



2023 Global Refugee Forum

Education in Emergency Contexts

Overview

Education is a human right and can be lifesaving and life-sustaining – a fact reflected in official guidance on humanitarian responses. And, more importantly, in crises refugee children, youth, and parents indicate that access to quality education is one of their most important priorities. Education is a vehicle to provide safe spaces where children and youth are protected and supported and have access to essential services.

The Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) urges States and other stakeholders to work together to **minimise the time that newly displaced children and youth spend out of school** to less than three months, and promote inclusion in national education systems.

While we aim to ensure a return to learning within three months of displacement, we recognize that “education in emergencies” programming may be required for a period lasting up to 18 months after displacement. This period is critical in ensuring that learning time is not lost and that recently displaced refugee children and youth receive supportive services that address mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) needs, nutritional support, language acquisition and academic support, and the establishment or expansion of educational infrastructure. The recommendations that follow focus on the period immediately following displacement until such time as refugee children and youth are able to attend recognised formal or accredited non-formal education services on a regular basis.

Challenges affecting newly-displaced refugees’ access and inclusion into national education systems

Education is often **underfunded, underprioritised and left out of crisis responses, preparedness plans and anticipatory action.**

Policies supporting the swift inclusion of newly displaced children and youth often do not exist. Even when such policies exist, they may be insufficient or not properly enforced.

The **political will** to include refugees in national systems may be lacking, whether due to the cost involved, uncertainty regarding the expected duration of displacement, or other reasons.

Host countries' education systems may struggle to handle increased demand for education, especially in contexts where **infrastructure, equipment, resources, and funding** are already over-stretched. Additionally, **teachers may lack appropriate support** at administrative, technical and financial levels.

Inequalities can be exacerbated in emergencies, including those related to gender, disability, ethnic identity or other characteristics. **Some groups may face additional challenges** towards inclusion into national systems due to this. Other barriers related to **curriculum, language, culture, legal status and displaced families’ economic situations** also hinder refugee children and youth’s access to quality learning.

Data availability may be limited due to difficulties in collecting information during crises.

These challenges must be addressed, as **education in emergencies can play a life-saving** role for children and youth and is an entry point for other critical goods and services.



Actions that could be pledged at the Global Refugee Forum

The GRF Education Alliance Task Team on Education in Emergency Contexts urges states, donors, civil society organizations and others to use the Global Refugee Forum as an opportunity to ensure a rapid return to learning in the following ways.

1. Expressing **political will by both host and donor countries** to ensure that children and youth - in all their diversity - can go back to learning as quickly as possible. This requires concerted effort and shared responsibility. In particular, donor countries and other donors should **step up their financial contributions**, to provide the multi-year and flexible funding host countries need as they extend services to refugee children and youth.
2. **Identifying and removing policy, legal, and administrative barriers to allow the swift inclusion of** refugee children and youth - in all their diversity - in national education systems.
3. **Strengthening the capacity of education systems** to absorb a higher demand for education. This also includes ensuring **adequate support for teachers**, awareness raising about the specific needs of displaced children and youth, and considering how to incorporate refugee teachers effectively.
4. **Promoting sustainability and inclusion from the start** of a response. Even if recently arrived children and youth cannot join schools in their host communities immediately, responses should be developed to integrate them in national systems as soon as possible – using **non-formal pathways when needed**.
5. **Aligning emergency phase responses and longer-term policy and planning** to create the conditions to include refugee children and youth in national education systems.
6. **Prioritising and integrating education in inter-sectoral responses** - newly arrived refugees may need support services that include addressing economic barriers to education, psycho-social support, assistance to learn the language of instruction and bridging curricular and cultural differences.
7. Mainstreaming education in **preparedness plans** and **anticipatory actions** to **increase education systems' resilience** and **ensure continuity of learning from the first day of a crisis**.
8. **Meaningfully engaging and empowering local actors**, teachers, affected children and youth and their families to be part of the decision-making and accountability processes.
9. **Investing in evidence generation** on how children and youth learn in emergency contexts, and what works to support their learning and development.

The task team also **urge those pledging on other education thematic areas** to consider the specific needs of recently-displaced persons and the communities hosting them when pledging on other areas. Examples include the **funding of education in emergencies**, the specific needs of **teachers** in crisis-affected or refugee-hosting countries, and considerations related to mental health and psycho-social support (**MHPSS**), social and emotional learning (**SEL**), early childhood development (**ECD**) and **higher education**.

For more information on pledging at the [Global Refugee Forum](#) or the [GRF Education Alliance](#) please visit UNHCR's website.