



UNHCR

FINDING DURABLE SOLUTIONS FOR REFUGEES.

BACKGROUND GUIDE

SAIMUN 2022

Honourable Delegates, Greetings!

A warm welcome to the 2022 Sub-Saharan International Model United Nations annual conference.

This conference is curated to cater for those students interested in diplomacy, politics, international relations, human rights, economics among others. During this conference, we will be tasked to address the issue of finding durable solutions for refugees.

It is our plea as the dais that all delegates are conversant with the rules of procedure as well as the flow of debate to facilitate vibrant simulations.

The dais:

1. Samuel Mue - Chair
2. Nicole Maranga - Co-Chair

Kindly note that this document will function as an informative guide on the basics of the topic at hand. Therefore, the dais strongly encourages you to do thorough research on the topic with respect to your allocated country/state, to further enhance the quality of debate.

If you have further questions, feel free to contact us via our committee email:

unhcr@saimun.net

Kind regards,

UNHCR Dais.

COMMITTEE BACKGROUND HISTORY



The office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was created in 1950, during the aftermath of the second world war, to help millions of Europeans who had fled or lost their homes. It had 3 years to complete and disband, however, with the rising cases of refugees around the world, it has not yet been disbanded and it continues to operate to help the refugees.

At the beginning of the 21st Century, it has been noted that UNHCR helped with major refugee crises in Africa, the Middle East as well as Asia.

MANDATES OF UNHCR

UNHCR's order is the (lawful) reason for UNHCR's exercises and the reasoning for its presence. It illuminates what UNHCR should do (material extension) and for whom (individual degree).

The essential wellspring of UNHCR's order is the Statute embraced by the General Assembly (GA) of the United Nations in 1950 (Resolution 428 (V) of 14 December). Passage 1 of the Statute expresses that "The ... High Commissioner... , acting under the power of the General Assembly, will expect the capacity of giving global assurance, under the sponsorship of the United Nations, to evacuees who fall inside the extent of the current Statute and of looking for extremely durable answers for the issue of displaced people (...)" (accentuations added).

The Statute further fosters the material degree in section 8. The individual degree was in this way extended by the GA (as predicted in section 9 of the Statute) to incorporate stateless people (explained by the GA in 1974 and affirmed in 1976), refuge searchers (explained by the GA in 1981), and returnees (perceived by the GA in 1985).

UNHCR doesn't have a general or elite command for inside dislodged individuals. The GA has approved UNHCR's association in explicit activities starting around 1972 (for instance in Sudan, Angola, Colombia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina), and in 1993 explained UNHCR's job under specific proper circumstances.

HISTORY OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

It has been noted with grave concern that over the years, refugees problems' have not been solved for the long term. Although refugees are protected under International Law, they end up excluded economically in their host communities. This has therefore resulted in refugees living in densely populated camps.

This, therefore, prompted us to have this as our committee topic to further have an impact on our current world through your finding/coming up with long-term solutions that are durable and actionable.

Reason why there are refugees

There are an estimated 22.5 million refugees worldwide.

They are drowning at the hands of smugglers; they are being placed in sprawling camps with little access to services; and they are even being robbed by the mafia. Everywhere from Germany to Argentina, refugees are amassing at faster rates than ever before. In fact, there have never been more forcibly-displaced people at any point in human history. But too often, it seems, the focus is placed on where refugees are running to, and not what they're running from.

So, what makes a refugee? And how do people become refugees?

The definition of a "refugee" has changed over the years — from Protestants fleeing religious persecution in France in the 17th century to Syrians fleeing bombs in the 21st. The term "refugee" was not officially defined in international law until the 1951 Refugee Convention. This came in response to the first great refugee crisis of the 20th century, the Second World War — which forcibly displaced around 50 million worldwide. The initial definition of "refugee" was pretty narrow.

In 1951, a mere 26 countries convened in Geneva to define a refugee as a person who has a “well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion” and who, on account of that fear “is unwilling to return to [their country of origin].”

The 1967 Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees updated this definition, which had previously only included refugees within Europe who were displaced before 1951.

But between 1967 and now, the number of refugees and displaced persons has skyrocketed.

In 1967 there were just over 2 million refugees around the world. In 2017, there were 17 million — and that’s not including the 5 million Palestinians, who are registered under the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, not UNHCR. As the refugee population has changed, so too has the need for a more encapsulating definition of what defines a refugee. With a growing global population, combined with human conflict and environmental change, people are becoming refugees for more reasons than ever before. Global Citizen is bringing you five of the biggest ones:

1. Religious/National/Social/Racial/Political Persecution

The most common reason people become refugees is persecution — which can take on many forms: religious, national, social, racial, or political.

When it comes to religious refugees in the United States, the split between Christians and Muslims is quite even. According to Pew, 46% of refugees in 2016 who came to the US were Muslim and 44% Christian; 10% were other, including Hindus, Buddhists, and Jews. Around the world, religious refugees are everywhere: from Muslims persecuted in Myanmar to Christians in the Central African Republic to Hindus in Pakistan. Many famous individuals have been, at one point or another, a political refugee. This includes Gloria Estefan (who fled the Castro regime in Cuba), Alexander Ginsburg (who fled the Kremlin during the Cold War), and the Dalai Lama (Tibet’s leader-in-exile).

2. War

Most of history’s refugees have been the direct or indirect product of war.

Currently, the largest group of refugees in the world are fleeing civil conflict in Syria, which has been raging since 2011 and has killed 400,000 Syrians and displaced 6.3 million internally. Another 5 million have left the country entirely. But before Syria, refugees fled wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in droves in the early 1980s, 90s and 2000s. Afghanistan, notably, had the largest number of refugees of any country in the world for more than two decades between 1981 and 2013, before being overtaken by Syria that year.

3. Gender/Sexual Orientation

This past June, France became the first country to accept a gay Chechen refugee — a monumental decision that had global reverberations. The UNHCR updated its guidelines to include refugees for reasons of gender or sexual orientation in 2012. “It is widely documented that LGBTI individuals are the targets of killings, sexual and gender-based violence, physical attacks, torture, arbitrary detention, accusations of immoral or deviant behavior, denial of the rights to assembly, expression and information, and discrimination in employment, health and education in all regions around the world,” the organization wrote.

4. Hunger

It’s estimated that 20 million people in four North African and Middle Eastern countries — Somalia, South Sudan, Nigeria, and Yemen — are facing extreme drought, and many of these individuals are becoming refugees, forced from their homelands in search of stable food sources. There are about 17 million displaced persons across the African continent, the Guardian reports, and only a small proportion of them are reaching the shores of the European continent. Many end up in sprawling, informal refugee camps like the town of Monguno in northeastern Nigeria. Refugees fleeing hunger can, of course, also be escaping from other factors at the same time, including the rise of extremist groups like Boko Haram in Nigeria and the impacts of climate change.

5. Climate Change

It’s estimated that in the next 83 years, a stunning 13 million coastal dwellers could be displaced by climate change, joining the teeming throngs of refugees and displaced people. Officially, climate change is not yet a valid reason for an asylum claim. In 2013, the first climate change refugee asylum case was shot down by the New Zealand High Court when a Kiribati man attempted to claim that status by law. But as man-made climate change worsens, and oceans rise, the 1951 and 1967 conventions may need to expand their scope.

PROBLEMS/ CHALLENGES FACED BY REFUGEES



Being a refugee is challenging enough, however, they still face more challenges.

These challenges include but are not limited to:

1. Discrimination (in all its forms)
2. Difficulty accessing quality education
3. Few to no employment opportunities
4. Difficulties in getting legal documents
5. Lack of freedom of movement
6. Poor access to youth-sensitive healthcare, including psychosocial support.

The life of a refugee is hard, they're fleeing places of war, hunger, famine, persecution and have gone through a tough journey to find a safe haven for themselves in a completely different journey. They do so for the pursuit of a normal life for themselves and their families. Many cross dangerous terrains and weather conditions, put themselves and their loved ones at risk to cross international borders just to have a chance at a better life. However, things aren't as easy as one might imagine after they reach another country. They're still left with many problems and challenges that they have to face, often alone, scared, and traumatized. Challenges faced by refugees and migrants shape their new life in a completely foreign country. Understanding the barriers that stand in the way of refugees and migrants is an essential step in paving the way for their well-being.

Overcoming a Language Barrier

Most refugees and migrants settle in countries that don't speak their native tongue. If you take an example of a Syrian refugee migrating to the USA, it's highly unlikely that they know English. Settling in the USA, where English is the primary language can be an uphill battle for refugees and migrants.

Daily communication, getting a job, filling documentation or buying food, all of these require knowledge of the English language. Similarly, refugees moving from Myanmar to Bangladesh, don't speak their language.

This makes daily tasks more difficult for refugees. Granted, one can learn a new language, but doing so is no piece of cake either. There's the question of managing it along with surviving on a daily basis and taking care of your dependents.

Raising Children as a Refugee

Raising children is definitely not an easy task. Doing so as a refugee or a migrant has additional challenges.

Their kids are growing up in a completely different society than they did. This puts them on a back foot as refugee or immigrant parents find it challenging on how to navigate through different situations. The number of shared instances keeps decreasing and the parent-child dynamic keeps

changing as time goes by. If they're being raised in an English-speaking country, the culture and mannerisms are completely alien to them, but they're normal for the children as that is what they've seen their entire life. In such cases, children receive no educational support from their refugee or migrant parents and have to rely completely on schools and teachers. Any feedback or complaint regarding the children is more likely to be ignored if the parents don't understand English. The systematic differences that exist in today's society put refugee parents and children at a disadvantage, especially when it comes to bullying and mental health.

Looking for Work as a Refugee

Everyone needs a secure source of income to lead a happy life. As a refugee or migrant, finding that is often a struggle. This is applicable to both skilled and unskilled refugees. Most employers require those job seekers to have an experience that's relevant within the same country. It doesn't matter if they were highly successful in another country, they have to start from scratch. For unskilled refugees, the struggle is even harder. They are often exploited and underpaid because of their desperation and lack of support. They have to learn the language of the land, find a job that helps them settle, more often than not they end up working in a labor-intensive field or one that is heavily unregulated, thus putting their lives at risk. The language barrier often plays a huge role when it comes to securing work. Not only does it prohibit them from expressing their skills, but it also shuts doors to many jobs that an average native citizen could easily get, such as customer-oriented roles such as a retail employee or a fast-food worker.

Finding Transportation as a Refugee

There have been studies that have linked access to transportation with the ability to get out of poverty. IF one has access to transportation, especially public transportation, they are more likely to take a job that's further away thus not limiting job opportunities by location. In the case of refugees, access to driving license doesn't come easy. A driver needs to be literate in order to pass the initial test in most countries. For refugees and migrants, it is often difficult to commute by public transport. If they don't speak the native language of the host country, figuring out how to go from point A to point B is exponentially difficult. Many refugees and migrant families tend to share one car between multiple family members. More often than not, it comes down to the women and children to find alternate modes of transport for their commute. For someone that doesn't speak the native language, this can be a highly intimidating and risky process.

Housing as a Refugee

More often than not safe housing is expensive. With most refugees and migrants stuck with low-paying jobs, this is a difficult scenario for them. This leaves room for greedy landlords to take advantage of their desperate situation. Many charge fees and raise rent amounts illegally all the

time while threatening evacuation, in most cases, refugees and migrants comply because they're either unaware of their rights or simply don't have the means to fight it out legally. Due to the cash-crunch, many large refugees and migrant families end up staying under the same roof with little or no personal space. This creates a stressful environment for all and makes it difficult to live peacefully on a daily basis.

Access To Health Services

If you take the example of refugees or migrants coming into the USA, while there is an infrastructure readily available for everyone, accessing it is often a challenge. The language barrier and the inability to speak English and communicate with people play a huge role. Refugees are more likely to have PTSD and depression, especially refugee children. However, due to social taboo and the language barrier, they are less likely to go seek professional help.

In the case of a law and order conflict, they are unable to present their side of the story successfully due to the communication barrier, which can lead to potentially life-threatening situations. Even if refugees and migrants do find a way to get access to some of these services, the experience is usually negative in one way or another as there is no support system in place for effective communication.

Cultural Barriers as a Refugee

It's safe to assume that when refugees and migrants settle in another country, they are more often than not moving into a country that has a completely different culture than their native country. This has an intertwined effect on all other aspects of their lives. Cultural barriers affect how they interact with everyone else, intentionally and unintentionally. For the host country and its people, even deeds done with a good intention can come off as culturally insensitive or rude because of how they're being perceived by refugees and migrants and vice versa. For example, the festivals and traditions of refugees and migrants are vastly different from any host country. Celebrating them and integrating them in the host country is a long process of cultural sensitivity and acceptance. Children of migrants face bullying in school because of their different appearance and traditions, right from food, clothing to mannerisms. Cultural barriers find their way into all aspects of a refugee or migrants' life.

Refugees and migrants are fleeing a life of extreme difficulty and hardships, they settle into a new country with hopes and aspirations of leading a better life.

These challenges often play spoilsport to such dreams and aspirations. Systemic recognition and action is the only way to ensure that refugees and migrants transition smoothly and they face fewer challenges while doing so.

PAST AND ONGOING ACTIONS

The UN has a few strategies in place to help give durable solutions to refugees. These include but are not limited to:

1. Voluntary Repatriation

- Provide information and advice on the situation in the country of origin.
- Facilitate return, by negotiating tripartite agreements between the country of asylum, country of origin and UNHCR.
- Promote “Go and See” Visits to facilitate the repatriation process.
- Monitor the repatriation and reintegration process in cooperation with other key actors.
- Promote development assistance and sustainable reintegration.

2. Resettlement

- Coordinate resettlement needs, and promote cooperation among relevant actors.
- Develop resettlement criteria, and identify candidates for resettlement.
- Promote resettlement in combination with other durable solutions.
- Lobby for resettlement opportunities, including increased quotas, diversified intake, introduction of more flexible selection criteria, and a greater number of resettlement country agreements.

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QUESTIONS A RESOLUTION MUST ANSWER

1. What will be done to find a durable solution to refugees problems
2. What can be added to what is being done
3. Who will be involved in the process
4. How much money will be used
5. Who will over see (if no.3 applies)
6. Who will be the overall watchdog

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PROGRESS

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