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Topic B. Measures to provide education to refugees and internally displaced people

I. Introduction

Education is a fundamental human right, established in the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child and the 1951 Refugee Convention.¹ Yet the challenges for refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs) in accessing education remain stark. According to a recent report done by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), only 50 percent of refugee children have access to primary education and only 22 percent of refugee adolescents have access to secondary education.

The situation is particularly serious for girls, since only eight refugee girls for every ten boys have access to primary school, while only seven girls for every ten boys have access to high school. Given the fact that refugees spend, on average, 20 years in forced displacement, this is not just a temporary break in the schooling of children. Also, being out of school as a refugee often means never having the opportunity to study. Almost 60 million people were involved in forced displacement in 2015, the highest number since 1945.²

Education for refugees and displaced people is a human right, but also, it protects them from other situations, like child marriage, illegal adoption and forced labor. School is a protected space and help people learn about their human rights, health measures but also, helps children and teenagers to develop a social network.

¹ United Nations. (n.d.). Education. Retrieved December 8, 2019, from <https://www.unhcr.org/education.nhtml>.

² United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2015)

It also should be taken into account that girls are likely to have less opportunity in school and jobs because of gender inequality, so they could be even more affected in these situations. Girls and women: 70% of the world's internally displaced population tends to be out of school at higher rates and have lower literacy rates than boys and men of comparable ages.³

II. Concept definition

- *Displaced people*: people who have to leave their country mainly because of violence, massive human rights violations, armed conflicts, etc.⁴
- *Internally displaced people (IDPs)*: individuals who have not crossed an international border to find sanctuary, but have remained inside their home countries. Even if they have fled for similar reasons as refugees. IDPs legally remain under the protection of their own government – even though that government might be the cause of their flight. As citizens, they retain all of their rights and protection under both human rights and international humanitarian law.⁵
- *Refugee*: someone who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.⁶
- *Stateless*: This term means not having a homeland, not being recognized by any state despite from being born there; this leads to the problem of lack of education for stateless children, or health care if they are sick, they cannot apply for a formal job because they are not allowed to work;

³ Policy Paper 26 (n.d) p.7 Retrieved December 11, 2019, from <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000244847>.

⁴ OIM. Glosario sobre inmigración. Ginebra, Suiza, pp. 19-53.

⁵ Regarding internally displaced persons, see UNHRC's website: <https://www.unhcr.org/sy/29-internally-displaced-people.html>

⁶ 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, Article 1, A.2.

people who are stateless does not have human rights because they don't belong to any state.⁷

- *Stateless de facto*: De facto is a Latin term which means that exists in fact. A person who is a stateless de facto is the one that actually has a nationality, but considering that they flee from their State, they don't have the protection either because they decline the protection or the State refuses to protect them.⁸
- *Vulnerable groups*: Since refugees are considered a vulnerable group it's important to define the concept; are groups or sectors of society that are more prone to be victims of violence, discrimination; also people that are recovering from natural disasters, economic difficulties; or the most vulnerable during conflicts or crisis like women, children or elderly.

III. Current issues

While examining the situation of recent refugees, the United Nations human rights treaty bodies have repeatedly expressed concerns about the limited enjoyment of rights by persons fleeing armed conflict or persecution who arrive at the borders of States. Drawing attention to various situations since the most recent refugee crisis, the treaty bodies have raised several issues regarding the right to education, the fundamental one being refugees' access to education. In addition, intolerance, xenophobia, aggression, national and ethnic tensions and conflicts affect many groups in many places.

Displaced people, for instance, are sometimes detained for extended periods and without legitimate reasons. The hesitation and resistance of some countries to allocating financial resources or promising resettlement for refugees seem too often linked to the perception that the influx of people might threaten their national security.

⁷ BBC mundo. Quiénes son los apátridas y por qué no tienen acceso a la nacionalidad. BBC, 5/11/14.

From: https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias/2014/11/141104_onu_nacionalidad_apatridas_quienes_son_lv

⁸ OIM. Glosario sobre inmigración. Ginebra, suiza, p. 8.

Education is an important tool to ensure peaceful societies. Quality education is an important means to counter intolerance in individual attitudes and to lead to a more inclusive society. It is a first step to prevent racism, xenophobia and other discrimination. Greater efforts therefore need to be made in host countries, in order to teach about human rights, respect, tolerance, and value diversity. Quality inclusive education has an important role in making people open-minded and tolerant, and must therefore be prioritized.

According to UNHCR, the number of displaced people all over the world has increased in the past 20 years in an uncontrolled way, despite from the effort that has been done internationally, until reaching more than 70 millions of displaced; the conflicts zones are more every year, more and more violence and discrimination is been presented against this sector of the population, in words of Filippo Grandi, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, "the story behind these figures is one of failure to prevent conflict, promote tolerance and lay the foundations for a lasting peace, a crisis of political leadership that has resulted in the number of refugees growing year after year, establishing new and unwanted records."⁹

In Nigeria, after violent attacks to civilians, there were 2 millions internally displaced people (IDP's). By early 2016, an estimated 952,029 school-age children had fled the violence.¹⁰ This attack happened in 2009, affecting until now the citizens, and forcing them to leave the country to look for education for their children and protection for their families. Even though, Displacement Tracking Matrix reported that in 19 out of 42 displacement camps in six states, children did not have access to any formal or non-formal education facilities in June 2015-¹¹

In Myanmar, the Rohingya minority was internally displaced for reasons of race and religion in 2018, some people migrate to Bangladesh where they are

⁹ Grandi, F.(20/06/19). Detrás de cada número se encuentra una tragedia. UNHCR Mexico. From: <https://www.acnur.org/es-mx/noticias/historia/2019/6/5d0bf5b14.html>

¹⁰ Human Rights Watch, 2016.

¹¹ No more excuses: Provide education to all forcibly displaced people. (n.d.). p. 6 Retrieved from <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000244847>.

trying to cover their basic needs, but this country is having increasing problems with the resources, in this way, they cannot afford bringing children a formal education to keep developing their abilities and within their possibilities to become productive citizens, because they have their own problems attending the populations which is below to the poverty line. In addition to the deplorable situation in which they are living, the army from Myanmar was accused by UN researchers to have intentions of committing genocide, they also blamed the government for don't giving the properly protection to this Muslim minority.¹²

In Latin America, education is a problem because about 50,000 children try to migrate to the US but they were stopped in the country border and the people that visit those places reported that the type of education of these children is inadequate.¹³

In Africa, where most of the refugees are from that zone, the education is a huge problem because of the lack of an efficient education system. In Chad, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda are in the Horn of Africa's Djibouti Declaration and what are doing is giving a better education for at least 12% of the refugees, but this is clearly not enough.¹⁴ Also what some African countries want to implement is the teaching of different languages to the children, so that they can progress in a secondary level in education.

As it was said before, the 63% of the refugees are in primary school but only the 24% in secondary school, the worst part of this is the higher education that only the 3% of the refugees are in it; this type of education is the most

¹² El país. La ONU califica de "intento de genocidio" la persecución de los rohingyas en Myanmar. El país, 28/08/18. From: https://elpais.com/internacional/2018/08/27/actualidad/1535356397_674335.htm

¹³ UNESCO. The right to education is challenged for migrants in the region | GEM Report, Latin America and the Caribbean. UNESCO OFFICE IN SANTIAGO, Chile, Santiago, 20/11/2018. From: http://www.unesco.org/new/en/santiago/press-room/single-new/news/latin_america_and_the_caribbean_migrant_and_refugee_childr/

¹⁴ UNESCO. New UNESCO Report reveals the strain of refugees on education systems in sub-Saharan Africa. 20/11/2018. From: <https://en.unesco.org/gem-report/sites/gem-report/files/4%20-%20Sub%20Saharan%20Africa%20-%202019%20GEM%20Report.pdf>

important of the education because is when this children can start with their leadership, creativity energy and idealism.¹⁵

Another major problem is that in some countries, such as Bangladesh, a curriculum is needed to enter school, something that refugees do not have. Also with this, the problem is not only education but also the protection of these children. In case they manage to enter the school in their country or in a refugee school, they will be in a dangerous situation at all times since they are constantly attacked in these schools.

The most important challenges that refugees are facing and to which more attention should be given, are the following:

- *Legal barriers* including lack of clear provisions on compulsory education for children in reception centers, children without residence permits or international protection status, or legal provisions for compulsory education, which may limit access to education for children outside a certain age group - e.g. children below 5 or above 15 years old. In federal countries, like Germany, legal provisions on access to education for newly arrived refugee and migrant children may also greatly vary from one region to another. In addition, there are often no legal provisions on how children's education level should be assessed and assigned to school grades.¹⁶
- *Administrative challenges* including inflexible registration deadlines, residence and other personal documentation requirements, extended stay in first reception centres where school enrolment is not compulsory. Such challenges are even more pronounced when it comes to early childhood education, upper secondary education and vocational training. Frequent movements of refugees and migrants from one type of accommodation to another, distance and transportation to schools, cost of school materials, insufficient information provision to children and their families about procedures and

¹⁵ UNHCR. The UN refugee agency. "no update date" from: <https://www.unhcr.org/steppingup/>

¹⁶ UNHCR. Refugee education 2030. Denmark, September 2019. From: <https://www.unhcr.org/5d651da88d7.pdf>

services available, etc., can also seriously impact school enrolment and attendance.

- Insufficient human and financial resources of education authorities including limited places in schools and pre-schools, lack of catch-up classes, budgetary shortfalls, insufficient guidance and training for teachers and education practitioners who work with refugee and migrant students, including those in need of psychosocial support and language learning.

IV. International Initiatives:

Being a refugee most of the time means to be dependent from the resources of the country they arrive to, or to the international support from many organizations; perhaps there is so much we can do for them to transform them from a sector that is dependent on others, to becoming a self-sufficient sector that can work, be economic sufficient to become a new labor market.

The efforts, in order to make this happen, should focus as much as possible in education for displaced children; quality in education will lead to a prosperous path for the years to come, that gradually will break the pattern of dependent people that are wasting their talents and abilities when they can improve them learning.

According to the figure of UNHCR over 3,7 million refugee children are out of school, we can change their lives investing in their futures; considering their capacity to evolve and resilience we can trust in their abilities, of children that right now may not be passing through good times; we don't know what kind of great things these kids can do in the future; there are two paths for them, and it's in our hands the possibility to make the trajectory to greatness easier for them to follow.¹⁷

In 2016, UNHCR and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) signed a memorandum of understanding to further strengthen collaboration to support

¹⁷ Access to education for refugee and migrant children. Denmark, September 2019. From: https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/press_release/file/access-to-education-for-refugee-children.pdf

the inclusion of refugees in national multi-year education plans. UNHCR is increasingly participating in GPE activities with relevant ministries of education. This includes representation in local education groups in countries with significant refugee and IDP populations. Specific countries for collaboration in 2017 include Burkina Faso, Burundi, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Liberia, Mali, South Sudan and the United Republic of Tanzania.¹⁸

In partnership with universities, donors and other organizations, UNHCR, the University of Geneva and others formed the Connected Learning Consortium for Higher Education for Refugees. Connected courses combine digital access with face-to-face learning. Since 2004, these initiatives have provided accredited programmes for more than 5,000 refugee students in nine countries. In 2016 alone, an expected 350 new students will benefit from connected learning degree and diploma programmes.

The use of technology and the Internet is not restricted to tertiary education. Using mobile phones, laptops, e-readers and tablets allows young people to study at home, even if they have family and domestic obligations. Digital books help to develop literacy skills and a love of reading at an early age, particularly in places where it is difficult to provide enough printed copies to go round. The ability to pack thousands of educational resources into a single device makes tools such as e-readers and tablets well suited to refugee environments, helping teachers develop lessons where children learn through play and exploration.

Consequently, Refugee Education 2030: A Strategy for Refugee Inclusion aims to contribute directly to the following goals of the Global Compact on refugees:

1. Ease the pressures on host countries.
2. Enhance refugee self-reliance.
3. Support conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity.

¹⁸ UNHCR. Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme. New York, 07/06/2017. From: <https://www.unhcr.org/593917957.pdf>

The strategy arises from lessons learned about parallel education provision for refugees reflected in the 2011 Review of refugee education, and from the experience of shifting to national education service provision across a wide range of distinct contexts as a result of the guidance provided in the 2012-2016 UNHCR Refugee Education Strategy. It is also informed by partner and UNHCR collaboration and innovations, new or amplified partnerships with ministries of education and planning, refugee youth, civil society, development and, humanitarian donors and the private sector, greater UNHCR internal capacity and significant international commitments related to the Global Compact on Refugees.¹⁹

UNICEF and UNHCR have provided guidance and technical assistance to national authorities in several countries to address legal and other practical barriers and develop national action plans to integrate refugee and migrant children in public schools. As a result of national authorities and inter-agency efforts in 2018, over 12,000 children were enrolled in public schools in Southeastern Europe.

In 2018, UNICEF, UNHCR and IOM supported the provision of non-formal education, including homework support and psychosocial support for over 16,200 children enrolled in public schools, facilitating their integration. In Italy and Greece, UNICEF also developed e-learning platforms to help children improve their language skills and prepare for public school exams. IOM in Greece and North Macedonia has supported extracurricular activities for national and migrant/refugee students, in view of strengthening the formal learning process, fostering personal development and inclusion into the local community.

Delegates, by the end of 2015, 6.7 million refugees were living in protracted situations. Refugees trapped in forced displacement for such long periods find themselves in a state of limbo. Their lives may be at risk and their basic rights, essential economic, social and psychological needs remain

¹⁹ UNHCR. Refugee education 2030. Denmark, September 2019. From: <https://www.unhcr.org/5d651da88d7.pdf>

unfulfilled. Despite concerted efforts to expand the provision of education to more refugee children and youth, the weight of numbers means that enrolment rates have been falling in the past few years, even in countries where determined efforts have been made to get more refugee children into school.²⁰

V. Guide questions

1. Which is the percentage of migration and displacement in your country?
2. Does your delegation have borders with a country which has internal conflicts?
3. What is the amount of refugees that enter your delegation per year?
4. How does your country is affected by the continuous entry of refugees and displaced?
5. When the displaced return to their communities, are they able to access education?
6. Does your delegation counts with programs that facilitate the employability and access to education to displaced people?
7. How much is the percentage to invest in refugees and displaced in your country?
8. At what time is being denied access to education considered a threat to those ruffled by the states parties?
9. To what extent can refugees be supported so that their fundamental human rights are guaranteed?
10. How could it be possible to validate human rights, and what they entail, for stateless?
11. How can basic services and official registration could be guaranteed for stateless children?

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