



JESUIT WORLDWIDE LEARNING
HIGHER EDUCATION AT THE MARGINS

Research Report

#01 / May 2021

Transformation at the margins

Diploma in Liberal Studies as a catalyst for personal and community development

This report investigates the paths taken by graduates of the Diploma in Liberal Studies, offered by Jesuit Worldwide Learning (JWL) in collaboration with Regis University. It looks at their careers, their further efforts in pursuing higher education programmes, and the ways in which they engage with their local communities. The results are based on a questionnaire distributed online to 433 Diploma in Liberal Studies graduates, in 6 countries – Malawi, Kenya, Afghanistan, Iraq, Jordan, and Myanmar in September 2020, to which 182 graduates (42%) took part.

This report answers one of the questions most frequently asked to JWL: what happened to the graduates after they completed the programme? What is the impact of this degree on their lives and on their communities, in terms of further educational opportunities, career choices and engagement with their local communities? By doing so, it also contributes to a broader field of study, proving the empowering force of higher education in transforming individuals and communities and consequently in building resilient and peaceful communities.

Innocent Tshilombo, Research Assistant, Jesuit Worldwide Learning
Dr. Isabella Rega, Global Research Director, Jesuit Worldwide Learning



Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION	3
2. THE DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESPONDENTS.....	6
3. GRADUATES' CAREER PATH	8
4. GRADUATES' HIGHER EDUCATION PATHS.....	14
5. GRADUATES' ENGAGEMENT IN THEIR COMMUNITIES	18
6. CONCLUDING REMARKS	23
7. AUTHORS	24



1. Introduction

This report unpacks the life journey of graduates of the Diploma in Liberal Studies in terms of their career achievements, their educational choices and their engagement in their local communities; by doing so this report shows the transformative impact of higher education at the margins, both in terms of personal growth and fulfilment and in terms of social and community development.

The Diploma in Liberal Studies, offered in collaboration with Regis University (US), has been running since 2010, and is the first academic programme offered by JWL. In September 2020, out of the total of 1,073 students enrolled, 305 were still active in the programme and expected to finish by end of 2021; 335 had withdrawn, which includes some who have been resettled; and 433 students had successfully graduated. With a foreseen completion rate of over 60%, this is a very successful programme, also in comparison with blended online learning programmes in Europe and the United States, which have completion rates that vary a lot but around 50% (Benetos & Gagnière, 2018)¹.

The core of the programme, and of every programme offered by JWL, is a Blended Online Learning approach, deemed crucial to implement two key components of the Ignatian educational philosophy: companionship and guidance, and to adapt the Ignatian model to students at the margins. Companionship and guidance are promoted through community learning

centres, where 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 (Jigsaw, 2016)². 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 to 3 US credits, and delivered in a blended-learning mode for 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). Students can choose among three concentrations: Education, Social Work and Business. The online content is hosted on the Georgetown University platform and online professors are recruited by JWL 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

¹ Benetos, K., & Gagnière, L. (2018). Understanding student paths in higher education blended-learning: beyond success and dropout.

² Hutchinson, P. (2016). Higher education for refugees in low-resource environments: Ignatian Pedagogy Briefing. Jigsaw Consult, United Kingdom.



(Bamyan rural centre and Herat urban centre), Jordan (Amman urban refugee centre), Iraq (Domiz Refugee Camp and Khanke Internally Displaced Persons Camp, Erbil urban centre), Malawi (Dzaleka

Refugee Camp), Sri Lanka (urban centres), Kenya (Kakuma Refugee Camp), Myanmar (urban centre), and Zambia (remote rural town).

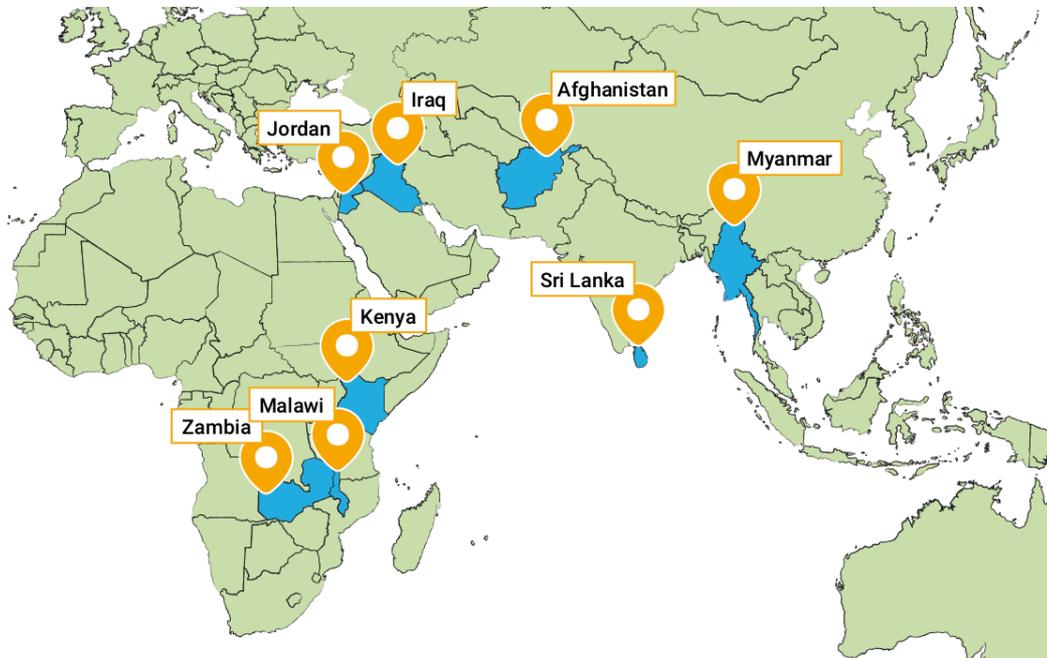


Figure 1: Countries in which the Diploma in Liberal Studies is offered

In summer 2020, the JWL research team designed a questionnaire to be distributed online to 433 Diploma in Liberal Studies graduates in 6 countries – Malawi, Kenya, Afghanistan, Iraq, Jordan, and Myanmar (as Sri Lanka and Zambia did not have graduates yet). The questionnaire was divided in the following sections: (i) Demographics; (ii) Educational Choices; (iii) Career Path; (iv) Community

Engagement; (v) Final Reflections. The questionnaire was distributed in September 2020, and 182 graduates (42%) participated in the survey, from all the cohorts, and this is reflected in the results: some graduates had years to develop their paths after graduation, while some others graduated just a couple of months before participating in the survey.

- 85% of the respondents who reported at least 1 job experience stated the Diploma was extremely / very important for their career path.
- 98% of respondents who pursue further studies believes that the Diploma programme was extremely / very important for their education path.
- 98% of the respondents believes that the Diploma was extremely / very important for them to engage in community activities.



This report answers one of the questions most frequently asked to JWL: what happened to the graduates after they completed the programme? What is the impact of this degree on their lives and on their communities, in terms of further educational opportunities, career choices

and engagement with their local communities? By doing so, it also contributes to a broader field of study, proving the empowering force of higher education in transforming individuals and communities and consequently in building resilient and peaceful communities.



Figure 2: Graduation Ceremony 2019, Dzaleka Camp, Malawi



2. The demographic characteristics of the respondents

42% (182) of graduates of the Diploma in Liberal Studies took part in the survey. In terms of geographical distribution, most of the respondents studied in Dzaleka Refugee Camp in Malawi and in Kakuma

Refugee Camp in Kenya (68 and 61, respectively) the two largest learning centres in terms of cohorts, and oldest in terms of time of operation. Afghanistan follows with 28 respondents, then Iraq (13) and Jordan (10). Finally, 2 respondents came from Myanmar, the youngest centre offering the Diploma in Liberal Studies. This is in line with the number of graduates for each location

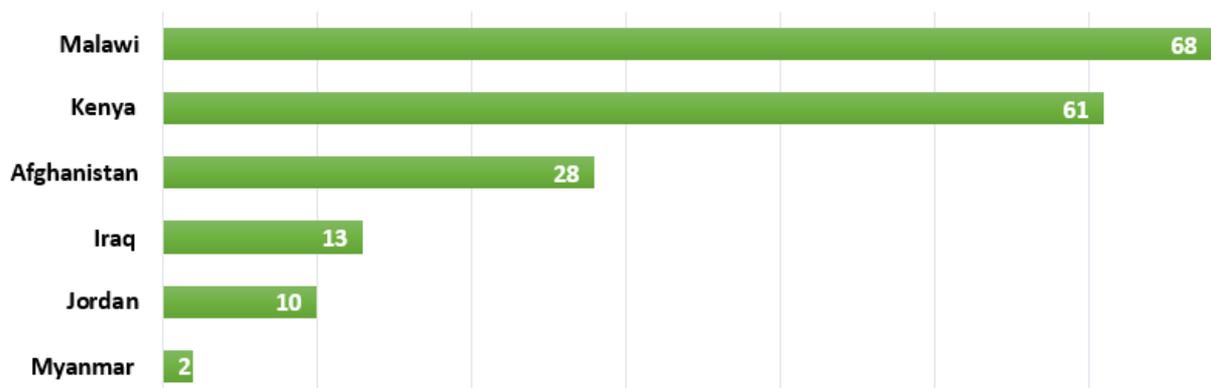


Figure 3: Respondents by country

The majority of the respondents (two thirds) were male, while one third were female (62). While the number of female students and graduates increased during the years (see [Report on 10 Years of the](#)

[Diploma in Liberal Studies for Refugees and Marginalised Communities](#)) in Kenya and Malawi the majority of graduates are still men, and this is mirrored here.

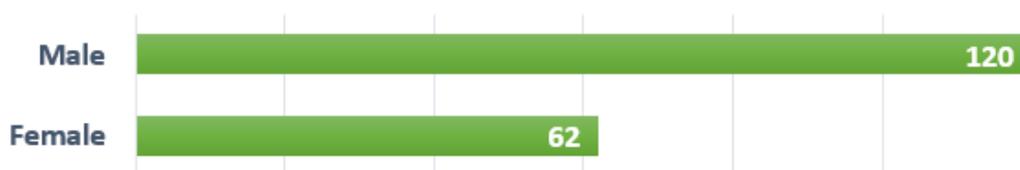


Figure 4: Respondents by gender

In terms of concentration, 103 majored in Social Work, 62 in Business, and 17 in Education, figures in line with the distribution among concentrations of the whole graduate population.

In terms of age, 92% of the respondents are younger than 40 years old, and the majority (61%) are younger than 30 years old.

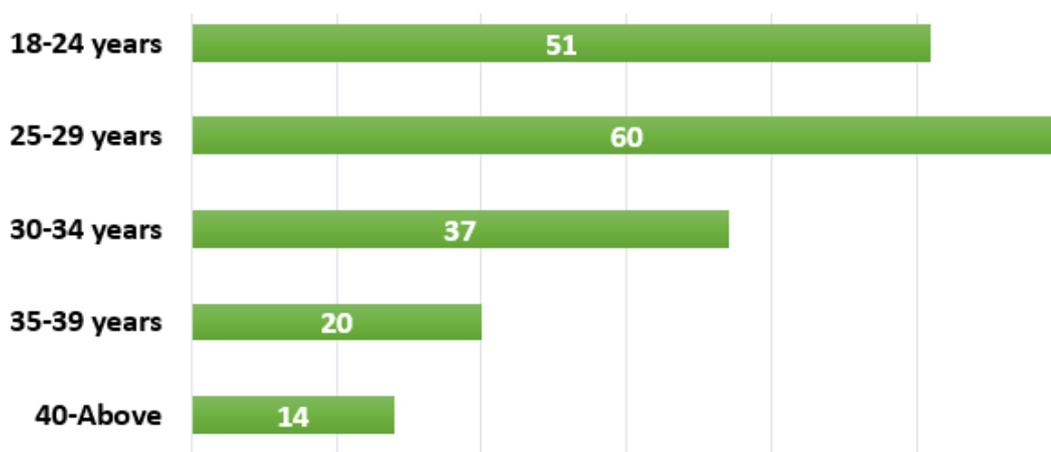


Figure 5: Respondents by age group

Diploma graduates who responded to the survey questions graduated between 2013 and 2020. Among the respondents, 5 graduated in 2013 (3 from Kenya and 2 from Malawi), 9 graduated in 2014 (2 from Kenya and 7 from Malawi), 8 graduated in 2015 (1 from Jordan, 4 from Kenya and 3 from Malawi), 1 graduated in 2016 (from Afghanistan), 14 graduated in 2017 (4 from Afghanistan, 1 from Jordan, 2 from

Kenya and 7 from Malawi), 53 graduated in 2018 (16 from Afghanistan, 2 from Jordan, 16 from Kenya and 17 from Malawi, 2 from Myanmar), 46 graduated in 2019 (7 from Afghanistan, 10 from Iraq, 4 from Jordan, 12 from Kenya and 13 from Malawi), 46 graduated in 2020 (3 from Iraq, 2 from Jordan, 22 from Kenya and 19 from Malawi).

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
Afghanistan				1	4	16	7		28
Iraq							10	3	13
Jordan			1		1	2	4	2	10
Kenya	3	2	4		2	16	12	22	61
Malawi	2	7	3		7	17	13	19	68
Myanmar						2			2
Total	5	9	8	1	14	53	46	46	182

Table 1: Graduates by country and by year



3. Graduates' Career Path

First of all, we aimed at understanding the career path of the graduates after they completed the Diploma in Liberal Studies. Overall, 91% of graduates reported at least

one job experience after graduation (95% male and 86% female), a very high proportion considering the contexts and locations where the graduates live in and the fact that 25% of the sample graduated in 2020 a couple of months before they took the survey.

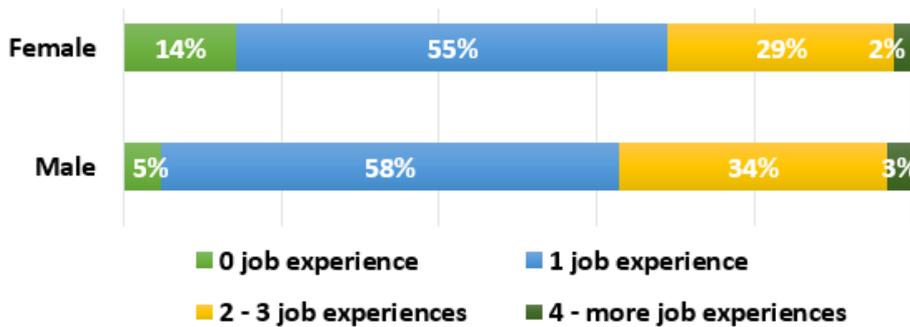


Figure 6: Reported job experiences by gender

Looking at geographical and contextual differences in terms of access to the job market, 95% of respondents from Afghanistan reported having had at least one job experience after graduation, followed by Kenya (94%), Malawi (91%), Iraq (89%) and Jordan (88%). More than one job experience has been reported

more often in countries in which the Diploma has been running for longer with Jordan being an outlier, being the country with the highest number of respondents who could not find a job due to legal restrictions, and the country with the highest number of respondents who changed more jobs.

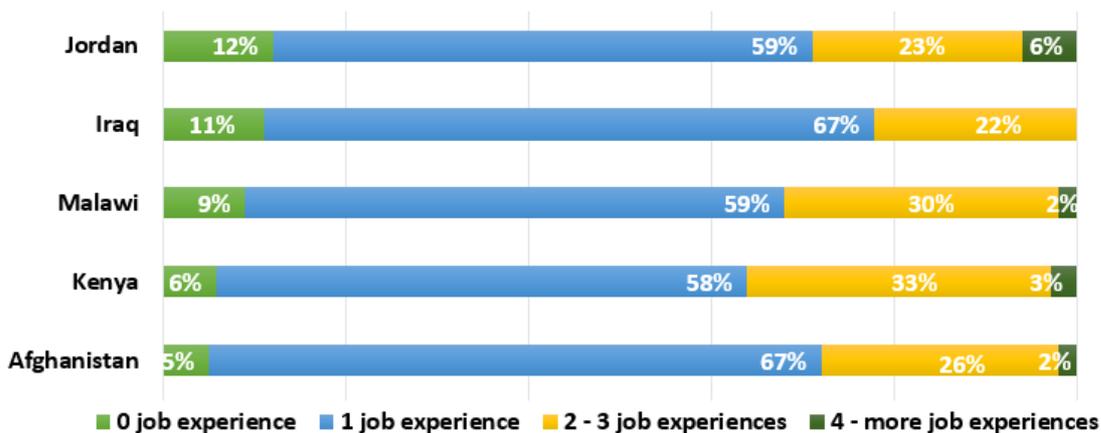


Figure 7: Reported job experiences by country

Even more striking is that 65% of respondents, regardless of gender, reported to be currently employed (September 2020). This is a very important

achievement as JWL operates in contexts with high unemployment rates and access to the job market is difficult and challenging. In Kakuma Refugee Camp



(Kenya) for example, only 20% of the refugees are employed according to the World Bank (2019). Furthermore, the

survey was conducted in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic.

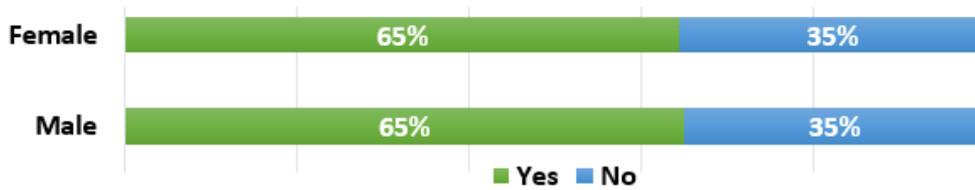


Figure 8: Respondents currently with a job by gender

Diploma graduates who reported currently having a job varied by country, with Kenya (78%), Iraq (77%) and Afghanistan (75%) having a very high number of currently employed graduates, followed by Malawi (55%) and Jordan (30%). In Malawi refugees are not allowed to work and are limited to Dzaleka camp. The official jobs available are within the camp and, even there, there are some restrictions for refugees. In Kenya, Kakuma Camp is 600 km far from the capital city, in the Turkana semi-desert. The only job market is the camp itself. A population of over 100,000 inhabitants needs many services in education, health, shops and NGO

positions. Well trained JWL graduates have advantages in finding a job within the camp or starting a business. In Iraq, refugees and internally displaced people are relatively free to move and engage in activities. The context of an expensive city like Amman, Jordan, is completely different from the other places. With high prices and legal restrictions hindering access to the job market, it is the most difficult context to survive in. The easiest context is in Afghanistan: Students are live, study in and engage in activities within their communities.

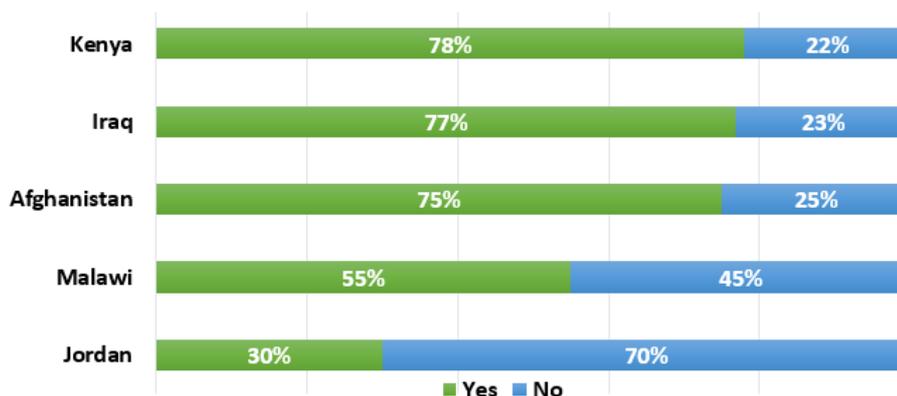


Figure 9: Respondents currently with a job by country

It is also interesting to understand where Diploma graduates find jobs, who the key employers are and which job sectors the graduates have access to. Table 2 shows the top 5 most cited employers divided by

country. Besides JWL which, as a strategic decision, hires the most promising graduates to nurture the field offices and to create ownership, other development and humanitarian agencies employ



Diploma graduates, such as JRS – Jesuit Refugee Service, UNHCR, DCA – DanChurchAid, ACTED, the BRAC Institute, and CAPNI. In Malawi, graduates also work for GEM – Global Education Movement - a Southern New Hampshire University (US) initiative offering degrees to refugees around the world, and for the Ministry of Health. In Kenya, graduates also reported entrepreneurship initiatives, like the foundation of new businesses (self-employed) or the creation of community-

based organisations. Also, in Afghanistan and Iraq graduates founded a community-based organisation, named New Horizon (Afghanistan) and a new learning centre in Iraq – the Bartella centre, to work in synergy with JWL to broaden access to higher education. In Iraq, graduates also reported working for international companies, such as Al Konda, working on construction, logistics services, and environmental services.

Malawi		Kenya		Afghanistan		Iraq		Jordan	
Employers	Number	Employers	Number	Employers	Number	Employers	Number	Employers	Number
JWL	11	JWL	8	JRS	8	JWL	2	JWL	1
JRS	7	JRS	8	NEW HORIZONS	3	ACTED	1		
UNHCR	5	CBO	4	JWL	2	AL KONDA COMPANY	1		
GEM	2	DCA	2	BRAC INSTITUTE	1	CAPNI	1		
Malawi MoH	1	SELF EMPLOYED	2			BARTELLA CENTRE	1		

Table 2: Employers reported in each country

Looking at the fields of employment, Diploma graduates work mainly in the sectors of education (42%), social work

(25%), community leadership (9%), research (6%) and logistics (5%).

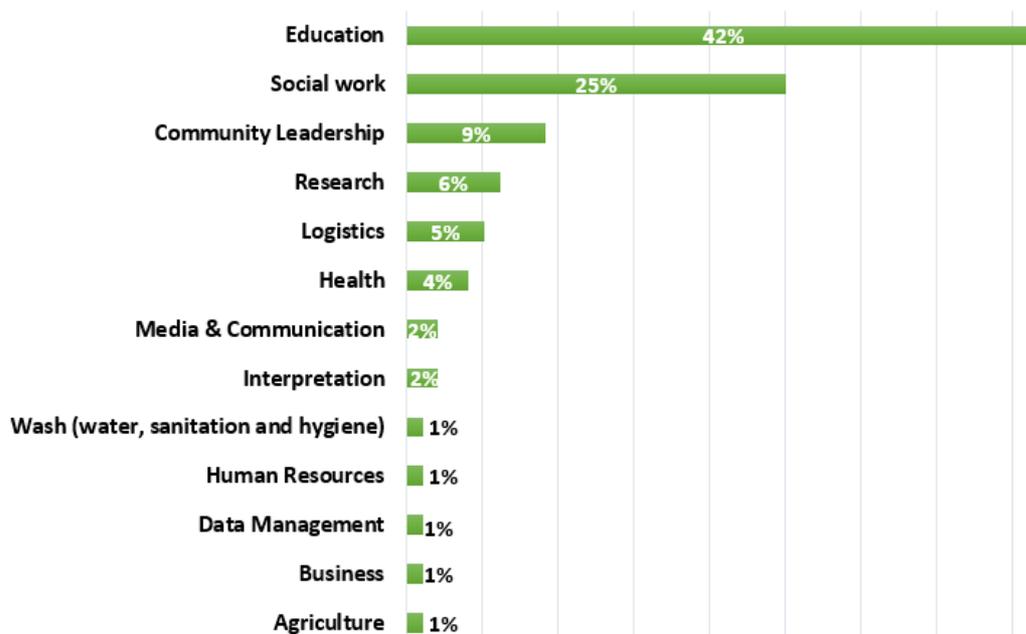


Figure 10: Sectors of employment

The respondents reported to be working or to have worked in many roles, but the most common jobs reported are: Teachers

(26%), Community mobiliser (7%), Research assistant (6%), Caseworker (6%), and Interpreter (6%).



Having a closer geographical look, Education is the predominant field of employment in Afghanistan (92%), in Iraq and Jordan – 50% together with Social Work, and in Kenya (39%). In Malawi, the most common field of employment is Social Work (45%), while Education is the

second one with 40% of jobs reported. Community Leadership and Research have been reported only in Kenya (23% and 16% respectively) and Malawi (6% and 3% respectively), while Logistics has been reported in Afghanistan. (8%), and in Kenya and Malawi (6%).

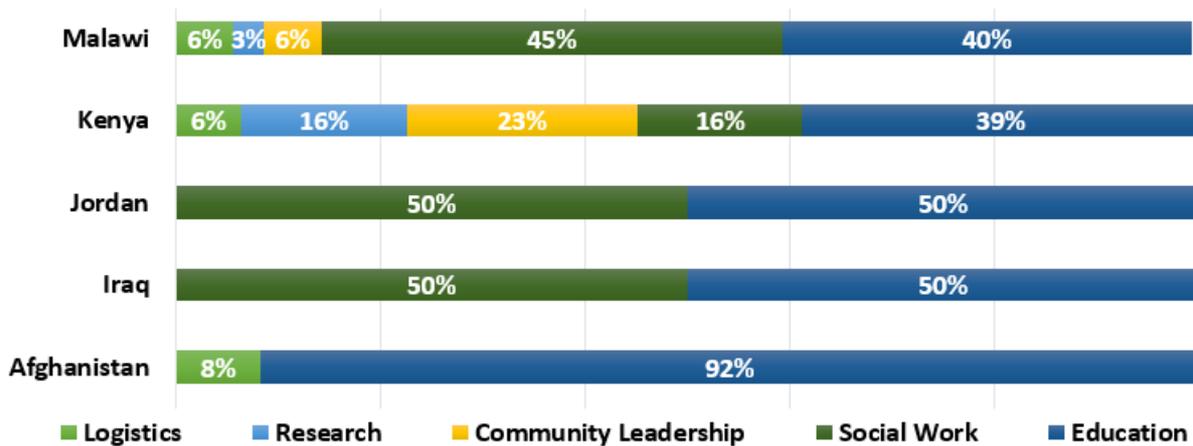


Figure 11: Sectors of employment by country

Male respondents find jobs in a wider range of fields. The majority of job opportunities, both for males and female respondents, are in the fields of Education (46% and 54% respectively) and Social Work (25% and 36% respectively). Community leadership involves 13% of

jobs reported by men and 5% of jobs reported by women, followed by research with 8% of jobs reported by men and 5% of jobs reported by women and finally Logistics, reported only by male respondents (8%).

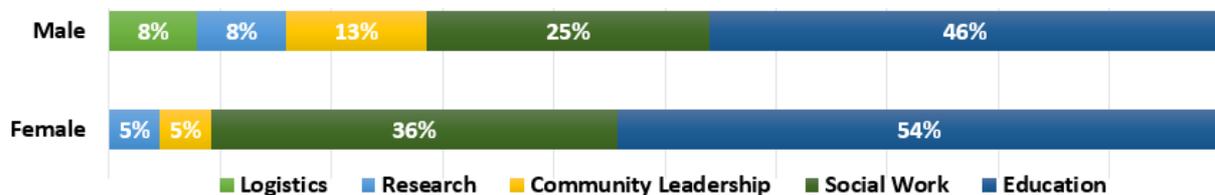


Figure 12: Sectors of employment by gender

Diploma graduates shared eight reasons as the main obstacles to their employment with different nuances from one country to another:

- 30% reported that they were unemployed because of the employment restrictions in their

host countries, such as the impossibility for refugees to work;

- 16% reported that they were unemployed because they were pursuing further studies;
- 14% reported that they were unemployed because they did not



have the required qualification and experience for available jobs;

- 12% reported that they were unemployed because of the unavailability of employment in their host countries, countries of origin, or countries of residence;
- 8% of Diploma graduates reported that they were unemployed because of the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic;
- 8% reported that they were unemployed because they lack

access to finance to start or grow their businesses;

- 7% reported that they were unemployed because distance learning is not recognised in their host countries, countries of residence, or countries of origin;
- 5% reported that they were unemployed because of a medical condition that makes them unfit for a job.

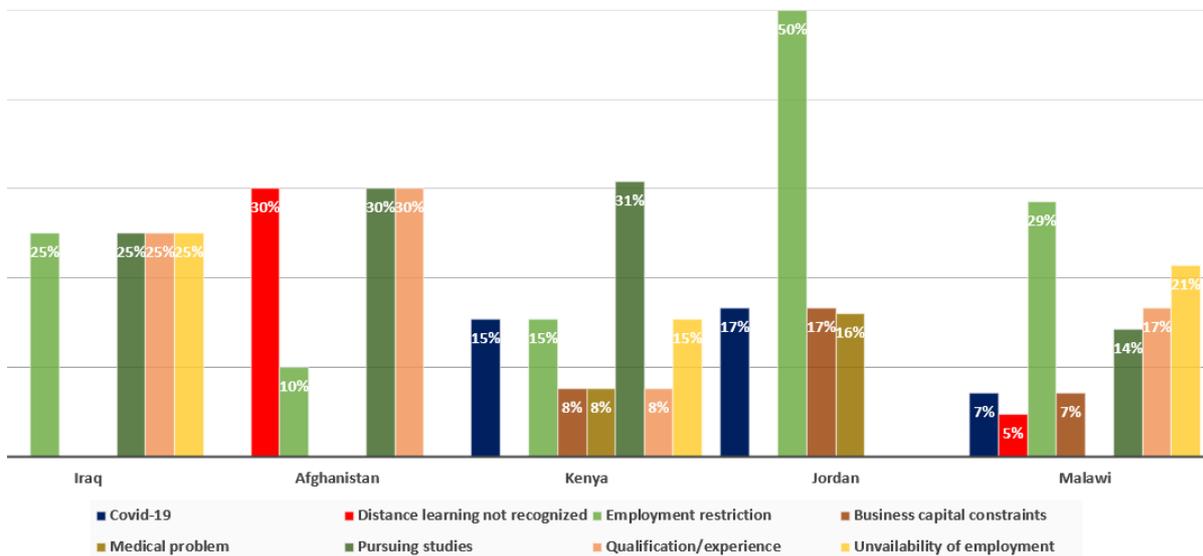


Figure 14 Motivations for unemployment by country

When zooming in each context, the relevance of the different reasons that hinder the access to the job market varies; employment restriction was reported in all the five countries with Jordan reporting a high rate of employment restriction (50%) as a cause for unemployment followed by Malawi (29%), Iraq (25%), Kenya (15%), and Afghanistan (10%). Pursuing further studies, as a cause of unemployment was reported in Kenya with the highest rate (31%), followed by Afghanistan (30%), Iraq (25%), and Malawi (14%) while in Jordan no one reported pursuing studies as a cause of their unemployment. Lack of necessary qualification/experience was

reported highest in Afghanistan (30%) followed by Iraq (25%), Malawi (17%), and Kenya (8%). The unavailability of employment as a cause of unemployment was reported highest in Iraq (25%) followed by Malawi (21%), and Kenya (15%). No one reported the unavailability of employment as a cause of their unemployment in Afghanistan or Jordan. COVID-19 as a cause of unemployment was reported highest in Jordan (17%), followed by Kenya (15%), and Malawi (7%). No one reported COVID-19 as a cause of their unemployment neither in Afghanistan nor in Iraq. Constraints in obtaining business loans or start-up capital was



reported as a cause of unemployment and highest in Jordan (17%) followed by Kenya (8%), and Malawi (7%). No one reported business capital constraints as a cause of their unemployment in Iraq or Afghanistan. Distance learning not being recognised

was reported highest in Afghanistan (30%), followed by Malawi (5%). Medical problems as a cause of unemployment were reported highest in Jordan (16%) followed by Kenya (8%).

Key points

- 91% of graduates reported at least one job experience after graduation (95% male and 86% female).
- 65% of graduates, regardless of gender, are currently employed.
- JWL, JRS, UNHCR, and Community-based Organisations are the top 5 employers of the Diploma graduates.
- The most common sectors of employment are: education (42%), social work (25%), community leadership (9%), research (6%) and logistics (5%).
- The most common jobs are Teachers (26% of jobs reported), Community mobiliser (7%), Research assistant (6%), Caseworker (6%), and Interpreter (6%).
- Restriction of employment (30%), pursuing further studies (16%), lack of qualification/experience (14%), and unavailability of employment (12%) are the four major causes of unemployment among the Diploma graduates.



4. Graduates' Higher Education Paths

The second area we investigated is whether Diploma Graduates pursue further higher education opportunities after completing the Diploma programme. Overall, 65% of Diploma graduates

continued their path in the higher education system after graduation – with a higher ratio of male graduates (70%) in comparison to female graduates (57%). Again, this percentage could be higher, as 25% of the sample graduated in 2020 a couple of months before they took the survey

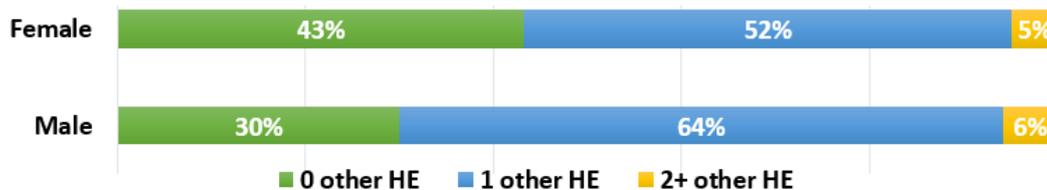


Figure 15: Graduates who joined other higher education programmes by gender

Kenya and Malawi recorded the highest ratio (79% and 80% respectively) of Diploma graduates who pursued further higher education, followed by Afghanistan

(47%), and Jordan (40%). No Diploma graduate from Iraq and Myanmar reported to have joined another higher education programme after graduation.

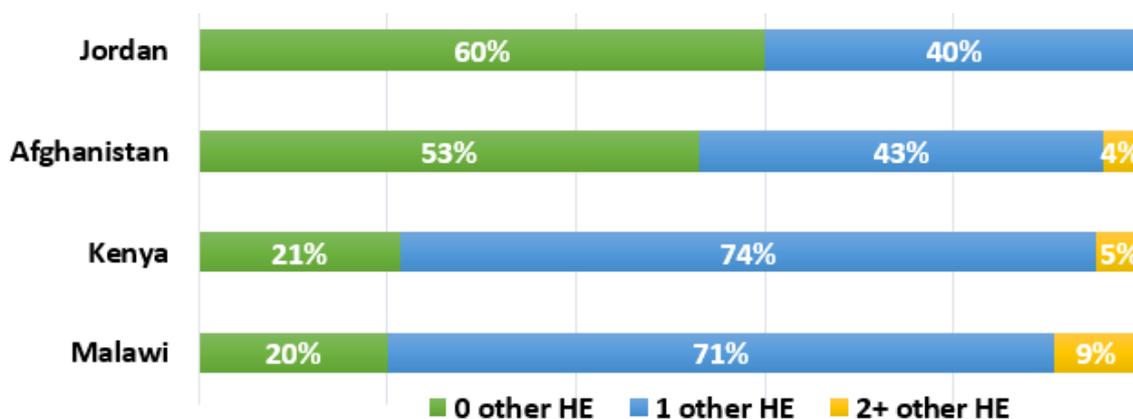


Figure 16: Graduates who joined other higher education programmes by country

The Diploma in Liberal Studies with 45 Credits has been shaped as a Foundational Programme which opens to students at the margins the entry to the University, the Diploma is not yet a degree. The intention of the foundational programme was to offer an entry point. The high number of graduates in Kakuma Camp and in Dzaleka Camp reflects exactly this function of the Diploma in

Liberal Studies. The 45 credits from a US University opened for many the door to BA programmes in online and campus Universities. For students in Afghanistan the Diploma in Liberal Studies was the opportunity to attend a high-quality programme; many of them were also enrolled in the local universities in Bamyan and Herat, in order to obtain a certificate recognised in the country.



The context in Amman, Jordan, is again different, because early on refugees looked at the Diploma in Liberal Studies as a gate way for resettlement. With some credits of a US University resettlement to the USA was seemingly more likely. Diploma graduates who chose the concentration in Social Work recorded the

highest ratio of the Diploma graduates who further pursued an academic path (69%), followed by Diploma graduates who chose the concentration in Business (64%), then graduates who chose the concentration in education (47%).

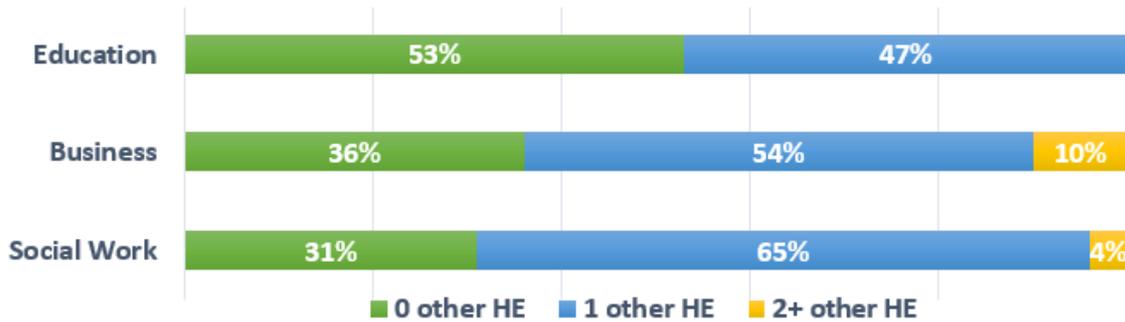


Figure 17: Graduates who joined other higher education programmes by concentration

84% of the Diploma graduates who pursued further education programmes, accessed programmes facilitated by JWL - 83% of male and 85% of female respondents. JWL facilitated the highest

ratio of Diploma graduates to pursued further education in Kenya (94%), followed by Malawi (85%), Jordan (75%), and Afghanistan (46%).

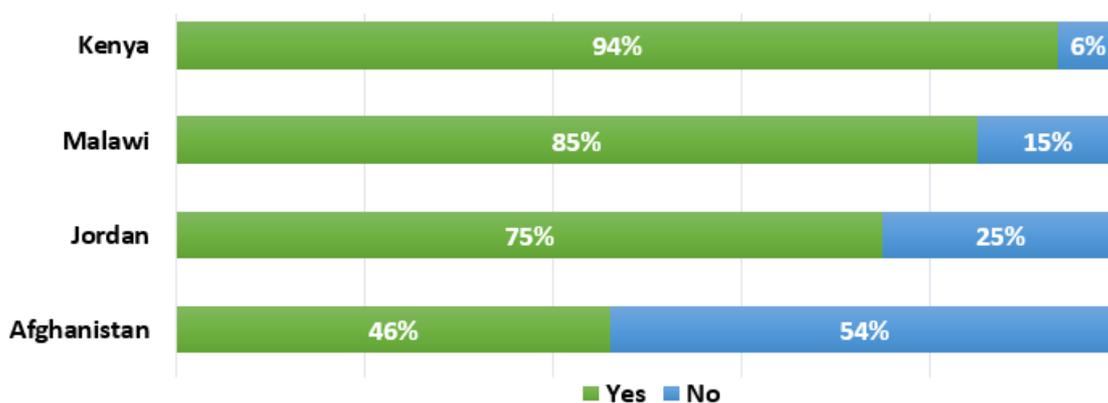


Figure 18: Graduates who pursued other higher education programmes facilitated by JWL in each country

Diploma graduates have joined 26 different education institutions around the world, proving that the Diploma in Liberal Studies was a real catalyser in opening doors to pursue global Higher Education

opportunities. SNHU - Southern New Hampshire University, was the institution taking most graduates (90 among the respondents), followed by Creighton University (6 among the respondents), are



the two most cited universities. The programmes they offer are also facilitated by JWL.

Over the years quite a number of the graduates of the Diploma were resettled to North America and some to Australia. Many of them could enter Higher education in the new host country based on the credits which were recognised. But a good number of graduates remained in Kakuma and Dzaleka Camp and did not have access to other higher education programmes. Southern New Hampshire University expanded their offers beyond Rwanda to new refugee camps. They took notice of the high quality of the JWL Diploma graduates and in agreement with Southern New Hampshire University all the 45 credits of the Diploma from Regis University were transferred and recognised. JWL in collaboration with SNHU could, in so doing, offer all those remaining graduates who wanted to reach a BA the chance to do so. 150 scholarships were made available to JWL graduates in the two camps. Similarly, Creighton University offered 20 places in their B.S. in Leadership programme. These places were offered to JWL graduates in Afghanistan and Jordan. This way, JWL could offer many of the Diploma graduates the chance to reach a degree programme in this first decade. JWL now offers its own degree programme with Xavier University Bhubaneswar (the BA in Sustainable Development).

Diploma graduates reported five motivators that triggered them to pursue further education. They reported finding a better job as one participant stated that "Better jobs require advanced education" (resp. 7). Other participants reported long-

term aspirations as a motivator to pursue further education and one participant stated that, "Since I was young I was dreaming how I could get a chance to study up to university" (resp. 150). Other participants reported the Diploma programme as a motivator to pursue further education and a participant stated, "I decided to continue [education] because JWL is my foundation [to] continue my higher education since I was a university drop out" (resp. 79). Other participants reported better serving the community as a motivator for them to pursue further education and a participant stated that "I was interested to become a leader in Afghanistan to bring about remarkable change in this country" (resp. 112). The desire to progress to further higher education studies was also reported, with a participant stating that "I decided to go further with my education because I want to enhance my knowledge and skills, so that I can become a good citizen of this country as well as becoming more professional" (resp. 25) after they graduated from the Diploma programme. Graduates in all the countries reported the desire to progress to further higher education studies and finding a better job as common motivators, with the desire to progress to further higher education studies as the main driver in all the countries, Jordan (75%), followed by Afghanistan (46%), Malawi (45%) and Kenya (41%). The second main driver in the refugee camps of Kakuma and Dzaleka in Kenya and Malawi is to give back to the community (25% and 24% respectively), while in Jordan it is to find a better job (25%), and in Afghanistan the graduates' long-term aspirations (19%).

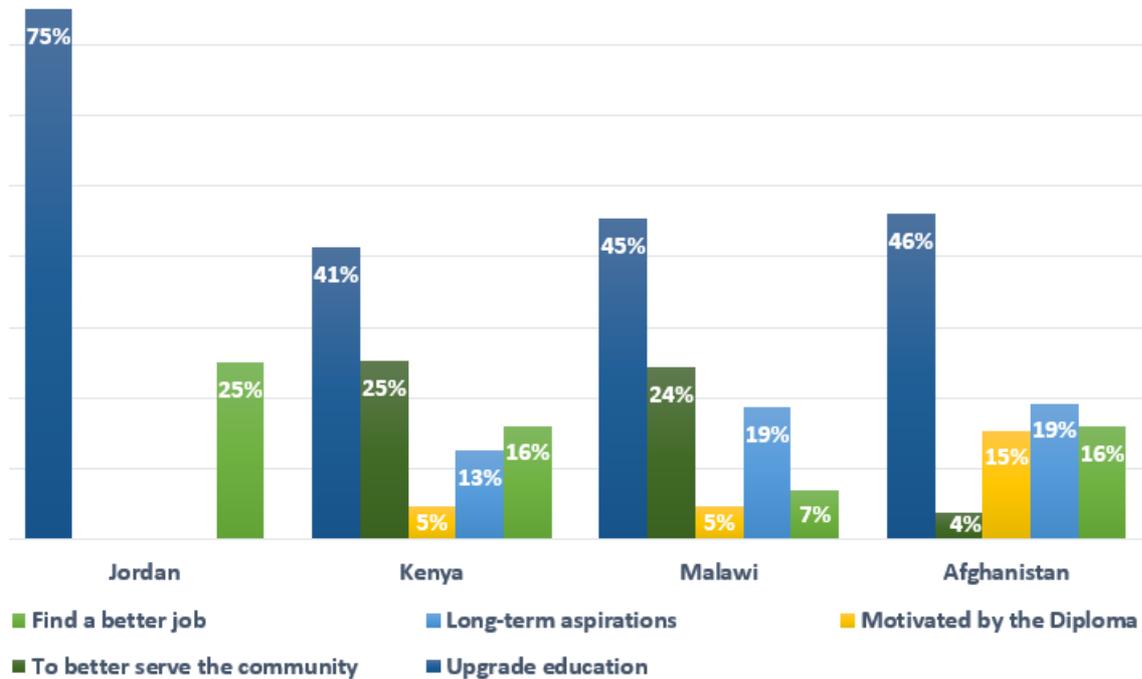


Figure 19: Drivers to pursue further education by country

Key points

- Overall, 65% of Diploma graduates continued their path in the higher education system– with a higher ratio of male graduates (70%) in comparison to female graduates (57%).
- Kenya and Malawi recorded the highest ratio (79% and 80% respectively) of Diploma graduates who pursued further higher education.
- Diploma graduates who majored in social work (69%) are more likely to go for further education than those who concentrated in business (64%) and education (47%).
- 84% of the Diploma graduates who pursued further education programmes, accessed programmes facilitated by JWL.
- Diploma Graduates have joined 26 different education institutions with SNHU - Southern New Hampshire University, taking most graduates, followed by Creighton University.



5. Graduates' engagement in their communities

So far, the report investigated the impact of the Diploma in Liberal Studies on the personal development of its graduates, in terms of career and education paths. This last section looks at how graduates engaged with their communities after graduation, to unpack the social potential of graduates as agents of change in their environments. 79% of graduates were engaged in at least one community engagement activity after they graduated from the Diploma programme (75% of female graduates and 81% of male graduates). The same percentage of graduates reported to be currently active in some efforts to contribute to their communities, bringing alive the Jesuit

motto 'men and women for others'. 19% of male graduates reported zero community engagement activity after the Diploma programme while 25% of female graduates reported zero community engagement after the Diploma programme; however, again, it has to be considered that 25% of the sample graduated in 2020 a couple of months before they took the survey. 15% of female graduates reported to have been engaged in two community engagement activities. 27% of male graduates reported to have been engaged in two or more community engagement activities. 7% of male graduates reported to have been engaged in three or more community engagement activities and 4% of male graduates in four community engagement activities.

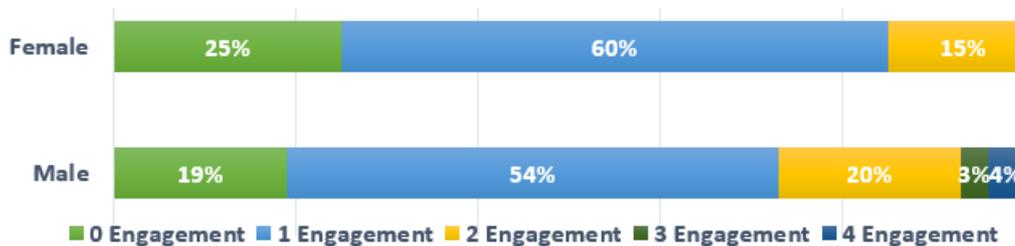


Figure 20: Reported community engagement activities by gender

Diploma graduates from all three concentrations reported a high level of engagement in community services, with a higher ratio for those who majored in education (82%), followed by graduates

who majored in social work (80%), then graduates who majored in business (76%).

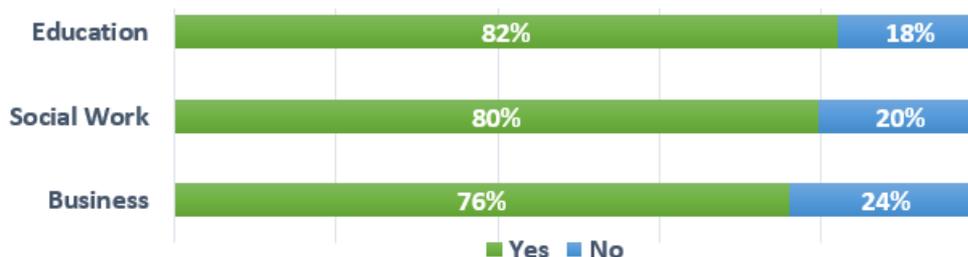


Figure 21: Community engagement activities by concentration



Diploma graduates in Malawi reported the highest ratio in community engagement activities (85%), followed by Kenya (82%), Afghanistan (71%), Jordan (60%), and Iraq

(54%). The only two graduates from Myanmar who participated in the survey also reported to be engaged in community activities.

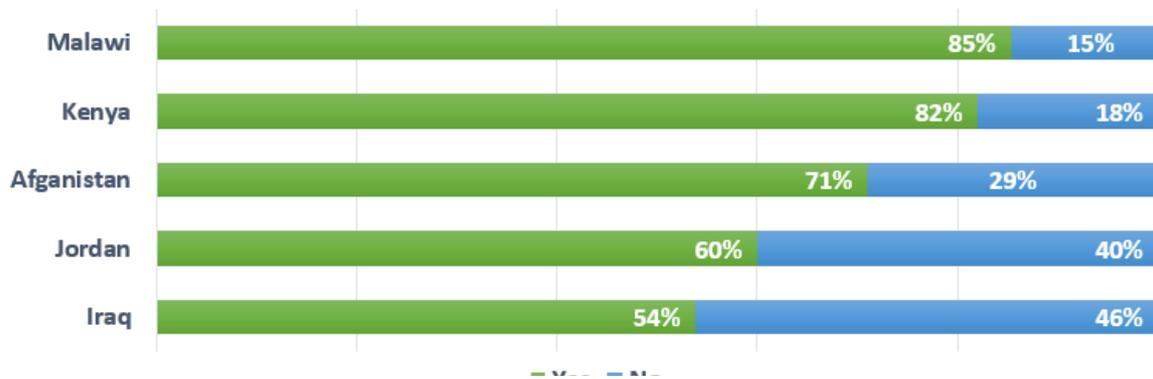


Figure 22: Community engagement activities by country

Older graduates seem to engage more in community engagement activities than their younger counterparts. Diploma graduates of age group 35-39 years old reported the highest ratio (90%) in community engagement, followed by graduates of age group 30-34 years old

(81%), graduates of age group 25-29 years old (75%), graduates of age group 25-29 years old (76%). The engagement of the oldest graduates (age group 40 and above) slightly decreases (79%) and this can be related to age.

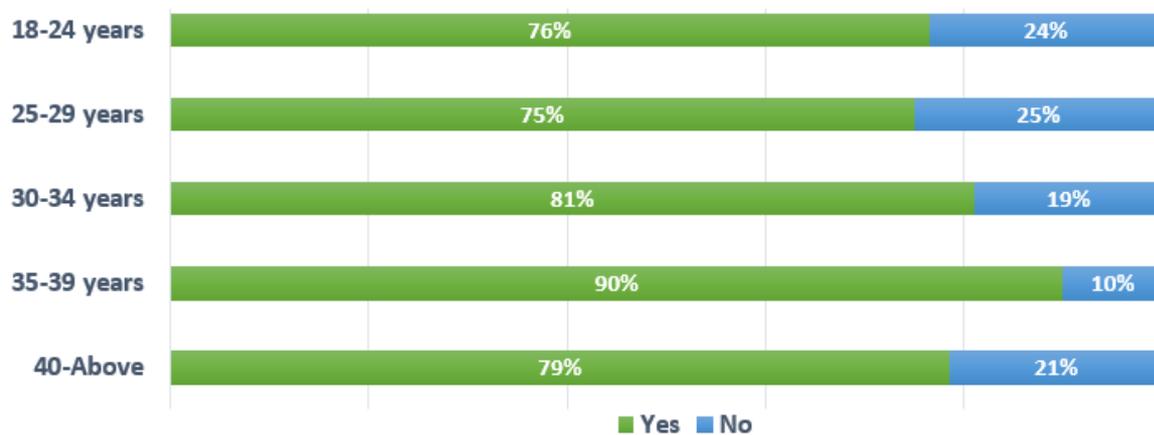


Figure 23: Community engagement activities by age group

Looking at the fields in which the graduates are active, most of the reported activities are in the field of Education (37%), followed by Social Work (32%), Community Leadership (14%), Health (4%),

Culture and Sports (4%), Media and Communication (3%), Business (3%), WASH (1%), Agriculture (1%), Religion (1%).

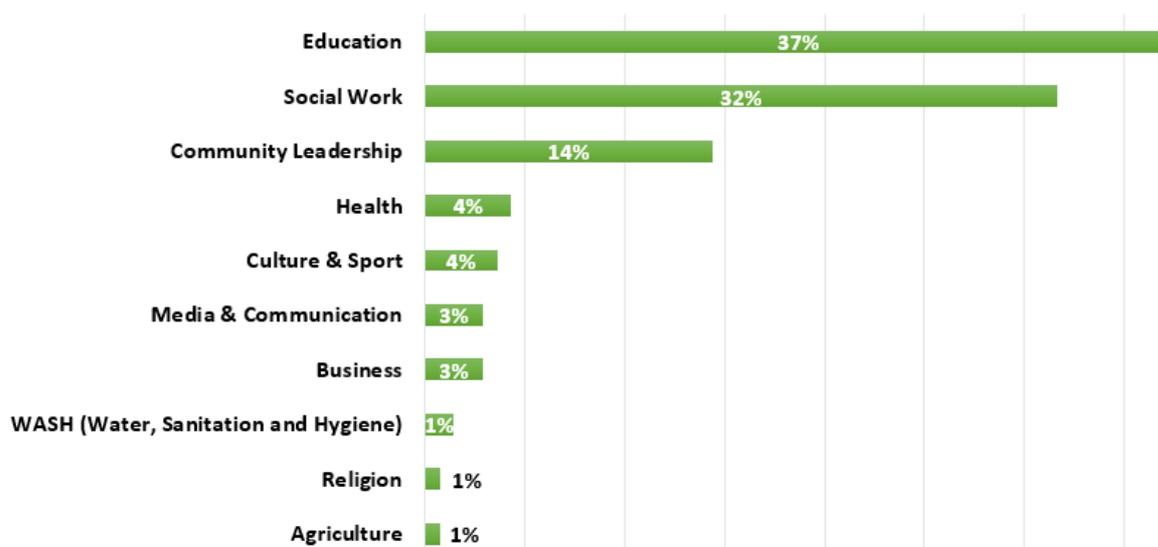


Figure 24: Fields of community engagement

Looking at the top five fields of engagement, the two main areas of engagement are related to education, with a larger proportion of women active in this field (49% of female and 37% of male) and to social work (33% female and 35% male).

Remarkably, male and female graduates are engaged equally in activities related to community leadership (16%); followed by activities related to culture and sports (2% female and 5% male) and to health (7% male).

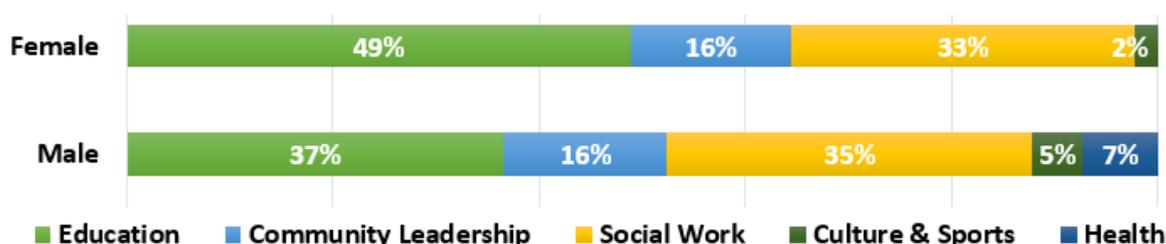


Figure 25: Top five fields of engagement by gender

Looking at the top 5 fields of engagement from a geographical perspective, education is the most common field of community engagement in all the countries (Iraq 72%, Afghanistan 63%, Jordan 40%, Kenya 36%), but in Malawi more graduates are engaged in social work activities (42%), followed by education (33%). In Jordan and Kenya, social work activities are also the most common type of activities with education

(respectively 40% and 36%). In all the countries, another relevant type of activity is related to community leadership: 20% in Jordan, 17% in Malawi, 16% in Afghanistan, and 14% in Iraq and Kenya. Health related activities were reported in Malawi (6%), Kenya and Afghanistan (5%); while Culture and Sport activities are mentioned only in Kenya (9%) and in Malawi (2%). Myanmar respondents mentioned Education and Social Work as fields of community



engagement in alignment with the rest of the respondents.

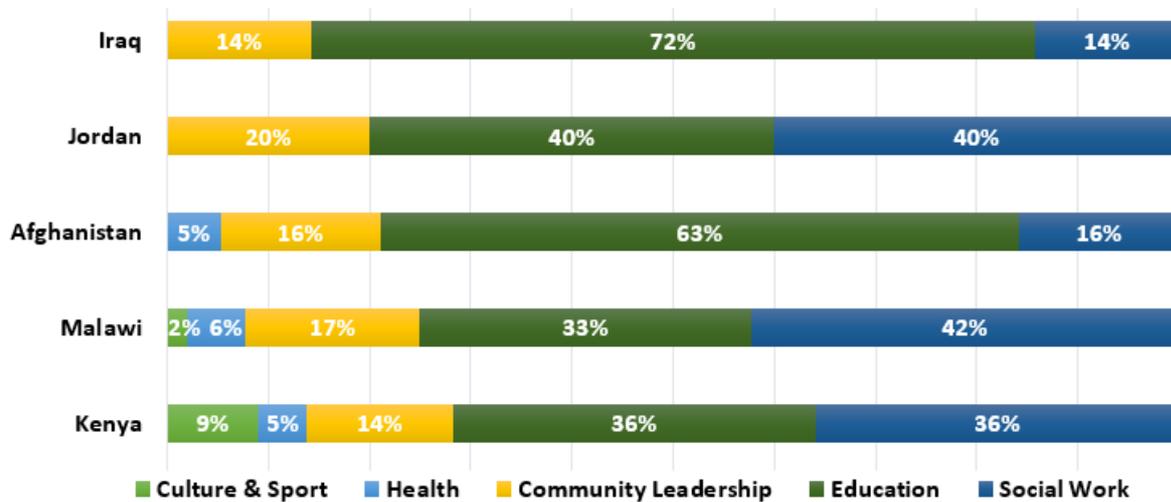


Figure 26: Top five fields of engagement by country

Diploma graduates reported having been engaged with Non-governmental Organisations (21% males – 47% females), Community-based Organisations (36% males – 35% females), International organisation/Humanitarian Organisations (13% males – 7% females), Educational

Institutions (9% males – 7% females), Government (2% males – 4% females). Business and Religious Institutions were only reported by male graduates, with 12% and 7% respectively.

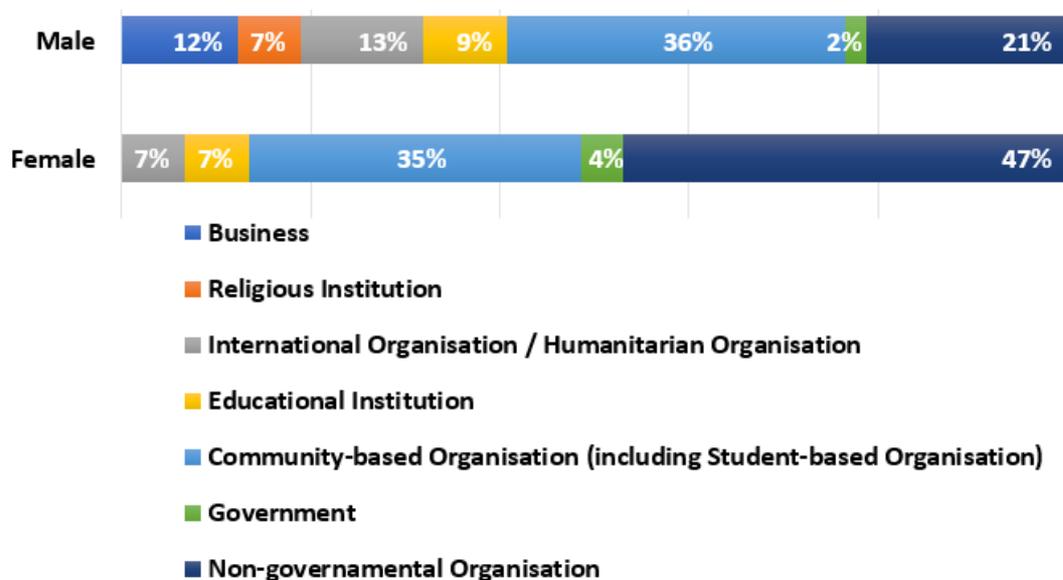


Figure 27: Types of organisations by gender



Diploma graduates have reported involvement in community engagement activities as Volunteers (8% males – 24% females), the roles of Manager/Leader (47% males – 49% females), Employee (1% males – 4% females), the roles of Initiator – Funder, entrepreneur (22% males – 7%

females), the roles of Community-based organisations/Student-based Organisations Member (18% males – 9% females), and other roles (4% males – 7% females).

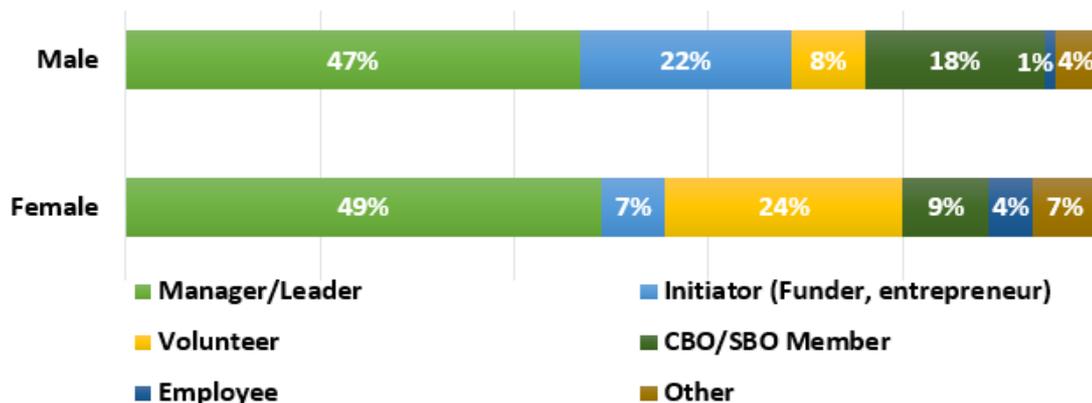


Figure 28: Roles by gender

In order to interpret this section and its results, it is important to highlight that probably not all respondents made a difference between community activities due to their employment versus voluntary activities. In both Malawi and Kenya, refugees are not allowed to work outside the camp. Being well trained persons, the

graduates more easily found jobs with NGOs and within the camp, most of these community-related. Graduates in Afghanistan and Iraq had another context with a broader range of activities beyond their community. Finally, in urban Amman, Jordan there is not a comparable community as one finds in a camp.

Key points

- 79% of graduates were engaged in at least one community engagement activity after they graduated from the Diploma programme (75% of female graduates and 81% of male graduates), and one of these activities is a current one.
- Diploma graduates in Malawi reported the highest ratio in community engagement activities (85%), followed by Kenya (82%), Afghanistan (71%), Jordan (60%), and Iraq (54%).
- The top five fields of community engagement are education, social work, community leadership, culture and sports and health. In all the countries Education and Social Work are the most common fields of community engagement.
- Women engaged more in activities related to the field of education (49%) in comparison to men (37%), and both men and women equally engage in activities related to community leadership (16%).



6. Concluding Remarks

At the start of the Diploma in Liberal Studies in 2010 there was no consensus on the opportunity to launch such an endeavour. To offer higher education in a blended learning mode in a refugee camp in rural Africa with poor internet connection and no permanent electricity, was unheard of; a three-year programme in such a volatile and unstable context was a risk. Critical questions were raised about the content: offering a curriculum in Liberal Studies to refugees? Wouldn't a practical job training be of greater use? In addition, a Diploma of 45 credits is not a degree but a foundation programme, so what would happen next? Would such a programme be accessible for both men and women? But students did not have these questions. They were making great efforts to get into the programme. It was their only chance to access higher education.

JWL set out with Regis University to offer the Diploma in Liberal Studies to foster critical thinking and help people at the margins to get an entry point to higher education, so to overcome the first biggest access barrier, and enable them to pursue their own pathway in education and the job market. The greatest hope was to form leaders in their community who, by giving back to their communities, would transform them.

The findings of this research are surprisingly positive and confirm the early assumptions, with set outcomes met more than one had dared to expect at the beginning: 88% of graduates found employment; 65% of graduates pursuing further studies. The engagement of graduates in their communities in the field of Education, Social work and Community Leadership reflects the successful training

of leaders in their communities, of 'men and women for others'.

Ultimately, the students who believed in the programme against all odds surpassed expectations, achieving the astoundingly positive outcomes with great impact in their communities.



7. Authors

Innocent Tshilombo is JWL Research Assistant intern and Master student at the Geneva Centre of Humanitarian Studies. He has led operations of humanitarian actions and blended education programs in hard to reach and emergency settings in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Dr. Isabella Rega is JWL Global Research Director and Associate Professor in Digital Media for Social Change at Bournemouth University (UK). She has been working as academic and practitioner in the field of the use of digital technologies to promote community development, in Europe, Africa and Latin America for the last 20 years.



JESUIT WORLDWIDE LEARNING
HIGHER EDUCATION AT THE MARGINS

18, rue Jacques Dalphin
1227 Carouge/GE Switzerland
CH-660-0056017-8
Website: www.jwl.org
Phone: +41 (0)22 525 38 33
E-mail: jwlinfo@jwl.org

If you want to cite this report:

Tshilombo I. and Rega, I. (2021). *Transformation at the Margins: Diploma in Liberal Studies as a catalyser of personal and community development*. Research Report #01. Jesuit Worldwide Learning