

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

Novice Committee

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Topic 1: Ensuring the Protection and Integration of Refugees in Host Countries

Introduction

The world is currently witnessing an unprecedented displacement crisis, with millions of refugees seeking asylum due to war, persecution, and economic instability. Refugees often face significant barriers to integration in host countries, including limited access to housing, education, and employment opportunities. These challenges can create economic and social tensions between refugees and host communities. The integration of refugees is not only a humanitarian imperative but also an economic opportunity that can contribute positively to host nations if managed effectively.

Delegates will explore solutions to help host countries provide essential services to refugees while addressing the economic and social concerns of local populations. Discussions will include strategies such as funding refugee resettlement programs, expanding language and vocational training, and fostering partnerships between governments, NGOs, and the private sector to create job opportunities for refugees. Additionally, policies that promote long-term integration while respecting the cultural and social dynamics of host communities will be examined. The role of international organizations and agreements in streamlining these efforts will also be analyzed.

Definitions

Refugee: As defined by the 1951 Refugee Convention, a person who has fled their country due to persecution, war, or violence and is unable or unwilling to return due to well-founded fears.

Host Country: A nation that receives and accommodates refugees and asylum seekers.

Internally Displaced Person (IDP): A person who has been forced to leave their home but remains within their country's borders.

Integration: The process by which refugees become part of the host society, gaining access to essential services, employment, and legal rights.

Resettlement: The process of relocating refugees from one host country to another where they can receive long-term support.

Case Study: Refugee Integration in Uganda

Uganda is often cited as one of the most progressive refugee-hosting nations, providing an example of effective refugee integration policies. Unlike many host countries, Uganda grants refugees the right to work, move freely, and access public services such as healthcare and education. The country hosts nearly 1.5 million refugees, primarily from South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Key Aspects of Uganda's Refugee Policy

1. **Land Allocation:** Refugees are given plots of land to cultivate, enabling them to achieve self-sufficiency and contribute to the local economy.
2. **Education and Employment:** Uganda has integrated refugees into the national education system and labor market, allowing them to seek employment without restrictions.
3. **International Support:** Uganda receives substantial support from international donors, NGOs, and UN agencies to sustain its inclusive refugee policies.
4. **Challenges and Lessons Learned:** Despite its progressive policies, Uganda faces funding shortages and infrastructure challenges, highlighting the need for sustained international support and innovative financing models for refugee-hosting nations.
5. **Community Relations:** Uganda's model emphasizes peaceful coexistence by promoting interaction between refugees and host communities. This approach has helped reduce tensions and foster economic collaboration.
6. **Sustainability Efforts:** Some refugee settlements in Uganda are implementing renewable energy projects and environmental conservation efforts to ensure long-term sustainability.

Case Study: Syrian Refugee Crisis

The Syrian conflict, which began in 2011, has displaced over 13 million people, including 6.8 million refugees. Countries like Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan have shouldered significant burdens in hosting Syrian refugees. Despite international aid efforts, many refugees struggle with legal status, employment, and access to education. Turkey, which hosts over 3.6 million Syrian refugees, has implemented work permit regulations and language training programs to promote integration. However, economic strain and social tensions remain key challenges.

Germany has also played a critical role, resettling over 1 million Syrian refugees since 2015, offering extensive integration programs, including language courses, vocational training, and employment support. While these efforts have helped many refugees build new lives, the rise of anti-immigration sentiment presents ongoing political challenges.

Past UN Actions

1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol: Established the legal definition of refugees and outlined their rights and state responsibilities.

Global Compact on Refugees (2018): A framework to improve international cooperation on refugee protection and integration.

UNHCR Resettlement Programs: Facilitates the relocation of refugees to third countries to reduce pressure on host nations.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Goals such as SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) support refugee integration.

Education Cannot Wait (ECW) Initiative: Provides education funding for refugee and displaced children worldwide.

Current Situation

The global refugee population has surpassed 35 million, according to the latest UNHCR reports, with host countries facing immense pressure to accommodate and integrate displaced individuals. Many host countries struggle to balance economic constraints with the need to provide essential services to refugees. Limited access to employment, education, healthcare, and legal protection often leads to marginalization and further economic hardship.

Moreover, political opposition and misinformation regarding refugees have fueled xenophobia and anti-immigrant policies in some regions. Many governments face public pressure to limit refugee intake due to concerns over national security, job competition, and resource allocation. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these issues, making economic recovery efforts even more challenging for host countries.

Recent Developments

Several nations and organizations have taken steps to improve refugee integration:

1. **European Union (EU) Initiatives:** The EU has expanded its funding for refugee education and vocational training, particularly for Ukrainian and Syrian refugees.

Countries like Germany and Sweden have invested heavily in job placement programs for refugees.

2. **Technology-Driven Solutions:** Several NGOs and private organizations are using digital platforms to match refugees with job opportunities, such as the “Talent Beyond Boundaries” initiative.
3. **Improved Legal Frameworks:** Canada has introduced expanded refugee sponsorship programs, allowing private citizens and organizations to sponsor refugee families.
4. **Increased UNHCR Funding:** The UNHCR has secured additional funding for refugee assistance programs in host countries facing economic strain, such as Lebanon and Jordan.
5. **Public-Private Partnerships:** Companies such as Starbucks and IKEA have pledged to hire thousands of refugees worldwide, setting an example for corporate responsibility in refugee integration.

Potential Solutions

1. **Economic Integration:** Expanding work permit accessibility, vocational training programs, and financial support for refugee entrepreneurs.
2. **Education and Language Training:** Increasing access to primary, secondary, and higher education for refugees, along with mandatory language training for adults.
3. **Housing and Social Inclusion:** Developing affordable housing programs and fostering cultural exchange initiatives to reduce social tensions.
4. **Public-Private Partnerships:** Encouraging businesses to hire and train refugees, promoting job creation and financial independence.
5. **International Cooperation:** Strengthening regional and international efforts to fairly distribute refugee populations and financial burdens.

Questions to Consider

1. How can host countries balance economic constraints with the need to provide essential services to refugees?
2. What role should international organizations and the private sector play in refugee integration?
3. How can public perception and misinformation about refugees be addressed?

4. What policies can be implemented to promote social cohesion between refugees and host communities?
5. How can nations cooperate to share the responsibility of hosting large refugee populations?

Topic 2: Addressing the Needs of Climate Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

Introduction

With climate change causing rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and resource scarcity, millions of people are being forced to leave their homes. Climate-induced displacement is expected to rise dramatically, with the World Bank predicting that by 2050, over 216 million people could become climate migrants if no urgent action is taken. Unlike traditional refugees, climate refugees and IDPs often fall outside the protection of existing international frameworks, making their legal status uncertain and limiting their access to resettlement options. Delegates will focus on defining legal protections for climate-displaced individuals, creating funding mechanisms to support affected communities, and implementing strategies to mitigate the root causes of displacement. The discussion may also involve regional and global cooperation to manage cross-border displacement and develop long-term resettlement plans for populations at risk of losing their homes due to environmental factors. Additionally, the role of climate adaptation programs and proactive government policies in reducing forced migration will be examined.

Definitions

Climate Refugee: A person forced to leave their home due to environmental changes linked to climate change, such as sea-level rise, desertification, or natural disasters.

Internally Displaced Person (IDP): A person displaced within their own country due to climate change, conflict, or other factors.

Environmental Migration: The movement of people due to environmental changes that impact their livelihood and safety.

Resettlement Programs: Initiatives aimed at permanently relocating climate refugees to safer areas.

Case Study: Climate Displacement in the Pacific Islands

The Pacific Islands serve as a critical example of climate-induced displacement. Countries such as Tuvalu, Kiribati, and the Marshall Islands are experiencing rising sea levels that threaten their very existence. Many island nations are already seeing entire communities forced to relocate due to flooding, coastal erosion, and freshwater contamination.

Responses to the Crisis

1. **New Zealand's Climate Refugee Visa:** In 2017, New Zealand introduced a limited humanitarian visa program for Pacific Islanders affected by climate change. However, the program remains small in scale and does not provide permanent relocation options.
2. **Planned Relocation in Fiji:** The Fijian government has developed a national relocation policy to assist communities at risk of climate displacement. Several villages have already been moved inland to avoid rising sea levels.
3. **International Aid and Agreements:** The United Nations and various NGOs have supported adaptive measures such as seawall construction, sustainable agriculture projects, and clean water access programs.
4. **Australia's Limited Response:** While Australia has contributed funding for climate adaptation in the Pacific, it has not formally recognized climate refugees or provided resettlement options, leading to ongoing debates over responsibility.

Despite these efforts, no legally binding international framework currently exists to grant climate refugees the same protections as political refugees, leaving millions vulnerable to displacement without a clear path to resettlement.

Past UN Actions

Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030): Addresses disaster-related displacement and climate adaptation.

Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (2018): Recognizes climate-related displacement but does not establish a legal category for climate refugees.

UNHCR's Strategic Framework for Climate Action (2021): Focuses on protecting and supporting displaced populations affected by climate change.

Current Situation

Climate-induced displacement has increased significantly in recent years, with more than 30 million people forced to leave their homes due to extreme weather events in 2022 alone. Developing nations, particularly in the Pacific Islands, South Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa, are

disproportionately affected. Many displaced individuals face legal uncertainty, as existing refugee protections under international law do not formally recognize climate refugees.

Efforts to address this crisis remain fragmented. Some nations have begun providing special visas for climate-displaced persons, such as New Zealand's limited humanitarian visa for Pacific Islanders. However, there is no comprehensive international framework for resettlement. Additionally, financial and logistical constraints limit the ability of developing nations to adapt to climate change, further exacerbating displacement issues.

Potential Solutions

1. **Legal Protections:** Establishing international recognition and legal rights for climate refugees.
2. **Funding Mechanisms:** Creating international funds to support displaced populations and climate adaptation efforts.
3. **Resettlement Plans:** Developing long-term strategies for relocating communities at risk.
4. **Regional & Global Cooperation:** Strengthening international partnerships to manage cross-border displacement.

Questions to Consider

1. How can the international community define legal protections for climate refugees?
2. What financial mechanisms can be implemented to support climate-displaced populations?
3. What role do developed countries have in assisting climate refugees?
4. How can nations prepare for future climate-induced displacement?

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