



JESUIT WORLDWIDE LEARNING
HIGHER EDUCATION AT THE MARGINS

Report on 10 Years

*of the online Diploma in Liberal Studies
for Refugees and marginalised Communities*



Introduction



It is going to be a challenge, but we at Regis University know online learning and will make it work.

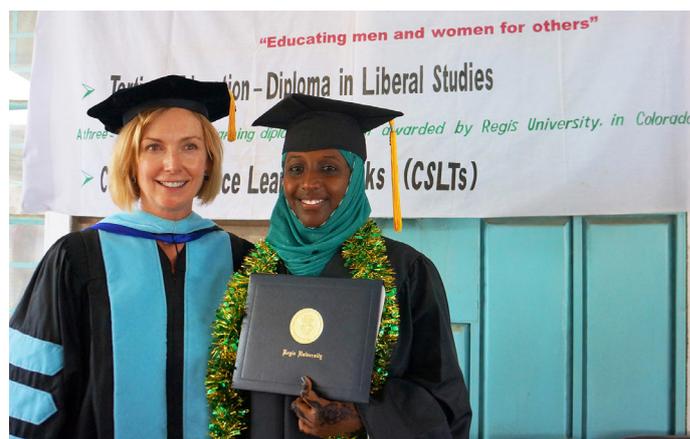
Bill Hasson, Former Vice President, Regis University

With these assuring words from Regis University we set out in 2010 on a pilot programme to make Higher Education accessible to students at the margins, in particular refugees, using blended online learning. Ten years later over 1,000 students were enrolled in the Diploma in Liberal Studies, a programme of 15 courses and a total of 45 credits offered by Regis University, Denver, Colorado (USA). Regis University made this possible, workable and a successful model.

Great merits go to Fr Mike Sheeran SJ, President of Regis University at the time, followed by the leadership of Fr John Fitzgibbons SJ, current Regis University President, and Dr Janet Houser, Provost of Regis University. Dr Steve Jacobs, Chief of Staff, and Dr Marie Friedemann, former Dean at Regis University, and Director of the Diploma in Liberal Studies, deserve special thanks for putting all their heart into the programme and assuring the students' success. We thank Regis University and all staff for taking on this challenge

in collaboration with JC:HEM – Jesuit Commons: Higher Education at the Margins (now JWL – Jesuit Worldwide Learning) and the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) as the strategic field partner for the pilot programme. A special thanks goes also to Georgetown University for providing the Learning Management System and the Student Information System.

Dr Mary McFarland, former Dean of Gonzaga University, was freed by Gonzaga University for some years to pioneer this new initiative of Jesuit Universities as International Director of JC:HEM. Her commitment and tireless care for the students made the pilot a great success so that the programme continued and was extended to new marginalised communities. Over the past 10 years out of 1,073 students who enrolled, 433 have already graduated and a majority of the presently 305 active students are expected to graduate before end of 2021. The expected completion rate will be around 60%, making the Diploma a very successful programme.



Mary McFarland in the graduation gown with a student Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kenya, 2013

This Report on 10 years of the Diploma in Liberal Studies is an expression of gratitude to all students, faculties, universities and to JRS. The report also provides insights on what works best and needs to be improved for the second decade of blended online higher education at the margins. The report is structured as follows: the first section introduces the Diploma in Liberal Studies and its development throughout the years, briefly explaining the educational model, the partners and the locations involved in its planning and development. Section two provides an overview of Diploma intakes throughout the years, presenting its development and growth, and reflecting on the criticalities encountered during the years. Section 3 and Section 4 delve into two perspectives: ge-

ography and gender and discuss the development of the Diploma and the success of the endeavour considering these two dimensions. The last section reflects on the lessons learnt during these 10 years of implementation.

This report is a quantitative analysis of admission, completion and retention data. A second report, based on qualitative data, will follow soon and will investigate how the blended online learning model based on the Ignatian Pedagogy played a transformative role within the marginalised communities JWL works in. It will explore the impact of the Diploma on the lives of the graduates and their communities, by unpacking academic and professional achievements as well as graduates' engagement and leadership in the community.



*Fr Dr John Fitzgibbons, S.J.
President, Regis University*



*Dr Marie Friedemann
Regis-JWL Diploma Director*



*Dr Steve Jacobs
Former Chief of Staff, Regis University*



*Dr Janet Houser
Provost, Regis University*

Section 1: The Programme

In 2007, Jesuit universities met at the Regis University campus in Denver, Colorado. One of the challenges was how to serve the poor as a university. The Australian Catholic University shared its initiative of blended online learning with refugees at the Thai Burma Border. The idea was taken up by the members of the AJCU (Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities in the USA), and the consortium of Jesuit Commons was formed to pursue this idea. The Jesuit Refugee Service was approached to be the field partner for the pilot project. Regis University, the host of the meeting, came forward to bring in its rich experience in online learning. A Foundation to remain anonymous came in to fund the pilot project. JRS agreed to partner with JC:HEM. From the beginning it was decided

to start to offer higher education in form of a foundational programme in liberal studies. JRS chose two pilot sites: Kakuma Refugee Camp in a remote and dry area in the north west of Kenya, and Dzaleka Refugee Camp near the capital of Malawi, Lilongwe. A third place was chosen, Aleppo in Syria, for urban refugees from Iraq, but unfortunately the outbreak of the war in 2012 blocked any forth coming. The three chosen sites put different challenges to the pilot such as remoteness, internet access and also the urban context.

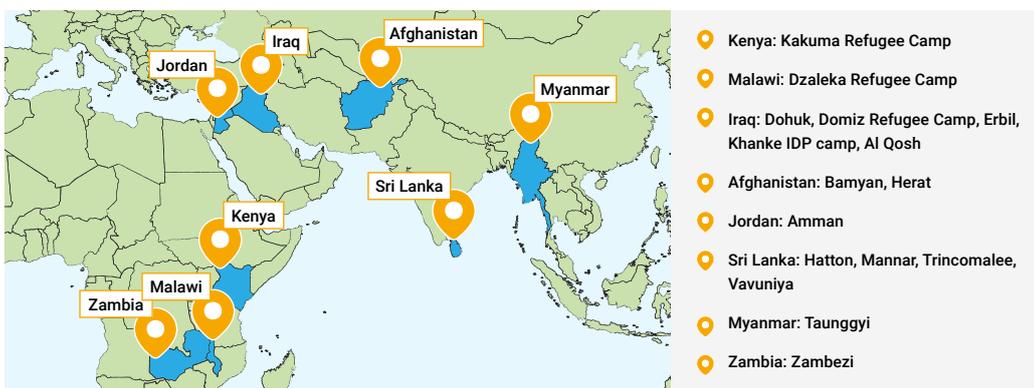
JC:HEM decided from the very beginning to use a blended online learning approach, instead of the emerging MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) model. This approach was deemed crucial to implement two key components

of the Ignatian educational philosophy: companionship and guidance, and to adapt the Ignatian model to students in refugee camps. Companionship and guidance are promoted through community learning centres, were students are accompanied by a local facilitator and work in groups, but are also integrated at a global level, with international online faculty teaching the courses and promoting discussion and reflection in the so-called global classroom. This model promotes critical thinking, social awareness and a positive view of self and others, as highlighted by Jigsaw in its 2016 report¹. Within Ignatian pedagogy, the process of teaching and learning follows a continuous learning circle, with five distinct stages (Context, Experience, Reflection, Action, and Evaluation)

and these steps are embedded in each unit of the programme, with the intent to promote critical thinking and leadership skills and to achieve the ultimate goal of Ignatian pedagogy, as stated by Fr. Pedro Arrupe SJ: forming men and women for others.

The Diploma in Liberal Studies is composed of 15 courses, each equivalent of 3 US credits, and delivered in a blended-learning mode during 8 weeks where the students work individually on the online material and meet weekly or bi-weekly to discuss with peers and with a learning facilitator, in a local community learning centre (CLC). The online content is hosted on the Georgetown University platform and online professors are recruited by JWJ to support the students online, who study in a global classroom, give them feedback on their work and grade their assignments.

Over the years, the Diploma in Liberal Studies has become a very successful programme delivered in 13 learning centres across 8 countries: Afghanistan, Jordan, Iraq, Malawi, Sri Lanka, Kenya, Myanmar, and Zambia, mainly to refugees and internally displaced people.



I was inspired by so many businessmen who started their businesses despite the challenges they had. Although, I'm a refugee that will not be an excuse for me to quit my dreams. I was born in a very poor family, in which education is difficult to pursue. Thanks to JWJ for providing me with a free education which will help me to cover a large portion of my dream I lost long time ago.

Diploma Graduate, Cohort 2017, Malawi

Besides these stable community learning centres, some students moved during their studies to other countries given that refugees are a mobile pop-

ulation. Some finished the programme in South Africa (1) and South Sudan (1), others were resettled to Canada (2) and the US (3) and finished there. Some

others who resettled to Canada (1) and to the US (5) have withdrawn due to new opportunities for higher education in the new host country. Such withdraw-

als should not be considered as 'failures' but show how the Diploma programme became for them a steppingstone to a durable solution.

¹ Hutchinson, P. (2016). Higher education for refugees in low-resource environments: Ignatian Pedagogy Briefing. Jigsaw Consult, United Kingdom.

Section 2: 2010-2020 Cohorts and Outcomes

Out of the total of 1,073 students enrolled 305 are still active in the programme and expected to finish by end of 2021. 335 have withdrawn, which includes some who have been resettled. By September 2010 a total of 433 students have successfully graduated. It is expected that by end of 2021 the majority of present active students will also have graduated with a foreseen completion rate to 60%. Compared to the completion rate of Massive Open Online Courses, less than 15% of the initial enrolment², and of blended online learning

programmes in Europe and the United States, that varies a lot but is around 50%³, the completion rate of 60% proves the online Diploma in Liberal Studies as a very successful programme.

The 2011 intake combines two cohorts, the very first cohort of students who started the Bridge to Learning course in October 2010 but were only registered in the Regis Student Information System in January 2011. The second cohort and intake of students in Kakuma and Dzaleka was in August 2011. For this reason, the



[...] the fact that some of my fellow refugees have completed their Diploma programme successfully and they are really doing well was a great motivation to me. Besides, the course itself was a motivation to me because it provided me with an opportunity to acquire new skills, knowledge, experience, and understanding.

Diploma Graduate, Cohort 2018, Kenya

2011 intake is about double of the year 2012 and 2014. There was no intake in 2013. This was due to the switch over to a new

global curriculum of the Diploma in Liberal Studies and the needed funding assurance after the pilot phase.

A significant increase in admission took place in 2018 when JWL set out to scale the programme. However, a significant withdrawal of students at an early stage indicates a less rigorous admission process. In January 2020, JWL saw the last intake of new students for the Diploma in Liberal Studies and in view of the end in 2021 significantly fewer students had been admitted.

Figure 1 reflects the history of the organisation: the relation between graduations and withdrawals shows in the first years a high success of the programme with few withdrawals. The transitional and rather difficult period of JC:HEM in 2015 - 2016 is reflected in the higher number of withdrawals and fewer completions of students of these cohorts. The academic leadership changed three times and that affected the programme. Stability came back when Dr Marie Friedemann became the Director of the Programme and was placed within Regis University assuring a strong relationship between the University, JWL and the students in the learning centres.

Cohort Outcomes	2011	2012	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
Graduated	93%	68%	40%	42%	56%	51%	28%	0%	0%	40%
Active	0%	0%	3%	8%	10%	15%	39%	87%	100%	28%
Withdrawn	7%	32%	57%	50%	34%	34%	33%	13%	0%	31%

Table 1: Percentage of active, graduated and withdrawn students per year of intake.

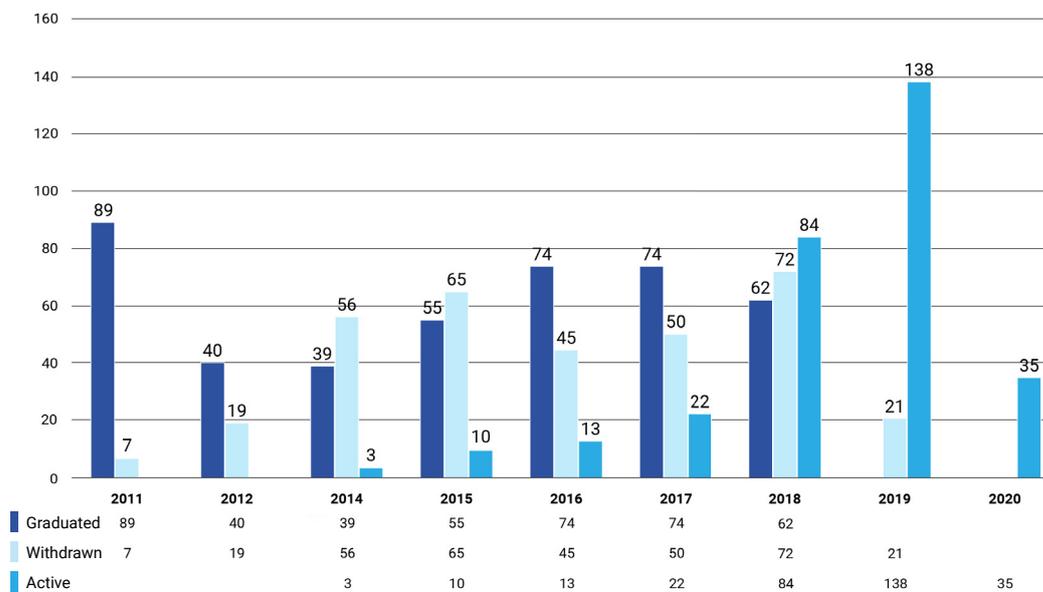


Figure 1: Number of active, graduated and withdrawn students per year of intake.

² Inside Higher Ed: <https://www.insidehighered.com/digital-learning/article/2019/01/16/study-offers-data-show-moocs-didnt-achieve-their-goals>
³ Benetos, K., & Gagnière, L. (2018). Understanding student paths in higher education blended-learning: beyond success and dropout.

Taking a closer look at the students who abandoned the programme without completing it, it can be noticed that 114 out of 335 who dropped-out never earned a credit and left right at the begin-

ning of the programme – they either left before actually starting, during the first course, or after failing the first course. If we exclude this group of students, the actual drop-out rate is reduced

from 34,93% to 23,04% – a very positive data.

The fact that one third of the dropouts never earned a credit allows to conclude that a more

rigorous admission process will help to exclude students who do not show the necessary commitment and resilience.

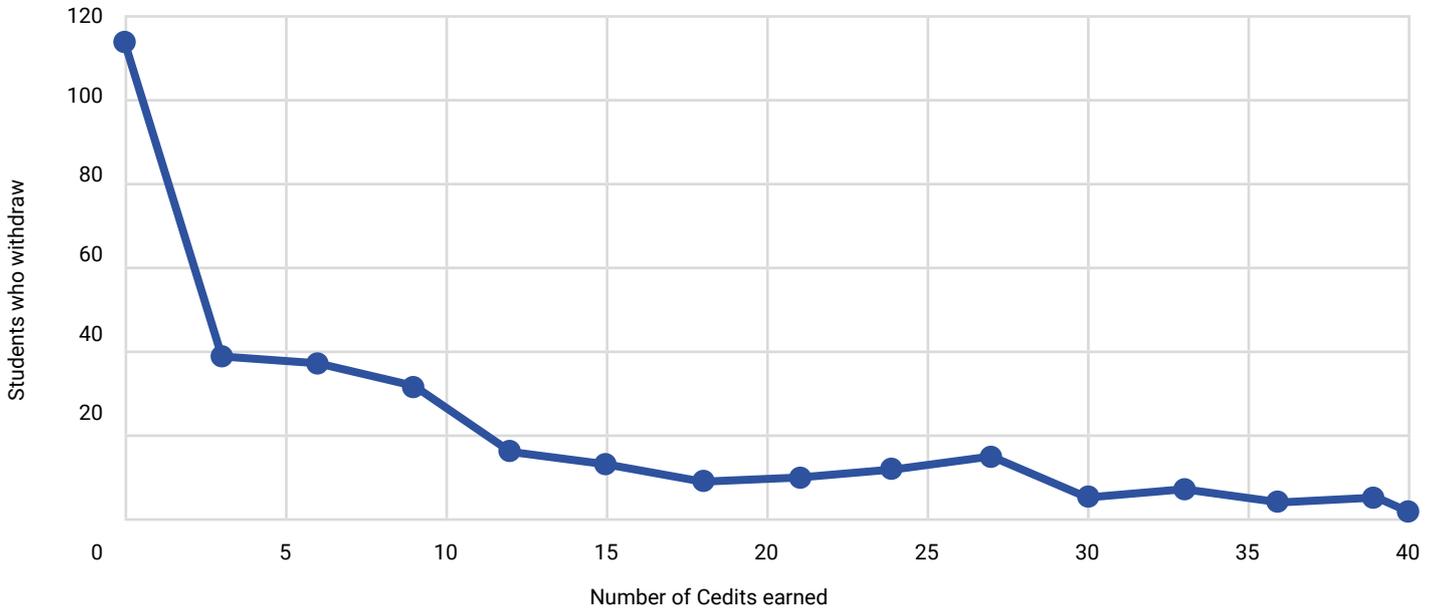


Figure 2: Total number of withdrawn by number of credits earned



Figure 3 shows the development in terms of number of students by location. The two original locations, Kakuma and Dzaleka, started in 2011 with similar numbers in terms of intakes (50 students in Kakuma and 42 students in Dzaleka). These two refugee camps followed a similar development throughout the years, with about 30 students annual intake except for 2012. In 2012 JWL held a conference in Denver with all stakeholders at Regis University, to evaluate the pilot programme and decide on its future. Due to some uncertainty the new intake in 2012 was on the more cautious side. Contrary to this the intake in 2018 showed a significant increase of students to meet the growing demand in Kakuma and Dzaleka and make JWL more cost-efficient. The programme had also a positive development in the new centres in Iraq and Afghanistan with around 30 new students per year in each country.

In Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Zambia the Diploma in Liberal Studies was offered but met only a limited response by the local partners and students. The programme did not really take off at these community learning centres. The reasons differ from place to place, but one conclusion can be drawn, that wherever other educational possibilities existed like in Sri

Lanka the Diploma programme seemed to be of less interest. The more JWL serves people at the margins and the unmet desire for higher education, the more successful the programme is. This is very much the case in refugee camps and in Afghanistan.

Jordan has its own history, and this is reflected in the numbers and in Figure 3. In 2011 the third place chosen for the pilot project was Aleppo, Syria. The last meeting of the potential students for the Diploma was held with candle-light in Spring 2012, at St. Vartan in Aleppo. Three months later the war had reached Aleppo and the centre was destroyed in September 2012. JWL in partnership with JRS shifted the programme to Amman and had the first intake of refugee students in summer 2012. Others followed and a first graduation took place in 2015. Figure 3 shows the admission of only 2 new students in Amman in 2017. The background to this drop was that the JWL partner changed the education policy and focused on English language programmes and professional trainings only. In mutual agreement it was decided to phase out the Diploma programme and have no new intake of students. A year later at a visit to Amman, JWL found the students left very much by themselves and struggling to keep

studying. The students pleaded with JWL to continue the programme and to open it up to new admissions. With no local partner organisation supporting the students JWL could only rely directly on the students, who organised themselves, hire some space and admit new students. It is the resilience of students that has kept the learning centre going to this day. The JWL community learning centre has become their 'new family' as they expressed by students from Sudan, Somalia, Yemen, Palestine, Iraq, and Syria, who as refugees are not wanted in their home countries nor in their host country.

Figure 3 and Table 2 consider data only until 2019 because Regis University is phasing out the Diploma programme and JWL is starting to offer a new BA programme in Sustainable Development in collaboration with Xavier University in Bhubaneswar (XUB), India. Therefore, in 2020 the Diploma in Liberal Studies has been offered only in the African region (Kakuma – 11 new intakes, Dzaleka – 21 new intakes) and in Iraq (3). The last intake of students to the Diploma was intentionally very limited to be certain that the students will still finish the programme within two years. In the centres in Asia, JWL kicked off the new BA in Sustainable Development programme.

Year	MALAWI	KENYA	AFGHANISTAN	IRAQ	JORDAN	SRI LANKA	MYANMAR	ZAMBIA
2011	41	50						
2012	24	22			11			
2014	37	31			24		5	
2015	34	32	23		32		9	
2016	31	34	34		24		7	
2017	33	32	38	33	2	5		
2018	59	56	31	29	19	7		17
2019	37	37	29	29	11	8		8

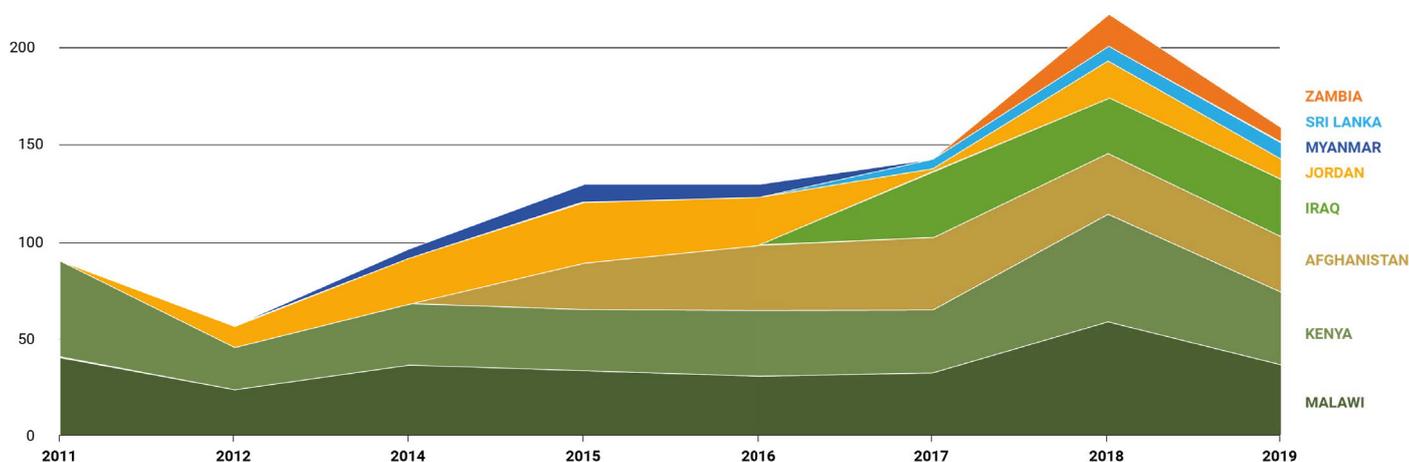


Table 2 and Figure 3: Number of Students joining the Diploma programme by year and country

Section 3: Geographical Trends

SUCCESS RATE

This section takes a closer look at geographical trends, unpacking how the geographic and social contexts have impacted the Diploma programme. We can group the community learning centres where the Diploma was offered into three groups, based on their success in retention and completion:

- A. Kenya (Kakuma Refugee Camp), Malawi (Dzaleka Refugee Camp), Afghanistan (Bamyan rural centre and Herat urban centre)
- B. Iraq (Domiz Refugee Camp and Khanke Internally Displaced Persons Camp, Erbil urban centre), Jordan (Amman urban refugee centre)
- C. Sri Lanka (urban centres), Myanmar (urban centre), Zambia (remote rural town).

The most successful centres are group A and the least group C. The success depends on several factors.



- ◆ **Marginalisation:** Refugees, war-affected people and marginalised rural populations are more motivated to make use of this unique chance to access higher education. (Group A, B)
- ◆ **Local alternatives:** Wherever students have some local alternatives to higher education the interest in a lengthy three-year Diploma programme was lower – it was less needed. (Group C).
- ◆ **JWL onsite facilitation:** A good onsite coordination and facilitation by JWL or its local partner makes a significant difference. (Group A) Where the local support and facilitation was weaker the performance of students shows this. (Group B, in particular group C)
- ◆ **Student Based Learning:** Centres in Group A are the oldest in JWL, well established and all are now managed by JWL graduates. The formation of JWL's own human capital through the Diploma programme bears fruits and is becoming a factor for success. The motivation is very high of students who have graduated and are now facilitators.
- ◆ **Length and relevance:** A three-year programme of 45 credits was, for countries in group C (Sri Lanka), just too long to be attractive. It is also a question of relevance for the students. Contrary to this the stretched programme was more adequate to refugees who had to take care of their life, work and study. For them, the Diploma in Liberal studies is more relevant as an entry to university studies. An important learning is that the Diploma as a foundational programme needs to be flexible, to be studied with two courses at a time or to be stretched for certain student groups.
- ◆ **Local and International support:** Jordan shows the highest percentage of withdrawals (59%). As explained above, this was due to the decision to phase out, with students left with no much support in 2017, struggling along without much institutional support locally and internationally. The opposite is seen in Dzaleka Camp which has very good local and international support, and only 17% withdrawals.
- ◆ **A Community of Learning:** the centres and locations with a critical mass in terms of cohorts are the most successful ones, as well as in terms of graduation and retention.

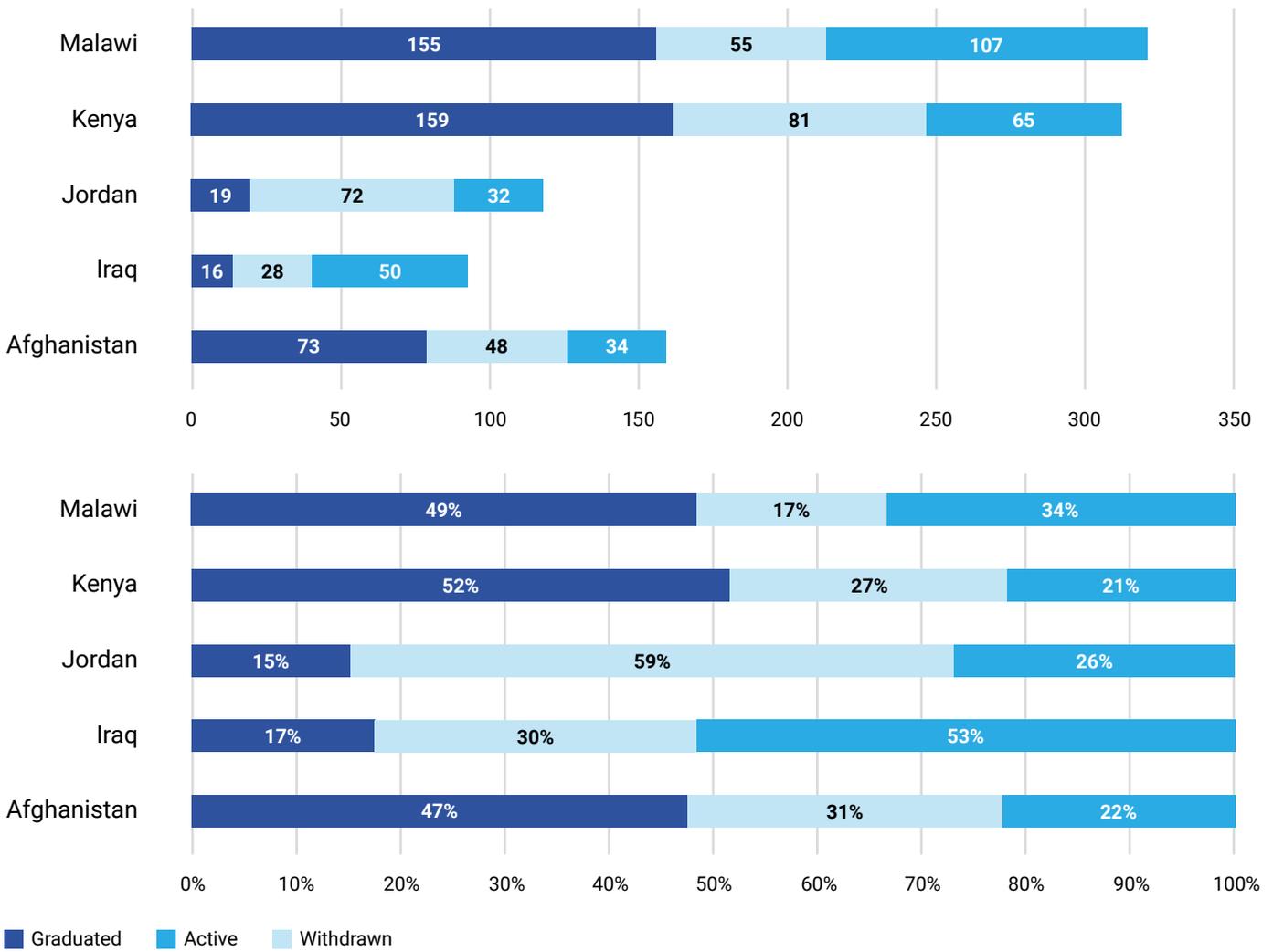


Figure 4: Absolute number and percentage of active, graduated and withdrawn students by country. Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and Zambia are not shown as student numbers are too low to be displayed as percentages.



TIME OF COMPLETION

The Diploma in Liberal Studies was designed as a three-year programme with 5 courses to be taken in a year and to complete the 15 courses after three years, receiving a 45-credit Diploma in Liberal Studies. The programme allowed for successful students to, after 5 courses, take two courses at a time and speed up. It also allowed for students who were at work with a family and other obligations to stretch and to pause at times.



I wanted to create my own company that could respond to some of the challenges we are facing particularly in Malawi. We are all called to save the community, after all.

Diploma Graduate, Cohort 2017, Malawi

The graph below shows, the minimum and the maximum time needed for some students to complete the Diploma. The average time of completion varies from 2 years and 2 months in Iraq, to 3 years and 3 months in Jordan. The average time of completion in Kenya and Malawi is also affected by what was explained above. Early on Regis University did not recommend students to take two courses per term; from this point of view Kenya and Malawi show similar trends, with an average time of completion of 2 years and

7 months. The high maximum time of completion, especially in Kenya, can be explained by the fact that some students could take up to 2 terms of study break. The situation of Jordan is once again reflected as the country with the highest average time of completion. On the other hand, Afghanistan and Iraq have a very good time of completion, 2 years and 2 months in Iraq and 2 years and 3 months in Afghanistan; although it is important to notice that the data in Iraq are influenced by the fact that the programme

started there only in 2017 and that there are still many (53%) active students, who need to complete the programme.

Sri Lanka and Zambia are not presented in the chart as there are no graduates from these countries yet, and Myanmar has a very small sample of graduates (4) who took on average 3 years and 2 months to complete the Diploma.

The most important learning from these figures is that although the

Diploma in Liberal Studies was mapped out for 3 years, students were willing and able to finish it within less than three years.

JWL should on one hand allow for a slower path for some students due to their circumstances but on the other hand support and guide students to complete within the given time. It is also an economic factor dragging out the study programme. The goal is to lower the average completion time and to avoid some individuals to dragging out their studies for too long.

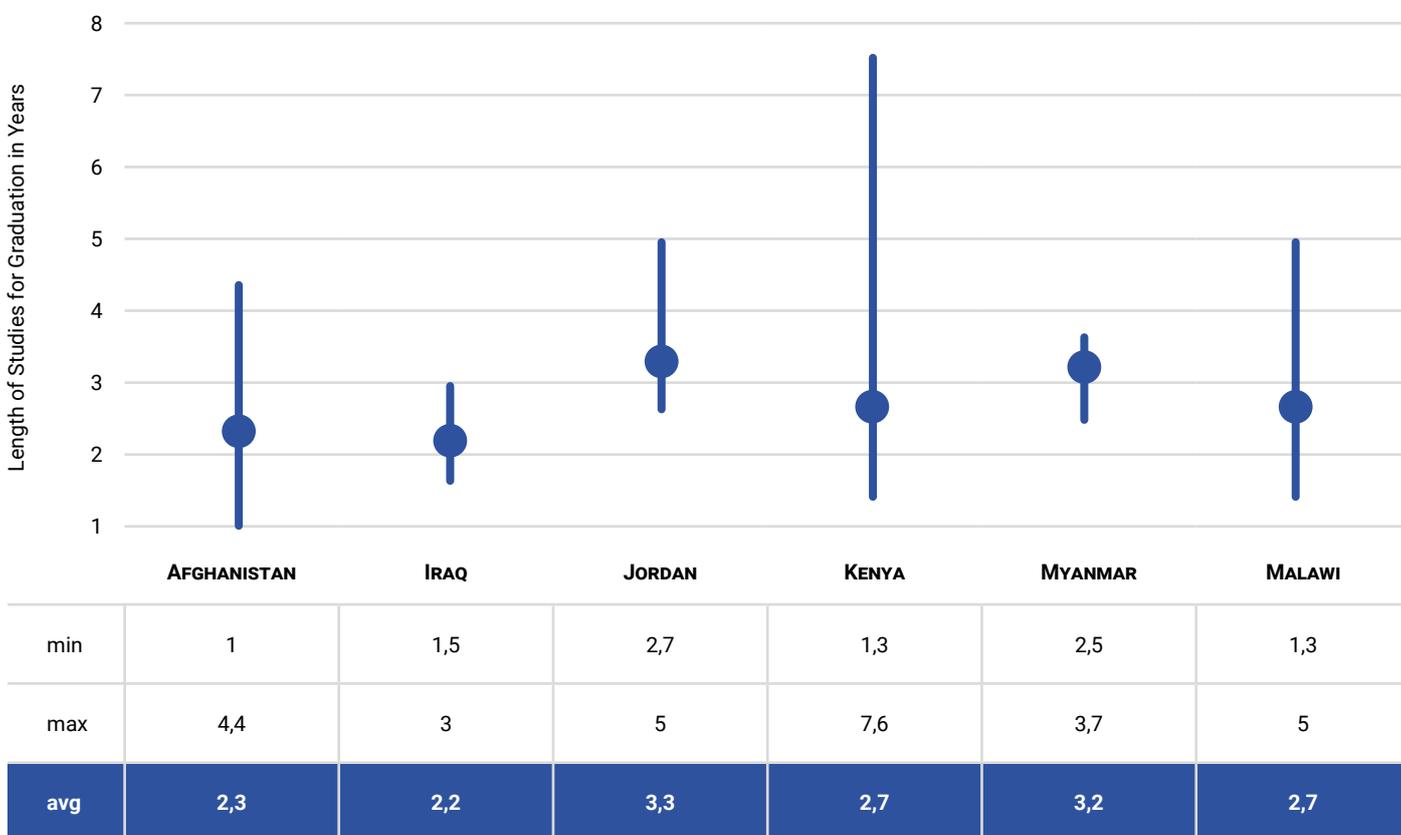


Figure 5: Maximum, minimum and average time of completion by country

Section 4: Gender Trends

In this section we are going to adopt a gender perspective to explore how the Diploma is supporting young women to access higher education and to reflect

upon challenges that women can face in terms of access, completion rate and time of completion. The total number of students admitted to the Diploma through-

out the years is 1,060⁴, of which 40.66% are women – making it a very inclusive programme, in countries where women experience great disadvantages in

accessing higher education, for example in Afghanistan women counts only for the 19.9% of the total higher education students population in public universities⁵.

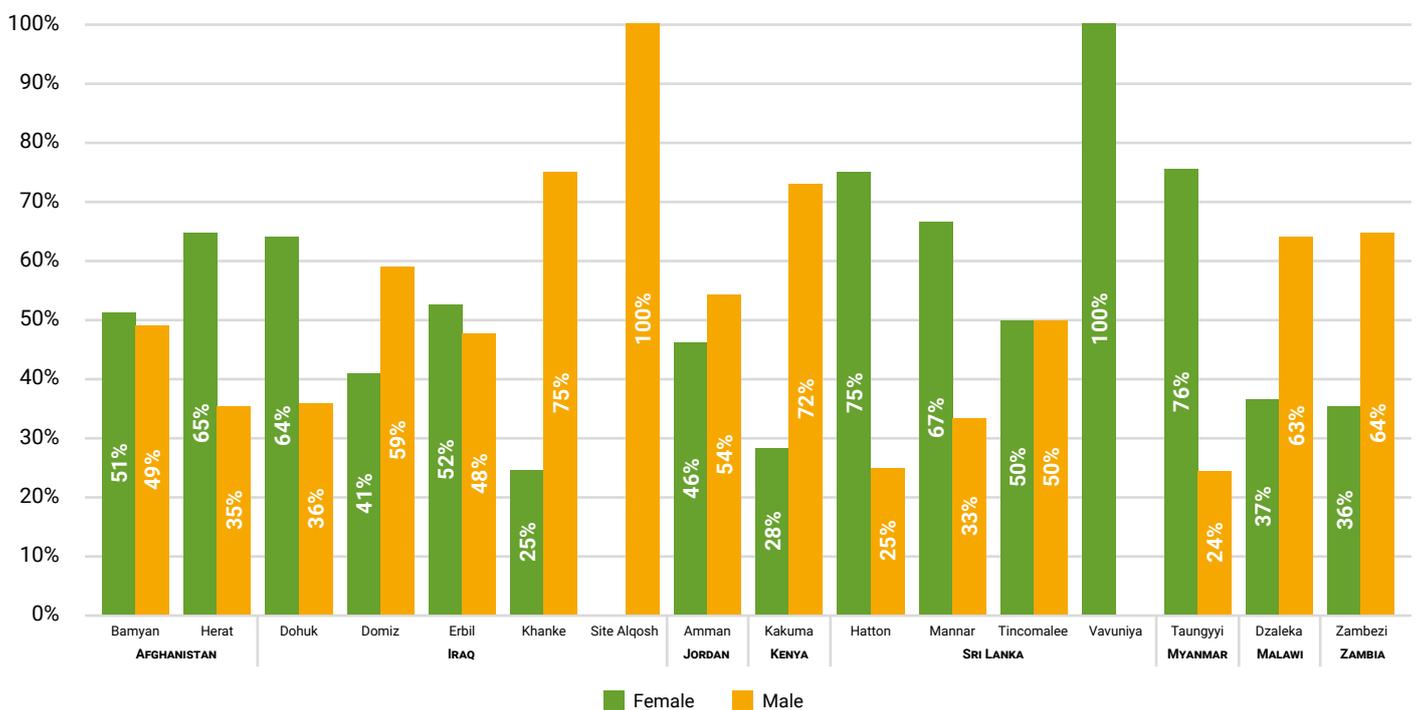
GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

The Diploma programme started out in Kakuma and Dzaleka with very few women among the first cohorts. The percentage of female

students improved over the years in both places but never reached the global average of the programme of 40,66%. There is a significant dif-

ference between the JWL community learning centres in Africa and in the Middle East and Afghanistan. There is also a difference between

the African centres. In Dzaleka, Malawi, 37% of Diploma students are women, while only 28% of students are women in Kakuma, Kenya.



	BAMYAN	HERAT	AMMAN	DOHUK	DOMIZ	ERBIL	KHANKE	SITE ALQOSH	KAKUMA	HATTON	MANNAR	TRINCOMALEE	VAVUNIYA	TAUNGYI	DZALEKA	ZAMBEZI	Grand Total
Female	29	64	56	7	14	14	5		86	3	4	2	6	16	116	9	431
Male	28	34	67	4	20	13	15	2	219	1	2	2		5	201	16	629
Grand Total	57	98	123	11	34	27	20	2	305	4	6	4	6	21	317	25	1060

Figure 6: Enrolled Student gender by community learning centre (in %)

	AFGHANISTAN	IRAQ	JORDAN	KENYA	Sri Lanka	MYANMAR	MALAWI	ZAMBIA
Female	60%	43%	46%	28%	75%	76%	37%	36%
Male	40%	57%	54%	72%	25%	24%	63%	64%
Grand Total	100%							

Table 3: Enrolled Student Gender by Country

The geographic differences reflect great socio-cultural differences. Africa differs from the other re-

gions with a lower enrolment of female students. Cultural and economic reasons might partly

explain this reality. Against the general assumption about culture and religion, in the Islamic communities

in the Middle East and Afghanistan the percentage of females in the Diploma programme is higher.

⁴ This number does not take into consideration the 2 students who finished the programme in South Africa (1) and South Sudan (1); the 5 students who were resettled to Canada (2) and the US (3) and finished there; and the 6 students who withdrew after being resettled to Canada (1) and to the US (5).

⁵ EPD (2011) Women's access to higher education in Afghanistan. [Womens-Access-to-Higher-Education-in-Afghanistan.pdf \(www.epd-afg.org\)](http://www.epd-afg.org)

There are significant differences between the two major centres in Africa which seek some explanation.

- ◆ In Malawi the population of refugees from the Great Lake countries (Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Burundi) do have a higher appreciation of education whereas the large number of refugees from South Sudan in Kakuma Camp have less expectations for higher education – and in particular the social position of girls and women in the pastoral societies of the Dinka and Nuer is much lower than in other countries of Africa. These are much more traditional societies. Although of Islamic culture the refugees from Somalia show a similar pattern and low status of women and girls.
- ◆ Preparation of students: In Dzaleka Camp, Malawi, JRS has been managing the primary and secondary education of thousands of young people for more than two decades. The Diploma programme offered since 10 years is a natural continuation of the learning path for men and women coming out of secondary school. Women can see a perspective in their life after school and make an effort. In Kakuma Camp the JWL programme is not directly linked to the numerous schools and most of the school leavers might not know about this programme. Women are even less encouraged to sign up.
- ◆ Geography of the camp: Dzaleka is a small camp of 2 km in diameter from the homes to the schools. The JWL community learning centre is right next to the housing section. There is no security issue for young women to reach the place. Kakuma Camp is different, stretching over 15 km with 5 sections. Some students have to walk 1 to 2 hours to come to the former learning centre at section one. This creates an insecure environment for young women. One incident was registered of a female JWL student being molested by a policeman.
- ◆ Computer centres: The very first model of the community learning centres had the computers and internet only at the centre, where students had to come. The centres were only open during the day and that put some additional limitations which particularly affects women. The more recent change to equip academic students with laptops made them less dependent on coming to the centre and is especially helpful for young women and mothers. They do not need to walk on insecure roads and can do their homework while still attending to their families.



The lower rate of female students also applies to the other African country Zambia where the Diploma is on offer in Zambezi – a remote rural town. Out of 25 students only 9 are women. The deeper issue regarding female participation is of a cultural nature, reflected to different degrees in the various contexts and different countries.

Afghanistan presents a very different picture. The overall percentage of female students is 60%. This percentage varies depending on the location of the students but never drops below 50%. At the JWL centre in Herat 65% of students are female. This might be influenced by the urban location of the centre, while in Bamyan the percentage of female students is 51%. This high ratio of women is also rooted in the religion and culture. Almost

all students are of the Hazara community, which are following Shiite Islam. From an outside perspective, Shiite Muslims seem to be more open-minded also regarding the position of women in their community. Many Hazara were refugees in Iran and experienced a more open Shiite Islamic society compared to the closed Taliban regime. For the youth and in particular for women, the post-2001 period in Afghan history offers a window of opportunity for education. The girls know from their mothers what it meant to be excluded from education by the Taliban.

The difference between the city of Herat and the rural town of Bamyan, is that in the city it is safer for women and girls and the society is more open minded towards the education of women. In Bamyan, the female and male

students come from the remote Ghor and Daikundi provinces. They have left their protected village to live in Bamyan to follow their studies. In actual fact this is a very significant step - the parents' trust to let their daughters live away from the village.

In Iraq, 43% of students are women, although we see again an important variation depending on the location of the community learning centre. In Dohuk, among the small number of students the majority are female (7 out of 11), although the numbers are very small, they show the eagerness of girls to access higher education. In Erbil there is no difference in terms of number of women and men participating in the programme (14 female students out of 27). On the other hand, in Domiz, Khanke and Alqosh (respectively, 14 female students out of 34, 5 out of 20 and 0 out of 2) the number of female students is significantly lower than the number of male students. Domiz camp is populated by Syrian refugees and in general education for women is more accepted in Syrian society. Khanke is populated by Yezidis – a pastoral community – and education gen-

erally not highly valued, particular that of women. This would explain the difference between Domiz and Khanke camps.

Finally, 46% of students in Jordan are female and again the urban location of the community learning centre (Amman), might have had an effect on the high participation of female students.

Sri Lanka and Myanmar present a similar pattern in terms of gender balance, with a large majority of female students (respectively, 15 out of 20, and 16 out of 21). The cultural background of these students is Christian in the community learning centres of the Jesuits in Sri Lanka as well in Myanmar, where Christians are a minority. This aspect could explain the higher number of women. It could also be that the JWL programme serves as a second choice for women compared to men who go for the Government universities. Given the rather short period of the offer of the programme in Sri Lanka and the small number in Myanmar, these are tentative explanations.

SUCCESS RATE

In Africa, female students graduate slightly less than their male colleagues. In terms of graduation rate in comparison to the initial number of students, female students, both in Dzaleka refugee camp and in Kakuma refugee camp have a slightly lower achievement, with 28% female graduates in Malawi (37% of female students) and 25% female graduates in Kenya (28% of female students).

The contrary happens in Afghanistan, where the percentage of female graduates is 67% against a total percentage of female

students of 60%. The percentage of female graduates in relation to the total of female students remains stable in Bamyan, while in Herat the vast majority (79%) of graduates are female. This could be explained with a stronger separation of roles between genders, with female students having more time to devote to their studies.

The same pattern can be traced in Iraq, where the majority of graduates (12 out of 16) are female, in all the three centres with graduates (Dohuk, Domiz and Erbil) female graduates outnumber male colleagues, showing the great



My aim was to strengthen the education system in the country and teach the marginalised community on gender equality in education. To teach the community to practice inclusive learning environment where everyone is entitled to study.

Diploma Graduate, Cohort 2016, Kenya

motivation and resilience of female students who do not want to miss out again the opportunity to obtain a higher education degree.. Finally, in Jordan the percentage of female graduates remain more or less stable in comparison with the percentage of female students

(42%). Female students are doing very well in the Middle East and Asia in terms of graduation.

In Myanmar out of the few graduates (4) half of them were female, but the numbers are too small to be conclusive.

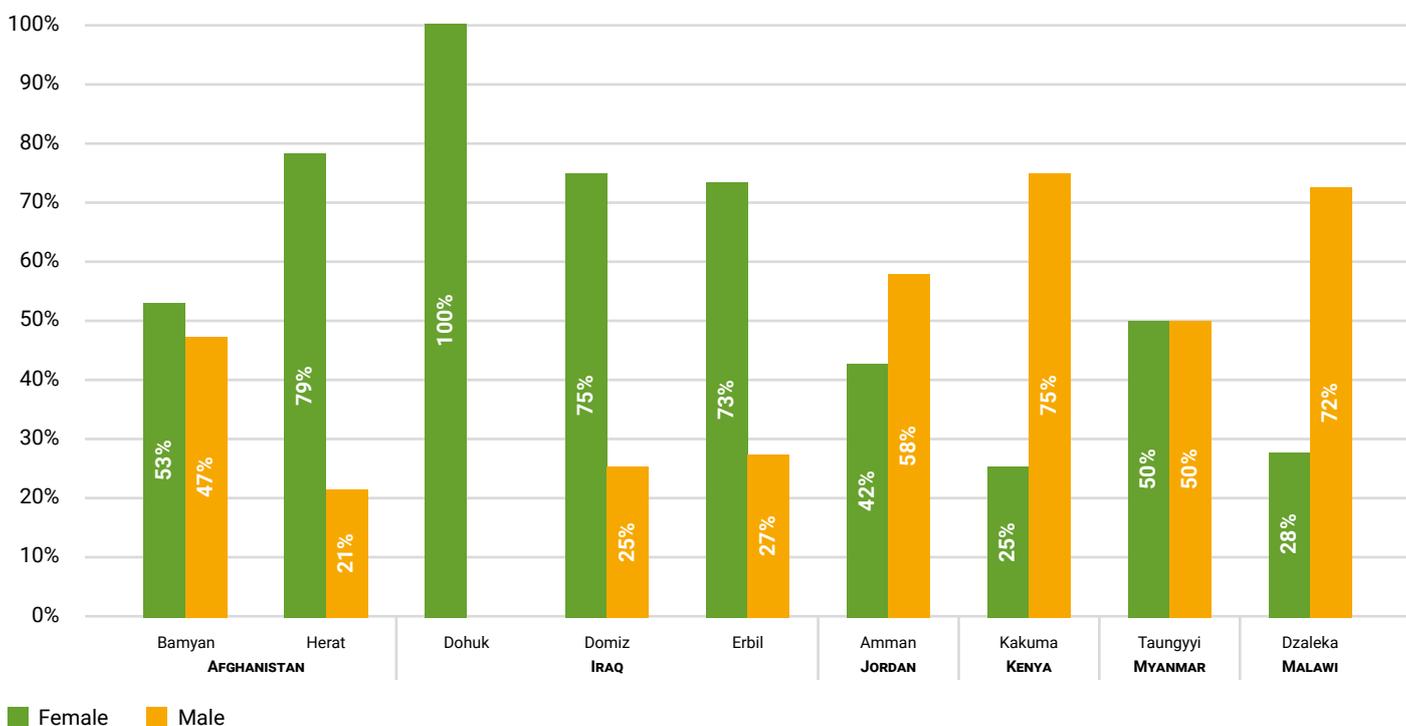


Figure 7: Number of graduates by gender (in %)

	AFGHANISTAN	IRAQ	JORDAN	KENYA	MYANMAR	MALAWI
Female	67%	75%	42%	25%	50%	28%
Male	33%	25%	58%	75%	50%	72%
Grand Total	100%					

Table 4: Percentage of female graduates by country

Looking at the gender perspective taking a longitudinal lens, considering data up to 2017, as the average time of completion varies from 2 years and 2 months

in Iraq to 3 years and 3 months in Jordan, it is possible to notice the effort that JWL made in including women in the programme, with fewer female students enrolling

in the early years and becoming half of the global intake in 2017, with a very good performance in terms of success rate. This is also related to the opening up to Iraq

and Afghanistan, where, as we have seen above, female students and female graduates in many locations are the majority.

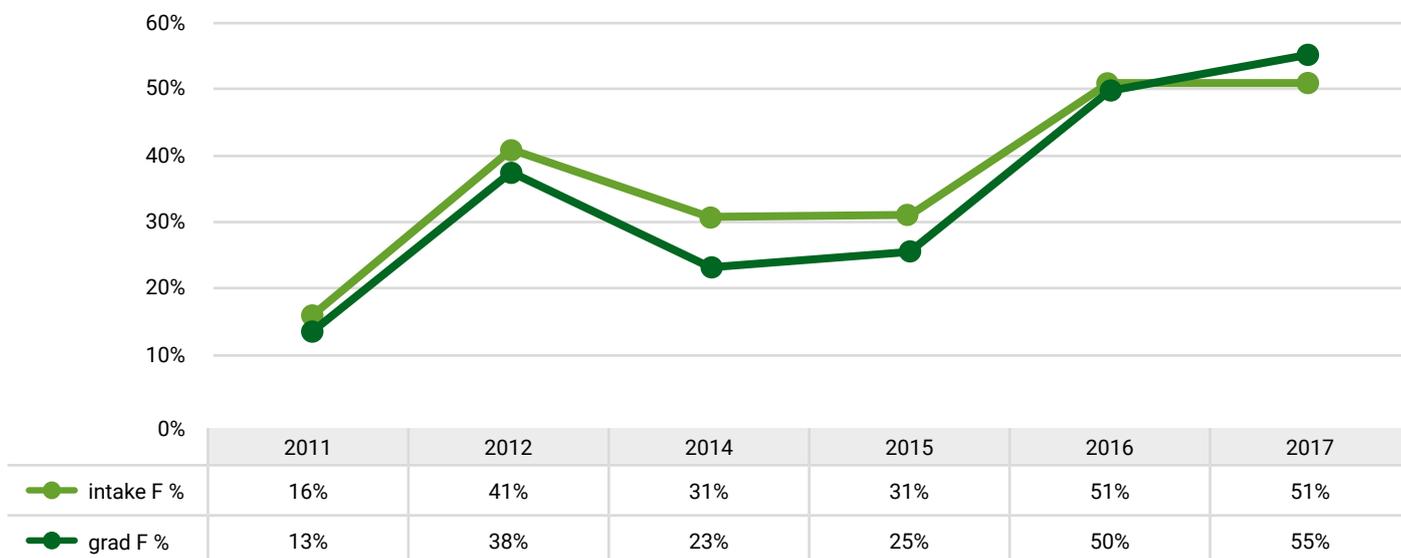


Figure 8: Intake Percentage and Graduation Percentage of Women

TIME OF COMPLETION

Looking at the time of completion for female and male graduates, we can see that on average there are very slight differences, with male students completing a few

months in advance in comparison to their female colleagues in Afghanistan and Iraq, with an opposite trend in Jordan, and with no difference between male and

female graduates in Kenya and Malawi. It is interesting to notice here that there is no relevant difference based on gender, and that the composition of the cohort,

also in country were female students are significantly less, does not influence the outcome in terms of time of completion.

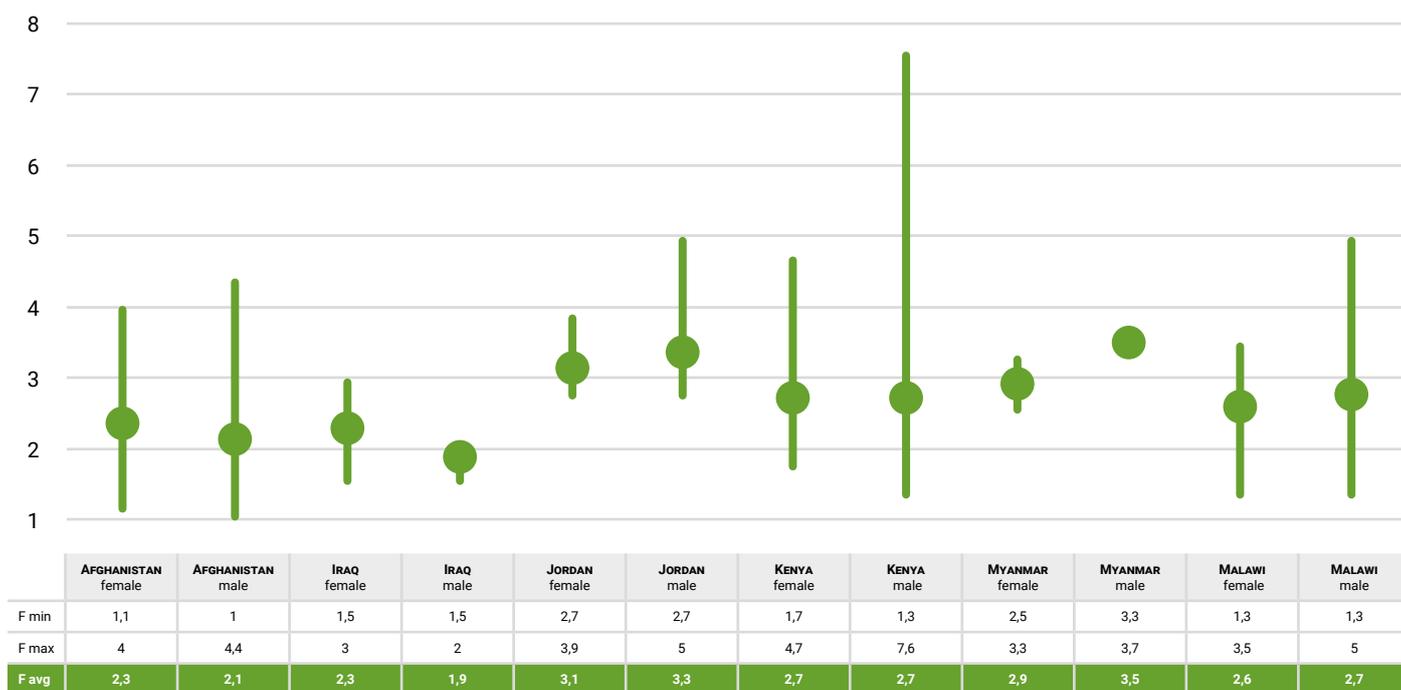


Figure 9: Maximum, minimum, and average time of completion by country and by gender

Lessons Learnt

The first part of this section reflects on factors that make the learning experience and the implementation on the ground successful, while the second part is more related to factors that make the learning experience more inclusive in terms of gender. Of course, the two sections are naturally intertwined.

Factors that make the learning experience successful:

Blended Learning and Ignatian Pedagogy: The model, rooted in the Ignatian tradition, having as pivotal elements guidance and companionship, and soundly tightening the 5 steps of the learning journey (context, experience, reflection, action, and evaluation) in the instructional design of each unit, proved to be successful, in terms of retention and completion, with an expected completion rate around 60% – an extremely high rate also for programmes not operating at the margins.

Recruitment and admission processes are key: Careful and rigorous recruitment and admission processes are key to guaranteeing the success of JWL programmes, as one third of the Diploma students withdrew without earning a single credit. The history of the organisation shows that in the years in which the recruitment and admission processes were more rigorous, the drop-out rates were significantly lower.

Serve the margins: The more JWL serves people at the margins and the unmet desire for higher education, the more successful the programme is. The three most successful locations where the Diploma in Liberal Studies has been offered are Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya, Dzaleka Refugee Camp in Malawi, and Afghanistan. In these three locations refugees, in the case of Kenya and Malawi, and internally displaced persons and minority groups in the case of Afghanistan, would not have had any alternative access to university, while in the least successful locations – Sri Lanka (urban centres), Myanmar (urban centre), Zambia (remote rural town) – the programme did not take off. In Sri Lanka and Myanmar, the competition with other higher education providers, and in Zambezi, the desire to go to Lusaka to attend universities, were a big factor hindering the growth of the programme.

Forming human capital: The centres in which the graduates became part of JWL staff, such as in Dzaleka and Kakuma, are the most successful. Furthermore, the case of Jordan, despite all difficulties, shows how students were able to organise themselves in order to carry on their studies and running their own centre, showing determination and resilience. Nurturing the human capital – the students – in order to build a strong organisation on the ground, have proven key to the success of the Diploma programme.

Strong partnership on the ground: Good onsite coordination and facilitation by JWL or its local partner makes a significant difference. Where the local support and facilitation was weaker, this was reflected in student performance. A key element of the blended online learning model, inspired by the Ignatian pedagogy, is the learning facilitator, who motivates students, supports reflection and action, and builds a sense of community.

The pace depends on the context: In certain countries, such as Sri Lanka, a three-year programme of 45 credits was too long to be attractive to students. On the other hand, the stretched programme was more adequate for refugees who had to take care of their life, work and study. An important learning is that the Diploma as a foundational programme needs to be flexible, to be studied with two courses at a time or to be stretched for certain student groups.

A community of learning: The centres and locations with a critical mass in terms of cohorts are the most successful ones, including in terms of graduation and retention. The critical mass ensures that students build a community of learning, a key component of the Ignatian pedagogy, keeping the momentum, boosting motivation and increasing resilience.

Factors that make the learning experience inclusive:

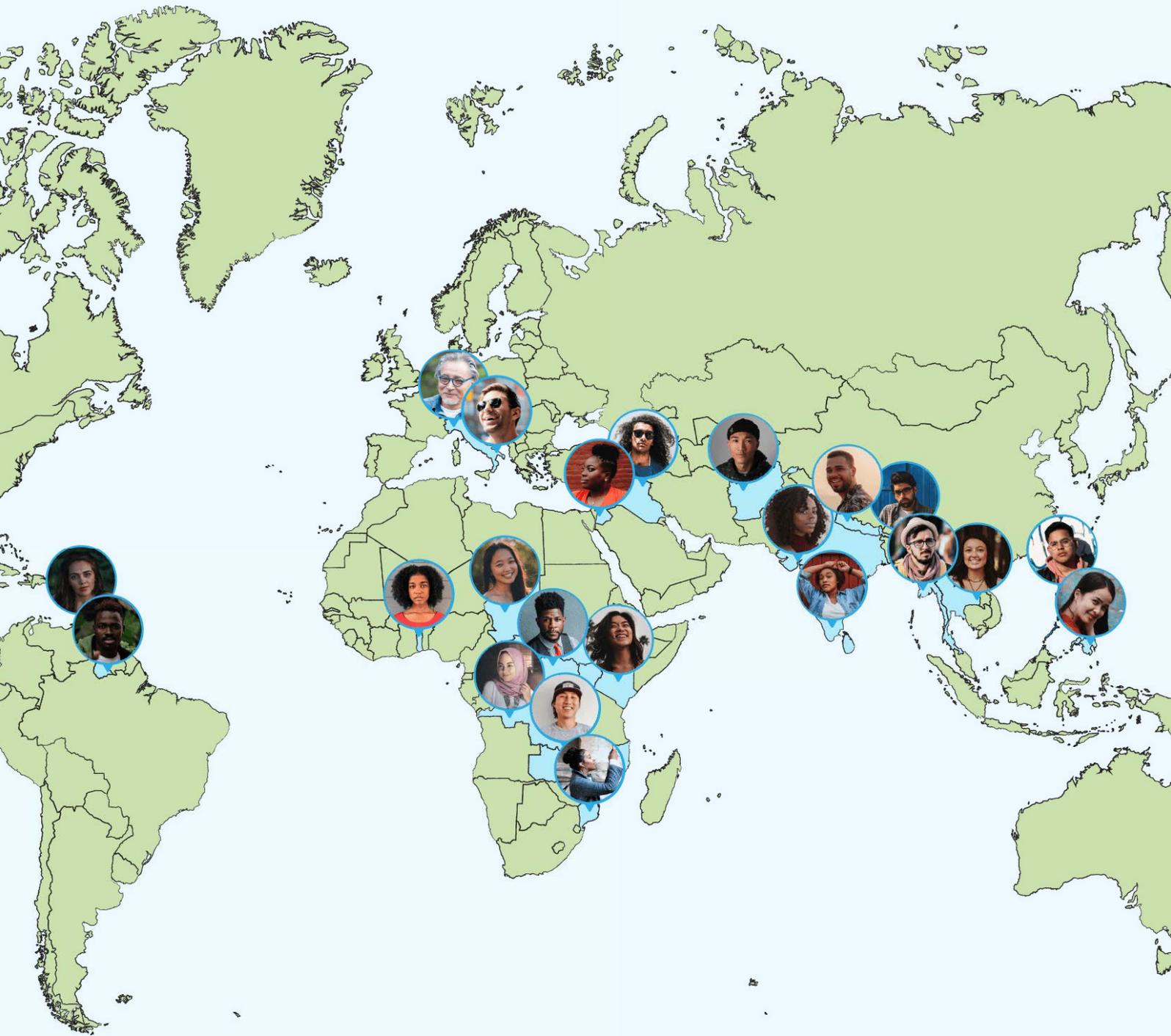
The online blended learning model, which foresees a global classroom component with international faculty in charge of culturally diverse cohorts along with a local community learning centre with onsite facilitators, works, also in terms of inclusion.

Location and technologies are key: Community learning centres such as the one in Dzaleka – locations with no security issues – are more accessible to women, while a more insecure environment and greater distance from home hinder access for female students. Furthermore, equipping students with mobile technologies (such as laptops) and making them less reliant on the centre, being able to carry on with their independent learning, facilitates the participation of young women and mothers.

Link to primary and secondary institutions: It has been observed that in locations where JWL has a strong connection with organisations pro-

viding primary and secondary education, the access to the Diploma is facilitated. In Dzaleka, for example, JRS has been managing the primary and secondary education of thousands of young people for more than two decades. The Diploma programme is a natural continuation of the learning path for men and women coming out of secondary school.

Gender unbalance does not prevent female success: In countries with a lower proportion of women entering the programme, we observed no difference in terms of completion rate and time of completion. This is a very encouraging results in terms of inclusiveness of the learning model.



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