



ECOSOC

PROMOTING THE ECONOMIC INCLUSION OF REFUGEES IN HOST COUNTRIES

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I. Introduction

At least 79.5 million people have been forcibly displaced due to persecution, armed conflict, natural disaster or generalized violence¹. Among them are nearly 26 million refugees, 86% of whom are hosted in developing countries where they face socioeconomic challenges and high poverty. In 13 countries surveyed by UNHCR, 50% of refugees and 44% of persons in host communities live in extreme poverty.

Refugees are often cast as an economic burden for host countries or fall victims to exploitation in the labour market. Including forcibly displaced people in the economies of their host countries is recognized as an effective way of boosting the local community's economic status, increasing their independence and restoring their dignity after experiencing tragedies that have led to the loss of their homes. It contributes to the self-reliance of refugees as well as their host economies. Economic inclusion entails giving refugees access to labor markets, finance and economic opportunities for all, including non-citizens and vulnerable groups. Into consideration should also be taken the right-to-work laws which give workers the choice of whether or not to join a union and the right to work which is the concept that people have a human right to work, or engage in productive employment, and may not be prevented from doing so.

Delegates must consider the guidelines under which this inclusion would be plausible and the possible effects that could have on the individual, the community and the health of the economy.

II. Definition of Key Terms

A. Refugees:² Refugees are people fleeing armed conflict, persecution or national disasters and crossing borders to find safety. They are defined in, and protected by, international law.

¹ “Global Facts and Figures about Refugees.” *Amnesty International*, www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/refugees-asylum-seekers-and-migrants/global-refugee-crisis-statistics-and-facts/#:%7E:text=In%202019%2C%20more%20than%20two,hosted%20by%20126%20countries%20worldwide

² “What Is a Refugee?” *UNHCR*, www.unhcr.org/what-is-a-refugee.html

- B. Host countries:**³ The States that have granted asylum to a significant numbers of refugees
- C. Economic Inclusion:**⁴ Giving refugees access to labor markets, finance and economic opportunities, as well as education for all, including non-citizens and vulnerable groups.
- D. Refugees vs. Migrants:**⁵ Migrants choose to move not because of a direct threat of persecution or death, but mainly to improve their living conditions. Simply speaking, a migrant is someone who chooses to move, and a refugee is someone who has been forced from their home.
- E. UNHCR:**⁶ The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is a global organization mandated to aid and protect refugees, forcibly displaced communities, and stateless people.

III. General Overview

After fleeing their countries the best way for refugees to rebuild their lives with dignity is to earn a living by working in their host countries. UNHCR places economic inclusion at the core of its principles, such as protection, access, equality and sustainability. Including refugees in the economies of their host countries provides safe work for the people, which assists them in their efforts to meet their families' needs, improve their living status and also contribute to society while boosting local economies.

³ "The Role of Host Countries: The Cost and Impact of Hosting Refugees." *UNHCR*, www.unhcr.org/excom/standcom/4de4f7959/role-host-countries-cost-impact-hosting-refugees.html

⁴ <https://www.unhcr.org/5bc07ca94.pdf>

⁵ "What's the Difference Between a Migrant and a Refugee?" *Encyclopedia Britannica*, www.britannica.com/story/whats-the-difference-between-a-migrant-and-a-refugee

⁶ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. "About Us." *UNHCR*, www.unhcr.org/about-us.html

- a. The right to work:** The right to work, other related rights and access to relevant services facilitate the economic inclusion of refugees. Everyone, regardless of their citizenship, has the right to work and Governments are obliged to take measures to protect this right. Non-citizens who are lawfully present in a State are entitled to treatment equal to that enjoyed by citizens in the area of employment and work. The right to work is set out in the 1951 Refugee Convention, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and various other regional and international instruments such as the International Covenant on Economic Cultural and Social Rights. Nonetheless, refugees are not allowed to work in around 50% of asylum countries. They are further hindered by restrictions on their movement, a lack of access to education, restrictions on rights concerning housing and land, and a lack of access to business-crucial services such as banking and training. Article 6 of the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights contains a provision legally binding states to safeguard everyone's right to gain a living through work
- b. Economic benefits:** Promoting an inclusive market-based system is about efficient resource allocation, as financial inclusion is invaluable to achieving a transition towards sustainable market economies. Some of the benefits include the following: low skilled refugees would hold positions that local populations are no longer able or willing to hold, while highly skilled refugees would provide knowledge and a variety of skill sets in order to diversify entrepreneurship. Moreover, the inclusion of various refugee groups would encourage new connections with other cities and industries that could possibly lead to alliances, political relations or the establishment of trade partnerships.
- c. Political discourse and challenges:** Refugees are often cast as an economic burden for host countries, although research provides evidence that they are not. In Europe for example, far-right parties often prey on the fear that refugees may be taking jobs, undercutting wages and putting pressure on public resources like hospitals, schools, transport and welfare. Also, a vast number of refugees don't have a valid identity document which makes it difficult for the private sector to serve them. Furthermore, other difficulties they might face include: unemployment, unrecognized qualifications, low

educational level and insecure work and lack of access to financial services. Also, they would be gaining access to capital which might lead to refugees finding it difficult to locate and receive financial services. Other challenges and forms of discrimination they might face entail: racial, religious and gender discrimination which could limit the employment opportunities for some refugees.

- d. Labour exploitation:** Refugees who face obstacles to formal job opportunities may fall victim to exploitation in the labour market. They face a broad range of challenges, including underpayment, risk of injury, job insecurity, lack of rights and discrimination.
- e. Refugees in developing countries:** A large majority of the world's refugees (85 per cent) live in developing countries. The size of the host country's population and the strength of its economy will affect how they cope with the economic impact of refugee flows. Countries bordering Syria, such as Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan, have received the largest refugee populations relative to their host populations. According to the OECD, South Sudan, Chad and Uganda host the largest refugee populations as a share of gross domestic product. Eight of the top ten countries with the highest number of refugees in relation to GDP are in Africa.

IV. Major Parties Involved and their Views

a. Turkey

As the amount of people fleeing their countries because of conflict, violence and persecution has reached record levels, Turkey is host to the largest number of refugees worldwide. Turkey currently hosts about 3.6 million registered Syrian refugees along with close to 320,000 persons of concern from other nationalities⁷. Turkey has been undertaking legislative and institutional reforms to build an effective national asylum

⁷ "Turkey | Global Focus." *Global Focus*, <https://reporting.unhcr.org/turkey>

system in compliance with the international standards. In April 2013, the Parliament endorsed Turkey's first ever asylum law, the Law on Foreigners and International Protection.⁸ The Law sets out the foundation of Turkey's national asylum system and established the Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM) as the main entity in charge of policy-making and proceedings for all foreigners in Turkey. Many programmes and policies in cooperation with a wide range of partners and actors such as the UN, have been endorsed by the government to ensure the well-being of the refugees.

The country has provided a solid and comprehensive rights-based legal framework through the Temporary Protection Regulation, offering Syrian refugees access to services including education, health care and the labour market. They can apply for work permits six months after their registration, according to the nation's regulations. With the Syrian refugee crisis entering its tenth year, economic inclusion of refugees and their access to the labour market is crucial for a dignified life. All in all Turkey is setting a positive example.⁹

b. Bangladesh

The South Asian country of Bangladesh is currently home to about 1 million Rohingya Muslims. These are a minority ethnic group that are escaping what the United Nations has described as genocidal violence that follows decades of persecution and human rights abuses. The Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina, is determined that the refugees will be short-term visitors, and has enacted hard-line policies to prevent integration. It denies the Rohingya formal education, bars them from working, proposes surrounding parts of the camp with barbed wire, and wants to send 100,000 of them to an isolated and flood-prone island. Refugees do not have proper housing conditions and are forced to live in the refugee camps. Furthermore, it doesn't have any legal framework to protect refugees, leaving them vulnerable and unsafe. Bangladesh has not yet ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention.

⁸ "Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Turkey." *UNHCR Turkey*, www.unhcr.org/tr/en/refugees-and-asylum-seekers-in-turkey

⁹ "Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion." *UNHCR Turkey*, www.unhcr.org/tr/en/livelihoods

c. United States of America (USA)

The United States is currently home to a large number of refugees. According to United States policy, refugees are allowed to work in the country upon arrival if they are recognized as refugees by the United States. They are also allowed to apply for permanent residency free of charge. However, on December 11, 2020 the Trump administration passed a set of rules that are referred to as the “death to asylum” rule. Scheduled to go into effect on January 10, the rule creates insurmountable procedural barriers, evidentiary burdens, and qualification standards to prevent three groups, especially, from being able to exercise their right to seek and enjoy asylum in the United States: Central Americans fleeing gang violence; women and others fleeing domestic abuse; and people fleeing persecution on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. But the rule sets bars that will make it exceedingly difficult for all people who deserve asylum to be recognized as refugees and protected. The term “persecution” will now require “the infliction of a severe level of harm...so severe that they constitute an exigent threat.” To qualify, applicants will essentially need to show a gun was held to their heads. Such strict measures need to be overturned to allow refugees to enter the country and be allowed to work so that they can lead a normal life.

d. Colombia

Over the past few years, the political and economic crisis in Venezuela has forced nearly 1.8 million Venezuelans to flee to Colombia. The Colombian government has responded warmly, taking steps to integrate Venezuelans into its society and economy. But legal and practical barriers still prevent many Venezuelans from achieving true economic inclusion, the attainment of decent work and income commensurate with their skills. COVID-19 has exacerbated these barriers, wreaking havoc on Colombia’s economy and health system. 40% of the refugees in Colombia have obtained the right to work while the rest are legally not allowed to participate in the labor market. Increasing the number of people working would lead to greater benefits for both the refugees and Colombia.

V. Relevant United Nations Documents

- The 1951 Refugee Convention
- The Rights of Non-Citizens, 2006
- The Global Compact on Refugees

VI. Questions to Consider

- How can we expand the rights of refugees to access the labour markets of their host countries?
- In which ways can we allow refugees to enter the workplace without infringing on their right to work?
- How can governments in refugee-heavy regions balance the need to support refugees with the needs of their own citizens when it comes to employment and business?
- How can we convince businesses to play their part in supporting the economic inclusion of refugees? What are the obstacles and how can they be overcome?
- How can we tackle the unfounded fear that refugees present an economic threat? How can we counter political narratives that perpetuate this?
- In host countries, how can we ensure the inclusion of refugees in labor markets, finance and economic opportunities?
- How can we better link up schools and universities where refugees are studying with future employers?

VII. Conclusion

All in all, the financial inclusion of refugees is really important both to the independence of the individuals but also the community. As far as the refugees are concerned, being included in the economy of their host country means financial and employment opportunities as well as access to education, all of which are needed for their integration into society. However there are some disagreements because of the political discourse that exists. Moreover, most of the refugees are hosted in developing countries with limited economic growth and high unemployment rates need international support to cope with the cost of refugee arrivals and to facilitate the economic integration of refugees. Even so, taking in consideration the right to work and right-to-work laws, measures must be taken in order to find effective solutions to the aforementioned issues and promote sustainable market economies that will benefit all parties involved.

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