



# ECE<sup>®</sup> Aid Newsletter

A charitable initiative developed to provide free evaluation reports for vulnerable and displaced populations.



## Highlights

NAFSA 75th Annual  
Conference:  
Washington D.C.

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Poster Presentation

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World Refugee Day

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Quarterly Updates

## SPRING/SUMMER 2023

Summer is definitely here in Wisconsin! Warmer weather means hiking, beaches, biking, outdoor music, and festivals galore. Those working within international education might be on break or may be preparing for the upcoming semester. Hopefully, whichever season you're entering is filled with friends, family, rest, and easy breezes. But first, let's revisit this spring and early summer and take a look at all of our positive efforts in "unlocking the promise of international education" for displaced people from around the world.

Spring can be a busy time for us at Educational Credential Evaluators (ECE) as many of us prepare to go to the largest conference in the field of international higher education hosted by NAFSA: Association of International Educators. This year was no exception as thousands of international education professionals converged in Washington D.C. for the 75th anniversary of the NAFSA annual conference. You'll read about my experience this year and learn about what I presented at this year's poster fair. In addition, you'll read about World Refugee Day, as well as quarterly ECE<sup>®</sup> Aid updates. Enjoy!



# NAFSA 75th Annual Conference: Washington D.C.

For the past 75 years, NAFSA: Association of International Educators has held their annual conference hosting thousands of international education professionals from over 100 countries. This year, the conference was held in Washington D.C. from May 30-June 2.

Over the course of four jam-packed days, attendees engage with each other through professional development workshops, learning sessions, exhibitors within the expo hall, networking and open meetings, poster fairs, and more.

Educational Credential Evaluators (ECE) is quite familiar with annual NAFSA conferences. For many years ECE has sent staff for professional development opportunities, to speak with colleagues at our exhibit booth, and to present at workshops and sessions, as well as the poster fair.

This year, I was fortunate enough to present at one of the poster fairs, which I will talk about more on the next page.



NAFSA 75th Annual Conference expo hall. Photo by Zak Holochwest



NAFSA 75th Annual Conference opening celebration at Nationals Park.  
Photo by Zak Holochwest

Another highlight for me included meeting with one of our active ECE® Aid participants, the [Ethiopian Community Development Council \(ECDC\)](#), at its national headquarters in Arlington, VA. I always appreciate meeting with colleagues in person to speak about potential collaborative projects and how we can support each other with those we serve. It was an excellent meeting, and I thoroughly enjoyed speaking with staff at ECDC.



Visiting the Ethiopian Community Development Council offices in Arlington, VA.  
Pictured with Svitlana Osaulenko, Ukrainian Humanitarian Parole National Program Coordinator. Photo by Zak Holochwest



## Poster Presentation

I was honored to present the work we do within the framework of ECE® Aid during the "Increasing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in International Education" poster fair at NAFSA 75.

My poster, seen below, was entitled "Providing Access to Higher Education for Refugees and Other Displaced People." You can zoom in on the image below to see that the poster explains challenges many displaced people face when attempting to access higher education. Additionally, the poster offers solutions, including the work being done through ECE® Aid.



Zak Holochwest presenting at the poster fair. Photo by Meg Wenger

# PROVIDING ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION FOR REFUGEES & OTHER DISPLACED PEOPLE



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## OBJECTIVES

- Describe challenges refugees and other displaced populations face when seeking access to higher education.
- Recognize solutions to assist the higher education community in providing more equitable outcomes for marginalized people in higher education.

## I. BACKGROUND

- Displacement Statistics\***
- 103 million forcibly displaced worldwide
  - 53 million are internally displaced
  - 32 million are refugees
  - 4.9 million are asylum seekers
  - 72% are from one of five countries:
    - Syrian Arab Republic - 6.8 million
    - Venezuela - 5.6 million
    - Ukraine - 5.4 million
    - Afghanistan - 2.8 million
    - South Sudan - 2.4 million
  - Higher education**
    - Only 6% of refugees have access to higher education (1% in 2019)
    - UNHCR 15by30 target - 15% of refugees (~500,000) can access higher education by 2030
- \*UNHCR Refugee Population Statistics Dashboard, 2022

## II. CHALLENGES

### Barriers to Higher Education for Refugees & Displaced Populations

- Policy challenges**
  - Federal
  - State
  - Local
  - Institutional
- Academic & documentation challenges**
  - Interrupted periods of education
  - No official proof of achievement
  - Unofficial documents
  - Unrecognized schools
- Financial challenges**

## III. RESEARCH

### ECE Conducted Higher Education Institution & Resettlement Agency Surveys in 2015

- What are the main concerns or pain points for refugees in the admissions/credential evaluation process?
- Respondents confirmed our assumptions of main concerns
  - Cost of credential evaluation
  - Documentation concerns
- As an organization, how can ECE help?
  - Committee work
  - Project development
  - Launch program
  - Connect with stakeholders

## IV. SOLUTIONS

### General Guidelines & Best Practices

- University policies**
  - Know your university/organization & what is feasible
  - Review current policy on documentation requirements
  - Seek guidance & support from provost, chief academic officer, registrar, & faculty members
  - Augment policy, if necessary, & obtain appropriate approval
  - Create 'ad hoc' committee to review & approve cases
  - Research applicants' circumstances to gain insight on impact to process & policies
- Handling students**
  - Ask students what they have & why
  - Verify situation or claims with experts & colleagues familiar with current state of affairs in the country or region
  - Thoroughly document cases and any exceptions to policy
- Documentation & resources**
  - Gather resources at your disposal
  - Use online verification tools when available
  - Request supplemental documents, educational history, affidavits, & verification letters

*Practice flexibility without damaging credibility.  
Be as consistent as possible.*

## V. OUR INITIATIVE



Initially launched in August 2016 with the intention of opening the door to education for refugees and asylum seekers, the scope has expanded to include those with temporary protected status, special immigrant status, and those affected by natural disasters or extreme hardship.

ECE® Aid is a charitable initiative developed to provide free academic evaluation reports for vulnerable & displaced populations.

ECE relies on experienced, trusted institutions and organizations to distribute fee waiver coupons to qualifying applicants. ECE does not provide complimentary reports directly to individuals.

### ECE® Aid process

- Participating organization identifies someone in need of assistance
- Participant sends referral to ECE® Aid
- ECE® Aid sends coupon code back to participant/client
- Client fills out ECE® application form and enters code
- Coupon code waives 100% of ECE® fees
- Credential evaluation process begins when documents are received for review

### Recipient eligibility guidelines

- Refugee or asylum status
- Temporary Protected Status (TPS)
- Special immigrant status
- Extreme hardship
- Lack of funds or scholarships due to unavoidable circumstances

### Participating institutions & organizations crucial for success

- Universities
- Community colleges
- Resettlement agencies
- Employment agencies
- Literacy councils
- Community organizations
- EducationUSA



[ECE.org/ECE-Aid](https://ECE.org/ECE-Aid)

### ECE® Aid accomplishments

**800+** evaluations issued since 2016 at no cost to recipient.

ECE® Aid has served people educated in over **80** different countries.

### Recent Program Activities

- Healthcare Response 2021
- Afghanistan Emergency Response 2021
- Ukraine Emergency Response 2022
- Fully funded through ECE revenue starting in 2023



[ECE.org](https://ECE.org)



**ECE® Educational Credential Evaluators**  
Unlocking the Promise of International Education®

The mission of ECE is to promote the betterment of individuals' lives and society by ensuring that educational qualifications are fairly and accurately recognized across borders.

### What is credential evaluation?

- Review of educational achievement
- Much more than a translation
- Conversion of international academic programs to U.S. or Canadian education system
- Based on deep understanding of education systems worldwide
- Knowledge of comparative education

### Steps to evaluating credentials

- Identify official status of institution
- Determine authenticity of documents
- Identify nature of education represented
- Was a qualification awarded?
- Convert credits or hours
- Convert grades

## World Refugee Day

This marks the 23rd year of World Refugee Day. With no end in sight of forced displacement of people worldwide, there is no better time than now to get involved with assisting refugees in whatever capacity is available. The theme for this year was "Hope Away from Home," and we like to think that ECE® Aid provides some glimmer of hope for those not able to return home due to conflict, environmental catastrophes, or persecution. We support all efforts in trying to assist refugees in their search for better lives, with the hope for peaceful resolutions and innovative solutions to global crises.

June 20, 2023

## WORLD REFUGEE DAY

### Hope away from Home.

### A world where refugees are always included.

Including refugees in the communities where they have found safety after fleeing conflict and persecution is the most effective way to support them in restarting their lives and enable them to contribute to the countries hosting them.

It's also the best way to prepare them to return home and rebuild their countries, when conditions allow them to do so safely and voluntarily, or to thrive if they are resettled to another country.



Unlocking the promise of international education®



## Quarterly Updates

**61** completed ECE® Aid evaluation reports in April, May, and June.

Top countries of education: Afghanistan, Ukraine, Pakistan, Nigeria, and Democratic Republic of the Congo.

### Recent ECE® Aid activities & outreach:

- Kentucky Humanitarian Assistance Scholarship, Community of Practice panel.
- 4th Annual Refugee & Immigrant Family Community Resource Fair, Milwaukee High School of the Arts.
- "Inclusive Workforce: Employers in Support of the Newcomer Experience" event, International Institute of Wisconsin.
- NAFSA 75th Annual Conference: "Providing Access to Higher Education for Refugees & Other Displaced People" poster presentation.

**Sincerely,**

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