IMPLEMENTING THE INTERNATIONAL CREDENTIALING SYSTEM FOR FORCIBLY DISPLACED PERSONS (ICSFDP)

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BRIDGING INTEGRATION THROUGH ADVANCEMENTS IN CREDENTIAL VERIFICATIONS FOR FORCIBLY DISPLACED INDIVIDUALS

Biographies

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Executive Summary

Globally, over 123 million forcibly displaced people (including refugees, asylum seekers, and stateless persons) face significant challenges rebuilding their lives in host countries, with one of the most persistent barriers being the lack of a trusted, standardized system to verify or reconstruct their academic and professional credentials. Without credible documentation, many highly skilled individuals are excluded from formal employment, contributing to refugee unemployment rates that are often double or triple those of host country nationals. This policy proposal calls for the urgent development of an International Credentialing System for Forcibly Displaced Persons – a secure, interoperable digital platform that enables displaced people to verify, recover, and share their qualifications across borders. By partnering with national governments, international organizations, educational institutions, and employers, this system would unlock the economic potential of forcibly displaced populations while supporting their dignity and self-reliance. For host countries, it offers a practical solution to fill critical labor shortages, reduce welfare dependency, and advance sustainable development goals through more inclusive labor market integration.

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Introduction

1.1 Problem Statement

Forcibly displaced people (FDPs) face unique and persistent barriers to fully participating in the economies of their host countries. One of the most significant obstacles is the lack of a clear, reliable way to verify or transfer academic degrees, professional licenses, or vocational skills acquired in their countries of origin. Many displaced individuals have even lost their original documents or cannot obtain verification from institutions in conflict-affected or unstable regions.

As a result, highly qualified refugees and asylum seekers are often unable to work in their trained professions or pursue further education without costly and time-consuming requalification processes. Existing national credential recognition systems are fragmented, inconsistent, and rarely designed to handle the challenges faced by forcibly displaced persons. The absence of shared international standards and interoperable systems contributes to underemployment, skills mismatches, and economic inefficiency for host communities that urgently need qualified workers in key sectors.

The world risks wasting valuable human capital while failing to deliver on commitments to meaningful refugee integration, self-reliance, and sustainable development if no changes occur to the existing system for FDP integration.

1.2 Policy Objectives

The International Credentialing System for Forcibly Displaced Persons (ICSFDP) is grounded in the understanding that status, recognition, and integration are not merely legal or technical facts, but rather social constructs that shape who is seen, who belongs, and who can participate fully in society. Drawing on a constructivist perspective, the ICSFDP aims to close gaps that arise when institutions, laws, and social attitudes fail to align with the realities of FDPs.

First, the ICSFDP seeks to dismantle the structural problem of legal limbo, which traps many FDPs in a state of uncertainty that erodes both functional and relational integration. By offering credible pathways to verify and reconstruct lost credentials, the ICSFDP helps transform limbo from an indefinite state of exclusion into a bridge toward recognized status and inclusion.

Second, the ICSFDP addresses the absence of standardized, portable identification systems by promoting multilevel identification and recognition frameworks. Inspired by models such as the European Council's *European Qualifications Passport for Refugees (EQPR)*, this approach respects national sovereignty while setting a shared understanding for credential portability, allowing FDPs to avoid repeating training or accept underemployment because of inconsistent rules.[1]

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[1] Council of Europe. (n.d.) The EQPR offers a method for evaluating refugees' qualifications when complete documentation is unavailable.

Third, the ICSFDP recognizes that language and education are not only practical tools for employment but also emotional and social bridges that build identity and community belonging. By supporting inclusive language acquisition and flexible, community-based education models, the ICSFDP strengthens FDPs' capacity to reclaim agency and contribute to their new environments.

Fourth, the ICSFDP tackles fragmented service delivery and poor data systems, which too often treat FDPs as peripheral. Instead, the ICSFDP aims to build collaborative data systems that center on dignity, recognize FDPs as active owners of their data, safeguard privacy, and enable integrated, person-focused support.

In sum, the ICSFDP pursues these constructivist-informed policy objectives:

1. To *facilitate trusted verification* and reconstruction of credentials as a way to restore professional identity and social legitimacy.

2. To *promote labor market integration* as a shared production between states, employers, institutions, and displaced people.

3. To *strengthen economic and social outcomes* by closing skills mismatches and enabling host communities to recognize FDPs as contributors, not burdens.

4. To *advance international commitments* by aligning recognition systems with global goals for protection, inclusion, and sustainable development.

5. To *uphold regional and multilateral cooperation* through voluntary, compatible frameworks that expand shared norms of who counts as "qualified."

6. To *drive digital transformation* that centers human dignity and privacy, empowering FDPs to control how their identity and history are rebuilt and shared.

1.3 Scope and Target Groups

The ICSFDP is designed to directly serve those most impacted by the social construction of unrecognized or invisible qualifications. People whose lives are put on hold because documentation is lost, institutions are destroyed, or receiving countries do not know how, or choose not, to trust foreign credentials.

Primary Target Groups:

1. *Refugees, asylum seekers, and stateless persons* who are denied full membership in the host society not only by legal status but by the lack of credible evidence for their skills and knowledge.

2. *Employers, licensing bodies, and educational institutions* that stand to benefit from tapping this hidden talent pool, but need standardized, trusted systems to do so confidently and equitably.

3. *National and regional governments, NGOs, and community-based organizations* that play a role in co-creating what counts as legitimate knowledge and building pathways to be recognized as skilled contributors.

Credential Types Covered:

- Formal academic degrees and secondary qualifications.
- Vocational and technical certifications critical for skilled trades.
- Regulated professional licenses (e.g., for healthcare workers, engineers, teachers).
- Informal and non-traditional learning that can be validated through alternative assessments, bridging programs, or community attestation. Defining what host societies accept as credible evidence of skill.

Priority Sectors:

- Sectors such as healthcare, education, construction, and IT highlight where skills shortages align with the often-overlooked competencies of displaced communities, showing that recognizing displaced talent is not only a matter of social justice but also a practical economic benefit.

Stakeholder Engagement:

- The ICSFDP will establish multi-stakeholder partnerships to develop recognition systems grounded in local contexts yet aligned with global standards. It emphasizes that individuals are active participants (not passive recipients) whose experiences and agency shape the practical meaning of ‘recognition.

Grounded in a constructivist view of migration and belonging, the ICSFDP transforms fragmented, exclusionary systems into connectors of shared prosperity, dignity, and community trust, shifting recognition from a technical challenge to a catalyst for social inclusion.

System Architecture and Implementation

2.1 System Architecture

An international credentialing system for FDPs must rest on a secure digital infrastructure that balances global integration with national sovereignty and regional variation. The proposed architecture is a secure, digital platform that stores, verifies, and shares FDPs credentials across borders. Its design must

emphasize consistency, scalability, and security while allowing flexible implementation pathways for host countries with varying digital readiness.

Single Global Database vs. Decentralized Regional Hubs

A foundational decision concerns the system's structural backbone: should it rely on a single centralized database or a decentralized network of regional hubs?

A single global database offers clear advantages. It simplifies management by consolidating data into one reputable source source, easing standardization of formats and verification protocols. Centralized governance can ensure uniform security and privacy safeguards, similar to the European Union's Schengen Information System[2], which provides a single portal for security and migration data across member states. However, such centralization poses inherent risks: a single point of failure can compromise the entire system's integrity, and concentrated control could invite political resistance from states wary of relinquishing data sovereignty. For instance, the European Asylum Dactyloscopy Database (EURODAC)[3] for fingerprint data has faced criticism over data misuse and cross-border privacy concerns. This emphasizes that while centralization may streamline operations, it can exacerbate vulnerabilities.

Conversely, decentralized regional hubs accommodate local diversity and national sovereignty by allowing countries or regional blocs to maintain control over their own data stores.This method boosts resilience by decentralizing storage and operations, adhering to core principles seen in ASEAN's mutual recognition arrangements[4], which allow member states to coordinate qualifications recognition without a central controlling body. Decentralization can also tailor systems to local regulatory, linguistic, and technical contexts. Still, the limitations are clear: decentralized models demand substantial integration standards and shared governance frameworks. Without effective integration, they risk fragmentation, duplication of effort, and gaps in data integrity over time.

A hybrid model combines these strengths. Regional hubs would operate under globally agreed standards and share credential data through secure, open Application Programming Interface (API). Such a framework references the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees (EQPR), which enables credential portability while allowing national education authorities to interpret verified data contextually. To succeed, the hybrid approach must commit to clear minimum standards and a binding governance framework to prevent deviation.

Integration with Host Country Systems

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[2]European Commission. (n.d.) The Schengen Information System (SIS) is Europe's largest security and border management database, enabling information sharing among border, immigration, police, customs, and judicial authorities. By compensating for the absence of internal borders, SIS remains the EU's key tool for cross-border cooperation.

[3] eu-LISA. (n.d.) Eurodac is the European Union's centralised biometric database, designed to assist with the management of asylum applications and support efforts to detect, investigate, and prevent terrorism and serious crime.

[4]Migration Policy Institute. (2019, April) ASEAN employs Mutual Recognition Arrangements (MRAs) to facilitate the recognition of qualifications among its member states without a centralized authority governing the process.

Regardless of architecture, the credentialing system must integrate seamlessly with host countries' domestic migration, labor market, and education systems. Verified credentials can streamline eligibility checks for asylum processing, work permits, or study visas. For example, Canada's Foreign Credential Recognition Program[5] offers a precedent: it accelerates labor market integration by connecting overseas qualifications with local regulatory bodies and employers. Similar integration can feed verified data into labor market information systems and skills-matching platforms to fill workforce shortages, a critical need in aging societies like Germany, which has successfully leveraged refugee labor market participation since 2015.

However, host countries must be prepared for administrative burdens. Data integration requires upgrades to national IT systems and staff training to interpret digital credentials correctly. There is also a risk of over-reliance on digital systems in contexts where manual document checks or interviews may still be needed to detect fraud. Policymakers should therefore pair digital credentialing with investment in local administrative capacity.

2.2 Credential Verification and Reconstruction

A major barrier for displaced persons is the frequent loss of original documents. The proposed system must go beyond simple digital storage: it must enable credential reconstruction through trusted, multi-layered methods.

First, where documents exist, the system should enable secure uploads, with trained verification staff cross-referencing with issuing institutions. For example, the World Education Services (WES) Gateway Program in North America[6] has pioneered flexible document requirements for refugees lacking standard transcripts.

Where no documents exist, the system should facilitate alternative evidence pathways, a concept tested by initiatives like the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT)[7], which accepts employer references, peer testimonies, and community endorsements to substantiate claims. Skills and competency assessments through accredited partners (e.g., vocational tests, practical demonstrations) can further validate applicants' qualifications. This aligns with Australia's Skills Recognition[8] programs, which integrate practical trade tests for those who cannot provide original diplomas.

While expanding access, such pathways risk inconsistency if alternative evidence isn't carefully verified. For example, community testimonies can be manipulated if not verified by trusted

[5] Government of Canada. (n.d.) Canada's Foreign Credential Recognition program verifies that education, skills, and work experience gained abroad meet the standards for a given profession or trade in the province or territory of employment.

[6] World Education Services. (n.d.) WES is the leading credential evaluation service provider in North America, having delivered over 4 million best-in-class credential evaluations accepted by 2,500 employers, academic institutions, and regulatory bodies across the United States and Canada.

[7] NOKUT. (n.d.) NOKUT, the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education, is an independent authority under the Ministry of Education and Research

[8] Skills Recognition International. (n.d.) Skills Recognition International Pty Ltd (RTO 32373) is certified by the Australian Skills Quality Authority to provide vocational education and training. Students can complete certificates online and gain nationally recognised qualifications. As a Registered Training Organisation (RTO), Skills Recognition International delivers accredited courses under the Australian Qualifications Framework.

intermediaries. Policymakers must therefore tie reconstruction pathways to vigorous oversight, ideally through partnerships with universities, licensing boards, and NGOs that have credibility and operational reach.

To improve trust and portability, the system should issue digital credential passports or verifiable certificates, stored on the user's profile and shareable with employers and institutions. Blockchain-based solutions, such as MIT's digital diploma system[9], show promise for tamper-proof credential issuance but come with technological demands that may be unrealistic for all host countries. Where advanced technology is not feasible, simpler cryptographic verification, such as QR codes or digitally signed PDFs, can offer practical alternatives.

2.3 Data Security and Privacy

Given the sensitive nature of displaced persons' data, reliable data security is non-negotiable. The platform must implement end-to-end encryption and comply with leading privacy frameworks such as the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)[10]. Ownership of personal data must rest with the user: forcibly displaced persons should retain the right to decide which credentials are shared, when, and with whom.

Consent management tools will empower users to authorize access case-by-case, similar to Estonia's e-Residency system[11], which gives users control over digital identity use. Identity verification must balance rigor with accessibility: biometric or multi-factor authentication can enhance security but must avoid inadvertently excluding users without stable access to smartphones or biometric records. Therefore, fallback manual checks or community-based verification may be required to ensure inclusivity.

Security must be continuously validated through independent audits and risk assessments. Lessons from breaches such as the 2017 Equifax data breach[12] or vulnerabilities found in Aadhaar[13]India's national ID system shows that no system is invulnerable. A layered security approach, regular patching, and clear incident response protocols are essential to maintain user trust and system integrity.

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[9] Lederman, D. (2017, October 19) The Massachusetts Institute of Technology, in partnership with Learning Machine, offers selected students the option to receive tamper-proof digital degree certificates upon graduation. These students can download a secure digital version of their diploma to their smartphones, in addition to receiving a traditional paper certificate.

[10] GDPR.eu. (n.d.) The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is the world's strictest privacy and security law. Although enacted by the European Union, it applies to any organization worldwide that targets or collects data on individuals within the EU.

[11] e-Estonia. (n.d.) All Estonians, regardless of residence, possess a state-issued digital identity (e-ID). Used for over 20 years, the e-ID is central to Estonia's e-state, facilitating secure digital transactions across public and private sectors.

[12] Federal Trade Commission. (n.d.) In September 2017, Equifax disclosed a data breach that compromised the personal information of 147 million individuals.

[13] Dahal, S., & Kumar, S. (2020) The Aadhaar system in India has faced legal challenges. The 2013 Supreme Court ruled Aadhaar registration voluntary and prohibited denying services without it, yet some health programs still subtly require it, delaying benefits if refused. In 2017, the Court affirmed the Right to Privacy as fundamental, reigniting debates on Aadhaar's privacy implications. In 2018, it upheld Aadhaar's constitutionality but reiterated its non-mandatory status. However, weak electronic health record regulations in low- and middle-income countries risk compromising patient privacy when linked to Aadhaar.

2.4 User Access and Interface

Accessibility is central to the system's impact. Many FDPs reside in low-connectivity environments or lack high-end devices. Therefore, the platform must adopt a mobile-first design, with offline functionality where feasible. The UNHCR's Refugee Cash Assistance apps[14] show that even simple mobile tools can deliver critical services in delicate situations.

Multi-language support must cover major refugee languages alongside host country languages. User dashboards should be intuitive, allowing individuals to upload documents, track verification status, and generate secure sharing links, such as QR codes that employers or institutions can scan for instant verification.

To bridge digital divides, local support hubs (operated by NGOs, community centers, or government integration agencies) can offer onboarding, troubleshooting, and guidance. Canada's Local Immigration Partnership model[15] demonstrates how community-level actors can complement digital systems by providing personal assistance to newcomers.

2.5 Integration with National and Regional Systems

Integrating with existing national qualification databases and regional frameworks will maximize the system's utility. Open standards and secure APIs can connect the new system with existing initiatives like the EQPR or ASEAN's Mutual Recognition Agreements for skilled labor.

Mutual recognition agreements supported by verifiable, standardized digital credentials can improve portability and build employer trust. However, countries may resist fully automatic recognition due to concerns over fraud or mismatches with national standards. Therefore, the system should complement, not replace, domestic credential evaluation processes. Continuous dialogue with national ministries of education, labor, and immigration will be essential to maintain legal alignment and adapt protocols as circumstances evolve.

2.6 Dispute Resolution and Quality Control

Given the stakes for users, effective dispute resolution is vital. The system must provide clear, transparent appeals pathways for individuals to contest credential decisions or request updates. Independent, accredited third parties should audit credential assessments, drawing on models like the European Network of Information Centres (ENIC-NARIC)[16] that mediate disputes in academic recognition.

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[14] UNHCR. (n.d.) UNHCR uses cash transfers to support vulnerable displaced persons, helping them meet urgent needs, sustain livelihoods, and enable voluntary return.

[15]Local Immigration Partnership Secretariat. (n.d.) Local/Zonal Immigration Partnerships (LIPs) are planning bodies that Immigration, Refugee Canadian Citizenship uses to foster community-based partnerships addressing newcomers' needs.

[16] ENIC-NARIC. (n.d.) The ENIC-NARIC Networks bring together national information centres from 56 countries to collaborate on the academic recognition of qualifications, operating under the principles of the 1997 Lisbon Recognition Convention.

Feedback mechanisms, such as surveys, will help identify user and stakeholder concerns. Governance bodies are responsible for detecting fraud risks, including fabricated documents and insider actions, and for dynamically strengthening safeguards.

Governance and Partnerships

3.1 Governance Structure

A credentialing system that crosses borders, industries, and institutions cannot succeed without clear, legitimate governance and strategic partnerships. This is why a multilateral governing body, potentially under UNHCR, UNESCO, or IOM, should steer strategic direction and ensure legitimacy. This body would comprise representatives from UN agencies, host country governments, regional blocs, accreditation bodies, refugee advocacy groups, and technical experts. Its mandate would be to set global standards for verification, data security, privacy, and interoperability, informed by best practices like the International Civil Aviation Organization's governance of biometric passports[17].

Regional advisory committees should complement this structure by tailoring oversight to local contexts, ensuring compliance with regional legal frameworks, and liaising with national governments. Transparent governance, regular stakeholder consultations, and publicly available reports will build trust among users, governments, and partners.

3.2 Operational Administration

Daily operations must be managed by a dedicated secretariat or coordinating agency. This body will handle system maintenance, user support, quality assurance, audits, partnership outreach, and monitoring. The agency could sit within an existing organization (i.e. UNESCO or IOM) or be structured as an independent non-profit consortium to balance neutrality with operational efficiency. Its design should reflect host countries' comfort levels with international oversight.

3.3 Partnerships

The system's success hinges on deep partnerships across public and private sectors:

- Host Governments must embed the system into migration, labor market, and education policies, recognizing verified credentials as valid for work and study. Without formal recognition, the system quickly loses its utility.

- International Organizations bring technical expertise and funding to develop secure systems and build local capacity, especially vital for lower-income host countries like Jordan or Uganda,

[17]International Civil Aviation Organization. (n.d.) More than 140 states and non-state entities (such as the United Nations and the European Union) now issue ePassports, with over 1 billion in circulation. ePassports enhance traditional passports by embedding an electronic chip that stores the holder's biographical data and a country-specific digital signature. This unique signature can be verified through its corresponding certificate, adding an extra layer of security.

which host large FDP populations with limited resources.

- Educational Institutions and Professional Bodies should help verify and assess credentials and deliver bridging or upskilling programs to align skills with host country standards. Germany's Recognition Act[18] demonstrates the importance of such connections: it connects foreign qualifications with regulated professions, helping FDPs integrate into the workforce.

- NGOs and Community Groups can assist displaced persons in gathering supporting evidence, navigating the system, and building trust. Experience shows that trusted intermediaries, whether refugee community leaders or local NGOs, are critical to encouraging adoption and ensuring that the most marginalized can benefit.

- Private sector employers should pilot the system for recruitment and offer feedback to ensure alignment with labor market needs. For example, Sweden's Fast Track Initiative[19] connected employers with refugees in high-demand sectors, showing how labor market actors could be integral partners.

3.4 Funding and Sustainability

To avoid pilot fatigue, the governance body must develop a durable funding model. A blended approach is recommended: multilateral and bilateral donors should cover core development and rollout costs, while host country governments contribute in recognition of labor market dividends. The private sector can supply co-funding or tangible support, such as cloud services or skills training. Limited user fees could sustain premium services (like expedited verification) while ensuring exemptions for the most vulnerable. Lastly, financial transparency and independent audits will protect both donor confidence and user trust.

Implementation Strategy

4.1 Phased Roll Out

Pilot programs for the ICSFDP will be initially launched in high-need migration regions such as Europe, MENA, East Africa, and Latin America. The ICSFDP will strengthen and expand the efficacy of existing infrastructure for refugee reception and labor market integration efforts already established in these migration corridors. To begin credentialing processes in the pilot regions, mobile credentialing teams will be deployed in various FDP camps and settlements. These mobile teams will connect with established refugee integration initiatives such as Europe's *European Qualifications Passport for Refugees* (EQPR), MENA's partnerships with Jordan and Lebanon for hosting Syrian refugee

[18] Government of Germany. (n.d.) The Federal Recognition Act governs and standardizes the process for recognizing foreign professional qualifications. It applies to professions regulated under federal law.
[19] UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning. (n.d.) Launched in Sweden in 2015, the Fast Track Initiative aimed to help newly arrived immigrants with relevant qualifications and experience enter the labour market within two years. The program combined validation of professional credentials, Swedish language courses, and job-specific training to help participants find work in their fields while addressing labour shortages in key sectors. The initiative is no longer active.

populations[20], Uganda's collaborations with local universities for refugee credential verifications[21], and Colombia's credentialing models for Venezuelan and refugees.[22]

The partnership between the ICSFDP mobile teams and existing regional frameworks will primarily focus on bridging labor market gaps in critical sectors where FDPs can make an immediate contribution with verified credentials. Sectors identified by the such as healthcare, education, construction, and information technology are clear priorities. For example, the EU alone is facing a major shortfall of nearly one million healthcare workers[23], while countries such as Jordan and Lebanon continue to report shortages of qualified teachers due to strain on local education systems from hosting large refugee populations.[24] In East Africa, Uganda's construction industry, one of the region's fastest-growing sectors, requires additional skilled labor, presenting opportunities for credentialed FDPs to help meet demand.[25] Meanwhile, in Latin America, Colombia's expanding IT services sector seeks additional workers to fill skilled and unskilled jobs, a gap that Venezuelan professionals could help close if their credentials are recognized efficiently.[26]

By linking the ICSFDP mobile credentialing teams with these sector-specific gaps, the pilot programs aim to demonstrate the feasibility and economic benefit of fast, portable, and trusted migrant credentialing to both host countries and FDP communities.

4.2 Evaluation, Monitoring and Continuous Improvement

The initial 60-day evaluation will also mark the beginning of a continuous improvement cycle, with reviews conducted every 60 days. Key performance indicators (KPIs) will include the number of credentials verified through the ICSFDP, employment outcomes resulting from said verified credentials, number of employers and institutions using the system, time and cost savings for users compared to traditional recognition pathways, user satisfaction rates, and host country policy and legal reforms aligned with the ICSFDP. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation will ensure the program's effectiveness and adaptability. Data from these cyclical evaluations will inform reports to safeguard sustained investment and broader regional expansion.

The ICSFDP will establish standardized, anonymized data collection methods to protect user privacy and ensure the ethical handling of sensitive information. To complement quantitative data, the system will partner with local institutions and NGOs to gather qualitative feedback through surveys and focus groups, to ultimately ensure that the experiences of FDPs inform ongoing improvements.

To maintain accountability and demonstrate progress, the ICSFDP will produce annual impact reports for partners, governance bodies, and the public. Findings and best practices will also be shared in international forums to encourage knowledge exchange and alignment with global standards.

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[20] Zintl, T., & Loewe, M. (2022)
[21] Schoemaker, E., Baslan, D., Pon, B., & Dell, N. (2021),
[22] Mejia-Mantilla, C., Gonzalez Rubio, S. D. C., Lendorfer, J., & Rodriguez Guio, D. F. (2024)
[23] European Commission. (2023). *Health-EU Newsletter 250*
[24] Fincham, K. (2020)
[25] Ekyalimpa, R., Kanyike, C., Ruhangaatwiine, M., Tiruneh, G. G., & Liu, H. (2024).
[26] OECD. (2024, November 28). *Job Creation and Local Economic Development 2024*

In addition to annual reporting, the ICSFDP will commission periodic external evaluations conducted every three to five years to assess outcomes, value for money, and long-term impact. Independent findings from these evaluations will inform major adjustments to system design, governance models, and funding structures, helping the ICSFDP remain effective, transparent, and adaptable to changing migration dynamics.

4.3 ICSFDP Expansion

Successful ICSFDP pilot programs will serve as frameworks for ICSFDP expansion to additional host countries and migration corridors. Other avenues for scaling include supporting national qualification authorities and ministries of education to align their recognition processes with ICSFDP standards, training local credential assessors and integration staff, and partnering with NGOs already serving forcibly displaced communities to deliver outreach and technical assistance. If demonstrated effective for the pilot regions, the ICSFDP initiative can be integrated into national integration programs, visa pathways, and work permit systems.

To ensure that expansion remains responsive and evidence-based, integrated feedback loops will be established so that user insights, stakeholder consultations, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) data directly inform policy updates, technical system upgrades, and capacity-building efforts. Indicators will be adjusted over time to reflect evolving priorities, scale, and the specific contexts of new regions, ensuring that the ICSFDP remains relevant and effective as it grows.

4.4 Technical Support and Outreach

FDP integration efforts alongside credentialing services will also play an important role in helping integrate linguistically and culturally into host countries. These efforts will include workplace-oriented language courses, mobile-based learning platforms, basic integration and survival language kits, language support preparatory materials tailored for credentialing exams, and community and cultural integration guides.[27]

Implementation of these language immersion and cultural integration activities will be carried out in collaboration with local NGOs, community centers, and diaspora groups. Additionally, partnerships with local employers and industry associations will be pursued to demonstrate the system's value in meeting workforce needs and to gain early buy-in for broader adoption of ICSFDP-supported integration pathways.

4.5 Timeline and Milestones

Phase 1: Foundation Building (Months 0–24)

- Secure investments and funding commitments
- Establish government and institutional partnerships
- Recruit and train staff and volunteers for pilot implementation
- Finalize governance structure and complete technical system design

[27] See Appendix 1 for more details about each language program.

Phase 2: Initial Implementation (Year 1)

- Launch pilot credentialing programs in selected regions
- Technical design is completed
- Begin first cycle of evaluations and feedback integration

Phase 3: Expansion and Refinement (Years 2–3)

- Complete pilot evaluations and refine operational models
- Onboard additional regions, sectors, and government partners
- Strengthen verification protocols and local adaptation strategies

Phase 4: System Integration and Scaling (Years 4–5)

- Expand ICSFDP across broader regions
- Integrate services into national systems and legal frameworks
- Implement continuous monitoring, evaluation, and improvement mechanisms

4.6 Cost Breakdown

Developing, launching, and sustaining the ICSFDP will require upfront investment, operational funding, and long-term financial sustainability planning. The tables below outline key cost categories and practical funding pathways to support implementation at scale.The monetary values are estimated based on cost analyses from the establishment of the Ugandan educational institution partnerships for refugees.[28]

Table 1

Phase 1: Start-Up Costs (Months 0-24)	
Estimated Costs: $25-$35 million USD	
Category	**Estimate (USD)**
Technical system design and development (secure database, ledger systems, interfaces)	$10M-$15M
Legal and regulatory framework consultation	$2M
Staffing (core development team, legal, compliance, strategic advisors)	$5M
Stakeholder consultations and MOUs with governments, NGOs, licensing bodies, educational institution partnerships	$3M

[28] UNHCR**.** (2024). *Regional Bureau for the East and Horn of Africa, and the Great Lakes Region*, World Bank (2021). *Uganda Digital Acceleration Project*

Initial recruitment and training (pilot staff, volunteers, translators)	$3-$5M
Contingency and overhead	$2M-$3M

Table 2

Phase 2: Initial Implementation (Year 1)	
Estimated Costs: $20-$30 million USD	
Category	**Estimate (USD)**
Pilot site launch in 3-5 regions	$10M-$15M
Mobile credentialing units (vehicles, hardware, portable tech kits)	$4M
Training displaced individuals and employers (incl. materials)	$2M
First-cycle monitoring, evaluation, and audit tools	$3M
Outreach and public communication (in multiple languages)	$1M-$2M
Personnel; core team for technical maintenance, data security, etc.	$5-$8M

Table 3

Phase 3: Expansion and Refinement (Years 2-3)	
Estimated Costs: $40-$60 million USD	
Category	**Estimate (USD)**
Expanded deployment to 10+ regions	$20M-$25M
Additional staffing and local hiring (credential assessors and trainers)	$8M-$12M
Local adaptation (translation, legal alignment, tech localization)	$5M
Strengthened verification protocols and digital tools	$5M-$10M
Independent audits and reporting (monitoring evaluations)	$1M-$2M
Ongoing data security scaling and maintenance	$2M-$4M

Table 4

Phase 4: System Integration and Scaling (Years 4-5)	
Estimated Costs: $50-$80 million USD	
Category	**Estimate (USD)**
National integration in 5-10 countries (e.g., labor systems, licensing bodies)	$30M-$40M
Capacity building for lower income host countries	$8M-$12M
Long-term monitoring and evaluation infrastructure	$4M-$6M
Continuous training and support hubs (physical and virtual)	$6M-$10M
Global communications, adoption campaigns, and trust building	$2M-$4M
Total Estimated Start-Up Cost (Over 5 Years)	$135M - $205M USD

Table 5

4.7 Funding Model

Possible partners expected to engage in funding the initial start-up and continuity of the ICSFDP include multilateral donors, host country governments, private sector co-investments, philanthropic foundations, and nominal user fees. Potential multilateral donors include the *World Bank*, *UNHCR*, *UNDP*, and the *European Union's Trust Fund for Africa*, all of which have experience financing refugee integration and digital systems development. Expected host country government contributions will be funded particularly from those benefiting from labor market integration.[29] Private sector co-investments would include global technology firms like *Microsoft Philanthropies* and *Google*, which have previously supported refugee digital inclusion initiatives.[30] Philanthropic foundations, such as the *Open Society Foundations*, *Hilton Foundation*, and the *Skoll Foundation*, all known for funding innovative refugee and education programs.[31] Lastly, nominal user fees will support select services, such as expedited credential reissuance with fee waivers for vulnerable populations, modeled after UNHCR's use of differentiated service models.[32]

[29] Germany's Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF), Canada's Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), and Uganda's Office of the Prime Minister have led in refugee labor integration and could allocate national funds

[30] Microsoft Philanthropies and Google have invested in refugee access to digital education, ID systems, and job platforms

[31] The Open Society Foundations and Hilton Foundation support education and legal access for displaced persons; the Skoll Foundation has funded scalable tech solutions for vulnerable communities

[32] UNHCR. (2009) – UNHCR has implemented service models that waive fees for vulnerable users while charging nominal fees for certain document services (e.g., resettlement documentation and voluntary return).

Possible financial mechanisms expected to assist in the start-up and continuity of the ICSFDP include pooled funds managed by a coordinating body, such as a multi-donor trust fund overseen by the *World Bank's* Financial Intermediary Funds (FIF) program[33], and performance-based funding, used by partners like *Gavi The Vaccine Alliance* and the *Education Outcomes Fund*, to incentivize measurable results and continued donor contributions.[34]

Incentives for Participation

The primary goal for the Global Migrant Credentialing System is to achieve attainable and practical benefits to FDPs, host country governments, employers, educational institutions, and international partners. Incentives will push for wide participation and sustained engagement for all parties involved in the ICSFDP initiative.

5.1 Incentives for Forcibly Displaced Persons

FDPs with a simplified access to verify credentials will experience better access to employment and temporary residency in their host country. Under the ICSFDP, FDPs will face a stark reduction of bureaucratic barriers to receive proper documentation, increased mobility between borders with a portable digital credential passport if secondary displacement or resettlement occurs, and the restoration of individual agency by regaining formal recognition for skills and educational achievements.

5.2 Incentives for Host Country Governments

In an ICSFDP partnership, host countries will benefit from reductions in welfare dependency and skill gaps, and are projected to experience substantial economic growth due to the ICSFDP design for improved labor market integration. Governments in partnership with the ICSFDP will also experience improved efficiencies in the administrative burdens for immigration licensing through the streamlined credentialing process. Ultimately, host countries that support self-reliance for FDPs help mitigate social tensions by exemplifying that FDPs are a productive contribution to the society.

5.3 Incentives for Employers

Employers partnered with the ICSFDP will benefit from improved access to a vetted pool of skilled workers through streamlined credential verification. This process reduces recruitment time and costs, minimizes onboarding delays, and mitigates compliance and HR-related risks. Participation also enables employers to demonstrate leadership in inclusive hiring practices and support for displaced populations, strengthening their public and industry reputation.

5.4 Incentives for Educational Institutions

The ICSFDP will offer clear incentives for educational institutions to engage with and adopt the system. Streamlined admissions processes will be made possible through trusted credential verification,

[33] World Bank's FIFs, like the Global Partnership for Education fund or the Pandemic Emergency Financing Facility, provide pooled and coordinated multi-donor support.

[34] Gavi and the Education Outcomes Fund structure funding to reward implementation partners for achieving measurable outcomes, including increased service access for vulnerable groups.

simplifying the evaluation of foreign qualifications for accurate placement, recognition of prior learning, or advanced standing. Verified credentials will also expand the potential student base by enabling more displaced students to enroll in and complete further education or vocational training programs, thereby supporting both institutional enrollment targets and local workforce development needs. In addition, institutions will have opportunities to collaborate through research and innovation initiatives, including developing methods for reconstructing lost or incomplete credentials, piloting alternative assessment models, and designing flexible learning pathways that recognize the diverse backgrounds and skills of forcibly displaced persons.

5.5 Incentives for International Partners

The ICSFDP will provide international partners, such as donors, development agencies, and multilateral organizations, with a practical tool to demonstrate efficiency and measurable impact in refugee integration, skills development, and poverty reduction. By supporting the ICSFDP, partners directly contribute to achieving key Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those related to decent work and economic growth, quality education, and reduced inequalities. Furthermore, successful implementation of the ICSFDP can serve as a model for future cross-border systems, including digital identity frameworks and international qualification recognition mechanisms, helping to shape global standards for mobility and integration.

5.6 Incentive Mechanisms

To encourage widespread adoption, the ICSFDP will offer a range of incentive mechanisms. Recognition agreements can incentivize governments through technical assistance, capacity building, or access to pooled funding linked to the adoption and implementation of standardized credentialing processes. Private sector employers will benefit from matchmaking services that connect them with verified talent pools, early access to skilled workers, and public recognition for supporting inclusive employment pathways for displaced populations. For displaced persons themselves, the ICSFDP will aim to remove barriers to access by offering free or subsidized services, establishing local support hubs, and partnering with NGOs to deliver outreach and guidance. These mechanisms will make certain that the system remains practical, equitable, and responsive to the needs of all stakeholders.

Legal and Ethical Framework

The International Credentialing System for Forcibly Displaced Persons (ICSFDP) will be firmly grounded in international legal precedents, operating in alignment with existing mutual recognition agreements, international human rights law, and refugee rights conventions such as the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol. By rooting its design and governance in these frameworks, the ICSFDP reinforces states' obligations to protect forcibly displaced persons while also creating practical pathways for cross-border collaboration on skills recognition.

The ICSFDP upholds the commitment to the right to privacy and data protection, recognizing that identity information is not just technical data but a core part of an individual's dignity, agency, and security. Particular attention will be given to the heightened risks faced by vulnerable populations, including survivors of conflict, political persecution, or statelessness. The ICSFDP will guarantee that all

personal and credential data remain under the ownership and control of the user, empowering displaced persons to decide what is shared, when, and with whom.

Informed consent will be a requirement at all stages of data collection, verification, storage, and sharing. The system will emphasize that consent is freely given, specific, informed, and revocable, with clear user interfaces and support for multiple languages and literacy levels to avoid unintentional consent through misunderstanding or coercion.

Safeguards will be implemented to protect credentialing data from misuse, ensuring that information verified through the ICSFDP cannot be weaponized to expose individuals to persecution, discrimination, or unauthorized profiling by state or non-state actors. These safeguards will include end-to-end encryption, secure user authentication, regular security audits, and strict role-based access controls.

By upholding these legal and ethical commitments, the ICSFDP will build the trust needed for displaced persons to participate willingly, for host countries and employers to adopt the system confidently, and for the international community to recognize the ICSFDP as a model for human-centered, rights-based digital credentialing. In doing so, the ICSFDP will demonstrate that technical innovation and humanitarian protection are not in conflict, but mutual strengths for integration

Risk Mitigation

Implementing an International Credentialing System for Forcibly Displaced Persons involves complex challenges surrounding Data Security and Privacy Risks, Political and Legal Resistance, Inequitable Access, Quality and Fraud Risks, Financial and Operational Risks and User Trust and Uptake. The table below identifies the main risks and presents practical measures to minimize them, protecting the system's integrity, user trust, and long-term viability.

Risk	***Description***	***Mitigation***
Data Security and Privacy	Unauthorized access, misuse of sensitive personal data, or data breaches could compromise user safety and erode trust	● Apply end-to-end encryption and international best practices (e.g., GDPR compliance). ● Use secure digital identity verification tools to prevent fraud. ● Implement strict user consent and data ownership controls. ● Conduct regular third-party security audits and penetration testing.
Political and Legal Resistance	Host governments may be reluctant to adopt a system perceived as undermining	● Involve governments early through advisory committees and co-design processes.

	national sovereignty over credential recognition or migration policies.	● Ensure the system complements (not replaces) national recognition frameworks. ● Provide legal and technical assistance to help countries align domestic laws. ● Highlight mutual benefits: economic gains, reduced bureaucracy, stronger regional cooperation.
Inequitable Access	Vulnerable displaced people could face barriers to accessing or using the system (e.g., digital divide, language barriers, limited documentation)	● Develop a mobile-first, low-bandwidth platform with multilingual support. ● Establish local help centers and mobile credentialing teams. ● Partner with community organizations to provide outreach and support. ● Include alternative pathways like competency testing and peer verification for those lacking documents.
Quality and Fraud	Fake credentials, inaccurate assessments, or inconsistent standards could undermine credibility and trust.	● Build robust verification protocols and rely on trusted partner institutions. ● Use multi-step validation combining documents, references, and assessments. ● Maintain quality control through audits, standardization, and third-party accreditation. ● Establish clear dispute and appeals processes.
Financial and Operational	Insufficient or unstable funding could interrupt services or prevent scaling.	● Diversify funding streams (multilateral, bilateral, private sector, in-kind). ● Link funding to measurable performance outcomes to attract sustained support. ● Use phased pilots to demonstrate impact and build political and donor buy-in. ● Maintain lean operations and build local capacity to reduce long-term costs.

User Trust and Uptake	Forcibly displaced persons may hesitate to use the system if they fear misuse of their information or discrimination.	● Guarantee user control over data sharing and informed consent. ● Work with trusted NGOs, community leaders, and refugee networks for outreach. ● Offer clear user education on rights, protections, and benefits. ● Embed transparency and accountability in governance.

Conclusion

Our international system allows more than 123 million forcibly displaced persons to remain trapped in legal limbo and under-recognized in their host countries.[35] The ICSFDP offers a practical, rights-based response to one of the most persistent barriers to genuine integration, which is the inability to verify, reconstruct, and navigate qualifications across borders.

This proposal emphasizes that credential recognition is not only a technical process but a social contract underscoring a shared understanding of who belongs, who is trusted, and who can contribute meaningfully to society. By building its design in constructivist theory, the ICSFDP recognizes that status and individual recognition are legitimized through the interaction between institutions, employers, and communities.

Through its secure digital platform, the ICSFDP directly addresses structural gaps in existing systems:

1. Dismantling legal limbo by creating pathways that help forcibly displaced people reclaim their professional identities and rebuild agency.

2. Standardizing credential recognition through voluntary multilevel frameworks, uniting sending and receiving countries without imposing uniformity.

3. Reframing language acquisition and education as bridges to belonging, identity, and well-being

4. Modernizing fragmented data systems into compatible, privacy-centered hubs that respect FDPs as rights-holders, not just data objects.

Together, these fundamental improvements position the ICSFDP as more than an administrative tool, but rather a humanitarian innovation that restores individual agency across the globe. To succeed, the ICSFDP demands political will, international cooperation, and genuine partnership among states, civil

[35] UNHCR. (2025) – Global Trends Report

society, employers, and forcibly displaced communities. By bridging local institutions with global frameworks and regional models, the ICSFDP can become a scalable standard that complements the Sustainable Development Goals and the commitments of the Global Compact on Refugees. Ultimately, the ICSFDP creates a future where the skills and knowledge of forcibly displaced people are no longer wasted with lost documents or fractured systems, but recognized, validated, and mobilized to build more inclusive, resilient societies for all.

Appendix

Appendix 1: Technical Support and Outreach Efforts

Workplace-Oriented Language Courses	Tailored for migrant specific sectors such as construction, healthcare, agriculture, hospitality, etc.	● Vocational ESL (English as a Second Language) or equivalent in host country language ● Phrasebooks and digital flashcards with industry-specific vocabulary ● Interactive dialogues from support team simulating job interviews, safety briefings, or customer interactions ● Printable cheat sheets/posters for worksites
Mobile-Based Learning Platforms	Additional support for FDPs in need-based regions relying on mobile phones for digital access	● Offline-accessible apps with downloadable lessons (e.g., Duolingo-style micro-lessons) ● SMS-based vocabulary lessons or quizzes ● Audio-only lessons for low literacy learners ● Voice recognition features for pronunciation practice
Basic Integration and Survival Language Kits	Essential for early stages of integration	● “Day One” Survival Phrases Guide (focus

		on transportation, emergencies, healthcare, grocery shopping, medical care) ● Visual aids with common signage and symbols ● Bilingual children's books
Community and Cultural Integration Guides	Language in context of cultural customs help build community trust between FDPs and local population	● Story-based audio lessons featuring local customs, laws, and etiquette ● Interactive cultural orientation modules ● Volunteer-led conversation practice groups ● Civic education resources in simplified language
Credentialing Language Prep Materials	Tailored to support success in re-credentialing exams or vocational training in host country	● Language-for-certification prep books (e.g., medical terminology, licensing vocabulary) ● Test simulators with feedback in the learner's native language ● Annotated transcripts of technical lectures with multilingual glossaries ● Online tutoring and/or peer mentorship

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*The use of ChatGPT was used to brainstorm ideas and develop an outline for the project in the early stages of project development

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