



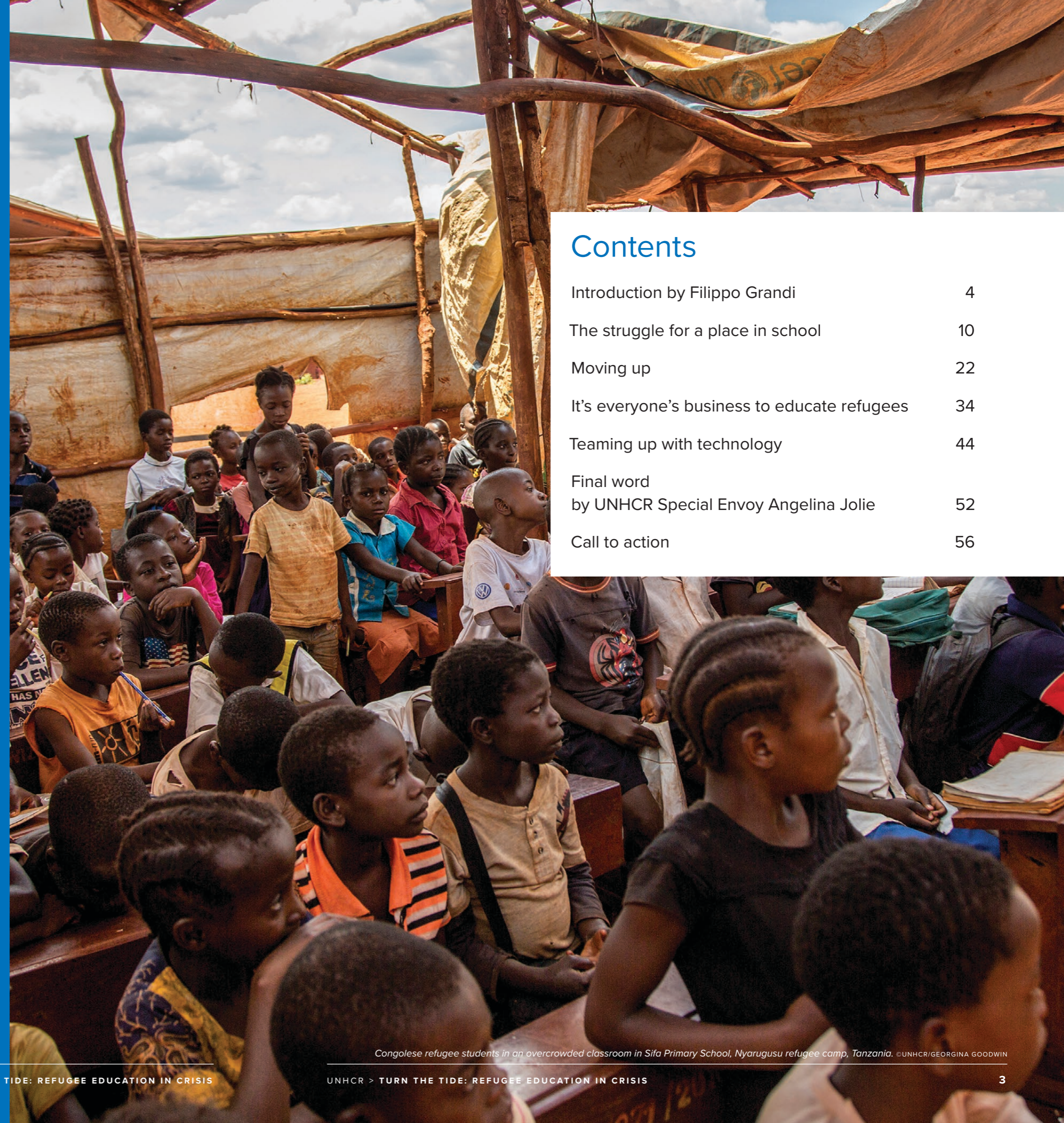
**UNHCR**  
The UN Refugee Agency

**TURN  
THE TIDE**  
REFUGEE  
EDUCATION  
IN CRISIS

## About this report

This report tells the stories of some of the world's 7.4 million refugee children of school age under UNHCR's mandate. In addition, it looks at the educational aspirations of refugee youth eager to continue learning after secondary education, and highlights the need for strong partnerships in order to break down the barriers to education for millions of refugee children.

Education data on refugee enrolments and population numbers is drawn from UNHCR's population database, reporting tools and education surveys and refers to 2017. The report also references global enrolment data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics referring to 2016.



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*Rihanna Siraj, 15, Ethiopian refugee, attends school in Kakuma refugee camp, Kenya. She is among one million formerly out-of-school refugee students who now go to primary school thanks to the support of the Educate A Child programme. ©UNHCR/ANTHONY KARUMBA*

*Congolese refugee students in an overcrowded classroom in Sifa Primary School, Nyarugusu refugee camp, Tanzania. ©UNHCR/GEORGINA GOODWIN*

# INTRODUCTION IT'S TIME TO TURN THE TIDE

BY FILIPPO GRANDI,  
UN HIGH COMMISSIONER  
FOR REFUGEES

UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi meets 7-year-old Syrian refugee Mohammad during a visit to the Father Andeweg Institute for the Deaf (FAID) in Beirut, Lebanon. © UNHCR/CLAIRE THOMAS

# 4M

Four million refugee children are out of school. An increase of half a million in one year.

Source: UNHCR (2017)

In early July, I travelled to the Kutupalong refugee settlement in Bangladesh, which has become home to hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees who have fled horrific violence in Myanmar. In a one-room learning centre, with the monsoon rains hammering on the roof, I saw girls and boys learning the basics of reading, writing and maths for just two hours a day, before another group took their place, and then another.

It was heart-rending to watch this faint semblance of the proper schooling to which these young refugees are entitled. But it also made it abundantly clear just how highly they value education. Without it, their future, and eventually the future of their communities, will be irrevocably damaged.

Half of the world's refugees are children. Of the children who are of school age, more than half are not getting an education – that equates to four million young minds not in school even though they are bursting with potential.

The number of out-of-school refugee children has increased by 500,000 in the last year alone. If current trends continue, hundreds of thousands more refugee children will be added to these disturbing statistics unless urgent investment is made.



Rohingya refugee children at a learning centre in Kutupalong refugee settlement, Bangladesh. © UNHCR/ADAM DEAN



“I loved it from day one. I missed two years of schooling because of the war.”

*Moaed, 13, Syrian refugee, attends Bar Elias School in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley. It is one of around 350 schools in Lebanon operating a second shift to increase the number of places available for refugee students. Afternoon shifts have allowed more than 150,000 refugee children to enrol in school in Lebanon.*

© UNHCR/HOUSSAM HARIRI

As part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the members of the United Nations pledged to ensure an “inclusive and equitable quality education” and to promote “lifelong learning opportunities for all”. And in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2016, governments pledged to share responsibility for the world’s refugees and to improve access to education for refugee children.

These were important commitments. But they will ring hollow to young refugees unless and until they experience real change and are given the same opportunities to go to school as others. It is time to honour those pledges and turn the tide, as detailed in our annual report on refugee education.

The same violence and persecution that uproots people from their homes, destroys stable family lives and forces many into poverty can also damage children’s physical, psychological and developmental well-being. As the world’s refugee crises deepen and multiply, children are often the most affected.

But children are extraordinarily resilient. By learning, playing and exploring, they find ways to cope, to progress and, if given the opportunity, to thrive. Today, education is fundamental to the way we at UNHCR think about every refugee emergency. Why? Because refugees now spend many years, even decades, in exile – a period that often extends over an entire childhood and beyond.

Many children and young people are displaced several times before they cross a border and become refugees. For children whose lives have been disrupted in this manner, school is often the

first place they start to regain normality – safety, friendship, order, peace. Regardless of their nationality or legal status, or that of their parents, children have the right to the academic and co-curricular activities that will enable them to prosper.

But two hours of basic education, as I witnessed in Kutupalong, is not enough. Children need a proper curriculum all the way through primary and secondary school, resulting in recognized qualifications that can be their springboard to university or higher vocational training.



*Rohingya refugee children collecting firewood on the edge of the forest in Kutupalong refugee settlement, Bangladesh. Many Rohingya children miss out on school because of household chores, social pressures, early marriage and a lack of access to formal education. © UNHCR/ROGER ARNOLD*

For that to happen, refugee children need to be included in the national education systems of their host countries – systems that are regulated, monitored and updated. In Bangladesh, many Rohingya girls and boys are going to school for the first time. This is welcome progress, but the fact that they are not following any formal curriculum, and the teachers are often untrained, severely limits their potential.

Yet the power of school runs deeper than academic qualifications. Education is a way to help young people heal, but it is also the way to revive entire countries. Allowed to learn, grow and flourish, children will grow up to contribute both to the societies that host them and to their homelands when peace allows them to return. That is why education is one of the most important ways to solve the world's crises.

In following the fortunes of young refugees who have had the opportunity of education, we have seen some pursue their dreams of becoming surgeons, pilots, lawyers, statisticians, journalists, community leaders, molecular biologists – and the teachers of the next generations.

But we have also seen dreams broken and thwarted. Less than a quarter of the world's refugees make it to secondary school, and just one per cent progress to higher education. Developing regions host 92 per cent of the world's school-age refugees, where schools are often woefully under-resourced. These governments need support to include refugee children in national education systems – as some of them are indeed striving to do – and to expand the infrastructure that is needed to bring this about.



*Madina, 16, Afghan refugee living in Brussels, Belgium, dreams of setting up a school for girls in Afghanistan. "I want all the girls in Afghanistan to know that they can do anything boys can do." © UNHCR/HUMANS OF AMSTERDAM/FETCHING\_TIGERS. Extract from story by @HUMANSOFAMSTERDAM*

We cannot build a future by shunting refugee children into a parallel system of schooling that relies on outdated materials, makeshift classrooms or untrained teachers. We cannot improvise an education and imagine that this is good enough.

Humanitarian organizations, governments and the private sector must come together to increase funding for education and to design more innovative and sustainable solutions to support

refugees' particular educational needs. We must build on the promise of the New York Declaration and start turning words into deeds. The global compact on refugees, to be adopted by the General Assembly later this year, sets out practical arrangements aimed at achieving just that – with the aim of enhancing refugees' self-reliance and easing the burden on host countries.

**This worldwide effort to transform the lives of refugees must include a concerted drive to improve educational opportunities and resources. In doing so, we will restore their futures and enrich our world.**



## CHAPTER 1

## THE STRUGGLE FOR A PLACE IN SCHOOL

Refugee and local children attend a summer school in Vienna, Austria, run by three Syrian refugee volunteers. ©UNHCR/STEFANIE J. STEINDL

## Education is not a luxury. It is a right.

As the world's refugee situations multiply and in many cases worsen, it is becoming more and more challenging to ensure that new generations of displaced children get the education they deserve.

By the end of 2017, there were more than 25.4 million refugees around the world, 19.9 million of them under UNHCR's mandate. More than half of the global refugee population – 52 per cent – were under the age of 18.

Of all the latest data, one statistic stands out: today, there are **4 million refugee children who are out of school**. That is over half of the 7.4 million refugee children of school age under UNHCR's mandate.

In 2017, one million additional refugee children needed to go to school. Thanks to the major efforts of those committed to the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, half of them were enrolled but the other half remain out of school.

In just one year, the number of refugee children out of school has increased by **half a million.**

Time in exile can last for years, if not decades, and some children have only known life as a refugee. This is why the long-term wellbeing of children and education are so important.

Millions of refugee children and youth will spend their entire childhood in a country that is not their own. They will spend their formative years deprived of the school environment which so many of us take for granted.



Mohammad, 7, Syrian refugee, was born as the Syrian conflict began and escaped with his family to Lebanon following a devastating attack on their home in Palmyra. Today he attends the Father Andeweg Institute for the Deaf (FAID) on the outskirts of Beirut, Lebanon. ©UNHCR/DIEGO IBARRA SÁNCHEZ

“Children caught up in conflicts will end up either as peacemakers or as peacebreakers. The difference is the opportunities they get in exile.”

*Foni Joyce Vuni, 25, South Sudan, is a DAFI graduate. DAFI – the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative – is a scholarship programme for refugees implemented by UNHCR, the Government of Germany and others. Foni was among a dozen youth delegates who brought their experience of conflict and displacement to a high-level meeting in Geneva devoted to establishing a new global response to record levels of displacement.*

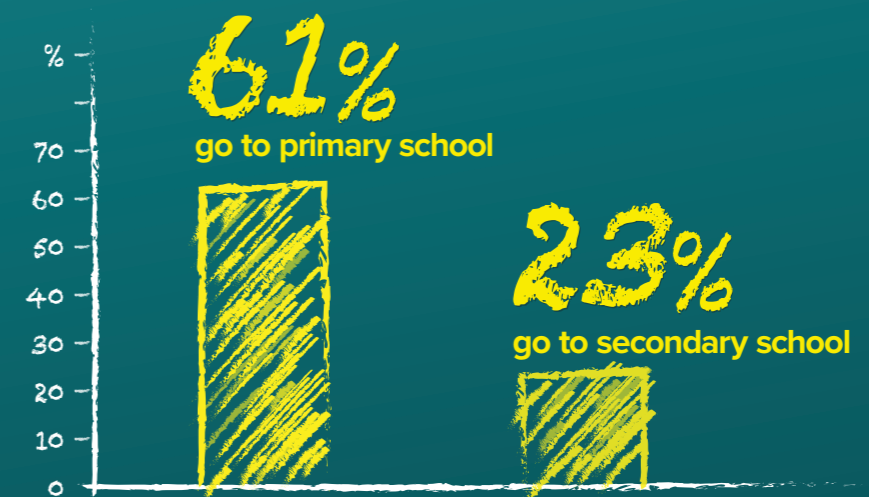
## The global picture

Comparing the situation of refugee children and youth with their peers illustrates the gap between the two – and the manner in which that gap grows to a chasm as they get older.

Even though in 2017 more than 500,000 refugee children were newly enrolled in school thanks to the far-reaching efforts of governments, UNHCR and partners, the rapidly growing refugee population means that, in percentage terms, the picture has not improved.

In 2017, 61 per cent of refugee children were enrolled in primary school, compared to 92 per cent globally. At secondary level the figure was 23 per cent, compared with a global rate of 84 per cent. This means nearly two thirds of refugee children who go to primary school do not make it to secondary school.

**Nearly two thirds of refugee children who go to primary school do not make it to secondary school**



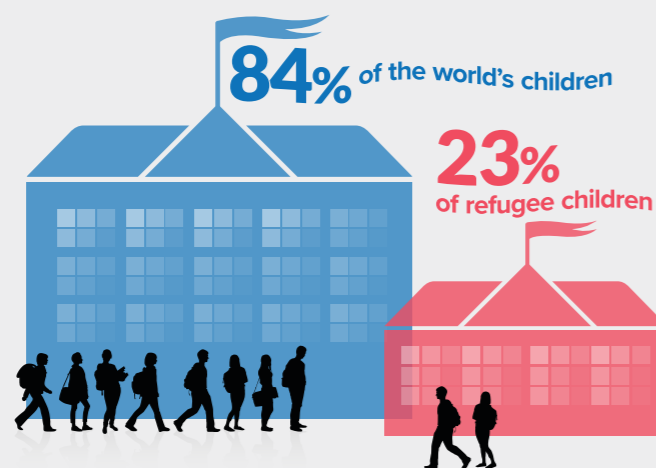
Source: UNHCR (2017)

### Primary school enrolment



Source: UNESCO (2016), UNHCR (2017)

### Secondary school enrolment



Source: UNESCO (2016), UNHCR (2017)

Taken as a whole, therefore, refugee children and youth have far fewer educational opportunities than their peers. Of the entire population of refugees, 54 per cent are out of school, compared to 10 per cent of children at primary or lower-secondary school level globally – meaning that at this level refugees are five times more likely to be out of school.

The statistics were markedly worse in low-income countries, which are disproportionately affected by refugee movements. Developing regions hosted 92 per cent of the world's school-age refugees in 2017. In low-income countries, less than half of primary-age refugee children get to go to school. At secondary level, only 11 per cent have the same opportunity



Natalia Rami Haddad, 14, Syrian refugee, with her Czech friend Natálie Sembdnerová, 12, at high school in Hradec Králové, Czech Republic. In 2017, Natalia received an award from the Czech Ministry of Education for her efforts as a language student. ©UNHCR/MICHAL NOVOTNY

## #HerTurn

Over the past three years we have also investigated the situation for refugee girls, who face even greater barriers to education. In a report published in March 2018, entitled “Her Turn”, we highlighted the social, health and economic benefits of ensuring that refugee girls have access to an education – yet in Kenya and Ethiopia, for instance, there are only seven girls for every ten boys enrolled in primary education, and four girls for every ten boys in secondary education.

If refugee girls can get an education, their families and communities are more likely to improve their social and economic position. UNESCO and World Bank research shows that educated mothers are more likely to send their children to school,

especially their daughters, and are more likely to support them in attaining a secondary and higher education. The further girls progress with their schooling, the more they develop leadership skills, entrepreneurship and self-reliance – personal qualities that will help their communities to flourish as they strive to adapt to their host countries or as they rebuild their own homes.<sup>1,2</sup>

Furthermore, UNESCO research shows that one additional year of school can increase a woman's earnings by up to a fifth.<sup>3</sup> Such benefits are felt by everyone; in countries where education is equal for both sexes, per capita income is boosted by 23 per cent.

1 UNESCO: Education Counts – Towards the Millennium Development Goals (2011)  
 2 World Bank: Returns to Investment in Education: A Global Update (1993)  
 3 UNESCO: Education Transforms Lives (2013)



If all women received a primary level education, child deaths from diarrhoea, malaria and pneumonia would fall, as innumerable studies show.<sup>4</sup> Deaths from diarrhoea, for example, the third-most frequent cause of child mortality, would be reduced by eight per cent if all mothers completed primary education, or by 30 per cent if they had secondary education.<sup>5</sup> These threats are especially acute in displacement situations.

Educated women are more likely to be aware of where to find professional help – some of it life-saving – when pregnant or as new mothers, while the further they progress with their schooling the more aware they are of the benefits of nutrition and sanitation.

At the age of four, Mary Maker and the surviving members of her family walked out of their home in war-ravaged South Sudan and sought sanctuary across the border in Kenya. A refugee for most of her life, Mary has fought tenaciously for the chance to go to school (she told her remarkable story in her own words at TEDxKakumaCamp<sup>6</sup>). Her determination made her both a student and a teacher – a teacher whose classroom in Kakuma refugee camp sometimes had more than 120 children, and now a student again on a scholarship programme in Rwanda, preparing to take exams for a place at a university in the US or Canada.

4 Gakidou, Cowling, Lozano and Murray (2010). Increased Educational Attainment and Its Effect on Child Mortality in 175 Countries between 1970 and 2009: A Systematic Analysis. *The Lancet*, Volume 376 (No. 9745), pp. 959-974

5 UNESCO: *Education Transforms Lives* (2013)

6 [https://www.ted.com/talks/mary\\_maker\\_why\\_educating\\_refugees\\_matters](https://www.ted.com/talks/mary_maker_why_educating_refugees_matters)

“With an education, everyone has an equal and fair chance to make it in life. But I believe education is not only about the syllabus. It is about friendship and also a place to discover our talents and allow us to discover our destiny.”

*Mary Maker, South Sudanese refugee, speaks at TEDxKakumaCamp, held at a refugee camp in Kenya.*



## CASE STUDY

## EXPOSED TO THE ELEMENTS

Even the basics are scarce in open-air classrooms in Nduta refugee camp, in northwestern Tanzania

Irahoze Diello is quietly confident about his mathematics test. Even without books, shoes, a safe place to study or a morning meal, he has worked hard to prepare for this moment.

He just hopes the rain will hold off long enough for him to complete it.

“When it rains everything gets wet,” says Irahoze, 14, who fled Burundi and now studies beneath the trees in Nduta refugee camp, in northwestern Tanzania. “When it’s windy the branches fall, and when the sun is strong it’s too hot. Sometimes we have to stop classes.”

Irahoze is one of about 200 refugee children who study at Furaha Primary School, where classes are

held in the open air. “When it’s windy our papers fly away and when it’s raining my books are ruined,” echoes Tuyishemele Kenilde, 15, from Burundi, who has already been held back a year.

Basic educational facilities are scarce in Nduta, Mtendeli and Nyarugusu, Tanzania’s three largest refugee camps. More than 70 per cent of students have to study outdoors, with just 193 permanent classrooms for almost 10,000 children. A high student-teacher ratio also adds to the difficulties.

There are nine primary schools in Nduta, but it’s not enough; a quarter of children aged between 6 and 14 do not attend school. And with only one secondary school, the enrolment rate at the secondary school is just eight per cent.

The enrolment rate at primary level in Nyarugusu camp is slightly higher, at 80 per cent, but several schools lack permanent buildings. Many children study in flimsy tents that collapse in the wind and bake in the midday sun. The classrooms that do have walls are hopelessly overcrowded, with as many as 120 pupils packed in.

“We have quite a few classes with no desks,” says Hafashimana Euphrasie, 14, whose prized workbook is tattered and torn. “We really need some more so we don’t have to sit on the floor.” There is also a serious shortage of school books and reference materials.

At the Furaha Primary School in Nduta camp, there is also a troubling gender gap, with just one girl for every three boys who attend school.

The head teacher there, Ndayisenga Aimable, says many children go to school on empty stomachs and are often too hungry to concentrate.



Hafashimana Euphrasie, 14, Burundian refugee, attends Furaha Primary School in Nduta camp, Tanzania. ©UNHCR/GEORGINA GOODWIN

For many, especially teenage girls, the challenges are too great. Instead, dropping out of school to earn money to support their families is viewed as a more attractive option, especially since food is hard to come by, school journeys are long and exams are difficult to pass.

The camps need another 640 classrooms to accommodate not only those children but all the others who are not enrolled yet desperately want to go to school. But the money just isn’t there: by July 2018, the Regional Refugee Response Plan to assist Burundian refugees in Tanzania has received only 14 per cent of its funding target for the year.

At Nyarugusu’s Hope Secondary School, Claude Nahilma, 19, is uncertain about his future. He has been studying there since arriving from Burundi two years ago, but does not know where he will end up.

“It is difficult when you complete your studies to get access to university,” he says. “I want to go home to continue my studies. This is a dead end.”

## CASE STUDY

## LEARNING IN THE MONSOON

Rohingya children brave wind and rain for just a couple of hours of school a day

*Minara (left) and Jasmine, both aged 12, attend classes at Temporary Learning Centres in Kutupalong refugee settlement, Bangladesh. It is their first time going to school; back home both girls worked to help support their families. ©UNHCR/CAROLINE GLUCK*

As monsoon rains and strong winds batter southern Bangladesh, refugee families are doing their best to shield themselves from the worst of the weather. More than 720,000 Rohingya refugees are living here under bamboo and tarpaulin shelters, having fled Myanmar since August 2017.

Displacement always brings hardship. But for some children in Cox's Bazar, it has also brought opportunity.

"Back home, I was busy with household chores," says Minara, 12, from Myanmar's Buthidaung township. "I had to work, so I never got the chance to go to school.

At home, she often had to help her brothers look after the family's 20 cows. Neither Minara nor any of her sisters went to school.

Refugees in Bangladesh do not have access to formal education, but at a Temporary Learning Centre in the vast Kutupalong refugee settlement, Minara is delighted to experience what school can be like. In a series of brightly decorated bamboo rooms, youngsters aged between six and 14 are intently taking part in a number of activities, from writing in workbooks to drawing, colouring and singing songs.

"I've learnt how to write here, and I can read as well," Minara says. "I'm very happy to come here. We can learn, draw, sing and play with other friends."

Her friend Jasmine feels the same about being in the temporary facility, which is run by a UNHCR partner, Community Development Centre. "Back home, my parents couldn't afford to send me to school," says Jasmine. Home is Maungdaw township in Myanmar's Rakhine state, where she used to help her father at his small shop in the family house, selling fruit and vegetables.

**Many Rohingya children in Rakhine state have difficulty going to school because of restrictions on their freedom of movement and their families' livelihoods.**

"I've learnt to write the alphabet," she says, smiling. "We can play and I've made lots of new friends."

The two girls laugh as they say their dream is to become teachers so they can help others to learn.

Both this and other temporary learning centres run by UNHCR partners throughout the settlements

are hoping to stay open during the monsoon season. This will not be easy: some of the buildings have been taken up by families whose accommodation was destroyed by landslides, while others have been flooded or otherwise damaged.

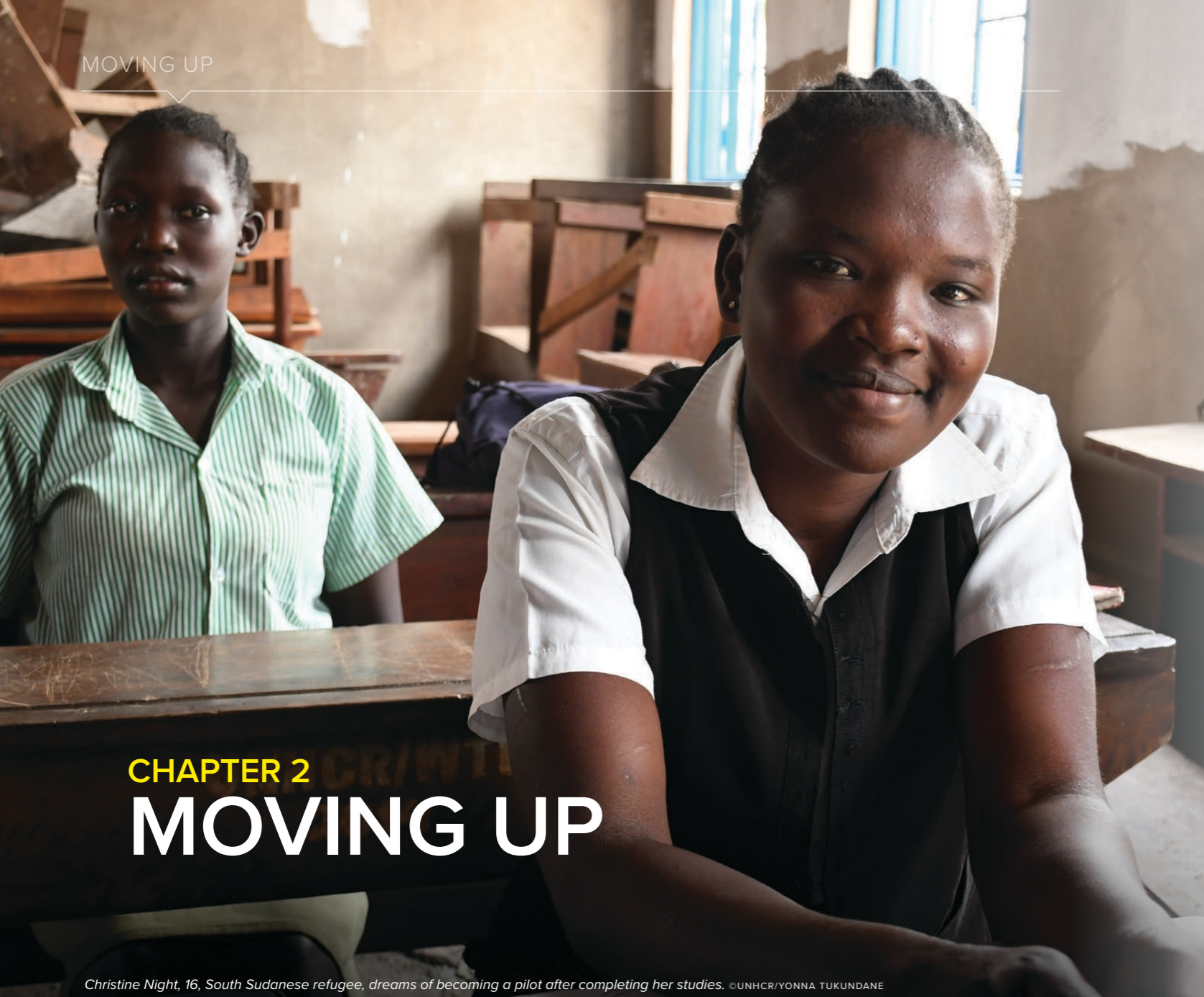
Class attendance is down because of the harsh weather. Indeed, Minara and Jasmine study in what is probably the wettest classroom in the world.

Nonetheless, alternative spaces have been found and teachers continue to hold classes six days a week. "We're determined to keep the classes going," says Community Development Centre project manager Jaidul Hoque. "Our centres are often safer places for children than the shelters where families are living. Although this is a very challenging time for us, we are trying our best."

It is a bold and determined collective endeavour with plenty of enthusiastic pupils, but many challenges remain. Most of the centres focus on basic literacy and numeracy and life skills training, while most temporary learning facilities operate on double or even triple shifts, offering youngsters only a few hours of classes each day.

But for many, these sessions are seen as a lifeline by students and parents alike.

"Education is an important human right for these children and it is an important part of our protection activities as well," says Mohammed Jahedul Islam Chowdhury, a UNHCR education associate in Cox's Bazar. "Education can help empower the youngsters, who also learn how they can protect themselves. We are also asking parents to let their daughters come to learn. We are trying to get more girl students in class, so they can have more opportunities in the future."



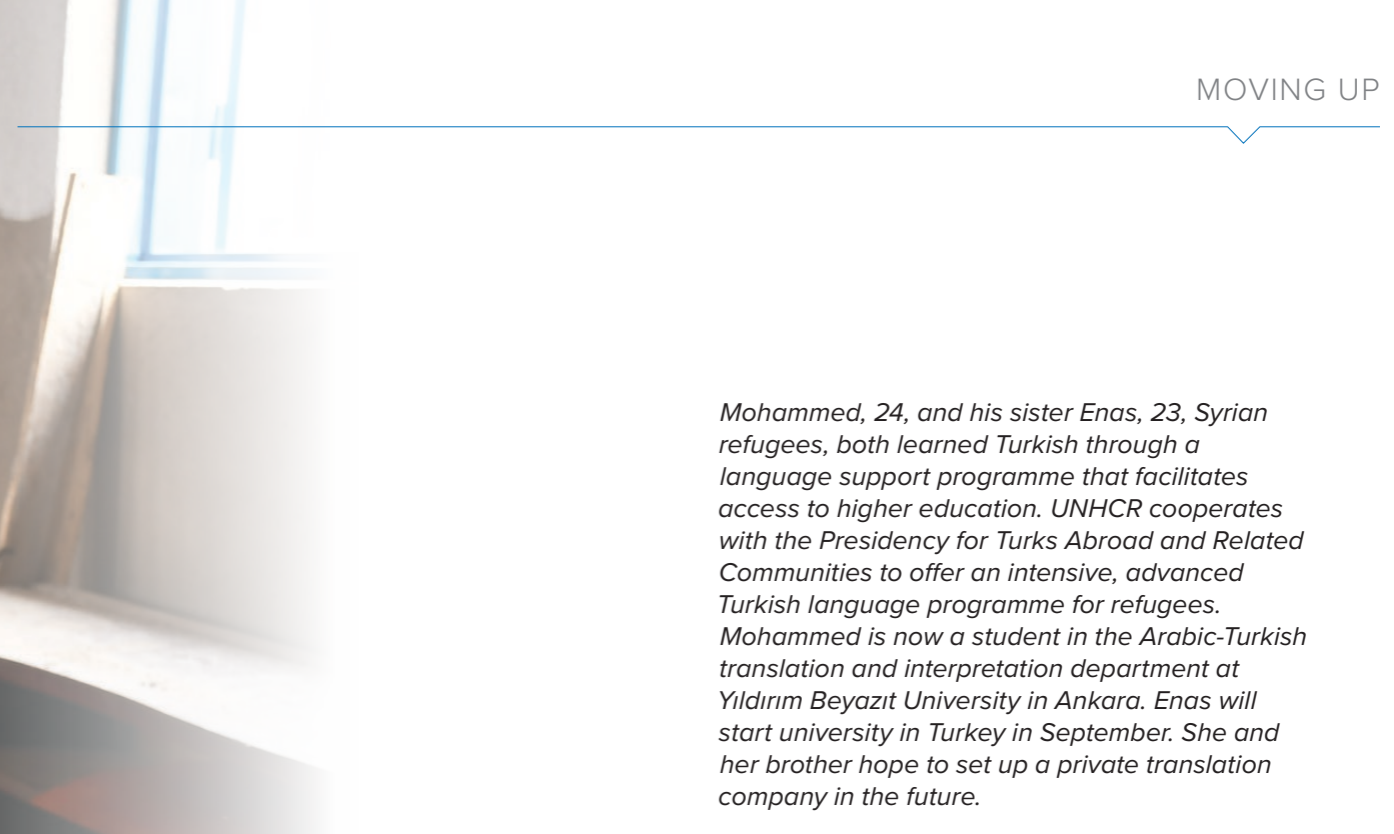
## CHAPTER 2 MOVING UP

Christine Night, 16, South Sudanese refugee, dreams of becoming a pilot after completing her studies. ©UNHCR/YONNA TUKUNDANE

For millions of refugee children, finishing primary school means reaching the end of their educational road.

**Of the 4 million refugees who were not in school last year, more than half were missing out on secondary education. Less than one in four young refugees go to secondary school.**

The impact of the war in Syria shows how conflict and displacement can spell the end of a child's education. In 2009, before the fighting erupted, 94 per cent of Syrian children attended primary and lower-secondary education. At the end of 2017, enrolment in formal primary and secondary education in the five biggest host countries – Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt – stood at 56 per cent. This is a ten per cent increase compared to the end of 2015, when 46 per cent were enrolled across these five host countries. Nevertheless, this still leaves some 700,000 Syrian school-age refugee children out of accredited education.



*Mohammed, 24, and his sister Enas, 23, Syrian refugees, both learned Turkish through a language support programme that facilitates access to higher education. UNHCR cooperates with the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities to offer an intensive, advanced Turkish language programme for refugees. Mohammed is now a student in the Arabic-Turkish translation and interpretation department at Yıldırım Beyazıt University in Ankara. Enas will start university in Turkey in September. She and her brother hope to set up a private translation company in the future.*



**“When I could not speak Turkish, life was really tough.”**

©UNHCR/KIVANÇ AYHAN

*Mercy Akuot, 24, South Sudanese refugee, fled home as a teenager after her parents forced her to marry a much older man. She escaped first to Uganda, and then to Kakuma refugee camp in northern Kenya, where she now supervises a women and girls' empowerment project, working with families to teach them the importance of educating girls and ending harmful cultural practices.*



UNHCR/ANTHONY KARUMBA

## Making the leap

Secondary education requires subject specialist teachers and more sophisticated learning materials, as well as science laboratories, well stocked libraries and access to the internet.

As refugee children grow older, they are often expected to take on a greater proportion of family responsibilities or to go to work, often in the shadow economy or in overtly illegal activities. This can make the opportunity costs of continued

education – on top of uniforms, exercise books and textbooks, transport and possible school fees – too great for refugee families to bear.

But the lure of teenage labour can be countered by community outreach programmes that promote the long-term benefits of education as well as financial help for families with school-age children to offset the potential loss of income.

An obvious result of lack of access to secondary education is that refugee enrolment in higher education is devastatingly low. Globally, only one per cent of refugees are able to gain access to higher education.

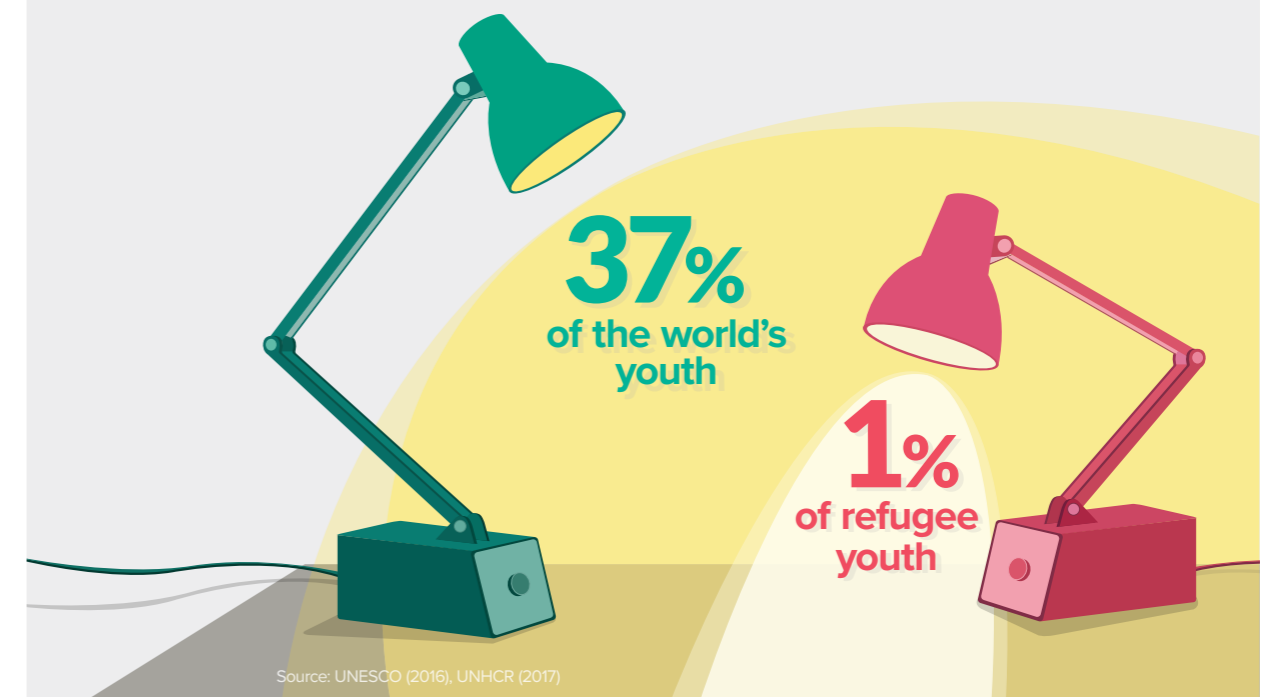
Finding solutions to shortfalls in educational access requires sustainable, long-term investment and planning. But there are other obstacles that could and should be overcome more readily. The most significant barrier to higher education is cost.

Schools and universities often insist on certificates proving that examinations have been passed or courses completed, documents that refugees often leave behind in the sudden dash for safety. Even when these documents are readily available, qualifications may not be recognized in the new country or may not be regarded as equivalent to

the local system. Yet not recognizing refugees' unique situations and barring them from the next level of their education because of bureaucracy is callous and counterproductive.

Similarly, although refugees frequently arrive in countries where they do not speak the language, to view this as a reason why they should be barred from the classroom is to overlook children's innate language-learning ability. Several countries – from Rwanda to refugee-hosting countries in Europe, including Turkey – have demonstrated how prejudicial this assumption really is, with refugee children learning the language of their hosts in a matter of months when they are given the opportunity. This helps refugee children integrate and make friends and also supports them in accessing and succeeding in education.

## Higher education enrolment





“I didn’t only find peace in Brazil, I found a future.”

*Salim Alnazer, 32, Syrian refugee, works as a pharmacist at JadLog, a transportation and logistics company in São Paulo, Brazil. His pharmacy degree from a Jordanian university was validated in Brazil with the help of Compassiva, a Brazilian NGO that helps steer refugees through the complex process of certifying their professional qualifications.*

## Showing the way

The true power of education is perhaps best expressed by those who have defied the odds and made it all the way through higher education. Refugees not only bring skills and talent to their countries of exile, they also possess tremendous potential that education can unlock.

Twenty-six years ago, UNHCR and the Government of Germany set up the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative, best known by its acronym DAFI, to provide higher education

scholarships to refugees. Among them is Hawo Jehow Siyad, who was a six-year-old Somali girl when she arrived in Dadaab refugee camp, Kenya, in 2000. Hawo not only managed to complete her primary and secondary education in Dadaab; in 2012 she was the top student in Garissa County, where Dadaab is located.

A DAFI scholarship sent Hawo to the University of Nairobi to study economics and statistics. After graduating she returned voluntarily to her native



“We’re getting the opportunity to give back to society.”

*Hawo Jehow Siyad fled Somalia and arrived in Dadaab refugee camp, Kenya, when she was six years old. After graduating from the University of Nairobi with a DAFI scholarship, she returned to Somalia where she now works as a database officer. © UNHCR/CAROLINE OPILE*



“Since I was in primary school, I knew I wanted to be a doctor.”

*John Jok Chuol, 24, fled South Sudan's conflict when he was eight years old, finding safety in Kenya's Dadaab refugee camp. He is now pursuing his dream, studying for a Bachelor of Science degree in Medicine and Surgery at the University of Nairobi on a DAFI scholarship.*

©UNHCR/ANTHONY KARUMBA

Somalia in the hope that she could serve her war-torn country. After a spell at the Ministry of Transport and Aviation, she moved on to a job at a World Bank-funded project, where she now works as a database officer. In Hawo's words, DAFI scholarships have transformed her life and the lives of numerous other refugees, giving them “the opportunity to give back to society.”

In the quarter century of its existence, DAFI has enabled more than 14,000 refugee students to study at universities and colleges. This programme expanded significantly in 2017, with more than 6,700 refugees enrolled in 720 universities and colleges in 50 countries around the world. UNHCR's ambition is to continue this positive

trend and see this number rising exponentially in the coming years, by bringing on more partners and diversifying opportunities, including through connected learning, a blend of digital and in-person study that can be done without physical access to a university. Addressing barriers to entry such as poverty, lack of certification and language acquisition will be key to achieving this aim.

Hawo's achievements show that when refugees can access quality education and complete their studies, they can stand on their own feet, give back to the countries that sheltered them and, one day, help their home communities to rebuild and to flourish.

## Reason for hope

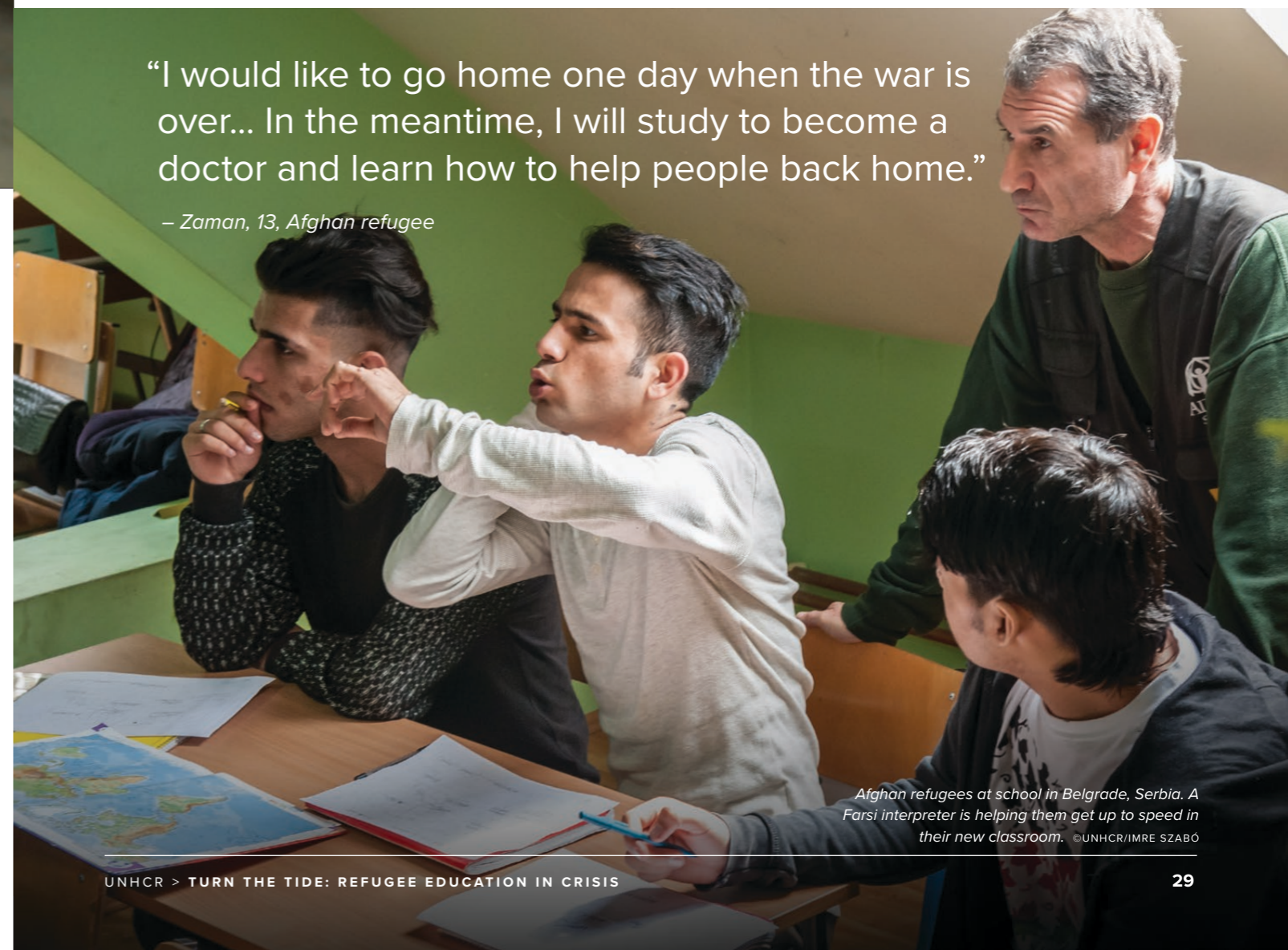
UNHCR is committed to turning the tide to enable refugees to get the education they deserve. In 2016, the 193 UN Member States committed to better support refugees and the communities hosting them. Primary among these commitments is their determination to provide inclusive quality education in safe learning environments for all refugee children. Education is also central to the global compact on refugees, which has been developed with Member States as part of a two-year process.

A promising example of progress can be seen in the countries neighbouring Syria, where intensive efforts to improve refugee education are beginning to reap rewards. Recognizing that many Syrian refugees had completed their secondary education before fleeing the country, host governments, donors, academic institutions and education actors have intensified their support for higher education. As a result, enrolment of Syrian refugees in universities across four of the largest host countries – Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq – reached 5 per cent in 2017<sup>7</sup>, an improvement on the global average of one per cent, but nevertheless still a huge gap compared to global access to higher education, which is 37 per cent.

7 UNHCR and American University of Beirut, Issam Fares Institute (2018)

“I would like to go home one day when the war is over... In the meantime, I will study to become a doctor and learn how to help people back home.”

– Zaman, 13, Afghan refugee



*Afghan refugees at school in Belgrade, Serbia. A Farsi interpreter is helping them get up to speed in their new classroom.* ©UNHCR/IMRE SZABÓ

## CASE STUDY

CHILDHOOD  
REGAINED

How a teenage mother found her way back to the classroom



Regina Juwan, 16, South Sudanese refugee, had to quit her studies when she became pregnant at the age of 14. She is now back in school at Kiryandongo refugee settlement in Uganda thanks to an Accelerated Education Programme. ©UNHCR/YONNA TUKUNDANE

When Regina Juwan found out she was pregnant at the age of 14, it looked like her childhood was over. Not only would she now have a baby to look after, but it seemed her education was finished – her school asked her to stay away until after she had given birth.

But then Regina's childhood had already been brutally cut short. She was 11 when civil war erupted once again in her native South Sudan. Both her parents were killed in front of her. She remained beside their bodies for an entire day until her aunt found her and the two of them fled to Uganda. It took them a long and exhausting month to reach safety. "We hid in the bush, we got hardly any sleep and ate very little – and sometime nothing for days," says Regina.

Once in Kiryandongo refugee settlement, in the country's midwestern region, the government allocated a plot of land to Regina, her aunt and other family members who joined them. After a while Regina even started going to school – until 2016, that is, when she was forced to abandon her studies to give birth.

"I loved being in school, being with my friends, playing netball and studying," says Regina. "I was so angry when my teacher said I should drop out because I was pregnant." But unfortunately that is standard practice, as schools do not want to be held responsible for supporting students like Regina when they are expecting.

Two years after giving birth, to a daughter she named Blessing, Regina was able to return to Victoria Primary School. But she had fallen well behind. Therefore, she was enrolled in an Accelerated Education Programme – a flexible programme for overage out-of-school children and youth which provides learners with equivalent, certified competencies for basic education and allows them to transition back into the formal system. In Uganda, the programme compresses seven years of formal primary education into three years; once Regina has completed the second level (grade 5), she will resume her formal studies next year in grade six.

Bringing up a baby has meant big changes for Regina – as well as an extra mouth to feed. But when she is in school she is able to recapture some of her own childhood in the company of her classmates. "We study together, we play, we chat – and we completely forget about [everything else]."

Inspired by the care and compassion of the nurse who delivered her baby, Regina has decided to become a nurse herself. But Oryema John, the head teacher at Victoria Primary and supervisor of the accelerated education programme, is worried for her and others like her. "Many children [in Kiryandongo] are still out of school," he says, "and those who complete their primary schooling have little chance to enrol in secondary classes because of poverty and a lack of decent learning spaces, school supplies and qualified teachers."

In Uganda, 63 per cent of the roughly 355,900 primary-level children are enrolled in school, but that falls to only one in 10 of the 141,900 secondary-age children and youth – and only one-third of those students are female. UNHCR, in its role as chair of the Accelerated Education Working Group, has been working with the Government of Uganda and other partners to recognize accelerated education as an important strategy for out-of-school children and youth like Regina.

For years, the Ugandan government has worked to meet educational demand for refugees and their peers from local communities in the face of funding shortages. But the education ministry, together with UNHCR and other partners, intends to launch an education response plan in September 2018 – a strategy incorporating accelerated education so that girls like Regina can resume their rightful place in the classroom.



## CASE STUDY

MACHINE  
LEARNING

Robot-mad brothers pursue  
love of science in new school

Jason and Kevin González\* are robot crazy. At school in Guatemala, the brothers signed up for robotics workshops and were encouraged to take part in science competitions.

*Kevin, 11, and his brother Jason, 14, Guatemalan refugees, fled to Mexico to escape violence. In their new school in Saltillo, they are able to pursue their passion of robotics and science. ©UNHCR/ENCARNI PINDADO*

The two of them even managed to win first prize in their category in a national robotics contest. For the science-mad duo, life seemed great. “We had everything a kid could want,” says Jason, 14.

“And all of the sudden, we had to leave behind the life we knew.”

Like thousands of refugees from the North of Central America region, Jason, his 11-year-old sibling and their father fled the gang-related violence in Guatemala and headed north for Mexico.

According to UNHCR’s Global Trends report, by the end of 2017 the number of asylum-seekers and refugees from the region had reached more than 294,000 – up by 58 per cent from the year before and 16 times more people than at the end of 2011.

Once over the border to Tapachula, in southern Mexico’s Chiapas state, the Gonzalez’s applied for refugee status and the boys set about trying to restart their education.

But that was not as easy as abc. “The first school we tried did not accept my kids,” says Andres, the boys’ father. “They said they had no spaces, but we felt it had more to do with us being foreigners, Central Americans.”

Eventually, with the support of UNHCR partner RET International, a humanitarian organization focused on education, the children were enrolled in a public boarding school, where they stayed during the week and went back to their father for the weekends. For children so recently uprooted from their homes, it was not ideal, but at the time it was the only option to continue their studies.

Seven months later, all three were granted refugee status and enlisted in a UNHCR programme through which recognized refugees are relocated to “integration spaces” in northern and central Mexico.

The González family joined almost 400 refugees who have started new lives in Saltillo, Coahuila state, where the heads of families can work legally and where their children can enrol in school.

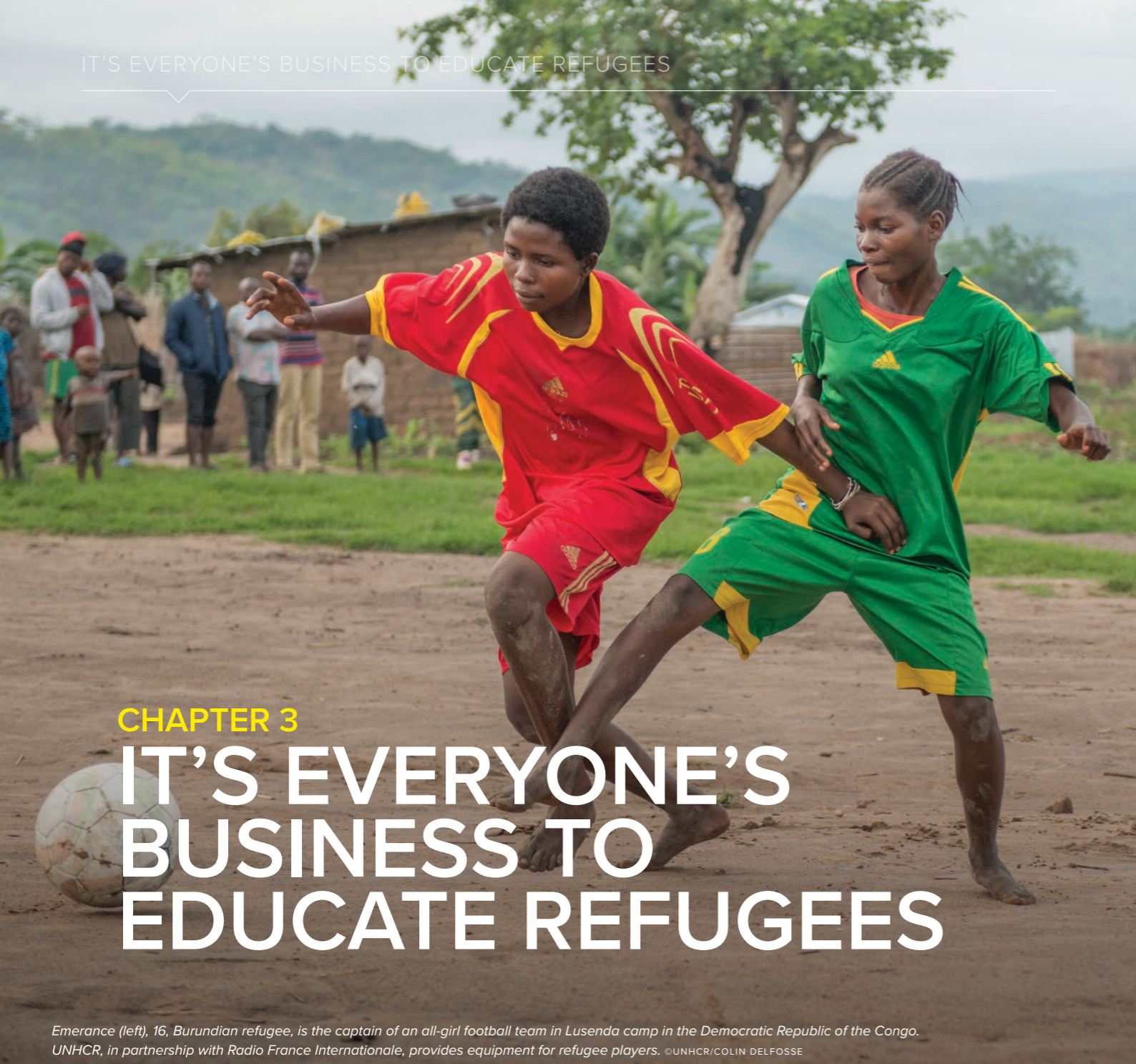
At their new school, the González brothers quickly excelled. Jason only had his primary school diploma from Guatemala, but he was able to take a standardized knowledge test so that he could start the third year of junior high school in August 2018. “This way, I’ll finish junior high within a year and catch up the time I lost when I was forced to leave Guatemala,” he says.

Although Jason was new, his teachers and classmates recognized his talent and made him team captain in a local science contest, “Knowledge Jeopardy”. They won first prize.

Even during the summer break, Jason and Kevin are not wasting time. With help from their dad, they are building a robot that looks like WALL-E, the character from the Disney/Pixar movie.

So where will this robotics obsession take them? The brothers say they want to work together – and are dreaming big. “I want to be the boss of my own company, where we will produce electronic devices and high-tech robots,” says Jason. “I want to be a scientist like Albert Einstein, or Nikola Tesla. I want to do so many things, I can hardly wait.”

\* Names have been changed for protection reasons.



CHAPTER 3

# IT'S EVERYONE'S BUSINESS TO EDUCATE REFUGEES

*Emerance (left), 16, Burundian refugee, is the captain of an all-girl football team in Lusenda camp in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. UNHCR, in partnership with Radio France Internationale, provides equipment for refugee players. ©UNHCR/COLIN DELFOSSE*

Decades of experience have taught UNHCR that the most effective way to ensure that refugee children go to school and stay there is to include them in the local school system. This requires national and local support and collaboration. When a refugee child enters a local school, it is often a first step in the community to welcoming them into their midst.

Partnerships, both local and international, are key to UNHCR's mission to break down the barriers to education for millions of refugee children. UNHCR

is one of a large community of organizations seeking to uphold the rights of refugees and the internally displaced, and only one of the many who support and protect children at risk. Despite these efforts, the number of refugees who are out of school continues to increase at an alarming rate, highlighting the need for new solutions and additional partners to join this challenge.

Investment in primary education has brought about an expansion of educational opportunity. But it has also created a need and a demand for

secondary and higher education – a demand that is going unmet. The further refugees progress in their educational journey, the harder it is for them to stay in school. The priority now must be to enable refugees to pursue and complete their education, from the first day in primary school all the way to receiving their diploma.

A swift and rapid expansion of schools and flexible education opportunities is required, whether in refugee camps or in urban and rural environments. Contrary to popular misconceptions of who refugees are and where they live, only 30 per cent of them reside in camps; the majority are to be found in villages, towns and cities, in private

homes or in unofficial settlements. Supporting educational facilities in those environments not only benefits a large number of refugees, but it also serves local populations in countries where the educational infrastructure is already overstretched – making long-lasting differences for host communities and boosting relations with refugees.

If the arrival of refugees means durable gains through more schools and more teachers, their presence becomes an advantage, not a drain on resources. Yet the sheer number of refugees in some countries presents challenges that go well beyond the capacity of the host government. It



*Okello Mark Oyat was 25 when he arrived in Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya as a refugee from Uganda. Three decades later, he graduated with a bachelor's degree in social studies from York University, Canada, through the Borderless Higher Education for Refugees distance learning programme. Today, he has secured a scholarship for a master's programme at York and is helping other refugees apply to online education programmes.*

©UNHCR/ANTOINE TARDY



“Education is the foundation of everything and preserves your dignity.”

*Yvonne Meritina Umutesi, 28, fled from Rwanda to Senegal as a young girl. A DAFI scholarship enabled her to complete a degree in Health, Safety and Environment and she is now a manager at a private construction company in Dakar. ©UNHCR/ANTOINE TARDY*

requires the mobilization of the private sector, in concert with the international community and established humanitarian and development actors, to ensure that both refugees and their host communities have a sustainable and resilient future.

The whole-of-society approach of the New York Declaration and the global compact on refugees paves the way forward. In the East and Horn of Africa, eight countries came together to sign the Djibouti Declaration in December 2017, committing to include all refugee and returnee children and youth in national education plans by 2020, to improve education quality and to expand training opportunities. In support of these important efforts by host countries, the international community, including humanitarian actors, development actors and the private sector, must engage to ensure that refugees and the communities hosting them have a sustainable and resilient future.

UNHCR's partnership with Educate A Child (EAC), a global programme of the Education Above All Foundation (EAA), brings together organizations as disparate as UNESCO, Qatar Airways, and the Dutch and Swedish Postcode Lotteries to help children, including refugees, by building and renovating schools, recruiting and training teachers, providing learning materials, supplying uniforms and pursuing other measures to eliminate the barriers they face to getting an education of good quality. The number of formerly out-of-school refugee children enrolled in primary school through EAC surpassed one million with the start of a new school year in August 2018. Without this programme, the enrolment rate of refugee children in primary school would have plummeted, derailing the hopes and prospects of a generation of children. Thanks to EAC support, primary school enrolment increased by 160 per cent in supported schools in South Sudan between 2015 and 2017. In the same period, it grew by 109 per cent in Kakuma, Kenya; by 80 per cent in Kenya's Dadaab camps; by 56 per cent in Rwanda; and by 43 per cent in Malaysia.



“I want to be a teacher when I grow up.”

*Shihnaz, 8, Afghan refugee, attends primary school in Khazana refugee village in Peshawar, Pakistan. The lap desk she received from from H&M Foundation, as part of the Educate A Child programme, makes up for a lack of desks in a crowded classroom.*

Strong partnerships have shown how companies can combine their expertise for the sake of the refugee community. It would be rare to find the likes of Gucci, Microsoft and Western Union pulling in the same direction, but the Global Business Coalition for Education has made it happen – bringing together business, civil society, educational experts and senior policymakers to facilitate joint projects where each party brings its own set of skills, assets and experiences.

Even if there are no school fees to pay, the cost of uniforms, books and supplies often presents an insurmountable barrier that keeps children from school. Since 2015, UNHCR's partnership with the H&M Foundation, a non-profit organization funded by the founders and owners of the global fashion company H&M, has enabled an estimated 500,000 children at primary and lower-secondary levels to benefit from textbooks, stationery, uniforms and lap desks in 12 countries across Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

## CASE STUDY

## TALE OF TWO SISTERS

Ethiopian girl becomes one in a million – but her elder sister is forced to make sacrifices

Rihanna Siraj, 15, Ethiopian refugee, attends school in Kakuma refugee camp, Kenya. She is among one million formerly out-of-school refugee students who now go to primary school thanks to the support of the Educate A Child programme. ©UNHCR/ANTHONY KARUMBA

Rihanna Siraj looks up from her desk to follow what her teacher is writing on the blackboard. She is a picture of concentration, whispering a few lines under her breath before writing in her exercise book. There are many students in her sweltering classroom: Rihanna is fortunate enough to sit at the front so she can hear her teacher better. This is a science class – Rihanna's favourite subject. "I like science because I want to be a doctor," she says.

Rihanna, 15, an Ethiopian refugee, is one of the many thousands of students in Kakuma refugee camp, in northern Kenya. When she was nine, she and her younger sister, Ikra, were separated from their parents during their family's journey to escape violence and persecution at home. Kakuma was where they started a new life, looked after by their elder sister, Fauzia, who arrived there a year before them. The girls have no idea if their parents are still alive.

Rihanna is literally one in a million out-of-school refugee children around the world who have been enrolled in primary school, despite being overage, thanks to Educate A Child (EAC) – a global programme of the Education Above All Foundation that unites private sector actors, foundations, non-governmental organizations and UN agencies to ensure out of school children get the opportunity to go to primary school. The programme helps with teacher training, school infrastructure and equipment, innovative ways to make sure children can attend school, and the provision of teaching and learning materials.

Today, more than 80,000 refugee children are enrolled in school in Kakuma refugee camp. But if Rihanna's medical ambitions show what a young refugee can aspire to if given the chance, Fauzia represents the tens of thousands who are not so lucky.

Fauzia tried her best to stay in school. She started making potato chips to earn some money for herself and her siblings, cooking in the morning before school and during her lunch break. But by the fifth grade she had dropped out. "I could not study because I had to come home and find work to care for my sisters," Fauzia says. "The cooking job and school could not go together. So now I work and they study."

"My sister works in the market – she takes care of us like that," says Rihanna. Fauzia now cooks for a restaurant but tops up her income with occasional work in a grocery store. "It is hard but she doesn't have any choice."

Fauzia is determined to see her sisters get an education. "If they go to school, tomorrow they can help me or their own families. There are many things they can do with an education."

Rihanna appreciates her sister's sacrifice – all the more so because school offers her protection against many of the cultural expectations girls face: early marriage, motherhood and a life where looking after the home and caring for younger family members may come ahead of going to school. "I feel like my sister protects me from those issues because some girls are getting married earlier," she says.

And she promises to make Fauzia proud.

"When she sees us go to school, she feels like she is going to school."

## The transformation of Dollo Ado

Educating a child takes a lot more than simply building schools. In 2012, in the Dollo Ado region of Ethiopia, close to the Somali border, UNHCR launched an ambitious programme to improve the lives of everyone living there, from the host community to every refugee man, woman and child who had fled there. Education was central to this strategy. At the time, the education system was in a sorry state, with just 18 per cent of children in school.

This was made possible by a first-of-its kind, multi-year partnership with the IKEA Foundation. Funding from the IKEA Foundation enabled UNHCR to start microfinance schemes for refugees. An irrigation project meant barren land was now farmed by refugees and the host community. As their incomes increased, parents were less likely to withdraw their children from school to work as manual labourers. Meanwhile, a project to bring electricity to the region had multiple benefits. Streets were lit. Hospitals and health centres had refrigeration for medicines. And computers and tablets helped teachers to improve the quality of the learning environment with digital lessons and more engaging ways of teaching.

Meanwhile, investment in primary education means that the number of classrooms has quadrupled to over 400, with many functioning on double shifts. As a result, by the end of the 2017 school year, over 47,000 refugee children were in school. This is more than twice as many as in 2012.

Enrolment in secondary school remains challenging, with enrolment at just six per cent. In the coming school year, as the majority of grade eight children have passed their exams, the 32 secondary classrooms available will be packed to bursting with over 70 students per class. This is well above the global recommendation of 40 students. Sixteen new classrooms are needed, but funding is elusive.

Space is not the only challenge. As more children succeed in completing primary school, there are not enough qualified teachers for the secondary school. A teacher training college in Dollo Ado opened its doors to students in early 2018, with the first graduates expected in 2020. Over 200 Ethiopian students and 23 refugee students are part of the first cohort of student teachers.

Poverty remains the greatest barrier to education for this population of Somali refugees, and for most refugees around the world. In the past couple of years, successive cuts to food assistance have been accompanied by to increased absenteeism and dropouts from school as refugee children have had to go to work to help the family finances.

*Bishar Yusuf (right), 14, Somali refugee, is proud of his mother, Axada Muhamed Muhumed (left), for earning money at the local market that enables him and his siblings to go to school in Melkadida refugee camp, Ethiopia. The IKEA Foundation has increased access to education and livelihoods for refugees throughout the Dollo Ado region of Ethiopia.*



*“I am very proud of her for being so strong and supporting me all my life.”*

## CASE STUDY

## 'THE KEY TO THE WORLD'

Teacher training college aims to answer huge demand from young learners

Yusuf Isak Ibrahim, 26, Somali refugee, raises his hand at the Teacher Training College in Dollo Ado, Ethiopia. He is studying there to become an English teacher. ©UNHCR/DIANA DIAZ

When Yusuf Isak Ibrahim and his family fled the fighting in Somalia in 2011, finding safety over the border in the Dollo Ado refugee camps, the idea of getting an education looked like a remote possibility.

Like many youngsters in Somalia, Yusuf hadn't been allowed to go to school as a teenager. "There was a war and Al-Shabaab [the extremist Islamist movement] was present. They said no one should go to school, no one should teach. They decided everything in our lives," he says.

At Dollo Ado, his chances did not look much better. When he arrived, there were two primary schools, one secondary school and a grand total of 240 teachers for almost 100,000 young refugees like himself.

Now aged 26, Yusuf is one of 265 young adults learning to become teachers at Dollo Ado's Teacher Training College. If you had told him a decade ago this is what he would be doing, he says, his teenage self would never have believed it.

**"I once heard that teachers are the key to the world. This is why since I was young I always wanted to become a teacher."**

In Dollo Ado, there are currently 70 schools and learning centres with over 750 teachers. The Ethiopian government has committed to integrating refugees in its national education system, as well as expanding tertiary education opportunities. Yusuf has benefited from both ambitions.

Today, 53 per cent of refugee children in the area are enrolled in school – still not close to enough, but a significant improvement compared to a few years ago.

By ensuring a constant supply line of teachers, the new training college, set up with the financial support of the IKEA Foundation, could change the game completely.

The college is the only one of its kind within a 500 kilometre radius. It opened its doors in November 2017 to train both refugees and members of the local community who wanted to make a difference in the lives of children in Dollo Ado and the surrounding areas.

"Refugees [flee] their countries without anything and here they have the possibility to change their lives, to be employed, to get an education," says Fadumo Osman Nour, a 19-year-old Ethiopian and one of Yusuf's classmates.

"And most importantly, by learning together we can all contribute to our communities. Education is the key to life, and I believe all of us can be integrated through education."

In a couple of years, Yusuf, who is studying to become an English teacher, will be among the college's first cohort of graduates. Initially they will work in schools in the refugee camps but if they get the necessary work permits they hope to fan out and teach across this densely populated region.

**"If you are educated you can sort out your life, you can get a job and provide for your family," Yusuf says. "And this matters for everyone, men and women."**

## CHAPTER 4

TEAMING  
UP WITH  
TECHNOLOGY

*Masha, 9, Ukrainian refugee, learns how to code through a project supported by the IT company EPAM Systems and UNHCR in Minsk, Belarus.*  
©UNHCR/EGOR DUBROVSKY

Technology's rapid rise presents us with some of the most exciting opportunities yet to extend education to refugees.

Digital access and connectivity is immensely important to refugees. Among other things, it can help them overcome feelings of isolation, find peer support and stay connected to family, as well as access learning opportunities from other ends of the globe. A sizeable array of online learning tailored for refugees has emerged, from online courses, lectures and curated content to entire degree programmes.

Access to information does not by itself equate to an education. Drop-out rates from online courses are extremely high, either because the material is not relevant or because students find it hard to stay motivated when they experience a course solely via a computer. This underscores the importance of face-to-face academic support as a component of what are known as blended learning programmes. In the hands of a well qualified teacher, technology is a powerful tool to improve the learning environment, but it must complement teaching, not replace it.

There has been significant growth in connected learning at tertiary level; it has become one of the strongest examples of how technology and pedagogy can combine to expand learning in a meaningful way. Connected learning courses gather students in a centre to learn together using online content and tutoring support to complement face-to-face teaching in a way that keeps distance learners engaged. Lectures can be delivered remotely, but are also given by visiting academics and staff who work on location. Without a common campus, students can nonetheless create their own communities, both on site and with their peers on other campuses, and thereby engage in group assignments as well as conventional individual tasks.

*Rita Butman (left), 31, Syrian refugee, is an instructor at ReDI School of Digital Integration in Berlin, Germany. Free coding courses enable refugee women to brush up on computer skills.* ©UNHCR/GORDON WELTERS

## A bridge to the world

The Instant Network Schools programme, a joint project of the Vodafone Foundation and UNHCR, aims to integrate technology in classrooms by providing training, solar power, connectivity and tablets with offline content. The programme places refugees and their host communities at the centre during a three-day design process that culminates in a tailored classroom design. Together they draw out what their ideal classroom looks like and how it will be used. While the teachers' priorities tend to be for learning resources, like every teenager in the world, refugee students tend to prioritize internet access.

The programme is also a bridge to the world through the Leadership Lesson initiative, with global leaders such as Paul Polman (CEO of Unilever) and Lisa Milroy (Head of Graduate Painting at the Slade School of Fine Art) delivering virtual lessons. Outside school hours, some of these classrooms transform into community hubs, opening up learning opportunities for a much broader group of people. Since the programme began in 2014, the Instant Network Schools project has worked in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, South Sudan and Tanzania and has benefitted some 62,000 young refugees and over 850 teachers.



Refugee students in Kakuma refugee camp use a tablet from the Instant Network Schools programme, a collaborative effort by UNHCR and the Vodafone Foundation to improve the quality of education in remote areas with mobile technology. The kit supplied includes tablets, laptops, projectors, speakers, solar-powered batteries, a satellite or mobile network, and a suite of content and online learning material.

© UNHCR/CATHERINE WACHIAYA



Mara Ara Janoian (left), 18, and Abdul-Aziz Jawad Al-Rubaye, 19, Iraqi refugees in Amman, Jordan, take distance learning courses in English and IT at the Jesuit Refugee Service. © UNHCR/ANTOINE TARDY

## The way forward

The advantage of connected learning is that it provides an incredibly cost-effective higher education without the students having to leave their present location (with all the additional expense that entails). Since 2012, over 7,000 refugee and host community students enrolled in connected learning courses in 12 different countries – from France and Germany to Afghanistan, Thailand, Malawi and Iraq – supported by a consortium of 16 partners, including universities, NGOs, UNHCR and foundations. The Connected Learning in Crisis Consortium is co-led by UNHCR and the University of Geneva, leveraging a broad network for innovative expansion of higher education for young refugees.

The game-changing move now would be to replicate, develop and expand connected learning initiatives, having learnt from previous start-ups. To achieve this, it is essential that more businesses, entrepreneurs and education specialists join UNHCR in making digital learning accessible to refugees around the world.

**This is why, in short, it is everyone's business to support the education of refugees.**



## CASE STUDY

## SMART SOLUTIONS

Refugees develop their tech skills to find answers to everyday problems

*Henriette Kiwele, 21, refugee from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, builds an Android app at the AppFactory in Dzaleka refugee camp, Malawi. The App Factory opened in 2017 as part of UNHCR's Connectivity for Refugees project with Microsoft 4Afrika. ©UNHCR/TINA GHELLI*

Remy Gakwaya fled his native Burundi at age 15, after his parents were killed in ethnic clashes. He made it to Dzaleka refugee camp in Malawi in 2008. Ten years later, he is now teaching 20 students how to code and develop apps.

It all started with courses in computer programming supported by the Jesuit Refugee Service at the Jesuit Worldwide Learning centre in the camp, where Remy learnt computer programming languages like HTML, Java and Python.

"I love programming," says Remy, now 23. "It is inspiring to see something that I create myself. Here in the refugee camp you are not free to do anything. We aren't able to work outside of the camp. However, if you do programming, you can do it from anywhere in the world."

In 2016, Remy founded TakeNoLab, a community organization that allows him to share his love of computer languages with young refugees in the camp.

Remy started teaching his six students the basics of how to use a mouse and a keyboard. But due to lack of computers, he had to print images of keyboard layouts which students would take home to practice typing and explain theories of coding, rather than showing them on a computer screen. Frequent power cuts meant classes often had to take place in the dark.

In a joint pilot with UNHCR, Microsoft 4Afrika provided Wi-Fi connectivity throughout the settlement with the support of local internet service providers for 12 months. One thousand smartphones, 40 and laptops and 10 tablets were also provided to help students get a step closer to unlocking their full potential.

In 2017, for the first time, Remy's students could work online with reliable internet, in proper facilities. The project started with 31 students who had passed a highly competitive aptitude test for enrolment in courses offered at the AppFactory, a Microsoft 4Afrika initiative that aims to build digital skills and coding capabilities of young people.

Apprentice developers spend up to six months working with software technicians from Microsoft, learning to design and code apps to solve problems they encounter in their everyday lives. The magic ingredients in the AppFactory are passion for software development, devotion, teamwork and empowerment.

The first app developed is called Habari. It helps new arrivals find services in the camp and teaches them the basics of English or Chichewa, the national language of Malawi. Another app, Smart Mapokezi, which means "distribution" in Swahili, sends refugees an SMS informing about upcoming food and other items available that day.

"I want to use technology to solve local problems that big software companies do not have the time to take on," says Remy.

While UNHCR is continuing to support connectivity for the AppFactory beyond the pilot, facilities for alumni remain limited and further support is required to allow graduates of the AppFactory to make the most of their new skills. Most of the students are refugees, and 5 of the 20 active students are young women.

But Remy is undeterred. He recently started a computer club called Girls' Smart Code to encourage refugee women and girls to join the technological revolution.

Henriette Kiwele, 21, and her sisters Claudine, 18, and Josephine, 17, escaped violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2013. On arriving in Dzaleka refugee camp they wanted to nothing more than to study.

When Henriette heard that TakeNoLab was looking for girls interested in learning to code, she and her sisters joined right away.

"There were mostly boys in the group, and we were asked if we would be able to keep up with them. We said yes, of course we can," says Henriette. "When I think of the future, I think one day I will be able to have a career based on the knowledge I am getting here at the App Factory," she adds.

## CASE STUDY

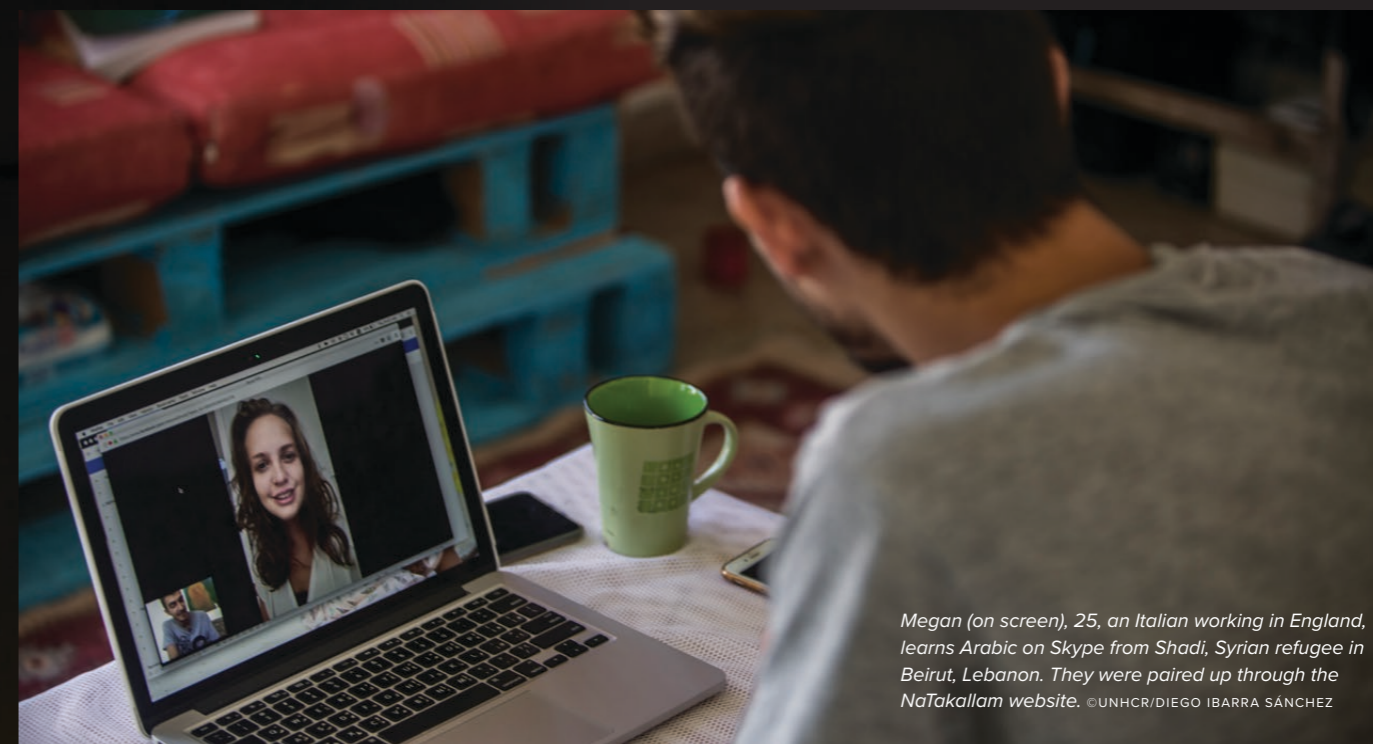
## POWER OF SPEECH

Syrian refugees are teaching Arabic to students all over the world thanks to a language-learning startup.

In a small rooftop flat in Beirut, Shadi sits by his laptop conversing in Arabic with a young woman in London. “How was your vacation?” he asks with a smile. “It was great!” Megan replies confidently in Arabic.

Megan, 25, is an Italian working in England. Shadi, 26, is a Syrian refugee in Lebanon. For the past few weeks, they have been meeting on Skype to work on Megan’s Arabic. They met through NaTakallam (“We Speak”), a website that enlists refugees as freelance language teachers and translators.

Shadi, 26, Syrian refugee in Beirut, Lebanon, is one of more than 100 refugees around the world employed by NaTakallam, a website that matches refugees with people who want to learn a language online. ©UNHCR/DIEGO IBARRA SÁNCHEZ



Megan (on screen), 25, an Italian working in England, learns Arabic on Skype from Shadi, Syrian refugee in Beirut, Lebanon. They were paired up through the NaTakallam website. ©UNHCR/DIEGO IBARRA SÁNCHEZ

Shadi fled Syria in 2016, interrupting his graduate studies in fine art. But he struggled to make ends meet in Lebanon, where Syrians can only work legally in a few sectors like construction and agriculture. NaTakallam offered a chance to use his language skills and earn a small monthly stipend. He now teaches Arabic online to Megan and three other students.

The service was launched by Aline Sara, a Lebanese-American entrepreneur who saw a way to draw on the talents of people living in exile. “Refugees are people who have something to offer,” she says. “Highly educated people like you and me who have been robbed of the opportunity to continue their lives.”

The idea came to her in the summer of 2014, when she had just completed her Master’s degree in international affairs at Columbia University in New York. Looking for an affordable way to practice her Arabic, she hit on a way to match refugees with people who want to learn a language online.

Four years on, the startup employs more than 100 refugees around the world, including Syrians, Iraqis and Afghans. Over 3,000 users in 65 countries have signed up for its language instruction and translation services.

But NaTakallam is more than a business. It’s also a community where users can forge friendships and benefit from intercultural exchange.

“NaTakallam is all about discovering,” Shadi says. “Discovering how people are abroad and how they think.” Some of his students have even come to visit him in Beirut.

Megan is equally appreciative. “We have this idea that we constructed of who and what a refugee is,” she says, “only to realize that it is a person exactly like we are, but in a completely different part of the world.”

After they hang up, Shadi begins preparing for a call with a student in the United States. “We Syrians were isolated from the world during the war,” he says. “Now I feel more connected than ever.”

# FINAL WORD

By UNHCR Special Envoy  
Angelina Jolie

**Refugee families endure innumerable forms of mental and physical anguish, including the pain of being unable to provide their children with food when they are hungry or medicine when they are ill or injured. But I have also seen how much it weighs on refugee parents when they are unable to send their children to school, knowing that with each passing year their life prospects are shrinking and their vulnerability is growing.**

In a report published today the UN Refugee Agency has warned that rising numbers of refugee children are not receiving an education. While the implications are grave, our response should not be to despair but instead to see an opportunity.

The global refugee crisis is one of the major challenges our generation faces. But the task is not hopeless. Refugees themselves are not passively waiting for help, but are actively searching for ways to be part of the recovery of their countries. Education is a key to helping them to do this.

The contrasting lives of two Syrian girls I have met brought this home to me vividly. The first was a young girl who arrived in Lebanon with her five siblings when she was 11. Her mother had been killed in an airstrike, and the children were separated from their father. There was no parent to put food on the table, so she spent her days collecting garbage to sell for miniscule amounts of money, and doing the back-breaking labor of fetching water and cooking and cleaning so her

siblings could go to school. She had to set aside her dream of becoming a doctor, and at 14, she married and become a mother. Today, she still cannot read or write. Even if the war ended tomorrow, she has been robbed of her childhood and the future she might have had.

The second Syrian girl I think of as I write this piece fled to Iraq from Syria with her family when she was 16. Their life in the camp was extremely hard, but she was able to enroll in a local school. Iraq's education authorities did not recognize her Syrian baccalaureate certificate, so she repeated her final year of high school. She now studies dentistry at an Iraqi university, while still living with her family in a refugee camp. When I met her and her family there this summer, she told me that as soon as she could she would go back to her homeland and help with its recovery, saying "Syria needs its young people".

We often describe refugees as a single mass of people, and a burden. We do not see the intricate mosaic of individual men, women and children with diverse backgrounds and immense human potential.

There are millions of young refugees with the energy and desire and commitment to study and work, who want to contribute to the societies that host them and ultimately help rebuild their home countries. There are millions of displaced parents who will make every sacrifice imaginable to help their children go to school.

*UNHCR Special Envoy Angelina Jolie visits Mosul, Iraq's second city, in June 2018. She met with families who survived years of terror and displacement and are now returning, determined to rebuild their homes and get their children back in school. ©UNHCR/ANDREW MCCONNELL*



UNHCR Special Envoy Angelina Jolie meets Hassan and his children – from left to right, Muthana, 8, Sara, 6, and Sora, 10 – an internally displaced Iraqi family returning to their home in West Mosul, Iraq. Jolie checks the report card of Sora, who is at the top of her class.

I remember a father I met in West Mosul, who'd somehow brought his family through three years of brutal ISIS rule and the violent liberation of the city. While they hadn't left Iraq, and so are classed as internally displaced people rather than refugees, they'd only recently been able to return to the city. Standing by their bullet-ridden former home, he fought back tears of pride as he showed me the school report cards of his two young daughters who had now returned to school.

This in the end, I thought, is how you rebuild a country: not with peace agreements and resolutions, as necessary as those are, but with millions of school report cards, exams passed, qualifications obtained, jobs acquired, and young lives turned to good purpose rather than spent languishing in camps. No one dreams of being a refugee, they dream of living up to their potential. They long to better themselves and their families. This is something we all instinctively understand and can relate to. We experience the power of education in our own families.

The loss of a child's education is a tragedy. With many wars today lasting longer than the duration of a childhood, this can mean a country losing out on an entire generation of education and skills amongst its young people.

Conversely, investing in the education of refugees is the most powerful way we can help them to be self-sufficient, and contribute to the future stability of countries torn apart by conflict. UNHCR is calling for refugee children to have access to a proper curriculum all the way through primary and secondary school, so they can get recognized qualifications and have a chance at higher education. We are asking that more support be given to countries in developing regions, who host 92% of the world's school age refugees, so more refugee children can be included in national education systems. And we are urging wealthier nations to address humanitarian shortfalls so refugee parents don't have to choose between food and schooling for their children.

Hardly a day goes past without bleak news headlines about violence, suffering and the displacement of people, from Afghanistan to Yemen. It is difficult to find a single example of where we are succeeding as an international community in ending conflicts and securing peace. The result can sometimes be an overwhelming sensation of a world out of balance, in which even our best efforts somehow fall short.

Yet the answer is not to feel hopeless or to turn away, but to work in a patient, long-term manner, guided by our values, to chip away at what seem like vast intractable problems. If we help refugees get an education, they themselves will take on the harder task of rebuilding the countries whose future peace and security is so important to our own. It is the wise as well as morally right course of action.

# CALL TO ACTION

## INDIVIDUALS

- Support education and inclusion of refugees in your community
- Engage with your government to support positive policies for refugees
- Help give refugee children an education: [donate.unhcr.org/education](https://donate.unhcr.org/education)

## EDUCATION ACTORS

- Adopt a policy of refugee inclusion in national schools rather than building parallel systems
- Coordinate with education partners to amplify each other's strengths, avoid duplication and achieve greater results for children

## BUSINESSES

- Fund education initiatives to provide quality education for refugees
- Share your expertise to bring new ideas, coalitions and approaches to refugee education
- Include refugees in your training, work placement and employment schemes

## HOST COUNTRIES

- Enrol refugees in national schools, monitor their inclusion and provide special support where necessary
- Eliminate barriers that block access to education, such as requirements for birth and school certificates
- Make provisions for refugees in multi-year education sector plans and budgets

## DONORS

- Commit to multi-year predictable funding from the emergency phase onwards so that no refugee is excluded from schooling due to lack of funds
- Establish clear links between humanitarian and development funding and programming

Maryam, 9, Afghan refugee, attends a UNHCR-funded primary school for girls in Khazana refugee village in Peshawar, Pakistan. © UNHCR/A. SHAHZAD

[unhcr.org/turnthetide](https://unhcr.org/turnthetide)



For more information and enquiries, please contact:

**UNHCR**  
P.O. Box 2500  
1211 Geneva 2  
Switzerland

