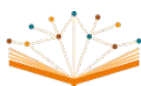


Asia-Pacific Region Complementary Education Pathways Community of Practice Meeting



**Hotel Benilde, Manila
The Philippines**

February 12-13, 2024



**Refugee Education
Special Interest Group**



Rationale for the Asia-Pacific Region Complementary Education Pathways Community of Practice meeting

Building on recommendations from the May 2023 meeting of the Global Task Force on Third Country Educational Pathways, De La Salle Philippines & The Embassy of Canada to the Philippines are proud to host the inaugural Asia-Pacific Region Complementary Education Pathways Community of Practice meeting on February 12 & 13, 2024 at the Hotel Benilde in Manila, the Philippines.

At the last meeting of the Global Task Force (GTF) Community of Practice (CoP), hosted by the GTF at Sophia University in Tokyo in May 2023, colleagues reported that regional meetings would offer a more cost-effective means for discussing issues of particular interest to actors in each region. Consequently, we decided to host our first regional Asia-Pacific meeting to facilitate meaningful engagement for practitioners in the region.

Aims

- Bring together students with lived experience of forced migration, practitioners, educators, advocates, policymakers, and UNHCR representatives to discuss progress and practice since the last GTF CoP meeting in May 2023.
- Profile the educational pathway pledges in the region to signal the commitment within the Asia-Pacific to create new, and expand existing, educational pathways.
- To communicate this commitment to other nations and partners in the Asia-Pacific who are not yet engaged in third country educational pathways and encourage their participation in discussions as aspirants.
- Encourage the development of national consortia of university partners.
- Facilitate the establishment of more Asia-Pacific-specific refugee student advocacy groups, specifically to join the UNHCR's Tertiary Refugee Student Network and Peer-to-Peer Student Advisor Network.



Executive Summary

This inaugural Asia Pacific Region Complementary Education Pathways Community of Practice meeting was well-attended in-person, with over 40 participants from Australia, Bangladesh, Japan, South Korea, and The Philippines. Online sessions also allowed several international participants to attend or present throughout the two days

Ideas for growing and sustaining existing educational pathways:

- Focus on language training before students commence their undergraduate studies.
- Develop campus support groups to help students navigate university life, as well as providing contacts with local students.
- Think of ways to promote the program but not the students.
- Host information sessions to advertise the program to potential donors or benefactors.
- Facilitate fundraising activities for the refugee students (e.g. on-campus bake sales, performances, fun runs).
- Solicit pledges from the faculty members.
- Petition government to provide additional support where needed (such as access to medical services).
- Raise awareness within the student body of humanitarian issues and the presence of refugees on campus.
- Raise awareness about the complementary education pathway programs (and the need for donations) through alumni and well-known people, and via social media.
- Encourage university leadership to match donations by faculty, alumni, and students.
- Raise awareness through celebrating pioneers/ first graduates of the program (while being mindful of ethics and the students' right to anonymity).
- Focus resources on board examinations to secure a license to facilitate future employment.
- Prompt universities to consider supporting post-graduate studies after the students' completion of the undergraduate program.

Actions for the Asia-Pacific Region Complementary Education Pathways Community of Practice

- Formalise the APCoP by developing an online presence, whether on the GTF website or a separate site to grow the network, to share good practice, and to distribute information across the region.
 - Regularly post on the APCoP page about various events, information, opportunities, impact, webinars, and meetings.
 - Host regular online meetings for APCoP representatives to meet
- Set up an evaluation and research special interest group
- Map the institutional Representation and disciplinary representation across the APCoP
- Undertake a cost-benefit analysis that will help market the programs.



Educational pathways across the Asia Pacific

The Philippines

In the Philippines, six universities and the 14 students studying in what they call the 'CPath program'. The six participating universities are:

1. University De La Salle - Araneta
2. University De la Salle - Bacolod
3. Tarlac State University
4. Columban College
5. San Beda University
6. St-Louis University

In essence, the UNHCR, The Department of Justice of the Philippines (DOJ) and the involved learning institutions work to allow students in situations of forced mobility the chance to attend higher education in The Philippines. Each learning institution is responsible to find the funding for the day-to-day well-being of the students and puts in place a local network to support them to the completion of the program of study.

Japan

In 2017, the [Japan Association for Refugees](#) (JAR) launched a pilot program to admit Syrian refugee students in Turkey to language schools in Japan. Shortly after, the [Japan ICU Foundation](#) (JICUF) and JAR launched the first private sponsorship program for refugees at a Japanese university by recruiting Syrian students to International Christian University (ICU). Then in 2022, JICUF and [Pathways Japan](#) (PJ), an organisation which emerged from JAR to exclusively manage pathways programs, were entrusted with the recruitment of Ukrainian students to 18 universities in Japan. As mentioned below, these universities formed a network called the [Japan Education Pathways Network](#) (JEPN) and continue to recruit additional students.

As for government-sponsored programs, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has been administering the Japanese Initiative for the Future of Syrian Refugees (JISR), also since 2017. The program recruits Syrian students in Lebanon and Jordan to enter postgraduate programs at Japanese universities. From 2017 to 2023, close to 80 students were admitted along with more than 70 family members.

Australia

Since June 2023, the federal Australian government has been working with key groups, primarily the [Refugee Education Special Interest Group](#) (RESIG), [Community Refugee Sponsorship Australia](#) (CRSA), and the newly-formed [Australian Refugee Welcome University Sponsorship Consortium](#) (ARWUSC), to co-design a blueprint for the Refugee Student Settlement Pathway (RSSP). The proposal for the RSSP is currently with the federal Minister for Immigration, with hope for an announcement in 2024.

Reflections on key discussions



Day 1: Best Practices and Challenges in Complementary Education Pathways

Overwhelmingly, the most consistent and significant challenge relates to a lack of sufficient and sustainable funding to both support the existing scholars, and to grow the programs in the Philippines and Japan. When discussing funding, colleagues often wrote the word in capital letters in their reflections and notes, to signify the strength of the challenge.

For the other countries represented who do not currently have, or at the pilot phase of, educational pathways, the challenges are broadly at the level of limited government support (Korea); massive displacement (Bangladesh); and timing (Australia).

In our discussions, we predominantly discussed the case of the Philippines because we had CPath students in attendance. However, many of these themes resonate with students in Japan, and with the examples discussed in the 2023 GTF CoP meeting.

What have refugee students told you has been the most challenging aspect of settling at their new school in the Philippines?

Everyday life

- Language: most people speak Tagalog for daily communication. Many Filipinos are afraid to speak English because they are afraid to be wrong.
- Funds: students do not receive enough money to live easily; students are discouraged from working so they can focus on their studies.
- Money management: students cannot easily open bank accounts or use g-cash as non-citizens.
- Cultural difference #1: food. Filipino love pork, making it difficult to find halal options.

- Cultural difference #2: stigma and misconceptions about refugees. Some Filipinos do not understand their cultural uniqueness.
- Psychological problems: homesick, sadness, separation anxiety, guilt.
- Lack of travel documentation means that students cannot travel to visit family.
- Internet connectivity: The connection is often slow, making it difficult for CPath students to communicate with their families, which contributes to mental health challenges.
- Religious considerations: Many students live far from the mosque.
- Healthcare: students do not have access to full medical services. While they can access the campus doctor or dentist (where available), this is not always sufficient to cover more complex issues. One student had to use her stipend to cover the costs of a private dentist.

Educational challenges

- Limited awareness: Not all educators are knowledgeable about the CPATH program, especially in public universities
- Board exams: The board exam is an issue. Licensure exams are needed to be employed. Students are concerned about how they will be supported to find work (such as finding volunteer experience)
- Education systemic differences: There are big differences with the Malaysian education system
- Religion/ Local context classes: Students report challenges with the religious Subject (not really a concern but more of an observation about its novelty, and the mandatory Filipino Subject.
- Language of instruction: Some educators teach in Tagalog, making it difficult for CPath (and other international students) to understand.
- Accommodation: some campuses have no availability in dormitories, meaning only a limited number of students can be accommodated.

What is preventing you from growing your program?

- Funding was identified as the main barrier to the growth of the program by the participating schools because CPath scholarships are not included in the regular budget.
- Human resources: Universities do not have adequate human resources.
- Limited awareness of the CPath program, both internally within the participating six universities, and externally.
- University regulations can limit the ways that universities can help (with tuition, staff support, access to guidance counsellors, medical treatment).
- Political considerations: Local government create opportunities and challenges because while they might to respond to humanitarian concerns, but they may not be able to scale in response as they also have to (appear to) support their local marginalised constituents.

What is working well in your program?

- Partnership: The partnership between the UNHCR, the DOJ and the learning institutions, either private or public. Hopefully can we tap more universities to 'adopt' the program.
- Guidance centres: Guidance centres are effective, especially when students

change their majors.

- Local language and history classes: They provide international students with the information and tools that facilitate their stay in the Philippines.
- Buddy system: The “local buddy” system was put in place to help international students gain knowledge about the local community, such as the appropriate place of worship or halal food stores. Buddies making sure that the students had access to the kitchen also helped them preserve their culinary culture and independence.
- Donations and support from faculty: This was proven essential to the first cohort of students. The completion of their studies will be an indicator of the success of the program and could be mentioned in future funding discussions.

What could be improved?

- Create a guidebook on how the CPath programs operate to assist new universities who join the program.
- Develop a network to publicly share best practices, challenges, ideas (complementing the existing Viber group that universities use).
- Develop a more streamlined system that can assist universities to find and secure funding.



Day 2: Building national consortia of universities

We heard two presentations about university consortia that already exist in the Asia Pacific region

Japan: As a response to humanitarian crisis, Japan Education Pathways Network (JEPN) was founded in 2022, which currently consists of 24 members of universities and foundations. JEPN brings together higher education institutions, governmental agencies, non-profit organizations, and other stakeholders to create and expand education pathways in Japan.

JEPN mission:

- **SHARE**: Share information on the minimum standards and best practices in education pathways through online resources, webinars, and events.
- **BUILD CAPACITY**: Build members' capacity to develop and implement education pathways through workshops and peer-to-peer exchange.
- **COLLABORATE**: Promote collaboration among members in the design and implementation of education pathways program.
- **SUPPORT**: Create a broad support network for refugee students.
- **INCREASE AWARENESS**: Increase awareness of education pathways and advocate for their expansion among relevant stakeholders in Japan.
- **FUNDRAISE**: Engage in joint fundraising.

JEPN currently working for:

- Joint recruitment and admission through education pathways (Japan Education Pathways).
- Bi-monthly meetings of faculty and staff members of universities (online or in-person).
- Meetings of welcoming students and refugee students.
- Reunion Day of students.
- Mobilizing refugee students as support staff members.

Agenda in the past meetings include:

- On-arrival support.
- Mental and psychosocial support.
- Documentation in exams (UNESCO Convention).
- Language exams (Duolingo).
- Integration in community.
- Local language acquisition required for academic study and job hunting.
- Preparedness for job-hunting.
- Introduction of Complementary Protection by the government.

JEPN Student Meeting@ICU



Australia: the recent establishment and launch of the Australian Refugee Welcome University Sponsorship Consortium (ARWUSC) has brought 13 public universities, representing the geographic spread and sectoral diversity of Australian higher education, together to co-design the blueprint for the Refugee Student Settlement Pathway (RSSP). This forms a proposal for government approval that has been sent to the Minister for Immigration for consideration within cabinet processes.

In the following discussion about the possibility of creating national consortia in other contexts, we heard the following arguments for this:

- Create one point of coordination (with government, UNHCR, other complementary pathway implementers, civil society organisations, potential funders).
- Communicate consistently with all partners (universities, UNHCR, government, funders).
- Advocate to peak body associations (such as the Commission for Higher Education in the Philippines) who act as the regulators and accreditors of both private and public universities.
- To advocate to the government as a united voice on issues such as providing healthcare and other supports.
- Simplify processes for funders. All donations should go to one umbrella and be distributed to universities according to students' needs.
- Share good practice, concerns, questions, advice (such as how to open bank accounts, how to navigate immigration processes) between participating universities.
- Promote CPath and success stories throughout the higher education sector, and in the public arena.
- Coordinate evaluation of and research on the pathways.

Employability and post-graduation outcomes

In Japan, Pathways Japan/Japan ICU Foundation (PJ/JICUF) model was originally designed and launched in 2017, integrating Japanese language education for two years and connectivity for employment in its Education Pathways Programs, as a preventive measure for the week asylum system in the country.

- From among the 40 Syrians who have been admitted in Japan-Syria Language School Pathways Program, 7 students who sought employment have found a full-time employment. Field of employment: Graphic design, System engineer, Pharmacy, Automobile industry, English education, Architecture.
- After March 2022 when the government started a generous humanitarian policy for admission of Ukrainians, PJ/JICUF expanded its program to admit 108 Ukrainian students with 18 university and 23 language school partners .It also increased partnership with companies to offer skill training program as below.
 - Mentorship and Apprenticeship with Bloomberg
 - Mentorship for CV writing, interview and career planning.

- Apprenticeship to work at Bloomberg for a year to have working experiences.
 - Online IT skill training with SAP
 - Offering SAP Learning Journeys to learn about SAP products with free vouchers.
 - Internship opportunities at companies in SAP ecosystem.
- PJJICUF also offer a meeting occasions with companies:
 - Info session/ Free talk with individual companies
 - Medical and Biological Laboratories Co. Ltd. Organized a free talk session with its employees.
 - Suntory organized an Info Session for students in education pathways programs.
 - Convention of companies
 - Offering opportunities for various companies to know better about recruitment of students with refugee backgrounds and creating a community of companies
 - In 2023, 15 companies including Suntory, Rakuten, PERSOL, AstraZeneka, Evonic Japan, JERA, Airbnb Japan, Lush Japan took part and the event resulted in internship opportunities.
- Job-hunting fair and Japanese classes for job-hunting
 - Offering opportunities both for the companies and students to know the other better and help students better prepared for the job-hunting.
 - In 2023, 10 companies including Shiseido, Fast Retailing, PERSOL, Evonic Japan, Airbnb Japan, Lush Japan, Tokyo YMCA took part and resulted in internship and employment opportunities.



Job-hunting fair in Oct 2023 @Sacred Heart University

Measuring impact

The potential of evaluation and research to tell compelling stories to encourage growth and sustainability of complementary education pathways was a point of discussion, in particular, the kinds of measures we want to achieve. To help articulate this, the team in Australia have co-designed a Theory of Change to underpin the intended robust, multi-partner, longitudinal evaluation & research plan for the Refugee Student Settlement Pathway (RSSP; see Appendix A).

What should we measure?

- What can be done, what worked, what didn't work, what should be improved.
- Different institutions and institutional arrangements, including:
 - Comparisons across pathways (inter/national)
 - Private and public universities
 - Nationwide
 - Regional.
- Partnerships between stakeholders.
- Public perceptions.
- Media and publicity reach.
- Student achievements (during studies, post-graduate destinations, paid employment).

How should we evaluate?

- Mixed methods, collaborative/participatory evaluation and research.
- Descriptive statistics because funders and donors expect these
- Qualitative case studies of students' experiences and successes.
- Include as many stakeholders as possible, including pathway students and local students.
- Systematise ethical data sharing.

If we tell stories of success effectively, we can build networks to inspire other people and institutions to accept refugees. Research can be transformed into policy papers, which can be helpful for government units, potential donors, and intragovernmental organisations.



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Appendix A: Example of a Theory of Change from Australia

Theory of Change for the Refugee Student Settlement Pathway

