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EDUCATION AND PROTECTION

Education is a basic human right enshrined in a wide range of internationally recognized conventions and declarations, including the 1951 Refugee Convention. Education plays a central role in UNHCR's refugee protection and durable solutions mandate.

Protecting refugees means ensuring that their rights, security, and welfare are recognized and safeguarded in accordance with international standards, and their non-discriminatory right to assistance and services, including education, is realized.

Providing quality educational opportunities in refugee contexts means that displaced children and youth can benefit from the protection of an accountable social service in which they have the time, opportunity and support to evolve into key actors in their own protection.

Quality educational programming contributes to the development of important content knowledge, as well as the critical thinking, problem solving and analytical skills that make academic knowledge useful in daily life. Participation in primary, secondary, tertiary, catch-up, accelerated and other types of formal and non-formal education programmes can also foster social cohesion, provide access to life-saving information, address psychosocial needs, and provide opportunities to link with or establish referral mechanisms for psychosocial issues specific to displaced children and youth.

Participation in full-cycle quality educational programming can provide long-term, dependable, safe environments for some of the most vulnerable within refugee populations. Participation and accomplishment in education increases opportunities for self-determination and provides a sense of purpose, normalcy and continuity in otherwise unsettled environments. The knowledge, skills and experience acquired in educational programming are key to building resilience for all possible durable solutions. Educated children and youth stand a greater chance of becoming adults who can participate effectively in civil society in all contexts.



EDUCATION PROTECTS THROUGH ALL PHASES OF DISPLACEMENT

During emergency and transition phases, educational programming can provide:

- Stability, a sense of normalcy and hope for children and youth who were already participating in educational programming at home
- Meaningful, predictable learning and recreational activities for children and youth who never had the opportunity to participate in educational programming prior to displacement
- Content, language and experiential knowledge required for access to full-cycle formal education systems for previously, intermittently and never-educated children and youth
- Safe spaces and supervision that parents and caregivers can trust

- Psychosocially sensitive programming that helps children and youth better cope with their changed environments and circumstances
- Life skills education that addresses self-protection from sexual abuse, economic exploitation, recruitment in armed groups, hygiene, health, and local safety and security issues that can be life-saving for children, youth and their families.

During the stabilization phase and beyond, educational programming can specifically support protection by providing opportunities for expanding or developing academic competencies that allow children and youth to remain in formal education until durable solutions are identified. The longer a child, adolescent or young adult stays in quality, protective formal or professional educational programming, the less risk there is for:

- Early marriage
- Early pregnancy
- SGBV
- Child labour
- Domestic slavery
- Transactional sex
- Military and gang recruitment
- Substance abuse

Quality, protective education also helps children and young people to develop:

- Social competencies that open doors for engaging with civil society in both displacement and durable solutions contexts, with knowledge, skills and responsibilities that expand and deepen over time
- Preparedness for acquiring livelihoods skills and knowledge that can improve opportunities for employment, self-sufficiency or community-building in displacement and upon return, integration or re-settlement
- Rights awareness so children, youth and their families understand better how to claim their legal rights and advocate for appropriate protection.

DID YOU KNOW THAT ...

- if all students in low-income countries left school with basic reading skills, there would be a 12% decrease in world poverty?¹
- in countries where access to education is equal for girls and boys, the per capita income is 23% higher?
- there would be 14% fewer child marriages if all girls completed primary education and 64% fewer early marriages if all young women completed secondary education?
- if all women received primary education there would be a 15% reduction in child deaths from pneumonia, diarrhea and malaria and that if they received a secondary education, there would be a 49% reduction?
- mothers living in poverty who complete primary school are 4% more likely to provide their children with nutrition that ensures their growth will not be stunted and that if the mothers completed secondary education the percentage rises to 26%?

PROTECTION OF REFUGEES THROUGH INCLUSION IN NATIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEMS

Current estimates suggest that two-thirds of the world's refugee populations live in protracted displacement situations. In such contexts, refugees often face protection and human rights challenges including confinement to camps, restricted movement or difficulties in availing of services in urban areas. Refugees may be unable to access the full cycle of education, earn livelihoods, or develop sufficient resilience for self-reliance or meaningful participation in civil society. In some situations, refugees may become dependent on international assistance to fulfill basic needs, including education. UNHCR's Policy on Alternatives to Camps addresses the reality of protraction and the need to provide opportunities for refugees in post-emergency phase operations that support social cohesion, resilience and self-reliance.

The implications of this Policy for education are twofold:

- 1 It is essential to establish or connect with existing outreach and referral mechanisms so that refugees are aware of and supported to

fully engage in educational opportunities, and their participation in educational programming is monitored appropriately. In the best-case scenario, and in accordance with UNHCR policy as it is reflected in its Education Strategy, refugees share the same rights to education and access to national education programmes at all levels that nationals do. In such a scenario, all education partners are prepared to support the enrolment and retention of refugee children, youth and young adults in national education systems rather than in refugee-exclusive systems that are not sustainable, require considerable annual investment that is rarely available, are not appropriately monitored or able to guarantee timely certification that can lead to continued education during asylum or any of the durable solutions scenarios.

Education in Emergencies response protocols are not yet consistently geared to prioritize refugee inclusion in national education systems when possible, or to prioritize programming during the emergency phase that will ease refugee inclusion into national systems from the stabilization phase forward. Such programming needs to be designed for the particular constraints specific populations face, such as the need for intensive language or literacy training,

¹ All statistics presented here come from the *Education for All Global Monitoring report*:
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002231/223115e.pdf>

catch-up classes or accelerated education. It is necessary for UNHCR, in collaboration with government officials, to orient planning and budgeting that will contribute to medium to long-term sustainable educational access for refugee children and youth; this collaboration and leadership needs to start during the emergency phase while emergency education partners are active, budgets are at a peak and programming decisions that have long-term impact are being made.

- ② UNHCR needs to be active in advocacy with and support to national and regional education authorities so that refugee students are included in education planning processes at country level and their progress in formal education is included in national education information systems. In collaboration with appropriate sectors of Ministries of Education, UNICEF and UNESCO national programmes, UNHCR can support national programming that draws attention to increased needs in areas where refugees live, as well as the planning, budgeting and national donor advocacy required to address those needs. Humanitarian funding that supports sustainable inclusion and shared access to education for refugees and host communities in regions or urban areas that are frequently underserved by government services can increase refugee participation in educational programming and mitigate known protection risks for out of school children and youth, and also contribute to national



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systems and social cohesion. UNHCR needs to participate actively in support of its policies in humanitarian education working groups, but also to be present to advocate with all partners at national level to support the right of refugees to sustainable, quality, full-cycle educational opportunities.



WHICH INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTRUMENTS AFFIRM THAT THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION APPLIES TO REFUGEES?

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948, article 26)
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)
- Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951, Article 22)
- The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966)
- United Nations General Assembly Resolution 64/290 recognizing the right to education in emergencies (2010)



WHICH INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS SUPPORT REFUGEE EDUCATION?

- Sustainable Development Goal 4
- Incheon Declaration: Education 2030
- Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies Minimum Standards for Education
- UNHCR Education Strategy 2012-2016

THERE IS A RISK THAT EDUCATION WILL NOT BE PROTECTIVE WHEN...

- Girls and boys do not have equal access to education at all levels and are not treated equally in the classroom
- Exploitation and abuse take place at schools, and when schools lack effective reporting and referral mechanisms for abuse, including an absence of consequences for perpetrators of SBGV and other abuses
- Teachers are not qualified or adequately supported to facilitate learning in refugee contexts
- There is no teacher Code of Conduct or mechanism to ensure it is monitored and enforced
- There are no safe mechanisms in place for the inclusion of over-aged children, youth or adults in primary or secondary school classrooms
- The community is not engaged to ensure the protection and security of all students
- The distance between home and school is too great and poses safety risks
- Cultural issues that interfere with educational participation are not met with innovative thinking
- There is social cohesion tension that isn't addressed by inclusive or peace education programming
- There is no access to potable water or hand washing facilities with soap
- There are insufficient numbers of gender-segregated latrines
- School buildings are unsafe and there is no school fencing
- There is malnutrition and problems with food access, but no school feeding programme.

UNHCR'S EDUCATION STRATEGY (2012-2016): FOCUS ON EDUCATION AND PROTECTION

UNHCR's Education Strategy (2012-2016) is anchored in a focus on ensuring the provision of refugee education not as a peripheral stand-alone service but as a core component of UNHCR's protection and durable solutions mandate. The Strategy reflects the essence of protective education. It does this through examination of key objectives that promote the internationally recognized right to education for all children, including refugee children. It highlights the importance of access to a full cycle of quality formal education as a means to establish knowledge and experience in protective environments that prepare refugee children and youth to live healthy, productive lives and builds skills for self-reliance for any possible future solution scenario.

The Strategy's six actions are supported by four strategic approaches:

A Partnerships will ensure quality and protective education for refugee children and young people: *How you plan and who you plan with matters.*

Programming that supports host country Ministries of Education to accommodate refugee learners has greater potential to provide refugees with full-cycle access to existing, functioning education systems. It also enhances social cohesion through the inclusion of refugee learners in national systems and by supporting whole systems that benefit both local and refugee children. UNICEF is a key partner that can join UNHCR in working with the most vulnerable in both refugee and host communities in the frequently underserved areas where refugees are found.

③ Capacity development of UNHCR personnel and of partners will improve education programme management: *How well UNHCR staff and partners understand what quality, protective education looks like matters.*

With the right set of skills and tools to effectively prioritise, plan, implement, monitor and evaluate education programming in line with global policy directions and national education sector plans, the quality of education can significantly improve so that it is protective and enabling.

④ Measuring progress will strengthen learning results: *How well you collect data and what kind of data you collect matters.*

Planning without appropriate data means that education programme budgets often try to solve the same problems year after year with fewer and fewer resources. This is frequently due to the fact that measurement focuses on outputs like numbers of learners enrolled, or numbers of classrooms built rather than outcomes like learning achievement

and attainment. Data collection and monitoring can help promote learning and this is central to achieving the overarching goal of promoting quality and protective education for refugees.

⑤ Innovative Use of Technology will Expand Education Opportunities: *How you look at recurrent issues in educational programming matters.*

If an operation is facing recurrent problems such as elevated grade four drop-out, or poor female attendance and completion, chances are the standard response to the problem is not appropriately aligned to the context. This means that the problem needs to be approached innovatively. Innovation not only refers to technology; it more generally means looking outside the box and identifying new ways of addressing old problems, for instance through new partnerships, new pedagogies, new ways of looking at teacher training, and new approaches and methodologies such as human-centered design.

“Education can provide protection, but only when schools are physically safe, psychologically and emotionally healing, and cognitively transformative.”

Refugee Education: A Global Review (2011)

RESOURCES

- UNHCR Education Strategy (2012-2016): <http://www.unhcr.org/5149ba349.html>
- UNHCR protection, child protection and SGBV frameworks and strategies
 - A Framework for Protecting Children: <http://www.unhcr.org/50f6cf0b9.html>
 - Action against Sexual and Gender-Based Violence: An Updated Strategy: <http://www.unhcr.org/4e1d5aba9.pdf>
- Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) Toolkits gather a wide range of resources:
 - INEE Toolkit Protection and Wellbeing: <http://goo.gl/142VSO>
 - Tools and Resources to Prevent Gender-Based Violence In/Through Formal and Non-Formal Education: http://www.ineesite.org/uploads/files/resources/doc_1_INEE_Toolkit-GBV.pdf