



World Access to Higher Education Day 2019: Summary Report



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1. What is World Access to Higher Education Day (WAHED)?

Participation in higher education (HE) by those from all social backgrounds is crucial to economic and social development for individual countries and at the collective global level. In all countries where evidence is available, over 90%, the evidence shows that HE participation is unequal. It is imperative that action is taken to address this inequality. UNESCO have recognised the importance of access to HE by making equal access to education, including university, one of its Global Goals for 2030

By 2030, countries should provide equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and higher education, including university – UNESCO Sustainable Development Goal

WAHED is a global commemoration day that acts as a catalyst to mobilise action at the local, regional, national and international level to address inequalities in access to higher education across the world. The aim of WAHED is to act as the springboard for the creation a global community of organisations and countries committed to addressing inequality in access to HE. WAHED is led by the National Education Opportunities Network (NEON) which is the profession organisation for access to HE in the UK and was once again supported this year by the Northern Consortium. **The Northern Consortium is a charity founded in 1987 to facilitate access to British education for international students.**

Special mention goes to the East Midlands Widening Participation Research and Evaluation Partnership (EMWPREP) based in the UK who made a distinct commitment to support WAHED by registering as Premium supporters. **We would like to thank the following organisations in particular for their special support of World Access to Higher Education Day 2019:**



2. World Access to Higher Education Day (WAHED) 2019

The second WAHED was on November 28th 2019. The theme for the second World Access to Higher Education day was **Advocating for Equity**. It is crucial that if access to higher education is becoming less unequal concerted efforts are made to build the arguments for greater access and we engage governments and other key stakeholders in this work. Building on this theme WAHED 2019 extended its reach and influence from 2018.

- Over 200 organisations engaged in WAHED 2019 from 45 countries including governments of 11 countries.
- The number of WAHED supporters increased from 65 to 124. WAHED now has named supporters in 32 countries from 6 continents and over 20 organisations made statements of support for WAHED.
- Over 35 registered WAHED events were held across the world including in Australia, Brazil, Colombia, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Nigeria, Rwanda, United Kingdom and Venezuela.
- The WAHED twitter account had over 100,000 impressions through November 2019.
- NEON & WAHED delivered in partnership their first *Global Equitable Access to Higher Education Capacity Building* Training course supported by the Asia Europe Foundation for participants from 20 countries in Asia and Europe.
- The second WAHED Global Summit was delivered in partnership with the University of Edinburgh with over 60 delegates from 25 countries.
- WAHED expanded its work in the area of thought leadership with a series of articles in the 'WAHED Voices' series from Japan, Croatia and the European Universities Association. WAHED with the support of the Lumina Foundation also launched its second major research report '*Measuring the Impact of Equity Promotion Policies: Lessons from National and Institutional Case Studies*' written by global tertiary education expert Jamil Salmi.

3. Who did WAHED engage in 2019?

WAHED brought together a coalition of supporters from a range of organisations in 2019. These included universities, global higher education organisations and their patrons and non-governmental organisations working on making higher education more equal. Outlined below are some of the statements of support WAHED received



HRH The Duchess of Sussex, Patron of the Association of Commonwealth Universities

Today, on World Access to Higher Education Day, we are able to celebrate the vital role that colleges and universities play in society and how important it is for all people, regardless of gender or socioeconomic background, to have the opportunity to access this higher education. The value of this cannot be understated. Because education expands mindsets, and those minds can then expand the scope of the world at large. From a micro to a macro level, it is with education that we see great change [...] I am proud to be patron of the ACU and all that it stands for, as we champion those seeking a higher education and commit to making this world a better place – together.

The University of Wollongong, Australia

All students with the ability to obtain a uni education should have the chance to do so. This is at the heart of UOW's approach to enabling access & success for all students. What we strive for at a local level, WAHED advocates for globally. Joining forces, we will create change.

Institute for the Development of Education, Croatia

As an organisation advocating for better policies to ensure equitable access to higher education (both in Croatia and at the EU level), the Institute for the Development of Education (<http://en.iro.hr/>) fully endorses World Access to Higher Education Day 2019!

Ryerson University, Canada

Universities and colleges have a responsibility to open doors for people from all walks of life. As those students become leaders, that diversity of thought pushes boundaries and can ultimately change the world.

City of Sanctuary and the Student Action for Refugees (STAR) network

Universal education and lifelong learning are a basic human right for all people, but one which is currently being denied to many of the millions of people forcibly displaced from their homes and seeking sanctuary elsewhere.

We, as Higher Education Institutions and related organisations in the UK, pledge to uphold and develop our commitments towards increasing access to Higher Education for people seeking sanctuary, as well as to building a culture of welcome in the UK and beyond.

We are committed to working alongside states and the wider global humanitarian community to deliver the promise of the Global Compact on Refugees including working towards a goal where 15% of the world's refugees have access to higher education by 2030. As part of our commitment we will continue to offer, and to develop, sanctuary scholarships and other innovative routes for improving access.'

Around the world universities signed a global statement of support for refugee access to higher education for World Access to Higher Education Day. This was in advance of the Global Refugee Forum 2019 (17-18 December 2019) where UK universities pledged to continue and expand their work for refugee student access to higher education led by STAR and City of Sanctuary.

3.1 WAHED and Social Media

Twitter was once again at the forefront of WAHED's social media activity. Tweets on the day from the WAHED Twitter account received 53,049 impressions and over 700 likes, with total impressions for the month of November alone reaching 115,000 impressions. In November the @WorldAccessHE twitter handle was tagged/ mentioned 159 times and the account gained 194 new followers out of the 370+ gained since the official launch of WAHED 2019 in May. The hashtag #WAHED2019 also started to trend at one stage during the day in the UK.

[The Association for Commonwealth Universities tweeted:](#)

"Today we are able to celebrate...how important it is for all people, regardless of gender or socioeconomic background, to have the opportunity to access this higher education."

Read our Patron HRH The Duchess of Sussex's message of support on #WAHED2019 <http://bit.ly/37GYtXB>

[UNHCR United Kingdom tweeted:](#)

Birkbeck shows its commitment to delivering on the promise of the Global Compact for Refugees. This includes working towards a goal where 15% of the world's refugees have access to Higher Education by 2030. #RefugeeForum #WAHED2019 #globalcompactonrefugees

[Mary Mitchell O'Connor Minister of State for Higher Education in Ireland tweeted:](#)

The Action Plan to Promote Traveller Participation in Higher Ed aims to double the number of Travellers attending HEIs, building on good work already being done to widen access to people who traditionally have not seen HE as a viable option @HEAaccess @tudublinaccess #WAHED2019

[The National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education tweeted:](#)

Keeping the #StudentVoice at the forefront of the #StudentEquity conversation, we present a new publication for #WAHED2019! Challenging notions of deficit, we celebrate the unique qualities and achievements of 17 inspirational students. #EnablingEquity2019 <https://ncsehe.edu.au/new-ncsehe-publication-my-story-student-voice/>

[Katja Urbatsch, founder and managing director of ArbeiterKind.de tweeted:](#)

#ArbeiterKind.de encourages students to become the first in their families to go to university. 6,000 volunteers are role models, tell their stories and give information. We support #WAHED2019 to raise global awareness for inequalities in access and success in #highereducation.

[Universitat Orberta de Catalunya tweeted:](#)

Today is World #HigherEducationAccess Day and in the #UOC we keep working to ensure the right of all people to access university. For the first time, this commitment is part of the international political agenda in UN's #Agenda2030. #WAHED2019

4. WAHED Events 2019

One of the key elements of WAHED is that it is not one event in one location. WAHED is about organisations using WAHED to push forward the access to higher education agenda in their own organization, region or country. Events delivered on WAHED 2019 included webinars, workshops, seminars, programme launches, award ceremonies, university taster sessions, lectures/seminars and conferences. The events highlighted and addressed various aspects of the collective effort to eliminate inequalities in accessing higher education for the marginalized and disadvantaged. They included for example events on reaching vulnerable groups and rural communities led by the Asociación Colombiana de Universidades in Colombia, on access for Roma students to Higher Education in Hungary and cross institutional issues in supporting access and successful participation for Black & Minority Ethnic students in Brazil. All the WAHED events made an impact on access to higher education for students in different ways. The full list of events can be found [here](#). The events featured below capture some of the ways these events were catalysts for global change in access to HE.

4.1 The WAHED Global Summit

Hosted by the University of Edinburgh the WAHED Global Summit drew together colleagues from key organisations engaged in the global access to HE agenda, with representatives from over 25 different countries. The summit looked in particular at the challenges facing those with disabilities and post-conflict settings in accessing higher education. It included contributions from the Equity Practitioners in Higher Education in Australasia (EPHEA) & the Lumina Foundation.

4.2 Global Equitable Access to Higher Education Capacity Building Training course

The Capacity Building Training on Equitable Access to Higher Education supported by the Asia Europe Foundation brought together a diverse range of HE managers, researchers and senior education officials from across 2 continents. The aim with the capacity building programme over the forthcoming years is to build a community of emerging leaders who can change the access landscape across the world. At the end of the 4-day course each participant presented an action plan for access change in their organization.



4.3 WAHED Global Event Series

Partners of WAHED organized over 30 events across the world. Three of these events are featured below:

Higher Education Inclusiveness Through Part-Time Studies – Crawford University, Nigeria

Crawford University Nigeria organized a WAHED event centered around the role of Part-Time Studies in widening access to higher education.



The event featured short talks, a play-let and roundtable talks that explored:

- Securing a future with part-time education
- Overcoming poverty through access to part-time education
- Enhancing entrepreneurial skills through access to education
- Career prospects available through accessing higher education

The play-let highlighted the need for higher education and explored the varying opportunities, outcomes and experiences made available to two entrepreneurs due to Higher Education.

It also featured a keynote address from Dr Victor Olu Akinola, Dean, School of Education, Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education in Lagos State titled: Reflecting And Structuring Higher Education Towards A Highly Productive Population which can be [read here](#).

Equity on access and success to HE: Strategies to handle the challenges to face, Brazil

The University of Campinas (UNICAMP), Brazil organized a WAHED event with a focus the various barriers faces by students from non-traditional backgrounds. During the event students shared their stories of success and the challenges faced during the process of accessing higher education through a series of short videos.

Faculty members, academic staff and leaders were also invited to participate in a debate focusing on minimizing and overcoming challenges for a successful academic trajectory.

Data on the determinants of success considering the profile of undergraduate students, admission and academic performance, educational environment, curricula, and financial support were presented during the event to inform this debate.

Access for Roma to Higher Education - Social Media Campaign, Hungary

Third sector organisation ‘Roma Students and Graduates Across Europe’ organized a social media campaign to broadcast the voices of Roma youth from across Europe, and present their thoughts on why they think access for Roma in higher education matters.

[The campaign](#) which took place on 26th November 2019 aimed to raise awareness around inequalities in access to higher education for Roma, and advocate for equitable access to higher education in Europe to policymakers, governments and universities.

Some of the student features that were released as part of the campaign can be seen below:



5. Thought leadership and WAHED

WAHED is playing a crucial role in extending the global knowledge base in the area of inequalities in access to HE. In 2018 the first global survey of HE policy '[All around the world – Higher education equity policies across the globe](#)' was launched for WAHED.

It showed that the policy commitments to addressing HE inequalities across the world were weak in the majority of countries with only 11% of them having a comprehensive national equity strategy that covered a range of equity groups.

Measuring the Impact of Equity Promotion Policies: Lessons from National and Institutional Case Studies

This year a follow-up study was undertaken to explore the most successful equity promotion policies and to assess the circumstances under which some policies work better than others. The new study focused on a small sample of countries that were included in the 2018 report: Australia, Austria, Colombia, South Africa and Vietnam.

The findings of the report are translated into five policy recommendations for countries and institutions keen on reducing disparities and offering equal opportunities in higher education. The report was once again authored by Jamil Salmi, global expert in tertiary education and supported by the Lumina Foundation.

The full study can be accessed [here](#).

“National commitment, translating into comprehensive, well-resourced policies, is indispensable to design and implement effective equity promotion policies to overcome both financial and non-monetary barriers. A long-term view is key to guaranteeing continuity and consistency in equity promotion policies.”

Measuring the Impact of Equity Promotion Policies: Lessons from National and Institutional Case Studies – Jamil Salmi, November 2019

5.1 WAHED Voices

To further inform the ongoing discourse around WAHED, and the wider issues with achieving greater access to higher education globally, a number of original discussion pieces were released in the lead up to and on the day. These took the form of 'WAHED Voices' features which provided an international perspective on various aspects of the access/equity agenda, and 'Access Project Spotlight' briefs which showcased projects or research undertaken to widen access to HE and their impact.

WAHED will continue to act as platform for the evidence and policy thinking that is essential if inequalities in HE participation are to be addressed. In 2019 our WAHED Voices included articles from:

[Masa Kobayashi](#), Emeritus Professor from the University of Tokyo's Centre for Research and Development of Higher Education on **Access and Student Financial Aid in Japan**.

[Thomas Jorgensen](#), Senior Policy Coordinator at the European University Association on **Leadership support for Diversity in European Universities**.

[Newcastle University](#), on their PARTNERS Programme that offers a supported entry route into Newcastle University for under-represented student groups

The [Institute for the Development of Education](#) (Croatia), on the new National Action Plan for Enhancing the Social Dimension of Higher Education in Croatia.

[Mosaik Education](#), on their Digital Guidance Workshops for Refugees Access University in Jordan and Lebanon.

6. What Now for WAHED?

It is undoubtedly the case that WAHED been the catalyst for new activities, collaborations and research which has moved forward the global access to higher education agenda. We believe that there is a long-term role for WAHED in this area but in order to do this a strong, sustainable model for the delivery of WAHED is needed. We will be consulting with partners in early 2020 to shape the future of WAHED.

Going forward WAHED will be looking to:

- Develop and strengthen what universities and other organization can do to enable greater access & participation in HE by launching the World Access to Higher Education Network.
- Expand our capacity building training with new partners.
- Develop our thought leadership and advocacy role.

Working with WAHED

We are keen to hear from all organisations and individuals across the world who share the vision of WAHED and want to make a difference to inequality. To work with us please contact access@worldaccesshe.com .