


The Solsberg Travel grant has provided me with the opportunity to conduct research on the experiences of female asylum seekers and refugees in accessing higher education in the region Île-de-France with the NGO, UniR³ Universités et Réfugié.e.s. Over the past six months, I have worked with the UniR team to develop a research-action project, that is directly in line with my graduate thesis research. As an association that supports refugees and asylum seekers in their academic integration in France, my work with UniR allowed me to contribute to their third pillar of action : the production and dissemination of knowledge.

The research focuses on the specific experiences of female asylum seekers and refugees in accessing higher education² particularly, the obstacles that are keeping them from entering into the higher education system or from continuing until completion. Since 2015, France has received an influx of asylum seekers as a result of current global conflicts. As one of the leading members of the European Union, France is highly regarded in terms of the development of sustainable systems for managing migration flows and upholding human and refugee rights. The French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (OFPRA) has reported that over 250,000 asylum demands have been made during this time.¹ This places the nation in a critical position to address the rights and needs of asylum seekers and refugees that extend beyond immediate humanitarian assistance and focus on long-term integration.²

Questions about the integration and education of asylum seekers and refugees have moved to the forefront of political and social discourse.³ By leaving their country of origin, asylum seekers and refugees are systematically degraded through marginalization, lack of access to information and professional networks, and they often struggle to have their skills and qualifications recognized or valued. Educational institutions, therefore, are at a critical time of reevaluating and strengthening educational systems in order to adapt to the sharp increase in university age youth. In strengthening educational institution systems, the recognition of potential academic and cultural barriers in terms of access to higher education and the development of appropriate infrastructure can directly respond

My engagement with the research will continue past the completion of the thesis. In fact,
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