Education at the Crossroads:
Inclusive Education for the Global Refugee Crisis

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Inclusive Education for the Global Refugee Crisis

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Abstract

The global refugee population continues to climb and the number of refugees across the globe is at an alarming high and is expected to continue to rise for the foreseeable future. Access to education is a basic human right and is linked to poverty reduction, holding promises of stability, economic growth, and better lives for children, families, and communities. Refugee children and adolescents remain amongst the most marginalized groups in education. Refugee children and youth have frequently missed substantial amounts of schooling due to the effects of conflict. The lack of high quality and protective education for refugees stands in the way of meeting education for all goals, of achieving durable solutions, and of sustainable development and reconstruction of home and host countries. Inclusive education is a process of strengthening the capacity of the education system to reach out to all learners and can thus be understood as a key strategy to achieve education for all. However, Collecting regular, reliable and disaggregated education statistics on refugees are notoriously complex meaning that education indicators for this sub-group can be difficult to estimate. Education indicators for refugees may not be included in either the statistics of the refugee's country or the country hosting the refugees itself. The World is witnessing the largest refugee crises in decades. Crisis and conflict are among the biggest obstacles to ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education for all. However, education is a human right with important implications for health, livelihood, and peace building in contexts of conflict and crisis. We need to make changes to the way we respond to the changing landscape of the displaced, particularly refugees. Education is one of the most prominent needs of displaced refugees. Therefore, it is necessary to explore the global refugee crisis creating hurdles in the field of education for achieving success in inclusive education all around the globe. The objective of this paper is to point out the obstacles and elaborate challenges in education with special reference to inclusive education for the global refugee crisis.
Keywords: *Education, Crossroads, Inclusive, Global Refugee, Crisis.*

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Introduction

The number of refugees across the globe is at an alarming high and is expected to continue to rise for the foreseeable future. Finding durable solutions for refugees has become a major challenge worldwide. While for many refugees a preferred solution may be to return to their home country with the restoration of safe conditions, this may not be possible due to continued conflict, political instability, insecurity, loss of livelihood, and difficulty reclaiming land and property.

Access to education is a basic human right and is linked to poverty reduction, holding promises of stability, economic growth, and better lives for children, families, and communities. The provision of educational opportunities is one of the highest priorities of refugee communities. Yet there is little evidence of tangible organisational commitment by UNHCR (the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) to guaranteeing the right to education for refugee children and young people. Education is "the key to the future," that it will help bring peace to their countries, that despite not knowing "what will happen tomorrow," education brings stability and hope. The lack of high quality and protective education for refugees stands in the way of meeting education for all goals, of achieving durable solutions, and of sustainable development and reconstruction of home and host countries.

The objective of this paper is to point out the obstacles and elaborate challenges in education with special reference to inclusive education for the global refugee crisis.

Global Refugee Crisis

Refugee crisis can refer to movements of large groups of displaced people, who could be either internally displaced persons, refugees or other migrants. It can also refer to incidents in the country of origin or departure, to large problems whilst on the move or even after arrival in a safe country that involve large groups of displaced persons, asylum seekers or refugees. According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, in 2017, 65.6 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide because of persecution, conflict, violence, or human rights violations alone (Wikipedia, 2007).

The global refugee population continues to climb. In 2016 there were 17.2 million refugees, an increase of 7 percent over 2015, according to UNHCR, the UN agency for refugees. For the third straight year, Turkey hosted the most refugees, at 2.9 million, followed by Pakistan, with 1.4 million, and Lebanon with 1 million people. Turkey and Germany are the only Group of

20 nations among the top 10 host countries. More than half of the world's refugees originated from Syria, Afghanistan and South Sudan. In South Sudan, a growing humanitarian crisis led to an increase of 64 percent during the second half of the year to 1.4 million people (Busso, MaryAnn and Czuczka, Tony, 2017).

Table 1. Top Host Countries for Refugees in 2016

Rank	Host Country	Total refugees	Total population
1	Turkey	2,869,421	80,745,020
2	Pakistan	1,352,560	197,015,955
3	Lebanon	1,012,969	6,082,357
4	Iran	979,435	81,162,788
5	Uganda	940,835	42,862,958
6	Ethiopia	791,631	104,957,438
7	Jordan	685,197	9,702,353
8	Germany	669,482	82,114,224
9	Democratic Republic of the Congo	451,956	81,339,988
10	Kenya	451,099	49,699,862
12	Sudan	421,466	40,533,330
13	Chad	391,251	14,899,994
14	Cameroon	375,415	24,053,727
15	China	317,255	1,410,000,000
16	France	304,546	64,979,548
17	Tanzania	281,498	57,310,019
18	Bangladesh	276,207	164,669,751
19	United States	272,959	324,459,463
20	Yemen	269,783	28,250,420
20	South Sudan	262,560	12,575,714

Sources: UNHCR Global Trends 2016, United Nations, World Population Prospects: The 2017 Revision, Key Findings and Advance Tables.
Methodology: Bloomberg ranked the nations by the number of refugees hosted in 2016 and showed the top 20. Includes people designated as refugees under UNHCR's mandate.
Design & development: Christopher Cannon and Cedric Sam

In 2015, an estimated 107,100 refugees were admitted for resettlement as permanent residents in host countries (UNHCR, 2016b). This leaves millions of refugees at risk for remaining in a protracted situation of exile. Of note, developing countries receive a disproportionate percentage of refugees, with most hosted by low- and middle-income countries. Thus, countries least able to meet the needs of their own citizens, let alone the humanitarian needs of refugees, provide asylum to the majority of refugees (UNHCR, 2016b). A number of

recent public opinion polls document the negative attitudes and perceptions of refugees in many Western countries. However, this can have a significant impact on these developing countries, as well as on the refugees who are seeking asylum.

Inclusive Education for the Global Refugee Crisis

Inclusive education is a process of strengthening the capacity of the education system to reach out to all learners and can thus be understood as a key strategy to achieve education for all (EFA). Inclusion is thus seen as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all children, youth and adults through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing and eliminating exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision that covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children (UNESCO, 2005).

Based on extensive analysis, this review sets out an agenda for change, aimed at promoting high quality and protective education for refugees, in keeping with education as a durable solution and as a core element of UNHCR's (20011), mandate:

- *Integration of refugees into national education systems,* particularly in urban areas where half of refugees now live, working closely with Ministries of Education and UNICEF to strengthen national systems for the benefit not only of refugees but also host communities;
- *Provision of post-primary education for all refugees* up to the end of secondary school, with emphasis on access for girls and other marginalised groups, and provision of additional opportunities for higher education, both scholarships and site-based programmes that use open and distance learning;
- *Investment in teacher training* that cultivates high quality skills related to both pedagogy and content and that is sequential, leading towards a basic qualification that is recognised in home and/or host countries;
- *Development of new standards and indicators for education* that measure learning outcomes, including formative in-class assessments and summative independent sample testing, drawing on the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) and on partnerships with UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP), national Ministries of Education, and other bilateral partners supporting education;

- *Recognition of the connections between education and conflict in all education policy and planning,* emphasising the use of conflict-sensitive analyses to assess the content and structures of education, including curriculum, language, and relationships between actors; the importance of education for political stability and leadership in host countries and upon repatriation; and the reinstitution of peace education as a core component of refugee education;

- *Support for increased and predictable human and financial resources in education,* including hiring of Regional Education Advisors, Education Officers in country offices, and Community Services and Protection Officers with educational expertise; the selection of Implementing Partners (IPs) with proven technical capacities in education; and formalised operational and field-level partnerships between UNHCR and national Ministries of Education, UNICEF, and the Education Cluster.

Crisis and conflict are among the biggest obstacles to ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education for all. However, education is a human right with important implications for health, livelihood, and peace building in contexts of conflict and crisis.

Education at the Crossroads

"Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed" Preamble to the 1945 Constitution of UNESCO (UNESCO, 2004a). The average duration that forcibly displaced populations spend in exile has also increased over the last two decades. As a result, many children and adolescents risk spending their entire schooling years in exile from their country of origin. The World is witnessing the largest refugee crises in decades. According to UNHCR reports, about 60 million people worldwide suffer from forced displacement, nearly half of them children. Most of them have no access to or drop out of primary education; numbers are even worse for secondary and tertiary education. UN agencies and other organisations involved fear that the lack of safe learning environments is leaving behind a 'lost generation' in conflict-affected areas. This applies even more to marginalised groups, such as girls, children with disabilities, unaccompanied minors and ex-combatants. Finding appropriate solutions is even more difficult, as professionals see themselves confronted with a lack of reliable data. The same applies to data on persons with disabilities among displaced populations. The importance of education provision in systems of reconstruction has been realised and its role strengthened. For as research shows, inclusive education approaches

can help post-conflict countries to escape the return to violence (Markowetz, Reinhard et al ,2016)

Education has a strong role to play in strengthening resilience, social cohesion and human security in those countries at risk of, experiencing or recovering from conflict (UNICEF, 2013a). During or following a period of conflict, people with formal education may be able to utilize other assets and exit poverty more rapidly than those without education given that they can access new livelihood options more easily (Bird et al., 2011). A number of studies support how spending on education is also positively correlated with reducing those factors which contribute to state fragility e.g. economic security, poverty and inequality, whilst at the same time being positively correlated with increased social mobility and labor opportunities. In addition, individuals with education are more likely to have socioeconomic resilience during and after periods of conflict, with it playing an important role in enabling individuals to utilize other assets and access new and difficult environments; education influences a range of attributes relating to resilience (Bird et al., 2011). While education can be a powerful tool in mitigating conflict; the wrong type of education can result in an increased risk of armed conflict.

In 2014, 25% – or 62 million out of the 263 million children and adolescents out of school – were estimated to live in conflict affected countries (UNESCO-UIS, 2016). Conflict-affected countries are often the furthest away from meeting the education goals set by the education community. Refugee children and adolescents remain amongst the most marginalized groups in education. Information on education indicators for refugee children and adolescents, however, has generally been recognized as an area in need of urgent reform. Collecting regular, reliable and disaggregated education statistics on refugees (and IDPs) are notoriously complex meaning that education indicators for this sub-group can be difficult to estimate. Education indicators for refugees may not be included in either the statistics of the refugee's country or the country hosting the refugees itself (Dryden-Peterson, 2011b). Even the limited education data collected by UNHCR is often only available for refugees living in planned/ managed camps which made up just 25% of total refugees worldwide (UNHCR, 2016a). And such data is not readily available disaggregated by level of education.

Refugee children and youth have frequently missed substantial amounts of schooling due to the effects of conflict: with each missed year of schooling they remain less likely to return to

the formal education system. Added to this is the challenge posed by education systems in countries hosting refugees, where the language of instruction may be different.

Education can both mitigate and exacerbate conflict. Establishing conditions for peace requires intense analysis of the sources of conflict and active engagement with the content and pedagogy of refugee education as a positive force. Re-conceptualising refugee education to account for these realities and to align with the human rights approach and the developmental approach will be critical to meeting UNHCR's Global Priorities and to achieving sustainable durable solutions.

Conclusion

There are many issues associated with the implementation of inclusive education in the global arena. There is a distinctly declared agreement in the globe that all children have the right to education regardless of their race, gender, nationality, disability and etc. However, all these blessing have not appeared ready in a moment. Education at the crossroads has a strong role to play in strengthening resilience, social cohesion and human security in those countries at risk of, experiencing or recovering from conflict. While education can be a powerful tool in mitigating conflict; the wrong type of education can result in an increased risk of armed conflict. Violence and instability around the globe have led to millions of individuals fleeing for their lives.

There are various challenges in creating more inclusive education systems for refugees which are characterised by child-friendly spaces and by safe environments that protect dignity, promote mutual respect and intercultural understanding and support personal development and the building of relationships and social networks, including by integrating community resources. In many places, schools are, at present, not adequately promoting the physical integrity and psychosocial well-being of learners, teachers and other education staff. The education systems are not pervaded by an inclusive culture, inclusive policies and practices; instead, there are non-participatory attitudes, values, practices, institutional design and policies that give rise to exclusionary pressures. The following actions are recommended towards education to provide safe, non-violent, inclusive learning environments that unfold its power to build peaceful, resilient, and prosperous societies:

- Adapt education sector plans, Education Monitoring and Information Systems (EMIS) and protective community measures to integrate risk management, emergency preparedness, response and recovery;

- Make schools and access to them safe for students and teachers, when necessary through military measures and conflict-free zones; no military use of schools;

- Keep children safe and continue to hold classes when a crisis strikes; inform communities of risks and actions to take;

- Incorporate adolescents' talents, capacities and potential to share sexual and reproductive health information, and implement adolescent-friendly services**;**

- Introduce ramps, natural lighting, flow of air and white walls;

- Build schools that are accessible to everyone.

We need to make changes to the way we respond to the changing landscape of the displaced, particularly refugees. Education is one of the most prominent needs of displaced refugees. Therefore it is necessary to explore the global refugee crisis creating hurdles in the field of education for achieving success in inclusive education all around the globe.

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