

## **BUILDING A HEALTHY SOCIETY**

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The Refugee Work Ecosystem Conference held on March 23rd, 2023 at Vrije Universiteit (VU) Amsterdam is a shining example of a powerful gathering. Attending this conference, myself is a privilege as I had the opportunity to witness the work that is done by different actors in the field to bridge the gap between the theoretical and practical aspects of the world of new citizens.

### **FRUSTRATIONS BUILD**

The sense of waiting, not being able to study, not being able to work, to be productive in any way is a state that new citizens find themselves stuck at while waiting for their second IND interview in the Netherlands. The waiting time recently has been extended recently to 15 up to 21 months. As the waiting time to know their destiny rises, the frustration that comes with it is building up as well. The frustration is led by the legalised process of canceling every opportunity a refugee can take while spending this time productively, if it was for work or studies alike.

### **THE REAL SOURCE OF DATA?**

Fortunately, there is a strong presence for organisations, universities, and scholars who are doing their best conducting the proper analysis in what serves the Netherlands as a great country while preserving the rights of refugees.

There were many insightful discussions that were presented at the conference. One of the most interesting discussed thoughts was regarding the importance of each individual personal experience. As there are many studies and researches conducted; however, reality hits different. We must always take refugee's insights and real up-to-date experiences into account and put them at the core of our work. With every new regulation, or amendment the refugee humanely life is affected directly. Therefore, they should be approached as the real source of data.

### **TALENT AS STARTING POINT**

We have so many brilliant talents arriving to the Netherlands on daily basis. This brilliant working force can contribute greatly to the shortage the country is facing right now, which as a result will definitely contribute greatly to the economy. Instead of putting these gems into 15 to 21 months of coma discouraging them of every effort to contribute into their future, we can polish these gems

and let them shine in their right place. There are so many potentials refugees can do with their diverse educational and experienced backgrounds.

### INCLUSION IS KEY

There are a lot of positive benefits for such a module that relies on the inclusion of refugee workforce rather than excluding them. These benefits serves both sides, asylum seekers and the government alike. For refugees, one of the most important benefits is building up their productive personalities through an encouraging environment to support their unique talents. This will eventually diminish their reliance on welfare systems at the end of their waiting trial and contribute greatly in avoiding their dependency over the black market seeking to support their various needs. That will result in saving tons of expenses on the government side. These expenses that are allocated to support refugees at camps and after as they will be able to be financially fully or partially independent. For the long term, expenses will be also saved after refugees being transferred to status-holders by decreasing their dependency on social benefits and by facilitating their integration process prior to getting their residence permit.

### DIAMONDS EVERYWHERE

Second, the mental health of refugees is highly reflected by the environment created. In case the environment is to be encouraging, supportive, and including, the refugee flourishes psychologically. It builds the bridge to heal the past and move toward a new future of productivity. A good mind that resides in an active body is a **diamond** that create the basis of a healthy society.