



Research Report

UNICEF

Ensuring Access to Quality Education
for Refugee and Displaced Children

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Introduction

Quality education is a fundamental human right essential for both personal growth and the progress of society. Unfortunately, many children who are refugees or displaced by conflict, violence, and natural disasters are denied access to this right. Over the past few decades, millions of families have been uprooted by these crises, leaving children without the stable and secure education they need.

The main people affected are children who have had to leave their homes because of wars, political unrest, and environmental disasters. These young individuals come from varied regions such as the Middle East, Africa, and Asia, and they are among the most vulnerable groups in the world. Their educational needs go beyond just learning to read and count. They also need support for their mental and emotional health, assistance in adapting to new cultures, and training in skills that will help them build new lives and futures.

The aim is to equip refugee children with the skills and knowledge they need to seize future opportunities and to help them build strength and resilience, even when they face hardships. Education is essential for achieving lasting peace, stability, and economic growth. For refugee children, gaining an education is a symbol of hope and a way to escape the poverty and exclusion caused by being displaced. Providing education to these children is not only the right thing to do but also a smart decision. Educated individuals have more skills and knowledge to help rebuild and support their communities, both where they currently live and in their homelands if they return.

Definition of Key Terms

Asylum Seeker

A person who has fled their home country due to persecution, conflict, or violence and has applied for international protection but has not yet been granted refugee status.

Displaced Person

An individual who has been forced to leave their home due to conflict, violence, human rights violations, or natural disasters. This includes internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees.

Forced Migration

The movement of people due to external factors such as war, persecution, environmental changes, or human rights abuses.

Formal education

A structured and systematic form of learning. This is the education of a certain standard delivered to students by trained teachers.

Host Country

A country that receives and provides temporary or permanent residence to refugees and displaced people.

Humanitarian Aid

Assistance provided by governments, NGOs, or international organizations to meet basic needs such as food, shelter, and education for displaced populations.

Internally Displaced Person (IDP)

Someone who has been forced to leave their home but remains within their country's borders, unlike refugees who cross international borders.

Protracted Refugee Situation

A situation in which refugees remain in long-term displacement, often for five years or more, without a durable solution such as resettlement or local integration.

Quality Education

Education that ensures all learners acquire essential knowledge, skills, and values in a safe and inclusive environment.

Refugee

A person who has been forced to flee their country due to persecution, war, or violence and has been granted international protection under the 1951 Refugee Convention.

Refugee Camp

A temporary settlement made to accommodate displaced people.

Temporary Protection

A short-term legal status granted to displaced people in emergencies, allowing them to stay in a host country until a durable solution is found.

Xenophobia

The fear or hatred of foreigners, which can lead to discrimination and exclusion of refugees and displaced persons from education and other opportunities.

General Overview

Historical Background

For many years, providing **quality education** to refugee and **displaced children** has been a global issue. This issue is often tied to wars, forced migration, and humanitarian crises. In 1951, an important treaty called the Refugee Convention was established. It gave **refugees** legal rights, including the right to education. However, this rule is not always enforced, leaving many **displaced children** without proper schooling.

In the past, major **refugee** crises, like those after World War II, prompted international efforts to integrate **displaced children** into education systems. During the Cold War period, migrations continued due to conflicts in countries such as Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Central America.

In the 21st century, the number of people forced to leave their homes has increased due to civil wars, terrorism, and environmental challenges. The ongoing Syrian Civil War, which began in 2011, has displaced millions. Neighboring countries, including Lebanon and Jordan, are struggling to incorporate **refugee children** into their schools. Similarly, the Rohingya crisis, which began in 2017, left thousands of children in Bangladesh without **formal education** because of legal and financial barriers.

Current Situation and Challenges

As of 2023, 43.3 million children worldwide were **displaced**, with many lacking access to education. Only 68% of refugee children enroll in primary school, and this number drops to 37% for secondary education.

One of the primary barriers is legal status. In many **host countries**, **asylum seekers** and **refugees** are not granted access to national education systems. Instead, they rely on informal or NGO-run schools, which often lack **quality education** standards and resources.

Educational Infrastructure and Resources

Even when legal barriers are overcome, the lack of infrastructure remains a major issue. **Refugee camps** often have overcrowded classrooms, untrained teachers, and inadequate learning materials. Some refugee students must study in temporary learning spaces or attend schools without basic necessities such as electricity and internet access.

Additionally, the shortage of qualified teachers is a widespread problem. Many teachers in refugee education settings lack formal training in handling trauma-affected students, leading to poor educational outcomes.

Psychosocial and Cultural Barriers

Education for **displaced children** is further complicated by psychosocial challenges. Many **refugee children** suffer from trauma due to war, persecution, or family separation. Without mental health support in schools, students often struggle to concentrate and succeed academically.

Language barriers also play a role. Many **refugee children** must learn in a foreign language, making integration into **host country** schools more difficult. Some curricula fail to recognize the unique cultural backgrounds of **displaced people**, leading to **xenophobia** and discrimination in the classroom.

Regions Most Affected by the Crisis

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has one of the highest concentrations of **refugee children**, mainly due to the Syrian Civil War and conflicts in Yemen and Sudan, leaving millions without access to **quality education**. In Sub-Saharan Africa, wars in South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Ethiopia have displaced millions, straining local education systems. South and Southeast Asia face similar challenges, with the Rohingya refugee crisis in Bangladesh restricting children's access to formal schooling. In Europe, the war in Ukraine has forced millions of children into **host country** schools, where they face language barriers and **xenophobia** despite government support.

Key International Stakeholders

The UNHCR leads global efforts to protect **refugees**, advocating for their right to education and supporting school programs in **refugee camps**. UNICEF provides **humanitarian aid**, funding emergency education initiatives like "Education Cannot Wait". **Host countries** play a crucial role in either integrating **refugee children** into national schools or imposing barriers that limit access. NGOs, such as Save the Children and the International Rescue Committee (IRC), fill gaps by offering alternative education programs where **host countries** lack resources or policies to support **quality education**.

Timeline of Key Events

1951 Adoption of the 1951 Refugee Convention

1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees Expanded the 1951 Convention by removing geographical and time limitations, increasing global refugee protections

1989 Adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) Recognized education as a fundamental right for all children, including refugees and displaced people

2001-2021 War in Afghanistan

2011 Start Syrian Civil war

2013 Start South Sudan Civil War

2017 Start Rohingya Crisis in Myanmar

2022 Start Ukraine Refugee Crisis

2023 Launch of 2023–2026 Strategic Plan by Education Cannot Wait A plan aimed at increasing funding for education in emergencies, focusing on displaced children

2023 Start Sudan Conflict

Stakeholders

Countries

A very high number of countries struggle with ensuring access to quality education for refugee and displaced children. Syria has suffered over a decade of conflict, driving millions of children refugees, who cannot access the host countries' formal education in Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan, whose domestic education systems are stretched. In Bangladesh, nearly 1 million Rohingya refugees have no access to proper education due to legal impediments and the unavailability of finances. Uganda, one of the biggest refugee-hosting countries in Africa, has open policies towards refugee education but is suffering from resource shortages. Syrian and Ukrainian refugees in large numbers have been integrated into the national education system in Germany, though the language problem remains. The war in Ukraine has displaced millions of children, who have had to seek education through distance learning or in host countries. Meanwhile, South Sudan and Sudan have witnessed mass displacement from conflict, and several of these refugee children lack schooling and humanitarian services.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

A number of big NGOs help in solving the issue at hand in different ways. [Save the Children](#) provides education materials, teacher training, and secure school settings in conflict zones.

[International Rescue Committee \(IRC\)](#) supports education initiatives for refugee children in emergencies, focusing on recovery from trauma and learning continuity. [Jesuit Refugee Service \(JRS\)](#) runs education programs in refugee camps, particularly in Africa and the Middle East.

Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) focuses on education in emergencies, providing alternative learning options for displaced children.

Affected Groups

Refugee children suffer most, having language problems, lack of school infrastructure, and limitations on law in host nations. Host country teachers and students need larger classes and require extra training to cope with diverse classrooms. Parents and guardians of refugees struggle to ensure stable conditions for the education of their children because they face legal and economic challenges. The local population of host countries can suffer economically and socially from the presence of displaced individuals, and in certain situations, this leads to xenophobia.

Possible Solutions

Increased Funding to Support Education

With more funding for education more programs can be opened in refugee camps. The funding could help build more schools, learning materials, and teachers for children in refugee contexts.

Improving Education Facilities in Refugee Camps

Improving the school infrastructure by building temporary or permanent classrooms that are equipped with valuable resources such as solar lights and clean water and expansion of the size of schools to accommodate growing numbers of displaced children, as well as making schools more secure and safe, would greatly improve access to quality education.

Teacher Training

Taking into consideration the specific needs of refugee children, UNICEF can expand its activities on training teachers in host countries and refugee camps.

Empowering Legal and Policy Reforms

Refugee children across the majority of host nations are met with legal barriers that disclude them from schooling. UNICEF can advocate the removal of impediments such as registration mandates, fees, or documentation procedures that deny children an opportunity for education. Furthermore, UNICEF can help governments incorporate children from refugee settings into national schools and provide access to equal opportunity in education.

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