

University of the People and UNHCR Partner to Expand Refugee Access to Education



Geneva, Geneva Dec 17, 2025 ([Issuewire.com](https://www.issuewire.com)) - University of the People (UoPeople), the world's first tuition-free, accredited online university, is proud to announce a new partnership with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) at the Global Refugee Forum Progress Review 2025 in Geneva. This collaboration will empower 5,000 refugees and displaced persons worldwide with free access to IBM professional certificate programs, advancing their career readiness in high-demand

fields of data analytics or cybersecurity.

In the shadows of war, where opportunity is often extinguished by violence and displacement, University of the People (www.uopeople.edu) stands as a beacon of hope. With a bold commitment to educate 35,000 refugees by 2030, UoPeople is already transforming lives—supporting 17,018 refugees and 17,531 internally displaced persons worldwide. Over 5,400 Afghan women are advancing their education through UoPeople’s tuition-free programs. These opportunities create pathways for learning and development, fostering hope, determination, and the ability to contribute meaningfully to their families and communities.

Through this groundbreaking partnership, displaced learners across a range of countries will gain access to world-class, fully online training from IBM—equipping them with in-demand digital skills and globally recognized credentials that open real pathways to employment. Delivered with the flexibility needed for those living in displacement or crisis-affected regions, these programs ensure that education does not stop when borders close or conflict strikes. Offered in English and designed to fit diverse schedules, the coursework empowers students to learn at their own pace while building a future-ready skill set. Upon completion, graduates earn an official IBM certificate in sought-after fields and can seamlessly apply their credits toward degree programs at University of the People—turning opportunity into lasting transformation.

This initiative reflects UoPeople’s mission to make higher education accessible to all, regardless of geographical, financial, personal, or political barriers. It also supports UNHCR’s commitment to expanding education and livelihood opportunities for refugees by leveraging partnerships that open pathways to sustainable futures.

“Education transforms lives,” said Shai Reshef, President of University of the People. “Together with UNHCR and IBM, we’re removing barriers that too often stand in the way of refugees’ aspirations and offering them the tools to build brighter, more stable futures. This partnership underscores a shared vision between UoPeople and UNHCR—using education as a bridge to opportunity, dignity, and hope for displaced people across the globe.”

UNHCR’s Higher Education Lead, Manal Stulgaitis added: “We are thrilled with UoPeople’s contribution to making higher education more accessible to refugees and displaced persons worldwide. This program represents the power of collaboration between education and technology to help refugees gain skills that are vital in today’s job market. UoPeople’s commitment sets a model for other universities to follow.”

Applications for the program will open soon.

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