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**Junior Committee**

**Issue: Ensuring access to quality education for refugees and displaced persons**

**Background information:**

Displaced persons is an umbrella term that is defined by the Cambridge Dictionary as “Someone who has been forced to leave their home, especially because of war or a natural disaster [...]”.[[1]](#footnote-2) Refugees, which tend to be the main focus of such discussions, are people who specifically flee their home country and seek refuge in a different nation. Refugees are usually caused by any major event that happens to strike, usually, Less Developed Countries, these events may include: natural disasters, such as seism, floods, volcanoes and hurricanes; political or economic instability and oppression; persecution, towards a specific group of people discriminating race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, belief, political opinion, etc.; war.[[2]](#footnote-3) Being unable to return to their home country.

The first recognized 20th century refugees were in fact the people displaced in the aftermath of the First World War (1914-1918)[[3]](#footnote-4). Governments responded by assembling international agreements and providing travel documents. The number of European refugees drastically increased during and, consequently, after the Second World War (1939-1945).

The issue of ensuring quality education for both refugees and all kinds of displaced persons alike has increasingly become one of great concern and has reached critical levels globally, with over 117.3 million people worldwide being currently displaced. Around 43.4 million of these are refugees, with an estimated 40% being children, and an approximate 49% of those children do not attend school. [[4]](#footnote-5)

The fourth of the UN Sustainable Development Goals highlights the need to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” [[5]](#footnote-6), further accentuating the importance of addressing such an issue to further establish and ensure human rights globally. Nonetheless, despite the continuous efforts of several groups and organizations to tackle the issue, such as the UNHCR, it has proven to be extremely challenging. To achieve SDG #4, the UN has the following instilled set of targets with the objective of setting clear goals to be achieved to successfully guarantee quality education for all: [[6]](#footnote-7)

1. Building relevant skills for financial success;
2. Elimination discrimination in education;
3. Universal literacy and numeracy;
4. Inclusive and safe schools;
5. Qualified teachers.

The access to reasonable education, according to the paragraph and points made above, is crucial not only for the individual as it empowers one and fosters critical thinking and self-reliance with informed decision making, but also to a better more peaceful society. Education is pivotal to a peaceful, stable nation, since a well-educated society is less inclined to conflict, discrimination, and prejudice.[[7]](#footnote-8) It also hugely affects the economic growth of a country, as an educated individual is more efficient at one’s job performance, increasing economic productivity.[[8]](#footnote-9)

However, the issue of quality education does not tackle only refugees. IDPs (Internally Displaced People) is a term that refers to those who seek refuge within their own country, however in a different area from where they actively reside. There are currently 68.3 internally displaced people in the world.[[9]](#footnote-10)

The matter of ensuring quality education for refugees and displaced persons has been an issue since as long as the French Protestants who fled France after the revocation were referred to as ‘refugees’ (a word that derivates from the French vocabulary ‘réfugié’). Current implications of this matter include the ongoing generational cycle of poverty and economic stagnation, not allowing families and especially nations to break this cycle of persistent poverty and slow development. Which leads to the missing out of innovation and causes these struggling countries to fall behind on technology, art and scientific development. This lack of education can specifically lead to ignorance, triggering radicalism and higher crime rates. When there is a clear lack of basic education for displaced persons the contrast between rich and poor has much more emphasis on the day-to-day life provoking hatred and a divided environment.

**International action to date:**

The UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) fully dedicates its organization to protecting the rights of displaced persons and has made several efforts to solve this issue of education. They work towards not only to ensure the education of school aged children, but also higher education through different initiatives focused on such. Delegates representing member states that strive to guarantee equitable education for all within their nation should take their time researching the UNHCR’s work and tie that into their country’s policy and beliefs.

Project Kakuma [[10]](#footnote-11) is an independent organization that was founded with the main objective of providing free quality education and housing to refugees from African countries, with its name - Kakuhma - deriving from one of the largest refugee camps in Africa, located in Kenya, focused on online learning.

The 1951 Refugee Convention

The 1951 Refugee Convention was created at first solely for European post-World War Two refugees. It was, in addition, written in the document that “events occurring before 1January 1951” which is understood as “events occurring in Europe” prior to the date.

However, on the 4th of October in 1967 the 1967 Protocol was adopted, and it consisted of abolishing the temporal and geographical limitations in the convention. That converted the 1951 Refugee Convention into an internationally including pact.

The Convention has as its core fundament the principle of non-refoulement, meaning that the signatory countries must “*not to expel or return in any manner whatsoever a person to territories where his/her life or freedom would be threatened, i.e. where there is a risk of persecution or any other form of serious harm*”[[11]](#footnote-12).

According to Article on of the 1951 Convention document describes a refugee as someone who "*owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of [their] nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail [themself] of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of [their] former habitual residence, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.*"[[12]](#footnote-13)

Article 22 is about ensuring and protecting the right to public education to any refugee, with the same treatment as any other national.[[13]](#footnote-14)

15by30: 15% by 2030

The 15by30 plan consists of a pledge on refugee higher education and self-reliance, with the vision that 15% of refugee youth will have access and will be enrolled in higher education by 2030.[[14]](#footnote-15)

One of the many reasons why refugees don’t have access to basic education is because they are displaced for most of their basic education school years. That is why only 7 per cent of refugee youth is enrolled in higher education.[[15]](#footnote-16)

The five pillars of the 15by30 roadmap contains, complementary education pathways; DAFI programme, which its goal is to support the refugee youth to pursue a higher education, with an already existing secondary education diploma, in their first country of asylum; enrolment in national universities; connected higher education; and TVET (technical and vocational education and training), aimed to provide a person skills related to the wishing profession.[[16]](#footnote-17)

**Current situation and focus of debate:**

The global refugee population has, since 2023 exceeded 35.3 million, including both refugees and ‘asylum seekers’ (“a person who has left their home country as a political refugee and is seeking asylum[[17]](#footnote-18) in another.” [[18]](#footnote-19)), between these, 14.8 million are under eighteen, yet 7 million are not enrolled in any education programme, including individuals from Ukraine, Sudan, Venezuela, Syria and other regions. [[19]](#footnote-20)

There is a large variety of challenges and factors to consider, and delegates should take them into account during debate sessions. Some of these challenges include, but are not limited to:

* Refugees being unfamiliar with the language of instruction. When finding refuge in a new country, how can refugees be expected to learn the language quickly in order to be given the education they need?
* Legal documentation is required to enrol a child into a new school; some governments may prevent displaced persons from enrolling due to political barriers or resource constraints.
* Regarding resource constraints, classrooms can become overcrowded and hard to teach properly due to the sheer number of displaced persons. Member states must also consider how the numbers of teachers and instructors available to provide the education are limited, and not all those instructors may be able to provide high quality education specifically. Meaning that the training of professionals is crucial for ensuring quality education.
* Many refugees and displaced persons leave their fortune and valuables behind so that they may be able to flee, leaving them with little to no conditions to pay for quality education. If their education is made free, then it’ll be hard to pay the salaries of the teachers crucial to their learning.
* Children tend to be the main focus of such debates, however adults also require forms of higher education in colleges and universities to find a job and live independently.
* War and conflict are the driving factors that lead to these populations becoming displaced, and such situations can cause immense physical and psychological trauma. How can member states guarantee these things won’t affect those trauma-ridden from war to affect their learning?

**Bloc Positions:**

Mozambique and Malawi:

Since the recent elections in Mozambique that took place on the 9th of October of this past year, violent protests have been taking place, caused by the suspicion of fraud and corruption in the election. Police forces have shot 329 people, killing over 110[[20]](#footnote-21), children and bystanders included. This major turmoil in the southeastern African country has led to drastically increasing numbers of refugees, forced, for their own safety, to evacuate to the neighboring country Malawi.

Malawi on the other hand isn’t the perfect place for a first country asylum, as itself currently suffers from famine, fuel shortages and droughts. The Mozambicans seeking refuge in Malawi is not new, since 1977 until 1992 Mozambique was in a violent, long civil war[[21]](#footnote-22) and almost a million of Mozambicans became displaced and fled to Malawi.[[22]](#footnote-23)

Now over around thirteen thousand other Mozambicans have crossed the border in just two months, escaping the rapidly escalating violence in their country of origin.

Ukraine:

For over a year and a half Ukraine has been under attack and being invaded by Russian troops. This has resulted in thousands of casualties and 6.7 million refugees, in which 400 000 who have crossed the border into Europe looking for shelter from January to August of 2024.[[23]](#footnote-24)

**Helpful articles:**

<https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr>

<https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/who-we-protect/refugees>

<https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/who-we-are/figures-glance>

<https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/who-we-protect/internally-displaced-people>

<https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4>

<https://www.unhcr.org/what-we-do/build-better-futures/education>

<https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

<https://www.projectkakuma.com/>

<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/displaced-person>

<https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2024/>

<https://www.concern.net/news/quality-education-explained>

<https://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/year-turmoil-conflicts-crises-and-displacement-2024>

1. <https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&opi=89978449&url=https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/displaced-person&ved=2ahUKEwjFxsSB5eaJAxVqSaQEHeCVJwYQFnoECBUQAQ&usg=AOvVaw2WnzQg7YyNHnt_ozvlF4jG> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR):** <https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&opi=89978449&url=https://www.unhcr.org/&ved=2ahUKEwj_3-G86uaJAxUXVaQEHQ_BN3IQFnoECCEQAQ&usg=AOvVaw19xT4wDIv7dgCb-LedoX5z> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. <https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/overview/1951-refugee-convention> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. <https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/who-we-are/figures-glance> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4>  [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)**: <https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&opi=89978449&url=https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/ensuring-quality-education&ved=2ahUKEwi37aTt7eaJAxXiU6QEHWmaOFsQFnoECBwQAQ&usg=AOvVaw02HZFhIgLaB4URUR8tv8Mg> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. <https://www.unesco.org/en/education> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. <https://www.investopedia.com/articles/economics/09/education-training-advantages.asp#:~:text=An%20economy's%20productivity%20rises%20as,race%2C%20age%2C%20and%20ethnicities>. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. <https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&opi=89978449&url=https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/who-we-protect/internally-displaced-people%23:~:text%3DWhat%2520is%2520internal%2520displacement%253F,68.3%2520million%2520internally%2520displaced%2520people.&ved=2ahUKEwjP8tvx6eaJAxX_UqQEHcD6EPsQFnoECBsQAw&usg=AOvVaw3_jePOwCw_zyGPcJZL-2po> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. <https://www.projectkakuma.com/> [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. <https://emergency.unhcr.org/protection/legal-framework/access-territory-and-non-refoulement#:~:text=The%20principle%20of%20non%2Drefoulement%20obliges%20States%20not%20to%20expel,other%20form%20of%20serious%20harm>. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. <https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/overview/1951-refugee-convention> [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-relating-status-refugees#:~:text=Article%2022%20%2D%20Public%20education,-1.&text=The%20Contracting%20States%20shall%20accord%20to%20refugees%20the%20same%20treatment,with%20respect%20to%20elementary%20education>. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. <https://www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/2023-12/15by30-roadmap.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. <https://www.unhcr.org/what-we-do/build-better-futures/education/higher-education-and-skills/15-2030-global-pledge-refugee> [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/dafi-annual-report-2022-30-years-dafi> [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. <https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/who-we-protect/refugees#:~:text=The%201951%20Refugee%20Convention%20defines,such%20fear%2C%20is%20unwilling%20to> [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. <https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&opi=89978449&url=https://languages.oup.com/google-dictionary-en&ved=2ahUKEwjgle3FgeeJAxXVUKQEHaYGL7gQvecEegQIIBAI&usg=AOvVaw3kNBXVjbAIAFeyFQVCJmJF> [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. <https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&opi=89978449&url=https://reporting.unhcr.org/education-report-2023-unlocking-potential-right-education-and-opportunity&ved=2ahUKEwj-1IX6g-eJAxVWU6QEHTnNLh8QFnoECBUQAQ&usg=AOvVaw0X4JjmPjpBBgrBtsR8sKV7> [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
20. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/12/mozambique-more-than-30-killed-in-one-week-as-protest-death-toll-reaches-110/> [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
21. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mozambican_Civil_War> [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
22. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2025/jan/08/malawi-sees-influx-of-refugees-from-post-election-violence-in-mozambique> [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
23. <https://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/year-turmoil-conflicts-crises-and-displacement-2024> [↑](#footnote-ref-24)