Committee: Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

Topic: Ensuring Equitable Access to Education for Asylum-Seeking and Refugee Children

Student Officer: Christina Avgeri

Position: President

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear Delegates,

My name is Christina Avgeri and I am an 11th grade student at Anatolia College. It is an immense honour to serve as the President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) at the 9th Deutsche Schule Thessaloniki Model United Nations conference.

I would like to extend a warm welcome to all delegates, and especially to those attending a conference for the first time. I hope that this experience leaves you filled with excitement and motivation to participate actively in similar experiences.

Model United Nations provides an excellent opportunity to engage with global politics, develop critical thinking and public speaking skills, and meet people from different backgrounds who share common interests. Through fruitful debates and collaboration, we can think from different perspectives and search for solutions to some of the world's most pressing problems. I strongly encourage all of you to take part in the committee's debates eagerly and build meaningful connections. The more effort and enthusiasm you invest in this experience, the more rewarding it will be.

This study guide contains essential information on the topic to guide you through your preparation. Nevertheless, delegates are expected to conduct more extensive and country-specific research in order to facilitate a constructive debate. Should you require any kind of assistance or have any inquiries regarding the study guide, please don't hesitate to contact me via; 20217037@student.anatolia.edu.gr.

I look forward to meeting you all and wish you the very best in your preparation.

Sincerely,

Christina Avgeri

TOPIC INTRODUCTION

Education is universally recognised as a fundamental human right [UN][1]. More specifically, it is essential for children's protection, recovery, social integration, and independence, especially in settings where children lose family support, stability, and access to various necessary services. Millions of asylum-seeking and refugee children are denied access to quality education and, instead, often face legal barriers, such as restrictive national policies on migration, and financial obstacles, such as transportation costs, school materials and the need for children to solely focus on contributing to household income [EIIE][2]. At the same time, they face linguistic differences which hinder overall classroom participation and effective integration. Children are also exposed to social exclusion, discrimination and xenophobia within host communities when trying to enter or remain in school. According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), nearly half of refugee children worldwide remain out of school, despite international commitments guaranteeing educational access [UNHCR][3]. These children experience displacement due to conflicts, political persecution, additional human rights violations, and humanitarian crises. During displacement, education is disrupted, resulting in learning loss, inequity, and decreased future opportunities.

The international community has therefore recognised education as a critical component of refugee rights since it allows children to become part of the social, cultural and economic life of their host countries. Apart from basic knowledge and important language skills, it equips them with qualifications that are necessary to pursue higher education and secure stable income through employment, thus reducing long-term economic dependence on humanitarian assistance and promoting self resilience and growth. Contrarily, exclusion from education amplifies the risk of poverty, social marginalization, exploitation and forced child labour, while also limiting economic opportunities for the displaced individuals and the countries in which they seek refuge to. Because of this, international treaties such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees framework and Articles 22 [UN][4] and 28 [UN][5]. The Convention on the Rights of the Child describes legal obligations that require states to effectively offer and ensure safety and access to education for all children regardless of nationality or immigration status.

This issue is also directly connected to the broader principles of the international legal system, particularly those concerning fundamental human rights that are considered

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[1] United Nations. "Universal Declaration of Human Rights." *United Nations*, 10 Dec. 1948, https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights Accessed 23 Aug. 2026

[2] Bourgonje, Paloma. *Education for Refugee and Asylum Seeking Children in OECD Countries*. 2010, https://www.ei-ie.org/file/252

[3] UNHCR. "Education." UNHCR, 2024, www.unhcr.org/what-we-do/build-better-futures/education

[4] "Article 22: Refugee Children." Archive.crin.org, archive.crin.org/en/home/rights/convention/articles/article-22

[5] "Article 28: Education." Article-28-Education.html, archive.crin.org/en/home/rights/convention/articles/article-28

peremptory norms (jus cogens). Even though the right to education itself is not classified as a jus cogens norm, it derives from broader principles such as human dignity, non-discrimination, and the protection of all fundamental human rights. The denial of any educational opportunities to refugee and asylum-seeking children works as violation of these principles.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Asylum-Seeker

"An asylum-seeker is someone who is seeking international protection. Their request for refugee status, or complementary protection status, has yet to be processed, or they may not yet have requested asylum but they intend to do so." [UNHCR][6]

Durable Solutions

"A durable solution is an outcome that ends the cycle of displacement for refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). It is achieved when displaced individuals no longer have specific protection or assistance needs linked to their displacement and can enjoy their human rights on an equal basis with others" [UNHCR][7]

Equal Access to Education

"Equal access to education signifies the principle that every individual has the right to an education without discrimination or barriers. This concept emphasises that factors such as socioeconomic status, gender, or disability should not hinder access to educational resources and institutions. It promotes inclusivity and equity within educational systems." [UNESCO][8]

Inclusive Education

"Inclusive education is an educational approach that ensures all students, regardless of their abilities, backgrounds, or disabilities, learn together in the same classrooms. It promotes equal access to quality education by removing barriers and providing necessary accommodations to support diverse learning needs". [Oxford][9]

Internally Displaced Person (IDP)

[6] UNHCR. "Asylum-Seekers." *UNHCR*, 2024, www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/who-we-protect/asylum-seekers.
[7] "Durable Solutions and Refugee Protection | UNHCR." *Unhcr*, 2025, https://www.unhcr.org/publications/durable-solutions-and-refugee-protection
[8] "Equal Access to Education." *Unesco.org*, 2024, www.unesco.org/en/query-list/e/equal-access-education.
[9] "Inclusive Education - Definition and Explanation." *The Oxford Review - or Briefings*, 21 Feb. 2025, oxford-review.com/the-oxford-review-dei-diversity-equity-and-inclusion-dictionary/inclusive-education-definition-and-explanation/.

"Internally displaced persons (IDPs) have been forced to flee their homes by conflict, violence, persecution or disasters, however, unlike refugees, they remain within their own country" [UNHCR][10]

Jus Cogens (Peremptory Norms)

'Jus cogens' (Latin for "compelling law") refers to fundamental, overriding principles of international law. Known as peremptory norms, these rules are universally binding on all states and are considered so essential that no country is permitted to violate, ignore, or override them via treaties or local laws." [Cornell][11]

Non-Discrimination

"Non-discrimination refers to the principle of treating individuals equally, without bias based on characteristics such as race, gender, religion, or disability. This concept is fundamental in the fight against racism and discrimination, promoting fairness and equality in various contexts, including employment, education, and public services". [UNESCO][12]

Refugee

"Refugees are people who have fled their countries to escape conflict, violence, or persecution and have sought safety in another country". [UNHCR][13]

Right to Education

"The right to education is a fundamental human right that entitles everyone to free, compulsory primary education, and equitable access to secondary and higher levels. It ensures the development of the human personality and guarantees education is available, accessible, culturally acceptable, and adaptable without discrimination." [UNESCO][14]

Social Cohesion

"The ability of a society to ensure the welfare of all its members, minimising disparities, and avoiding polarisation". [UN][15]

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[10] UNHCR. "Internally Displaced People." *UNHCR*, 2024, www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/who-we-protect/internally-displaced-people.
[11] Cornell Law School. "Jus Cogens." *LII / Legal Information Institute*, https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/jus_cogens.
[12] "Non-Discrimination." *Unesco.org*, 2024, www.unesco.org/en/query-list/n/non-discrimination.
[13] UNHCR. "Refugees." *UNHCR*, 2024, www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/who-we-protect/refugees.
[14] UNESCO. "The Right to Education." *Www.Unesco.Org*, UNESCO, 2023, https://www.unesco.org/en/right-education
[15] United Nations. (2023). *Social Cohesion Concept and Measurement*. https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2023-12/2317603_E_ECE_CES_STAT_2023_8_WEB.pdf

Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) Quality Education

"Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all." [UN][16]

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Global Refugee Education Crisis

The global refugee education crisis is a crucial problem that the modern world faces. Countless children are displaced for long periods of time, while many education systems in host countries for refugees lack the capacity and the necessary resources to support them. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), more than 123 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide by the end of 2024 due to conflicts and acts against fundamental human rights. [UNHCR][17] Children unfortunately represent a significant percentage of this population, with millions experiencing extended and disruptive interruptions to their education.

Unlike other refugee crises, displacement today is increasingly prolonged, meaning that many refugee situations last for years or decades. This results in children spending a significant part of their childhood outside their country of origin, and education becoming a development necessity. UNHCR estimates that approximately 7.1 million school-age refugee children require access to education, but more than half of them remain out of school. In the most recent academic year, around 3.5 million refugee children between the ages of 5 and 17 were not enrolled in school, including approximately 1.5 million children of primary-school age and 2 million adolescents of secondary-school age. [GG][18]

Since the beginning of the Syrian Civil War in 2011, millions of Syrian refugees have fled primarily to neighbouring countries such as Türkiye, Lebanon, and Jordan [JRS][19]. These countries have made efforts to accommodate refugee children in their education systems. However, overcrowded classrooms, limited funding, teacher shortages, and language differences continue to severely restrict access. In Lebanon, for example, many Syrian refugee children have relied on non-formal education programmes or additional afternoon school shifts because public schools have struggled to accommodate the increased demand. [UNHRC][20]

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[16] The Global Goals. (2025). *Goal 4: Quality education*. The Global Goals. https://globalgoals.org/goals/4-quality-education/

[17] *UNHCR report highlights education crisis for refugee children | UNHCR*. (2017). Unhcr. https://www.unhcr.org/news/news-releases/unhcr-report-highlights-education-crisis-refugee-children

[18] The Global Goals. (2025). *Goal 4: Quality education*. The Global Goals. https://globalgoals.org/goals/4-quality-education/

[19] Buckner, Elizabeth, et al. "Between Policy and Practice: The Education of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon." *Journal of Refugee Studies*, vol. 31, no. 4, Dec. 2017, pp. 444–65, https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fex027

[20] UNHCR. "Education | UNHCR Lebanon." *UNHCR Lebanon*, 2023, https://www.unhcr.org/lb/what-we-do/educatio

Similarly, Russia's invasion of Ukraine forced millions of Ukrainians to be displaced, including large numbers of children. [EEA][21] Many European countries integrated Ukrainian students into national education systems while also supporting online learning opportunities. Digital education was an incredibly useful tool during these emergencies, however, it also presented challenges related to technological access, language integration, and coordination between education systems. Other crises, including conflicts in Sudan, Afghanistan, Myanmar, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the displacement of communities in Bangladesh, continue to leave children without consistent access to formal education and, as an extension, to any online opportunities.

Additional Limitations

Globally, a decline in participation in education as children grow older has also been reported and is caused by multiple factors, including financial pressure, child labour, early marriage, limited access to secondary schools, and the need to support family livelihoods. [UNHCR][22] This exclusion further supports cycles of poverty and dependency, since children who miss years of schooling often face reduced employment opportunities, lower wages, and increased vulnerability to exploitation or informal labour [UNESCO][23].

Furthermore, as economies and countries become more dependent on digital skills and industries are based on knowledge, access to technology and digital literacy are becoming essential. However, refugee families and their children often lack internet access, electronic devices, electricity, and stable living conditions. The digital divide therefore risks the increased exclusion of displaced children from participation in modern markets that rely on innovation.

International Treaties and Conventions

The right of refugee and asylum-seeking children to education is reinforced and supported by several international legal instruments. These frameworks demonstrate that access to education is a humanitarian and internationally recognized right that relates to an individual's dignity, equality, and development. The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees remains the foundation of international refugee law. It establishes the legal definition of a refugee and outlines the responsibilities of states towards these displaced populations. Despite this and other similar international commitments, refugee and asylum-seeking children continue to face practical obstacles preventing them from accessing education.

Issues Encountered by Displaced Children

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[21] "Support for People Affected by Russia's Invasion of Ukraine." *European Education Area*, 2026, https://education.ec.europa.eu/el/support-for-people-affected-by-russias-invasion-of-ukraine

[22] *Primary Education: Closing the gap*. (2018). Stepping Up: Refugee Education in Crisis - UNHCR. https://www.unhcr.org/steppingup/primary-education-closing-the-gap/

[23] *Unesco.Org*, 2021, https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000123330

Many refugee children arrive in host countries without essential documents such as birth certificates, passports, identification papers, vaccination records, or previous school records. [UNCHR][24] Families fleeing conflict or persecution usually leave their homes in a hurry and abandon important documents. In countries affected by civil war or institutional collapse, government systems responsible for issuing and verifying documents no longer function effectively. Some children may also have never been registered at birth, particularly in regions where civil registration systems are limited. [WS][25] Without the essential official documentation, schools struggle to verify a child's age, previous education and legal identity, delaying or, even, preventing enrolment.

Language differences are another major challenge. Refugee children entering an altogether new education system struggle to understand lessons, communicate with teachers, or complete assessments if they do not speak the language of instruction [MPI][26]. Without language support programs, students fall behind academically and experience additional difficulties socially. Language barriers can also affect the children's parents, who may struggle to understand school procedures and communicate with educators, thus increasing discrimination and exclusion. [FIP][27]

Indirect costs such as transportation, uniforms, textbooks, school supplies, internet access, and meals can also prevent refugee children from attending school. Many refugee families experience poverty or limited employment opportunities, meaning children are pressured to contribute financially through child labour instead of attending school. [INTERSOS][28] As a result, economic hardships reduce or prevent educational access, which, in return, limits future economic opportunities. [S4S][29]

Displacement also often intensifies existing inequalities. In regards to gender inequalities, refugee girls face various barriers including early marriage, household responsibilities, gender-based violence, safety concerns, and limited access to menstrual health resources [IJERPH][30]. Ensuring gender-sensitive education policies is essential for

[24] "Identity Documents for Refugees." *Unhcr*, https://www.unhcr.org/publications/identity-documents-refugees-0.

[25] Robiz. "World's Stateless Children Accessing Documents, Preventing Statelessness." *Worldsstateless.Org*, 2016, https://children.worldsstateless.org/3/migration-displacement-and-childhood-statelessness/accessing-documents-preventing-statelessness.html

[26] "The Educational Experiences of Refugee Children in Countries of First Asylum." *Migration Policy Institute*, https://www.migrationpolicy.org/publication/educational-experiences-refugee-children-countries-first-asylum

[27] Alrawashdeh, Haneen Abdaljaleel, and Naciye Kunt. "Refugee Children and English Language: Challenges From English Language Teachers' Perspectives." *Frontiers in Psychology*, vol. 13, June 2022, https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.918734

[28] Anna. "Child Labour in Lebanon: Childhood Denied by Poverty and Conflict." *Intersos*, 12 June 2026, https://www.intersos.org/en/child-labour-lebanon/

[29] Markel, Eden. "How Does Poverty Affect Education." *Soles4Souls*, 9 July 2026, https://soles4souls.org/how-does-poverty-affect-education/

[30] Chalouhi, Jinane, et al. "The Health and Well-Being of Women and Girls Who Are Refugees: A Case for Action." *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, vol. 22, no. 2, MDPI AG, Jan. 2025, p. 204, https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph22020204

achieving equitable access to education [DGIPPD][31]. In addition, refugee children with disabilities experience multiple additional layers of exclusion. Schools may lack accessible infrastructure, specialised teachers, assistive technologies, or inclusive learning materials.

Many refugee-hosting countries already face challenges in providing education to their own populations. The arrival of large refugee populations can create additional pressure through overcrowded classrooms, teacher shortages, limited learning materials, and insufficient infrastructure. Refugee education cannot depend solely on individual host countries [DI][32]. International funding, technical assistance, and responsibility-sharing are necessary to strengthen education systems and ensure that both refugee and native children receive quality education [POM][33].

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

Bangladesh

Bangladesh hosts nearly one million Rohingya refugees in camps, making it central to current debates on humanitarian education in camp settings. In recent years, UNICEF and partners have helped expand education so that around 300,000 Rohingya children are enrolled in learning centers and, for the first time, children of all ages can study the Myanmar national curriculum in the camps, significantly expanding opportunities for older children and adolescents. At the same time, frequent fires, weather events such as Cyclone Mocha, overcrowding, and funding shortfalls show how fragile and resource-intensive it is to provide even basic schooling in large camps, underlining the importance of sustained international support and host-country cooperation. [UNIF][34]

Germany

Germany is a major destination country for asylum-seeking and refugee children, particularly those from Syria, Afghanistan, and other states that are affected by conflict. German law provides that all children are subject to compulsory schooling and have the right to attend school regardless of migration status, and asylum-seeking children also have

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[31] *DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR INTERNAL POLICIES POLICY DEPARTMENT C: CITIZENS" RIGHTS AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS WOMEN'S RIGHTS & GENDER EQUALITY Female Refugees and Asylum Seekers: The Issue of Integration STUDY*. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/556929/IPOL_STU(2016)556929_EN.pdf.

[32] Haidari, M. Ashraf. "Empowering Refugee Youth Through Education: Challenges and Solutions in Kenya - Displaced International." *Displaced International*, 25 Jan. 2025, https://displacedinternational.org/empowering-refugee-youth-through-education-challenges-and-solutions-in-kenya/

[33] Sebnem Manolya Demir, et al. "EXPRESS: No Country for Young Refugees: Barriers and Opportunities for Inclusive Refugee Education Practices." *Production and Operations Management*, Wiley-Blackwell, Mar. 2024, https://doi.org/10.1177/10591478241243382.

[34] "Bangladesh / Rohingya Children Education." *UNifeed*, 12 Mar. 2024, https://media.un.org/unifeed/en/asset/d307/d3073743

access to early childhood education and care. However, various studies on Germany's policies show that the timing of access to school varies depending on federal states, and that tracking, language support, and school capacity negatively influence the rate of refugee children being effectively integrated into education and later higher education. [ECRE][35]

Türkiye

Türkiye, as the country connecting Europe and Asia, hosts one of the largest refugee populations in the world and has chosen to make the inclusion of refugee children in its national education system a central policy. Turkish legislation allows access to education for all children in the country, including those under temporary and international protection, and UNHCR works with the Ministry of National Education to support enrollment, Turkish language learning, and inclusive school environments. At the same time, research shows that documentation requirements, language barriers, and capacity limitations still make it difficult for all refugee children to enroll in school. [UNHCR][36]

Uganda

Uganda is one of the world's largest refugee-hosting countries, but, since it is also a low-income state, the education response is extremely crucial for bridging refugee inclusion and development. Uganda has adopted a relatively progressive policy by granting refugee and asylum-seeker children access to universal primary education and allowing them to attend pre-primary, secondary, vocational, and other institutions under the same national framework as nationals. To enroll, children typically need a refugee ID or asylum-seeker certificate and, where available, previous school certificates, which demonstrates the need for capacity support from international partners. [UNESCO][37]

International Organization for Migration (IOM)

IOM is the UN migration agency and, while it is not the main guardian of refugee law, it plays an important role where migration and asylum overlap, particularly in transit, border, and mixed-movement contexts. In the context of education, IOM undertakes projects to improve access to education for migrant and refugee children, supports governments with data and policy advice, and works on safe migration pathways that can affect whether and how children enter school in host countries. IOM also partners with UNHCR, UNICEF, and others in multi-agency responses where families are on the move or in reception centers. [IOM][38]

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[35] "Access to Education." *Asylum Information Database | European Council on Refugees and Exiles*, https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/germany/reception-conditions/employment-and-education/access-education/

[36] "Education | UNHCR Turkey." *UNHCR Turkey*, 2019, https://www.unhcr.org/tr/en/ne-yapiyoruz/education

[37] "Paving Pathways for Refugee Inclusion: Uganda Case Study." *Unesco.Org*, 2022, https://www.unesco.org/en/emergencies/education/data/refugees/uganda

[38] IOM. "International Organization for Migration." *International Organization for Migration*, 2018, https://www.iom.int/

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

UNICEF is the UN's child-focused agency, and it works extensively on education for refugee and asylum-seeking children, especially in emergencies and protracted crises. UNICEF supports the provision of temporary learning spaces, teacher training, learning materials, psychosocial support, and cash transfer schemes, and it has been particularly active in contexts such as Bangladesh and other Syrian-hosting states. UNICEF also co-authors research and guidance on education solutions for migrant and displaced children. [UNICEF][39]

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

UNHCR is the lead UN agency for refugee protection and has a core mandate to ensure that refugee children can access quality, safe, and inclusive education. Through its Refugee Education 2030 strategy and global reports, UNHCR advocates for the inclusion of refugees in national education systems, coordinates with host governments, and supports school construction, teacher training, cash-for-education programs, and data collection. UNHCR's statistics and analyses are the main global reference for refugee enrollment rates and out-of-school figures. [UNHCR][40]

BLOCS EXPECTED

Bloc A

Western developed member states are mostly expected to emphasize integrating refugee and asylum-seeking children into already existing education systems through language learning programs, inclusive and non-discriminatory policies, and teacher support. States such as France, Sweden, Canada, and the United Kingdom most likely will emphasize that this integration can provide refugee children with greater stability, recognized qualifications, and opportunities to interact with their host communities. They may also support measures that address specific barriers faced by displaced children, such as language difficulties, interrupted schooling, and the recognition of previous education. Therefore, the members will most likely advocate for sustainable international funding mechanisms, increased cooperation with organizations such as UNHCR and UNICEF, and greater investment in education in countries hosting large refugee populations. However, debate may arise over the extent of financial responsibility that developed states should assume, particularly regarding long-term funding and whether resources should be directed towards domestic integration programmes or international assistance.

Bloc B

[39] UNICEF. "Unicef." *Unicef.Org*, UNICEF, 2025, https://www.unicef.org/
[40] United Nations. "UNHCR - The UN Refugee Agency." *Unhcr.Org*, 2023, https://www.unhcr.org/

Most major host countries are likely to emphasize the disproportionate pressure placed on their education systems by large refugee populations and advocate for increased international support. States such as Türkiye, Jordan, Lebanon, Uganda, and Pakistan host significant numbers of refugees while often facing their own economic, infrastructural, and educational challenges. For these countries, the arrival of large numbers of displaced children can lead to overcrowded classrooms, teacher shortages, limited educational materials, and increased pressure on already stretched public services. These states may therefore call for greater financial assistance, infrastructure development, teacher training, and technical support from the international community. They are also likely to emphasize that responsibility for refugee protection and education should not depend solely on geographical proximity to conflicts. In addition to financial responsibility-sharing, they may advocate for stronger international support for asylum-seekers, including protection from discrimination and greater flexibility in accessing public services. Their approach is therefore likely to focus on burden sharing that is fair and ensures that countries receiving large refugee populations are not left to manage the consequences of displacement alone.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of event
4th October, 1967	**Adoption of the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees** Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees adopted to remove geographical and temporal limitations, and ensure that refugee protection applied globally after World War II.
20th November, 1989	**Adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child** The Convention on the Rights of the Child established comprehensive international protections for children and recognized education as a fundamental right, by requiring states to

	protect all children within their jurisdiction.
8th September, 2000	**Introduction of the Millennium Development Goals** Millennium Development Goals introduced as a global development framework for reducing poverty and improving social conditions. Goal 2: Achieve Universal Primary Education discusses the importance of expanding educational access worldwide.
25th September, 2015	**Adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals** Sustainable Development Goals. SDG 4 (Quality Education) ensures inclusive and equitable education for all. SDGs 10, 16, and 17 address inequality reduction, social inclusion, and international cooperation.
17th December, 2018	**Adoption of the Global Compact on Refugees** Global Compact on Refugees adopted to strengthen international cooperation and improve responsibility-sharing between refugee hosting countries and international communities.
13th-15th December, 2023	**Global Refugee Forum: Education Pledges** Global Refugee Forum education pledges focused on expanding access to

	national education systems, increasing funding, supporting teachers, and improving learning opportunities for displaced children worldwide.

RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees

The Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, adopted on 28 July 1951, is the foundation of modern international refugee law. It described the legal definition of a refugee and thoroughly outlined the rights of refugees and the protections that states must provide to all individuals who have fled persecution, conflict, or serious threats to their safety and are seeking asylum. For the topic of refugee education, the most relevant provision is Article 22, which strictly requires states to provide refugees with the same treatment as nationals regarding elementary education. Originally created in response to the displacement caused by World War II, the Convention remains the primary legal framework guiding refugee protection worldwide. [UNHCR][41]

1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees

The 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees expanded the 1951 Refugee Convention by removing its original geographical and temporal limitations. The 1951 Convention initially applied mainly to people displaced by events occurring in Europe before 1951. However, with the growing number of refugee crises worldwide, the need for a broader and more inclusive framework became clear. By eliminating these restrictions, the Protocol further ensured that refugee protection applied to displaced populations regardless of their location or the date of their displacement. Together, the Convention and Protocol form the central international legal framework for refugee rights. Regarding education, the Protocol maintains the obligations established under the Refugee Convention, including ensuring refugees' access to basic services and protection against discrimination. [UNHRC][42]

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1966, recognizes a range of fundamental rights, including the rights to education, health, work, and an adequate standard of living. The most relevant provision for this topic is Article 13, which recognizes education as a human right

[41] UNHCR. "The 1951 Refugee Convention." *Unhcr*, https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/overview/1951-refugee-convention

[42] UNHCR. "The 1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees | UNHCR." *Unhcr*, 1967, https://www.unhcr.org/media/1951-refugee-convention-and-1967-protocol-relating-status-refugees

and requires states to work towards accessible and equitable education systems. It specifically emphasizes free and compulsory primary education, equal access to secondary and higher education, and the development of educational opportunities for all individuals. It discusses how lack of educational access among refugee children can contribute to unemployment, poverty, and social inequality, making education a key factor in achieving sustainable development. [OHCHR][43]

Convention on the Rights of the Child

The Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted in 1989, is the most widely ratified human rights treaty and establishes comprehensive protections for children worldwide. It recognizes that every child, regardless of nationality, legal status, or background, is entitled to protection and equal access to fundamental rights. For refugee and asylum-seeking children, Article 22 is particularly important, as it requires states to provide appropriate protection and humanitarian assistance to children seeking refugee status. Additionally, Article 28 recognizes every child's right to education and obliges states to ensure access to educational opportunities. The CRC reinforces the principle of non-discrimination under Article 2, meaning that refugee children must not be denied access to education because of their migration status. This makes the Convention a key legal instrument for addressing inequalities faced by displaced children. [UN][44]

Resolution A/RES/64/290; The right to education in emergency situations

Resolution A/RES/64/290, adopted by the UN General Assembly on 27 July 2010 without a vote, recognizes education as an essential component of humanitarian response when there is increased disaster risk. It urges Member States to integrate the right to education into humanitarian assistance strategies and encourages the development of resilient education systems through disaster preparedness, risk assessments, teacher training, and safe school infrastructure. The resolution also calls for the protection of students, teachers, and educational facilities during armed conflict, while addressing the heightened vulnerability of girls and other marginalized groups to violence and exploitation during crises. Furthermore, it encourages governments, donors, and the private sector to increase financial support for education programmes during humanitarian emergencies and recovery efforts. [UN][45]

New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants

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[43] United Nations. “International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.” *Ohchr*, United Nations, 16 Dec. 1966, https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-economic-social-and-cultural-rights

[44] United Nations. “Convention on the Rights of the Child.” *Ohchr*, United Nations, 1989, https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child

[45] General, UN. “The Right to Education in Emergency Situations :: Resolution /: Adopted by the General Assembly.” *United Nations Digital Library System*, UN, 27 July 2010, https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/685964?v=pdf

The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants was adopted unanimously by all 193 United Nations Member States in 2016 in response to increasing global displacement. Although it is not legally binding, it represents a significant political commitment to improving international cooperation and refugee protection. The Declaration recognizes that refugee and migrant children are among the most vulnerable groups and emphasizes the importance of providing access to education, healthcare, and other essential services. It called for stronger international responsibility-sharing, acknowledging that countries hosting large refugee populations often require additional support. The Declaration also initiated the development of two global frameworks: the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

Global Compact on Refugees

The Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2018 to strengthen international cooperation and improve responsibility-sharing among states, international organizations, and other stakeholders. The Compact recognizes that refugee protection cannot rely only on countries that are geographically close to conflicts. Instead, it promotes a more predictable and equitable approach through financial support, humanitarian assistance, and development cooperation. It encourages states to include refugee children in national education systems, expand access to quality learning, support teachers, and increase investment in education infrastructure. [UNHCR][46]

[46] UNHCR. "The Global Compact on Refugees." *Unhcr*, 2018, https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/overview/global-compact-refugees

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

UNHCR Refugee Education Strategy

The UNHCR Refugee Education Strategy, which ran from 2012 to 2016, and subsequent education initiatives aim to improve refugee children's access to quality education by supporting governments, schools, and humanitarian partners. UNHCR recognises education as a long-term investment that promotes protection and the ability of refugees to contribute to their communities. A major focus of UNHCR's education efforts has been increasing school enrolment and retention rates, particularly among refugee children who face barriers such as poverty, displacement, language differences, and lack of documentation. UNHCR works with governments and partners to support the inclusion of refugee children in national education systems and the construction and improvement of schools. At the same time, they aim to improve teacher recruitment and training, while also ensuring the provision of learning materials and financial support. The ultimate goal is to accelerate education programmes for children who have experienced significant learning gaps. More recently, UNHCR has expanded its focus on digital learning initiatives, using technology as a tool for reaching displaced children who cannot easily access traditional classrooms. Digital education programmes, including online learning platforms, mobile-based resources, and blended learning models, became especially important during the COVID-19 pandemic, when many refugee children experienced additional educational disruptions. Unfortunately, digital learning presents additional challenges, including limited internet access, lack of electronic devices, unreliable electricity, and unequal digital literacy among students and teachers. Therefore, technology is viewed as a complementary solution rather than a replacement for accessible, quality education systems [UNHRC].[47]

SDG 4; Quality Education

Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) was adopted in 2015 as part of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It aims to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.” SDG 4 is directly connected to refugee education because it emphasizes that education systems must reach vulnerable and marginalized groups, including refugees, displaced children, and individuals affected by conflict. It calls for removing barriers to education, improving learning environments, and ensuring equal opportunities regardless of background or status. Several SDG 4 targets are particularly relevant:

- Target 4.1: Ensure all children complete free, equitable, and quality primary and secondary education.

[47] “UNHCR Education Strategy 2012-2016.” *Unhcr*, https://www.unhcr.org/media/unhcr-education-strategy-2012-2016

- Target 4.5: Eliminate disparities in education, including those based on vulnerable status.
- Target 4.A: Build and improve inclusive, safe, and effective learning environments.

Achieving SDG 4 requires international cooperation, particularly because many refugee-hosting countries lack sufficient resources to expand education systems without external support. [GG][48]

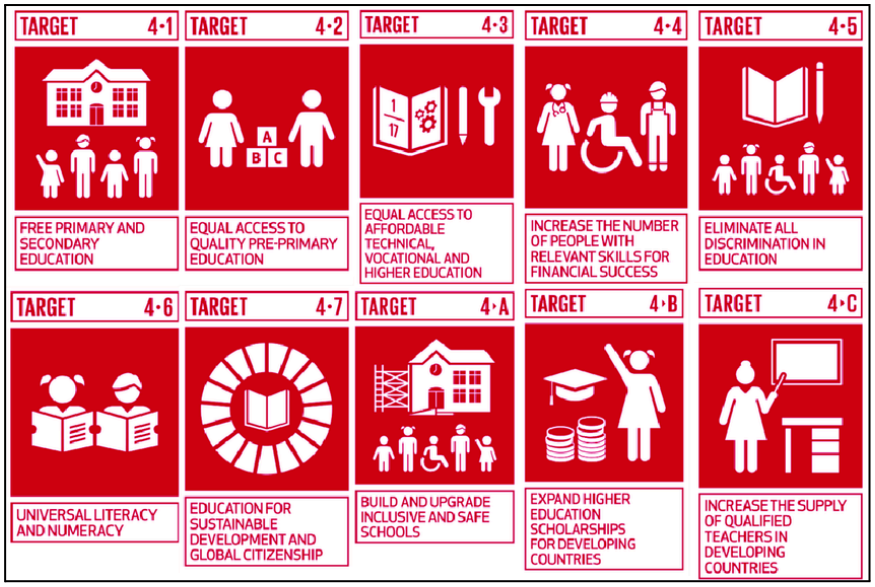


Figure 1: Summary of Targets for SDG 4 [Research Gate][49]

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Removing Enrollment Restrictions

Governments can improve refugee children's access to education by eliminating policies that prevent or delay enrolment based on nationality, migration status, or lack of documentation. Asylum-seeking children spend months or even years waiting for their legal status to be determined, and this uncertainty should not result in them losing valuable years of education. Allowing children to enter schools as soon as possible after arrival can prevent prolonged interruptions in learning and provide them with a sense of stability during an otherwise uncertain period.

[48] The Global Goals. "Goal 4: Quality Education." *The Global Goals*, 2025, https://globalgoals.org/goals/4-quality-education/.
[49] Sustainable Development of Education for Giang University - Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh - https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Summary-of-SDG-4s-Targets-Source-4_fig1_383041513

States could review national enrollment policies to ensure that refugee and asylum-seeking children have the same practical opportunity to attend school as children in the host community. This could include introducing temporary enrollment while immigration procedures are ongoing, providing access to public schools regardless of residence status, and ensuring that schools are informed about the rights of displaced children. With these measures children's right to education would be protected and their social integration would be supported by allowing them to learn and interact alongside children from the host community.

Simplifying Documentation Requirements

Many refugee children arrive in host countries without documents such as birth certificates, identification papers, proof of residence, vaccination records, or previous school records. These documents may have been lost during displacement, left behind when families were forced to flee suddenly, or become impossible to replace because conflict has disrupted the institutions responsible for issuing them. Some children may also have never been formally registered at birth.

Governments could therefore introduce flexible enrollment procedures that do not make possession of these documents an absolute requirement for entering school. Temporary registration systems, alternative methods of establishing a child's age and educational background, and provisional acceptance of students while documentation is being verified could significantly reduce delays. Cooperation between schools, governments, UN agencies, and civil society organizations could also help families obtain or replace essential documents. Administrative difficulties should not prevent a child from receiving an education.

International Education Funding Mechanisms

Many major refugee-hosting countries, and especially lower-income countries, already face challenges in providing education to their own populations. The arrival of large numbers of displaced children can place additional pressure on classrooms, teachers, school buildings, and educational materials. The international community could establish or strengthen dedicated funding mechanisms for refugee education, providing predictable and long-term financial assistance to countries experiencing significant increases in their school-age populations. Funding could be directed towards constructing and expanding schools, recruiting additional teachers, providing learning materials, improving sanitation and accessibility, and developing transportation systems for children living far from schools.

Increased donor contributions

Greater financial commitments from wealthier states, international organizations, development agencies, and other donors are necessary to make refugee education programmes sustainable. Humanitarian funding is often designed to respond to immediate emergencies, while refugee children may remain displaced for many years. Short-term funding can therefore leave schools and organizations unable to plan for the long-term educational needs of the children they serve.

Increased contributions could support programmes that benefit both displaced and local children. Investing in national education systems, rather than creating entirely separate structures for refugees, can strengthen the capacity of host communities while promoting greater inclusion. At the same time, donors could coordinate their contributions more effectively to reduce duplication and ensure that resources reach areas experiencing the greatest educational needs.

Language Support Programmes

Language barriers can prevent refugee children from participating fully in education even when they have successfully gained access to a school. A child may understand very little of the language used in the classroom, making it difficult to follow lessons, communicate with teachers, complete assignments, or form relationships with other students. Over time, this can lead to lower academic performance, isolation, and increased risk of dropping out.

Governments could introduce language learning and integration programmes specifically designed to support newly arrived students. These could include intensive language classes before or alongside mainstream education, bilingual learning materials, additional support teachers, and tutoring programmes. Where possible, children should also be encouraged to maintain their first language and cultural identity while learning the language of their host country. This can help children adapt to their new environment without feeling that their previous identity and experiences must be abandoned. Effective language programmes can improve both educational attainment and social cohesion by helping refugee children participate more confidently in their new communities.

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