



STUDENT AS PARTNER WORKSHOP REPORT

Equipping Student Leaders as Partners for
Sustainable Humanitarian Action 2023

ABSTRACT

The "Equipping Student Leaders as Partners for Sustainable Humanitarian Actions 2023" conference brought together global leaders, students, and professionals to discuss the critical role of students in driving humanitarian action. Focusing on collaboration, ethical considerations, and the intersection of higher education with Sustainable Development Goals, the event highlighted the importance of women's education, humanizing higher education through civic engagement, and creating actionable steps for campus-based social action. The insights and experiences shared at the conference emphasized the potential of student partnerships to address global challenges and foster transformative change.

Souzan Husseini

PhD Students / Waseda University GSAPS

Outline of the Report:

1. Introduction	Page 02
1.1. Conference Background	Page 03
1.2. Purpose and goals of the conference	Page 04
1.3. Special Keynotes by Kim Phuc	Page 05
2. Day 1: Setting the Scene for Taking Action	Page 08
2.1. Plenary sessions	Page 09
2.2. Workshops	
3. Day 2: Building Action Plans	Page 13
3.1. Plenary sessions	Page 13
3.2. Workshop	Page 14
3.3. Research Paper Presentations: Students as Partners	Page 15
3.3.1. Group 1: Paul Martin Centre	
4. Day 3: Building Action Plans	Page 18
5. Conclusion	Page 23
5.1. Key takeaways and personal insights from the conference	Page 24
5.2. The future of student partnerships and sustainable humanitarian action	Page 24

1. Introduction

I recently had the incredible opportunity to attend the Students as Partners Conference, organized by the ISOW Scholarship Initiative in partnership with the UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, at Wilfrid Laurier University. The conference focused on the essential theme of fostering partnerships between student leaders and higher education institutions to drive sustainable humanitarian action. With an emphasis on active learning and the inclusion of diverse voices, the event inspired stimulating conversations, meaningful connections, and a wealth of knowledge that continues to resonate with me.

Throughout the conference, delegates participated in various workshops and panel discussions, exploring topics such as humanitarian action in a time of global crisis, ethical humanitarian action, and the potential for effective action through student partnerships. It was a unique and transformative experience, hearing first-hand accounts and insights from individuals from around the world who are deeply committed to humanitarian work and social justice. This not only expanded my understanding of the challenges faced by those impacted by humanitarian crises, but also provided me with an invaluable perspective on the power of collective action.

The event served as a catalyst for self-reflection, prompting me to consider how I can apply the lessons learned from this conference in my own personal and professional life. I walked away from the conference with a newfound sense of purpose and determination to actively engage in humanitarian initiatives, support marginalized communities, and work collaboratively with others to create lasting, positive change.

In the following sections, I will discuss my key takeaways and observations from the Students as Partners Conference, shedding light on the importance of empowering students as partners in humanitarian action and how higher education institutions can play a pivotal role in driving forward this movement.



Photo: conference tables the symbol of ISOW as central piece

1.1. Conference Background:

The "Equipping Student Leaders as Partners for Sustainable Humanitarian Actions 2023" conference was organized by the International Students Overcoming War (ISOW) Scholarship Initiative at Wilfrid Laurier University in collaboration with the UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency. The conference took place over three days between the 30th March till 2nd April 2023 in Canada, Waterloo, addressing the importance of student partnerships in higher education institutions and their contribution to sustainable humanitarian efforts.

The conference brought together a diverse group of individuals, including student leaders, academic professionals, representatives from NGOs, and higher education staff from around the world. Participants from all over the world had join in attending, sharing their knowledge, experiences, and thoughts about different pathways of access to education, inclusion and diversity, leadership, and integration. Key topics covered during the conference included forced displacement, higher education, sustainable development goals, ethical student-led humanitarian action, the role of universities in social action, and effective strategies for campus-based social action.

The UNHCR has been leading efforts to support this vulnerable population, with a particular focus on ensuring access to higher education for refugees. This commitment has led to collaborations with universities such as Wilfrid Laurier University, which houses the internationally-recognized, student-run, and student-funded International Students Overcoming War (ISOW) scholarship program.

Recognizing the crucial role of student leadership and the need for collaboration between students and higher education institutions, the conference aimed to promote a deeper understanding of the potential for effective humanitarian action through such partnerships. The event brought together students, faculty, professionals, and researchers from around the world to engage in active learning workshops, panel discussions, and presentations, all centered on humanitarian action and the importance of fostering meaningful collaborations.

During the conference, and at the beginning of each session, a student stands up and declare the land acknowledgment. Which is a statement acknowledging the traditional Indigenous lands on which the conference at Wilfrid Laurier University is taking place. The statement recognizes the historical and ongoing impact of colonialism on Indigenous communities in Canada and highlights the importance of spreading awareness and fostering healthier relationships with Indigenous peoples and the land. Land acknowledgements are a way to honor and respect the Indigenous peoples who have lived on and cared for the land for generations.

The Acknowledgment:

“We acknowledge that this conference at Wilfrid Laurier University is taking place upon Indigenous lands traditionally lived in and cared for by the Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe, and Neutral Peoples. Land acknowledgements are important because they spread awareness of Indigenous presence, contributions and land rights in everyday life, while recognizing the lasting harms done to Indigenous communities as a result of past and ongoing colonialism in Canada. In addition, land acknowledgements symbolize the need for

Canada to work to address these harms and to foster healthier relationships with Indigenous peoples and the land.” –ISOW

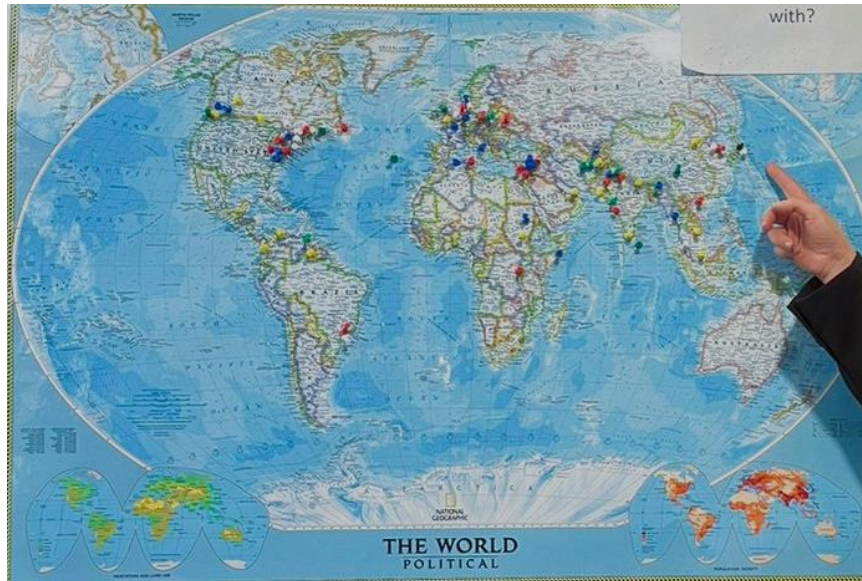


Photo: The map participants highlight were they identify themselves with

1.2. Purpose and goals of the conference

The Students as Partners conference aimed to bring together students, faculty, staff, and representatives from NGOs and higher education institutions to collaborate and develop sustainable solutions to humanitarian crises. Hosted by International Students Overcoming War (ISOW) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the conference took place at Wilfrid Laurier University's Waterloo campus from March 30 to April 2.

The conference had several goals:

1. Encourage student-led innovation, creativity, and leadership in addressing the challenges posed by global displacement and humanitarian crises.
2. Foster research-based discussions and develop action plans that empower students to engage in sustainable humanitarian and social action upon returning to their institutions.
3. Create new partnerships between universities, students, and NGOs to enhance the effectiveness of humanitarian action supported by academic institutions.
4. Provide a platform for sharing perspectives, lived experiences, and resources, promoting a collaborative environment for tackling complex issues.

5. Empower students to become agents of change by implementing specific action plans developed during the conference, thereby creating a ripple effect on students and communities across the globe.

By achieving these goals, the conference aimed to mobilize students and higher education institutions to contribute to solving the pressing humanitarian challenges of our time.

At the conclusion of the conference, the organizing committee sought feedback from participants and aimed to establish a communication hub to facilitate ongoing collaboration and information sharing among the attendees. This would help strengthen the connections made during the conference and foster continued efforts toward addressing humanitarian challenges through student-led initiatives and partnerships between universities, students, and NGOs. Refer to the questions below to gain a better understanding of the topics the organizing committee sought feedback on:

- After this conference how will you apply what you have learned?
- What next steps can we take to ensure that this was a good use of time and resources?
- Please comment on the conference plenaries and workshop: which ones were most helpful, and which one were less helpful? Why?
- What topic do you wish we had discussed that was not covered at this conference?
- If we are to hold another conference, where should it be and what should the purpose be?
- Would you be interested in participating in a follow-up webinar with delegates who could not attend due to visas not being granted?

1.3. Special Keynotes by Kim Phuc

Kim Phuc's keynote speech at the conference was an inspiring and engaging account of her personal journey, survival, and forgiveness. Her presentation skills, characterized by a calm and measured storytelling style, captivated the audience and made them hang on her every word.



Photo: Kim Phuc keynote¹

In her presentation, Kim Phuc shared her compelling life story, beginning with her childhood in Vietnam, continuing through her experiences as an international student in Cuba, and eventually

¹ Source of the photo: Wilfrid Laurier University website (2023). Link: <https://www.wlu.ca/news/spotlights/2023/april/international-students-overcoming-war-welcomes-international-delegates-to-laurier-for-students-as-partners-conference.html>

seeking refuge in Canada. She recounted the harrowing story of the napalm attack that changed her life and the iconic photograph that captured the moment. Throughout her journey, the importance of education remained central, with Kim initially aspiring to become a doctor before eventually studying languages. Kim Phuc also opened a fund to support children's education, further emphasizing her commitment to education.

Kim Phuc highlighted the support she received from various sources during her healing process, including doctors, nurses, family, and friends. She discussed her path to forgiveness, attributing it to her faith and the power of love. Throughout her presentation, Kim Phuc shared number of quotes that resonated with the audience, such as "Everyone in this room has a good story to tell, but today is my turn." She also recounted her experiences in a way that conveyed the emotional impact of her journey, like the description of her 14 months in the hospital and 17 surgeries after the napalm attack.

Overall, Kim Phuc's presentation was a powerful testament to her resilience and the human capacity for healing and forgiveness. Her calm and engaging storytelling style made her speech all the more impactful, leaving a lasting impression on the audience. By sharing her experiences and lessons learned, Kim Phuc emphasized the importance of resilience, hope, and education. Kim Phuc shared several important lessons during her presentation, which she learned through her personal journey and experiences:

1. Terrible things may happen, but we can learn to be stronger and overcome adversity.
2. The healing power of love and support from doctors, nurses, family, and friends can help us through the most difficult times.
3. Education is crucial, as it can help us find our way out of darkness, broaden our perspectives, and create opportunities for a better life.
4. Sometimes dreams have to change, and we need to adapt to new circumstances or opportunities that present themselves.
5. Faith can play a significant role in one's healing process and provide guidance on the path to forgiveness.
6. Forgiveness can transform bitterness and pain into something more positive, allowing us to move forward in life.
7. Our personal stories and experiences can inspire us to make a difference in the lives of others, just as Kim Phuc's iconic photograph motivated her to help children in need.

These lessons reflect Kim Phuc's resilience, strength, and commitment to forgiveness and compassion, serving as valuable takeaways for the audience at her presentation.

Kim Phuc's speech had several positive aspects that resonated with the audience. The compelling narrative she shared took them through her life's journey, from her childhood to the present day, demonstrating the transformative power of personal experiences. She emphasized the importance of education as a means of empowerment and freedom, a message that holds significance for many. Kim

also acknowledged the vital role of individuals such as doctors, nurses, family, and friends in her healing process, highlighting the importance of support networks.

However, there were a few concerns and points of contention within her speech. Firstly, the use of "black" and "white" as metaphors for evil and good could be seen as an oversimplification and potentially racist. This simplistic dichotomy might not accurately reflect the complexities of human experiences and perceptions of good and evil. Secondly, the idea of forgiveness, while powerful, could be perceived as disrespectful in certain situations, especially when it comes to war criminals and those who perpetrated violence. Forgiveness may not always be the appropriate response and could be seen as undermining the gravity of the harm caused. Lastly, Kim emphasized religion as the source of her enlightenment, which might not be applicable to everyone. People from different backgrounds and belief systems may find their path to healing and understanding through alternative means.

In conclusion, Kim Phuc's keynote speech was a powerful and emotional account of her journey, survival, and forgiveness, eliciting a range of opinions and reactions from the audience. Her engaging storytelling style and the structure of her presentation highlighted the resilience of the human spirit, as embodied in her personal experiences. However, it is important to acknowledge and critically engage with the concerns raised in her speech to foster a more nuanced understanding of her experiences and the broader implications of her message. By doing so, we can appreciate both the impact of her story and the complexity of the issues it brings to light.

2. Day 1: Setting the Scene for Taking Action



Photo: Conference Venue and Wilfrid Laurier University

The first day of the conference began with an orientation for delegates that emphasized the importance of partnership, opportunity, failure, skill, and leadership in addressing the challenges faced by refugees and displaced individuals. The president of the university highlighted the value of confidence, stemming from self-assurance and reminders of one's capabilities, in achieving success. The significance of human connections, friendships, hope, and optimism was also stressed throughout the day.

Dr. Walker encouraged delegates to consider the tools and skills they could gain from the conference, while Saja commented on ISOW's role in equipping students with essential skills and development opportunities, which may not be available in some countries, such as Japan. Britny shared her experience in the program, discussing how it changed her perspective on normality and allowed her to learn about partnerships at a young age. She emphasized the importance of understanding people's experiences in conflict and adopting the right approach.

Throughout the day, the conference touched upon various concepts, including working together to create an impact, empowering and supporting students, and understanding the language that is important to a particular situation. The focus extended beyond funding projects, aiming to involve students in changing their institutions' responses to address growing needs. Delegates were encouraged to consider how they could effectively partner to achieve better outcomes.

During the conference, I was introduced to a number of inspiring individuals who supported my visa application and provided valuable guidance. Manal and Arash from UNHCR, Oshish, the amazing organizer of the event, and Dr. Gavin, who extended his support to everyone, were among these incredible people. I am particularly grateful to Manel Miaadi for taking time out of her busy schedule to have a one-on-one session with me, working on the visa application and providing guidance. This support and inspiration began as soon as I stepped into the conference, and I continued to meet many other inspiring people throughout the event. Their contributions and dedication made the conference an unforgettable and enriching experience for me.

2.1. Plenary Sessions



Photo: UNCHR Manal Presentation of higher education and global leadership (Plenary session 1)

Day one of the conference featured four main plenary sessions, each offering unique insights and takeaways. The speakers shared insights on the importance of student engagement, scholarships, access to education, and the challenges faced by refugees in navigating different educational systems.

The first session on the global context of forced displacement and higher education Rema Jamous from UNHCR emphasized the importance of aligning humanitarian response with national development objectives in hosting countries and the role of students, university leadership, and the humanitarian sector in addressing global issues. Manal Stulgaitis, also from UNHCR, discussed the changing nature of displacement, the need to update the Global Compact on Refugees, and the significance of partnerships. The role of higher education in providing leadership, subsidized tuition, and scholarships for refugees was highlighted. Manal's presentation centered on sustainable development, taking action, and the roadmap for inclusive higher education. She stressed the importance of including refugees in education plans and addressing challenges like cost and accessibility. The five pillars of the 15by30 roadmap and the need for refugees to have access to work in host countries were also discussed.

The second session focused on the role of higher education institutions in addressing the needs of young people in conflict and fragile situations, emphasizing the potential impact of investments in higher education on sustainable development goals and national development. Scholarships were discussed as not just about access, but also commitment. Challenges faced by refugee students, such as documentation issues and the end of their protected status, were highlighted.

The Global Student Forum was addressed, recognizing students as leaders, targets, and potential threats. Access to education was seen as an opportunity for global mobility, and the need for institutional support was emphasized. The conversation also covered inclusion, diversity, and the importance of considering local culture and rules.

Humanitarian actions discussed included student support, language assistance, and knowledge sharing. The role of government in addressing these issues was questioned. Student-led projects, community awareness, and communication were discussed, as well as the importance of student voices in NGOs, relationship-building, and creating new forms of knowledge.

The third plenary session of the conference, "Universities and Social Action: A Contested Role?", discussed the challenges that universities and colleges face in overcoming the inequities that result from harmful colonial structures. Institutional transformation is often slow and typically comes in response to demands from students who lead calls for justice. The session emphasized the importance of ensuring that higher education institutions contribute to solutions rather than perpetuate existing problems when engaging in campus-based humanitarian action. The conversation centered on the need for deep introspection and a humble approach to knowledge, as well as the importance of considering identity, culture, and language in these discussions. The panel also highlighted the significance of intergenerational perspectives and addressing the influence of documents of institution, media, history, and politics in shaping the role of universities in social action.

The fourth plenary session, "Strengthening Higher Education through Social Action," focused on the connection between humanitarian action and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and how they resonate with students and staff in universities and colleges around the world. The discussion emphasized the importance of creative and meaningful campus-based action, as well as the need for institutions to invest in and empower student leadership in order to foster future sustainable humanitarian action. Duncan Ross from Times Higher Education led the session and highlighted the interest of academics in the Education Goal (SDG 4) but noted the lack of research on Goal 1 of the SDGs. The session also touched upon the relevance of university rankings in the context of their commitment to achieving the SDGs.

Overall, these plenary sessions provided valuable insights into the various challenges faced by refugees and displaced individuals in accessing higher education, as well as the role of universities, students, and stakeholders in addressing these issues. The day was filled with thought-provoking discussions, lessons on the importance of collaboration, and the need for institutions to empower student leadership in fostering meaningful change.



Photo: Duncan Ross presentation on "Strengthening Higher Education through Social Action" (plenary 4)

2.2. Workshops

During the workshops, I had the opportunity to engage with a diverse group of participants, including Cathryn B. Bennett, Kathleen Herbest, João Felipe Rufatto Ferreira, and Oshish Ungras as the workshop team facilitator. These discussions allowed us to learn about the experiences of refugee students in various countries, such as the United States and Brazil, and to share the situation in Japan. We identified the language barrier as a common challenge across countries, requiring alternative communication methods. Additionally, we compared the opportunities available for refugees in each country, leading to increased understanding and collaboration in addressing global challenges faced by refugee students.

In the first workshop, we explored how universities and colleges participate in humanitarian action and discussed ways to overcome obstacles to greater involvement. We considered the benefits of engaging in humanitarian action, the unique resources and advantages that higher education institutions possess, and the barriers that make it difficult for them to take part in such actions. The challenges of asking students to lead campus-based humanitarian actions were also discussed, along with ways to support them.

In the second workshop, participants focused on addressing potential criticisms when making the case for higher education institutions' commitment to humanitarian action. We aimed to develop an ethical framework to guide delegates when approaching university and college leaders, emphasizing the urgency of responding to emergencies today.

Key takeaways and lessons learned from these workshops include:

1. Higher education institutions can significantly benefit from engaging in humanitarian action, as it not only enhances their social impact but also strengthens their reputation and fosters global citizenship among students.
2. Universities and colleges possess unique resources, such as access to research, expertise, and networks, that can be leveraged to address global humanitarian emergencies.
3. Barriers to greater involvement in humanitarian action include institutional resistance, lack of awareness, and limited resources. To overcome these obstacles, participants stressed the importance of advocacy, collaboration, and empowering students to take the lead in organizing campus-based humanitarian initiatives.
4. Participants also shared their experiences in different countries, highlighting the common challenges faced by refugees, such as language barriers and cultural differences. They also discussed the importance of creating safe spaces and providing support to help refugees adapt and succeed.
5. The EmPATHy initiative was briefly introduced as an example of youth engagement and cross-cultural collaboration in addressing refugee issues in Japan. This organization, founded by Youth UNHCR members and individuals with refugee backgrounds, aims to bring about change, safety, and inclusiveness for refugees in Japan through awareness-raising and collaboration with NGOs and NPOs.

6. Developing an ethical framework for student-led humanitarian action is crucial to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of initiatives. This framework should consider ethical concerns, give agency to the people being helped, and be sensitive to their real needs.

Overall, the workshops provided valuable insights into the potential of higher education institutions and students to contribute to humanitarian action. By learning from shared experiences, participants can work towards fostering more inclusive societies and empowering refugee communities. It is crucial to involve students in shaping the higher education experience. Since Japan currently lacks formal student-as-partner initiatives, introducing this concept and empowering students could start with small-scale projects that engage and involve students in the decision-making process.

3. Day 2: Building Action Plans



3.1. Plenary

During day 2 of the conference, there were three plenaries that discussed various topics related to education and humanitarian action. The fifth plenary focused on Afghanistan and the importance of providing education to Afghan women who face numerous barriers and challenges. The speakers highlighted the need for building partnerships with universities, students, and communities to raise money and provide scholarships. They shared the success story of Friba Rezayee, who participated in Judo and inspired others to pursue sports and education. The panelists also emphasized the need for more scholarships and opportunities for Afghan women to access higher education.

In the sixth plenary, the focus was on students as partners for sustainable humanitarian action. The speakers discussed the benefits of empowering students as partners in higher education, such as increased confidence and teamwork. They also highlighted the role of informal communication and knowledge transfer between students and faculty. The panelists emphasized the importance of experiential learning in student empowerment, but also discussed challenges faced by students in partnerships, such as potential misuse of power and overcoming shyness.

The seventh plenary discussed the concept of humanizing higher education through civic engagement. The speakers emphasized the need for cultivating a culture that fosters student leadership through experiential learning and meaningful partnerships. They addressed challenges associated with working with students, such as logistical issues and long-term commitment. The concept of the "invisible university" was also discussed, which emphasizes relationships and taking risks. Finally, the panelists emphasized the importance of leadership and access to leadership opportunities for students.

Several key takeaways and insights emerged that emphasized the importance of women's education, student partnerships, and the humanization of higher education:

1. **Women's Education:** The situation in Afghanistan highlights the urgency of providing education to women in conflict-affected areas. Access to education is crucial for empowering women and improving their lives. Partnerships with universities, students, and communities can help raise funds and provide scholarships to support women's education.

2. **Student Partnerships:** Engaging students as partners in sustainable humanitarian action can lead to more effective outcomes. Student-led initiatives, such as the Tertiary Refugee Student Network (TRSN) and International Students Overcoming War (ISOW), demonstrate the power of students in driving change and creating meaningful impacts.
3. **Empowerment Through Partnership:** Working in partnership with faculty and staff empowers students, providing them with opportunities to learn, develop skills, and gain confidence. It also allows for more equitable and flexible relationships within higher education, fostering better communication and collaboration.
4. **Civic Engagement:** Institutional leaders discussed the challenges and opportunities associated with cultivating a culture that fosters student leadership through experiential learning. Encouraging students to take an active role in both curricular and co-curricular programs can lead to more humanized and meaningful educational experiences.
5. **Overcoming Challenges:** Addressing the challenges and limitations faced by students and institutions when working together is crucial for successful partnerships. Open communication, flexibility, and adaptability can help overcome these obstacles and ensure more effective humanitarian action.

Throughout the plenaries, participants discussed the value of empowering students and providing them with opportunities to lead and participate in higher education. They shared stories of success and the importance of collaboration between universities, communities, and students to create change. The discussions also highlighted the challenges faced by students in partnerships and the need for a supportive and inclusive environment to foster growth and empowerment.

3.2. Workshop

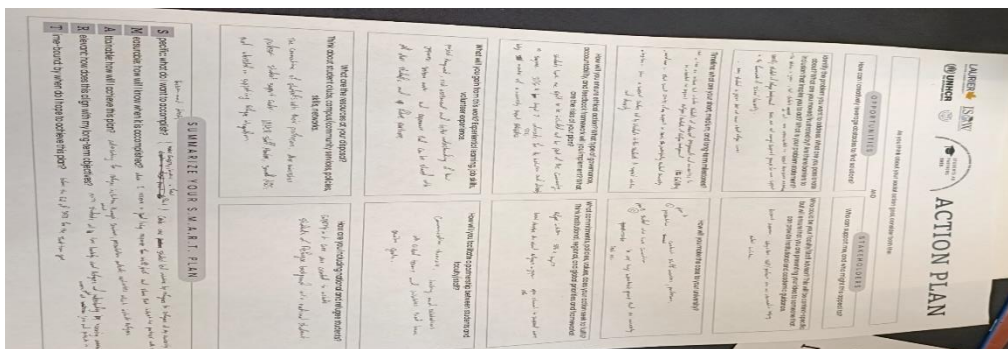


Photo: STEM workshop

During the workshop, participants were asked to choose one of six Sustainable Development Goals, including Education, Gender, Poverty, Climate Action, and Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions. They then formed groups with others who selected the same goal. In my group, which focused on Goal 4, Education, various ideas were discussed, such as providing education to younger generations. My idea centered on advocating for student participation and inclusion through diverse activities,

with organizations like EmPATHy serving as a hub to connect students from refugee backgrounds with university students.

We employed the STEM approach to work on our ideas, either individually or in small groups. Although working alone before sharing with the team was beneficial, there was a lack of feedback, insight, or direction on what steps to take next or how to improve our ideas. Nevertheless, the experience of developing a plan within a limited time frame was valuable and informative.

3.3. Research Paper Presentations: Students as Partners

3.3.1. Group 1: Paul Martin Centre

The panel presentations highlight various efforts to promote more inclusive environments in higher education, benefitting both students and faculty members, and fostering collaboration between them. These initiatives showcase the importance of incorporating diverse perspectives and offer unique insights, fostering a more comprehensive understanding of various issues. The panelists also discuss the importance of engaging with different audiences, leveraging alternative platforms such as podcasts, and utilizing various networks to reach more people and create a wider impact. However, there are challenges in implementing these initiatives, such as resistance to change from faculty members or administrators and power imbalances between students and faculty that can hinder effective collaboration and create barriers to open dialogue and constructive feedback. Additionally, securing resources and funding for these projects can be difficult, making it challenging to compensate student collaborators or provide adequate support. Finally, balancing multiple responsibilities, such as coursework, extracurricular activities, and advocacy work, can be challenging for students involved in these initiatives, potentially leading to burnout or difficulty maintaining a healthy work-life balance.

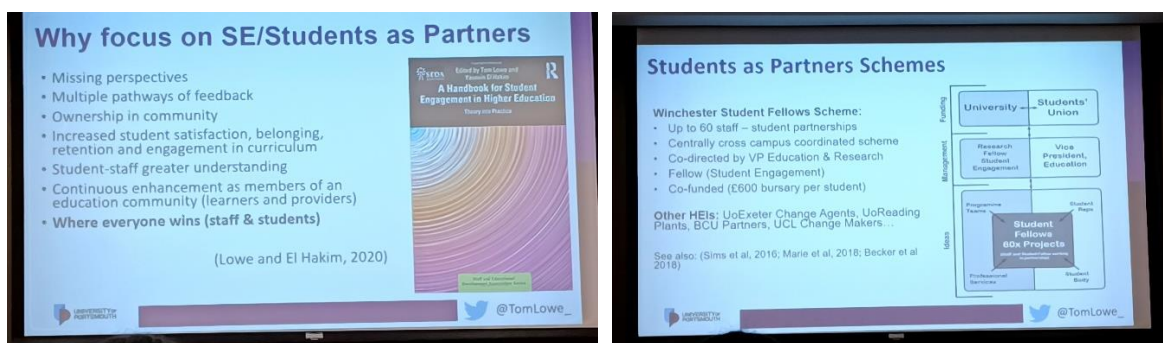


Photo: Tom Lowe's presentation

1. Dr. Fatima Maatwk, Dr. Jennifer Fraser, & Kyra Araneta: They discussed their podcast, "Surviving Society," which focuses on addressing and deconstructing issues related to race, gender, and social class. Their podcast aims to challenge the existing norms in higher education and create a platform for alternative perspectives. They shared their experiences

with podcasting and how it helps them connect with a wider audience, including students, academics, and activists from various disciplines.

2. Dara Drake's presentation: Dara talked about her work in promoting student-faculty partnerships and the importance of undergraduate voices in decision-making processes within the university. She shared her experiences in collaborating with faculty members, creating a university-acknowledged course, and overcoming challenges related to funding and compensation. She emphasized the importance of caring deeply about the cause and finding ways to prove the value of student input to faculty members who may be resistant to change.
3. Tom Lowe's presentation: Tom addressed the concept of hard and easy partnerships between students and faculty. He discussed the challenges and opportunities of involving students in more critical roles, such as observing lectures and providing feedback, being involved in faculty interview panels, and working in partnership with the university during the pandemic. Tom highlighted the importance of starting with eager volunteers, sharing the benefits of these partnerships, and gradually building a critical mass of support within the institution to create lasting change.

The panel presentations provide valuable insights into promoting more inclusive environments in higher education, with a focus on fostering collaboration between students and faculty members. One key takeaway from these presentations is the importance of engaging with diverse perspectives, which can enhance the overall educational experience and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of various issues. The panelists emphasize the need for open dialogue and constructive feedback, even in the face of power imbalances and resistance to change.

Another lesson learned from these presentations is the value of alternative platforms, such as podcasts, and the use of various networks to reach wider audiences and create a more significant impact. These initiatives demonstrate that innovative approaches to sharing information and fostering collaboration can lead to increased engagement from both students and faculty members.

The challenges faced by those involved in these initiatives should not be underestimated, as securing resources and funding can be difficult, and balancing multiple responsibilities can be taxing for students. However, the panelists' experiences suggest that persistence and passion for their work can drive meaningful change in higher education, ultimately benefiting all stakeholders involved. By sharing their experiences and strategies for overcoming obstacles, the panelists offer a roadmap for others interested in promoting inclusive environments in higher education.

Key takeaways and lessons to learn from the panel presentations:

1. Alternative platforms for knowledge sharing: Podcasts like "Surviving Society" can create opportunities for discussing and challenging existing norms in higher education, promoting a more inclusive environment and engaging a diverse audience.
2. Importance of student-faculty partnerships: Encouraging collaborative efforts between students and faculty members can lead to more inclusive decision-making processes and better learning experiences for all parties involved.

3. Persistence and passion: When advocating for change or pushing for new initiatives, it is essential to be persistent and passionate about the cause. Demonstrating genuine commitment can help garner support from others and lead to successful outcomes.
4. Start small and build momentum: When introducing new initiatives or partnerships, it's helpful to start with early adopters and use their positive experiences to gain wider support. This approach can help create a critical mass that will eventually make resistance a minority.
5. Use data and testimonials to influence change: When trying to convince resistant faculty members or administrators, presenting data or testimonials from successful partnerships can be a powerful tool to demonstrate the value of student input and collaboration.
6. Leveraging resources and networks: To overcome challenges such as funding and compensation, it's important to explore available resources, such as grants, department funds, and university courses. Building a network of supportive mentors and allies can also help in achieving goals and navigating institutional barriers.
7. Addressing power imbalances: Recognizing and addressing power imbalances between students and faculty is essential to ensure meaningful and constructive collaborations. It's important to create an environment where both parties feel comfortable sharing feedback and engaging in open dialogue.

4. Day 3: Building Action Plans and Reflections



Photo: day 3 panel discussion, students of refugee background

Day three had some change in the schedules and turned to be a spontaneous show. The first part introduced a group of 4 refugee students two from Syria and two from Afghanistan who shared their stories, hopes, and what challenges have they faced in their life to reach to where they are at now.

Aisha's story is one of resilience and determination in the face of adversity. She shared that she had to face many challenges in pursuing her education, including financial struggles and the societal expectations for women in Afghanistan. Despite this, she was able to obtain two bachelor's degrees from two different universities while also working as a volunteer for more than four years. Aisha was also involved in the peace process and provided advocacy and awareness for peace.

However, her life took a dramatic turn when the Taliban took over Afghanistan in 2021. Aisha had to flee her home country with her family, leaving behind everything she knew and loved. "I wish no girl was born in Afghanistan" Aisha said while sharing her story fleeing from Afghanistan and Taliban oppression. Seeking for change to access Education and some human rights. She was eventually able to make it to Canada and is now pursuing her master's degree.

Aisha's story highlights the challenges faced by women and refugees in Afghanistan and the importance of education in providing a path towards a better future. Despite the hardships she faced, Aisha's determination and resilience allowed her to overcome the obstacles in her path and pursue her dreams. Her talk was very inspiring, the way she presented her story was so elegant, audience could feel her struggle through her words and the language she used. She started with sharing her insight about Education during Emergency, which I agree with her on that point, the word emergency give the sense of something being temporary. I Think "Sustainably Education" or "Education for Sustainability" will give a better presentation and feeling of something being continues than the Emergency response.

The second story was shared by a Syrian girl who lived in Iraq. She shared that her family had to flee Syria due to the war and they ended up in Iraq as refugees. She talked about the difficulties of being a refugee, including the lack of access to education and the struggle to make a living. Despite these

challenges, she remained determined to continue her education and eventually managed to enroll in university in Iraq. She also talked about the importance of education and how it can provide hope and a way out of difficult circumstances. She and her family had a lot of financial difficulties.

Mustafa is a Syrian student who fled his country in 2015 due to the ongoing conflict. He was studying at a university in Syria, but the war forced him to abandon his studies and leave his homeland. Mustafa and his family settled in Turkey. Despite the difficult living conditions, Mustafa was determined to continue his education. He enrolled in a Turkish university and studied hard to improve his language skills. He also worked part-time to support himself and his family. He worked hard to finally receive a scholarship to study at a university in Canada. Although excited about the opportunity to pursue his dream, Mustafa faced several challenges during his journey. The transition to life in Canada was difficult, He also struggled with feelings of guilt about leaving his family behind in Turkey, as well as with the trauma of the war in Syria.

Despite these challenges, Mustafa remained determined to succeed. He worked hard to excel in his studies, and he also became involved in volunteer work and community activities. Through these experiences, Mustafa has found a sense of purpose and belonging in his new home. Mustafa's story is a testament to the power of perseverance and the resilience of the human spirit. Despite facing enormous challenges, he remained determined to achieve his goals and make a better life for himself and his family. His story is an inspiration to others who may be facing similar challenges and obstacles in their own lives.

The fourth story featured a young man from Afghanistan discussing his experiences living in his country and fleeing as a refugee after the Taliban takeover in 2021. He had earned two bachelor's degrees and volunteered in various roles, including peace advocacy. He also talked about how his family had gone on a vacation just before the government collapsed in July 2021, and they didn't realize the severity of the situation until later. He shared his experience of being alone at home when the Taliban came to his city. After leaving Afghanistan, he experienced stress and anxiety during his evacuation. Now in Canada, he pursues a master's degree in bioethics, emphasizing the importance of education for refugees to rebuild their lives. His story highlights the challenges refugees face and the need for support and resources to help them.

The four stories shared by students with refugee backgrounds highlighted the challenges they faced in pursuing education and building a better life. These stories revealed the struggles of refugees who have to start anew in foreign countries, often experiencing discrimination and lack of support. However, they also showcased the resilience, courage, determination, and importance of education as a means of empowerment and a pathway to a better future.

Learning from these experiences, it is vital to empathize with refugees and provide them with support and resources to access education. Universities and educational institutions can play a significant role in offering a safe and supportive environment while promoting inclusion and diversity. Recognizing the global refugee crisis as a long-term issue, sustained attention and action from governments, organizations, and individuals are needed.

To support student enrollment at educational institutions, the following steps can be taken:

1. Recognize and address the unique challenges faced by students from refugee backgrounds by providing financial support, language programs, and mentorship opportunities.
2. Foster a welcoming and inclusive environment by promoting diversity, cultural awareness, and providing support services like counseling and career guidance.
3. Advocate for education as a human right through partnerships with refugee organizations and advocating for policies supporting access to education for all.

By implementing these measures, educational institutions can help students from refugee backgrounds achieve their full potential and contribute to their communities.

The following discussion focused on the power dynamics and agency of students within academic institutions and refugee communities. The panelists agreed on the importance of incorporating student voices, fostering collaboration among institutions, and empowering students to bring about change. They also highlighted the need for universities to partner with organizations that provide scholarships, especially for refugees.

Key points discussed:

1. The power of students: They have the potential to influence university and government policies and can be agents of change.
2. The responsibility that comes with student power: Teaching and engaging students in a way that they understand the responsibility that comes with their voice.
3. Increasing perceived relevance: Encouraging students to see the importance of humanitarian action and other issues, thereby increasing engagement and promoting change.
4. Creating international networks: Connecting students from diverse institutions worldwide to share ideas, data, campaign materials, and evidence, ultimately fostering collaboration.
5. Championing for university partnerships and scholarship opportunities: Sharing models and experiences, and promoting sustainable scholarships for refugee students.
6. Encouraging collaboration among students: Inspiring students to work together to create greater impact and develop solutions to the challenges they face.
7. Exploring different models for creating new opportunities: Discussing various models for international partnerships, local initiatives, and cross-country student union collaborations.

An inspiring story mentioned during the discussion was the South African student protest against the proposed increase in university fees. The students united and demonstrated their power by organizing protests on social media, effectively shutting down the country's education system in solidarity. As a result, the university fees remained unchanged, showcasing the power of students when they come together to fight for a cause they believe in. The speaker emphasized that if students can make a change in their university policies, they could also influence government

policies, including those related to refugee issues. This story demonstrates the potential impact of student activism when they collaborate and leverage their collective power.

For refugee students and marginalized communities, social capital can be essential for accessing education and support. In the conversation, panelists highlighted the importance of building social capital by creating connections between students, universities, and support organizations.

By fostering these connections and networks, students can access opportunities, resources, and support that might not be available to them otherwise. Additionally, strong social capital can contribute to a sense of belonging and empowerment within the university and the broader community. This, in turn, can lead to better educational outcomes, increased confidence, and the ability to advocate for themselves and others in need.

When the speaker said, "I am because of you" "We see them" they were emphasizing the importance of empathy and understanding the interconnectedness between people. This statement reminds us that the struggles faced by refugee students and those in need of support could easily be our own, and vice versa. Recognizing this shared humanity can foster a sense of solidarity and encourage individuals to advocate for more inclusive and supportive policies within universities and beyond. By embracing this mindset, we can work together to break down barriers and create a more equitable and compassionate world.

The key takeaway from this discussion is the importance of recognizing and leveraging the power of students as agents of change. Encouraging collaboration and partnership between students, universities, and institutions can lead to innovative solutions and meaningful impact. By increasing the perceived relevance of topics like humanitarian action, tuition fee waivers, and accessible education, more students can be engaged in these issues. Furthermore, creating international networks and sharing resources, models, and evidence can help amplify the collective impact of student activism and make a tangible difference in addressing challenges such as refugee education and inclusivity.

The final panel focused on student-led initiatives, particularly working with refugees and higher education access. Key takeaways include the importance of building trusting relationships between students and faculty, disrupting traditional hierarchies, and ensuring the long-term sustainability of such initiatives. Other important points touched on involve learning from students, addressing power imbalances, and collaborating with international organizations like UNESCO. Going forward, it is essential to continue nurturing these partnerships, learning from other institutions, and seeking support from stakeholders to create sustainable, inclusive, and impactful educational opportunities for refugees and other marginalized communities.

The discussion highlights the significance of student-led initiatives in creating more inclusive and accessible higher education opportunities for refugees and other marginalized communities. By building trusting relationships between students and faculty and disrupting traditional hierarchies, these initiatives foster a more collaborative and supportive environment. The conference also demonstrates the willingness of stakeholders to learn from students and collaborate with international organizations like UNESCO, opening up possibilities for innovative approaches to education access. The successful examples shared by the participants, such as scholarship programs and student-led funding initiatives, showcase the potential impact of these efforts.

Despite the many positive aspects of the discussion, some challenges and concerns remain. Balancing personal and professional relationships can sometimes interfere with the effectiveness of these initiatives. Furthermore, the sustainability of such projects is often uncertain, making it crucial to find long-term support and resources. The discussion also reveals the need for better collaboration and communication between institutions, as well as the importance of addressing biases and power imbalances within these partnerships. Lastly, while there is a growing interest in replicating successful models, the unique contexts of different institutions and regions must be taken into consideration to ensure that such efforts are adaptable and relevant.

5. Conclusion



Photo: Conference Venue and Wilfrid Laurier University

The conference highlighted the crucial role of student involvement in driving sustainable humanitarian actions and fostering transformative change. Collaboration among stakeholders, including students, academic professionals, NGOs, and higher education institutions, is essential for fostering innovation and developing effective strategies to address global challenges. Ethical considerations in student-led humanitarian action and the link between higher education and the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were emphasized. The importance of women's education, particularly in conflict-affected regions like Afghanistan, was discussed as vital for sustainable development and peace-building. The potential of student-led civic engagement to humanize higher education was underscored, and the conference offered an opportunity to develop actionable steps for campus-based social action. Overall, the conference showcased the potential of student partnerships in driving sustainable humanitarian actions and served as inspiration to continue pursuing these goals in higher education institutions and beyond.

A few suggestions on initiating projects to involve students in shaping their higher education experience include forming a student advisory committee with members from diverse backgrounds and majors to discuss various aspects of university life, such as academic programs, extracurricular activities, and campus services. Encouraging faculty-student collaborations through joint projects, like research initiatives or curriculum development, can also be effective. Launching student-led initiatives, such as clubs or organizations that address specific issues or interests, can promote collaboration between students and university administration to implement positive changes on campus. Organizing regular forums or town hall meetings provides opportunities for open dialogue between students, faculty, and university administration, fostering a sense of shared responsibility in shaping the university experience. Lastly, offering resources, workshops, and training sessions focused on leadership development, project management, and communication skills can help students become effective advocates for change. Implementing these small-scale projects can gradually create a culture of student empowerment and partnership within the university, leading to broader changes and fostering a more inclusive and dynamic higher education experience.

5.1. Key takeaways and personal insights from the conference

The conference provided valuable insights into various aspects of education, social change, and humanitarian action. A recurring theme throughout the event was the importance of empowering students to take an active role in their education and fostering partnerships with faculty or staff members. These partnerships can lead to transformative learning experiences, increased confidence, and a greater sense of ownership over one's education.

Access to education was another critical topic, particularly for marginalized or underrepresented populations. Ensuring access to education is vital for promoting social change, empowerment, and improved quality of life. This is especially important in conflict-affected areas, such as Afghanistan, where providing education to women is an urgent necessity. Strong partnerships between students, faculty, institutions, and NGOs were emphasized as a way to raise funds, create scholarships, and improve access to education for those in need, ultimately resulting in sustainable and effective humanitarian action.

Incorporating experiential learning opportunities into higher education programs can help students develop valuable skills, such as teamwork, communication, and problem-solving. This approach also helps humanize education by allowing students to engage directly with real-world issues and challenges.

Cultivating leadership within higher education institutions was another key takeaway. Fostering a culture of leadership is vital for promoting civic engagement, empowering students, and ensuring long-term commitment to social change. Institutions should provide opportunities for students to develop leadership skills and participate in meaningful initiatives that address pressing global issues.

Lastly, the conference stressed the importance of recognizing and addressing the challenges and limitations faced by students and institutions. Emphasizing flexibility, adaptability, and open communication can help overcome these challenges and foster more impactful outcomes. By combining these insights, the conference presented a comprehensive and inspiring roadmap for advancing education, social change, and humanitarian action on both local and global levels.

5.2. The future of student partnerships and sustainable humanitarian action

Insights and future plans for advocating student enrollment and partnership involve understanding the value that students bring to the table and the transformative impact of education on their lives. Here are some key points to consider when advocating for student enrollment and partnership:

1. **Education as an equalizer:** Access to education can break the cycle of poverty and inequality. By providing students with the necessary resources, knowledge, and skills, they become more capable of improving their lives and contributing to their communities.
2. **Economic benefits:** An educated workforce drives innovation, economic growth, and global competitiveness. Supporting students in accessing education is an investment in the future, as their contributions will ultimately benefit the broader society.

3. **Diverse perspectives:** Enrolling a diverse student body and fostering partnerships among them can lead to innovative ideas, creative problem-solving, and a more inclusive and tolerant society. By encouraging diverse voices, institutions can become more adaptable and open to new ideas.
4. **Empowerment through partnership:** Engaging students as partners in decision-making processes enables them to contribute their unique insights, skills, and experiences. This, in turn, helps create more effective and relevant policies, programs, and services.
5. **Networking and global citizenship:** Establishing partnerships among students and institutions can foster a sense of global citizenship, promoting collaboration and understanding across borders. This interconnectedness can lead to more effective solutions to global challenges.
6. **Alumni engagement:** Alumni who have been supported and empowered through their education are more likely to give back to their alma mater and communities. By advocating for student enrollment and partnerships, institutions can create a virtuous cycle of engagement and support.

To advocate for student enrollment and partnerships, stakeholders can:

1. **Raise awareness:** Share success stories and data that demonstrate the impact of education on individuals and society to garner support for student enrollment and partnerships.
2. **Lobby policymakers:** Advocate for policies that support accessible and affordable education, such as increased funding for scholarships, grants, and low-interest student loans.
3. **Collaborate with the private sector:** Encourage businesses to invest in education and offer internship or mentorship opportunities to students, creating a mutually beneficial relationship.
4. **Engage alumni and donors:** Highlight the importance of giving back and supporting the next generation of students, inspiring a culture of philanthropy and engagement.
5. **Promote inclusive and equitable practices:** Work towards removing barriers to education for underrepresented groups, such as low-income, first-generation, or minority students.

In conclusion, supporting student enrollment and partnerships is essential for fostering a diverse, innovative, and equitable society. By advocating for policies and initiatives that empower students, stakeholders can help shape a brighter future for all.

To support student enrollment at educational institutions, stakeholders can:

1. **Advocate for policies and funding that increase access to education for underrepresented and marginalized communities, such as women in Afghanistan and refugees.**
2. **Develop and promote scholarship programs and financial aid opportunities that target students from diverse backgrounds, ensuring that financial barriers do not hinder access to education.**

3. Foster a culture of partnership and collaboration between students, faculty, and staff, enabling students to contribute their skills, perspectives, and experiences in shaping the educational experience.
4. Encourage and support student-led initiatives, such as humanitarian action projects, that promote access to education and create positive change in local and global communities.
5. Implement inclusive and equitable practices within the institution, such as offering courses and programs that cater to diverse student populations and addressing the unique challenges faced by underrepresented students.

By incorporating these ideas from the conference into their policies and practices, educational institutions can create a more inclusive and supportive environment that encourages student enrollment and promotes the transformative power of education.

To advocate for students as partners in Japan, several steps can be taken. Firstly, raise awareness about the importance of student partnerships in education and humanitarian action. Secondly, organize events and workshops to discuss and promote the concept of students as partners. Thirdly, collaborate with existing student organizations, NGOs, and educational institutions to develop initiatives that promote student involvement. Fourthly, create resources, toolkits, and guidelines to help educational institutions implement student partnership initiatives. Fifthly, engage with policymakers and educational authorities to advocate for the inclusion of student partnership principles in educational policies and guidelines. Sixthly, create a network of educational institutions, student organizations, and NGOs that support the concept of students as partners. Seventhly, publicize the successes and achievements of student partnership initiatives in Japan. Finally, foster a culture of mentorship and peer support among students, faculty, and administrators in Japan.

