

## Global Refugee Forum 2019 Template for Good Practices

Please send this template and any attachments to the Global Refugee Forum Coordination Team at [hqgrf@unhcr.org](mailto:hqgrf@unhcr.org) **as early as possible** to facilitate the consolidation and presentation of good practices in time for the Global Refugee Forum.

Good practices can be shared on the Global Refugee Forum website and then included in the digital portal, which is currently under development.

Please complete a separate template for each good practice.

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<b>Partners</b>	<i>Refugee communities and Australian communities</i>
<b>Name of good practice</b>	<i>Cisarua Refugee Learning Centre</i>
<b>Country/ Region:</b>	Indonesia
<b>Year(s) of implementation and duration:</b>	2014 – to present
<b>Document related to the good practice model/approach:</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Attached <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Available at:	<a href="https://cisarualearning.com/">https://cisarualearning.com/</a>

## General description of the good practice:

The **Cisarua Refugee Learning Centre (CRLC)** is the first refugee established and managed school in Indonesia, and it inspired a refugee-led education revolution.

In 2014, a small group of refugees knew that education is a human right and decided to start a school for their children. The men were scared to risk their ‘refugee status’, so women volunteered as teachers. Starting in a small room, with a few books and a \$200 donation, it was an instant success. Within a week there were 40 children learning, and another 40 on the waiting list.

A community, which had previously not existed, formed around the school. When they posted photos and video online, outside individuals began to bring books, help train teachers and develop the syllabus, and provide money for rent on a larger building. Within three months the school had moved to a bigger space, and had over 100 children and 15 volunteer managers and teachers.

The CRLC is entirely run by volunteer refugees and teaches over 200 students aged from 5 to 65. Its approach has been followed by at least 10 other refugee-led schools and there are now over 1800 refugees receiving education at refugee-led education centres in Indonesia.

## Main activities of the good practice:

CRLC provides primary and lower high school education to approximately 130 children under 18, and basic literacy lessons to 80 older men and women.

It is the centre of a community, and is a place where refugees can connect with each other, share information, share small financial support, identify mentally troubled or at-risk refugees, and organise sports and other activities.

The school is a safe place, where children are able to enjoy their childhoods, build friendships, learn English, maths, science, sport, art, drama and other subjects. Adult refugees teach all lessons and manage the school including curriculum and staffing decisions, social media, hosting visitors, and community liaison.

For interested people outside the refugee community, it is a space where they can connect and meet refugees. Every year the school receives hundreds of visitors from Indonesia, Australia and around the world. They include Indonesian and Australian Members of Parliament, academics, undergraduate students on study tours, refugee supporters, and large and small media organisations. Each visitor provides an opportunity for the refugees to educate others about who they are and where they come from.

CRLC provides a liaison point for UNHCR Indonesia to disseminate information or consult about refugee needs.

### **Results of the good practice:**

CRLC immediately transformed the refugee community in Cisarua. Before the centre, refugees were isolated, did not trust each other or outsiders, and slept throughout most of the day.

CRLC has provided refugees with a structure to their day, an identity beyond ‘refugee’ and a sense of pride and purpose. CRLC boosts resilience and mutual support, social bonds of trust, reliable information and an extended network of support. The children are meeting their developmental milestones and are buffered from the deleterious effects of prolonged transit.

Education at CRLC is on par with any average primary school anywhere. They learn from an Australian syllabus, speak fluent English, and have in-depth cultural understandings and developed relationships with individuals in all major destination countries.

CRLC students resettled are entering their age-appropriate grade levels, most without needing English as a Second Language support. Resettled teachers are enrolling in university within 18 months of resettlement. The community remains connected with each, developing an ‘institutional knowledge’ and maintaining determination to work hard to prepare themselves for the opportunity they hope to have in the future.

CRLC enables refugees to speak for themselves as UNHCR, NGOs and media organisations now seek them out for comment.

### **Challenges in implementing the good practice and how they are being addressed:**

Challenges include relationships with the local community, national government policies, individual financial hardship, and raising money to support the schools.

There have previously been difficulties with the local community, causing several NGOs to move their offices from Cisarua. The refugees invite the local community to simple events and gatherings in the school, and have developed a friendship. Recently, at a village-wide event, the local Chief said that “Indonesians and Refugees live together in Cisarua like brothers”.

Registering the school with Indonesian authorities has not yet been achieved and so students do not get formal educational credit. The school has been visited by many Indonesian authorities and Members of Parliament and all have been positive towards its goals.

No financial support is available to refugees in the community, forcing many into debt. Some students and families have been forced into homelessness or detention due to poverty.

An Australian charity, Cisarua Learning was established in 2015 to support CRLC. That charity raises enough to support rent and materials, and a small stipend for the teachers and managers. Increasingly the charity is supporting the rent of other schools in the area, but the education of 1800 refugees across Indonesia is mainly driven by refugees themselves.