

**Forum:** UNESCO

**Issue:** Tackling the issue of low literacy rates in refugees

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## Overview

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The world is facing the biggest crisis of refugees since the end of the World War 2: 1 of 113 people in the world is refugee. From the 1950s, world's refugees were increasing in a constant steep rate. However, after the 1980s, the world's number of refugees started to increase dramatically. Until recent years, the number of refugees is still increasing. The most part of refugees is concentrated in the Middle East and Africa.

There are about 750 million people in the world that cannot read or write. Literacy is very important because it may affect other aspects of basic human life. The low literacy rates issue is the second hardest barrier for the refugee children. Children and adults are weighing high rates among the refugee group, they have large needs of education, but their demand and future are still nebulous. In 2016, 3.5 millions of school-aged refugee children cannot go to school, and the total number of them was 6.4 million, the literacy rates were only about 45%, the low rates brought us many facts to see, including some short-term needs and long-term objectives. For example, school systems among refugees are not visible; The language barriers make communication harder; Limited resources and the lack of expertise teachers. In recent years (2012-2018), many countries now working on a specific aged of refugee group with some organizations to help those children receive the education.

## Key Terms

### Refugee

A person forced to flee their country because of war, violence or persecution is called refugee. Refugees are facing a serious issue because of their identity, race, nationality, and religion. According to the UNHCR: “two-thirds of all refugees worldwide come from just five countries: Syria, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Myanmar and Somalia.” (UNHCR, what is a refugee)

### Internally displaced person (IDP)

Refugees that needed to be forced to flee their home but not internationally. Until today, there are 40 million people who are internally displaced refugees.

### Stateless person

Refugees who have no nationality of any country, 10 million people around the world are stateless or at risk of statelessness. (UNHCR, Refugee Statistics)

### Asylum seeker

Once refugees flee their country or to another country, they are going to find an asylum. Those people are called asylum seeker. In 2017, there are 3.1 million people became new asylum seeker. (UNHCR, what is a refugee)

### Returnees

Refugees who go back to their own country after the refuge. Until today, there are more than 4 million refugees are considered as returnees.

### Refugee camps

Refugee camps are built for those refugees who have no residence, and it may be a temporary accommodation for refugees. Above all, there are 2.6 million refugees live in the camps, and more refugees are still living in informal residences.

### Literacy rates

The total amount of aged-group peoples' literary level.

## Important Events/Timelines

Date	Event
1988	Alf Dubs, the refugee child during the Holocaust, established a new organization called "The Kindertransport Association"(KTA). This association uses their story from the Holocaust to influence and aid children in need.
2003	BEFARe(Basic Education for the Afghan Refugee Project) learned that women and girls in Afghanistan had been treated as a "special place" in education because of bias. Through building educational aids for them, the organization achieved increasing the interest in learning among female refugees. At the end of the year 2003, the organization helped refugees increased 61% literacy courses and 52% of the homeschool program. (UNESCO, Literacy Conflict Situations)
2011	UNRWA education programme has started a reform to ensure the education quality and system can catch up to the 21st century. The reform achieved through training teachers, balancing gender equality, building the suitable classroom, developing the resources.
2015	Over 1 million refugees flee to EU because of crisis, this number is still increasing, most of them are looking for humanitarian assistance. (ECHO, Refugee Crisis in Europe)

**2016** UN Refugee Agency launched #WithRefugees petition in June 2016, and appeal to the world to take part in this petition. The agency set June 20th as every year's World Refugee Day, in order to contribute to refugee issues.

## Major Nations/Organizations

### UNHCR

The office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was established on 14 Dec 1950. The main purpose of UNHCR was to help refugees to solve some humanitarian problems. UNHCR can provide legal protection to refugees. UNHCR launches many programs every year to help the refugees. Also, there are a lot of research and statistics produced by the agency which can help many nations to study and practice.

### Women's Refugee Commission

The Women's Refugee Commission was founded in 1989, the goal of the organization is to help refugee women and children. Since 2010, the organization holds the Voices of Courage Awards Luncheon, the luncheon invites some remarkable refugee women in order to encourage spirits of other refugees. (Women's Refugee Commission, About the Women's Refugee Commission)

### DAFI Scholarships(Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative)

DAFI is the organization which helps refugees to access higher education. Since 1992, the organization has helped thousands of refugees attend universities. The percentage of scholars has increased 43%, this means more and more scholars are willing to help refugees and the organization provides asylum with academic and language classes based on their needs, as well as mental support, digital opportunities. (UNHCR, DAFI Programme)

### UNRWA

UNRWA is the humanitarian organization services about education, health issue, social issue, camp improvement, emergency crisis. Since the 1960s, the organization ensured all Palestine refugee children could access to education. The organization has operated over 600 of

schools in the Middle East to ensure refugee children receiving the quality education.  
(UNRWA, What We Do)

## Important Documents/Passed Solutions

In 2017, UNESCO published a resolution called “Protect the right to education for refugees”, the document basically includes the issues regarding to the education problems of refugees, the international framework of the issue and the possible solutions. The document split the situations into short term emergency and the long-term needs. For the short-term situation, include providing the daily life needs for the refugees like food, shelter, protection, refugee community schools, and other emergency protection stations. The document states that such crisis starts with social and psychological aspects, so the attention must be focused on vulnerable group. Open specific schools for refugees in crisis area; Provide teacher training and expertise the teaching group. The resolution also writes about the educational access to refugees. “Refugees should be included in the international educational systems” and “Educational organizations and institutions should be accessible to everyone”.

In September 2016, UNHCR provided a report called “Missing Out Refugee Education In Crisis”. The document basically mentions school rates for refugee children and their literacy issues from 2014-2016. It also includes the global enrollment of school from the UNESCO. Based on the introduction and description, the document gives some related information about literacy rate crisis, which is good for many nations to learn.

UNESCO and UNHCR called on many nations and organizations to start some projects like the Youth Development Project, and help youth and younger children to build early education services.

In 2017, the UNESCO held Mobile Learning Week in order to expand the technology use in refugee groups and disabled groups. The program provided interactive courses, digital

technologies, smartphone APPs for refugees. The organization achieved the goal by enhancing the learning interest among refugees and narrowing the gap of digital learning between refugees and normal social groups, making them feel less unfair treat. (UNESCO, How Mobile Technology Is Empowering Displaced Youth learners)

Based on the idea of helping refugees to learn online and to use digital resources, the innovation activity was held by UNHCR and Vodafone Foundation. They worked in Kenya, South Sudan, DR Congo, and the United Republic of Tanzania to provide digital kits(including e-book, projectors, tablets) for those countries' refugees. (Missing Out Refugee Education In Crisis)

## Statistics

1. According to the UNHCR, there are 53% of refugees are children who are school-aged and still under 18. (UNHCR, what is a refugee?)
2. 61% of refugee children are in school age and study in primary school today, and less than 50 percent of refugee children in low-income countries, attend primary school. Globally, 91 percent of children attend primary school. (UNHCR, what is a refugee camp?)
3. 23 percent of refugee adolescents and 9 percent of refugee adolescents in low-income countries attend secondary school. Globally, 84 percent of adolescents attend secondary school.
4. Only 1 percent of refugees enroll in college or university. Across the world, enrollment in college or university stands at 36 percent. (Missing Out Refugee Education In Crisis)
5. Over 2015-2016, there are still over 33 million children in conflict-affected countries remain out of school. Girls are 2.5 times more than boys to be out of school.

## Possible Solutions

1. Humanitarian relief activity: The main issue should be the bias. Humanitarian relief is the most important thing for nations and organizations. Collect professional articles and

statistics and spread those to the society, let everyone knows the emergency crisis of refugees.

2. Host countries: crisis countries should include the refugees into the worldwide education system to make sure refugees are receiving the education.
3. Donor government: UN organizations should contribute worldwide activities to call on nations and governments to donate money. The economy issue should be placed as an important place. The needs should be lifted onto the emergency level. Establish the humanitarian and refugee based fund.
4. Refugee camps: Call on nations and governments to deliver daily needs such as electricity and to the refugee camps. access to education
5. Higher education: encourage organizations to establish higher educational programs and unite universities and pre-academic schools. Provide some free opportunities or scholarship program for refugees to join in, promote the self-reliance students and sponsored students and help them to get more employment opportunities.
6. Technology: Engage the innovative technology use and digital education to expand the learning opportunities for refugees.

## Additional Links

<http://uil.unesco.org/literacy/effective-practices-database-litbase>

<http://popstats.unhcr.org/en/overview>

<http://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?>

[page=search&docid=4f4cd9812&skip=0&query=education%20strategy](http://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=4f4cd9812&skip=0&query=education%20strategy)

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