



## Education for Refugees Backgrounder

According to the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), there are 7.1 million refugee children of school age in the world, and 3.7 million of these children are out of school. Sub-Saharan Africa hosts almost a third of all refugees in the world, along with millions of internally displaced people, both of which put huge strains on already struggling education systems.

The following chart shows the percentage of school age children enrolled in school worldwide and in refugee situations:

**Percentage of School Age Children Enrolled in School**

	Globally	Refugees
<b>Primary Education</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>63%</b>
<b>Secondary Education</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>24%</b>
<b>Postsecondary Education</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>3%</b>

The UNCHR has set an ambitious target to have refugee children achieve parity with non-refugee children in national education systems by 2030. *Stepping Up*, UNHCR, 2019 <https://www.unhcr.org/steppingup/>

### For a displaced child, schools:

- Give the surest road to recovering a sense of purpose and dignity.
- Provide access to a safe place to learn.
- Give exposure to positive role models, help develop critical thinking skills, amplify their voice, and enable rapid generational change.
- Serve a protective function, often keeping the child safe from risks like sexual violence, child marriage, harmful work, and recruitment by armed groups.
- Will prepare him or her for the world of today and tomorrow.

### Barriers to Accessing Quality Education in Refugee Camps

The average time spent in a refugee camp is 17 years. For those children who are lucky enough to access a school, the conditions are often deplorable, including very poor infrastructure, untrained teachers and no learning materials or resources. In addition, the children may not understand the

language of instruction. For refugee girls, the barriers (among them, culture, gender-based violence, and access to sanitation) are often exacerbated by safety concerns and lack of protection.

(*A Call to Action: Education for Every Last Refugee Child in the African Union*, Save the Children, 2019)

## **In sub-Saharan Africa, good things are happening for refugee children, but funding is needed to fully accomplish goals.**

**Uganda** hosts the largest number of refugees in the region. The government has adopted a comprehensive multi-year sector plan which aims to increase co-ordination and accountability for refugee and host communities, shifting from a mainly humanitarian format to integrated long-term services.

**Chad** is the first country to include refugee students in its national education plan, boasting one of the most promising and rare examples of professional pathways for refugee teachers and upscaling their qualifications.

**Kenya** is registering schools in refugee camps with the Ministry of Education, ensuring that students receive the quality education that Kenyan students receive. An innovative partnership program in Dadaab Refugee Camp allows 60 learners to study at York University in Toronto through an online platform.

**Ethiopia** is running parallel refugee schools which follow the national education system. It has also established an innovative AEP (Accelerated Education Program) which targets 11-14 year-olds and uses a condensed version of the Ethiopian curriculum, shortening the time needed to get into secondary school.

To learn more on the state of education in sub-Saharan Africa go to: <https://en.unesco.org/gem-report/sites/gem-report/files/4%20-%20Sub%20Saharan%20Africa%20-%202019%20GEM%20Report.pdf>

## **Impact of COVID-19**

COVID-19 is having an unprecedented impact on education systems around the globe. School closures have affected more than 91% of the world's student population, exposing critical gaps in education systems, especially in the developing world. School closures threaten to roll back gains made in recent years to improve access and to advance gender equality through education. In Africa, COVID-19 is, in fact, exacerbating the struggle that children are already facing to access a quality education.

To read more about the challenges to delivering curriculum to Africa's children, read:

<http://www.adeanet.org/en/news/delivering-education-home-adea-african-member-states-amid-covid-19-pandemic-brief-status-report>

Also check out the joint solidarity letter sent to the African Union to advocate for critical interventions to ensure that adolescent girls are not left behind:

[https://www.globalpartnership.org/news/joint-solidarity-letter-african-union-impact-covid-19-girls-education-and-child-marriage?utm\\_source=gpe\\_social\\_en&utm\\_medium=twitter\\_en&utm\\_campaign=announcement](https://www.globalpartnership.org/news/joint-solidarity-letter-african-union-impact-covid-19-girls-education-and-child-marriage?utm_source=gpe_social_en&utm_medium=twitter_en&utm_campaign=announcement)

## Collaboration and Partnerships – The GPE at Work

The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) works in partnership with governments and other organizations, such as UNHCR, Education Cannot Wait, and Save the Children, to increase and improve funding for refugee education and find ways to provide host communities with the financial support that will include refugees in national education systems. The GPE recently committed US\$250 million for countries facing emergency situations, including refugee crises.

[https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/f\\_gpe1038\\_refugees\\_factsheets\\_web\\_0.pdf](https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/f_gpe1038_refugees_factsheets_web_0.pdf)

## Learning More

A safe and high quality education is one of the most significant determinants of the future life chances of children and a key contributor to the potential of societies for long-term stability and prosperity. If you would like to learn more about this issue, you might consider undertaking one of the following activities. Engage others in conversation and share what you are learning with a friend, your GRAN group or on your next family ZOOM call.

1. Watch one of these short videos:  
Education Cannot Wait “Delivering Education to Refugee Children in Uganda:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xsrFfAy4jiY>  
UNHCR “Girls Secondary Education in Kakuma Refugee Camp” 2014:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rz9ToKRKKmQ&t=34s>
2. A possible summer read: *Kakuma Girls* by Clare Morneau tells the inspiring stories of teenage girls facing hardship with hope in the Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya
3. To stay current with evolving changes in refugee education, follow GRAN on Facebook and Twitter. On Twitter you can also follow **@GPforEducation**, **@EduCannotWait**, and **@UNHCR\_Education** for the latest developments on how children and youth are accessing a quality education in sub-Saharan Africa.

*Thank you for reading me!*