



Save the Children

PROGRESS UNDER THREAT

**Refugee education one year on
from the Global Refugee Forum
and the impact of COVID-19**

Save the Children believes every child deserves a future. Around the world, we work every day to give children a healthy start in life, the opportunity to learn and protection from harm. When crisis strikes, and children are most vulnerable, we are always among the first to respond and the last to leave. We ensure children's unique needs are met and their voices are heard. We deliver lasting results for millions of children, including those hardest to reach.

We do whatever it takes for children – every day and in times of crisis – transforming their lives and the future we share.

Acknowledgements

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Some names have been changed to protect identities.

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Cover photo: A Syrian refugee girl returns to school at Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan. School closures were implemented to stop the spread of COVID-19. Now children are returning to school, UNHCR, UNICEF, the Ministry of Education and other partners have worked to ensure classrooms are regularly cleaned and masks distributed. (Photo © UNHCR/Shawkat Alharfosh)

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Executive summary

Discrimination against refugees is present and has a major impact. My biggest fear is becoming ignorant and unsuccessful and so unable to build my future.

Lama, 14, a Syrian refugee girl in Lebanon

For the first time in human history, an entire global generation of children have had their education disrupted. To prevent the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, hundreds of thousands of schools closed with education moving to distance learning where possible. While many schools have reopened with COVID-19 measures in place, **over 200 million children have still not returned to school which is likely to be a vast underestimate.¹ This is on top of the 258 million children who were out of school before the pandemic.**

This pandemic, rather than being the ‘great equaliser’, has shone a light on and increased inequalities. The most marginalised children including the poorest, girls, children with disabilities, conflicted affected and displaced children have been worst hit.

A recent study by the World Health Organisation reveals that the pandemic has had a disproportionately harmful impact on refugees around the world.² It has caused the existing barriers they face to be even harder to deal with. These include limited access to information caused by language and cultural differences, coupled with the geographic marginalisation, lack of access to basic services, such as education and health, and to adequate employment. During 2020 there was even greater forced displacement across borders, including the crisis in northern Ethiopia.

At the same time, refugees contribute huge amounts of human capital and innovations that drive economic and social development. Yet their voices are frequently not represented in decisions that affect them and are not included in national systems and responses.

The Refugee Convention (and Protocol)³ and the Global Compact on Refugees⁴ provide blueprints for governments, international organisations and other stakeholders to ensure that refugees, as well as host communities, get the support they need to meet their education needs, including during this COVID-19 education emergency.

This time last year, education ‘stole the show’ at the first ever Global Refugee Forum,⁵ where hundreds of policy and financial pledges were made to get refugee children in school and learning. This report assesses what progress has been made on those pledges in 2020 and what impact has COVID-19 had on delivering those pledges and on education for refugees more broadly.

Evidence from the ten-country case-studies in this report highlight the importance of including refugees in national education systems and in the COVID-19 education response. **Disappointingly, multiple Forum pledge-makers have not shared updates on their fulfilment of their pledges. What is also clear is that where updates are provided, COVID-19 has had an impact on progress, especially in contexts where carrying out the pledge relies on children being physically in schools.**

At the same time in response to the pandemic, new initiatives have been set up to respond to refugee children’s learning and wellbeing needs. The outcome paper from a roundtable on refugee education in September 2020 lists several promising practices and learnings.⁶



Ethiopian refugees, fleeing clashes in the country's northern Tigray region, cross the border into Hamdayet, Sudan in November 2020.

As we mark one year on from the Global Refugee Forum, we must not lose sight of the global commitment made in the Global Compact on Refugees to get all children in school and learning within a few months of their displacement, including the responsibility the international community shares to enact this promise with refugee hosting countries.

As governments and donors worldwide respond to the health and economic crisis, with difficult spending decisions to be made – education for the most marginalised children including refugees must be kept a priority. **They have a right to quality education, which is a core building**

block for their futures and the prosperity and security of the regions they live in. If we exclude refugees from the COVID-19 response, we will all bear the costs.

This education emergency requires action today. Save the Children calls on the world to come together to protect education, including for refugees and other marginalised children, and put it at the very heart of the global recovery effort. **Governments and donors must act in to overcome this crisis and build back better towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 in 2030.**



Najma, 12 attends a HEART (Healing and Education through the ARTs) session at a Save the Children education centre in a camp for Syrian refugees, northern Iraq. She says “I felt brave and happy today during the activity, and while presenting what I’d made to the class.”

1 Introduction

The Global Compact on Refugees,⁷ affirmed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2018, set out a new comprehensive refugee response model, with global responsibility at its core. Its four main objectives are to:

1. ease pressures on countries hosting refugees
2. enhance opportunities for refugees to become self-reliant
3. expand refugees' access to third-country solutions such as resettlement and other pathways, and to
4. support conditions in refugees' countries of origin so that they may be able to return in safety and dignity.

The Compact includes the landmark commitment that: 'more direct financial support and special efforts will be mobilised to minimise the time refugee boys and girls spend out of education, ideally a maximum of three months after arrival'. With millions of refugees out of school this promise, if fulfilled, could have a huge impact on the lives of refugee children.

A central process for enacting the promises in the Global Compact is the Global Refugee Forum.⁸ Every four years this brings together States and other actors to understand best practice and make commitments of financial or technical support or policy changes to help meet the objectives of the Global Compact. The first of these Global Refugee Forums was held in December 2019.

Education was rightly recognised as one of the key success areas of the Global Refugee Forum. As one of six sectors of focus, education had the most spotlight sessions, and of the 1,399 total pledges 228 address education.⁹ Of the financial commitments made at the Forum a quarter were for education.¹⁰ **Implementing these pledges in full could catalyse much needed progress for refugee education. This progress however has been stunted by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic that has closed schools for significant periods of time in most countries, with serious impacts on all children's learning, particularly the most marginalised, including refugees.**

A child's right to an education does not end in times of emergency. Refugees have a critical need for safe, good quality and inclusive education – a building block of recovery, resilience and long-term development. **Refugee children and their families themselves consistently identify education as a high priority.** And unless efforts are made to reach those furthest behind, including refugees, the world will not meet Sustainable Development Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.



Jahangir, 6 and Sifatara, 3, have lived in the world's largest refugee camp in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, for the past three years. Access to education in the camp is heavily restricted.

2 Refugees lack access to quality education

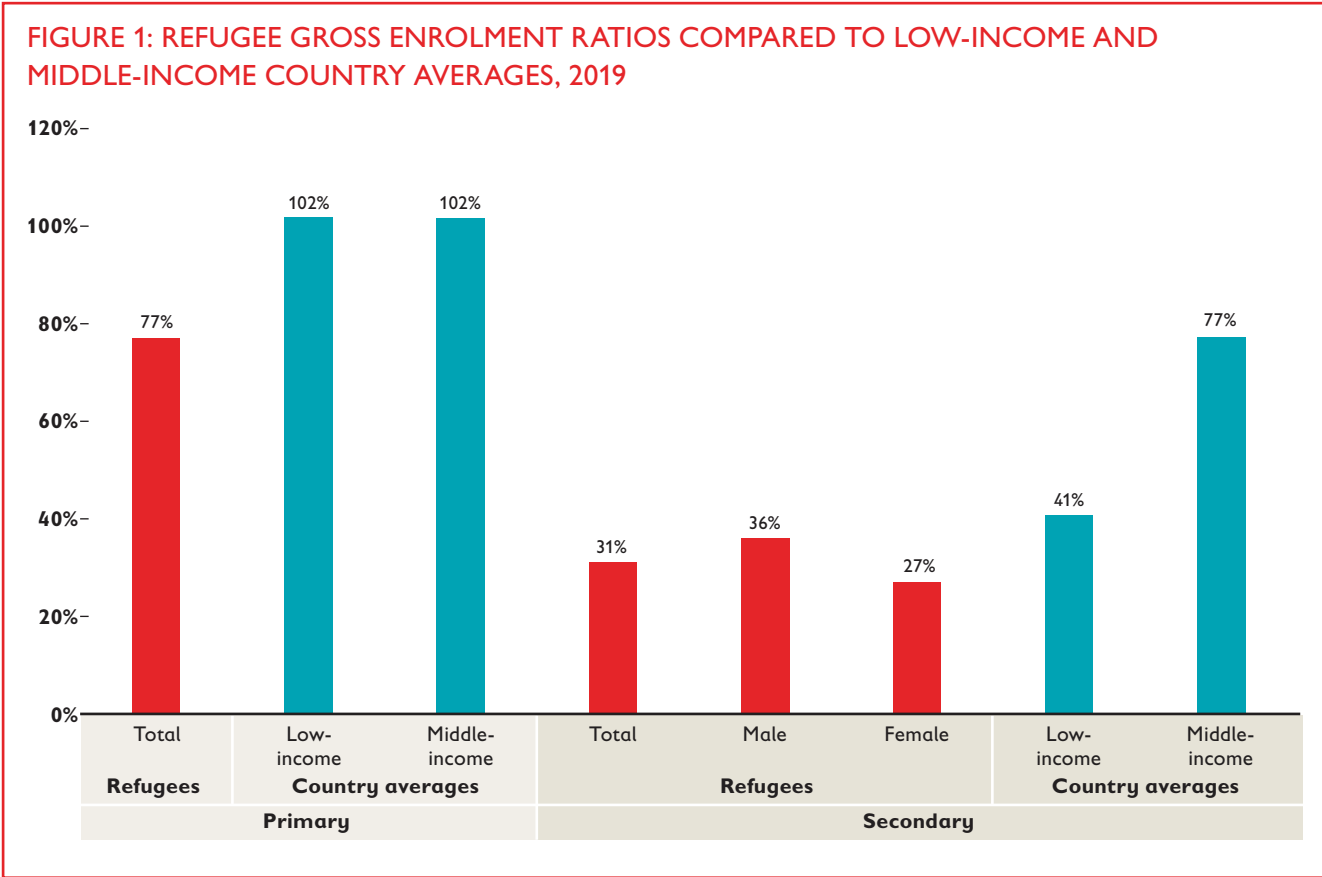
A child’s right to a good-quality, safe and inclusive education does not end in times of emergency.

Right now, there are 26 million refugees, 5.6 million of which are Palestinian. There are a further 4.2 million asylum-seekers, and 3.6 million Venezuelans displaced abroad, but without recognised refugee status.¹¹

85% of these refugees and Venezuelans are hosted in low- or middle-income countries, and 73% are hosted in neighbouring countries.¹² **Almost half – 48% – of refugees, asylum seekers, and Venezuelans displaced abroad are children under the age of 18.**¹³ These countries’ education systems already struggle to meet the needs of the most marginalised host population and need international support to scale up education services

and provide alternative educational opportunities for refugees.

Refugees have some of the lowest access rates to education in the world. At primary level only 77% are enrolled compared to 102% for the total primary school-aged population in low-income and middle-income countries (including overage children).¹⁴ Less than a third of refugees are enrolled at the secondary level, with significant differences between boys and girls. Male refugees enrol in secondary school at 36% compared to only 27% for female refugees. Only 3% of refugees enrol at the tertiary level (see Figure 1).



Sources: UNHCR, 2020. Coming together: for refugee education, Copenhagen: UNHCR; UNESCO, 2020. UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2020. UNESCO Institute for Statistics Database. [Online] Available at: <http://data.uis.unesco.org> [Accessed 24 November 2020].

UNHCR estimates that in the countries where they have rigorous enough data, almost half – 48% – of school-age refugee students are out-of-school.¹⁵ This figure could be even higher, given the countries with weaker data systems are likely to be those with weaker education systems and therefore offer even fewer opportunities for refugees to enrol in education.

Access to education for refugees varies significantly from country to country, and within countries. In Ethiopia, only 67% of Sudanese refugees are in primary school and 13% at secondary.¹⁶

In Colombia, although refugee enrolment in early childhood programmes has increased from 62,247 in 2018 to 102,965 in 2019, there is a slight reduction as of November 2020 with 94,052, potentially due to the pandemic. A recent survey found that 52% of refugee children under the age of five are not in any kind of early childhood or pre-primary programme.¹⁷

When in school, refugees, alongside their host community peers, do not always receive good quality education. This is putting their development, learning and well-being at risk and leads to high dropout rates. The education needs of refugee students are complex. They may have already missed years of schooling and may be unfamiliar with the local curriculum and the language of instruction. Many displaced children have experienced severe trauma and require socioemotional learning (SEL) opportunities and psychosocial support (PSS). Access to education for children with special needs, including those with mental and physical disabilities, must be prioritised.

Globally, early care and development for young children in emergencies, alongside parent and caregiver education, is recognised as providing

critical lifesaving and life sustaining support. **But pre-primary and early childhood care and education services are rarely available to refugee communities.**

Refugees also often experience high pupil-teacher ratios and receive education from poorly trained teachers. In Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya, pupil-teacher ratios are high, with 56 students per teacher at primary, with only 8% of these teachers certified and 60% completely untrained. In core subjects, such as English and maths, there are four students per textbook.¹⁸

Similarly in Uganda a survey found that pupil-teacher ratios were twice as high in schools in refugee settlements (113 students per teacher) compared to those outside (57:1). Learning levels were low across both groups. In Yumbe, 32% of grade 5 Ugandans have grade 2 reading skills, with refugees slightly lower at 30%.¹⁹

Girls are disproportionately affected by crises. Refugee girls – particularly adolescents – are almost three times more likely to be out of school than their non-refugee counterparts.²⁰ **They face a heightened risk of trafficking, child marriage, early pregnancy, and sexual and gender-based violence.** Refugee girls also face numerous barriers to education, including the opportunity costs of attending school (such as loss of earning), gender-based violence, and a lack of sanitation facilities in school, including access to menstrual hygiene management supplies. These barriers to education are exacerbated by safety concerns and a lack of protection in transit to and from educational facilities, or in the educational facilities themselves.

3 Summary of 2019 Global Refugee Forum pledges on education

This section summarises the education pledges made at the 2019 Global Refugee Forum to education. In total 228 pledges included some focus on education.²¹

Figure 2 shows the breakdown of these education pledges by area of focus. Over half were solely on education. The rest included a combination of education with other sectors. 9% were on education combined with jobs and livelihoods and 8% on education and protection.

Of these education pledges around half were for compulsory education (early childhood through secondary), with the other half for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and higher education (see Figure 3 on next page).

FIGURE 2: AREA OF FOCUS OF THE 228 EDUCATION PLEDGES²²

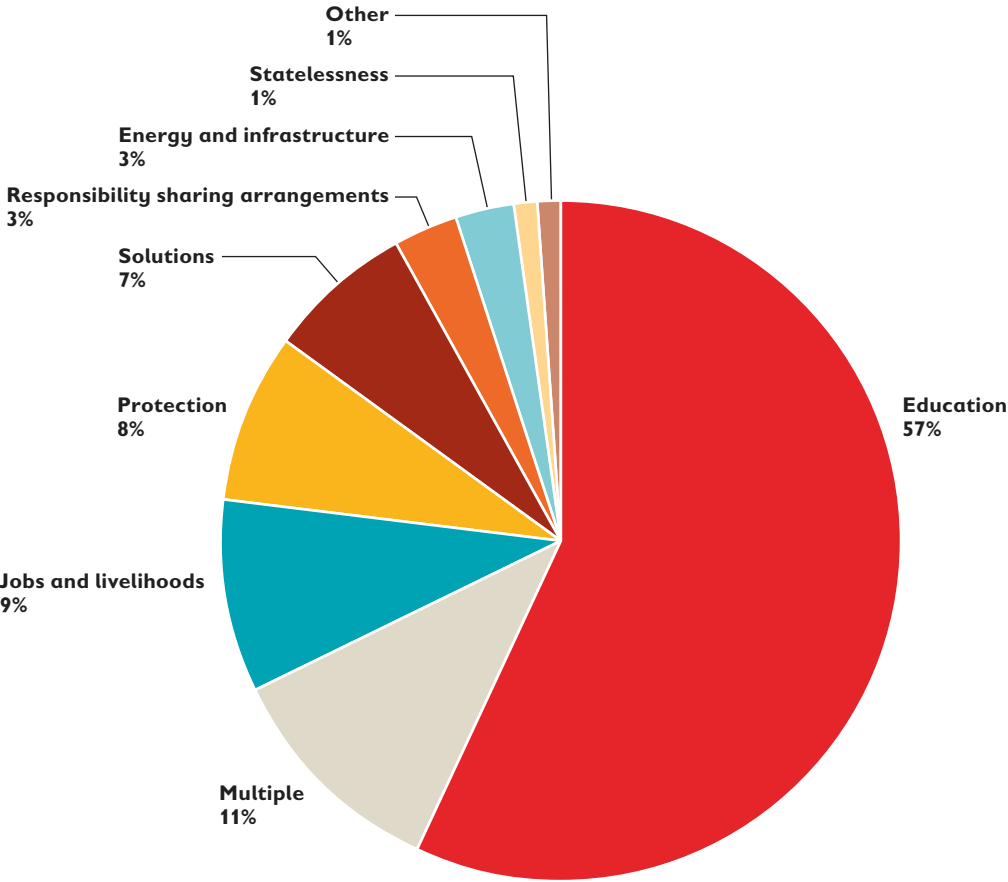


FIGURE 3: LEVEL OF EDUCATION OF PLEDGES²³

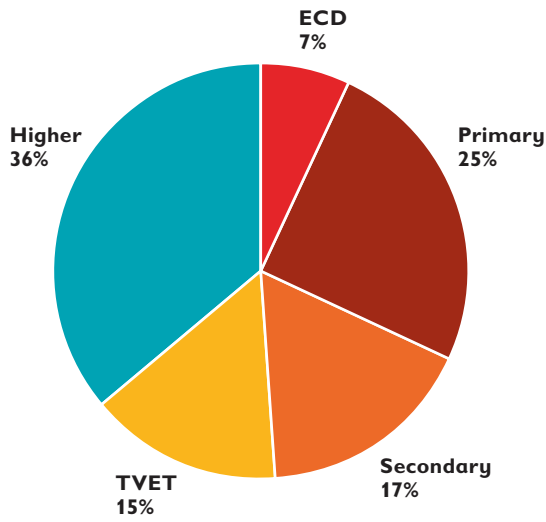
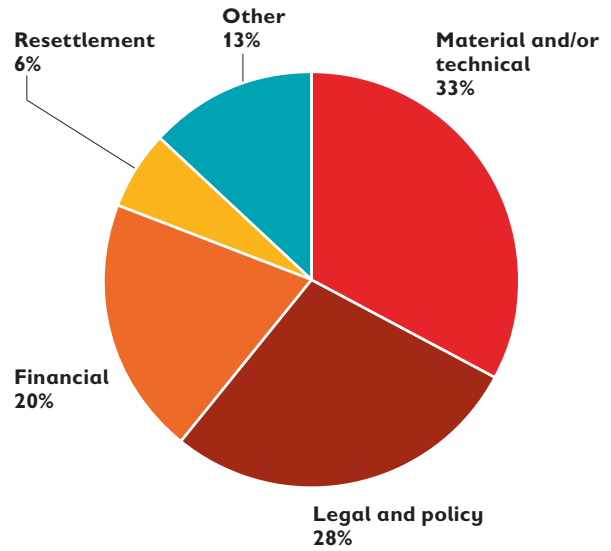


FIGURE 4: TYPE OF PLEDGE (OF THE 228 EDUCATION PLEDGES)



The nature of these pledges also varied. Of the pledges involving education, one third were pledges of material and/or technical support, 28% were legal or policy pledges, and 20% were financial pledges (see Figure 4).

Pledges to education also came from a diverse range of actors. Just under a third were from states – either refugee-hosting countries or donors – and a similar proportion from NGOs. 10% came from the private sector with the rest from other

groups including academics and researchers, local government, and faith-based organisations (see Figure 5).

Analysis of the education pledges in June showed that 59% of pledges were from global actors or European countries. 16% were from Africa and 12% from the Americas. Of recipients, 34 pledges were global, while Africa received 60, and the MENA region and Europe received 37 each.²⁴

FIGURE 5: TYPES OF PLEDGING ORGANISATIONS (OF THE 228 EDUCATION PLEDGES)

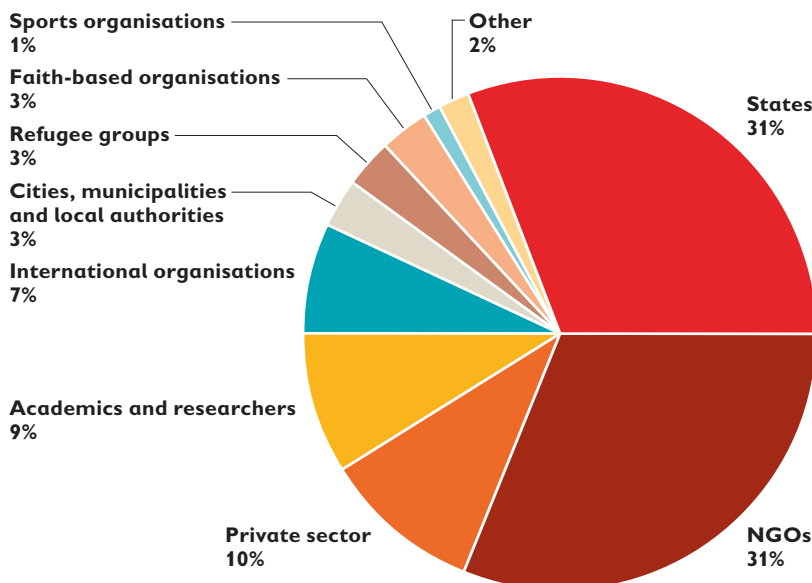




PHOTO © SAVE THE CHILDREN

Furugh, 10 and Aysha, 11 with Save the Children facilitator, Tina, holding cleaning items in Bosnia. Both children fled Iran and became friends at a refugee centre in Bosnia. Save the Children has supported their enrolment into school.

4 Progress on Global Refugee Forum pledges

This section tracks available information on the implementation status of these pledges. **For pledges with available data,²⁵ 9% have been fulfilled, 71% are in progress with 20% still in the planning stage** (see Figure 6). For just over half the pledges however there was no status update. This report recognises that implementation of many pledges has almost certainly been impacted by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. We strongly encourage all pledge-makers to report regular updates on their pledges (at least once a year).

As of 17th December 2020, the Global Refugee Forum pledge tracker²⁶ shows information on specific pledges, including 7 fulfilled pledges, as shown in Table 1.

FIGURE 6: EDUCATION PLEDGE IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS

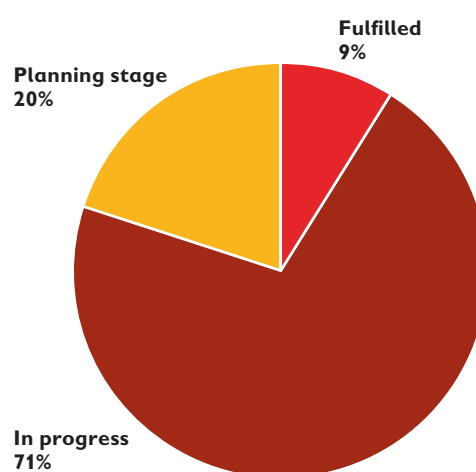


TABLE 1: LIST OF FULFILLED GLOBAL REFUGEE FORUM EDUCATION PLEDGES

Pledging entity	Pledge receiver	Pledge
Caracol Televisión S. A., Colombia (private sector)	Save the Children/ UNHCR	Somos Panas is a media campaign to reduce discrimination on social media towards the Venezuelan population in Colombia and to promote solidarity especially amongst girls, boys and adolescents.
German Government	Education Cannot Wait	€16million to support education for children and youth in regions affected by crisis in 2019
Slovakian Government	UNHCR	Financial contribution €100,000 for refugee education
German Government	UNHCR	Germany will open the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI) program ²⁷ to other partners
German and Danish Governments	UNHCR	Providing access to higher education for refugee youth through the DAFI programme. Germany provides €13.4million to DAFI and Denmark €10million in 2020
LCC International University, Lithuania	Syrian refugees	Student scholarships (tuition, housing, stipend) for the BA and MA programs and English language immersion, including for Syrian refugees
Norwegian Government	UNICEF, UNHCR, Save the Children, NRC	Supporting education in crisis and conflict situations, including refugees, through their humanitarian aid and development aid budgets.

Notable from this small selection is that it is not clear how many of the pledges are new commitments or restatements of existing commitments to refugee education. Analysis of further pledges, whether fulfilled or not, indicates that many may in fact be restatements of existing commitments. This calls into question the claim that the Forum helped raise an additional US\$350 million for refugee education.²⁸

Other high-profile pledges have also made progress. Education Cannot Wait (ECW), the Global Partnership for Education, and the World Bank pledged “to work together to close the education financing gap and provide technical assistance in refugee-hosting countries”.²⁹ **To advance this pledge, which runs until 2025, they have created and started implementing a sequenced action plan.** Phase one includes financial analysis, identifying and setting out plans within priority countries, and developing a collaborative approach.³⁰

The Government of Switzerland has partnered with Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), ECW and others to establish Geneva as a global hub for education in emergencies. Geneva already hosts multiple humanitarian organisations, and the hub seeks to build on this capacity. INEE and ECW have already started relocating staff to Geneva and members of the hub set out a joint call to action in June 2020 to address the COVID-19 threat to education.³¹

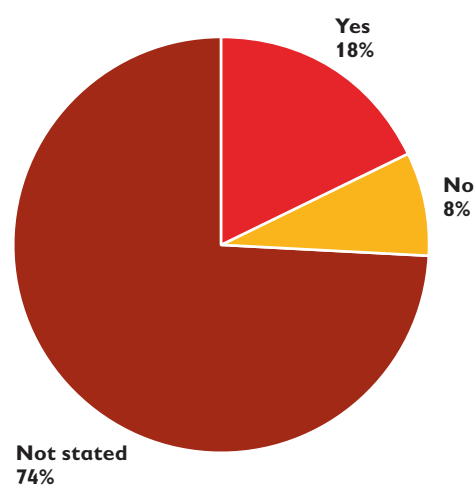
UNHCR and UNICEF agreed on an ambitious two-year Blueprint for Joint Action. The Blueprint focuses on a first group of 11 countries that are home to 2.24 million refugee children – over 20% of the global total – with a view to global scale-up of proven approaches, including education services to reach all refugee children worldwide from early 2022.³²

In some cases, pledges have been adapted and expanded in response to the pandemic. The Learning Passport started off as a partnership between UNICEF, Microsoft and the University of Cambridge, designed to provide education for displaced and refugee children through a digital remote learning platform. It has now undergone rapid expansion to facilitate country-level curriculum for children and youth whose schools have been forced to close due to COVID-19. The platform also provides key resources to teachers and educators.³³

An Education Co-Sponsorship Alliance³⁴ was set up in advance of the Global Refugee Forum to develop the Framework on Refugee Education³⁵ and make pledges in support of the Framework. It recently met to discuss updates on pledges and other activity started in 2020 in support of the action areas in the Framework. **This Alliance, made up of over sixty Member States, UN Agencies, civil society and private sector should continue to share progress, discuss gaps in provision, coordinate advocacy and plan activities together ahead of the Global Refugee Forum high-level moment in December in 2021. This would ensure education remains a major focus of the Global Refugee Forum process.**

For pledges to be tracked and for accountability purposes it is also important that pledges are time-bound. Analysis of the latest pledge tracker indicates that less than a fifth of education pledges have a stated timeline for implementation. 8% do not have a timeline and the rest have not stated whether there is a timeline or not (see Figure 7). In some cases, pledges may be contingent on receiving funding for a specific programme or action, making it difficult to define a realistic timeline. Even so, projects should set out milestones where possible and include where targets are dependent on external actors.

FIGURE 7: DO EDUCATION PLEDGES PROVIDE TIMELINE FOR FULFILMENT?



Future pledging events should consider whether to accept all pledges without verifying whether these pledges are new commitments or to only accept genuinely new commitments. Pledge submission mechanisms should also strongly encourage pledges to have timeframes clarified. However, the Global Refugee Forum process could be a useful vehicle to track commitments made before the 2019 Forum and those made at the Forum, to provide a fuller picture of progress and gaps.

Analysis of pledges made in ten country case-studies (see section 6) supports these findings. Many of the pledges in those contexts are without timelines and progress has often not been updated. For many it is not clear to what extent these are new pledges or restatements of existing commitments. **What is also clear is that where updates are provided, COVID-19 has had an impact on progress, especially in contexts where carrying out the pledge relies on children being physically in schools.**



PHOTO: © SAVE THE CHILDREN

While schools are closed during Covid-19, Save the Children has distributed home learning packs to more than 100,000 children across Uganda.

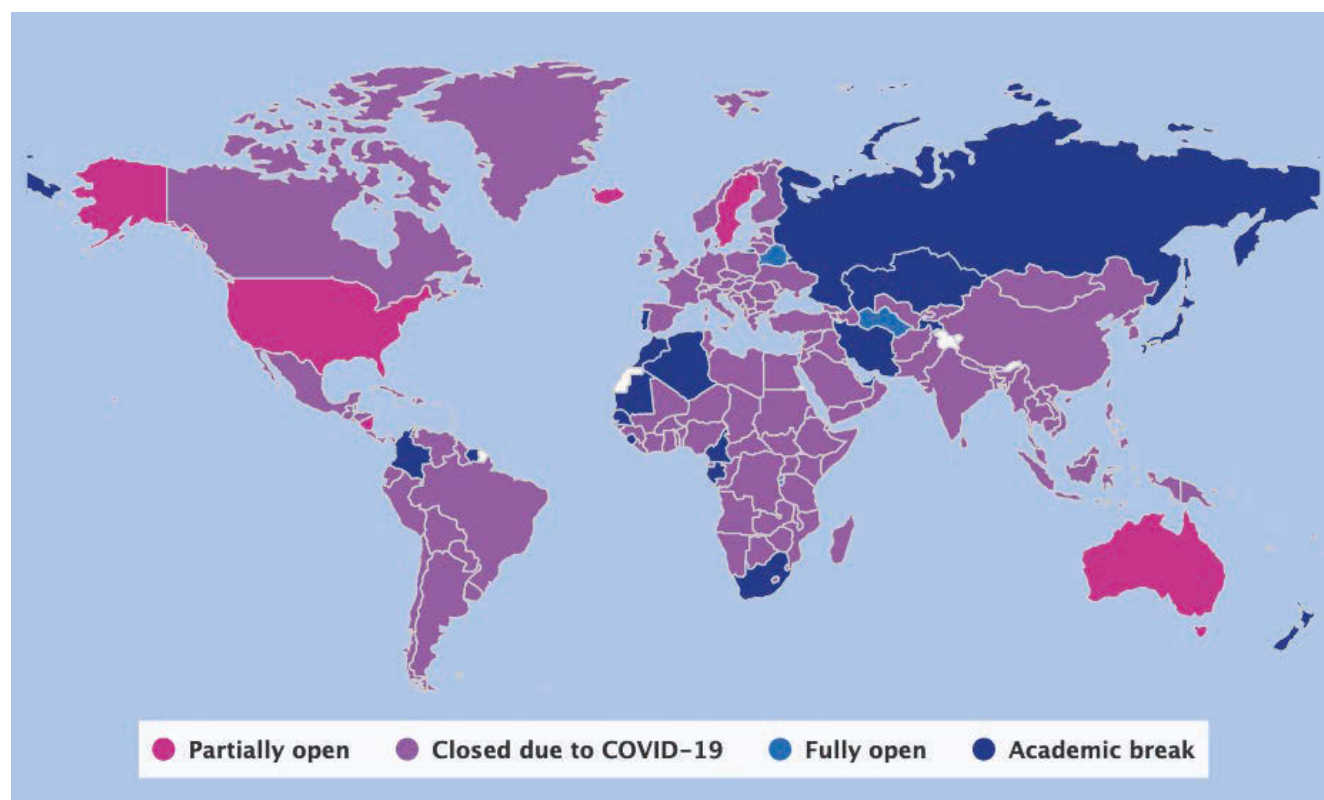
5 Impact of COVID-19 on education for refugees

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating effect on education around the world. The peak of impact on access to education was on April 2nd 2020, with national school closures due to the pandemic in 172 countries. Nearly 1.6 billion students were affected by full or partial closures – 85% of all students (see Figure 8).³⁶ Nearly 200 million school-aged children are still out of school as of December 2020.³⁷

Emergencies do not affect all children equally, and pandemics are no different. The most marginalised children, including the poorest, displaced and conflict-affected children, girls and children with disabilities faced barriers to accessing quality education even before the pandemic. **COVID-19 has further compounded their learning outcomes and wellbeing.** This could be due to lack of access to technology for continued remote learning and lack of support

for learning at home in the case of first-generation school students. Families with low incomes may have found their incomes further reduced and have even less ability to afford school costs such as uniforms, learning materials, and transport to and from school. Food insecurity may mean those in school are less able to concentrate and learn. And in the direst circumstances' families may be forced into relying on child labour and child marriage to make ends meet.

FIGURE 8: SCHOOL CLOSURES DUE TO COVID-19, 2ND APRIL 2020



Source: UNESCO, 2020. Education: From disruption to recovery. [Online] Available at: <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse> [Accessed 26 November 2020]

Analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on refugee education and the responses in 10 country case-studies in section 6 of this report show a similar pattern. School closures have seriously impacted education for all children in countries affected by COVID-19. However, this impact is not spread evenly. With many countries and systems relying on remote learning during school closures – either through TV, radio, online, or other – children’s access to education has in part relied on access to technology. **Refugee families often live under acute economic hardship and have less access to the necessary technologies to take part in remote learning. Without this access, refugees are immediately excluded from education.**

Before the pandemic refugees’ economic hardship, often due to the inability to access the labour market or lower employment rates if they do have access, meant higher drop-out rates for refugees as families are less able to afford the direct and indirect costs of education. **Refugee children being out-of-school and in poverty-affected families has severely increased refugee children’s vulnerabilities during COVID-19. Evidence from this report’s country case-studies clearly indicate this has led to increased rates of child labour, gender-based violence, sexual exploitation, child marriage, and child pregnancy among refugee communities.** Besides the lost learning, children are also missing out on non-academic benefits of attending school, such as free school meals and psychosocial support.

The global humanitarian response to education during COVID-19 has been weak. Just 5.7% of the US\$342 million requested for education under the COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan has been funded as of December 21st 2020.³⁸ In some large refugee hosting countries, welcome funding from ECW and Global Partnership for Education (GPE) for the COVID-19 response has not always met parts of the country with refugee populations, meaning that funding gaps exist. **A lack of funding from the international community means refugees and the low- and middle-income that host the vast majority of them are facing the consequences of this disrupted education without the support they need.**

All countries documented below have struggled with reopening schools. In some cases, schools have reopened fully, only to close later amidst COVID-19 surges. In others, schools have only partially reopened with priorities given to children in grades with important examinations this academic year or particularly vulnerable children. Some countries have partially reopened while are still relying in part on distance learning. **What is clear is that in no case are all schools back to normal and the impact of disruption is likely to affect refugees more severely.**

“Because of poverty a lot of girls and children in general are forced to drop out, either to marry young or work and support their families. A lot of parents see remote education as useless and so girls under 18 are forced to drop out of school, and are exposed to early marriage and street work. Education is an essential right to all children, especially girls so they are empowered.”

Ghinwa, 12, a Syrian refugee girl in Lebanon

6 Country case-studies

This section analyses the status of education for refugees, progress on Global Refugee Forum pledges, and the impact of COVID-19 in ten case-study countries. These are the ten low- and middle-income countries with the highest number of refugees, people in refugee-like situations, asylum seekers, and Venezuelans displaced abroad where Save the Children also has office representation.

Many of these countries have received very welcome emergency funding support from both ECW and GPE for education during COVID-19. For example, in July, ECW funding for education during the pandemic for refugee and internally displaced populations amounted to US\$43.5million, including grants to Bangladesh, Ethiopia, and Lebanon from the list in Table 2.³⁹ The GPE's COVID-19 Accelerated Funding window of US\$500 million is funding 20 (out of 55) projects

which will enable refugee children to access national education systems in some form.⁴⁰

Where possible, public sources for information in this section have been cited, but given the recent and ongoing nature of the pandemic and its impact on refugee education and Global Refugee Forum pledges this section in part relies on internal reporting from refugee education experts in Save the Children offices.

TABLE 2: TOP 12 LOW- AND MIDDLE-INCOME REFUGEE-HOSTING COUNTRIES

Country of asylum	Total refugees and people in refugee-like situations (including Venezuelans with refugee status or residential permits)	Asylum-seekers (including Venezuelans displaced abroad with no official status)	Registered Palestinian refugees and other registered persons	All refugees or similar
Turkey	3,579,531	328,257		3,907,788
Jordan	693,684	51,305	2,419,662	3,164,651
Palestine			2,687,893	2,687,893
Colombia	18,115	1,771,237		1,789,352
Lebanon	916,156	12,123	538,692	1,466,971
<i>Pakistan*</i>	1,419,606	8,541		1,428,147
Uganda	1,359,464	21,658		1,381,122
Sudan	1,055,489	15,545		1,071,034
<i>Iran*</i>	979,435	33		979,468
Peru	477,060	496,095		1,043,460
Bangladesh	854,782	38		854,820
Ethiopia	733,125	1,687		734,812

* Save the Children do not have offices in Pakistan or Iran.

Sources: UNHCR, 2020. Global Trends 2019: Annex Tables, Copenhagen: UNHCR; UNRWA, 2020. UNRWA in Figures 2020, Amman: UNRWA

ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Jordan hosts over 650,000 registered Syrian refugees and 34,000 Iraqi refugees. 49% of these refugees are children under 18.⁴¹ As in many countries, access to education for refugees falls far below national averages. Around 134,000 Syrian refugee children were enrolled in formal education before the pandemic. A further 3,000 were in remedial education, 5,000 in a drop-out programme, and 4,000 in a catch-up programme. **This means 40% of school-age Syrian refugee children in Jordan were not in school before COVID-19.**⁴²

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON EDUCATION, AND THE RESPONSE

To address education needs during school closures the Jordanian Ministry of Education has piloted remote learning, including lessons via TV, online, and through a smartphone app. However, these solutions are not available to all students equally, with refugees lacking the resources needed to participate. 70% of all students have been able

to access distance learning during the pandemic, 33% through TV with the remainder through other sources. **These rates are likely much lower for refugees.** A pre-pandemic survey found that only 2% of refugee households own a computer,⁴³ meaning very few would be able to access the online remote learning opportunities.

Those with disabilities are also at high risk of exclusion. Before the pandemic only 10% of children with disabilities in Jordan were enrolled in formal education, and their specific learning needs have not been met during the pandemic.

Due to COVID-19, children, whether nationals or refugees, are showing increased signs of stress and declining wellbeing overall, with children at higher risk of dropping out of school or attending irregularly. Incidents of child marriage and child labour have increased among refugees as families suffer the economic consequences of the pandemic.

Most schools started reopening in September, although schools in areas with COVID-19 spikes have been forced to close.⁴⁴



PHOTO © JORDI MATAS/
SAVE THE CHILDREN

Faisal, 5, and Bilal, 5, attend a class at Save the Children's Early Learning Centre in Za'atari camp in Jordan. The boys build forts, play with toys and run races. "I let Faisal win, because when he's happy I am happy as well," Bilal says.

BOX 1: ADAPTING TEACHER TRAINING IN JORDAN⁴⁵

Save the Children and J-WEL's Transforming Refugees Education for Excellence (TREE) Programme (in partnership with Community Jameel, Dubai Cares, and Hikma Pharmaceuticals) is coordinating with the Ministry of Education to support the development of online learning resources for teachers that focus on their professional development and wellbeing. The programme has adapted its approach during the

COVID-19 crisis and is now conducting its meetings with teachers, principals, and counsellors online, with a focus on enabling and equipping teachers with tools and resources to use online and distance learning with their students and community. A survey was conducted to better understand the availability of internet connection and the willingness of teachers to attend online sessions. Findings informed the design of the online sessions.

GLOBAL REFUGEE FORUM PLEDGE PROGRESS

There was one education pledge specific to Jordan alone. The University of Jordan's Center for Strategic Studies pledged to produce a policy brief on challenges faced by Syrian refugees in the higher education systems of host countries and

how to overcome them with a focus on lessons learned from Jordan. This brief is currently being produced. Jordan was also included in pledges to multiple countries. Those that have made progress are included in Table 3. All these pledges have made progress but have had to adapt to the COVID-19 challenges.

TABLE 3: GLOBAL REFUGEE FORUM EDUCATION PLEDGE PROGRESS, JORDAN

Pledging entity	Pledge	Progress
Center for Strategic Studies (CSS) – University of Jordan	Policy brief on challenges faced by Syrian Refugees in the higher education systems of host countries and how to overcome them: Lessons learned from Jordan	Policy brief in production
Government of Australia	Support for expanding access to education by refugees and host communities, and improving the quality and inclusiveness of education systems – Bangladesh and Jordan	This work has continued despite having to adapt to COVID-19.
Luiss Guido Carli University	Mediterranean Project – higher education for refugees in Jordan, Malta, Morocco	This includes 10 Jordanian refugees and is ongoing. Learning has moved online during COVID-19.
ProFuturo	Digital education for refugee children in Lebanon, Malawi and Jordan	Project was ongoing until disruption by COVID-19 closed schools and learning centres. Alternative distance education provided during COVID-19 but lower quality and reaches fewer refugees.
Save the Children	Supporting the inclusion of refugees, including the most marginalised, into the national education system – Bangladesh, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Uganda	Continue to monitor and influence the implementation of commitments made by the Government of Jordan at the Supporting Syria and the Region conferences, to expand access to the formal education system and certified non-formal learning.

ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Lebanon hosts almost 1 million registered Syrian refugees,⁴⁶ alongside over 500,000 unregistered Syrians who have fled the conflict,⁴⁷ and over 500,000 Palestinian refugees.⁴⁸ **Given Lebanon's relatively small population this makes Lebanon the country with the highest number of refugees per capita. Over half of these refugees are children.**⁴⁹

Syrians have access to formal education through the second shift system, where existing schools are used twice in one day by different sets of children. **However, there are multiple barriers to accessing this provision.** Refugees do not have freedom of movement within the country and in 2019 only one third have paid employment.⁵⁰ This has increased in 2020 with the impact of the economic and political crisis, compounded by the pandemic. This means parents may not be able to afford their children's formal education costs and children may be forced into child labour. Registration processes in formal education can be complicated due to civic documentation required which refugees frequently lack. Distances from school can be far and the lack of affordable, safe transportation further excludes children. There is an overall lack of school places for all children, low quality of education and there is also little provision for children with disabilities. **These barriers and a rigid pathway from non-formal to formal education mean many refugees are excluded.**

Non-formal education is provided by national and international NGOs for out-of-school refugees who have missed significant periods of education and cannot attend formal education. This has largely been in the form of programmes to acquire foundational skills such as Community-Based Early Childhood Education and Basic Literacy and

Numeracy, and accelerated learning programmes or bridging programmes, from non-formal to formal. In 2015/16 the Ministry of Education and Higher Education has taken over organisation of accelerated education programme cycles; however, these have limited capacity and are still not available to all refugee children that need it.

Non-formal education programmes organised in the community are a crucial component in refugee education in Lebanon, however, they must adhere to strict regulations and are not inclusive to all, excluding certain age groups from the programmes. **In the 2018/19 academic year 320,000 school-aged Syrian children (aged 3–18) were not enrolled in any form of learning,⁵¹ with thousands having never been to school at all.**

The factors mentioned above are not only barriers that exclude refugee children from school, but also increase risk of drop out for those in school. Violence and bullying within schools are additional factors that could force children to drop out. Lack of adequate nutrition may also mean those in school are less able to concentrate and learn.

Palestinian refugees' education within Lebanon falls under the mandate of UNRWA.⁵² UNRWA schools are a separate system from the Lebanese national education system. This is generally recognised as a strong parallel system, with 36,817 students in Lebanon.⁵³

Schools reopened in October with a plan to reopen fully with five days a week of in-person teaching followed by one week of remote education (hybrid approach).⁵⁴ Following a 2-week closure during a November lockdown schools reopened again in December using a combination of in-school and home learning.⁵⁵

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON EDUCATION, AND THE RESPONSE

Before COVID-19, education had already been interrupted during political unrest and national protests in October and November of 2019, resulting in several months' loss of schooling in the 2019/20 academic year. This interruption and learning loss had therefore already put greater numbers of students at risk of long-term drop-out before COVID-19. As in many countries the impact

of COVID-19 has impacted the most marginalised children hardest, including refugees especially.

The shift to online learning during COVID-19 school closures has excluded those who struggle to attend remotely. This includes those without adequate connectivity and those who struggle to meet internet costs. Syrian refugee students in second shifts have received only very limited access to formal remote learning. This lack of access further increases the risks parents will be forced to seek out child labour and child marriage.



PHOTO © SAVE THE CHILDREN

“Online education is extremely difficult, and the teachers aren’t explaining the lessons well. Since most parents are illiterate, they can’t help their children in understanding the lessons. Because of the financial situation, families can’t buy stationary or books or devices and some families have only one phone so the siblings need to share it and sometimes the father needs to take it with him to work so the children miss their classes.”

Ghinwa, 12, Syrian refugee girl living in a Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon. She holds up her artwork showing what change she would make after role-playing a decision-maker in an activism workshop

BOX 2: BACK TO SCHOOL LEBANON⁵⁶

In Lebanon, Save the Children has expanded on our previous experience of Back to School campaigns, which had a whole school community approach. This component focuses on community engagement to identify and target outreach to vulnerable, marginalised, children in the community, including children who were out of school before the COVID-19 closures. Outreach and mobilisation activities have been conducted

at household, school, community and national levels, sharing tailored information and messages on school reopening for children, caregivers, teachers and policy decision-makers. This has been supported by child-led messages – to ensure that children return to school and to reassure caregivers and community members that schools are safe places for their children.

GLOBAL REFUGEE FORUM PLEDGE PROGRESS

There were no education pledges made by the Government of Lebanon at the Forum, nor were there any pledges to refugee education solely in Lebanon. There were 21 pledges that include Lebanon with multiple other countries. Table 4 shows those pledges for where we have progress updates.

At the Forum, Save the Children pledged to expand our Return to Learning programme in Lebanon. The programme has the goal of getting forcibly displaced children back to learning and includes a focus on national-level advocacy around implementing the Global Compact on Refugees.

In 2019 we rolled out the complete programme for the first time in Lebanon, reaching more than 600 out-of-school refugee children. In 2020, Return to Learning continued to be implemented, mainly to increase children's readiness before entering non-formal education programmes.

It remains crucial to further invest in community-based non-formal education programmes for refugee children in Lebanon to address the high number of out-of-school children and ensure that all children have foundational literacy and numeracy skills. **In addition, focus remains on advocating for enhanced pathways from non-formal to formal education, and more inclusive formal education provision for refugee children.**

TABLE 4: GLOBAL REFUGEE FORUM EDUCATION PLEDGE PROGRESS, LEBANON

Pledging entity	Pledge	Progress
ProFuturo	Digital education for refugee children in Lebanon, Malawi and Jordan	Project was ongoing until disruption by COVID-19 closed schools and learning centres. Alternative distance education provided during COVID-19 but lower quality and reaches fewer refugees.
Save the Children	Expanding our Return to Learning programme which aims to get forcibly displaced children back to learning	Programme expanded to increase children's readiness before entering non-formal education programmes.
Save the Children	Supporting the inclusion of refugees, including the most marginalised, into the national education system – Bangladesh, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Uganda	Continue to monitor and influence the implementation of commitments made by the Government of Lebanon at the Supporting Syria and the Region conferences, to expand access to the formal education system
Scort Foundation	Young Coach Education to empower young women and men in their role as proactive community leaders	Ongoing but having to adapt to COVID-19 by moving online

ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Turkey hosts over 3.5 million Syrian refugees and over 300,000 asylum seekers, 46% of which are children under 18.⁵⁷ A number of policies have been devised to fill gaps in services for the ever-increasing number of Syrian refugees, but these policies have been open to misinterpretation and have also changed frequently.

Turkey has been a generous host, first through an open border policy and later, from 2014 onwards, through the assigning of ‘temporary protection’ status to Syrians. However, Turkey’s policy framework assumed that the majority of Syrians would soon return home and failed to account for the challenges of protracted displacement. As a result, despite generous funding and concentrated attention from the Turkish government, and to a more limited extent from the international community, many of those with temporary protection status live precariously, and access to education and employment are of particular concern.⁵⁸

Before COVID-19, of the more than 1 million school-aged Syrian refugee children in Turkey, around 684,000 attended school. This corresponded to 90% at primary, 70% at lower secondary, and only 32% at upper secondary.⁵⁹ However, according to the Turkish Ministry of National Education, over 400,000 refugee children are out of school leaving them particularly vulnerable to isolation, discrimination, violence and abuse. Barriers to school for refugees include lack of Turkish language skills, economic hardship and associated child marriage and child labour, and fears of gender-based violence in or on the way to and from schools.⁶⁰

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON EDUCATION, AND THE RESPONSE

The protracted nature of the Syria crisis has greatly affected the country, requiring sustained and enhanced international support. The COVID-19 pandemic has increased vulnerabilities, protection risks and needs of many Syrians, vulnerable host communities, international protection applicants and other status holders. **Because of the temporary closure of schools, the learning of 19 million children in Turkey, including 680,000 refugee children, has been affected.**

The pandemic’s impact on livelihoods and income has been devastating. Almost 80% of refugee households have faced negative changes in employment and income status. This has meant households have struggled to meet costs such as accommodation, food, and hygiene. This has a knock-on effect on the ability to meet the direct and indirect costs of education.

Schools were closed as part of social distancing measures, with pre-schools reopening in June. Catch up classes in public Turkish schools began at the end of August ahead of the new academic year in September. Remote learning was in place for 16 of the 18 academic weeks with additional broadcast distance learning available over the summer.⁶¹ As in most countries, refugees’ education is likely to have been more severely affected due to their more precarious economic situations and lack of access to technology for remote learning.

Schools had started limited reopening in September but have since reclosed until at least January 4th 2021 due to a surge in COVID-19 rates. Pre-schools are however exempt from this.⁶²

GLOBAL REFUGEE FORUM PLEDGE PROGRESS

There are seven Global Refugee Forum education pledges specific to Turkey. Table 5 details these pledges and the progress made. Although some

have been delayed it is clear significant progress has been made. What is unclear for many of these is the extent to which these are entirely new commitments, or restatements of past commitments or continuations of existing commitments.

TABLE 5: GLOBAL REFUGEE FORUM EDUCATION PLEDGE PROGRESS, TURKEY

Pledging entity	Pledge	Progress
Turkish Ministry of National Education, Construction and Real Estate Department	Construction of new schools for Syrian Kids to provide quality education	Of the 220 schools planned to be constructed within the scope of the project, the construction of 66 schools of 160 schools has been completed, and construction work continues in 94 schools. Tender studies for 60 schools are ongoing.
Turkish Ministry of National Education, Directorate General of Vocational and Technical Education	Increased access to TVET institutions for refugees and host community children	Ongoing
Turkish Ministry of National Education	Increasing the Number of Syrian and the Host Community Children Provided with Early Childhood Education Services in Turkey	Suspended during COVID-19, but planned to continue in 2021
Government of the Principality of Liechtenstein	Language Teaching Programme for Refugees in South-East Turkey implemented by “Liechtenstein Languages” and “RET International”, funded by Liechtenstein	Teaching materials are prepared, delays due to COVID-19 as programme relies on in-person teaching
Turkish Ministry of National Education, Construction and Real Estate Department	New schools will be constructed under funds provided by EU Delegation to Turkey. 170 kindergarten, 10 primary schools, and 1 public education centre. Capacity for 32,000 children.	Site selection process has started
Maya Vakfi	Trauma Informed Schools programme	Implementation started but paused during COVID-19 school closures
Turkish Ministry of National Education	Sustainability of the Conditional Cash Transfer for Education of Syrian Kids	Unknown



Syrian refugee Ahmed, 9, showed signs of emotional distress after his father was killed and he ended up living for months in ISIS-controlled Raqqa. Save the Children's partner, Shafak, is providing psychological support to Ahmed in Turkey.

ACCESS TO EDUCATION

There are 2.3 million Palestinian refugees in Palestine under UNRWA’s mandate; nearly 1.5 million in Gaza and almost 860,000 in the West Bank. **As of December 2019, UNRWA was providing education to over 282,000 school-age refugee children in Gaza and over 45,000 in the West Bank.** 48% of students in Gaza are female compared to 60% in the West Bank.⁶³

Although a parallel system outside of national education systems, UNRWA’s education provision is recognised as high quality, and in fact performs comparably or better to national education systems in the region.⁶⁴ **In 2018/19 96.7% of refugee students reached the final grade of basic education offered by UNRWA, comparable to the 97.6% rate for OECD countries.**

Significant progress has been made for students with disabilities, with 72% provided with support according to their needs in 2019 compared to 38% the previous year.⁶⁵

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON EDUCATION, AND THE RESPONSE

COVID-19 has affected education across the State of Palestine. School closures commenced in March alongside distance learning measures by the Ministry of Education.⁶⁶ All UNRWA schools also closed in March, with the academic year finishing during these closures in May. UNRWA has worked on catch up and back to school programmes with five strands: Self-learning; Psychosocial support; Health safety and hygiene; TVET; and Monitoring and Evaluation. **Parent-report data indicates**

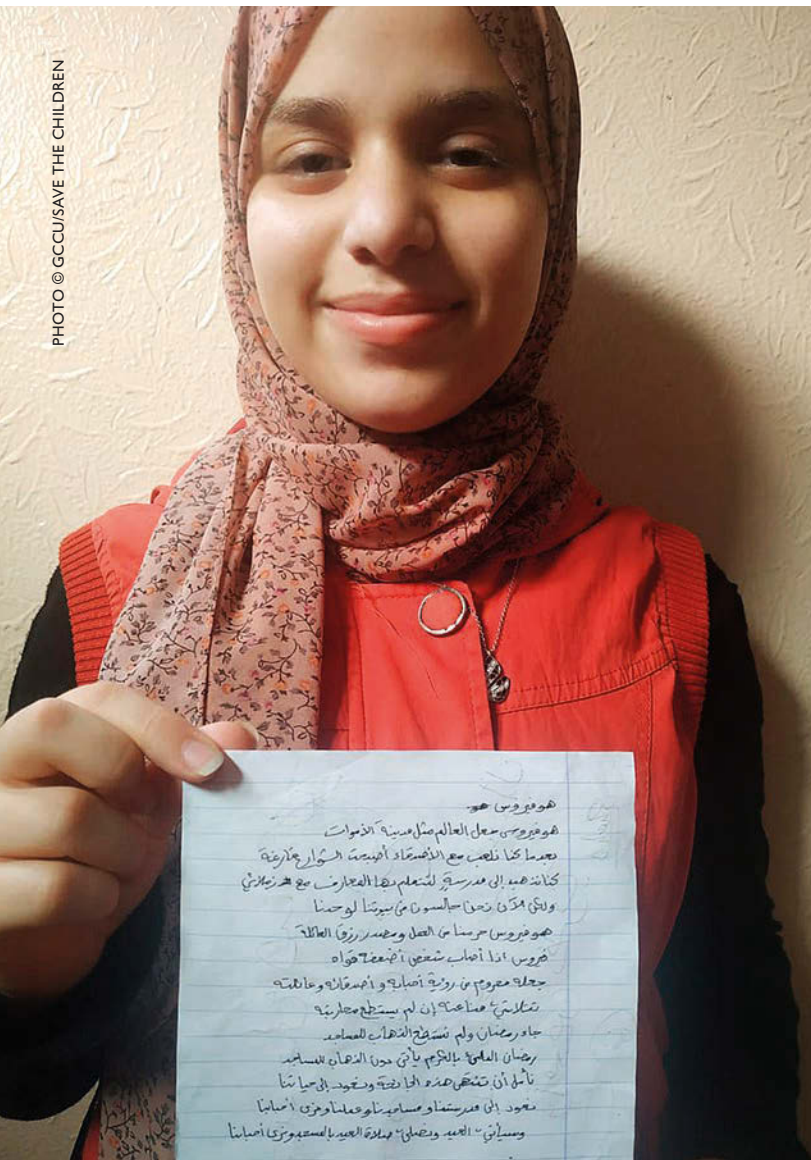


PHOTO © GCCU/SAVE THE CHILDREN

Mariam 14, lives in Gaza with her family. She holds up her poem which includes:

It is a virus that made the world like the city of the dead, After we were playing with friends, the streets became empty. We used go to a school to gain knowledge with my classmates. But now we are sitting in our homes on our own.

هو فيروس هو
هو فيروس جعل العالم مثل مدينة الموتى
عندما كنا نلعب مع الأصدقاء أحييتنا السوار حياوية
كنا نذهب إلى مدرستنا لتعلم بها العجائب مع هذين
ولكن الآن نحن جالسون في بيوتنا لوحدها
هو فيروس حرسنا من العمل وعصمنا من الذهاب
ففيروس إذا أجلب شعبي أضعفت قواه
جعلنا معزومين من رزقنا أصابعنا وأهمقنا وعالمتنا
تتلاشى معنا حتى إن لم نستطع جعلنا
جاد رمضان ولم نستطع الذهاب للمصايد
رضان الملعون بالذي حزن النعمان للمسلمين
أنا لم أكن تتضح هذه الواجبة وتعود إلى حياتنا
تعود إلى مدرستنا ومسارنا وعملنا وجزقنا
ومسراتنا - الغم - وضغلي - ولادة العبد المستعبد مني أصابنا

that 89–90% of refugee students in Palestine used self-learning resources during COVID-19 school closures. This is slightly lower than the rates for UNRWA-supported students in Jordan (94%) and Lebanon (97%), and similar to those in Syria (88%).⁶⁷

Financing of the response remains a concern in Palestine. Successive quarterly appeals have not reached their funding targets. The latest appeal, covering August to December 2020, requires US\$94.6 million, of which US\$18.7 million is for education.⁶⁸ At the latest update this was only 45% funded (UNRWA, 2020b).⁶⁹ Without this funding students will not receive the support they need for their education during the pandemic, putting them at risk of permanent drop out and subsequent vulnerabilities to child labour and child marriage.

UNRWA schools reopened in a limited way in September. Most refugee children unable to access remote learning can attend school three times per week.⁷⁰

GLOBAL REFUGEE FORUM PLEDGE PROGRESS

The only Global Refugee Forum education pledge specific to Palestine is the UNRWA pledge that requests partners to recommit their support of refugee education for Palestinians. UNRWA has continued their support and resource mobilisation for refugee education, however international support is limited. In November UNRWA ran out of money and had to call on donors for increased funds.⁷¹

TABLE 6: GLOBAL REFUGEE FORUM EDUCATION PLEDGE PROGRESS, PALESTINE

Pledging entity	Pledge	Progress
UNRWA	Request that partners recommit to the goal of ensuring that Palestine refugees have access to education	UNRWA has continued resource mobilisation for Palestinian refugee education despite COVID-19 and reduced international funding support

“Every time I hear the word ‘war’ I get really scared. It’s only a three-letter word but it has a lot of meaning.”

Samir, 13, excels at school and, with the support of our counselling sessions, he is learning how to cope with living in a warzone.



ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Colombia hosts almost 1.8 million displaced Venezuelans, who although do not have recognised refugee status, are a significant population displaced across an international border tracked by UNHCR and the International Organisation for Migration.⁷²

Around 460,000 of these Venezuelans are school-aged children. They have been granted access to local education and healthcare systems in Colombia, with 94,052 refugee children enrolled in pre-school and 363,126 in basic and secondary. Yet barriers to accessing quality education remain

and have been exacerbated by the pandemic. Some assessments show that 37% of households with children aged between 12–17 years, report not having access to formal learning activities.^{73,74} An assessment of learning outcomes of Venezuelan and Colombian children in communities in Colombia found that those Venezuelans and Colombians in school performed to similar levels with 30–40% at or above targets for oral reading fluency and reading comprehension. However, these levels were only around 15% for Venezuelans out-of-school.⁷⁵ Discrimination and xenophobia have also been identified as barriers to school facing Venezuelans in Colombia.⁷⁶



PHOTO © JENN GARDELLA/SAVE THE CHILDREN

Cristina and her son Marcos, 12, are among thousands of Venezuelans living in informal settlements in Colombia's Maicao city. The adults have been unable to find work, and the children are not enrolled in formal school.

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON EDUCATION, AND THE RESPONSE

COVID-19 has had a serious impact on education of all children in Colombia, including displaced Venezuelans. With the COVID-19 school closures, the Ministry of Education moved to a remote learning modality through an on-line platform in August. This could extend into the first semester of 2021. However, in rural parts of the community where many displaced Venezuelans and internally displaced Colombians live, there is a very low allocation of resources for the implementation of the national guidelines at the school level, with limited access to the Internet and devices.

Half of the children who were studying remotely since March had stopped studying in August due to lack of connectivity or financial reasons. Many children have not had face-to-face classes for nine months. Additionally, 1.5 million children in Colombian who were out of school before the pandemic.

In the last quarter of 2020, the Ministry of Education allocated US\$500 million to regional mayors and

governors to prepare for COVID-19 measures. It is estimated that 1.3 million migrant and refugee children from Venezuela are in need in 2021.⁷⁷ This includes girls, boys and adolescents that were not enrolled in formal education before the onset of COVID-19, children who lag behind their peers, and those living in households without internet access, due to the particular importance of having access to online connectivity and devices in the COVID-19 context.

GLOBAL REFUGEE FORUM PLEDGE PROGRESS

There are no education pledges specific to Colombia only, however there are four that include Colombia alongside multiple other countries. Only one pledge has progress updated (see Table 7). UNESCO pledge to support inclusion of forcibly displaced people into national education systems in Colombia, Iraq, and Zambia. Although delayed by COVID-19 a strategy is nearly complete and the piloting of a UNESCO Qualifications Passport is ongoing.

TABLE 7: GLOBAL REFUGEE FORUM EDUCATION PLEDGE PROGRESS, COLOMBIA

Pledging entity	Pledge	Progress
UNESCO	Support national education systems in the inclusion of forcibly displaced populations by providing technical assistance for systems strengthening and policy and planning – Colombia, Iraq, Zambia	Although delayed by COVID-19 a strategy is nearly complete and the piloting of a UNESCO Qualifications Passport is ongoing.
Save the Children	Expanding our Return to Learning programme which aims to get forcibly displaced children back to learning within 90 days of their displacement – Colombia, Lebanon, Uganda	Rapidly adapted the programme for the COVID-19 situation to remote implementation to reach children in Arauca and Cali at home. The programme materials for remote implementation include: (1) A paper-based child activity pack for self-learning (with caregiver support), (2) An accompanying paper-based caregiver guide to help caregivers support children's learning at home, and (3) A Positive Parenting Podcast series called Yo crio con Amor/I grow with Love that is shared with caregivers via Whatsapp

ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Peru hosts almost 380,000 Venezuelans displaced abroad.⁷⁸ **97,000 Venezuelan migrant and refugee children are enrolled in school, with 68,000 not registered in the Peruvian education system.** Unlike in many emergency settings, girls have a higher enrolment rate than boys with 54% of those enrolled being girls.⁷⁹

A key reason displaced Venezuelans are out-of-school is they lack the required documents to enrol in the national system.⁸⁰ Other barriers are likely to include poverty and gender-based violence.

Children have been accommodated in part through a double-shift system, however this has added strain to an already weak education system with inadequate infrastructure, outdated learning materials, and poorly trained teachers.

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON EDUCATION, AND THE RESPONSE

COVID-19 and school closures have had a serious impact on the education and safety of displaced Venezuelans in Peru. Displaced children face risks of hunger, poverty, gender-based violence, and worsening wellbeing. Since COVID-19 there have been increased rates of numbers of missing girls,

child pregnancies, and abuse.⁸¹ This is in part driven by the dual economic hardship faced by Venezuelans being displaced and struggling to find employment and the impact of COVID-19 on labour markets.

The Peruvian Government has provided a remote education programme – *Aprendo en Casa* (I Learn at Home), although displaced Venezuelans economic situation means their children have less ability to connect or maintain attendance in this programme. This programme started in April and uses radio, TV, and online learning. As of August, 10% of children in the capital, Lima, and Callao had not participated in remote learning during school closures.⁸² These figures are likely to be significantly lower for displaced Venezuelans.

There is very limited reopening of schools in Peru. In-person primary and secondary teaching is only allowed in rural areas where distance education is not feasible and there are no COVID-19 cases.⁸³

GLOBAL REFUGEE FORUM PLEDGE PROGRESS

No official pledges were made for Peru. The Government of Peru included the prioritisation of education for refugees in a plenary session of the Global Refugee Forum.⁸⁴



PHOTO © MIGUEL ARREATEGUISAVE THE CHILDREN

Yaleima and her two children are Venezuelan migrants now in Peru. She is being advised by a Save the Children staff member on assistance that is available.

ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Bangladesh currently hosts almost 860,000 people displaced from Myanmar that, although do not have recognised refugee status, are classified by UNHCR as being in a refugee-like situation due to their cross-border displacement being due to conflict. 54% of these are under 18 years old.⁸⁴

Rohingya refugees are not allowed access to the Bangladesh national education system and education within camp settings is severely restricted. This approach by the Bangladeshi government is to deter integration and under the assumption that Rohingya will return to Myanmar, despite the increasingly protracted nature of the crisis. For now, the Government has allowed the use of a UNICEF-developed curriculum referred to as a 'learning competency framework' at grades 1 and 2. Further grades have not been approved by the Government. **This means**

around 90% of refugees aged 14 or more are out of school.

Girls have a particularly high drop-out rate at higher ages because of a lack of girl-only schools and social sensitivities around mixed education. Language of instruction is a further barrier. Bangla is banned in camp schools, and teaching is carried out in Rohingya, which has no written script, or Chittagonian, a Bangla dialect similar to Rohingya. Burmese and English are taught but Burmese teaching expertise is particularly lacking.

Sesame Workshop has recently unveiled new Rohingya Muppets to help thousands of refugee children overcome trauma and tackle the impact of COVID-19 in the refugee camps in Bangladesh. Six-year-old twins Noor and Aziz Yasmin will feature alongside existing characters such as Elmo and Louie in educational videos in Rohingya language, including learning through play.



A young Rohingya refugee learning Burmese language in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. With the camp's learning centres temporarily closed because of COVID-19, some home-based learning is being provided.

BOX 3: SUPPORTING PARENTS OF YOUNG CHILDREN IN BANGLADESH⁸⁵

Save the Children are supporting parents' and caregivers' wellbeing by training frontline early childhood care and development staff in psychosocial first aid. They will then use interactive mobile phone messages to contact parents and caregivers to discuss social-emotional education, self-care, child

stress and positive parenting. Parents and caregivers will also be given the opportunity for phone consultations with professional counsellors and the opportunity for referrals. We have contributed educational resources for teachers, parents and caregivers to the national e-learning materials hub.

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON EDUCATION, AND THE RESPONSE

In March 2020 the Bangladeshi Government approved the use of the Myanmar National curriculum for a pilot programme for 10,000 children in grades 6–9. However with COVID-19 spreading, all learning centres in camps were closed in March. **This has meant over 300,000 refugee children that had previously been attending NGO learning centres have now been out of school for over 9 months.** Humanitarian partners have distributed guidance and support for carer-led education, however remote online education has been **almost impossible due to the ban on mobile data in camps, since September 2019,** and other technology restrictions within camps. Reopening of education in camps is linked to the reopening of schools nationwide, which as of the time of writing is not planned before early 2021.

GLOBAL REFUGEE FORUM PLEDGE PROGRESS

There is one pledge specific to the Rohingya refugee crisis in Bangladesh. Save the Children – supported by Norwegian Refugee Council, International Rescue Committee, CSI, UNICEF, and UNHCR – pledged to establish a cross-border education working group focused on Rohingya refugee education. The goal of this group was to establish relationships with counterparts in Myanmar as partners moved ahead with the implementation of the Myanmar National Curriculum in Cox's Bazar. The use of the Myanmar curriculum is supposed to support Rohingya refugees to integrate on return to Rakhine. The pledge was made to facilitate formal cross-border coordination, information and knowledge sharing.

TABLE 8: GLOBAL REFUGEE FORUM EDUCATION PLEDGE PROGRESS, BANGLADESH–MYANMAR

Pledging entity	Pledge	Progress
BRAC	The Rohingya Refugee population children and families are receiving early year's education and parenting services. The host community will also be receiving the same services. In the next 4 years, the contribution aims to receive about 100,000 children (aged 0–6) and their families in both Rohingya and host communities in Cox's Bazar Bangladesh	In 2020, BRAC as part of the Play to Learn partnership with the LEGO Foundation, Sesame Workshop and IRC, developed a telecommunication model called Pashe Achhi in order to reach children and caregivers affected by the pandemic in both the Rohingya camps and host community of Bangladesh. Through weekly telephone calls, trained frontline staff provide psychosocial support, as well as self-care tips and health and hygiene messages to caregivers while engaging children through play-based activities.
Save the Children	Create a working group on education among actors in Rakhine and Cox's Bazar to support equitable access to quality education	Terms of reference for group developed, but progress paused since March 2020 due to COVID-19. Due to resume in January 2021.

ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Ethiopia hosts over 730,000 refugees from five East African countries and Yemen. Over half are from South Sudan, with significant numbers from Somalia and Eritrea also. **Reflecting the young populations of countries in the region, 62% of these refugees are children under 18.**⁸⁶

Pre the pandemic, net enrolment rates for refugees were significantly below national averages. 67% of refugees were enrolled in primary, and less than 13% at secondary. This compares to national averages of 105%⁸⁷ and 32% respectively. Refugee girls were also far behind boys. At primary level 79% of boys were enrolled compared to 55% of girls, and 17% compared to 7% at secondary, **meaning there were over twice as many refugee boys in secondary schools as girls.**⁸⁸

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON EDUCATION, AND THE RESPONSE

UNHCR reported in September 2020 that over 200,000 refugee children were out-of-school in Ethiopia because COVID-19 school closures since March.⁸⁹ Following these closures the Ministry of General Education introduced distance learning, primarily through TV and radio.

However, access to TV and radio vary significantly within the population. Households with first generation students struggle with lack of parental support, while teachers received limited training to support students through distance education.⁹⁰ Where possible, teachers have been supporting students with home visits. The purpose of these visits is to monitor student progress using radio and print media-based learning initiatives, and to support students in higher grades with national exam preparation.⁹¹

Interview evidence suggests existing inequalities have widened during COVID-19 with some groups, such as children with disabilities or girls, particularly at risk. Children have been increasingly forced into child labour or child marriage, have been at increased risk of pregnancy and gender-based violence, and suffered from lack of non-academic support from schools such as school feeding or psychosocial support.

Schools in Ethiopia started reopening in October with a priority of getting children at risk of child labour and child marriage back in to school, however many schools lack basic means to limit the spread of COVID-19.⁹²

BOX 4: GETTING READING BOOKS TO CHILDREN IN RURAL ETHIOPIA: OUR CAMEL LIBRARY⁹³

Save the Children created a camel library in the Somali region of Ethiopia in 2010. The programme includes 21 camels, which are traditionally used by communities to transport goods across the hot lowland areas. Camels can carry up to 200 storybooks at a time in wooden boxes strapped to their backs. The project currently reaches more than 22,000 children in 33 villages, which enables children to keep learning while schools are closed.

BOX 5: SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S LEARNING THROUGH TV AND RADIO IN ETHIOPIA⁹⁴

Save the Children has secured nine satellite television channels that reach 8 million children with learning materials being developed by regional education bureaus and the national Ministry of Education. The channels also broadcast risk awareness and protection messages, including mental health and psychosocial support, and on how to support children's education. Messages will be delivered in local languages via TV and radio across the country.



Like 26 million other children in Ethiopia, Mahadiya, 13, is out of school because of COVID-19, but thanks to Save the Children’s camel library, she is able to continue reading and learning at home.

GLOBAL REFUGEE FORUM PLEDGE PROGRESS

There is one Global Refugee Forum pledge specific to refugee education in Ethiopia. The Ethiopian Agency for Refugees and Returnees Affairs pledged to “Provide equitable, quality and accredited skills training to 20,000 host and refugees” with the next

2023 Global Refugee Forum being the completion target. The pledge tracker indicates that despite COVID-19 this pledge retains high priority however the success of this pledge is critically dependent on receiving financial support from the international community. This support though, at the time of writing, has not been forthcoming and threatens the feasibility of this pledge.

TABLE 9: GLOBAL REFUGEE FORUM EDUCATION PLEDGE PROGRESS, ETHIOPIA

Pledging entity	Pledge	Progress
Government of Ethiopia, Agency for Refugees and Returnees Affairs	Provide equitable, quality and accredited skills training to 20,000 host and refugees by 2023 Global Refugee Forum	In progress, despite COVID-19 disruption. Roll-out critically dependent on external financing from international community, with little incoming so far.

ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Sudan is another country that hosts refugees from a range of different countries. Sudan hosts over one million refugees in total, 80% of which are from South Sudan, with significant numbers from Ethiopia, Eritrea and Syria also. **Half of these refugees are children under the age of 18.**⁹⁵

By signing the Djibouti Declaration on Refugee Education,⁹⁶ Sudan has promised to integrate refugees into the national education system, however this is already one of the world's weakest education systems. To integrate refugees Sudan must receive financial and technical support from the international community in line with the responsibility sharing principles of the Global Compact on Refugees. However, funding for refugee education is an ongoing concern. The national refugee response plan's mid-year report shows only 15% of the education response has been funded. This is far below other sectors, such as food security (69%) and shelter (38%).⁹⁷

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON EDUCATION, AND THE RESPONSE

As in many countries Sudan closed schools in March 2020 due to COVID-19, affecting children across the country, including refugees. Vulnerable children are at increased risk of dropping out and not returning, while children and youth have been identified as at higher risk of child labour, child marriage, early pregnancy, trafficking and sexual abuse. Additionally, children miss out on free school meals

increasing risks of malnutrition.⁹⁸ Refugees' precarious household situations means they are even more vulnerable to all these risks.

With the prolonged absence from school, children, and particularly vulnerable children including children with disabilities, are at a high risk of dropping out of school and never finishing their primary or secondary education. The government response to COVID-19 has included distance learning through TV and radio, and paper-based home learning. Although there are ongoing efforts to develop mechanisms for the safe return to schools, until then, access to technology and support for learning at home are likely to be more limited for refugees with fewer resources.

Schools in Sudan remained closed, although the Ministry of Education has recommended that basic and secondary schools reopen, starting with the 8th grade of primary and 3rd grade of secondary.⁹⁹

GLOBAL REFUGEE FORUM PLEDGE PROGRESS

There is one pledge specific to Sudan. The Government of Sudan pledged to gradually integrate refugees into the national education system. However, no update has been provided on this pledge and it does not seem to be a new commitment given this is already a commitment of the 2017 Djibouti Declaration of which Sudan is a signatory.¹⁰⁰

TABLE 10: GLOBAL REFUGEE FORUM EDUCATION PLEDGE PROGRESS, SUDAN

Pledging entity	Pledge	Progress
Government of Sudan	Integrate refugee education in the national education system in a gradual manner	Unknown



Selina, 9, at a hand-washing station in Kapoeta, South Sudan. Save the Children is promoting awareness of COVID-19 risks and disseminating key messages around hand washing, contact tracing and physical distancing.

ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Uganda hosts 1.4 million refugees from many eight different African countries. Over 860,000 are from South Sudan, almost 400,000 from the Democratic Republic of Congo, with significant numbers from Burundi, Somalia, and Rwanda also. **61% of these refugees are children under the age of 18.**¹⁰¹

Before COVID-19 75% of primary school-age refugees were in school (up from 53% in 2017 thanks to concerted efforts to deliver on the Education Response Plan). Of those who complete primary only 12% can access secondary due to lack of resources.¹⁰² Uganda has excellent policies regarding refugee settlement and integration, and is one of the Djibouti Declaration signatories, meaning they have prioritised refugee integration into the national

education system. However, most South Sudanese refugees reside in the north west of the country, one of the poorest regions of Uganda, where education provision is particularly weak.¹⁰³

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON EDUCATION, AND THE RESPONSE

Schools closed in Uganda in March 2020 in response to the pandemic. The Government in conjunction with UNICEF and other partners have sought to ensure learning continues by broadcasting lessons on TV and radio and distributing print materials for home learning.¹⁰⁴ UNHCR has worked with partners to expand a connected education project, which makes learning resources available to teachers and

BOX 6: REACHING YOUNG CHILDREN THROUGH RADIO¹⁰⁵

Save the Children produced a radio series in Uganda called Ready to Learn with play-based learning and basic reading and counting activities designed for three to six year olds to do together with their parents or caregivers. The series is being translated for use in rural areas and refugee settlements, and includes songs and messages to engage and inform young children about COVID-19. As stress levels increase within homes during lockdown, we have also adapted

our social emotional learning programme HEART (Healing and Education through the Arts) into a radio series with short activities for children and caregivers to do together or alone to help relieve stress during lockdown. The activities are designed to be done in small homes and at no cost, and are broadcast on national and local radio and recorded with children themselves to encourage others to take part.



While schools are closed during COVID-19, Save the Children is supporting lessons to be carried out over the radio in Rwamwanja refugee settlement in western Uganda.

students. For many refugees, internet connectivity is poor at best, so efforts were made to ensure only limited connectivity was required to download content that is then available offline.¹⁰⁶

As in many countries the disrupted education and increased poverty due to COVID-19 has made refugee children vulnerable to multiple risks, including child labour, child marriage, early pregnancy, and sexual exploitation.

Schools in Uganda started reopening in October for final grades, with the Government assessing schools' capacity to operate during COVID-19 before opening for other grades.¹⁰⁷

GLOBAL REFUGEE FORUM PLEDGE PROGRESS

There were four pledges to education in Uganda, although only one have provided progress updates yet. The Government's pledge to provide quality education in the national system to refugees is a restatement of their Djibouti Declaration commitments. Progress on this is dependent on financial support from the international community.

TABLE 11: GLOBAL REFUGEE FORUM EDUCATION PLEDGE PROGRESS, UGANDA

Pledging entity	Pledge	Progress
Government of Uganda	Promote access, quality and inclusiveness of the national education system for refugees and host communities	Unknown
KCOC (Korea NGO council for overseas cooperation)	A Project for the Improvement of the Educational Environment for the South Sudanese Refugee Children of Obongi District in Uganda	Unknown
Save the Children	Advocacy for greater investment, and better planning and coordination in education in emergencies, including specifically advocacy for the international community to fund the ERP and for the government of Uganda to allocate greater resources to refugee education.	<p>The Education Response Plan (ERP) is almost 50% funded, with funds required being at US\$263 million. The Education Consortium consisting of 15 partners led by Save the Children has been critical in mobilisation of these funds – being the grant agent for a 3-year ECW funded Multi Year Resilience Programme and ECHO funded INCLUDE Programme. In addition, Education Consortium secured funding from ECW's First Emergency Response window to respond to COVID-19 emergency.</p> <p>Save the Children in collaboration with UNICEF and UNHCR have facilitated the development of district level Education Response Plans to enhance the local government capacity and sustainability. By October 2020 7/12 district ERPs had moved through approval processes.</p> <p>Save the Children is conducting an assessment into the processes that inform the budgeting, hiring and deployment of teachers into refugee-hosting. Recommendations will be used to advocate for better education services for refugee and host community children.</p>
Education International	Promoting refugees' right to teach and right to learn through support to refugee teachers	Unknown



PHOTO © PEDRO ARNESTRE/
SAVE THE CHILDREN

A refugee family in Moria camp, in Lesbos, Greece where 13,000 refugees live. Many families have been left without any shelter for days after recent fires.

7 Conclusion

3.7 million refugees were out of school before the pandemic and millions more were in school but had poor learning outcomes. While the first Global Refugee Forum resulted in over 200 pledges for education, the pandemic has impacted their implementation. At the same time, new initiatives have been created by governments, multi-lateral institutions, donors and civil society to adapt their financing and delivering of programmes to refugees in response to the pandemic.

This paper highlights the importance of including refugees in national education systems and in the COVID-19 education response. This is the most practical and sustainable way to provide displaced children with accredited and certified learning opportunities that can be monitored for quality. While multiple refugee hosting governments pledged to expand formal provision of refugees in national education systems, limited updates on these pledges has been provided.

All governments have grappled with the new reality of delivering education while schools are closed. **Yet refugees are even less likely to have been able to access remote learning, resulting in many months of lost learning.** This is having a severe impact on their learning and wellbeing, which was already compromised due to the very nature of forced displacement.

As we mark one year on from the first Global Refugee Forum, we can take stock of progress on pledges to date and what we have learned about delivering education for refugees during the pandemic. We must not lose sight of the global commitment made in the Global Compact to get all children in school and learning within a few months of their displacement, including the responsibility the international community shares to enact this promise with refugee hosting countries.

As governments and donors worldwide respond to the health and economic crisis, with difficult spending decisions to be made – **education for the most marginalised children including refugees must be kept a priority.** They have a right to quality education, which is a core building block for their futures and the prosperity and security of the regions they live in.

This education emergency requires action today. Save the Children calls on the world to come together to protect education, particularly for refugees, and put it at the very heart of the global recovery effort. Governments and donors must act in to overcome this crisis and build back better towards achieving SDG4 in 2030.

8 Recommendations

The Global Refugee Forum process – coordinated by **UNHCR** – and other pledging fora, should:

- Work with the World Bank and other partners to research, document and share best practice on including refugees in national education systems.
- Continue to use the Education Co-Sponsorship Alliance to share progress on pledges, discuss and address gaps in provision and coordinate advocacy activities ahead of the Global Refugee Forum high-level moment in December in 2021 and second Global Refugee Forum in 2023. The Alliance members should seek to address the specific barriers at the country level that impede progress towards refugees access to quality education opportunities.
- Ensure that local and refugee-led civil society organisations are easily able to engage with the processes around the Global Refugee Forum, including by having the support to advocate for specific pledges based on their expertise in their locality.
- Ensure that refugee education pledges are substantially new and specific commitments – with restatements of existing commitments identified and included in the tracking of progress towards delivering promises in the Global Compact.
- Strongly encourage all pledges to include timelines for completion to allow accountability mechanisms to properly track progress. In situations where a timeline is not possible (e.g. an NGO implementing a project contingent on funding), the pledge should include clear milestones by which progress is tracked.
- Continue to encourage all large refugee-hosting countries to make strong pledges on inclusion and quality of refugee education, and report regularly on progress.

- Continue to encourage all donors to support refugee-hosting countries fulfil their pledges on inclusion and quality of refugee education, and report regularly on progress.

Refugee hosting countries, supported by donor funding and technical expertise, should:

- Continue to accelerate the inclusion of all refugees in national education systems.
- Include refugees in national education responses to COVID-19 to ensure children return safely to school and catch up on lost learning.
 - Use the COVID-19 Refugees Return to Schooling Guidelines, provided by UNHCR, which has practical suggestions to address the specific needs of refugee children, youth and families as schools begin to re-open.¹⁰⁸
 - They should provide refugees the additional support they require to access distance learning and return to school safely, such as learning materials, EdTech initiatives, cash transfers, back to school campaigns, mental health and psycho-social support and language support. (See Save Our Education Now briefing for more details and costs for these interventions).
- Increase their domestic revenues by expanding their tax base – with the purpose of increasing their domestic spending on education. This should be done through progressive taxes that are redistributive and gender-sensitive. Governments should analyse their taxation of multinational companies and remove harmful tax incentives such as tax holidays.
- National governments that are granted debt suspensions or debt relief should document increased investments in child welfare, including education for refugees.

Donors, particularly donor countries, should meet the funding requests made for refugee education in low- and middle-income host countries as part of the responsibility sharing principles of the Global Compact on Refugees, including through:

- Increasing bilateral funding for education including by providing match-pledging to aid governments who have made significant commitments to include refugees in national education systems, but require financial support to obtain these aims..
- Fulfilling Education Cannot Wait's funding gaps for the COVID-19 response and for the remainder of its strategic period up to the end of 2023. ECW requires US\$400 million to its global fund and US\$2 billion in-country to support Multi-Year Resilience Programmes.
- Ensuring that the Global Partnership for Education's replenishment needs of US\$5 billion for strategic period 2021–2025 is fully funded to ensure that they have the resources required to support partner countries to recover from COVID-19 and build back better.

The **World Bank** should:

- Commit to stimulating demand for education funding, especially from countries that are eligible for the IDA19 Window for Host Communities and Refugees.
- Provide a supplementary IDA budget of around US\$25 billion over the next two years, with at least US\$10 billion in grant financing for investments for children's learning and wellbeing.
- Work with the IMF to strengthen the Debt Service Suspension Initiative to secure a freeze on US\$48 billion of debt service payments during 2021.

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PROGRESS UNDER THREAT

Refugee education one year on from the Global Refugee Forum and the impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 education emergency has not affected all children equally. Refugee children already faced significant barriers in accessing good quality learning because of poverty and discrimination. The pandemic has further compounded these challenges.

Progress under threat highlights the impact this pandemic is having on refugee children, including in the ten countries with the largest refugee populations where Save the Children works.

Refugees are much less likely to access remote learning, will have lost many months of learning and may drop-out of school. The pandemic has severely impacted their learning and wellbeing, which was already more complex than their host community peers due to the very nature of forced displacement.

The world must act now to protect education. Education pledges made at the Global Refugee Forum must be fully implemented and tracked.

In addition to current pledges to refugee education, a bigger concerted effort, with adequate financing is urgently needed.

Because at the heart of the global recovery effort from the pandemic must be every child's right to learn.

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