

# Leave No One Behind:

## Bringing Tertiary Education and Vocational Training to Vulnerable Populations

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### Interactive Panel Discussion

**2 October 2019**

*Palais des Nations, Room XXVI, 10h-12h*

### Background

#### Reaching the Furthest

In 2018, there were 70,8 million forcibly displaced people worldwide. This figure has never been higher since UNHCR records began in 1950.

A large proportion of youth growing up in hard-to-reach areas lack the relevant knowledge and skills needed in the labor markets or for further studies, which affects their livelihood prospects and opportunities. Access to quality education and skills training remain a major challenge as we move towards the 2<sup>nd</sup> cusp of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Only 23% of at-risk adolescents are enrolled in secondary education (compared to 84% globally), which in the hard-to-reach context mostly consists of unaccredited short courses. As for tertiary education, enrolment for this population worldwide is just 1%, compared to 36% of the global population. At-risk and hard-to-reach persons thus remain in real danger of being left behind when it comes to education, skills training and ensuing their professional prospects. Solutions aiming to improve access to tertiary education are already implemented by education partners, including setting up vocational skills centers, online and distance learning, provision of scholarships, but this is limited due to constraints in access, infrastructure, and funding. As a result, a large proportion of youth growing up in such settings lack paths leading to relevant competency that would also support local economic growth.

A prevailing gender disparity in the provision of education at all levels must also to be noted. Young girls face a distinctive set of barriers to learning and are disproportionately affected by the lack of quality and accessible education. *Her Turn*, a 2018 UNHCR report, highlights that girls at secondary level are only half as likely to enroll in school as their male peers, although girls make up half of the school-age population. The report underlines specific, gendered challenges that contribute to the marginalization of girls, such as social and cultural conventions resulting in boys being prioritized to attend schools due to their perceived greater future earning potential; poor facilities; school-related gender-based violence; or prohibitive costs of school supplies added to the perceived “opportunity costs” in terms of girls’ income and domestic duties. Furthermore, as girls grow older, the gender gap grows. At the level of tertiary education and vocational training, this translates into marked inequalities in provision and access, thus widening broader gender inequality trends in livelihoods and economic opportunities.

In countries such as Germany, Switzerland or Finland, where human capital development is at the core of sustainable national development, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) offers lifelong learning paths, through which all people can access quality education and training. With the rapid changes brought about by industrial revolution 4.0, training, re- and upskilling people for employment and entrepreneurship is the only option, if we are to increase self-reliance and empower forcibly displaced people and the communities that host them. Improving access to flexible and accessible education programmes represents a critically important tool for integrating vulnerable

populations, including refugees and displaced persons, into the global decision-making processes, thus ensuring that the international development agenda is continuously informed with them and for them.

Against this background, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development places quality education (SDG 4) among the top priorities for the international community for the decade to come, while leaving no one behind remains a fundamental crosscutting principle for the whole set of global goals. In the educational realm, the Leave No-One Behind (LNOB) implementation model addresses the challenges mentioned above by bringing vocational and technical training and higher education to the most remote and hard-to-reach locations.

### **When Multi-Sector Partnership is Key**

Known and recognized globally as a hub for innovative educational approaches and the quality of its education system at all levels, *Finland* has designed gender-sensitive modular competency-based programmes of technical and vocational education and training, the elements of which, such as recognition of prior skills and learning, make it particularly suitable for refugee populations. Not requiring a specific educational background for entry, the Finnish model of TVET focuses on mapping the already existing knowledge as a basis for devising personalized study paths, which allows for a quick transition to employment and/or entrepreneurship within a relatively short time frame. Scalability and local ownership are cornerstones of Finnish vocational and professional education and training. The international implementation model includes training and certifying local male and female trainers as well as quality assurance measures for long-term support. The programmes lead to recognized Finnish Diplomas at EQF levels 4 and 5 – stepping stones for further studies at tertiary level, employment and entrepreneurship. Job creation is an important element of these training programmes, thus entrepreneurial skills are embedded in the pedagogical approach as well as the obtained skillset.

*The United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)* is a dedicated training arm of the United Nations system, whose mandate is to develop individual and institutional capacities for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through outcome-based training and learning initiatives. By providing tailored training in different formats and lifelong learning opportunities, the Institute makes a substantive contribution to the achievement of the Goal 4 of Quality Education. In relation to the Goal 16 of Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, UNITAR strives to support the (re-) establishment of peaceful, just and inclusive societies by enabling individuals and organizations to contribute meaningfully to sustainable peace.

UNITAR partners with leading higher education institutions to design academic programmes that combine convenient modes of delivery with student-centered and multicultural approach to learning, offering a high degree of flexibility for mid to upper-level professionals currently working in the field or whose assignments involve a lot of traveling. In an effort to support the work and professional development of United Nations volunteers, UNITAR offers a series of advanced online courses tailored specifically to the needs of female and male UNVs, who are serving for peace and development in the most difficult settings.

In 2019, UNITAR joined forces with *Omnia Education Partnerships (OEP)* – the international commercial arm of four Finnish non-profit training organizations – to devise and implement gender-sensitive TVET projects in several non-EU countries. With the support of the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, the first pilot programmes in two, yet to be identified countries will be rolled out in 2020.

## Event Format and Goals

Driven by its commitment to delivering quality education to vulnerable populations and those supporting them in all parts of the globe, on the occasion of the International Day of Nonviolence 2019, UNITAR will convene its current and prospective partners in Geneva with the aim to hold a productive discussion on the ways to advance the universal access to quality education and training.

Organized in the format of a panel discussion, the event will strive to achieve the following objectives:

- enable a hands-on exchange of experience and best practices in the realm of TVET and higher education in displacement and other special settings;
- launch the new LNOB initiative of UNITAR and OEP as one example of such practices with potential scaling;
- examine the most strategically appropriate cooperation modalities involving partners from multiple sectors and at various levels, including, most importantly, local partners in target countries and locations;
- set the agenda and identify concrete future steps to ensure that collaborative projects in the area of tertiary and vocational training are fully inclusive and is focused on creating a sustainable multiplicative impact.

## Confirmed and Potential Speakers

- Mr. Evariste Karambizi, Director, Division for Peace, UNITAR
- Dr. Jon-Hans Coetzer, Team Leader Online Learning and Education Projects, UNITAR
- Ms. Susanna Graf, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (TBC)
- Ms. Mervi Jansson, CEO, Omnia Education Partnerships (OEP)
- Professor Kevin Bampton, Head, Leicester De Montfort Law School
- Mr. Ville Wacklin, Finn Church Aid
- Dr. Raquel Xalabarder and Dr. Daniel Rajmil Bonet, University of Catalonia
- Mr. Luc Craen, Vice President, EU Business School (TBC)
- Ms. Eveline Steinger, School of Social Work, University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland (FHNW)
- Mr. Jonas Steiger, Researcher, University of Zug (TBC)
- Ms. Barbara Bulc, President, GlobalDevelopment
- Ms. Carla Rachman, University of Boston Study Abroad
- Mr. Amjad Mohamed-Saleem, Manager of Inclusion, Protection and Engagement, IFRC

## Target Audience

- Current and aspiring professionals of various levels engaged in the projects related to peacebuilding, humanitarian assistance and sustainable development;
- UN agencies, NGOs, academic institutions, civil society organisations and businesses, which currently offer related training programmes, individually or in partnership;
- UN agencies, NGOs, academic institutions, civil society organisations and businesses, which are interested in providing related training programmes within or outside their organisations.

With the abovementioned categories being the most direct beneficiaries of the initiated discussion, this public event will be open to any other interested parties.