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FORUM: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

ISSUE: Supporting the Social Inclusion of Refugees

STUDENT OFFICER: Ein Sel

POSITION: Deputy President

Introduction to Committee:

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, abbreviated as UNHCR, was established January 1, 1951 by the UNGA. As the UN Refugee Agency, the UNHCR works to provide protection for refugees and find solutions for refugees to better assimilate into their new environment. The UNHCR works with host governments of these refugees and provides humanitarian aid. Another goal the UNHCR has is to provide education for school age refugees, as they believe education plays a key role in the thriving and survival of refugee children. The UNHCR stands in the center of the refugee response system, taking a leading role and assuming lots of responsibility to provide aid for refugees. By definition, the UNHCR aids anyone considered a refugee, from IDPs to those who are exiled. As of 2021, the UNHCR has over 16.1 million refugees under their jurisdiction, over half that number being children under the age of 18. The UNHCR also has the elected high commissioner, who is picked every 5 years by the UNGA. Currently, Filippo Grandi is the 11th UN high commissioner for refugees, and will serve his place in office until June 30, 2023.

Introduction to Topic:

The refugee crises in the 21st century is considered the largest refugee crisis since World War II of 1939. Worldwide, there are over 80 million forcibly displaced peoples; around 26.3 million of this number are refugees, looking for a new home to call their own. As these refugees find new homes in new states, they are faced with the issue of social inclusion, are facing xenophobia and racism in their newfound homes and are struggling to assimilate and familiarize themselves to their environment. Supporting this social inclusion of refugees is of top priority for the UNHCR and UN at a time like this. The UNHCR has many refugees under its mandate, 67 percent of the refugees being from states in conflict such as the Syrian Arab Republic, South Sudan, and Venezuela among other developing states. These refugees often find themselves the subject for discrimination and hate crimes. Furthermore, over 40 percent of the forcibly displaced people population are children under the age of 18. This poses another serious threat for these children do not have access to the necessary materials they need for a healthy childhood and development into adulthood. Delegates must take critical procedures in house to present their delegation's abilities and work together as the international community to form constructive solutions to the urgent issue at hand.

History:

Syrian Civil War – The Syrian Civil War is an ongoing violent conflict between the Syrian government and a pro-democratic group since the February of 2011. An estimated 12 million Syrians were displaced so far, and an estimated 4.1 million have left the state and became refugees.



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South Sudanese Civil War – The South Sudanese Civil War is an ongoing violent conflict between the two largest ethnic groups in South Sudan, the Dinka and Nuer, since the December of 2013. An estimated 2.24 million refugees and asylum seekers were created due to this conflict.

Civil Conflict in Columbia – Columbia’s civil conflicts are a collection of violent conflicts between the FARC and the National Liberation Army, which halted in 2016. While the violence may be halted, conflicts still occur between these two groups, and sustainable peace has not been formed as of 2021. An estimated 5.7 million people have been displaced.

Receiving Countries’ Reactions – Many receiving countries’ populations show a dislike in taking in new refugees. Often this dislike is caused by economic concerns among other reasons. Many of these refugees find themselves attempting to resettle in developing countries, where the states own population is also trying to make ends meets. This causes them to dislike new refugees, possibly taking their resources away.

Inclusion in the Economy – Refugees, by the 1951 Refugee Convention, have the right to work. However, even with these rights, over half of all member states do not recognize these rights. Furthermore, out of the member states that give refugees the right to work, many impose conditions or give labor protections according to their laws. In addition, these refugees also have a harder time accessing financial services such as creating bank accounts and building credit.

Inclusion in Education – As previously stated, over 40 percent of all displaced peoples are under the age of 18. These displaced children, even after finding new homes, face discrimination in school. Furthermore, many of this population struggle to even access adequate education services. Education for refugee children should be of top concern for the UNHCR because with access to education, these children will have an easier time assimilating into their communities. At school, these refugee children can learn the local language and culture, in order to understand and participate in their local society. In addition, education prepares these children for their future lives, and prepares them to be self-sufficient.

Inclusion in Social Services – Many refugees, after arriving in their receiving countries, have a difficult time being included in social services. For example, health care is often an essential social service overlooked by a large majority of the population. Health care is an expensive service, and many refugees lack the sufficient funds to access this public service. This economic instability along with racial profiling leaves these refugees at a distance from health care, leaving them at risk for physical and mental illnesses.

Global Refugee Forum – The Global Refugee Forum was first held 2019, in Geneva, Switzerland. The goal for this forum was to pledge for changes to improve the lives of all refugees and their respective receiving countries. Not only is this a positive step towards reaching the 16th Sustainable Developing Goal to create inclusive societies, but it was also a great opportunity to bring the issue to a larger audience. It brought positive media support, public interest, and spread the issue of supporting refugee inclusion into the foreground.

Key Terms:



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MEDC – MEDCs, or “more economically developed countries” represents states that have a higher gross domestic product (GDP).

LEDC – LEDCs, or “less economically developed countries” represents states that have a lower GDP. These states are highly vulnerable to economic shocks among other threats. Currently, 46 states are recognized as a LEDC by the UN.

IDP – IDPs, or internally displaced people, are those who are displaced from their homes within their home state. This may be due to war, social hatred, or other pushing factors. The UNHCR has said there were over 50 million IDPs by the end of 2019.

Refugee – Refugees are those who have fled from their home state or power to escape danger or other persecution. The UNHCR splits refugees into two smaller classifications; *resettled refugees* and *refugees in protracted situations*. Resettled refugees are refugees that have permanently resettled in a new state because they are unlikely to return home. These resettled refugees only contribute to one percent of all refugees each year. Refugees in protracted situations are those who wish to return to their home state but cannot return due to an ongoing conflict. These refugees are highlighted by their long exile, which at minimum is five years. This group makes up the majority of refugees, filling an estimated 78 percent of the population.

Xenophobia – Xenophobia is the fear, hatred, or prejudice against a certain group, strangers, foreigners, or anything else that is strange or foreign. The UNHCR classifies xenophobia as a form of discrimination which often leads to social exclusion, violence, and/or hate crimes.

Asylum Seekers – Asylum seekers are those who are seeking for refuge and international protection. These people do not have determined status, and many have to wait months or years just to get an answer back.

Receiving Countries – Receiving countries are states that take in new refugees. The UN recognized Turkey, Columbia, Pakistan, Uganda, and Germany as the largest receiving countries, these 5 states alone hosting 39 percent of the world’s refugees.

De-skilling – De-skilling is the phenomenon where once skilled workers cannot perform the same skills they once could, i.e., specialized jobs, and leads to the lose of confidence and self-esteem in oneself.

Major Parties Involved:

1. Supranational Organizations

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) – The UNHCR, is the head organization running most refugee support missions. Since their establishment in 1951, they have supported countless numbers of refugees and children around the world.



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United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) – The UNRWA was established by the UNGA in 1949 specifically to support Palestinian refugees. Currently, they provide assistance and protection to over 5.6 million registered refugees. They support any Palestinian refugee that meets their definition of one and have supported over 4 generations of Palestinian refugees. Most of the funding for the UNRWA comes from voluntary donations from member states, but some funds are also received from the Regular Budget of the UN.

2. International Organizations

International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement – Considered the largest humanitarian network in the world, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement not only provides aid to those in need, but they also support vulnerable refugees. Along with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), they help find gaps between protection and assistance given to refugees, and work to fill it. They help make sure refugees are given fair treatment under law and works to provide legal statuses for refugees. International Red Cross and Red Crescent societies also works with national governments, to uphold refugee rights and safety under each state's jurisdiction.

The Save the Children Fund – The Save the Children Fund, more commonly referred to as Save the Children, is another organization that works to provide for the vulnerable children around the world. They work in over 100 states, reaching the hardest to reach children, and make sure that children are provided with education and protection programs. Their support extends to those refugee children, as these children also deserve quality education to better prepare them for the future and rest of their lives.

The AIRE Centre – The AIRE Centre (Advice on Individual Rights in Europe), is a charity that works in the Europe, especially in the EU, to protect everyone's fundamental rights. They protect refugee rights under the European human rights law stating that no person can get expelled from the state where they are residing in. They work to provide these rights and protection to those refugees who may not have access to them. They further help these refugees and asylum seekers file court cases to the European Court of Human Rights if the refugee/asylum seekers rights have been severely violated.

3. Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs)

Each year, the UNHCR provides funding for hundreds of NGOs, local and national responders, and other partners. In 2019 alone, the UNHCR disbursed 1.25 billion USD to 900 NGOs.

Consonant – Consonant, better known as their former name, Asylum Aid and Migrant Resource Centre, is an organization based in the UK that works to help all refugees looking to resettle in the United Kingdom. They help resolve possible issues between British communities and refugees, along with giving everyone a voice to present their issues. Each year, hundreds of refugees are protected from violence and persecution by the Consonant.



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4. National Governments

Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, South Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic – These aforementioned national governments produce a large majority of the world's refugees as of 2021. Therefore, lots of work with these governments have been done in the past to attempt to return many refugees back to a safe environment in their home states.

European Union (EU) – The European Union has very open policies in their own area of Europe, and work to provide all refugees in the jurisdiction of the EU their rights and protection. Recently, the EU worked towards helping other areas of the world reach this level of equality as well. Delegates should look at EU regulations regarding refugees to find possible solutions.

Problems Raised:

Xenophobia and Fear – As refugees enter new ethnic regions, they often face xenophobia and fear, which leads to discrimination. Many refugees bring their culture and religion with them into their host communities. Due to this reason, xenophobia rises, and can result in violent conflicts and hate crimes. Vandalism, injuries, and possibly death can be forced upon these refugees, causing physical and emotional stress. Often, refugees are associated with “illegal” or “poor” in the media, further causing xenophobia. These factors combined makes it harder for refugees to assimilate into their host communities, and thus, make it hard for them to be included in their new communities.

Failure to Enter Economy – While many believe refugees are poor and uneducated, this is not always the case. Many refugees are skilled workers in a variety of jobs, but often find themselves without one in their new host communities. There are a couple factors causing this. One is that even when these refugees have the right to work under law, they often find themselves target to discrimination and racial prejudice. Another is that these highly skilled refugees do not have the proper paperwork to back up their skills. Because many refugees are escaping danger, they do not have the time nor resources to bring documents proving their credibility to recruiters. This means they will need to spend lots of resources, including time and money, to regain these documents to be able to work again. These refugees do not have the time nor money for this, thus often leading to a phenomenon called de-skilling. All these factors make it hard to refugees to be included in the economy, and results in them not having the funds to live a stable life.

Sexism – Sexism is common in many aspects of life, and it especially cannot be left out when talking about refugees. Female refugees not only face issues male refugees have, but they are also further affected due to their genders. They are often hired to work “feminine jobs” or completely turned away because females are considered “caregivers” or “at home moms.” This makes it even harder for female refugees to be included in the economy and thus the community.



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Rise in Uneducated Children – With several tens of million refugees being children under the age of 18, it reveals a serious concern in the future of the community. Many refugee children do not have the access to adequate education, and this means they will be without proper education to allow them to have a prosperous life in the continuously developing era called the 21st century. As refugee children grow, education levels fall, and thus leaves these children to have a harder time to be included in the community and economy in the future as they grow up.

Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue:

As the refugee crisis continues to escalate, countless numbers of agencies, NGOs, and other supporters of the inclusion have been created. Many states have begun to work together to find new homes for many of these refugees, and continue to help refugees, their descendants, until they are independently stable. Refugee camps have been created, education has been provided, but not in the scale needed to support the 30 million refugees in need. Furthermore, a day has also been dedicated to bringing refugees to the limelight, called World Refugee Day, held on June 20 of each year. This brings the issues refugees face into the spotlight and help bring more public attention to the important matter. The largest action taken thus far is the 1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol, which were meetings for head of states to create an agreed on legal document stating the definition and rights a refugee have and the legal obligation of states to protect these refugees.



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Timeline:

(Date)	(Event)
April 1948	Ethnic disputes in Myanmar
22 April 1954	The Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951 Refugee Convention) becomes effective
4 October 1967	The Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees (1967 Protocol) becomes effective
20 June 2001	World Refugee Day is held for the first time to celebrate the 1951 Refugee Convention's 50 th anniversary.
December 2001	Start of Afghanistan War
15 March 2011	Start of the Syrian Civil War
December 2013	Start of South Sudanese Civil War
2014	Economic and political instability in Venezuela
2015	Increase in violence in Afghanistan
19 September 2016	The UNGA holds a high-level meeting to discuss the topic regarding large movements of refugees
December 2019	The 2019 Global Refugee Forum is held, bringing issues regarding refugees to the public eye

Possible solutions:

The following solutions are suggested by the deputy president for inclusion in the draft resolution, however, the deputy strongly urges all delegates to undergo additional research through credible sources such as the UN, governmental organizations, international news outlets, and the UNHCR to best prepare themselves for the upcoming conference.

1. Encourages member states to take precautions to fight xenophobia, hate speech and disinformation about refugees. Some possible solutions include the creation of a news outlet or NGO under the control of the UNHCR. These outlets can be used to provide accurate information about refugees. This same source can also be used to debunk false information and other derogatory rumors about refugees. Addressing xenophobia will show different levels of difficulty per state, however, will have a similar pattern. States with a younger average age will have an easier time, so attempting to bring positive views on these younger states first, will reveal how refugees are not bad. Over time, this belief can be spread to more MEDCs, which tend to have a larger aging population.
2. Emphasizes the need to provide refugees access to health systems, with a special emphasis on the provision

psychological counselling. Some possible solutions that member states can take include providing



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community checkups by workers trained by the UNHCR or other medical group. Member states are reminded the COVID-19 pandemic should also be put into consideration, and vaccinations should also be mentioned.

3. Suggests member states to get local citizens of the host communities to play a role in supporting refugees. Possible actions include spreading positive vibes through local citizens already open to the idea of receiving refugees. These most open should work to help refugees feel welcome and help them get used to living in a new environment.
4. Calls for member states to involve businesses to support the inclusion of refugees in their communities. Possible actions that can be taken by businesses include the fair provision of job opportunities to refugees. This alone should help many refugees gain jobs and be included in the economy.
5. Reminds the international community the social and cultural inclusion of refugees should also be supported. Possible solutions include holding events to introduce new culture from countries refugees come from, so refugee cultures do not seem out of place. Creating ethnic enclaves with many refugees, and past refugees together can also help them assimilate easier into the rest of their host state. These ethnic enclaves should not be separated, but rather integrated into the community so the population can get regular access to the rest of the community as well.
6. Further requests for another NGO to be created, which provides aid for skilled refugees. Many highly skilled refugees are unemployed because they do not have the proper resources to prove their skill in an aspect of some job. For this reason, a new NGO that supports these highly skilled refugees can boost the economy with further high skill workers, while also bringing these refugees into the economy and preventing de-skilling.
7. Expresses its hope that refugee children can be ensured access to education in host countries. Some possible ways to ensure this service is creating public learning centers for refugee children in refugee camps and areas with a high concentration of refugee children. Even a little bit of education provided each day for these children can have a big impact, and as more funds are collected, member states can work to set up schools and other learning areas to provide refugee children the full access to educational services.

Delegates are reminded they will need to further elaborate on all suggested solutions, as these solutions are only ideas. Delegates should add details and omit unneeded sections to match their delegations needs. The deputy president believes the above suggested solutions should only be used to spark new ideas, but believes that with additional information, which link possibly distant solutions to the main topic, delegates can use these suggested solutions to their ease.



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