

MISSING OUT

REFUGEE EDUCATION IN CRISIS



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

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ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report tells the stories of some of the world's six million refugee children and adolescents under UNHCR's mandate who are of primary and secondary school-going age between 5 and 17. In addition, it looks at the educational aspirations of refugee youth eager to continue learning after secondary education.

Education data on refugee enrolments and population numbers is drawn from UNHCR's population data base, reporting tools and education surveys. The data refers to the 2015-16 school year. The report also references global enrolment data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics referring to 2014.

SEPTEMBER 2016

An Afghan boy spells out the alphabet at a special English language class at the Oinofyta reception centre north of Athens, Greece © UNHCR/Achilleas Zavallis



UNHCR High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi visits a class of Syrian refugees at a primary school in Beirut, Lebanon. The Ibtihaj Kadoura Primary School in the Bir Hassan neighbourhood added a second afternoon session to accommodate 595 Syrian refugee students.

Introduction

BY FILIPPO GRANDI, UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

When the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees began work on January 1, 1951, it was given three years to complete its task of helping millions of European refugees left homeless or in exile after the war. At that time, three years was deemed long enough to resolve the refugee problem once and for all, after which – it was expected – UNHCR’s task would be complete.

Today, there are 16.1 million refugees worldwide under UNHCR’s mandate.¹ More than half are children, and six million are of primary and secondary school-going age. The average length of time a refugee spends in exile is about 20 years.² Twenty years is more than an entire childhood, and represents a significant portion of a person’s productive working years. Given this sobering picture, it is critical that we think beyond a refugee’s basic survival. Refugees have skills, ideas, hopes and dreams. They face huge risks and challenges, but – as we saw exemplified in the inspiring achievements of the Refugee Olympic Team – they are also tough, resilient and creative, with the energy and drive to shape their own destinies, given the chance.

¹ In addition to these 16.1 million, 5.2 million Palestinian refugees are registered by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA).

² UNHCR, 2016, Global Trends – Forced Displacement in 2015: <http://www.unhcr.org/statistics/unhcrstats/576408cd7/unhcr-global-trends-2015.html>

Making sure that refugees have access to education is at the heart of UNHCR's mandate to protect the world's rapidly increasing refugee population, and central to its mission of finding long-term solutions to refugee crises. However, as the number of people forcibly displaced by conflict and violence rises, demand for education naturally grows and the resources in the countries that shelter them are stretched ever thinner.

Of the six million primary and secondary school-age refugees under UNHCR's mandate, 3.7 million have no school to go to. Refugee children are five times more likely to be out of school than non-refugee children. Only 50 per cent have access to primary education, compared with a global level of more than 90 per cent. And as they get older, the gap becomes a chasm: 84 per cent of non-refugee adolescents attend lower secondary school, but only 22 per cent of refugee adolescents have that same opportunity. At the higher education level, just one per cent of refugees attend university compared to 34 per cent globally.³

“Education enables children and youth to thrive, not just survive.”

The personal stories in this report show that refugee children and youth – whether they are girls or boys, young children or adolescents, living in cities, towns, camps, or other settlements – regard going to school as a basic need, not a luxury. However, the obstacles to full participation in formal education are considerable.

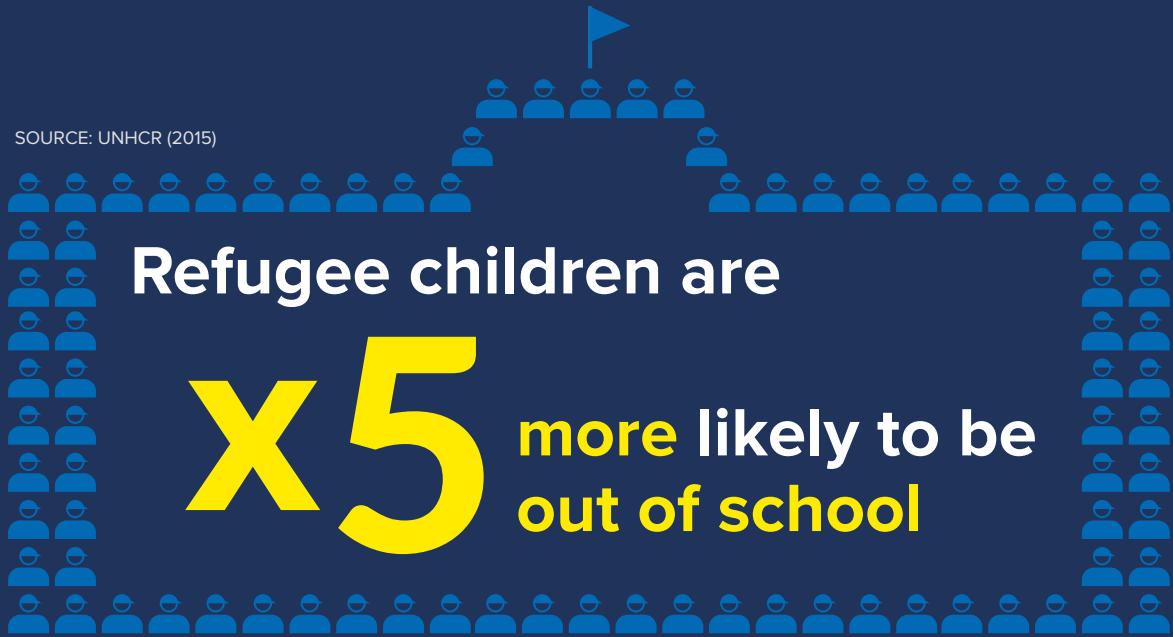
The vast majority of the world's refugees – 86 per cent – are hosted in developing regions, with more than a quarter in the world's least developed countries.⁴ More than half of the world's out-of-school refugee children are located in just seven countries: Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lebanon, Pakistan and Turkey. Refugees often live in regions where governments are already struggling to educate their own children. Those governments face the additional task of finding school places, trained teachers and learning materials for tens or even hundreds of thousands of newcomers, who often do not speak the language of instruction and have missed out on an average of three to four years of schooling.

The obstacles to full participation in formal education are considerable.

³ Global enrolment rates refer to 2014 (UNESCO Institute for Statistics) and refugee enrolments rates refer to 2015 (UNHCR).

⁴ UNHCR, 2016, Global Trends – Forced Displacement in 2015: <http://www.unhcr.org/statistics/unhcrstats/576408cd7/unhcr-global-trends-2015.html>

SOURCE: UNHCR (2015)



By the end of 2015, 6.7 million refugees were living in protracted situations⁵. Refugees trapped in forced displacement for such long periods find themselves in a state of limbo. Their lives may not be at risk, but their basic rights and essential economic, social and psychological needs can remain unfulfilled. Despite concerted efforts to expand the provision of education to more refugee children and youth, the weight of numbers means that enrolment rates have been falling in the past few years, even in countries where determined efforts have been made to get more refugee children into school.

Although some protracted refugee situations have lasted more than two decades, refugee education is largely financed from emergency funds, leaving little room for long-term planning. Traditionally, refugee education does not feature in national development plans or in education sector planning, but a few of the largest refugee hosting countries are taking steps to correct this.⁶ However, refugees' educational access and attainment are rarely tracked through national monitoring systems, meaning that **refugee children and youth are not only disadvantaged, but their educational needs and achievements remain largely invisible.**

The returns on investing in education are immense and far-reaching. There is solid evidence that quality education gives children a place of safety and can also reduce child marriage, child labour, exploitative and dangerous work, and teenage pregnancy. It gives them the opportunity to make friends and find mentors, and provides them with the skills for self-reliance, problem solving, critical thinking and teamwork. It improves their job prospects and boosts confidence and self-esteem.

⁵ Situations where 25,000 people or more have been forcibly displaced for more than five years.

⁶ Most recently, Cameroon, Chad, Niger, Pakistan and South Sudan have included refugees in provincial or national multi-year education sector plans.

Education enables children and youth to thrive, not just survive. Failing to provide education for 6 million refugees of school-going age, on the other hand, can be hugely damaging, not only for individuals but also for their families and societies, perpetuating cycles of conflict and yet more forced displacement. It means lost opportunities for peaceful and sustainable development in our world. As this report illustrates, education is central to both those goals – peace and development – and to helping refugee children to fulfil their potential.

The returns on investing in education are immense and far reaching.

One year ago, members of the United Nations set out an agenda for global action for the next 15 years. Sustainable Development Goal 4, “Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning”, cannot be achieved by 2030 without meeting the education needs of vulnerable populations, including refugees, stateless persons and other forcibly displaced people. The multiplier effect of education on the other goals – on eradicating poverty and hunger, for example, and on promoting gender equality and economic growth – illustrates education’s important role.

As world leaders gather for the UN General Assembly’s Summit for Refugees and Migrants, and for the Leaders’ Summit on the Global Refugee Crisis hosted by the President of the United States of America (USA), UNHCR is calling for a broad partnership between government, humanitarian agencies, development partners and the private sector to address the huge gaps in the provision of quality education for all refugees.

We are beginning to acknowledge the scale of the issue. In May this year, governments, companies and philanthropists met at the World Humanitarian Summit in Turkey to create the Education Cannot Wait fund, an initiative to meet the educational needs of millions of children and youth affected by crises around the world.


But we are not acting fast enough. All too often, education for refugee children is considered a luxury, a non-essential optional extra after food, water, shelter and medical care. It is the first item to drop off the list when funding is short, as it is today. The figures tell this sorry story: one in two refugee children have access to primary school, which declines to fewer than one in four enrolling in secondary school, dropping to a pitiful one in 100 having the opportunity to continue their studies at university or elsewhere.



This needs to change. By educating tomorrow's leaders, be they engineers, poets, doctors, scientists, philosophers or computer programmers, we are giving refugees the intellectual tools to shape the future of their own countries from the day they return home, or to contribute meaningfully to the countries that offer them shelter, protection and a vision of a future.

If we neglect this task, we will be failing to nurture peace and prosperity. Education provides the keys to a future in which refugees can find solutions for themselves and their communities.

Refugees face two journeys, one leading to hope, the other to despair. It is up to us to help them along the right path.

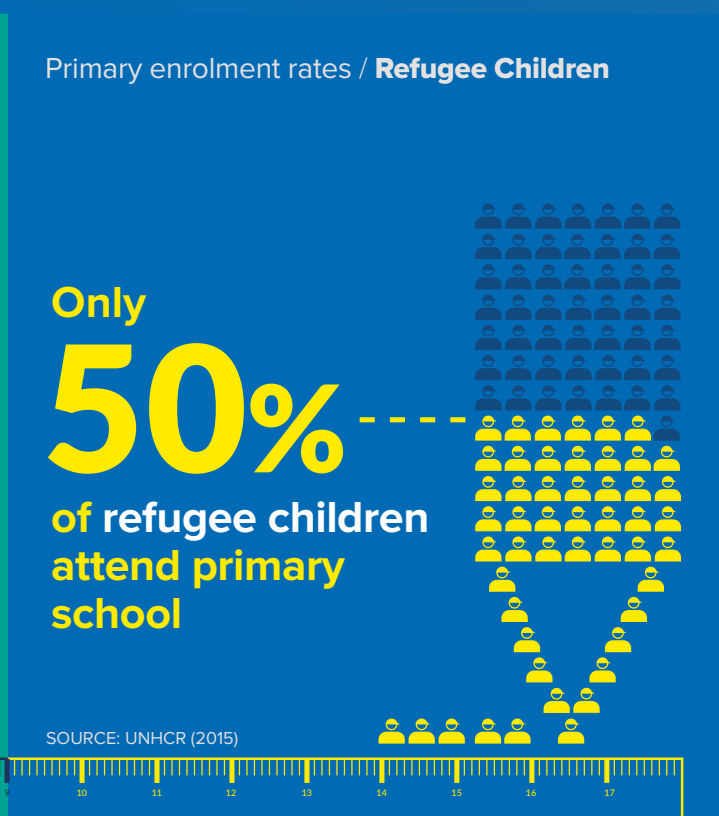
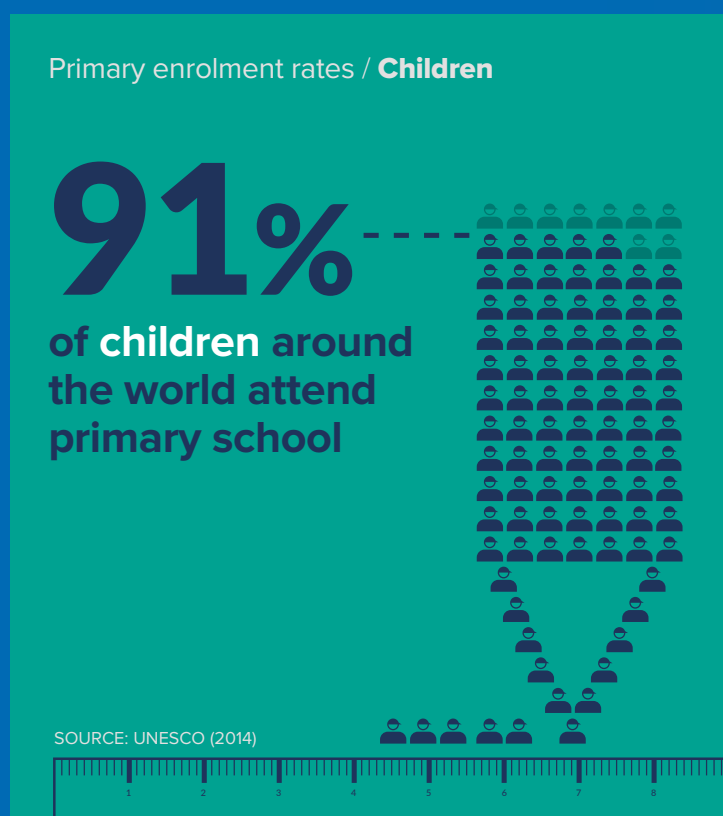


“When I grow up I want to be a doctor to help my family and all of the sick people, so I have to study a lot to become a big woman,”

says eight-year-old Ivorian refugee girl during her presentation at school in Liberia.

The Global Picture

There are six million refugee children and adolescents of school-age under UNHCR's mandate. In 2015, only 2.3 million were in school, 3.7 million were out-of-school. 1.75 million refugee children were not in primary school and 1.95 million refugee adolescents were not in secondary school. The 1.75 million refugee children in primary school and the 550,000 refugee adolescents in secondary education were in need of increased support to help them stay and succeed in school.



Governments, UNHCR and partners have made progress in enrolling refugees in school and in ensuring they have access to accredited education in national systems. The struggle is one of sheer numbers: while the global school-age refugee population group was relatively stable at 3.5 million over the first ten years of the 21st century and there was gradual progress on enrolment rates, it has grown by 600,000 children and adolescents annually on average since 2011. In 2014 alone, the refugee school-age population grew by 30%. At this pace, this means an average of at least 12,000 additional classrooms and 20,000 additional teachers are needed each year.



Aletho, 14, is an Ethiopian refugee living in Dadaab camp, Kenya, and dreams of becoming a reporter:

“I love imagining things. In real life, I am eagerly waiting to be a journalist. I admire the way they talk on TV. I’d like to travel the world as a reporter.”

STARTING OUT

WHY EDUCATION FOR REFUGEES MATTERS



© UNHCR/Sebastian Rich

Sumeh, 26, is teaching Burmese to her Standard 2 class of Karenni refugee children. Sumeh, also a Karenni refugee, says the best thing about living at the Ban Mai Nai Soi camp in northern Thailand is free access to education for all children.

Early childhood and primary education form the foundation of the lifelong learning cycle that is at the heart of UNHCR's Education Strategy.

At the global level, UNHCR estimates that half of the 3.5 million refugee children of primary school-age do not go to school. In collaboration with ministries of education, UNHCR and the Education Above All Foundation work with a vast array of other partners to address this unacceptable situation. The Educate A Child programme aims to increase the quality of, and access to, primary education for out-of-school refugee children and improve retention by supporting innovative approaches to education, infrastructure, teacher training and development, as well as better provision of teaching and learning materials. Since 2012, over 400,000 additional out-of-school children in 12 countries have been enrolled in school thanks to this partnership.

First and foremost, school should be a safe haven. Schools also play an important role in identifying refugee children at risk of abuse, sexual and gender-based violence, and forced recruitment, and they can help connect them with appropriate services.

Quality education is the anchor that will keep children in the classroom, encouraging them to continue to the end of primary school and transition to secondary and beyond. For that reason, education has a protective effect only if it is of good quality. Knowing that their children are learning is an incentive for parents to send their children to school and make sure they attend regularly. The key to quality lies in sound and inclusive education policies as well as motivated and well-trained teachers. However, teachers are often in short supply where there is an influx of refugees, even in high income countries.

Despite great progress in enrolling more refugee children in primary education, refugees are still lagging behind their peers in their host countries. In Chad, Kenya, Malaysia and Pakistan, for example, the percentage of refugee children in primary education is about half of that of their host country peers. This does not point to lack of good will or restrictions on access. Reasons for low enrolment rates vary greatly and include, among other factors, low absorption capacity in local schools, the distance a child has to travel to get to the classroom, and a plethora of social, cultural and economic factors according to context.

Where conflict erupts, the effects on countries with effective and established educational systems can be disastrous. The violence in Syria is a case in point: whereas in 2009, 94 per cent of Syrian children attended primary and lower secondary education, by June 2016 only 60 per cent of children did so, leaving 2.1 million children and adolescents without access to education. In neighbouring countries, more than 4.8 million Syrian refugees are registered with UNHCR, among them approximately 35 per cent of school age. In Turkey, only 39 per cent of school-age refugee children and adolescents were enrolled in primary and secondary education, 40 per cent in Lebanon, and 70 per cent in Jordan. This means that nearly 900,000 Syrian school-age refugee children and adolescents are not in school.⁷

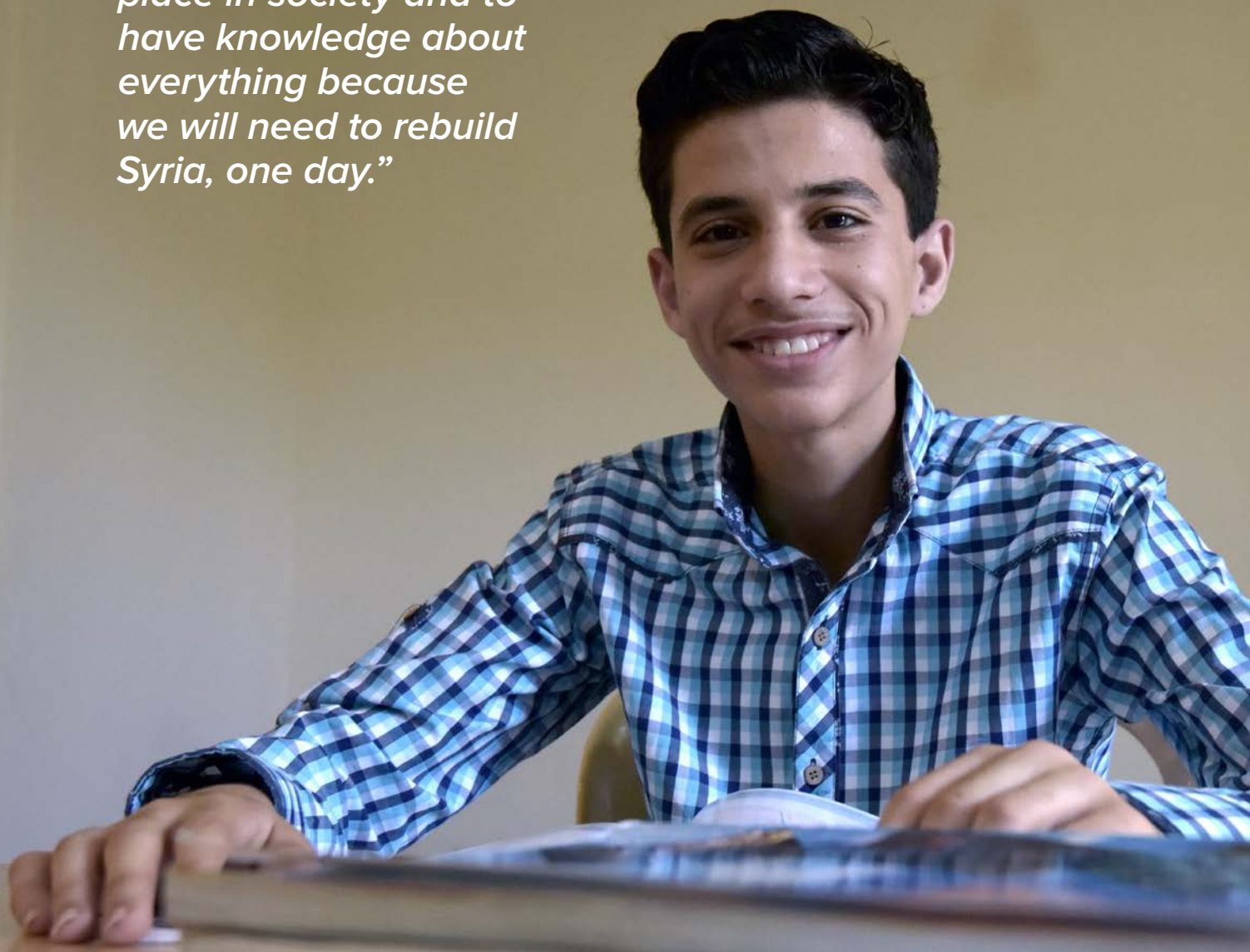
Quality education is the anchor that will keep children in school.

UNESCO research finds that low levels of access to education and high levels of inequality in education in turn heighten the risk of violence and conflict, creating a vicious cycle of lost educational opportunities, conflict and displacement. Observed over 21 years, regions with very low average rates of education had a 50 per cent chance of experiencing conflict.⁸

⁷ Enrolment and population figures for Turkey are provided by the Ministry of National Education.

⁸ UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report 2016: <http://gem-report-2016.unesco.org/>

“You must learn and study to have your place in society and to have knowledge about everything because we will need to rebuild Syria, one day.”



UNHCR/Haidar Darwish

CASE STUDY

Two Futures

Nawfal and Mohammad are two Syrian boys who fled the violence in their country and found shelter in Lebanon. A small part of the exodus of more than 1 million Syrian refugees now registered in Lebanon, they face very different futures.

Syrian refugee Mohammad Ammar Koushak, 16, reading books by his desk. Mohammad, who was in grade nine last year, scored the second highest grade nationwide in the Brevet official exam, with 268 over 280.

Nawfal, whose old home was in Raqqa, now has a new one in an informal settlement in the Beka'a Valley. Like thousands of other children in the area, he does not go to school. For most of the day, he hangs around or plays with other children amid the rubbish, open sewers and mud. They have no toys, no playground and nothing to do.

"I miss my school," Nawfal said. "I never missed a day of school in Syria. I miss my books the most. I miss reading." In 2009, before the war began, only 1.1 per cent of Syrian children did not attend primary school. By 2013 that had leapt to 29.1 per cent.

By contrast, Mohammad and his five siblings are an example of what can be achieved when refugee children are given a chance in education. Mohammad, 15, was always top of his class back in Syria. He and his family had to flee their home in Daraya almost four years ago and the children spent more than a year in Lebanon without going to school. But Mohammad's parents never gave up on their children's education. All of them – aged between 9 and 17 – attend Lebanese public schools. And all are among the top students in their years. Mohammad, who was in grade nine last year, scored the second-highest mark nationwide in the official exam. "You must learn and study to have your place in society and to have knowledge about everything because we will need to rebuild Syria one day," he said, exhorting other refugee children to enrol in school.

There are more than 380,000 refugee children between the ages of 5 and 17 registered with UNHCR in Lebanon. It is estimated that less than 50 per cent of primary school-age children have access to public primary schools and less than 4 per cent of adolescents have access to public secondary schools.⁹

Although enrolment is free in Lebanese public schools for refugees, some families are deterred from sending their children to school because of associated costs such as transport and learning materials, as well as language difficulties and

certain other barriers. For example, unlike the Syrian curriculum where Arabic is the only language of instruction, in Lebanon children learn in Arabic, French and English. A vulnerability assessment of Syrian refugees in Lebanon showed that 660 of 1,432 households (46 per cent) reported they had at least one child out of school. Of these, 57 per cent said the associated cost was one of the reasons.¹⁰ In Lebanon, where the refugee population is widely dispersed, transport to and from school is a particular problem.

Safe transport plays a particularly important role in cities. More than half the world's refugees today live in towns and cities rather than camps, and that proportion rises sharply in countries that have taken in hundreds of thousands of Syrians. By June 2016, of the more than 4.8 million Syrian refugees in the region, only 10 per cent were living in camps. In Lebanon, there are no camps whatsoever and refugees are scattered across the country at more than 1,700 sites.

In their efforts to accommodate refugee children, Lebanese schools have opened a second shift in the afternoons, a scheme that was launched throughout the country in November 2013 by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education with the support of UNHCR. In the 2016-17 school year, 330 schools will run the double-shift system.

Undeterred by the sheer numbers, the Lebanese government recently committed itself to getting all children aged between 5 and 17 in education by the end of 2021. Students such as Mohammad receive the same level of education as their Lebanese peers and are awarded Lebanese public school diplomas, ensuring their education is recognized.

Schools running two shifts provide classes in Arabic, French, maths, science, civil society and geography. After this, it is hoped that students will be fluent enough in French to enter the less crowded mainstream secondary education system.

9 Inter-Agency Coordination, Lebanon - Education Dashboard Jan-May 2016: <https://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=11514>

10 Inter-Agency Coordination, Lebanon - Education Dashboard Jan-May 2016: <https://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=11514>

A place of transformation

A teacher who manages a classroom that includes refugee learners will walk into perhaps the toughest classroom in the world.


Among the class will be children who have seen their homes destroyed and their relatives injured or killed. Some may have disabilities, either from birth or as a result of the violence in their home countries. There may be a former child soldier, a survivor of sexual abuse, someone who made the journey to safety when their brother or sister did not. Their education will have been interrupted for weeks, months or even years. On average, UNHCR estimates that refugees miss out on three to four years of schooling because of forced displacement.

The classroom will probably be crowded, even if the school operates a double shift system, with children from the host country rubbing shoulders with refugees. These arrangements enable more children to attend school but the long hours place an extra burden on teachers and other staff. In some countries, lessons may be held in a language that the refugee children are only beginning to understand.

Yet this classroom can transform children. They can learn reading, writing and mathematics, the foundation of lifelong learning, and they can learn how to learn. This underpins further development in language, literature and maths as well as the sciences, geography, history, religious studies and other subjects as children move into secondary school and beyond. Besides academic subjects, they can learn about basic health care and hygiene, citizenship, human rights and where, how and from whom to get help. From the first lessons through to university, education helps refugees stand on their own feet, allowing them to prepare for the future, whether that is in a host country or in their own country upon their return.



In the Kashojwa village school in Uganda, a total of 2,800 local Ugandans and Somali, Congolese, Burundian and other refugees attend school together. Classrooms are over packed and under resourced, placing significant stress on the pupils and teachers.



“Many of our friends do not study, they work in the fields with their families.”

CASE STUDY

Learning in a new system

Anas, 11, and his nine-year-old sister Zoera have never seen their homeland. Their parents fled war in the Darfur region of Sudan in 2003, a conflict that has cost many lives and displaced more than 2 million people. Anas and Zoera were born in exile in Chad and now live in the Djabal refugee camp in the southeast of the country.

Anas Daouda, 8, raises his hand in class in Djabal Refugee Camp, Chad.

UNHCR in collaboration with the Chadian government and partners oversaw a programme of transition to the host curriculum.

School starts at 7am and lasts until lunchtime. Lessons are given in Arabic, one of Chad's two official languages (the other is French). There is a shortage of desks so Anas and his 30 classmates unroll mats on the floor to sit on. Only his teacher has a textbook and so she writes notes on the blackboard, but UNHCR and partners are working to provide them for every child.

“Many of our friends do not study, they work in the fields with their families,” Anas said.

Because of the difference in language and educational systems, Sudanese refugee children in Chad originally followed the Sudanese curriculum. As with other displacement situations, no one foresaw that the arrival of refugees from Darfur would continue long-term, with chances of a return home still looking slim.

In response, UNHCR worked with the Chadian government and partner organisations to implement a programme of transition to the Chadian curriculum, including the training of hundreds of Sudanese refugees as teachers and the deployment of more than 250 Chadian

teachers specializing in French, citizenship, history and geography to camps and other sites. The transition to the Chadian education system was initiated in October 2014 in all schools in the eastern camps. In addition, refugee teachers are enrolled in a national teacher training institute so that they can get a professional qualification.

However, there are still significant problems. While the Darfur crisis has faded from media attention, refugee camps in eastern Chad continue to host more than 90,000 Sudanese refugee children of primary school age, served by only 62 schools in 2016. The high pupil-to-teacher ratios are a major reason why children drop out, particularly as they make the transition from primary to secondary level. Although 64 per cent of primary-age Sudanese refugee children in eastern Chad are enrolled in school, that falls to 39 per cent at secondary level. There is still not enough funding to pay for textbooks and the refurbishment of classrooms, or for more to be built to cater to the large numbers of out-of-school children.



Zoera Daouda, 10, with her teacher Amina Moussa Ibrahim, 28 in Djabal Refugee Camp, Chad. Amina is one of the teachers set to participate in the bilingual school teacher training supported by UNHCR and the Educate A Child (EAC) programme.



© UNHCR/Sebastian Rich

Afghan refugee children attend summer school alongside Iranian classmates in Varamin, Islamic Republic of Iran. Afghan refugee children can attend public schools and study in the same class as their Iranian peers.

Focus on: The need for inclusion

UNHCR has learned from many years of working with refugee communities that refugees should be included in national education systems and follow national curricula rather than pursue parallel courses of study that cannot be supervised or certified by the host country. National education ministries are, therefore, vital partners in ensuring all children and youth, regardless of their legal status, have the opportunity to study and obtain recognized qualifications. To support such efforts, UNHCR has formalized its collaboration with the Global Partnership for Education to work towards the systematic inclusion of forcibly displaced children and youth in national education sector plans, budgets, programming and monitoring.

In some countries, such as Cameroon, Chad, Islamic Republic of Iran, Lebanon, Rwanda or Uganda, the inclusion of refugees is well established, either in national schools or in camp or community schools that follow the host country's curriculum and are administered by the relevant education ministry. While most host countries¹¹ do not place any formal legal or administrative barriers to refugees accessing their national education systems, the degree to which refugees are included varies greatly. In some countries, refugees do face various restrictions on their enrolment in national schools and have access only to unregistered schools. Such parallel courses, leading sometimes to exams that are not recognized

¹¹ Sixty-four out of 81 refugee hosting countries analysed by UNHCR do not place formal restrictions on refugees accessing national systems.

by any country, mean that subsequent inclusion in national systems at secondary and tertiary level becomes almost impossible. Refugees must be allowed to take accredited examinations and to benefit from teaching that meets established national standards, at all levels of education.

Without sufficient information about the advantages of such inclusion, refugee communities can at first be reluctant to have their children study foreign curricula when this raises the unwelcome prospect of prolonged displacement or seems to weaken ties to their native countries, cultures, religions and identities. But following a new curriculum does not mean forgetting one's roots, and refugee communities have shown themselves to be adept at maintaining close ties to their own cultures and languages outside the classroom.

Refugee communities have shown themselves to be innovative.

UNHCR's education policies include extending opportunities to children and youth from the host community as well as to refugees. With the arrival of refugee children, teachers can suddenly face considerably more complex classrooms than they were used to and need support if they are to ensure that the learning environment remains safe, inclusive and fair to everyone.

With the number of refugees growing rapidly all over the world, many countries need support in expanding and strengthening their formal education systems to cope. Where necessary, particularly where children and adolescents have been out of school for several years and find the formal system inaccessible, they should also provide certified accelerated education programmes. These give older students the opportunity to cover the same ground as standard-age learners, but at a faster and more intensive pace with a condensed curriculum. Accelerated education is certified by an accredited institution so that learners can then integrate into mainstream education if they wish (in the right class for their age), transfer to the next level (normally secondary), or switch to technical and vocational courses of study.

The inclusion of refugees in national education systems requires strong partnerships and a significant investment of time and resources to support children and youth to succeed in the new system, with training in the language of instruction where needed. However, it is an investment with rich dividends for the refugees, their host communities and the wider region.

MOVING AHEAD

CLOSING THE GAP



© UNHCR/Agron Dragaj

Parents see off their daughter Tinalbarka, 16, as she leaves the family tent to attend classes at secondary school in Mbera refugee camp, Mauritania. Tinalbarka, a refugee from Mali and role model among her peers, dreams of becoming a lawyer

If it can be difficult to find a place in primary school, at secondary level the obstacles can seem insurmountable. A refugee's schooling is likely to reach a premature end in primary school. Among the 2.5 million refugee adolescents of secondary age, nearly 2 million do not have the chance to attend secondary school. The comparison with countries where the transition to secondary school is almost taken for granted is stark. Worldwide, 84 per cent of lower secondary-age adolescents are enrolled in school. By contrast, in countries with the largest refugee populations, access to secondary education for refugees is rare: in Pakistan, 5 per cent of secondary-age refugee adolescents attend school; in Cameroon only 6 per cent; in Ethiopia, the figure is 9 per cent, while in Turkey, host to 2.7 million registered Syrian refugees, it is 13 per cent.

Secondary education is a long-term investment whose ultimate benefits can be difficult to see for a family that has lost everything, especially when adolescents can bring in much-needed cash here and now. Sending adolescents out to earn a wage through child labour is a route many refugee families find difficult to avoid, the more so if keeping them in school will present an additional financial burden because of transport costs, fees, books and pens.

Secondary enrolment rates / **Adolescents**

Secondary enrolment rates / **Refugee Adolescents**

84%
of adolescents
around the world
attend secondary
school



Just
22%
of refugee
adolescents receive
a secondary
education

SOURCE: UNESCO (2014)

SOURCE: UNHCR (2015)

Secondary education deserves urgent attention because it is there that students, their families and their communities experience the true benefits of a proper schooling. Building on the foundations of primary school, secondary education promotes social cohesion, gender equality and better health. It helps adolescents discover and develop their skills and find their role in the world. Secondary school is a bridge to vocational training, to college and university, and thus to valuable qualifications, better professional training and job prospects, and greater self-reliance for young refugees wherever the future may lead them.

If it can be tough to find a place in primary school, at secondary level the obstacles can seem insurmountable.

Without the safety net of secondary education, adolescent refugees can become increasingly vulnerable. If they are not drawn into child labour, they may grow bored or feel helpless, adrift and frustrated and thus become easy prey for recruitment by armed groups. For girls, there are the additional dangers of child marriage and teenage pregnancy, confinement to domestic labour or sexual exploitation.

“I know it will be tough, but I love science and maths and I believe in myself.”



© UNHCR/Benjamin Loyseau

“In my culture, people believe that girls should stay at home and raise children. I want to break the record and prove that girls have a future.” Esther Nyakong, 18, is a South Sudanese refugee in Morneau Shepell Secondary School for girls in Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kenya

CASE STUDY

From camp to campus

Esther arrived in Kakuma refugee camp, in the far northwest of Kenya, when she was 10 years old. She had fled Juba, the capital of her homeland of South Sudan, with her mother and two sisters, reaching Kakuma by a roundabout route through Uganda and Nairobi. They travelled with nothing but the clothes they stood up in.

“We left because where we lived in Juba was the place where the soldiers lived. All the time we heard guns, and bombs. People were running, and people were falling down dying, every day. My mother decided to move from that place for our own safety – you might never know when you would die.” Her father was killed in the war shortly before she was born.

There are 22 primary schools for more than 60,000 primary learners in the camp, and only five secondary schools with 5,700 pupils, just under 1,300 of them being girls. Esther is one of them and it took her more than two years to find a place in school but in 2011 she was admitted at last.

“People were running, and people were falling down dying, every day.”

“I really loved reading, so even out of school I was reading,” she said. “It was easy for me to catch up.”

There were plenty of doubters. There were those who said the daughter of an illiterate mother would never amount to anything at school, and there were others who advised her to forget her books, get married and have children.

“In my culture, people believe that girls should stay at home and raise children,” Esther said. “Girls are considered a source of wealth to the family. I want to break the record and prove that girls have a future.”

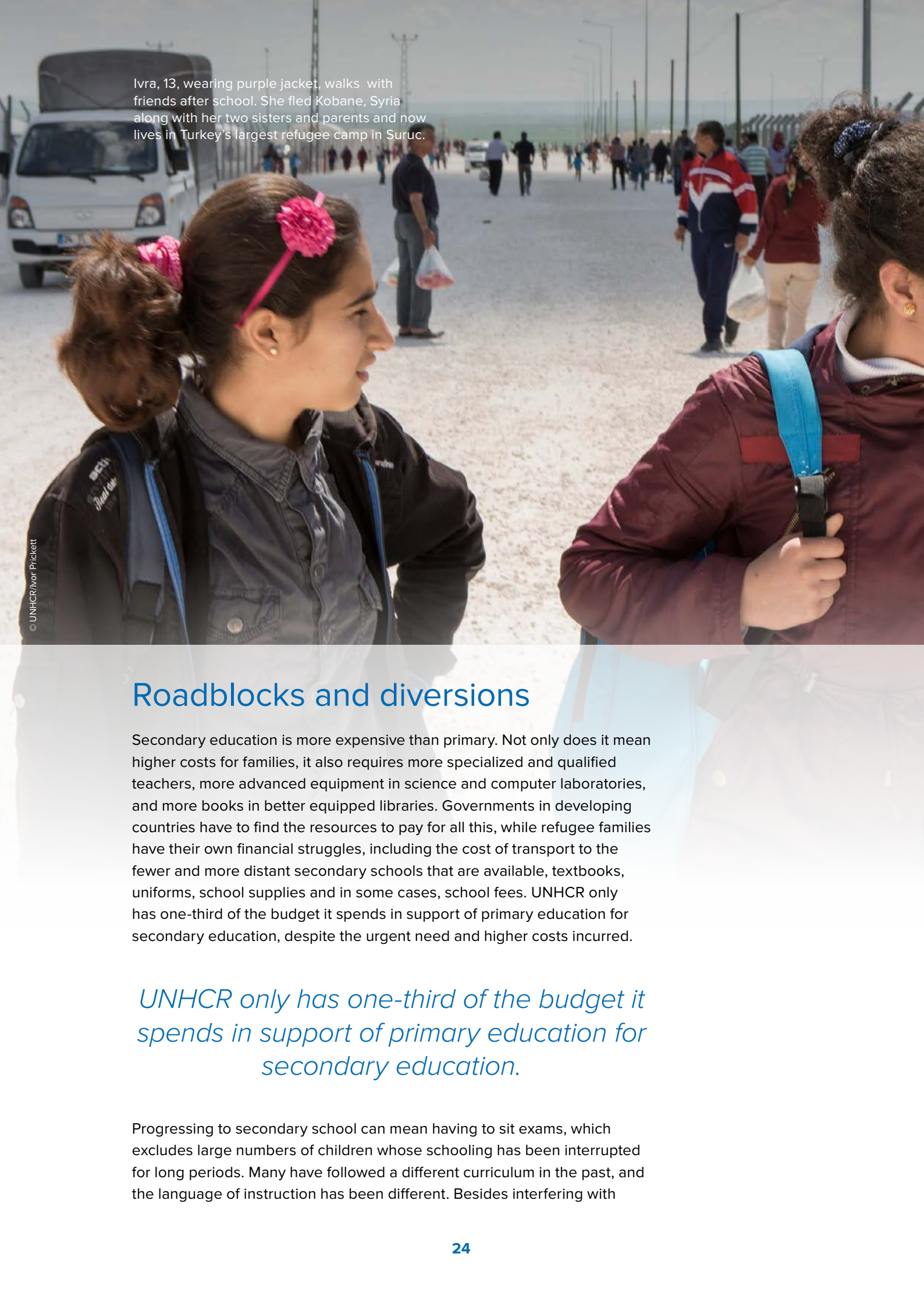
Now 18, Esther has been true to her word, sticking to her studies from primary to secondary

school with the ambition of returning to her home country and becoming a neurosurgeon. Her journey is all the more remarkable given the pressure on educational resources in Kakuma. Overall enrolment among school-age children in the camp as of June 2016 is 70 per cent for primary schools but only 3 per cent for secondary schools.

“I know it will be tough, but I love science and maths and I believe in myself,” she said. “I would love to return [to South Sudan] as a successful citizen, ready to make a change.” Esther is aware how her life’s journey so far has given her the chance to achieve something remarkable with her education. “I want to be the girl that made it from the camp to campus, and from a refugee to a neurosurgeon.”



Esther Nyakong, 18, arrived with her mother and two sisters in Kakuma refugee camp, Kenya, in 2008 unable to speak either English or Swahili, and with very limited previous education. Now she is hoping to beat the hundred to one odds of going to university.

A young girl, Ivra, with pink flower hair ties, is talking to a friend in a refugee camp. They are standing on a paved road with other people and a white van in the background. The girl is wearing a dark jacket and has a backpack. Her friend is wearing a maroon jacket and has a blue strap over her shoulder.

Ivra, 13, wearing purple jacket, walks with friends after school. She fled Kobane, Syria along with her two sisters and parents and now lives in Turkey's largest refugee camp in Suruc.

© UNHCR/Ivor Prickett

Roadblocks and diversions

Secondary education is more expensive than primary. Not only does it mean higher costs for families, it also requires more specialized and qualified teachers, more advanced equipment in science and computer laboratories, and more books in better equipped libraries. Governments in developing countries have to find the resources to pay for all this, while refugee families have their own financial struggles, including the cost of transport to the fewer and more distant secondary schools that are available, textbooks, uniforms, school supplies and in some cases, school fees. UNHCR only has one-third of the budget it spends in support of primary education for secondary education, despite the urgent need and higher costs incurred.

UNHCR only has one-third of the budget it spends in support of primary education for secondary education.

Progressing to secondary school can mean having to sit exams, which excludes large numbers of children whose schooling has been interrupted for long periods. Many have followed a different curriculum in the past, and the language of instruction has been different. Besides interfering with



learning, these disruptions also produce bureaucratic hurdles that can be difficult to overcome. One country may not recognize exam certificates from elsewhere, for example, or may not allow children without birth certificates or identity papers into the classroom. Children in more advanced courses at secondary level must also tackle and understand a greater complexity of knowledge and ideas. This can be a challenge for a young person learning in their own language and harder still for those studying in an unfamiliar language or dialect, often after a gap in their education.

In view of the great need and the daunting task of getting nearly 2 million young refugees into secondary education, it is clear that more creative ideas are required. Only broad partnerships between governments, development partners and humanitarian agencies, as well as the private sector and civil society, in consultation with refugees, can ensure secondary education no longer remains a distant dream for so many young people.

Ensuring continuous primary and secondary education for refugees means having a reliable and sustainable source of funding as soon as refugees begin to arrive in search of sanctuary. In Ethiopia's Dollo Ado camps, for instance, the availability of long-term support from the IKEA Foundation for education from the beginning of the refugee influx has been an important factor in increasing enrolment and retention rates, and in providing quality education. This partnership has resulted in the enrolment of more than 43,000 children and youth over four years.



© UNHCR/Petterik Wiggers

CASE STUDY

Access denied

A few hundred kilometres north of Esther's school, across the border in Ethiopia, another South Sudanese girl dreams of becoming a pilot.

Nyahok Reath, 13, attends primary school in the refugee camp in Gambella, Ethiopia. Her dream is to become a pilot, but the fact that education does not continue beyond grade nine is severely limiting her prospects.

As a youngster, Nyahok used to watch with fascination as the UN's aid planes took off and landed at the airport near her home in Nasir, in South Sudan's Upper Nile State. After decades of war, she and many of her generation were finally able to settle down with their school books as the new country enjoyed its independence.

It did not last. In December 2013, civil war broke out again and hundreds of thousands of people fled. "There was killing everywhere. Nobody was safe," said Nyahok, who trekked with her family for a week to Kule Refugee Camp, one of six in the Gambella region of Ethiopia.

Now 13, she attends the camp's primary school and is being encouraged to study by her parents. Her mother, Nyanchiok, would prefer for her to become a doctor but will settle for a pilot. "If she is educated, that will help the family more," Nyanchiok said. However, their hopes may be dashed given the limited funds available for educating the 115,225 school-age refugee children living in Gambella.

Lim Bol Thong, the vice-principal at Nyahok's school, said they had no library or textbooks. "Some students do not have uniforms, shoes or

lamps to study at night. We lack teachers, and we have to divide the school to teach in morning and afternoon shifts." Yet he is proud that all but one of the 471 South Sudanese refugee children at his school who sat Ethiopia's primary exams last year passed.

However, lack of funding means UNHCR and partners can ensure provision of education services only up to grade nine, the first year of secondary school, in the two high schools where most new arrivals to Kule enrol. Already, less than half the camp's children attend class, and overcrowding sometimes means that five pupils must squeeze together at one desk. In the school's spartan environment, classes of 150 are not uncommon.

"If she is educated, that will help the family more."

As long as there are no classes for 10th grade and above, higher education, and Nyahok's ambitions of becoming a pilot, will remain a dream.



Lim Bol, 21, from South Sudan wants to become a medical doctor. His education was cut short when he had to flee to Ethiopia due to the conflict. While he waits to progress to University, he is working as a teacher and Vice Principal at Kule school in the Gambella region, Ethiopia.

Focus on: accelerated education

Because so many children and adolescents miss out on school because of poverty, marginalization, conflict and crisis, more flexible forms of education are essential, especially where refugees are concerned. Accelerated education comprises flexible, age-appropriate programmes aimed at disadvantaged groups and overage out-of-school children and adolescents who have missed out on school or had their education interrupted.

Classrooms hosting large numbers of refugee students are tough enough for teachers who already have to deal with limited resources and facilities; having overage learners who have missed long periods of schooling in the same classroom as younger children of the correct school age makes it harder still. Besides overcrowding and different levels of ability and maturity, mixing younger and older children in one class also raises protection risks. The goal of accelerated education is to avoid such circumstances.

Working with national education ministries, UNHCR and partners aim to match accelerated programmes to the student's level of cognitive maturity and to condense primary school courses of study so that adolescents can catch up, earn the right certificates and rejoin the curriculum at the right level. In 2015, we stepped up our efforts to increase access to accelerated education, with programmes now underway in several countries including Ethiopia, Lebanon, Kenya, Syria, South Sudan and Sudan.

Displaced young people face an increasing need for more flexible education opportunities.

For example, Ethiopia has a well-established accelerated education programme (known as Alternative Basic Education, or ABE) which was developed by the education ministry in 1997, originally for rural communities but later extended to other parts of the country. The ABE programme targets children aged 11-14 and uses a condensed version of the Ethiopian curriculum, shortening the time of schooling and allowing an easy transition into formal primary school. The programme has been used in refugee camps in Ethiopia for the past 15 years and more than 12,800 overage refugee children are enrolled in 2016.

Displaced young people face an increasing need for more flexible education opportunities. In response, UNHCR has initiated an Accelerated Education Working Group, an inter-agency group of education partners that is working to provide guidance, standards and indicators for accelerated programming.





© UNHCR/Shawn Balwin

Lebanese teacher Souad assists third grade Syrian students attending the accelerated learning program at the Materiet Shoumai School in the village of Kharayeb, Lebanon.

AIMING HIGHER

THE OTHER ONE PER CENT



© UNHCR/Gordon Wetters

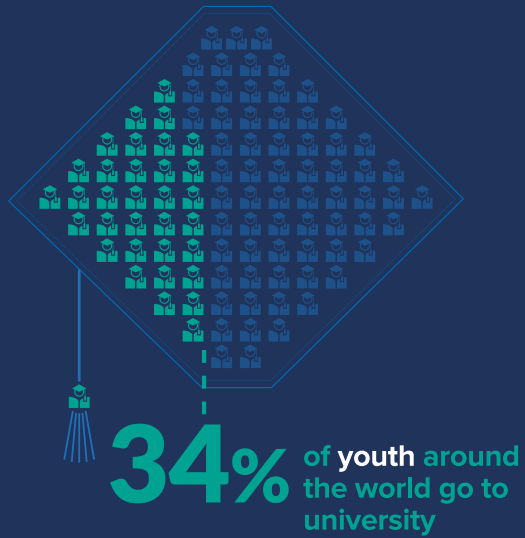
Mojtaba Tavakoli, 22, had only completed his elementary education when he fled the Taliban in Afghanistan at the age of 13. Now he is studying molecular biology at the Medical University in Vienna and aiming for a future career in cancer research.

To reach university education level, a young refugee has to overcome significant barriers and only one in 100 makes it. By comparison, just over one-third of young people of university age around the world are in tertiary education.¹² Despite their potential, young refugees are greatly disadvantaged in accessing university education as well as technical and vocational training.

Highly educated refugees can become leaders in their communities, creating businesses and social enterprises, or building infrastructure as engineers, scientists and technology specialists. They can lobby for improvements to public services as politicians and campaigners, and demand a better future through education, employment, and the protection and nurturing of youth. In doing so, they support and contribute to peace and stability, at a local, national and regional level. Refugees with good qualifications have a better chance of finding work and contributing to the economy of their host countries or wherever they might end up living, gaining valuable experience as well as increasing their self-sufficiency and their ability to support their families and relatives.

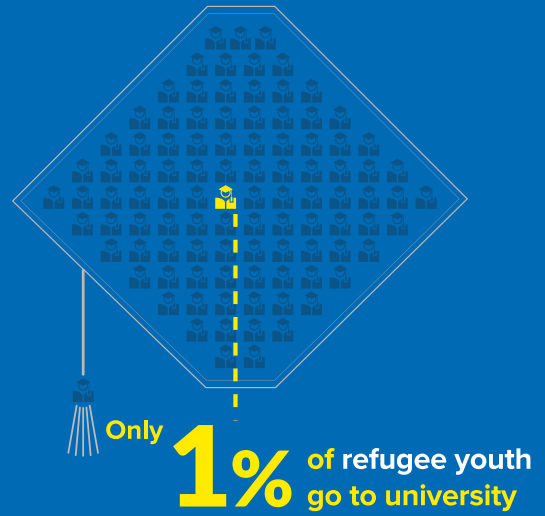
¹² UNESCO Institute for Statistics: <http://data.uis.unesco.org/>

Higher education / Youth



SOURCE: UNESCO (2014)

Higher education / Refugee Youth



SOURCE: UNHCR (2015)

For all these reasons, higher and further education form an integral part of UNHCR's mandate to protect and support the world's refugees. Increasing opportunity is a priority, since there is a major shortage of options. The scholarships, courses and connected learning programmes that are available are being seized with both hands and the move to tertiary education for refugees should be regarded as a natural progression, not an exception.

Highly educated refugees can become leaders in their communities.

“I remember when I first got my school backpack. I would put on the backpack and stare at myself in the mirror, just imagining myself as a student.”

©UNHCR/Ted Adnan

CASE STUDY

From school to university in four years

For most refugees, primary school marks the end of their educational road. Nawa had the opposite problem: she was desperate to start school but was unable to do so until she was 16. Just four years later, she has found a place at university.

Nawa, a Somali refugee, volunteers at Fugee school, a community-run learning centre in Malaysia that helped her catch up on over ten years of missed schooling.

Nawa, 20, is a Somali refugee who lives and studies in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Born in Saudi Arabia, she and her family were deported to Somalia when she was aged six but the violence there forced them to move on to Ethiopia in 2001. They fled again in 2012 when her mother's shop was burned to the ground and the family felt under constant threat of more violence. So Nawa, her brother, mother and niece moved to Malaysia.

The following year she found a place at a community-based learning centre called Fugee School in Kuala Lumpur. Malaysia does not admit refugees to the national education system so UNHCR has partnerships with non-governmental, charity- and faith-based organizations such as Fugee School in order to establish an informal parallel system. "I remember when I first got my school backpack," Nawa said. "I would put on the backpack and stare at myself in the mirror, just imagining myself as a student."

At first, school was a strange and often difficult experience. "I was 16 years old, with classmates who were 10 years old – and some of them were actually younger than that," she said.

However, she learned fast, skipped several grades and passed the International General Certificate of Secondary Education exams to win a scholarship for a year-long foundation course, in preparation for a full degree, at the Malaysian campus of the UK-based University of Nottingham. After that, she hopes to study international relations, with the ultimate goal of

working for a human rights organization.

"It's unbelievable how much I learnt in four years," she said. "What drives me is that I'm the only person in my family to have access to education and to have got this far."

Nawa still attends the Fugee School, now as a volunteer teacher, giving lessons to pre-school refugee children. "They came from countries like Somalia, Iraq, Yemen, Pakistan and spoke no English in the beginning," she said. "But they learn so fast and now they speak better than me."

"I can't believe how much I learned in four years."

Before she first walked into a classroom, Nawa said, she could not read or write in her own language and the only education she had had was picking up a few words and phrases in English from her brother.

"Before I came to Malaysia and started at Fugee School, I did not know what I wanted in the future. But now I know what life is like, what opportunities are out there, and I have better skills to serve the world." Besides studying and teaching, Nawa likes to give talks about her life as a refugee. "I spoke at a World Refugee Day event one year. I want to tell people that refugees are just like them. The only difference is the label."

Finding ways to innovate and connect

Refugees may sometimes find themselves in remote places but that does not mean they have to be cut off from the rest of the world. Besides the communications available in towns and cities, many refugee camps are equipped with internet access, allowing e-learning in addition to face-to-face teaching in the classroom.

Universities around the world are increasingly using the internet – for example, by putting lectures and other material online to be viewed before a student arrives for lessons. Some institutions are taking online learning even further, facilitating courses that allow students from different countries and backgrounds, including refugee camps, to study together.

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

E-learning is an important way to bring flexible learning to refugees. However, it cannot replace face-to-face teaching, especially if it does not ensure certification. The key point about digital learning is that it leads to, or supports, accredited qualifications and should accompany but not replace on-site support, mentoring and tutoring. Yet it is still a valuable resource, for both refugees and nationals of the host country.

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

Language learning, teacher training and support networks, certified connected learning programmes and the wealth of information on the internet, such as documentaries, lectures, news channels, educational games and online libraries, can all make education better for refugees. As one teacher put it, explaining rainfall cycles to children born in arid zones is made easier when pupils see videos showing them mountains and oceans for the first time.

Examples of innovation and the use of connectivity in the education of refugees abound. In Kenya, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo and United Republic of Tanzania, UNHCR is working with the Vodafone Foundation, equipping existing classrooms with Instant Classroom kits that provide localized digital content, tablets, projectors and audio systems, powered by solar batteries and using satellite or mobile networks. Similarly, across the globe from Burundi to Lebanon to Malaysia, UNHCR is working with partner organizations to test new resources and approaches for learning. Examples include the Ideas Box, a portable multimedia resource that can turn any space into a cultural centre allowing both children and adults to access news and information, read books and play games, and even create their own newspapers and edit their own films. Another programme is Teachers for Teachers, which enables refugees working as teachers to communicate with experienced educators worldwide using mobile phones, helping them deal with problems related to classroom management such as teaching to classes of 80 children or more. And TIGER, or These Inspiring Girls Enjoy Reading, is a community-led mentoring scheme for adolescent girls in Jordan that encourages them to stay in school.



Women in Kavumu camp in Burundi attending literacy class using the Ideas Box. Each box unfolds to create a customized library and media centre, with internet access and its own power source.

“I want to open my own clinic in Aleppo when I graduate. This is my biggest dream.”

DÜNYADA HER ŞEY İÇİN,
MEDENİYET İÇİN, HAYAT İÇİN,
MUVAFFAKİYET İÇİN,
EN HA...RSİT İLİMDİR, F...
1924

©UNCHR/Nayana Bose

CASE STUDY

Learning to heal

Two years ago, Shehab had a choice: to serve in the Syrian military and fight in the war, or to leave his home in Aleppo. His father practically ordered him to go. Most of Shehab’s teachers had already left Syria. He was well aware of the risks of refugee life from friends who had fled to Europe. First, he applied on line to a university in Turkey and left Aleppo only after being accepted.

Shehab, 23, a DAFI scholar at Hacettepe University, Ankara, posing in front of a statue of Kemal Ataturk on campus.

Now 23, he is the recipient of a DAFI scholarship, UNHCR's higher education scholarship programme, which gives young refugees financial assistance to access higher education in their host countries alongside national students. Shehab has finished the second year of a health sciences degree course in Ankara at Hacettepe University, one of Turkey's top medical schools.

Shehab's family still lives in Aleppo and he last saw them in August 2014. "My father does not want to leave his country, his land," he said. "This is where he built his life." But it is hard to keep in touch. "Last year, they bombed the technology center in Aleppo and there was no internet for eight months." Even now the connection is so slow that he can only text.

Before starting his studies, Shehab had to learn Turkish. He spent nine months, seven hours a day, studying the language – though it helped that he had Turkish roommates.

Now almost fluent, Shehab is specializing in physiotherapy and rehabilitation, a subject not taught in Syria. When he was 14, the family had a car accident near Aleppo and his father broke his leg. "I used to go with him [to the hospital] and watched how they made him walk again," he said.

For the first year of his degree, Shehab relied on his parents for funding. "I used to feel so guilty taking money from them in a situation of war," he said. "My father is old now and does not work. Now, with the scholarship this year, I can focus on my studies and I don't worry about the money anymore."

Shehab intends to return to Syria once he has graduated. "No war will last forever," he said. "I want to open my own clinic in Aleppo when I graduate. This is my biggest dream."

"Now, with the scholarship this year, I can focus on my studies and I don't worry about the money anymore."



© UNHCR/Diana Diaz


Focus on: Higher Education programmes

DAFI scholarships (DAFI is a German acronym for the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative) play an integral part in enabling refugees worldwide to access higher education. Inclusion in recognized systems is the principle underlying the DAFI programme, so that refugees can study on campuses in their countries of asylum alongside nationals. Awards cover a wide range of costs, from tuition fees and study materials, to food, transport, accommodation and other allowances.

Since it began in 1992, the DAFI programme has sponsored more than 8,000 refugee students to attend university in 42 countries. In 2015, 2,324 refugee students were on DAFI scholarships and a further 2,560 young refugees will be able to attend universities in their first country of asylum thanks to an expansion of the programme between 2016 and 2020, with support from the German government and other donors.

UNHCR's efforts to support opportunities for refugee girls are also bearing fruit. The proportion of female DAFI scholars has increased to 43 per cent. Many graduates work in refugee camps, particularly as teachers and community workers, and act as role models for other refugee students. In the case of girls, having female DAFI scholars to emulate is a huge motivational boost.

"As a young girl I have to be educated." Aiwon, an Ivorian refugee in Liberia, has been awarded a DAFI scholarship to study at the University of Liberia in Monrovia and with it the opportunity to realise her dream of becoming a doctor.




UNHCR's systematic efforts to support opportunities for refugee girls are also bearing fruit.

These results, taken over more than two decades of the DAFI programme, mark a lasting contribution to peace and stability in regions of conflict and displacement.

Clearly, the number of scholarships provided by DAFI and other UNHCR partners cannot solve the crisis in higher education for refugees, but it demonstrates the demand and shows what can be done. In 2014, despite their often difficult living and learning conditions, only a handful of DAFI students dropped out: 2 per cent because of resettlement in a third country, and 2 per cent for medical and personal reasons. This shows an extraordinary level of persistence and dedication.

Even as UNESCO estimates that there could be a shortage of 40 million tertiary-educated workers worldwide by 2020¹³, too many eligible young refugees do not have the opportunity to go to university. For them, tertiary education is the exception, not the norm. It is vital that governments and higher education institutions provide more schemes allowing refugees to attend universities under the same conditions as nationals. To facilitate this, secondary school students need more academic support through extra-curricular programming and tutoring so they meet the standards for higher education. And before that, we need to ensure that the millions of refugee children not in primary or secondary school are given the chance to get there. The journey may be long and sometimes arduous, but the prize of higher education at the end of it can act as a powerful motivation.

¹³ UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report 2016: <http://gem-report-2016.unesco.org/>



“I remember during high school my dream was to be a doctor and I was eager to join the university”

© UNCHR/Caroline Opie

CASE STUDY

Connecting to a brighter future

After finishing secondary school in 2009, Daniel fled Burundi. He spent two years in Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya, waiting for the opportunity to continue his studies, slowly giving up hope that it would ever come. One day, it did.

Daniel, 27, fled Burundi in 2009 and almost gave up hope on continuing his studies in Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya. A new pilot project is helping Daniel dream big again.

“I remember during high school my dream was to be a doctor and I was eager to join the university. But the day I found myself in the camp, my dream started to die. There seemed to be no way to make my goal a reality.”

But in 2011 a new pilot project started in a bustling corner of the camp’s market. The project, called JC:HEM, or Jesuit Commons: Higher Education at the Margins, aimed to use technology to provide higher educational opportunities in Kakuma itself. It combined onsite instruction, peer learning and academic tutoring with online learning from universities in the USA.

“In Burundi, we are taught to memorize and repeat content. The [JC:HEM] programme not only helped me acquire new knowledge but it taught me how to think critically for myself, and how to apply my skills and knowledge to be a leader and improve my community.”

That wasn’t easy. It took time and effort to adjust to the new style of teaching and learning – and there were other obstacles, too. “Some of the biggest challenges we had was with typing. In fact, I remember my first simple assignment took me eight hours to complete – struggling with both the language and typing a suitable response. We all struggled, but the onsite staff provided great support.”

Three years later Daniel had earned a liberal studies diploma from Regis University in the USA. “Those who supported me opened the door to new educational opportunities that I never knew were available. I am now enrolled in a different online degree program, and am working with other tertiary partners to provide my community with greater access to online learning.”

Now 27, Daniel has lived in Kakuma for seven years. But it has gone from a place where his dream was about to die, to a place where he can make a difference.



Daniel, 27, a Burundian refugee in Kakuma camp in Kenya, has earned a liberal studies diploma from Regis University in the US through online academic tutoring and learning.

THE STRUGGLE FOR EQUALITY

WHY GIRLS LOSE OUT



© UNHCR/Charlie Dunmore

At Za'atari refugee camp young Syrian refugee girls gather for a meeting of TIGER (These Inspiring Girls Enjoy Reading) programme which targets refugee girls who have dropped out of school, or who are at risk of dropping out of school.

Getting a primary education is difficult enough for girls, but obtaining a place in secondary school is harder still. There are fewer secondary schools in most refugee environments and girls frequently lose out. The coping mechanisms to which families often resort in order to bring in money can end a girl's education chances for good. Culturally, there may be resistance in some communities to the idea of girls staying in school into their teens.

The need for girls to remain in school for longer is clear and urgent.



Yet the need for girls to remain in school for longer is clear and urgent. Globally, educated mothers are more likely to have smaller, healthier and better educated families. Education has helped reduce the rates of child marriage, teenage pregnancy, and maternal and infant mortality, as well as leading to improvements in child health. Educated mothers are more likely to ensure water is clean, seek help when a child is ill and have their children vaccinated. Since they are more aware of their surroundings, including sources of help as well as of danger, educated women are better equipped to protect their children from threats of all kinds.

In fact, UNESCO estimates that educating mothers to lower secondary education in sub-Saharan Africa by 2030 could prevent 3.5 million child deaths between 2050 and 2060.¹⁴ In addition, if all girls were educated at secondary education level, it is estimated that child marriage for girls could fall by almost two-thirds, while 59 per cent fewer girls would become pregnant in sub-Saharan Africa and south and west Asia, which are among the top hosting regions for refugees.¹⁵

The benefits of educating girls are wide reaching. Many girls talk of the new respect they receive in their communities as a result of completing secondary school, giving them the confidence to speak out and to become leaders in their own right. Those who reach higher education, such as Esther, act as much-needed role models for succeeding generations.

Women with a secondary education are more likely to ensure that their own children go to school.

At global level, for every ten refugee boys in primary school there are fewer than eight refugee girls; at secondary school the figure is worse, with fewer than seven refugee girls for every ten refugee boys. Among populations where there are significant cultural barriers to girls' education, the difference is stark. In Pakistan, for example, 47 per cent of Afghan boys are enrolled at primary school, compared with 23 per cent of girls. Dropout rates among Afghan refugee girls are high – 90 per cent in some areas. As a result, the literacy rate for refugee girls and women in Pakistan is less than 8 per cent. This, in turn, means there are fewer female teachers who might encourage more girls to attend school, making it increasingly difficult with each generation to break the cycle.

That this is still possible against all the odds, is shown by the story of one dedicated teacher, Aqeela Asifi.

14 UNESCO, 2013, Education Transforms Lives: <http://www.unesco.se/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Education-transforms-lives.pdf>

15 Girls Not Brides, 2015, [What is the Impact?](http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/what-is-the-impact/) <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/what-is-the-impact/>

“If you educate girls, you educate generations.”



© UNHCR/Sebastian Rich

The teacher's tale: 2015 Nansen Refugee Award winner

In 1992, three years after Soviet troops had withdrawn and with mujahideen forces encircling Kabul, Aqeela Asifi fled the Afghan capital with her family and travelled to the Kot Chandana refugee village, in Pakistan's Punjab province. Nearly a quarter of a century later, she is still in exile.

As a former teacher, she was struck by the lack of schooling for girls, a consequence of the conservative culture in the refugee village, and was determined to teach them.

After winning the backing of the village elders, she went door-to-door to persuade reluctant parents to let her tutor their children. She began with 20 students in a makeshift school in a borrowed tent, writing out worksheets by hand. More came, the tiny school blossomed and in time Aqeela expanded the school to six tents.

“When I first set up my school I was not very optimistic about the success of my mission,” she said. “But when I look back, I feel I have achieved more than I envisaged.”

Ms Aqeela Asifi, the 2015 winner of UNHCR's Nansen Refugee Award, leads the morning assembly for Afghan refugee and Pakistani girls at her school in Kot Chandana refugee village in Mianwali, Pakistan.

Today, the school is a permanent brick building with 159 pupils who crowd round Aqeela at the start of the school day in an unruly roll call. The girls, aged from 6 to 16, are mostly Afghan refugees born in Pakistan, but there are Pakistani girls among them, too. Aqeela's school has transformed the lives of more than 1,000 girls who have reached eighth grade and received a nationally endorsed certificate. They have gone on to become teachers, pursue further education and support their families, in Pakistan as well as on their return to Afghanistan.

As a former teacher, she was struck by the lack of schooling for girls.

Her husband, Sher Muhammad, has championed her work from the beginning. "In the future I would like [the schools] to go beyond eighth grade and include technical schools, so they can play a positive role in the development of Afghanistan," he said.

Pakistan is the second-largest refugee-hosting country in the world, with more than 1.5 million registered refugees and an estimated one million undocumented Afghans. Pakistan has an estimated 25 million of its own children who do not attend school, the second-largest number in the world. Of the school-age Afghan refugee population, about 75 per cent do not attend school. Islamic Republic of Iran hosts a further 950,000 Afghans with more than 360,000 Afghan refugee children accessing primary and secondary education and receiving the same treatment as nationals. Since 2015, all Afghan children of school age, regardless of documentation status, can attend primary and secondary education.

Aqeela's courageous work earned her the 2015 Nansen Refugee Award, presented every year to honour extraordinary service to the forcibly displaced. Bending over her charges as they tackle their writing exercises, she constantly explains, corrects and encourages. "When you have educated mothers, you will almost certainly have educated future generations," she said. "So if you educate girls, you educate generations.



Samina, an Afghan refugee, is keen to learn English and wants to be a teacher when she grows up. Samina is one of Aqeela Asifi's students and is highly inspired by her teacher who pioneered girls' education at Kot Chandana Refugee Village in Pakistan.

CALL TO ACTION

1

Host countries

effectively include refugees in national education systems and multi-year education sector plans

2

Donor governments

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

3

Private business and individuals

Fund education and help design innovative and sustainable solutions to support refugees' particular educational needs



“I urge our leaders to put those most affected — girls and boys — at the heart of substantive commitments. Refugee children have the potential to help rebuild safe, peaceful, prosperous countries, but they can’t do this without education.”

© UNHCR/Modesta Ndubi

“I promise to use my voice to tell your stories”. Malala Yousafzai, Nobel Peace Prize laureate and celebrated education activist, speaks to young Somali refugees during her visit to Dadaab camp in Kenya July 2016.

Malala Fund's report, *Yes All Girls: Education and the Global Refugee Response*, examines the long-term consequences - for children, adolescents and stability in refugee host countries, home countries and conflict-affected regions - of donors' failure to invest in secondary education. The report finds funding for education declining and some donors shifting aid from the overall refugee crisis to cover costs for relatively small numbers of refugees in their borders. Malala Fund also offers specific recommendations for the upcoming refugee summits, calling for substantive, long-term commitments for refugee children.

#WithRefugees

Stand **#WithRefugees** and send a message to world leaders that all refugee children need access to school

The #WithRefugees Campaign and its petition aim to build public empathy and support for refugees. One of the petition's key asks is for all refugee children to have access to education. Signing the petition will help send a strong message to governments to act with shared responsibility for people forced to flee their homes. The #WithRefugees petition will be delivered to the UN Secretary-General ahead of the historic Summit on Refugees and Migrants on 19 September.