



Urban Refugee Education

February 2017

Guidelines and Practical Strategies for Strengthening Support to Improve Educational Quality for All

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Acronyms

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| BPRM | Bureau for Population, Refugees and Migration (U.S. State Department) |
| CBOs | Community-based organizations |
| CRC | Convention on the Rights of the Child |
| ECCN | Education in Crisis and Conflict Network |
| EFA | Education for All |
| EMIS | Education management information system |
| ICESCR | International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights |
| INEE | Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies |
| INGO | International non-governmental organization |
| ITS | Informal tented settlement |
| MoE | Ministry of Education |
| NFE | Non-formal education |
| NGO | Non-governmental organization |
| OAU | Organization of African Unity |
| SDG | Sustainable Development Goals |
| SRGBV | School-related gender-based violence |
| UDHR | Universal Declaration of Human Rights |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNHCR | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |

About This Report

Purpose

The *Guidelines and Practical Strategies for Strengthening Support to Government Authorities, School Leaders, Teachers and Community Members in their Efforts to Improve Educational Quality for All* aim to provide guidance and practical strategies to key actors working to both provide and support education for urban refugees around the world. Most of the operational and technical guidance that currently exists about the provision of education in conflict and displacement settings focuses primarily on the various international organizations working in this space. Much less information is available to help guide national and local actors in their efforts to ensure the right to education, particularly in urban settings.

While the provision of access to education for refugees and other displaced children and youth is paramount, it is also important to attend to issues of quality, inclusion and academic achievement and school completion once these learners have secured a place in school or other relevant educational opportunities. The protracted nature of crisis¹ and the fact that children and youth from conflict-affected countries risk missing out on education requires that efforts to advocate for local integration into national systems include more than just getting children and youth into school. We must also ask ourselves:

- *How can parents/families have more positive and successful experiences in their efforts to communicate and interact with school officials as they seek to enroll their children?*
- *What type of support do teachers need to accommodate a new and different profile of learner in their classrooms?*
- *How can local community members and community-based organizations—refugee and host members alike—support schools, school leaders and teachers in a way that is mutually beneficial for refugee and local students?*
- *How can INGOs support local stakeholders—both government and civil society—in their efforts to provide quality education to refugee and host country national students?*
- *How can these collective efforts contribute to improvement in social relationships between refugee and host communities and counter increasing xenophobia and discrimination?*

Schools and other types of educational programs are important places to ensure security of all learners, especially those from vulnerable, marginalized populations or minority groups. Being a student and going to school may provide the only sense of security and structure in children and youth's lives amidst the turmoil of being uprooted and displaced from their countries of origin (Nicolai & Triplehorn, 2003). These guidelines specifically acknowledge the critical role that national education authorities, school leaders, teachers and community members play in ensuring or inhibiting access to quality education.

While these guidelines focus on national and local actors providing (or needing to provide) education to urban refugees in the host country, they also propose recommendations for how international organizations might enhance or modify the ways in which they approach their work with refugee education in urban contexts. International and national organizations with humanitarian or development-oriented mandates are confronted with a different type of operating space when working in urban settings compared to camps or settlements. This often requires that they shift from direct service delivery to a more supportive role, working through and with governmental partners and/or other leading local organizations. Although urban settings require such a shift, there are still many opportunities for international and other organizations to support government and national/local partners in a way that greatly benefits not only refugee students but also students, schools and systems in the host country.

Target Audience

These guidelines were developed to focus on the national-local-community interactions around schooling and educational opportunities for refugee learners in the host country as well as the key actors involved at this level. As such, we hope that these guidelines and suggested strategies will resonate and help the following actors strengthen their provision and support of education to refugees in their communities: national and local education authorities, leaders and teachers for both formal and non-formal schools/programs, staff from community-based organizations, and community members. We hope that the guidelines will be equally helpful to policy makers, program developers, and project implementers of formal and non-formal educational programs working in donor agencies, the United Nations, and international and national non-governmental organizations.

Background on Urban Refugee Study

During 2015-16, a team of faculty and graduate students from Teachers College, Columbia University (New York, USA) conducted a mixed-methods research study, *Global, National and Local Intersections: Educational Policies and Schooling Practices for Urban Refugees*, which consisted of a global survey of international, national and local organizations working on education programs in 16 countries with significant urban refugee populations and field-based comparative case studies of Beirut (Lebanon), Nairobi (Kenya), and Quito (Ecuador). The research for this study also entailed a desk review of both academic and grey literature related to refugee education and educational programming in urban contexts. The study findings, based on 190 survey respondents and 77 key informant interviews (93 interviewees), both informed the development of these guidelines and provided the data for the select examples of promising practices that can be found throughout this document.



Introduction

“

We commit to providing inclusive and equitable quality education at all levels – early childhood, primary, secondary, tertiary, technical and vocational training. All people, irrespective of sex, age, race, ethnicity, and persons with disabilities, migrants, indigenous peoples, children and youth, especially those in vulnerable situations, should have access to lifelong learning opportunities that help them acquire the knowledge and skills needed to exploit opportunities and to participate fully in society. We will strive to provide children and youth with a nurturing environment for the full realization of their rights and capabilities, helping our countries to reap the demographic dividend including through safe schools and cohesive communities and families.

([Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#)) ”



Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) seeks to ***Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning***, which includes the educational rights, needs and aspirations of refugee children and youth (United Nations, 2015). Given that the average duration of displacement as a result of conflict is 17 years, coupled with the fact that more than half of all refugees can be found in urban settings in host countries, also highlights the importance of **Goal 16** of the SDGs -- i.e. to ***Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies*** (Milner & Loescher, 2011; UNDP, 2016; United Nations, 2015).

As greater numbers of refugees find their way to urban centers, stay longer due to the prolonged crisis back home, and have more opportunities to interact with people of the host country, we must address how we can support national and local governments, school leaders, teachers, and communities in our collective efforts to uphold the right to education for all (*See insets for global and regional treaties protecting the right to education as well as policy frameworks and tools*). In doing so, we must also consider the ways in which our efforts to gain access to quality and protective educational opportunities can contribute to mitigating the fear and xenophobia rising within host countries and communities.

Global Treaties Protecting the Right to Education

At an international level, the legal system governing urban refugees' right to education comes primarily from three international treaties:

1) **1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol**

Article 22: *"The Contracting States shall accord to refugees the same treatment as is accorded to nationals with respect to elementary education."*

2) **Convention on the Rights of the Child**

Article 28: *"States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular: (a) Make primary education compulsory and available free to all; (b) Encourage the development of different forms of secondary education...[and] make them available and accessible to every child"*

3) **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**

Article 13: *"The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to education...(a) Primary education shall be compulsory and available free to all; (b) Secondary education in its different forms...shall be made generally available and accessible to all by every appropriate means."*

These three core treaties serve as the backbone of the legal system governing the education of urban refugees because they all explicitly protect the right to education and act as binding legal promises that each signatory country has made to the other. Of these three treaties, only the 1951 Refugee Convention and its accompanying 1967 Protocol specifically address the right of *refugees* to an education. The Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights concern the rights of all individuals, and therefore serve to protect the rights of refugees as humans, regardless of their origin, current location, and legal status.

Regional Treaties Protecting the Right to Education

At a regional level, the legal system governing urban refugees' right to education builds upon international law primarily through expanding the *definition of refugee* to fit the regional context. Additionally, the regional policies affirm international treaties concerning refugee and human rights through recognizing these treaties as foundational documents in the treatment of refugees. The excerpts below highlight the expanded definition of refugee, the right to education and/or the recognition of global refugee laws in regional treaties.

1) **Organization of African Unity (OAU) Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems (1974)**

Article 1.2: *"The term 'refugee' shall also apply to every person who, owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of his country of origin or nationality, is compelled to leave his place of habitual residence in order to seek refuge in another place outside his country of origin or nationality."*

2) **African (Banjul) Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1986)**

Article 17: *"1. Every individual shall have the right to education."*

3) **Arab Convention on Regulating Status of Refugees (1994)**

Article 5: *"The Contracted States to this Convention shall undertake to exert every possible effort, to ensure that refugees are accorded a level of treatment no less than that accorded to foreign residents on their territories."*

4) **Declaración de Cartagena (1984)**

Article 3: *"Hence the definition or concept of a refugee to be recommended for use in the region is one which, in addition to containing the elements of the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol, includes among refugees persons who have fled their country because their lives, safety or freedom have been threatened by generalized violence, foreign aggression, internal conflicts, massive violation of human rights or other circumstances which have seriously disturbed public order."*

5) **Regional Ministerial Conference on Refugee Returns Sarajevo (2005)**

5: *"Upon return or local integration, all refugees shall enjoy the same rights and shall have the same responsibilities as all other citizens, without any discrimination."*

6) Bangkok Principles on the Status and Treatment of Refugees (1955)

Article 4.7: *“States shall take appropriate measures to ensure that a child who is seeking refugee status or who is considered a refugee in accordance with applicable international or domestic law and procedures shall, whether unaccompanied or accompanied by his parents or by any other person, receive appropriate protection and humanitarian assistance in the enjoyment of applicable rights set forth in the present Principles and in other international human rights instruments to which the said States are Parties.”*

The African (Banjul) Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights (1986) is the only regional law (listed above) that directly mentions the right to education. Similar to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, this right to education is for every individual, therefore including refugees and asylum seekers. The remaining five regional conventions, treaties or principles reference global policies—specifically the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights—in their Preambles or Articles themselves. However, these regional policies do not specifically address the educational rights of refugees or the right to education in general.

Other Useful Policy Documents and Tools

Global policy can be developed and adopted by a number of different parties ranging from NGOs to government ministries, such as the Ministry of Education in a particular country. Although policy can become law if it is formally enacted by a country’s legislative system, most of the policy concerning the education of urban refugees has not been enacted into law, and instead serves as an unenforceable internal guideline for those who have adopted it. The following policy documents are critical tools for protecting and promoting the educational rights of children worldwide, both refugee and host country nationals.

- 1) Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (1948)
- 2) UNICEF Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action (2004)
- 3) UNHCR Policy on Refugee Protection and Solutions in Urban Areas (2009)
- 4) UNHCR Policy on Alternatives to Camps (2014)
- 5) UNHCR Education Strategy (2012-2016)
- 6) UNESCO Education for All Framework (2000)
- 7) United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (2000)
- 8) United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (2015)
- 9) Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) Minimum Standards for Education: Preparedness, Response, Recovery (2010)



UNHCR and other organizations advocate for the integration of refugees into national education systems, including urban areas, because they see this approach as the best way to both “strengthen national systems for the benefit not only of refugees but also host communities” (Dryden-Peterson, 2011, p. 84). The movement of refugees into urban settings is also seen as an opportunity for refugees to become more self-reliant as they seek both educational and livelihoods opportunities for their children and families. While this is encouraging, refugees in urban settings still need support as they navigate new systems, policies, and schools.

Objectives

The objectives for developing these guidelines reflect efforts to:

- Draw attention to national, local, community and school-based actors who have critical roles and responsibilities in providing education to refugees in their countries and communities; and
- Identify programs or approaches through which international actors might either shift or further strengthen their support to national and local actors in the provision of education for urban refugees.

Key Principles

The guidelines that follow are shaped by the following key principles:

- ***Establishing and sustaining partnerships***...as key actors pursue the goal of *ensuring inclusive and quality education for all and promoting lifelong learning*, they need to form collaborative partnerships between and among government, non-profit and private sector partners at local, national and international levels.
- ***Engaging key actors through participatory approaches***...the partnerships that key actors establish should be formed through authentic participatory approaches that create opportunities for inclusive and meaningful engagement between large and small organizations, international and local actors, refugee and host representatives.
- ***Sharing information and raising awareness about education and other relevant laws and policies***...key actors should engage in open and transparent communication and information sharing processes to ensure that all stakeholders have access to and are informed about education laws and policies that shape their roles and responsibilities as providers of education for urban refugees.
- ***Fostering inclusive and welcoming environments for host and refugee communities***...key actors share the desire and recognize the importance of working together to create political, social and (when possible) economic environments that respect the human rights and dignity of members from both the host and refugee communities.
- ***Ensuring quality education for all learners***...key actors collectively aim to provide schooling and educational opportunities of the highest quality so that learners and the communities and societies to which they will contribute receive the full benefits of their endeavors.
- ***Building resilient systems, schools and communities***...by instilling these principles in the guidelines that follow and their efforts to provide quality education for refugees in urban settings, key actors will collectively achieve success in building resilient education systems, schools and communities for refugee and host communities alike.

Who are the Key Actors?

These guidelines focus on the key actors working at the national-local-community nexus in any country. These include education authorities working in the central Ministry of Education as well as local government (regional and municipal) offices. While the focus remains on education, it is also important to look at other governmental units and how their policies and practices may help or hinder the Ministry of Education's efforts to expand access and retention in school or other educational programs. (For more information on this issue, see The Urban Refugee Education Project's Advocacy Report). School leaders, namely head teachers, play an important role in interpreting and implementing national education policies and laws, as well as in liaising with refugee and host community representatives and family members about issues of access, quality, protection and inclusion. Teachers also interact with communities and families while playing a potentially transformational role--positively or negatively--in the lives of their refugee and local students. Members or representatives from both the local and refugee communities are influential in setting the tone for community relations and supporting local schools in their efforts to provide welcoming and inclusive environments for all students. Finally, staff working at community-based organizations and/or refugee-led associations can help secure additional resources, support and understanding in their efforts to expand access and improve the quality of schooling and educational programs. **Image 1** below depicts these key national and local actors supporting urban refugee education.



Image 1. Key national and local actors supporting urban refugee education

Guidelines for Key Actors

This section includes targeted recommendations and practical strategies for each of the key stakeholder groups at the national and local levels: Education Authorities (National and Local), School Leaders, Teachers, Local Communities (Host and Refugee), and Community-based Organizations. Select promising practices that emerged in the larger urban refugee education study are highlighted as well as newer and more innovative ideas that may to date be untried or untested, but merit consideration. We hope these promising practices and innovative ideas provide insight and inspiration into effective education programming for urban refugees with the understanding that all initiatives must be contextualized to the population (refugee and national) it is serving.

Education Authorities (National and Local)

The education authorities working at national, regional and municipal levels within a country hosting refugees face pressures from different directions. First and foremost, they must provide educational services to the citizens of their country. As 86% of refugees settle in neighboring countries, the majority of which are low-income with weak national infrastructure, ensuring access to and quality in education to host country nationals is often a challenge (UNHCR, 2016). Secondly, education authorities--depending on national law and international obligations--must promote and protect the educational rights of non-citizens, including refugees and asylum seekers. National and local education authorities strive to meet these responsibilities through the development, enactment and implementation of education policies. Their awareness, and perhaps more importantly empathy, for the refugee population is critical to promoting an effective and inclusive educational environment for refugees and host country nationals alike. The recommendations and practical strategies proposed here aim to acknowledge the critical role that education authorities play while also identifying ways that they might increase communication and collaboration among various stakeholders to ensure the educational needs of refugees and host country nationals are met.

Broadening Perspectives through Field Visits and Personal Exchanges

During the development of the new *Guidelines for the Admission of Non-Citizens to Institutions of Basic Education and Training in Kenya* (2015), which was facilitated through an inter-agency stakeholder group of government, UN, NGO and CBO representatives, several education authorities had a unique opportunity to visit the field through an assessment exercise that included schools in the refugee camps as well as national schools in city centers. One of our study participants recounted the comments made to her by a Ministry of Education official at the end of the day after a school visit:

"This could happen to me. I could have easily become a refugee in 2007 when war broke out in Kenya. What would have happened to me? Would my children have been denied education if I went to Uganda? Would my children be in school learning? And how will they be learning?"

This reflection speaks to the value of creating opportunities for education authorities to bear witness with their own eyes to the realities on the ground for urban refugees. Direct exposure to how refugees live--both in camps and urban areas--has the dual benefit of being educational and empathy-building for education officials who may not have otherwise had the opportunity to see the hardships refugees face in their daily lives.

Create meaningful opportunities and exchanges for bottom-up policy development

- Either national governments themselves or the international organizations supporting refugee education should create opportunities for education authorities at various levels to interact with school leaders, teachers, students and representatives from refugee and local communities in order to illuminate the situation on the ground and to better inform the policy making process. These interactions could take place through:
 - Field visits to communities and schools hosting sizable refugee populations that provide opportunities for education authorities to interact with and meet not only school leaders and teachers, but also the refugee students and families.
 - Annual forums that bring together the diverse range of actors mentioned above in order to provide updates and to exchange information about the opportunities and challenges that different schools and other educational programs are facing.
 - Open communication channels or hotlines through which school leaders can seek guidance about newly enacted education policies to ensure clear understanding and implementation at the school level.

Intentional efforts should be made to bring together diverse stakeholders with varying perspectives and degrees of support about how to best support refugee learners in urban settings in order to cover the full spectrum of issues that may be hindering refugees' access to quality education and/or successful local integration.

Local-to-Central Government Communication

In Ecuador, representatives from the central government facilitate weekly video conference calls with all 140 school directors throughout the country to facilitate communication and information exchange. They also utilize WhatsApp to communicate with school directors. This is a strategy they employ for maintaining regular and direct contact with the Ministry of Education in the capital and elevating local voices in the policy making and implementation process. As they embark on the development of their new 10-year plan, representatives from the central Ministry of Education will visit all of the districts in the country during which they will conduct meetings with key stakeholders at the district level, participate in working groups established by local community members, and even engage and have some fun through athletic events during these visits as they promote healthy habits around the country.

Collect data to inform assessments about the provision of schooling and educational opportunities to urban refugees

- National governments in partnership with inter/national organizations should make concerted efforts to better map where refugees are residing and trying to access schools, which would greatly contribute to more effective education management information systems (EMIS) and overall education sector planning (e.g. schools with second shifts should be physically closer to and/or within the communities with the highest numbers of refugee students, particularly where issues of transportation and/or insecurity are significant).
- Where high levels of distrust or concern by refugee populations in sharing this information exist, international organizations can play a role by collecting the data in a way that both protects refugees while sharing updated statistics about where and how to expand educational opportunities.¹

Establish local to national feedback mechanisms about policy implementation

- Once new educational policies have been developed and are being implemented, national governments and other inter/national organizational partners need to create feedback mechanisms to assess the situation on the ground during the rollout period. Feedback mechanisms could consist of:
 - Face-to-face meetings that provide an opportunity for school leaders and representatives from the refugee and local communities to come together to highlight what is and is not working in terms of the field-level interpretation and implementation of the new policy.
 - Mobile technology-based feedback mechanisms through which national governments and partnering organizations could circulate brief polls or questionnaires that capture the experiences and concerns on the ground.

Refugee Teacher-to-National Teacher Support

In Lebanon, World Vision is pairing Syrian teachers with Lebanese teachers to serve as teaching assistants in their classrooms. The Syrian teacher assistant is able to provide psychosocial and language support to the refugee students as well as classroom management support to the Lebanese teachers. One of our study participants describes the initiative:

“What we’re doing now, because we have Syrian refugees, they are providing services... They are not the main teachers, they are supporting. Since they are supporting, even as a volunteer... we are ensuring that we are building the capacities... [and] ensuring the secure psychological framework for the children, where we can have Lebanese who are maybe more qualified or programming more, and we’re coaching and supporting Syrian refugees teachers.”

By drawing on the strengths of the host country teachers as well as refugee teachers, refugee students receive more support in the classroom. In addition to supporting the students, this pairing ensures that Syrian teachers continue to grow and develop professionally by giving them opportunities to work in classrooms. Our participant explained how opportunities like this can protect the mental health of refugees who would otherwise be idle during their displacement.

Explore options for leveraging teaching expertise among refugee populations

- Amidst the teacher shortages in many countries, including those affected by conflict and/or hosting refugees, national governments should be encouraged to find ways to identify and leverage teaching expertise among refugee populations.
 - Refugee teachers who have been trained in their countries of origin or have become teachers during displacement may be interested in serving as classroom assistants, providing language support, helping national teachers better understand and relate to their refugee learners by sharing or facilitating meaningful exchanges about their backgrounds, experiences, hopes and dreams.

Recognize and strengthen teacher qualifications for integration, repatriation and resettlement

- Create “more flexible pathways to deployment of qualified refugee teachers and teacher certification for refugee teachers” that would serve both host and refugee communities well in cases of integration, repatriation or resettlement (UNHCR, 2015).
- Engage in “cross-border agreements on recognition of...teacher certification” (UNHCR, 2015).

Develop equitable equivalency policies that recognize educational attainment in refugees’ countries of origin or prior country of residence

- Design equivalency exams for various educational levels (primary, secondary and tertiary) and protocol that allow refugees to sit for exams (i.e. no costs associated with exam, multiple opportunities to take exam throughout the year, etc.).
- Collaborate with governments in the region to create a standardized cross-border recognition system for educational degrees and/or certification (see Box 1 on Article 22 of the 1951 Refugee Convention).



Box 1: Article 22 of the 1951 Refugee Convention

Public Education: *The Contracting States shall accord to refugees treatment as favourable as possible, and, in any event, not less favourable than that accorded to aliens generally in the same circumstances, with respect to education other than elementary education and, in particular, as regards access to studies, the recognition of foreign school certificates, diplomas and degrees, the remission of fees and charges and the award of scholarships.*

School Leaders

School leaders set the tone and shape the culture of the school through their actions and attitudes. As they aim to create quality learning environments that uphold inclusion and respect, school leaders need to ensure this is happening between and among all of the actors engaged at the school level--students, teachers, school administrators, parents/families, and representatives from the host and refugee communities. The recommendations and practical strategies proposed here aim to highlight key decisions or practices that school leaders can pursue to create positive learning experiences for all.

Understand and implement education policies clearly and fairly

- Carefully review relevant education policies that may affect school-level decisions related to enrollment, grade placement, examinations, promotion, and graduation and assume as inclusive an interpretation of the policies as possible to ensure that all potential students can gain access to school and other educational opportunities (e.g. use of terms like “non-citizen” and “migrant” in a policy would include refugees and asylum seekers even if these categories are not listed explicitly).
- Establish open communication channels through which school leaders can seek guidance from local/regional/national education authorities to alleviate any confusion or uncertainty about how best to adhere to relevant education policies and to ensure consistency in application across all schools, communities, etc.
- Propose opportunities for school leaders to coordinate their efforts across different schools/districts and/or engage with local/regional/national education authorities in an effort to expedite the dissemination and implementation of new education policies.
- Create opportunities for School Boards, School Management Committees or Parent Associations to learn more about education policies and the needs of refugee learners by facilitating workshops/discussion about relevant issues and ensuring that there is a representative (or more) from a refugee family participating in the group.

Building Understanding of Refugee Issues among School Boards and Committees

The *Xavier Project*, an NGO working in Kenya and Uganda, recently started working with parent members involved with the Boards of Management¹ at local schools in Nairobi to both highlight refugee issues and to help build capacity of board representatives who can then reach out to other parents, families and community members to raise awareness about and respect for refugee learners.

Generating Community Support for Refugee Integration through School Leadership Champions

In Lebanon many head teachers hesitate opening second shifts in their schools to accommodate Syrian refugee students due to community resistance. Despite widespread objections, one head teacher in the northern governate managed to persuade his community to do just this. He advocated on behalf of Syrian refugee students by talking to his community members as well as the mayor at the Union of Municipality. One of our participants recalls this head teacher's experience:

He told them, "Syrian children are going to be on the streets anyway, whether you want it or not. Either you have children running on the streets or you have them in my class."

After much negotiation, the head teacher convinced the community and local authorities to allow him to open a second shift, which now accommodates 130 Syrian children. This head teacher's perseverance demonstrates the invaluable role school leadership plays in advocating for integration of refugees in their schools.



Establish positive and empowering interactions between schools and refugee families from the first point of contact

- Ensure that all prospective students and their families are greeted in a warm and welcoming manner upon the first meeting for admissions and/or school registration purposes by setting high expectations among all school personnel about their treatment of potential learners.
- Offer translation support through community volunteers to assist with school-related meetings with parents/families.
- Provide educational opportunities throughout the academic year for teachers to interact with students and families outside of school to encourage a deeper understanding of how students live (e.g. student-led community walks where teachers meet with local community leaders and see first-hand the challenges their students--refugee and host--face every day) (Bajaj, 2016).

Aim to establish a positive, enriching and safe school culture for everyone involved

- Help teachers through additional training and professional development to provide “language support, academic support, and social support” to all students, including refugee students (Roxas, 2011, p. 3).
- Establish or adapt existing “codes of conduct for teachers and students to ensure equal treatment of different social groups, and support a peaceful, safe school climate. Help students, youth clubs, sports clubs and less formal groups to develop their own leadership and behaviour codes that engages them in a more democratic process” (Global Education Cluster, 2012, p. 13).
- Encourage “reality pedagogy” to create deeper understanding among teachers of their students’ daily lives through providing opportunities for teachers, students and community members to meet outside of the classroom in the students’ communities (Edmin, 2016).

Teachers

The role that teachers play in the lives of all students cannot be underestimated. Teachers' attitudes and expectations for refugee students in their classrooms, along with the other students, greatly affect their schooling experiences, either positively or negatively (Giuliano Sarr and Mosselson, 2010). Educators need ongoing training opportunities that will allow them to more effectively respond to the needs of refugee learners in their classrooms. These trainings should be well coordinated in the event that multiple actors are working in the same community and potentially targeting the same schools or teachers. From these trainings, teachers need to be able to draw on a range of resources to ensure student learning and to help refugee students overcome the challenges that they may confront when trying to access and stay in school. In urban centers, refugee youth live and study among host country nationals, often who are vulnerable or marginalized themselves. Teachers need training to recognize and better support the distinct needs of refugee students in addition to the vulnerable national students.

The demands placed on teachers from school leaders, parents, students, and community members necessitate that teachers are better supported as they strive to meet the needs of diverse learners in their classrooms. The recommendations and practical strategies proposed here aim to encourage teachers to advocate for their own needs in their tireless efforts to help their students achieve while also making specific suggestions for how teacher training institutes and/or inter/national organizations working to support refugee learners in urban contexts might improve and expand their support to teachers of refugees.

Serve as positive role models and key supporters of refugee learners

- Establish high expectations for all learners, including refugees, and support and motivate students to work through the challenges they might face with the language of instruction, curriculum, new school environment, and larger school-community relations.
- Identify trusted male and female focal teachers (in addition to guidance counselors) among teaching staff who students can confide in about challenges they might be facing at home or at school (e.g. issues pertinent to their refugee status, psychosocial/physical needs, SRGBV, etc.). It is important to note that in some contexts, female teachers are critical to ensuring girls have access to education; therefore, gender balance among teaching staff should be prioritized in these settings.
- Seek out and/or request teacher training and professional development opportunities that will help you support refugee and other learners from diverse backgrounds and experiences.
- Participate in ongoing teacher training initiatives that intentionally strike a balance between theory and practice to ensure that teachers have adequate opportunities to apply the new learning in a safe environment before they return to their classrooms.
- Ensure that teacher training opportunities include the relevant topics/issues facing teachers based on the context and demographics of their learners (*see inset for Priority Issues for Teacher Training & Professional Development for Teachers of Refugees*).

Priority Issues for Teacher Training & Professional Development for Teachers of Refugees

- **Second-language teaching methods** that allow teachers to support second language acquisition and learning among students entering a classroom with a new and unfamiliar language of instruction.
- **Culturally responsive pedagogical training** that helps teachers better understand the diversity of refugees' backgrounds, realities of displacement, and prior schooling experiences (or lack thereof).¹
 - *Culturally relevant pedagogy “empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes. These cultural referents are not merely vehicles for bridging or explaining dominant culture; they are aspects of the curriculum in their own right”* (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 18).
- **Participatory and active learning approaches** “are based on democratic principles and acknowledgement of the unique qualities and capabilities of each student. [Training methods should] emphasise comprehension and dialogue rather than learning by rote and copying teachers’ notes. Children and adolescents should be encouraged to question, debate and discuss topics” -- a practice that will benefit all learners as teachers encourage the development of critical thinking skills in their classrooms (Global Education Cluster, 2012, p. 7).
- **Curricular adaptation approaches** that allow teachers, particularly in formal education systems, to teach the national curriculum with high fidelity while also finding strategic opportunities for refugee (and other) students to connect the new learning content to their previous education and to share stories with others.
- **Psychosocial well-being approaches** that teachers can use to both provide their learners with additional social-emotional support and help them identify when students might need help that exceeds teachers’ knowledge and abilities.
- **Corporal punishment and positive discipline techniques** that challenge teachers to think about why and when they are using corporal punishment, what the negative implications might be both emotionally and physically on learners, and what positive discipline alternatives might be most appropriate in their classrooms.
- **School-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) awareness** to “provide teachers with skills in gender-sensitive curriculum development and pedagogy, and a stronger awareness of, and commitment to, agreed ethical and professional standards” (Leach, Dunn and Salvi, 2014, p. 64).

Right to Play's Teacher Training in Lebanon

Since 2013, Right to Play Lebanon has been hosting teacher workshops in partnerships with local NGOs and CBOs. The workshop focuses on empowering educators to use active learning, and child-centered and play-based teaching methods to better engage students in classes. With an aim to help teachers deliver contextualized curriculum based on the needs of the children (e.g. displaced and/or traumatized children), facilitators of the Right to Play conduct weeklong trainings, supporting them to design different sessions (life skills or subjects). After the training, a group of teachers and coaches develop their own games and activities for the purpose of their organizations. The games are based on what the children used to play or play in their daily lives, and they are aimed to get specific skills out of children (e.g. collaboration). While there is flexibility in designing, Right to Play makes sure that teachers include issues of child protection, and follow the three phases (Reflect-Connect-Apply) in discussions, trying to relate the activity to reality. Not only does the Right to Play support teachers in the planning and implementation phases, but it also provides follow-up supports through observations, coaching and assessments.

- **Peer-to-peer support** among learners and how teachers can leverage fellow students to help both with language/translation support and psychosocial well-being concerns by making students feel more connected to the lessons and the learning experience
- **Special needs training** that helps teachers better understand the ways in which different types of disabilities (intellectual, learning, physical, psychosocial) may affect learners in their classrooms and the strategies that they might employ to facilitate learning across a range of learner abilities.
- **Refugee awareness workshops** to understand the legal rights afforded to refugees in their host country as well as globally in international, regional and national laws and policies. Workshops also provide an opportunity for teachers to understand the challenges refugees face in their daily lives.
- **Combatting bullying and xenophobia** in an effort for teachers to create welcoming and inclusive classrooms for all learners.
- **Teacher well-being** to help alleviate work-related stress that may stem from their demanding jobs, diverse student needs and competing priorities, community pressures, and/or inadequate support.

Local Communities (Host and Refugees)

Members of the local community—both host and refugee—greatly influence school-community dynamics and by extension the experiences of all children living and/or going to school in a particular neighborhood or community. In some communities there are also serious concerns about children’s safety and security, making community engagement even more important despite the additional challenges that may accompany urban settings. The recommendations and practical strategies proposed here recognize the critical role that different community members play in hopes of helping them engage with one another in positive and constructive ways for the betterment of the educational experiences of all their children.

Motivate and engage community members and local leaders to improve and strengthen school-community relations

- Bring community members together to raise awareness and sensitization of refugee issues and to garner support from parents, families and community members at large to support refugee students’ right and goals of getting an education.
- Create opportunities for representatives from both host and refugee communities to meet, share concerns about educational opportunities, and generate constructive ideas through community gatherings most appropriate to a particular context; opportunities should be made available for men, women, children and youth, school leaders and teachers to participate.
- Interpretation/translation support (for both host country national language and language/s of refugees) should be provided by leveraging existing community resources to ensure clear communications during community or school-based events.
- Mobilize community members (both host and refugee) to solve challenges related to safety/security and/or transportation that students may be facing in their efforts to go to school (e.g. set up community watch programs, enlist volunteers to help provide safe passage to/from school).
- Plan community-based events that provide opportunities for host and refugee community members/families to engage in dialogue and celebrate cultural traditions in an effort to counter xenophobic attitudes founded on the unknown or misunderstood.

Community-based Participation: Sharing Resources

World Vision Lebanon has benefited from communities sharing resources; it has been helpful not only in procuring materials and maintaining standards, but also in ensuring security, staffing, and capacity building. When World Vision lacked access to basic amenities such as toilets and water faucets, the community members were generous enough to provide access to their houses, water, and other resources. One of the participants in the study explained this collaboration.

[W]hen you have challenges with procurement in poor cities, we do not have access, for example, to toilets. We're still waiting [for] installation of toilets, and the community was supporting. They're giving us access to one of their toilets, they're giving us water. It's participatory... They know that they have a voice...they have more ownership.

Training Community Leaders to Raise Awareness of Refugee Rights and Service Provision

Often in urban settings, refugees live dispersed and sometimes hidden (by choice) among the host community. They may lack awareness of their rights in the host country and/or where to access different social services. In addition, INGOs, NGOs and CBOs may not know where urban refugees are settling, which further complicates successful service provision. In Ecuador, Refugee Education Trust (RET) trains community leaders to help educate fellow refugees on their rights and where to access various social services. An employee of RET and participant in our study explains this strategy:

"[We] know that the population that comes to us doesn't consist of everyone who may need these services, so we've trained our participants' parents in legal knowledge, in educational topics...sometimes they encounter another countryman in their neighborhood, church, or in various activities who is a newcomer...[who needs] that information.

The idea of making these spaces is somewhat based on the grounds that to exercise a right you have to know it, so it is important that people who are coming due to forced migration have adequate information off the bat, at the beginning. So sometimes some of the families that we receive are referred by this group of trainers."

This collaboration between an INGO and local community leaders provides an example of how local communities play a critical role in ensuring refugees are able to access services in their host community. While INGOs may have programs supporting urban refugees, they may not have the capacity to find/reach them. Through working with local community leaders, larger organization can more effectively provide services to urban refugees.

Community-based Organizations

Staff and administrators creating and working for community-based organizations (CBOs), including refugee-led initiatives, have the opportunity to greatly mitigate concerns or tensions that may arise in a particular community. CBOs can dedicate the staff, time and resources to getting to know key actors within the host and refugee communities and subsequently propose recommendations for how they might engage to provide a quality education for all learners (refugee and host) that simultaneously reduces resentment among any one particular group. The recommendations and practical strategies presented here aim to highlight strategic opportunities for engagement for improving access and quality of the schooling experiences for students, parents and the wider community.

Provide opportunities for communities to stay apprised of and influence the policy making process, including establishing synergies between community-led efforts and formal education

- Advocate on behalf of local communities (refugee and host) for opportunities for select representatives to interact with governmental actors and/or education authorities about education policy development and implementation.
- For CBOs providing educational programs, establish recognition and agreed upon transition points for bridging programs and/or other pathways into the formal education system early in the program development process (when applicable).

Facilitate opportunities for student/school exchanges and joint community service

- Support extra-curricular activities that bring students and community members from host and refugee communities together through art (singing, dancing), drama, and sports.
- Design community service or service learning projects that would provide opportunities for students from both the host and refugee communities to give back to their community and to improve community relations.

Link refugee students/parents/families (and others) with needed community resources and services that may be hindering their educational attainment

- Help build partnerships between communities and schools by engaging local medical and mental health professionals, arts-based programs, and teacher trainers to provide volunteer or pro bono support to students (and teachers) in need of additional help.
- Connect struggling students and families with helpful resources outside of schools based on their needs (i.e. legal counsel, financial assistance, documentation, medical/dental support, childcare, etc.).

Identify and leverage teaching expertise among refugee populations

- Recognize refugee teachers who have been trained in their countries of origin or have become teachers during displacement may be interested in serving as classroom assistants, providing language support, helping national teachers better understand and relate to their refugee learners by sharing or facilitating meaningful exchanges about their backgrounds, experiences, hopes and dreams.

Supporting Vulnerable Refugee and National Youth through Theatre

Asociación Solidaridad y Acción (ASA) is a local NGO working with vulnerable communities in Ecuador. An implementing partner of UNHCR, its programs target refugee youth from Colombia as well as at-risk Ecuadorian adolescents. ASA brings together youth from these two communities in an after-school theatre program addressing gender issues—primarily prevention of violence against women, and the creation of “new masculinities”. The multi-week training begins with theatre exercises and body awareness games to create a friendly, open environment before introducing educational gender topics on SRSGBV. One of the participants of our study explains the wider impact this theatre program:

[I]t's a space to work on issues to prevent violence against women, implement new masculinities or alternative masculinities from the perspective of popular action and theater of the oppressed...In the first process we had 18 Colombians and about 10 Ecuadorians. This first trial had a big impact, we carried out some advocacy events to draw attention to the issue...we [invited] their families to be aware of what their children were doing and then we tried to introduce the issue to the families. For example, now we work with families...and...their younger siblings. This year's process was open to children, adolescents, youth, and families; now we are working on the topic of the construction of new masculinities.

By addressing a common challenge in both communities, youth are able to work together to advocate for solutions to overcome traditional (and harmful) notions of masculinity and violence against women. Beyond reaching youth from the refugee and host community, ASA's theatre program raises awareness among their families--spreading the impact of this extra-curricular program. Additionally, to ensure sustainability, many of ASA's programs transition to the community after initial implementation

Final Reflections

These guidelines have been prepared from the standpoint that the key actors cited in this report and the other inter/national actors who are also supporting them are (or can become) committed to a common goal of the progressive realization of quality education to all learners regardless of their circumstances. It also takes the stance that we have the resources (financial and otherwise), the collective agency, the innovative spirit and the creativity to accomplish this shared goal.

These guidelines also express a hope that if we can find a way to work together collaboratively and respectfully that we can stem the tide of surging xenophobia and hatred around the world that ultimately diminishes everyone's educational experiences. Collaboration is critical in urban settings where division of service provision is not as clear as in the traditional camp setting. This ambiguity is augmented by the spread of the urban refugee population. Unlike in a refugee camp, refugees settling in urban centers are not restricted to living in specific areas. Therefore, collaboration among educational stakeholders is paramount to ensuring refugee (and host country) children have access to and quality in their education.

As we move forward on this shared path, we need to acknowledge and celebrate the progress gained and the accomplishments achieved by large and small actors working in humanitarian or development spaces to improve education programs and strengthen educational systems in countries generously hosting refugees. We need to use these success stories to continue improving the policies and practices at all levels—local, national and international.

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Acknowledgements

First and foremost, we would like to thank all of the individuals from 16 different countries who shared their expertise and time as participants in the urban refugee education study that our team from Teachers College, Columbia University conducted during 2015-16. Their responses, reflections, frustrations and ideas were instrumental in shaping the various deliverables developed as a result of this study.

There is a long list of generous individuals who contributed to this study by sharing their ideas, their feedback, and/or their translation support. We extend our appreciation to: Elizabeth Adelman, Kayum Ahmed, Sonia Aguilar, Sonia Ben Ali, Judit Barna, Emily Bishop, Dean Brooks, Sandra Carolina Herrera Cardenas, Maritza Córdova, Lucia Diaz-Martin, Rebecca Donaldson, Sarah Dryden-Peterson, Ali Ezzatyar, Sonia Gomez, Nini Guerrero, Aiman Haddad, Sonia Khoury, Edmund Lang'at, Amna Mahmoud, Katie Mahoney, Emeline Marchois, Mustafa Menai, Margaret Njayakio, Fungling Ong, Claudio Osorio, Angela María Escobar, Sophia Palmes, Oren Pizmony-Levy, Shanza Quereshi, Marlana Salmon-Letelier, Terry Saw, Ann Scowcroft, Ita Sheehy, Jennie Taylor, Peter Transburg, Zeynep Turkmen, Suha Tutunji, and Barbara Zeus.

We also extend a special thanks to Bettina Dembek and Cornelia Janke from the Education in Crisis and Conflict Network (ECCN) for generously funding the urban refugee education roundtable event held in Washington DC on October 3, 2016, which provided the opportunity for us to not only share and receive feedback on the findings and recommendations that emerged from this study, but also to expand the event to include a range of diverse stakeholders who were also working to support urban refugee education through policies, practices and research.

The graduate students who worked on this study deserve a special thanks for their tireless contributions through every step of the process that we undertook over the past year, from writing the initial concept note to preparing the final outputs. A heartfelt thank you to Peter Bjorklund, Jihae Cha, Danielle Falk, Diana Rodríguez-Gómez, Dominique Spencer, and Sarah Horsch. We hope that you learned as much from us as we did from you during this intense and exciting collaboration. The graduate students enrolled in Professor Mendenhall's Education in Emergencies course during the Fall 2015 semester helped lay the foundation upon which the research study continued to evolve. We thank these students for their wonderful contributions.

Finally, this study would not have been possible without the generous support of the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration. Special thanks to Bryan Schaaf for supporting us through the process.

**Study funded by State Department
Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration**



Appendix: Helpful Resources

ICT Resources for Refugees

Techfugees

Techfugees harnesses the international tech community's expertise and experience to generate effective ICT response to the refugee crisis. Founded in 2015, this social enterprise is completely voluntary and has 11,000 members. Techfugees organizes conferences, hackathons, workshops and meetings between tech engineers and private and public sector partners to generate tech solutions to help refugees. Apps include Refugee Aid App (a database for refugees that provides the information on services by sector and location) and Hababy (an app that provides culturally sensitive/relevant information to pregnant refugee women inspired by the Arabic a term of endearment Habibi). <http://londonist.com/2016/04/refugee-crisis-there-s-an-app-for-that?CMP=https://techfugees.com/about/?ref=sidebar>

Sesame Workshop and International Rescue Committee (IRC) Partnership

In May 2016, Sesame Workshop (the educational non-profit of Sesame Street) and the International Rescue Committee (IRC) announced their plan to bring quality education to refugee children. The two organizations will first focus on adapting existing Sesame content to the regions where the IRC and Sesame Workshop already have a presence. In addition to the development and distribution of educational programs and materials for refugee youth, the two organizations will consider the best forums to implement them, including both formal and non-formal education, parent education or more broadly through PSA announcements. http://mashable.com/2016/05/23/sesame-irc-refugee-education/?utm_cid=hp-hh-sec#PLDWOYQz8aq3

Project Planning and Programming Resources

INEE Minimum Standards for Education: Preparedness, Response, Recovery (2012)

The INEE Minimum Standards Handbook provides guidance on the design and implementation of quality, coordinated humanitarian action in education. Containing 19 standards with accompanying actions and keynotes, the INEE Toolkit, encompasses all guidelines on emergency education response in the following sections:

- Minimum Standards for Education: Preparedness, Response, Recovery
- Pocket Guide to Gender
- Pocket Guide to Supporting Learners with Disabilities
- Pocket Guide to Inclusive Education
- Guidance Notes on Teacher Compensation
- Guidance Notes on Teaching and Learning
- Guidance Notes on Safer School Construction
- Inclusive Education

http://toolkit.ineesite.org/toolkit/INEEcms/uploads/1012/INEE_GuideBook_EN_2012%20LoRes.pdf

Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV)

Urban refugees often live in vulnerable situations and are subject to violence, discrimination, xenophobia, exploitation, sexual and gender-based violence, human trafficking, and forced repatriation (Grabska 2006; Karanja, 2010; Morand et al., 2012). Heightened vulnerability to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) for refugee youth may be linked to distances they often have to travel to school. In fact, in the global survey distance to school and lack of transportation were cited as barriers by 77% and 79% of survey respondents, respectively. The threat of SGBV for refugee students is further compounded by the pervasive discrimination urban refugees face; in the global survey, 70% of respondents mentioned discrimination and xenophobia as a barrier to schooling. Training on SGBV is critical and relevant for supporting refugee youth living in urban areas. The resources below present different examples of training available for diverse stakeholders on SGBV.

SRGBV Guidelines http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/HIV-AIDS/pdf/SRGBV_UNESCO_Global_ReviewJan2014.pdf

International Rescue Committee's (IRC) Training for Clinical Care Providers
<http://iaawg.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/facguide.pdf>

World Health Organization (WHO) and UNHCR's Protocol for Clinical Management of Rape Survivors <http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/43117/1/924159263X.pdf>

Learning to Live Together

In our global survey, 70% of respondents mentioned xenophobia and discrimination as a major barrier in access to and quality in urban refugee education. It is critical that teachers and other educational stakeholders mentioned in this report have access to training on combating xenophobia and/or building tolerance among refugee and host country national students alike. The following resources seek to promote inclusion and disrupt xenophobic discourse in the classroom and school environment.

We breathe inclusion in educational spaces: Methodological proposal for educators (this training is in Spanish) <http://www.acnur.org/fileadmin/Documentos/Publicaciones/2016/10267.pdf?view=1>

Teaching Tolerance: www.tolerance.org

Teaching for Change: www.teachingforchange.org

PBS Teacher's Network: www.pbs.org/newshour/tag/teachers-lounge/

British Council's Language for Resilience Report:
<https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/language-for-resilience-report-en.pdf>

www.tc.columbia.edu/refugeeeducation.