**Conclusion**

Multifaceted support is needed in many areas to facilitate the integration of displaced scholars into academia. Displaced academics should be welcomed not only to bring their lived experiences to research but also to join other intellectual communities as academics who bring a wealth of alternative types of knowledge and expertise that are not necessarily Eurocentric or Western in nature or related to displacement and humanitarianism.

Academic institutions, NGOs that help displaced scholars and even individual academics can act as an enabling force to offer support to displaced academics and help them thrive. Successful support or mentoring schemes could be created and expanded such as those developed by the Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law or by CARA. These actors can offer sustainable mentoring programmes for displaced academics, who may themselves act as future mentors for subsequent cohorts of academics. Such programmes can provide considerable support to displaced academics professionally and personally and equip them with the necessary skills to progress.

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# Exclusion from the conversation: reflections from Afghan refugees

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While refugee voices are increasingly valued in research and policymaking, Afghan refugees continue to face barriers to access and participate in these conversations. Their insights offer recommendations for how to increase inclusion to inform decision making.

The challenge of increasing diversity and inclusion in global conversations about forced migration is widely recognised. Research and policy decision-making have tended to be led by actors who rarely originate have been movements to reflect refugee participation in international mechanisms of decision-making, such as the 2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants and the 2018 Global Compact on Refugees.[4]

the multi-layered barriers faced by Afghan refugees in this sector and our proposals for increasing the diversity of the conversation.

**Challenges to joining the conversation**

**1. Barriers to education**
Education is often seen to provide the foundational skills necessary to participate in research and policymaking. Attendance at a higher education institution and academic references are regularly cited as prerequisites for many job opportunities. However, accessing higher education is a major challenge for young refugees. In 2020, only 5% of refugees globally were enrolled in tertiary education, compared with a 39% enrolment rate among non-refugees.[5]

Lack of access to higher education is recognised by Afghan refugees to be a critical issue. The expense of university tuition is a key barrier to access, with many refugee families experiencing economic hardship and young people needing to find employment to support household income. Furthermore, in 2017 an estimated 600,000 to 1,000,000 Afghan refugees in Pakistan were undocumented and therefore unable to access higher education. This contributes in turn to a lack of employment opportunities, economic security and thus educational opportunities for the next generation.

**2. Hostile local research cultures**

*Despite holding a master's degree with a distinction in data science from a Pakistani university, Bilal (26 years old) has noticed a distinct lack of opportunities to work as a researcher, and has faced two key challenges. Firstly, local refugee communities attribute little importance to research. This is often due to the fact that refugees have a limited understanding of what research can achieve and therefore do not view it as a priority. Secondly, host communities may view refugee researchers as a potential threat to local livelihoods, which increases competition for research positions and may give rise to prejudice in application processes.*

This silencing is further compounded by the instability felt by refugee communities. Due to the nature of a refugee's citizenship status, the personal risk incurred by entering into political or controversial conversations about forced migration means refugees may self-censor their work. This, combined with a lack of mentors or support systems at university, result in refugees not feeling encouraged to pursue research as a career path.

*Nabi (33 years old) fled Afghanistan during the 1990s, and is currently working as a journalist, writing research articles for a local news agency. He loves writing due to the power and importance he attributes to sharing stories in the media. Despite this, he is highly aware of the censored nature of what he is able to publish as a refugee. He has faced personal threats when conducting research on certain topics and received a lack of support, even amongst his peers, for his work.*

restrictions or increasing education and employment opportunities, would provide refugees with more autonomy to attend and contribute to international platforms.

*As a journalist and researcher seeking to showcase refugee voices, **Arya** (24 years old) was excited to have been invited to speak at an international education conference. However, her attendance was prevented by travel restrictions imposed on her as a refugee. In most countries, documented refugees are provided with the Geneva Convention travel document in lieu of a passport. On this occasion, however, the travel document was not granted, despite an official letter of confirmation from the international organisation holding the conference.*

#### 4. Widespread discrimination
While some challenges arise at a local or global level, discrimination is a barrier we have faced at every level. Globally, the stereotyping of refugees has contributed to continuing negative attitudes. Whether in the media, political discourse or research itself, refugees are frequently presented as vulnerable, dependent and a potential threat to host communities. This can affect integration and inclusion. Afghan refugees are often the targets of criticism and prejudice from host communities in Pakistan. This can have a knock-on effect on employment opportunities and access to certain platforms, both within and beyond areas of research and policy.

A second issue relates to language

*him. Nonetheless, he continues to value research as a means to change these attitudes and build a better society.*

#### How to diversify the conversation?
If Afghan refugees – and the many other millions of displaced people worldwide – are to have a meaningful platform from which to influence the research and policy decisions which affect our communities, then steps need to be taken to increase inclusion in such conversations. While we recognise that our list of recommendations is not exhaustive, it is nonetheless important: it is rooted in the experience of those who have been excluded from the conversation in the past, rather than those seeking to fix it from the 'inside'.

**Prioritise refugee education:** The experiences of many Afghan refugees highlight that a lack of access to education (due to cost, documentation and references) is a major barrier to entering the fields of research and policymaking. Increasing access to education for refugees, and particularly access to higher education, is therefore a priority.

**Establish awareness-raising initiatives to boost research engagement:** We have noticed that local refugee communities do not tend to regard research as important, which only compounds the lack of refugee representation in global conversations. Increased information sharing and community workshops could

**Implement participatory research methodologies:** Providing opportunities for refugees to actively participate as co-researchers could not only provide employment pathways but also enable refugees to share valuable insights and refine research methodologies in a way which is most appropriate for their context.

**Recognise the twofold value of removing language barriers in research:** We welcome the increasing efforts to diversify academic publishing. A greater range of languages and pathways to publication will likely result in more refugee voices being heard in research. Distribution of this research is also important; addressing the issue of academic paywalls, as well as publishing findings in accessible languages, would further increase refugees' engagement with the sector.

**Combine requirements for refugee participation with practical support to implement them:** Some declarations have been made to increase refugee participation in international networks, but there are barriers (including travel restrictions) which limit the success of implementing such standards. A dual approach is needed.

**Enable networks for refugee collaboration and contribution:** Refugees do not share one voice. We represent a diverse group of perspectives and experiences. Creating global networks through which refugees can communicate with one another could provide a platform for refugees not only to contribute to the conversation but to lead it.

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