Save the Children

THE PRICE OF HOPE

Funding education for the world's refugee children

Save the Children exists to help every child get the chance of a future they deserve.

In more than 100 countries, including the UK, we make sure children stay safe, healthy and learning – finding new ways to reach children who need us most, no matter where they're growing up. For over a century, we've stood up for children's rights and made sure their voices are heard. With children, for children, we change the future for good.

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*** Names marked with an asterisk have been changed to protect identities**

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Harriet's story "I'm going to change the world!"

Harriet,* 14, lives in a refugee settlement in Northern Uganda. Harriet and her family fled South Sudan when the sound of gunshots came to their village. Harriet only brought a handful of belongings with her, including a radio, a yellow dress and her school uniform.

Harriet is bright, friendly and confident. She loves singing and dancing and writes songs about the value of education and how girls' education can change society.

When she fled South Sudan, she was afraid she would never get back to school. But then she joined Save the Children's Accelerated Learning Programme for child refugees – and her learning took off.

Now, Harriet's caught up on the education she missed, and is doing brilliantly. She's been chosen as Head Girl by the other pupils. This top student is determined to become a lawyer and make life better for people in South Sudan. *"I'm going to change the world!"* she says.

Harriet is working hard to create opportunities for other girls, too. By writing songs and plays about gender equality, she's changing perceptions of what girls can do. She sings: *"Our girls are driving, our girls get salaries. Society benefits, our nation benefits."* Her dreams don't stop at her own goals, she says: *"When a girl is given a chance, she can do what a boy can do,"* and she is working hard to create opportunities for girls and shed light on the challenges they face.

South Sudan has been a tense area of conflict, even prior to its creation in 2011. Since 2013 there has been an escalation in the civil conflict between the two largest ethnic groups in the country, which has led to a significant number of citizens seeking refuge in surrounding states. Many South Sudanese people have come to neighbouring Uganda, which has an open-door immigration policy that has made it a safe haven for many fleeing conflict and persecution.

The Ugandan government has taken significant steps to promote the inclusion of refugees in their education system. In 2018 it launched a multi-year Education Response Plan (ERP) designed to ensure that all refugee and host community children and young people have access to quality education. In 2022, 86% of refugees were enrolled in primary school, though enrolment rates for secondary level were much lower at just 10%.[1] The second phase of the Education Response Plan (ERP II) was launched in May 2023 and will run until June 2025, with even greater ambitions. At a cost of US$450.71 million, full implementation of the plan requires significant resources from the international community.

Executive summary

Refugee children from Ukraine, Syria, South Sudan and many other countries have been uprooted from their homes. Many have lost parents, brothers, sisters, and friends. They have witnessed unspeakable acts of violence. These children need security and a chance to rebuild their lives.

For the world's refugees, education is a source of opportunity and hope for a brighter future. Yet almost half of all refugee children are out of school, and there is a real and present danger that a generation of refugee children will be deprived of the education they need to restore their future.

Education is an essential part of any quality child-focused humanitarian response. It can be lifesaving as it provides a safe space where children are protected, supported by responsible adults and have access to water, sanitation and hygiene services, and health and nutrition programmes. Their mental health and psychosocial support needs can be met, and they can learn skills to keep them safe, play with peers, thrive and build their own futures.

However, education is too often neglected as an afterthought rather than seen as every child's right, and too many refugee children wait months, if not years, before returning to education.

Integrating refugee children into the national education system is the most effective and sustainable way to meet their need for relevant, quality, and accredited education. While a few countries continue to actively exclude refugees from the national education system, many have taken commendable steps to adopt national policies that explicitly indicate refugees can access education on the same terms as the host community.

Yet, even when policies are place, host governments struggle to implement them at the local and school levels, and refugees face a range of policy and practical barriers in accessing the formal education system which further disrupt their development. This includes language barriers, lack of documentation, and discriminatory gender and social attitudes in host communities and schools which create hostile learning environments for an already excluded group.

A global promise to the world's refugees has been put on hold

In 2018, the world adopted the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), an international agreement to improve the worldwide response to the needs of refugees. The Compact includes the landmark commitment to get all children in school and learning within a few months of their displacement, and makes this a shared responsibility for the international community and refugee-hosting countries. At the first Global Refugee Forum (GRF), in 2019, significant resources and funding were pledged to support the education of refugees in the countries and communities who hosted significant numbers.

Then the world changed. The COVID-19 pandemic caused unprecedented disruption, closing schools all over the world, and acutely damaged the livelihoods of the most vulnerable in society. As the world struggled to respond to the crisis, the hope for a better future that was promised to refugees was put on hold.

The world's largest displacement crises have also become even more protracted. **Today the average humanitarian crisis lasts over nine years**[2] **and protracted refugee situations last an estimated 26 years.**[3] The intersecting threats of COVID-19, conflict and climate change now threaten to push back progress even further, and increase the education needs of an ever-growing population of refugee children.

Refugee children around the globe are still waiting for governments to deliver on their promises to secure their futures. From Syrian refugees in Lebanon, Venezuelan refugees in Colombia, to newly displaced refugees from Ukraine and the millions who have been displaced by the ongoing hunger crisis in East Africa, the urgent need for sustainable and durable solutions to meet their education needs has never been greater.

Some of the poorest countries host the highest numbers of refugees – and their economic outlook is bleak

The need to support the countries that host refugees is fundamental to addressing the refugee education crisis. **76% of the world's refugees live in low-income and middle-income countries**[4] **whose education systems already struggle to meet the needs of children and where learning poverty (being unable to read and understand a simple text by age 10) is high.**[5] Resources are massively stretched, and many countries receive little to no international support, despite the global public good that refugee-hosting countries perform by opening their borders and educating the world's refugees.

The general absence of funding for refugee education and host governments is exacerbated by a lack of predictable, long-term funding, a lack of clear financing targets and resource mobilisation plans, and poor coordination among donors.

On top of this, worsening debt burdens are threatening the ability of low- and lower-middle-income countries to allocate sufficient resources towards education. More than half of low-income countries are currently either in or at high risk of debt distress and **4 out of 14 of the top low- and middle-income refugee-hosting countries, nearly a third, spent more on servicing external debt than they did on education in 2020**.

What's more, the low- and middle-income countries in the top 20 refugee-hosting countries **paid more than US$23 billion in interest payments on external debt alone in 2020. This is enough to send every refugee child in low- and middle-income countries to school for nearly five years.**

The 2023 Global Refugee Forum is an opportunity to get progress back on track

At the 2019 Global Refugee Forum, 233 pledges were made to support refugee education. While less than a quarter have so far been fulfilled (24%), many pledges span years if not decades and reflect medium- to long-term processes to deliver durable and lasting solutions for refugee children and young people.

But many of the commitments made by host governments were contingent on financial support from the international community, which has not materialised. Many pledges were understandably affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, which exacerbated the challenges that host governments face in financing education.

Three and a half years on from the first Forum, there is still no status update for over a quarter of the education pledges (26%) so whether they have been implemented remains unknown. As we approach the second Global Refugee Forum, in December 2023, it is critical that all pledge-makers commit to reporting regular updates on their pledges (at least once a year). **The Forum presents a critical opportunity to take stock of how well previous pledges were implemented, and get progress back on track through the fulfilment of existing commitments and delivery of new meaningful, accountable and actionable matched pledges.**

Without mobilising sufficient funding, the world's promises on refugee education will never be realised

Undeniably, the world has been dealt some immeasurable challenges since the last Global Refugee Forum. But the promises made in the Global Compact on Refugees still stand. At its heart, the Compact promises a programme of ***action*** – focusing on exactly how host country and donor governments and other stakeholders will improve refugees' access to quality education.

In 2021, the World Bank and the UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR, estimated the annual global cost of educating the world's refugee population in low- and middle-income countries at US$4.85 billion a year.[6] At the Global Refugee Forum this December, the international community urgently needs to

commit to finding this financing. Delivering inclusive, safe and quality education for refugees is not just about money – but in many circumstances, a lack of financing remains the biggest bottleneck preventing this from happening.

Save the Children calls on the international community to mobilise the funding needed to meet the annual US$4.85 billion cost of providing education to refugees and strengthening education systems in low- and middle-income countries. Resources should be distributed equitably, with a focus on the poorest countries and the education needs of the most marginalised children and young people, including the multiple and intersecting barriers that many refugee children face in accessing quality education and learning.

This report sets out recommendations to the international community on how to support some of the poorest refugee-hosting countries to deliver education that will benefit refugee and host community children alike.

This year's Global Refugee Forum is an opportunity to create new hope for the world's refugees, but commitments must be backed with cash if we are to turn the promise of the Global Compact on Refugees into a reality.

Having already lost their homes, refugees are losing their education and their hopes for a brighter future. **Delivering the funding needed for refugee education will give a generation of refugee children the opportunities that come with education and the chance to rebuild their lives.**

Ghinwa*, 13, doing her homework at her home in a refugee settlement, in Beirut, Lebanon

PHOTO: JONATHAN HYAMS/SAVE THE CHILDREN

1 Refugee children are missing out on education

Despite the landmark commitment in the Global Compact on Refugees to get all children in school and learning within a few months of their displacement, refugees continue to experience some of the lowest access rates to education in the world. Almost four years on from the first Global Refugee Forum – which was meant to pave the way for historic action to support refugees and those that host them – the world looks markedly different but the situation for refugee children remains bleak. Far too many are still denied their basic human right to education. **The critical progress that was secured when hundreds of policy and financial pledges were made in support of refugee education is in jeopardy.**

There are more forcibly displaced people around the world now than at any time in modern history

An unprecedented 108.4 million people have been forced from their homes.[†] Among them are 35.3 million refugees who have fled their country due to violence or persecution.[‡] This includes 29.4 million refugees under UNHCR's mandate, and 5.9 million Palestinian refugees registered with the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

Children are over-represented among the world's refugees. They make up less than one third of the global population, but around 40% of the world's forcibly displaced population.[7] **At the end of 2021, there were 12.6 million child refugees.** The real figure is likely to be even higher as increased rates of displacement were recorded in 2022.

76% of refugees and other people in need of international protection are hosted in low- and middle-income countries,[8] including 16% in low-income countries, where education systems struggle to meet the needs of children and learning poverty is high. 70% of all children in low- and middle-income countries are unable to read and understand a simple text by age 10.[9] In sub-Saharan Africa, which is estimated to host one-third of the world's refugee population,[10] the rate is 89%. Resources are already stretched in these countries and education systems are not equipped to respond to a large influx of refugee learners or to address their complex needs.

As it stands, less than a quarter of the 193 UN member states bear most of the responsibility for refugees – either hosting large refugee populations or contributing financially to humanitarian efforts.[11]

[†] At the end of 2022, 108.4 million people worldwide were forcibly displaced as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations and events seriously disturbing public order. Source: UNHCR Refugee data finder

[‡] This report will focus specifically on refugees, by the UN definition as outlined in the 1951 Refugee Convention, rather than the broader umbrella of displaced peoples which includes those who have not been displaced over international borders.

Andriy's story "This is my life, and I don't want to waste a year of it."

Andriy* is 13 years old and lives in Lithuania with his mother, father and sister. Andriy fled Ukraine with his family after the conflict escalated in February 2022. He likes living in Lithuania, but sometimes finds making friends difficult. Andriy says that attending a Save the Children summer camp helped. He hopes to return to Ukraine to finish school. Afterwards, he wants to go to university and dreams of becoming a logistics specialist or a driver.

More than 7.7 million refugees have fled Ukraine to seek safety in other European countries; an estimated 40% are children.[12] European states and the European Union have taken notable steps to ensure refugee children from Ukraine access education. Most significant has been the activation of the Temporary Protection Directive, whereby refugees from Ukraine can obtain residency permits in EU member states and access education and other government services on the same terms as nationals. However, despite this enabling legal framework, many children still remain out of school.

"I attended [a local school] for two weeks, but there were not many teachers who could speak Russian, so I went back to Ukrainian online school," Andriy says.

Like many children, Andriy has found that there are few language teachers to support him to learn the host language. Local authorities often do not have the funding to hire additional educational staff. Save the Children research with more than 1,000 children and caregivers in eight European countries highlights challenges that children who have left Ukraine face in accessing the education system in their host country.[13] Children expressed concerns that when attending local schools, they may be placed in lower grades, fall behind in the Ukrainian curriculum, or that their qualifications will not be valid on their return to Ukraine.

Around one in four children surveyed said they did not intend to enrol in a local school in the 2022–23 academic year, or were unsure. These worrying findings are borne out by data on school enrolment in European countries. In Poland, out of an estimated 700,000 Ukrainian children registered in the country, fewer than 200,000 are currently enrolled in a local school. Many children have continued their Ukrainian education online, which presents challenges to quality learning, and as the war in Ukraine becomes more protracted there is an urgent need to ensure greater integration and support to Polish schools to accommodate much larger numbers of refugee children. Save the Children is working closely with local partners to provide Polish language classes to refugee children and supports Ukrainian 'intercultural assistants' who work in Polish schools to help refugee children integrate. Save the Children also organises recreational activities where Ukrainian children can engage in fun activities, practise their language skills and make Polish friends.

It is essential that Ukrainian refugee children and young people in Lithuania, Poland and other countries now receive the necessary support so that they can enrol and learn effectively.

PHOTO: RENATA KERŠIENĖ/SAVE THE CHILDREN

Top refugee-hosting countries

	Country of asylum, end-2022	Total refugees†
1	Türkiye	3,568,259
2	Iran (Islamic Republic of)	3,425,091
3	Jordan	3,004,772
4	Colombia	2,455,469
5	Occupied Palestinian territory	2,348,243
6	Germany	2,075,445
7	Pakistan	1,743,785
8	Uganda	1,463,523
9	Lebanon	1,298,398
10	Russian Federation	1,277,672
11	Sudan	1,097,128
12	Peru	976,360
13	Poland	971,129
14	Bangladesh	952,384
15	Ethiopia	879,598
16	France	612,934
17	Chad	592,764
18	Syria	581,851
19	Ecuador	555,429
20	Democratic Republic of the Congo	520,544

Having already lost their homes, many refugees are now losing their education

UNHCR estimates that refugee children miss out on an average of three to four years of schooling due to forced displacement.[14] **The gross enrolment rate for refugees at primary level is just 68%, compared to 102% for the total primary-school aged population.**‡ That drops to just 37% for secondary education for refugees.

In almost every country, the refugee enrolment rate lags behind that of host community children, with gaps greatest for girls.[15] Refugee girls face numerous barriers to education, such as gender-based violence in transit and at school, a lack of gender-segregated sanitation facilities in schools, including lack of access to menstrual health products, and discriminatory gender norms. **Refugee girls are half as likely to enrol in secondary school as their male peers.**[16]

Despite progress in the number of refugee students enrolled in schools, the continued rise in the global forcibly displaced population means that close to half of all refugee children – 48% – remain out of school.[17]

† Refugees here includes those classified by UNHCR as refugees, registered UNWRA refugees, those in refugee-like situations, and other people in need of protection, including Venezuelans displaced abroad. Sources: UNHCR (2023) Refugee Data Finder; UNWRA (2023) Where we work (Accessed 14 June 2023)

‡ Figures for refugees are based on data from the 2020–21 school year. The figure for gross enrolment at primary school level is from 2020. Over 100% is possible as this is based on gross enrolment ratios, which include over-aged children. Sources: UNHCR (2022) UNHCR Education Report 2022 – All Inclusive The Campaign for Refugee; World Bank (2022) School enrollment, primary (% gross)

Rising displacement only increases the education needs of refugee children

Global displacement figures continue to break records as multiple and converging crises become more frequent and protracted. **The number of people forced from their homes has increased every year over the past decade. More than 1 in 74 people worldwide are forcibly displaced as a result.**[18] Over half of all refugees currently under UNHCR's mandate and other people in need of international protection come from just three countries: Syria, Ukraine and Afghanistan.

- **Conflict** has spiked dramatically in the last decade, with 449 million children currently living in violent conflict zones.[19] Russia's invasion of Ukraine has quickly caused Europe's largest refugee crisis since World War II, and led to severe global repercussions for food security, energy markets, and commodity prices. Protracted conflicts in Syria and Yemen continue to displace thousands across borders. War in Ethiopia's northern regions of Afar, Amhara and Tigray, and in Sudan and Afghanistan, have also led to millions being displaced.
- The **climate crisis** continues to worsen, and is the greatest threat to children's survival, learning and protection. Despite the majority of lower-income countries contributing the least to climate change, they are most affected by the crisis. Many are already seeing their land shrink and whole communities losing their homes and forced to leave. Nearly half of all children globally – one billion in total – live in countries at **extremely** high risk of the impacts of climate change.[20] More than 50 million children have already been displaced due to climate-related events, migrating across borders or displaced within their own countries, and leaving their education behind.[21]
- The **hunger crisis** in East Africa has driven millions to leave their homes in search of food and shelter. The crisis has been turbocharged by complex intersecting factors including a devastating drought caused by multiple failed rainy seasons, ongoing conflict in affected countries, and a global food shortage precipitated by the war in Ukraine. Connected climate and hunger crises are set to worsen over time, disrupting the education of children facing acute malnutrition and causing school shutdowns due to adverse weather conditions.
- **774 million children** face the dual threat of poverty and climate emergency.[22] Most of the children facing this dual threat live in lower-income countries that are hosting the vast majority of the world's refugees. The relentless economic shocks of recent years have hit economies and livelihoods hard. The ongoing economic crisis in **Venezuela** has resulted in millions of people being displaced. 5.2 million people in Venezuela, 74% of them women and girls, 50% children, and 13% people with disabilities, have no access to basic services, resulting in forced migration.[23]
- In **Lebanon** the collapse of the economy and currency has had a devastating impact on children's right to education and protection. Over a million children have not been able to complete a full year of education since 2019 due to civil unrest, COVID-19, the Beirut port explosion and a prolonged teachers' strike due to low pay.[24]
- At the start of 2023, the devastating earthquake in **Türkiye and Syria** took over 50,000 lives[25] and flattened entire neighbourhoods, forcing hundreds of thousands of people to disperse in search of safe infrastructure, and compounding the refugee crisis in a region that was already one of the worst globally.
- Refugee flows are also becoming more complex as people move throughout the **Sahel into North Africa or coastal West Africa**; many have fled their homes multiple times. Almost one million people have sought refuge in neighbouring countries in the Sahel.[26]

Many refugees today have been displaced by a number of intersecting factors rather than one event. Alarming projections indicate that unprecedented rates of displacement show no sign of slowing down. Recent projections have suggested that an additional **1.2 billion people** could be displaced, both within countries and across borders, by 2050, due to climate change alone.[27]

Refugee children's vulnerabilities have been compounded by COVID-19

The closure of schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic made the structural and systemic inequalities that affect refugee children more visible and much worse.

At the peak of the pandemic, nearly 1.6 billion students in over 190 countries were affected by full or partial school closures. Yet the COVID-19 education emergency did not affect all children equally.[28] The most marginalised children, including the poorest, girls, children with disabilities, and conflict-affected and displaced children, were worst hit.[29]

Before the COVID-19 pandemic a refugee child was twice as likely to be out of school as a non-refugee child.[30] The significant barriers refugee children face in accessing a good quality education were further compounded during the pandemic. This was due to a variety of factors including lack of access to technology for remote learning. With mobile phones, tablets, laptops, and even radio sets often not readily available to displaced communities and without internet connectivity and reliable electricity, many refugees were immediately excluded from education.

Our analysis, published in early 2021, on the impact of COVID-19 on refugee education and the responses in the ten largest refugee-hosting countries where Save the Children works showed a consistent pattern.[31] **Being out-of-school and in poverty-affected families severely increased refugee children's vulnerabilities during the pandemic.** Evidence we collated found this led to increased rates of child labour, gender-based violence, sexual exploitation, child marriage, and child pregnancy among refugee communities. For refugee girls – particularly adolescents – the impact was especially grave.

The pandemic also had a devastating impact on the livelihoods and financial wellbeing of refugee families. Many refugee families found their incomes further reduced, leaving them with even less ability to afford school costs such as uniforms, learning materials, and transport to and from school. In Türkiye, we found that almost 80% of refugee households experienced negative changes in their employment and income status.[32]

Refugees were among the most excluded from COVID-19 education responses.[33] This resulted in refugees not receiving the support they required to access distance learning and return to school safely, leading to many months of lost learning or dropping out of education altogether. A lack of funding from the international community, including to education under the COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan, also left the low- and middle-income countries that host most of the world's refugees facing the consequences of this unprecedented disruption to education without the resources they needed.

Implementation of many education pledges made at the Global Refugee Forum in December 2019 was also almost certainly affected by the pandemic. **New analysis in this report shows that progress to get pledges back on track has been too slow.** The consequences of the pandemic on refugees' access to education and quality learning continue to play out. Like their peers in low and middle-income countries, refugee children are experiencing a learning crisis, with 70% of 10-year-old children not achieving expected literacy proficiency levels.[34]

Education systems are on the brink of collapse in refugee-hosting countries

The triple threat of COVID-19, climate change and conflict in low- and middle-income countries is putting the education systems that serve millions of children at risk of collapse. In October 2022, Save the Children published the second iteration of the **Risks to Education Index**,[35] which ranked countries by the vulnerability of their school education system to hazards like COVID-19, conflict, climate change and displacement, and deficiencies in preparedness. This enabled us to form a holistic view of where national education systems require increased resources from national governments and international actors to mitigate existing and prevent future crises.

We identified four countries – Afghanistan, Sudan, Somalia, and Mali – at 'extreme risk' of ongoing and future crises disrupting education. These countries are closely followed by a further 30 countries ranked as 'high risk'.

This showed that education systems in many low- and middle-income countries, which host the vast majority of the world's refugees, have never been more vulnerable. Countries that host large numbers of refugees face a compounding set of factors. Often highly vulnerable to climate change and other global challenges, and having already absorbed a large influx of refugees, many lack the capacity to respond to further shocks. As a result, overstretched education systems in these countries are simply unprepared and unequipped to anticipate and respond to ongoing and new emergencies. Low digital connectivity rates also mean that when a crisis hits and schools and other educational facilities are no longer safe, children are frequently unable to continue learning at home.

When disruption does occur, a failure to prioritise education for refugees and host communities as a life-saving intervention in emergency response plans and in the first phase of a response leads to extended periods out of school and the associated protection risks for refugee children. **Refugees are subsequently waiting months, if not years, to resume their education.**

Catch-up Clubs: A pioneering approach to getting refugee and host community children safely back to school and learning

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Uganda closed schools for almost two years: the longest school closures in the world. Refugee children were hit hard: many had limited access to learning materials and alternative sources of learning. While some refugee children were able to access informal learning, funded by Education Cannot Wait and other donors, many experienced significant disruptions to their learning, social interaction and skills development, creating enormous challenges for schools and communities.

In response, Save the Children launched Catch-up Clubs, an innovative approach to helping children catch up on their education and make them less likely to drop out. An intensive thirteen-week remedial education programme, Catch-up Clubs enable children aged 8–13 to catch up on their foundational learning (literacy, numeracy and social and emotional learning).

The Clubs adopt 'Teaching at the Right Level', an approach developed by Indian NGO Pratham, which uses a simple learning assessment to sort children into learning groups based on their learning level rather than age so they can follow targeted activities to help them progress.

Catch-up Clubs also adopt an integrated approach that recognises the impact of poverty on children's attendance, retention and learning outcomes and the importance of mental health and psychosocial support. Using Save the Children's Steps to Protect approach, child protection case workers ensure that the Clubs' learning facilitators and teachers refer the most vulnerable children to case management services, so that they can receive the timely individual services and psychological support they need to succeed.

Catch-up Clubs have had significant effects on literacy outcomes. Results from an evaluation in refugee settlements in Uganda showed that 85.9% of the children who attended Catch-up Clubs improved their reading by one level in contrast to 25.7% of children who didn't.[36]

Children engage in Catch-up Club activities at a primary school in a refugee settlement in Uganda

PHOTO: ESTHER RUTH MBABAZI/ SAVE THE CHILDREN

Furthermore 38.8% of learners who attended Clubs could read a story and answer questions about it in contrast to 3.3% of learners in the comparison group.

"I like this club so much. I have learned so much more about how to write, create sentences and read stories. My favourite book so far is Tinto goes Swimming", said Ziipe,* aged 11, who attends a Catch-up Club in a refugee settlement in western Uganda.

In Colombia, which currently hosts 2.5 million Venezuelan refugees and migrants, the school dropout rate for Venezuelan refugees is almost double that of Colombian children.[37] Even when children are able to attend school, many fall behind. Half of ten-year-olds in Colombia cannot read or understand a simple text.[38] Save the Children is rolling out Catch-up Clubs for both refugee and host community children. By the end of the Catch-up Club cycle in 2021, 100% of children who attended the Clubs could read a story and answer questions about it.

Children in Catch-up clubs in a range of contexts have made good progress in learning and the Clubs have already reached over 30,000 children in 11 countries.

Refugee children want to continue their education, regardless of their circumstances

In surveys Save the Children conducted with 1,700 children across six crisis-affected countries, education was ranked as their highest need.[39] Children were more than twice as likely to rank going to school as their top concern compared with immediate needs like food, water, shelter or money. In the world's largest refugee camp in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, where for five years Rohingya refugees have languished in limbo without formally recognised education, 75% of young refugees said education was their top priority.[40]

As crises become more frequent and intense, the duration of displacement is also increasing: protracted refugee situations now last an estimated 26 years on average.[41] **This means that children currently living in displacement will likely remain displaced for their entire childhood.** The case for host governments to include refugee children in their national education system and ensure access on the same terms as host community children could not be clearer or more urgent. This is the most effective way to meet refugee children's needs for relevant, quality and accredited education, while also expanding access to and the quality of education for host community children.

The threats to children's education and the barriers that forcibly displaced children face in accessing quality learning continue to intensify, yet their resilience and will to learn remain resolute. We have a responsibility to act on their priorities and address the barriers that continue to prevent their access to education. **This year's Global Refugee Forum is a fresh chance to get progress back on track and deliver the brighter future that was promised to them.**

Education in Emergencies Day 1 approach

Investment in preparedness is of paramount importance to ensure that education systems are resilient and adaptable in times of crisis. Save the Children and local and national actors are working to ensure that all children's learning and wellbeing needs are prioritised from the outset of every acute humanitarian crisis.

Save the Children developed the Education in Emergencies (EiE) Day 1 approach to increase the speed and quality of initial education responses. The Day 1 approach bridges operational and technical preparedness, to ensure Save the Children and local and national actors are positioned to launch an EiE response from the first day of a crisis – and are prepared even before the crisis hits, thanks to an increased focus on anticipatory action. In some places, work has supported better preparedness of the whole sector, through work with the Education Cluster and other coordination groups.

When the Save the Children Country Office in Pakistan conducted Day 1 last year, their preparedness activities were put to an immediate test when the flooding emergency occurred soon after. The strengthened coordination within the Education Sector Working Group that had taken place as part of the Day 1 preparedness work meant that there was already strong liaison with all relevant stakeholders.

It was therefore possible to work together more effectively to map the areas affected by flooding, collect data and identify geographic locations for interventions. The collection and prepositioning of teaching materials, the advanced preparation of lifesaving messages on health, nutrition and hygiene, and the pre-vetting of staff for scale-up allowed for a much faster, more effective response. As a result, Save the Children was among the leading organisations responding to the floods in terms of education provision and had the largest geographical presence.[42]

Tomal* attends a child-friendly space run by Save the Children in a Rohingya refugee camp in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

PHOTO: ALLISON JOYCE / SAVE THE CHILDREN

Time to Act

In 2018, Save the Children published *Time to Act: A costed plan to deliver quality education to every last refugee child*,[43] a comprehensive review of the state of refugee education and the challenges hindering the provision of education for all refugees. The report outlined a set of recommendations to make the commitments in the Global Compact on Refugees a reality.

We recommended that donors, host country governments, the private sector and non-governmental organisations join forces – in the spirit of responsibility sharing – to agree a global costed plan designed to deliver quality education to every refugee child. We identified three pillars on which the plan should be based:

- **Inclusion**: Support for including refugees in national education systems
- **Improvement**: Increasing efforts to ensure refugee and host community children are learning
- **Investment**: Mobilising the funding necessary to scale up access to quality learning opportunities for refugees

The report also included an accountability framework that would monitor progress and promote collaboration in the delivery of the plan.

The report showed that it is well within our means to provide pre-primary, primary and secondary education to all the world's refugees, while also improving the education of children in host communities, and that it can be achieved with modest additional financing.

1 Inclusion

All refugee children should have access to national education systems in the countries they reside in, or to accredited non-formal education where the former is not possible.

Inclusive policies and practices, that are delivered through costed implementation plans, are vital so that refugee children can access and thrive in the formal education system where possible or in accredited non-formal education when not. This is the most practical and sustainable way to meet refugee children's need for safe, quality and accredited learning opportunities.

While a few countries continue to actively exclude refugees from the national education system, many have taken commendable steps towards inclusive, integrated national education systems. 75% of countries have a national policy or other policies that explicitly indicate that refugees can access primary education on the same terms as the host community.[44] But even where the policy environment is favourable, refugees may still face limitations in accessing education. The 2021 GCR Indicator report shows that these limitations were reported most frequently in countries in Asia and the Pacific (30% of countries have such limitations), Southern Africa (25%) and the Middle East (17%). Rates are also lower at the secondary level, with only 66% of countries reporting that refugees can access secondary education on the same terms as nationals.

Specific groups of refugees often face additional barriers based on their gender, ability, language, ethnicity or socioeconomic background. In many host countries where refugees are notionally allowed to access the national education system, social, cultural and economic constraints prevent this from happening. These barriers include lack of documentation, limits on time spent out of education, discrimination and safety concerns, and the costs of education. Financial constraints, in particular, are a key barrier to accessing secondary education across many contexts. Even when national policies support free education for all, hidden school-related costs such as for learning materials and transport can be a significant financial burden for refugee families.

Host country governments have a responsibility to remove policy and administrative barriers that prevent refugee children from accessing the national education system on the same terms as host community children and to ensure that national policies are implemented at the regional, local and school levels. The international community must provide financial and technical support to enable host country governments to overcome barriers to inclusion so that refugee children not only have legal access to the national system but thrive in it.

2 Improvement

The quality of education available to refugee children is often poor and needs significant improvement to meet their needs.

Refugee children are disproportionately concentrated in low- and low-middle income countries where learning poverty is high and education systems struggle to meet the needs of learners. This is putting their development, wellbeing and learning at risk.

Education systems in these countries typically lack the capacity to collect and produce robust data on learning outcomes for refugee and host community children.[45] This means there is a lack of evidence on the education outcomes of refugees specifically, however select assessments have found that refugee learners perform worse than,[46] or about the same as, host country students.[47]

Refugees face many additional barriers to access quality learning; they are often unfamiliar with the local curriculum and language of instruction, experience safety concerns, or may be prevented from progressing in education due to a lack of recognition of prior learning or documentation. Displaced children who have been out of school for extended periods may face difficulties when they are enrolled in school according to their age.

The psychological trauma that refugees have experienced may also inhibit their ability to participate and learn in a classroom, particularly if their needs for quality mental health and psychosocial support and social and emotional learning opportunities remain unaddressed. Quality pre-primary and early childhood education is also often not widely available in the countries that host the majority of the world's refugees and in refugee communities.

Classrooms can be overcrowded and lack disability- and gender-sensitive facilities. This is exacerbated by the low supply of qualified teachers with an understanding of diverse learning requirements, and language of instruction. In many countries, refugee teachers are prevented from entering the workforce, not only denying them access to work, but also erecting an artificial barrier to children's learning in the contexts where they are needed most. In displacement settings, the average teacher to student ratio is estimated to be above 1:70.[48]

The international community must work with host governments to strengthen their capacity to transform education systems and ensure that classrooms are protective spaces where refugee and host community children receive a quality holistic education, that ensures they learn, supports their wellbeing and is relevant to their lives.

3 Investment

Education systems around the world, especially in low- and middle-income countries that host most refugee children, are underfunded and failing to meet the needs of children. The funding gap must be filled urgently.

Lack of funding is a critical barrier to the full inclusion of refugees in national education systems and their access to quality learning opportunities. Many host governments have suitable policies in place, but their overstretched and under-resourced education systems are simply unable to absorb a large influx of refugees and meet their complex needs.

The lack of predictable, long-term financing for refugee education, including clear financing and resource mobilisation plans, and costed refugee and host community education response plans, means that access guaranteed at the national level is in constant jeopardy. Financing for refugee education remains largely oriented towards short-term projects that fail to address the protracted nature of refugee crises, and do not always reflect needs on the ground as well as the need to strengthen coherence between traditional humanitarian and development donors.

Refugee education needs are largely invisible in host country budgets, meaning refugee education receives little or nothing from stretched budgets, unless a specific refugee education plan is put in place. Even when such plans do exist, there are often significant funding gaps.

Many of the low- and middle-income countries that host most of the world's refugees receive little international assistance and are absorbing the overwhelming cost of educating the world's refugees alone. Donors and the international community must close the financing gap for refugee education by providing urgent resources to these countries in recognition of the global public good they are performing in hosting and educating the world's refugees.

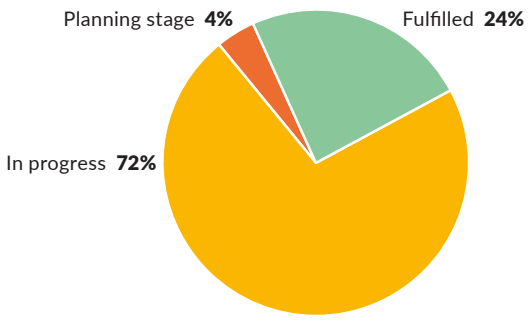
2 Global commitments on refugee education – what has the world delivered?

In 2018, the international community adopted the Global Compact on Refugees.[49] The Compact set out a new comprehensive refugee response model, with global responsibility at its core. It was the first global agreement on refugees since the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol and built on the existing international legal system for refugees.

The Compact provides a framework for more predictable and equitable responsibility sharing to better protect and assist refugees and ensure that host communities and countries get the support they need. It is based on recognition that a sustainable solution to refugee situations cannot be achieved without international cooperation. It also sets out a vision to expand the quality and inclusiveness of national education systems to facilitate access by refugee and host community children and young people at primary, secondary and tertiary education levels.

The Compact includes the landmark commitment that: "more direct financial support and special efforts will be mobilised to minimise the time refugee boys and girls spend out of education, ideally a maximum of three months after arrival". With millions of refugees now out of school, we must not lose sight of this global commitment to get all children in school and learning within a few months of their displacement, and the responsibility the international community shares to enact this promise with refugee-hosting countries.

Education pledges implementation progress



The 2019 Global Refugee Forum

A central process for enacting the promises in the Global Compact is the Global Refugee Forum. Taking place every four years, the Forum brings together states and other actors to commit to financial or technical support or policy changes to help meet the Compact's objectives.

The first Global Refugee Forum took place in December 2019 in Geneva, Switzerland. It was the first UN-led event dedicated to tackling the global refugee crisis. The aim was to bring the international community together to demonstrate solidarity with refugees and the countries hosting them, and to take action to support them in meeting the needs of refugees globally.

Education was one of the key success areas of the Forum. As one of six sectors of focus, education had the most spotlight sessions and pledges to support refugee education accounted for almost 14% of the 1,400 pledges made.[50]

233 pledges were made on education but less than a quarter have so far been fulfilled.

As of April 2023, for education pledges with available data:[51]

- 24% had been fulfilled
- 72% were in progress
- 4% were in the planning stage

Progress in fulfilling education-specific pledges has been slightly slower than for pledges in other areas. **Overall, where reporting has taken place, 27% of all pledges made have been fulfilled.** There is likely

PHOTO: NOUR WAHID/SAVE THE CHILDREN

Lina's story "I am a strong girl. I am good at school"

Lina* is a 10-year-old girl from Syria who is now living in Lebanon after escaping the protracted civil conflict in her home country. She does not have a father and her mother struggles to meet their needs financially. Lina works hard at school and wants to be an artist when she grows up. She enjoys school where she has many friends who sing and draw together.

Lebanon hosts the highest number of refugees per capita worldwide, including large numbers of refugees from Syria and the occupied Palestinian territory. The government estimates they host around 1.5 million refugees from Syria alone.[52] The situation for refugees has become especially dire due to the severe economic downturn Lebanon has faced in the last few years, which has been compounded by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the devastating explosion in the port of Beirut in 2020.[53] 90% of Syrian refugees are living in extreme poverty.[54] In October 2022, the country declared its first cholera outbreak since 1993.[55]

Children like Lina and her friends are losing access to lifesaving education due to disruptions caused by the economic crisis and hyperinflation and subsequent extensive teacher strikes. The 2022–23 school year has been the fourth in a row to have significant disruptions to learning.[56]

Lina faces her difficulties with courage and confidence. She needs the international community to make significant pledges to restore education for all children in Lebanon and globally so they can achieve their dreams.

to be a number of reasons why less than a quarter of education pledges have so far been delivered. Many pledges span years, if not decades, and reflect medium- to long-term processes to deliver durable and lasting solutions for refugee children and young people. Indeed, many of the pledges that have been fulfilled are small-scale and low-impact solutions, such as scholarships for small numbers of students, that do not lead to wholesale transformations in the inclusion and outcomes of refugee learners.

The delivery of many host government commitments was contingent on financial support from the international community which has not materialised. Only one-third of pledges were joint pledges submitted by multiple entities, and commitments made by donors, the private sector and other stakeholders often failed to correspond with the priorities identified by host governments. UNHCR's Education GRF Pledge Analysis 2022 report highlights a further imbalance between pledges made by hosting governments and donors.[57] 73% of education pledges made by states were domestic, with the rest international in nature, mostly from donor states. Without a fair share of resources from the international community, many host governments have been unable to deliver the transformative ambitions set out in their pledges.[58]

Many pledges were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, which exacerbated the challenges that host governments face in delivering quality education for refugee and host community children.

In December 2020, Save the Children looked at the progress that had been achieved in implementing education pledges made at the Forum a year earlier. We found that for pledges with available data,[59] only 9% had been fulfilled, 71% were in progress and 20% were still in the planning stage. There was no status update for just over half of the pledges. It is welcome that some progress has since been achieved, with the number of pledges that have been fulfilled between December 2020 and April 2023 more than doubling and the proportion of pledges where no reporting has taken place halving. But overall, progress in getting pledges back on track has been too slow.

Three and a half years on from the Forum, for over a quarter of education pledges (26%) there is still no status update, meaning that implementation status remains unknown.[60] While the reporting of pledges is voluntary, and is self-reporting by the pledge-makers, without regular reporting it is not possible to assess progress achieved.

The 2023 Global Refugee Forum is an opportunity to get progress back on track

This year's Global Refugee Forum is an opportunity to take stock of how well previous pledges were implemented, build on existing commitments, and get progress back on track towards achieving the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees. This

Siraj*, 13, on his way to school with his siblings and cousins, Bekaa valley, Lebanon

PHOTO: JONATHAN HYAMS/SAVE THE CHILDREN

will require the fulfilment of existing commitments and delivery of new meaningful, accountable and actionable pledges.

Recognising that many pledges are yet to be reported on, or are long-term processes which will be take many years to deliver, it is imperative that all pledge-makers report on the progress that has been achieved, identify barriers to implementation, and provide updated and costed delivery plans with measurable targets and indictors to track progress. All pledge-makers should also commit to report regular updates on their pledges (at least once a year).

To overcome the barriers many hosts governments have identified and to advance responsibility sharing, donors and the international community must prioritise matched pledges. This entails providing the financial, material or technical support host governments say they need to deliver on their policy commitments and overcome existing barriers.

Include, Improve, Invest: What has been delivered since 2019?

Despite the challenges many stakeholders have faced in implementing existing pledges, significant progress has been achieved to provide refugee children with quality education. This section looks at the pledges that were made and the progress that has been achieved against the three pillars in our *Time to Act* report.

At the 2019 Global Refugee Forum, a diverse range of actors made pledges to support refugee education. Just under a third of pledges (31%) were from states – with a similar proportion (35%) from NGOs. 12% of pledges were made by academics and researchers, and 9% came from the private sector, with the rest from other groups including international organisations, local authorities and faith-based organisations.[61] The proportion of education pledges submitted by states was significantly lower than the average for all sectors combined of just under half of all pledges (48%).

The nature of education pledges varied. Almost one-third were pledges of material and/or technical support, a quarter were financial pledges, and a similar proportion were legal or policy commitments.

One-third were multi-outcome pledges that address more than one level of education, mostly addressing both primary and secondary education.[62] Higher education had the highest number of pledges, with 36% of all education pledges. 68% of education pledges included a focus on either early childhood, primary or secondary education.

Here we outline progress made on pledges in line with the pillars set out in our 2018 *Time to Act* report.

1 Inclusion

Almost half of all education pledges had a focus on the inclusion of refugees in national education systems. Host governments have, however, faced challenges in overcoming practical barriers to this.

106 education pledges had a focus on inclusion, policy and planning.[63] This covered policy commitments, as well as commitments to strengthen implementation, planning, and data management and monitoring. Inclusion-related pledges accounted for more than three-quarters of all education pledges made by states (62 out of 81).

Many hosting governments committed to strengthen inclusive national policies through the implementation of specific policy actions.

The **Government of Guatemala** pledged to strengthen coordination with local authorities and educational institutions to enhance the inclusion of refugees in the national education system, in accordance with agreement 1753-2019 of the Ministry of Education, which allows for refugees who may not have full documentation of their studies abroad to be integrated into the education system. The pledge recognised that while the Ministerial agreement was already national policy, socialisation at the local and national levels is required for its full implementation. Removing such practical barriers to refugees enrolling into schools or learning centres is an essential step towards their inclusion in the national system.

Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)[†] member states made commitments to put the vision of the Djibouti Declaration, which includes far-reaching commitments to deliver quality education to refugees through the development of inclusive national education plans, into action.

The **Government of Kenya** pledged to increase support for refugee and host community education through implementation of the Education and Training Policy on the Inclusion of Refugees and

[†] The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) is a body of eight member states: Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, and Uganda (Eritrea is currently inactive).

Asylum-Seekers and a costed implementation plan. The achievement of this pledge remains contingent on international funding, and the latest update in December 2021 did not state how many of the intended 322,000 refugee and host community children had been reached.

Pledges also included the development of national policies and plans. The **Government of Chad** adopted a joint strategy with UNHCR for the full inclusion of refugees into the national education system by 2030. Since 2018, 96 schools and 10 formation centres attended by refugees have been integrated into the national system, and all schools attended by refugees now follow the national curriculum, rather than the Sudanese curriculum as was previously often the case, according to the Government's most recent update in July 2021.

Of the 106 pledges addressing inclusion, 11 have been fulfilled (10.4%) and 59 are in progress (56%). Those in progress include the **Government of Nigeria**'s commitment to ensure the enrolment of all school age refugee, internally displaced and returnee children in primary school by 2023 and the **Government of Egypt**'s commitment to ensure access to education for refugee children within the national education system in line with the national education strategy by 2030.

2 Improvement

Fewer pledges were made to ensure refugee and host community children are learning. This is despite the low learning outcomes and significant barriers to learning experienced by refugees.

Although there was some overlap with pledges that promoted inclusion in national education systems, foundational learning was not included as a distinct outcome area in the 2019 Global Framework for Refugee Education that was developed to inspire and articulate pledges.[64] This makes drawing conclusions on the number of pledges in this area more complex. It is welcome however, that the draft pledging framework developed for the 2023 Forum includes a focus on foundational learning as a cross-cutting priority.

Many stakeholders did make pledges in this crucial area. The **Government of South Sudan** pledged to address the bottlenecks refugee and host community children face in accessing quality learning as part of its commitment to increase access to quality education for refugees and host communities and reduce school drop-out by 2024. This included improvements to school infrastructure, providing teacher training in refugee-hosting areas, and promoting psychosocial wellbeing.

The **Government of Rwanda** pledged to upgrade schools in refugee-hosting districts and increase the number of classrooms as part of its efforts to expand access to and improve the quality of education for refugee and host community children. As of February 2023, 282 classrooms had been constructed, with UNHCR and its partners providing learning materials, uniforms and support for school feeding programmes.

Pledges were also made to strengthen the capacity of teachers to deliver quality education to refugee and host community children. 11.6% of all education pledges included a teacher training or professional development component.[65] A further 7.6% of pledges included psychosocial support. These included social and emotional learning and responding to the psychosocial needs of displaced teachers and second-hand trauma of working with displaced children in both formal and non-formal education environments.

The **Government of Djibouti** pledged to improve the training, certification and remuneration of 60% of refugee teachers in the national budget by 2023. The pledge recognised that strengthening the professional development, remuneration and inclusion of refugee teachers in the national education workforce would yield improvements in the enabling environment for children's learning.

The **Lego Foundation** established and scaled up their Play Matters programme, focusing on high-quality play-based pre- and primary learning for refugee, host community and internally displaced children across Uganda, Ethiopia and Tanzania. **Like many others, this pledge has been adapted to be more responsive to children's needs during the COVID-19 pandemic.** It was expanded to include the provision of home-based and distance play-based learning programming, mental health and psychosocial support, and back to school support.

Over a quarter of education pledges made reference to equity.[66] Gender was the primary equity consideration, with 22% of all pledges explicitly addressing gender, including a focus on women and girls, gender sensitivity and gender disaggregated data. The **Governments of Australia, Kenya, South Sudan** and **Sweden** all committed to gender-sensitive education provision in their pledges. Just 4% of pledges addressed children and people with disabilities.

PHOTO: BELINDA GOLDSMITH/ SAVE THE CHILDREN

Larey* and her three children fled from their village in northwest Nigeria when it was attacked by armed criminals. They now live in a refugee camp in neighbouring Niger.

3 Investment

Over 100 education pledges included a financial component. However, resources were not always matched to the policy commitments made by hosting governments and less than one-third of education pledges that included financing have so far been fulfilled.[67]

Financing and resources had the highest number of associated pledges (156), accounting for 70% of all education pledges.[68] **104 pledges included a financing component.** The remainder included either a materials component or technical support.

Donor financing and investment accounted for 15% of all financing and resourcing pledges, while domestic financing accounted for 8%.

Over a quarter of all pledges were scholarship-based, largely supporting access to higher education. The scope of scholarships varied considerably, for example the **Government of Azerbaijan** pledged one state-supported tertiary education scholarship per year to a refugee student; while the **Governments of Germany** and **Denmark** fulfilled pledges of €13.4 million and 10 million Danish krone to tertiary education through UNHCR's DAFI higher education scholarship programme.

The **Danish Government** has delivered 25 million Danish krone through UNICEF to support the implementation of the Uganda Education Response Plan for Refugees and Host Communities (ERP). This plan to provide quality schooling for more than half a million refugee and host community children is a first of its kind – no other country has ever published such an ambitious education plan that specifically aims to ensure that refugee children receive an equitable education alongside host community children. While Uganda invested domestic resources in the plan, and was supported by donors, the ERP, budgeted at US$389 million, was only 58% funded.[69] The ERP has since been updated to align with the Uganda National Development Plan II, with a new aim to reach over 690,000 children, at a cost of US$450.71 million, but donor funding is urgently needed to implement it.[70]

The **Government of Namibia** pledged to allocate N$50 million for the education of refugees in Osire refugee settlement, including payment of teachers' salaries and provision of learning materials from 2019–23. As of June 2022, 1,966 learners were attending school, 344 were attending kindergarten and 46 teachers were supported.

Germany, Norway and **Ireland** all fulfilled their pledges of financial support for refugee education. Norway contributed 10 million Norwegian kroner to UNHCR for implementation of their education strategy. Germany contributed €16 million to Education Cannot Wait (ECW) in 2019, and another €11.8 million in 2020. Ireland had contributed €6.85 million to ECW by the end of 2021. Both countries significantly scaled up their contributions at ECW's High-Level Financing Conference in February 2023.

Five things Save the Children wants to see at the 2023 Global Refugee Forum

A quality education for every refugee child is within reach, and we know what is required to make it happen. The 2023 Global Refugee Forum is an opportunity to take stock of how well previous pledges were implemented, and get progress back on track towards meeting the urgent educational needs of refugee children.

Save the Children has high expectations for the second Global Refugee Forum. We want to see decisive action in five areas:

1 Make the promise of the Global Compact on Refugees a reality

The international community has already committed to timely access to education for refugee children. The Refugee Convention (and Protocol) and the Global Compact provide blueprints for governments, international organisations and other stakeholders to ensure that refugees, as well as host communities, get the support they require to meet their education needs.

Specifically, the Compact calls for: "more direct financial support… to minimise the time refugee boys and girls spend out of education, ideally a maximum of three months after arrival".

The Global Refugee Forum (GRF) is a central process for enacting this commitment, and for the international community to recognise its shared responsibility alongside refugee-hosting countries. This year's Forum is the opportunity to put the international solidarity and responsibility sharing principle that is at the heart of the GRF into action. **We must not waste this opportunity.**

2 Put refugee children at the heart of the Global Refugee Forum

The safe and meaningful participation of refugees, including refugee children and young people, must be at the heart of this year's GRF. At the first GRF, out of over 3,000 participants, only 70 were refugees, and to our knowledge very few were children. The 2023 GRF must ensure that refugees and refugee children and young people are adequately represented and supported to participate meaningfully in the lead-up to and during the Forum, including through virtual and child-friendly platforms, and in GRF preparations at national and global levels. For example, member states and other stakeholders should include young refugees in their delegations to the Forum.

Governments and other pledging entities should ensure safe, accessible, inclusive, child-friendly platforms and processes that empower children and young people, and refugee-led organisations and networks, to participate meaningfully in the design, implementation and review of existing and future pledges. This should include consultations with refugee children and communities to identify their needs and priorities, including barriers they face in accessing education on the same terms as host community children, so that pledges reflect solutions to overcome these barriers. All stakeholders should review their pledges with a child-sensitive lens and adapt them accordingly. This should take into account the diversity within communities, recognising that forced displacement affects children differently depending on their age, gender, disability, and other characteristics.

Refugee children and young people are experts on the challenges they face, and to truly understand and overcome the barriers to refugee children's learning they must have equitable opportunities to engage in the decisions that affect their futures. They want and have the right to have their voices heard and be able to hold governments and other bodies to account for the commitments they have made.

3 Prioritise matched pledges to advance responsibility sharing

Three-quarters of refugees live in low- and middle-income countries where education systems are weak and struggle to meet the needs of marginalised communities. Even when refugee children are notionally allowed to access the national education system, national policies are often not implemented at the local and school levels. Hosting governments need urgent resources to overcome these barriers and increase the number of refugees who are learning from a quality education.

Matching translates the principle of responsibility sharing into action, providing a concrete and coordinated way for traditional and non-traditional partners to support and resource the commitments made by host countries. Through matched pledges, donors provide the financial, material or technical support necessary for host governments to deliver on their commitments.

A small number of low- and middle-income host countries are bearing almost all the responsibility for educating the world's refugees. **But educating refugee children is a global public good and must be a shared global responsibility.** It's time to tip the scales.

4 Pledges must be meaningful, accountable and actionable

233 education pledges were made at the first Global Refugee Forum. Yet our analysis revealed that less than a quarter of those pledges have been fulfilled. For 26% of pledges, the implementation status is unknown.

Monitoring, tracking and reporting mechanisms for pledges have been inadequate. It is imperative that all pledges include timelines for completion and measurable targets and indicators so that progress can be properly tracked. In situations where a timeline is not possible (for example, an NGO implementing a project that is contingent on funding), the pledge should include clear milestones by which progress will be tracked. We also urge all pledge-makers to report regular updates (at least once a year). Where pledges are restatements of existing commitments, these should be identified and included in the tracking of progress.

5 Focus on the money needed to ensure all refugees have access to quality education

Opening education to all refugee children and including them in national education systems can be achieved at an estimated annual cost of US$4.85 billion globally. **What's missing is the financing to make this happen.**

Host country governments must be supported to develop and implement policies to ensure that refugee children are included in the national education system or in accredited non-formal education when that's not possible. While host governments have a responsibility to ensure that inclusive national policies are implemented, it is incumbent on the international community to mobilise the funding needed to close the refugee education financing gap.

The final section of this report outlines why a focus on financing at the 2023 Global Refugee Forum is urgently needed and makes recommendations for donors and other stakeholders.

3 Mobilising the funding to educate the world's refugee children

Allowing the education of millions of refugee children and young people to be cut short by displacement is not just ethically indefensible, it is economically ruinous. Equipped with the skills and knowledge that come with quality education, refugee children and young people can seize economic opportunities and secure a decent livelihood when they grow up. Investing in their education now offers the prospect of high social and economic returns.

The failure to invest has the opposite effect. We know that many refugee children and young people are forced out of education and into destitution, child labour and early marriage.

There are many policy and political barriers to refugee children being included in education systems. But lack of financing is one of the most critical. The general absence of funding is exacerbated by a lack of predictable, long-term funding, a lack of clear financing targets and resource mobilisation plans, and poor coordination among donors.

We challenge donor governments and international agencies to do better

Education systems around the world, especially in low- and middle-income countries, are underfunded and failing to meet the needs of children, especially the most marginalised.†

Many refugees live in low-income countries, including Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Sudan and Uganda. **Hosting large refugee populations puts a huge strain on these countries' already stretched services.**

Bilateral donors collectively reduced their direct aid to education by US$359 million from 2019 to 2020, according to the World Bank and UNESCO.[71] Countries prioritised health and social protection spending over education at the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, and now additional aid is being directed towards mitigating the consequences of the war in Ukraine and other crises. Education is also one of the least funded humanitarian areas, receiving just 3.1% of global humanitarian financing in 2021, with appeals for education receiving just 22% of the funds required.[72]

Given the magnitude of the current global refugee crisis, the lack of predictable, long-term development and humanitarian financing is a serious challenge. Humanitarian activities delivered through UN agencies and international and local NGOs are overwhelmingly supported through short-term funding cycles, with spending earmarked against projects that reflect donor priorities.

Resources and attention are being diverted away from some of the world's most neglected refugee responses

UNHCR's *Underfunded Report*, published in September 2022, highlights twelve chronically underfunded large hosting countries, where operations are less than 50% funded and responses are blighted by donor fatigue trigged by the proliferation of conflicts and humanitarian crises around the world.[73] A lack of funds from donor states forced UNHCR to cut its global budget twice in 2022 – from US$802 million to US$726 million and then to US$710 million – leading to devastating cuts to its lifesaving aid to refugees.[74] UNWRA has also faced a funding crisis for several years, putting the very existence of the agency mandated to respond to the needs of 5.6 million Palestinian refugees across the Middle East at risk.[75]

† In April 2023, UNESCO published new costings that estimated that there is an average national financing gap of US$97 billion per year in the 79 low- and lower-middle-income countries. Source: UNESCO (2023) Can countries afford their national SDG 4 benchmarks? Paris: Global Education Monitoring Report

A significant increase in the use of official development assistance by donor governments to cover 'in-donor refugee costs' – costs associated with hosting refugees in their own country – has further come at the expense of some of the poorest host countries. The Centre for Global Development estimates global in-country costs of hosting Ukrainian refugees could amount to US$30 billion in the first year.[76] Countries are allowed to do this for twelve months under OECD DAC rules,[77] however it appears some are stretching the rules to the maximum. **While Governments are legally and morally obliged to support people fleeing conflict and humanitarian crises within their borders, donors should not fund a response to one crisis at the expense of others.**

Refugee-hosting countries face an education financing challenge

Refugee hosting countries are facing inordinate financing challenges, both due to the lack of domestic spending on education and inadequate international financing. This means that under-resourced education systems are over-stretched and this challenges refugees' ability to be included in national education systems.

In 2021, the World Bank and UNHCR updated the estimated annual cost of educating refugee children in low- and middle-income countries that Save the Children originally calculated in *Time to Act*. **Their updated costings estimated this cost at US$4.85 billion globally.**[78] This is a pre-COVID estimate and is likely to increase with the additional costs associated with COVID-19 education interventions, such as the roll out of remote learning and upgrading of school sanitation facilitates, and to compensate for lost learning and school drop-out.

These costs should not just be viewed as an investment in refugee children, but also in the children in hosting countries, who will benefit from the expansion and investment in education services. The principle of inclusive education, in this case, opening national education systems up to refugee children, can also lead to better services for local communities in host countries.

Now, the intersecting threats of COVID-19, conflict and climate change threaten to push back education progress further and widen the financing gap. In many low- and lower-middle-income countries these crises are happening concurrently and exacerbating one another, with the greatest impacts being felt by the most marginalised households and communities.

Government mobilisation of domestic public resources is the most sustainable source of education funding in the long-term, with the Education Commission estimating that 97% of future funding for education across low- and middle-income countries must come from domestic sources.[79] Unfortunately, only half of low-income countries and two-thirds of lower-middle-income countries spend either at least 4–6% of GDP or 15–20% of their budget on education,[80] as recommended in the Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action.[81]

Lower-income countries need to mobilise more funding for education, however economic growth across these countries is expected to remain below pre-pandemic levels.[82] This will impede governments' abilities to raise the funding that is required to expand access to and the quality of education for refugee and host community children.

Worsening debt burdens undermine governments' ability to fund education

Further, worsening debt burdens are threatening the ability of low- and middle-income governments to allocate sufficient resources towards education, a situation only anticipated to worsen. Currently, more than half of lower-income countries are either in or at high risk of debt distress – meaning governments are unable to fulfil their financial obligations and require debt relief.[83]

The IMF and World Bank publish Debt Sustainability Analyses for lower-income countries eligible for concessional financing through the Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust.[†] **Of the lower-income countries in the top 20 refugee-hosting countries with data, one is at low risk (Bangladesh) two are at moderate risk (Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo), two are at high risk (Ethiopia and Chad) and one is currently in debt distress (Sudan).** The Debt Sustainability Analyses do not cover the

[†] The PRGT is the International Monetary Fund's main vehicle for providing concessional loans to low-income countries.

middle-income and high-income top refugee-hosting countries. However, this does not mean that they are not also facing significant debt burdens – in 2020, both Lebanon and Ecuador defaulted on their sovereign debt,[84] and many commentators worry Pakistan is now on the brink of defaulting as well.[85]

These debt burdens have significant impacts on governments' ability to properly fund their education systems – **4 out of 14 of the top low- and middle-income refugee-hosting countries, nearly a third, spent more on servicing external debt than they did on education in 2020.**[†]

Top refugee-hosting countries: spending on education vs spending on external debt servicing

Country	Income group	Spending on education (% GDP)	External debt servicing (% GDP)
Türkiye	Upper middle income	3.4%	2.5%
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	Upper middle income	3.0%	0.04%
Jordan	Upper middle income	2.9%	5.7%
Colombia	Upper middle income	5.0%	2.6%
Occupied Palestinian territory	Lower middle income	N/A	N/A
Germany	High income	N/A	N/A
Pakistan	Lower middle income	2.3%	2.8%
Uganda	Low income	2.6%	0.8%
Lebanon[‡]	Lower middle income	N/A	N/A
Russian Federation	Upper middle income	3.7%	4.1%
Sudan	Low income	1.7%	0.5%
Peru	Upper middle income	4.3%	0.6%
Poland	High income	N/A	N/A
Bangladesh	Lower middle income	1.1%	0.6%
Ethiopia	Low income	5.6%	1.8%
France	High income	N/A	N/A
Chad	Low income	2.9%	1.1%
Syria	Low income	N/A	N/A
Ecuador	Upper middle income	4.1%	5.2%
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Low income	1.7%	0.6%

Sources: Education Finance Watch 2022 data for government spending on education, World Bank International Debt Statistics data for debt service on external debt, and World Bank World Development Indicators for GDP

[†] 2020 data on external debt servicing was used for this analysis to match the latest available education spending data. However, for many countries debt burdens have grown since 2020 – for example, Chad's public and publicly guaranteed spending on external debt was US$114 million in 2020 but grew to at least US$541 million in 2022. This analysis, therefore, likely underestimates the impact debt burdens are currently having on education spending.

[‡] Lebanon was excluded from this analysis because the government defaulted on US$1.2 billion worth of Eurobonds in 2020. It is unclear if the debt statistics from that time reflect what was actually paid or what was due to be paid before this default.

Interest payments on external debt alone by the low- and middle-income countries in the top 20 refugee-hosting countries totalled more than US$23 billion in 2020 – this is enough to send every refugee child in low- and middle-income countries to school for nearly five years.[86] It is clear that debt relief could play a critical role in mobilising the scale of funding required to ensure every refugee child has access to education.

Securing the funding

The principles of fair burden-sharing and the commitments undertaken by donors for refugees provide a strong rationale for support from the international community. Refugee-hosting countries are responding with incredible generosity, opening up their borders and national systems. In stark contrast, the international community is responding with increasing hostility, while reducing aid budgets, leaving some of the poorest countries in the world to shoulder the responsibility and the cost of educating the world's refugees.

Progressive tax and domestic resource mobilisation are the most sustainable and locally accountable sources of financing for education. National and subnational governments must implement progressive tax reform policies that increase the size of their budgets and increase the share of the budget for education to meet needs and fulfil international commitments, including allocating at least 20% of the budget or 6% of GDP to education. However, lower-income countries cannot, and should not be expected to, fund the additional costs of refugee education from their own public resources when they are already struggling to provide quality education to their populations.

Predictable, long-term and sustainable financing is urgently required in these countries to underpin the inclusive policies many have already put in place and to address the protracted refugee crises that they are responding to.

Therefore, ahead of this year's Global Refugee Forum, **this report focuses on the role the international community can play in mobilising funding to support refugee-hosting countries to provide inclusive, equitable and quality education for refugee children**.

Although the way existing resources are used to further educational outcomes could be improved, fundamentally education needs more funding if we are to achieve the aims set out in Sustainable Development Goal 4, to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. The Education Commission found that under the most optimistic scenarios of domestic resource mobilisation and increased aid, there would still be a gap of at least US$20 billion by 2030. This is especially true for lower-income refugee-hosting countries, where the burden on already under-resourced education systems is the greatest.

Children from Ukraine do their homework in a digital learning centre in Lodz, Poland

PHOTO: PAUL WU/DEC

PHOTO: NADÈGE MAZARS/SAVE THE CHILDREN

Sergio's story "We must be brave, we must fight for our dreams"

Sergio* is a 16-year-old living in Maicao, Colombia, with his family after fleeing Venezuela. When the COVID-19 crisis turned their lives upside down a second time, Save the Children helped the family stay afloat, providing education support, cash, and guidance on their rights.

Sergio dreams of becoming a forensic doctor. This dream is threatened by his inability to secure the identification documents he needs to enrol in college in Colombia. He says, *"If I do not study, I cannot achieve my goals"*. In Colombia and elsewhere, legal systems which fail to account for the needs of those who have fled their home countries undermine their ability to build new futures in their host countries.

Recommendations

Save the Children calls on the international community to mobilise the funding needed to meet the annual US$4.85 billion cost of providing education to refugees and strengthening education systems in low- and middle-income countries. Resources should be distributed equitably, with a focus on the poorest countries and the education needs of the most marginalised children and young people, including the multiple and intersecting barriers that many refugee children face in accessing quality education and learning.

This report sets out recommendations to the international community on how to support some of the poorest refugee-hosting countries to deliver education that will benefit refugee and host community children alike.

These recommendations are in line with commitments made by national governments and the international community at the Transforming Education Summit in September 2022. The Call to Action on Education Financing adopted at that Summit recognised that while public domestic investment in education is by far the main source of financing for education and must increase, international financing for education remains critically important for low- and lower-middle income countries, particularly to address the impact of protracted crises.

The Call to Action on Education in Crisis Situations included further commitments to protect and improve external financing to enable all crisis-affected children and young people, including refugees, to have access to inclusive, quality, and safe learning opportunities. Specifically, countries committed to "adapting existing mechanisms and developing and resourcing additional multi-year financing mechanisms for lower middle-income countries to support them to eliminate barriers to national education systems for those outside the reach of current domestic and international financing, such as refugees and stateless populations – in line with the policies of hosting governments".

Recommendations for donors and international development partners

Donors and international development partners should:

- **commit to funding the delivery of safe, quality education for refugee children**, providing predictable, long-term, multi-year funding. Financing must flow as directly as possible to local and national actors.
- **fulfil commitments to provide 0.7% of national income as official development assistance, increase education's share of development aid to 15%, and ensure flexible humanitarian funding** to respond to education needs from the onset of a crisis.
- **ensure the Global Partnership for Education and Education Cannot Wait are fully funded.**
- **provide timely debt relief for countries whose debt burdens are threatening their ability to adequately invest in public services** through a strengthened system for global governance of sovereign debt. Debt relief mechanisms should be transparent, inclusive of all creditors including the private sector, and address fears of credit rating downgrades for debtor nations seeking relief.
- **make new lines of long-term credit with concessional and sustainable interest rates available** to low- and lower-middle-income countries, without austerity conditions attached. The goal should be to enable transparent, long-term financing that can be used to invest in services and programmes for children. In order to do this the IMF and multilateral development banks must optimise their balance sheets by implementing

relevant reforms including those from the independent Capital Adequacy Frameworks (CAF) review commissioned by the G20, and donors must support these institutions through further guarantees and capital.

- **accelerate recycling of special drawing rights (SDRs) to low- and lower-middle-income countries**, including ensuring that new mechanisms like the Resilience and Sustainability Trust operate effectively and without imposition of austerity and other conditionalities and explore options for recycling through multilateral development banks. High-income countries must urgently fulfil commitments to recycle US$100 billion of unused SDRs to lower-income countries in need, and make ambitious future commitments to go beyond this.

Recommendations for multilateral organisations

A joint pledge to work together to close the refugee education financing gap

At the 2019 Global Refugee Forum, Education Cannot Wait (ECW), the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and the World Bank jointly pledged "to work together to close the education financing gap and provide technical assistance in refugee-hosting countries". They also pledged "to 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 towards advancing this pledge, which runs until 2025, the three partners launched a sequenced joint action plan in October 2020. Phase one included financial analysis, identifying and setting out plans within priority countries, and developing a collaborative approach.

The partners committed to roll out annual joint advocacy and financing plans across countries where all three organisations work and where there are significant out-of-school refugee populations. However, we understand that was scaled down to three countries. It is difficult to identify what progress has been achieved in delivering this joint pledge due to a lack of regular reporting. No doubt the ability to deliver this pledge as it was imagined in 2019 was subsequently hindered by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

We urge GPE, ECW, and the World Bank to renew their commitment to this joint pledge to improve the coordination and financing of their efforts in support of education for refugees and host communities. The partners committed to presenting a full progress report at the second Global Refugee Forum. We urge them to do so, alongside an updated action plan up to 2025, and call on them to publish regular progress reports thereafter.

Global Partnership for Education

The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) is the world's only education partnership and fund dedicated exclusively to quality education in lower-income countries, and a unique, multi-stakeholder partnership. Core to GPE's model is that funding priorities are agreed at the country level, whereby partners such as donors, multilateral organisations, INGOs and civil society have mutual accountability for working together with governments to make decisions on the strategic and equitable use of GPE grant funding.

GPE's 2025 strategic plan identifies support to countries affected by fragility and conflict as a key priority. GPE works with governments to include refugees in education systems and helps strengthen capacity and resources to meet the education needs of refugees. GPE partner countries are home to almost 4 million refugee children.[87]

In 2019, at the Global Refugee Forum, GPE announced the expansion of its accelerated funding mechanism, which would unlock up to US$250 million in rapid funding for education in countries experiencing humanitarian emergencies.[88] The mechanism allows countries to respond to urgent education needs. It can allow countries to address the needs of refugees, displaced populations and host communities, and create resilient education systems that can respond to emergency situations. The announcement allowed eligible countries to receive 20% of their grant in accelerated funding, while keeping their maximum country allocation.

In 2022, GPE reported that to date, **US$79 million has been used in accelerated funding to support the education of refugees**, with the remaining US$171 million supporting the needs of internally displaced children and other crisis-affected learners.

Of the 27 GPE partner countries with a high refugee burden (large number of refugees in the country or potential for many returnees) there are seven partnership compacts either finalised or in draft: Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, Somalia-Federal, and

Somaliland. The partnership compact articulates how a GPE partner country intends to work with others around a priority reform with the potential to catalyse system-wide change.

Partnership compacts in DRC, Kenya and Uganda all highlight refugees in reference to the priority reform. In Somaliland and Somalia-Federal, there is a clear emphasis on addressing the needs of displaced children in the country with specific outcomes and outputs linked to the priority reform, and in Rwanda, where refugees are included in the system, the partnership compact references refugees in the data section.

Education Out Loud, GPE's fund for advocacy and social accountability is also promoting refugee education and is active in 37 fragile and conflict-affected situations, including programmes in Yemen and Somalia promoting access to quality education for refugees and other marginalised children.

Global funds working together to fund and deliver refugee education: two examples

South Sudan

In South Sudan, ECW and GPE work together to ensure international education financing targets those worst affected by emergencies and protracted crises. When one-third of the country was flooded in 2022, GPE made US$10 million available at the country's request to mitigate flood impact on education.

In partnership with the Ministry of General Education and Instruction, the Education Cluster, Coordinating Agencies, UK and USA, and other key global and national partners, GPE allocated this US$10 million towards the ECW-facilitated Multi-Year Resilience Programme 2 (MYRP-2), as additional financing to the US$40 million seed funding from ECW. This meant the GPE funding was fully integrated into the MYRP-2 scope of work, targeting of beneficiaries and grantee selection process. Country partners felt this made for a more efficient process.

The Programme has a focus on girls and children with disabilities, refugees and internally displaced people, and the transition from emergency response to development. The programme supports a package of interventions, including school fees, radio education, re-enrolment campaigns, teacher training – especially for female teachers – child protection and safe and protective learning. The MYRP is aligned with the country's education sector plan, which the bulk of GPE resources is supporting in areas of improving access, quality, and system management.

ECW and GPE's support to South Sudan is the humanitarian-development nexus in action. The Multi-Year Resilience Programme's focus on humanitarian response and early recovery provided a framework for GPE to fund and help build resilience by mitigating flood impacts on education. GPE's ongoing programme in South Sudan (now commonly termed GPE II to distinguish it from the earlier GPE I programme for the period 2018 to 2021) financed by a US$41.7 million grant is designed to ensure that by the end of 2023, the number of boys and girls who are out of school in target areas decreases by 15%, while ensuring increased equitable access to quality education through working closely with other programmes.

Kenya

In Kenya, GPE and the World Bank are working closely together through the Primary Education Equity in Learning (PEEL) Program, which includes an initial US$140 million International Development Association (IDA) credit, an IDA grant of US$60 million from the Window for Host Communities and Refugees, and an additional grant of US$117.1 million from GPE, which includes a contribution of US$10 million from LEGO Foundation.

The PEEL Program supports refugee education through the following interventions: results-based school grants in refugee and host schools in Dadaab, Kakuma, and Kalobeyei; national sample-based learning assessments in refugee schools; refugee and host student scholarships; and school meals. These programme elements have been designed and developed through a collaborative process, convening humanitarian and development partners in refugee education; for example, the Kenyan Ministry of Education collaborated with UNHCR and implementing partners to revise the criteria for school grants, to take better account of the needs of refugee schools.

In 2022, 43% of National Education Coalitions supported by Education Out Loud had among their members at least one organisation representing internally displaced persons or refugees.

The Global Partnership for Education should:

- **explore how to leverage its existing grant mechanisms to further progress commitments made in the 2019 joint pledge**, in line with the Global Compact on Refugees. For example by:
  - **promoting the integration of refugee education in national education systems** and the Partnership Compact of host countries to incentivise systems strengthening and quality education for all;
  - **continuing to support eligible refugee-hosting countries to access additional funding by leveraging the GPE multiplier mechanism**, as has already happened in Uganda, Kenya, Djibouti and Ethiopia, recognising the additional costs of ensuring that out-of-school refugee children are reached and supported to enrol and stay in school within the national education system.
- **ensure the equitable engagement of refugee children and young people, host communities and local refugee-led organisations in education sector planning** to ensure national education systems address the specific needs of refugee learners.
- **ensure that its Knowledge and Innovation Exchange and Education Out Loud fund support inclusive and equitable quality education for all, including refugee children.** This should include the development of global public goods, capacity building, advocacy and peer exchange related to refugee education and support to activities that seek to further the inclusion of refugees in national education systems.

Education Cannot Wait

ECW is the only global fund dedicated to education in emergencies and protracted crises. ECW and its partners implement programmes in many countries that are hosting the largest numbers of refugees, including Colombia, Pakistan, Lebanon, Uganda, and Bangladesh.

ECW has three funding windows – the Acceleration Facility, the First Emergency Response Window and the Multi-Year Resilience Programme (MYRP) Window – that between them address some of the critical challenges in quality investment in refugee education.

ECW has reached 2.07 million refugees – 30% of all children reached since its inception in 2016.[89] In 2021, 1.1 million refugees, including 360,000 child and adolescent refugees in the occupied Palestinian territory, were supported through ECW's regular programming. This represented 29% of total children reached, down from 38% in 2020, although this represented a higher figure compared to the 876,917 refugees reached in 2020. **The share of funding allocated to refugees also increased to US$38.5 million, up from US$20 million in 2020.**

At the first Global Refugee Forum, ECW committed to facilitate and invest in multi-year programmes for refugee and host community children. Taking as a model the Education Response Plan for Refugees and Host Communities in Uganda, which was developed and launched with support from ECW under the MYRP funding window, ECW pledged to facilitate and invest in similar MYRPs.

Earlier this year ECW renewed its MYRP in Uganda to align with the objectives of Uganda's Education Response Plan for Refugees and Host Communities II. The new programme will support the inclusion of more than 122,000 refugees in the national education system and seeks to catalyse US$180 million in aligned funding to deliver the second phase of the Education Response Plan. ECW also recently launched a MYRP in Pakistan to improve access to quality education for at least 155,000 refugee and crisis-affected children and adolescents.

In aligning financing so that refugee educational needs are integrated in education sectors plans, ECW is making an important contribution to shifting

education financing modalities from parallel service delivery to the implementation of national policies, and from project-type interventions to multi-year development financing.

Education Cannot Wait should:

- **provide and facilitate support from its partners to refugee-hosting countries for the development of multi-year refugee and host community education response plans.**
  - ECW should also provide its own funding for these plans and work to mobilise additional resources to implement them.
  - This should include funding to support quality coordination in refugee and mixed contexts, by Refugee Coordination Mechanisms and refugee education working groups, Education Clusters and other coordination mechanisms, which is critical for inclusive, accountable and needs-based education provision.
- **meaningfully consult refugee and host community children and young people in the development of such plans** and ensure that grantees provide equal opportunities for them to participate in the design, implementation and evaluation of all ECW-funded programmes.
- **ensure that its First Emergency Responses provide immediate education interventions in the initial phase of a refugee crisis** to ensure children are able to re-enter safe learning spaces as quickly as possible, reduce the likelihood of extended periods out of school and the associated protection risks. Resources should flow as directly as possible to local and national NGOs, including through funding local leadership of coordination groups.
- **ensure that programmes supported through its Acceleration Facility systematically include considerations of the specific needs of refugee children and contexts.**

World Bank

The World Bank is a major player in the international refugee response architecture. The International Development Association (IDA) is the part of the World Bank that helps the world's poorest countries. The Window for Host Communities and Refugees (WHR) was established as part of the IDA's financing mechanism for low-income countries.

US$2.4 billion has been allocated to the WHR with the intention that it be used for development programming that supports refugees and the communities that host large numbers of them over three years from July 2022. The Window provides additional allocations of IDA funds for projects targeting refugees and their hosts; this avoids asking governments to divert their usual country allocations.

Although this represents less than 3% of IDA financing available to low-income countries, it represents a considerable injection of funds into refugee responses.

The World Bank should:

- **stimulate demand for education funding**, especially from countries that are eligible for the Window for Host Communities and Refugees under IDA 20 and with an eye toward the IDA 21 replenishment.
- **update the Refugee Policy Review Framework methodology to include children as a cross-sector issue.**
- **commit to supporting the development and financing of multi-year refugee and host community education response plans.**

Conclusion: A fresh chance to provide refugee children the education they were promised

Five years on from the adoption of the Global Compact on Refugees, refugee children still do not have access to the education they were promised. The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected refugee children and further exacerbated the challenges they face in accessing quality learning. The pandemic has also significantly affected implementation of many of the pledges made in support of refugee education at the first Global Refugee Forum.

The barriers and threats to education for refugees and host community children continue to increase. Conflict, climate change and the hunger crisis are driving displacement rates at unprecedented speed. These multiple and intersecting crises show no sign of slowing down and will continue to shatter records. Having already lost their homes, refugee children are losing their education and their hopes for a brighter future. Yet their resilience and will to learn are impressive. They are demanding that we act and deliver the brighter future that was promised to them.

This report shows that, despite the setbacks of recent years, it remains well within our reach to fulfil the vision of the Global Compact on Refugees. **However, that requires a fundamental change in how the international community funds education for the world's refugees.**

A small number of low- and middle-income countries are bearing the overwhelming responsibility for educating the world's refugees. They have responded with incredible generosity, opening their borders and national systems, without the support they need and deserve. This must change. The international community must put the principle of responsibility sharing, which is the heart of the Global Compact, into action by funding education for the world's refugees.

Save the Children calls on the international community to mobilise the funding needed to meet the annual US$4.85 billion cost of providing education to refugees and strengthening education systems in low- and middle-income countries. This is not just an investment in the future of the world's refugees but also in the children in hosting countries, who will benefit from improved education services.

There are many policy and political barriers that must be overcome to ensure access to education for refugee children on the same terms as host community children. But this report has highlighted why financing is one of the most critical. **Without mobilising sufficient funding, the world's promises on refugee education will never be realised.**

This year's Global Refugee Forum is our chance to overcome that barrier and provide hope to the world's refugees.

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