

Ensuring More Effective, Efficient and Aligned Education Assistance in Refugee-Hosting Countries

ECW-GPE-WBG Joint Action Plan (September 2020)

Introduction

Refugee situations continue to increase in scope, scale, and complexity. Today, there are 26 million refugees worldwide, and the overwhelming majority are hosted in low-income countries facing their own economic and development challenges. Some 7.1 million of the 13 million refugee children globally are of school age, and 3.7 million - more than half - are not in school.¹ This is not acceptable.

Recognising the need for a coordinated global response, the international community committed in the 2018 Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) to “contribute resources and expertise to expand and enhance the quality and inclusiveness of national education systems to facilitate access by refugee and host community children (both boys and girls), adolescents and youth to primary, secondary and tertiary education.”

Tailored and flexible responses are needed to address the various refugee situations that exist. As crises are becoming more protracted, host countries are receiving large refugee populations for extended periods and with limited resources. Meanwhile, new conflicts emerge, with large numbers of refugees fleeing to neighbouring countries in sudden and equally large numbers.

Host governments, in particular those that already struggle to meet the educational needs of their population, need financial and technical assistance to include refugees in national educational systems. When circumstances prevent the inclusion of refugees in national education systems, other partners need to step in with emergency educational measures that embed multi-year planning, programming and financing as well as designated commitments to sustained financing and ownership.

Education Cannot Wait

Education Cannot Wait (ECW) is a global multilateral fund dedicated to education in emergencies and protracted crises. Launched during the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, its efforts are geared towards ensuring access to inclusive and equitable quality education for 75 million crisis-affected children and youth, including 39 million girls and adolescent girls. This entails, *inter alia*, facilitating joint analysis, planning and programming, promoting closer collaboration between governments, donors and implementers, strengthening the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, and leveraging additional financing, both globally and in-country.

¹ See: Stepping Up: Refugee Education in Crisis (UNHCR, August 2019)

Global Partnership for Education (GPE)

GPE is a global partnership and fund dedicated entirely to helping children in lower-income countries get a quality education. GPE mobilises partnerships and investments to help nearly 70 partner countries transform education systems and deliver quality learning to more girls and boys, especially those marginalized by poverty, gender, disability or displacement. With nearly 20 years' experience supporting partner countries' sector plans and reforms, GPE convenes teachers, civil society, donors, United Nations agencies, development banks, businesses and philanthropists behind partner country leadership to finance and support solutions so that no child is left behind.

World Bank

The World Bank Group (WBG) is the largest financier of education in the developing world. In fiscal year 2019, the WBG provided about US\$ 3 billion for education programmes, technical assistance, and other projects designed to improve learning and provide everyone with the opportunity to get the education they need to succeed. The WBG's current portfolio of education projects totals US\$ 16 billion, highlighting the importance of education for the achievement of the twin goals, ending extreme poverty and boosting shared prosperity. The WBG works on education programs in more than 80 countries and is committed to helping countries reach Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 by 2030.

Joint Pledge

With this in mind, at the first ever Global Refugee Forum (GRF), which took place in Geneva from 16 to 18 December 2019, **Education Cannot Wait**, the **Global Partnership for Education**, and the **World Bank** announced that the three organisations would pledge to work together to close the education financing gap and provide technical assistance in refugee-hosting countries, including by supporting governments and their in-country partners to better coordinate and align the planning, financing and delivery of education assistance to refugees and their host communities. The full text of the pledge is as follows:

A serious and persistent lack of funding remains a critical barrier to providing both refugees and their host community peers with quality learning opportunities.

Specific responses to address this gap include the creation of Education Cannot Wait, the Global Partnership for Education's support in fragile contexts and the World Bank's IDA regional sub-window for refugees and host communities, which has a wider remit but has supported educational provision.

We recognise the urgent need for more and better external assistance to provide education to refugee and host community children, and that we have a specific role to play.

We therefore commit to work together to increase and improve the financial support and technical assistance we provide to countries hosting large refugee populations to meet their educational needs through their national education systems.

We will support governments and country-level partners to coordinate and align the planning, financing, and delivery of education assistance to refugees and their host communities.

As a first step we will publish by no later than mid 2020 a plan about how this commitment will be operationalised.

We will review our efforts annually and publish an overview of progress detailing where, when and how we have worked together and report on these efforts to the second Global Refugee Forum in 2023.

Goal

Our goal is to ensure that all refugee children as well as all children from affected host communities have access to quality education by 2030 (SDG4).

Objectives

By 2025, ensure that enough technical and financial support is available for refugee and host community education. Specifically:

- For governments that do, or can include refugees in their education systems, ensure they have financial support to strengthen host community schools and enable refugees and children in host communities to access quality education;
- For governments that do not include refugees in their education systems, ensure strategies, plans and financing are in place to support alternative education provisions for refugees in the short- to medium-term. These should pave the way to include refugees in national systems in the long term, including through certification and curriculum alignment.

Guiding Principles

This action plan serves not only to define the added value we each bring, but also the opportunities we have for working together to implement our joint pledge made at the GRF.

The following principles will guide our work in implementing the GRF pledge:

- **Rights:** To uphold the rights of people of concern, including the right to education, as these are expressed in international treaties and conventions;
- **Access:** Ensure equitable access to quality education for refugee children and youth as well as for children and youth from affected host communities;
- **Quality:** Promote quality teaching and learning, including by investing in a capable and committed teacher workforce who are prepared and supported to meet the needs of crisis affected learners: and by helping to create safe, secure and conducive learning environments;

- **Gender:** Ensure that sufficient support is provided for interventions that advance gender equality in and through education;
- **Inclusion:** Support refugee-hosting countries to expand and enhance the quality and inclusiveness of their education systems;
- **Tailored funding responses:** The three organisations shall provide timely funding in the most appropriate manner to address the gambit of needs from the outset of a crisis to longer-term situations;
- **Coordination:** Jointly support and promote coordination among partners at country level to help reduce transaction costs for governments and other stakeholders and improve the quality of responses, including speed and scope; and
- **Communication and information-sharing:** Maintain open and direct communication and share information on a regular basis to ensure that we are able to provide the best possible support.

Action Plan

Based on a sequenced approach, we will implement this plan according to the following timeline:

PHASE 1: July - December 2020

1. Financing analysis

We will build on a joint UNHCR/World Bank global analysis that uses a standard methodology to estimate the cost of educating refugee children, as well as on national planning processes. This analysis will feed into our recommended actions, joint advocacy and jointly developed financing plans for priority countries, which we will expand as relevant to additional countries where all three partners are present.

2. Priority countries

There are currently 10 countries where we all work and where there are significant populations of out of school refugee children, i.e. Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cameroon, Chad, DRC, Ethiopia, Niger, South Sudan, Sudan, and Uganda. Together, these countries host more than 5.9 million refugees, an estimated 3.5 million who are below the age of 18.² Of these children and youth, 1.5 million are out of school. We will identify opportunities for improved collaboration and coordination and sequenced financing at the country level, focusing initially on Bangladesh, Chad and DRC.³

For each of these refugee contexts, we are in the process of mapping on-going efforts as well as remaining gaps. Based on our joint analysis, we will look for ways to better coordinate and align our support. By basing our support on country-led, multi-stakeholder programming frameworks, such as multi-year resilience programmes (MYRPs), education sector plans (ESPs) or transitional educational plans (TEPs), we

² Calculated using UNHCR data on refugee populations at the end of 2018. The number of refugee children and those out of school use 2017 data.

³ According to UNHCR, Bangladesh currently hosts almost 709,000 refugees, Chad hosts more than 465,000 refugees, and DRC hosts more than 532,000 refugees

also aim to leverage more financing from other sources to meet the growing and urgent education needs on the ground.

Depending on the context, we will liaise with intergovernmental organisations, governments as well as other partners, so that they are fully aware of the on-going efforts to provide more effective, efficient and aligned support. In addition, we will explore the possibility of underpinning and supporting on-going resource mobilisation efforts.

The three organisations will aim to undertake joint missions and meetings to discuss potential actions with governments and UNHCR as well as other partners, such as the Education and Protection Clusters, Education in Emergencies Working Groups, Refugee Education Working Groups and Local Education Groups, as relevant. The mission goals will be to:

- Develop a timeline and plan per country that links financial and technical support within a single, coherent framework that is embedded in the country's overall education reform and/or sector plan; or, where refugee education provision is not included in the country's reform or sector plan, support dialogue and actions to enhance complementarity between alternative provision and national education systems to provide pathways to further education opportunities; and
- Participate in periodic reviews of progress, integrated within existing country-level review mechanisms around refugee response plans, education sector reviews or humanitarian reviews as relevant. Map and document the collaboration, learning and decisions in each context with a view to creating global goods and for future analysis and stocktaking.

3. Developing a collaborative approach

While rolling out this process, a joint steering committee will provide oversight and compile information on the pilot approach to derive processes and ways of working together that can inform a more **standardised approach**, while recognising that every context is different, and the approach taken will vary from country to country. A **tracking mechanism** will be developed in collaboration with UNHCR, to enable identification of more opportunities for pro-active joint engagement. It is expected that the collaboration mechanisms derived from this initiative will also inform broader systematic collaboration between ECW and GPE.

PHASE 2: January 2021 - GRF 2023

Based on the set of countries where all three partners are active, develop and roll out annual joint advocacy and financing plans for 10 countries.

The agreed tracking mechanism will be applied, and the standardised approach will be rolled out on a continuous basis. This will involve tracking of needs/opportunities, information-sharing and where opportunities arise, agreement to work together, and implementation according to agreed mechanisms.

In line with the pledge, an **annual review meeting** will be organised to take stock of experiences and to compile a report on when, where and how we have worked together. This will contribute to a full report to be presented at the second Global Refugee Forum in 2023.