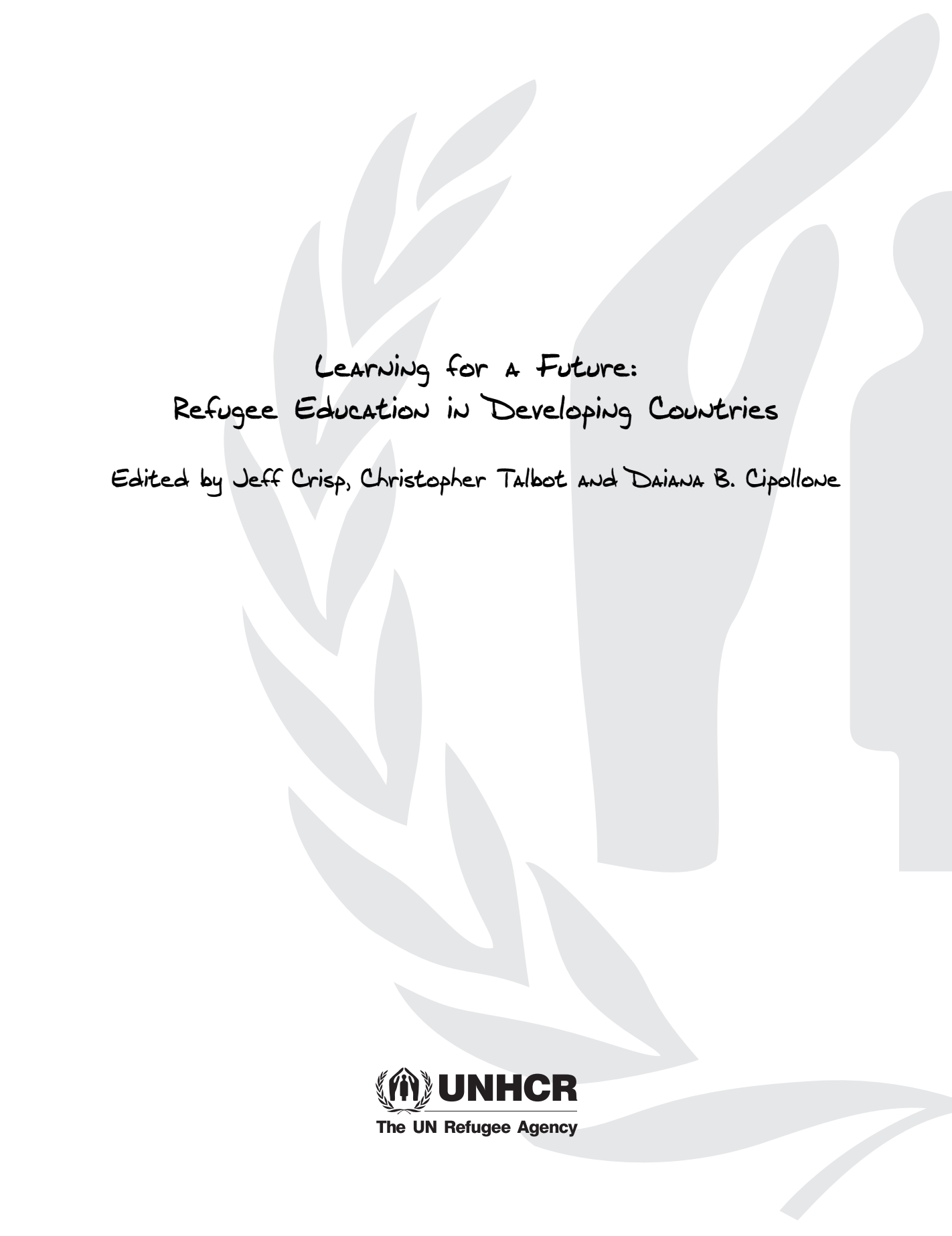


Learning for a Future: Refugee Education in Developing Countries





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Edited by Jeff Crisp, Christopher Talbot and DAIANA B. Cipollone



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

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Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit
Health and Community Development Section
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

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Foreword

Contrary to popular opinion, visiting a refugee camp or settlement is frequently an inspiring experience. For while refugees undoubtedly suffer a great deal of hardship and trauma, they also show tremendous determination to make the best of a bad situation and to prepare for the day when they can resume a normal way of life.

This determination is to be seen most clearly in the very high value which refugees place on all forms of education. Indeed, experience shows that once refugees have met their basic need for food, water and shelter, their primary concern is to ensure that their children can go to school.

Tragically, the international community has tended to place less value on education than refugees themselves. With humanitarian needs growing in many parts of the world, the funding available for refugee assistance programmes has become progressively tighter. In many situations, this has meant that the resources available for education have declined.

It is impossible to calculate the immense costs that are incurred by depriving refugees of education. A refugee who goes without education cannot look forward to a more productive and prosperous future. A refugee who is unable to attend school or a vocational training course is more likely to become frustrated and involved in illegitimate or military activities. A refugee who remains illiterate and inarticulate will be at a serious disadvantage in defending his or her human rights.

The education of refugees is an important but neglected humanitarian issue. I therefore welcome the publication of this stimulating new book, and hope that it will be instrumental in bringing new ideas, information and resources to the challenge of providing education to the world's refugees.

Ruud Lubbers
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

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The papers presented in the volume were commissioned by UNHCR and presented at a March 2001 workshop on 'Refugee Education in Developing Countries: Policy and Practice', kindly hosted by the George Washington University in Washington D.C., in association with UNHCR's Washington office. The papers have been revised for publication, taking into account the workshop discussions, as well as comments submitted by UNHCR's Senior Education Officer, Christopher Talbot.

The production of this book would not have been possible without the hard work of Elizabeth De Leon-Jones, who assisted with the organization of the workshop; Sue Mulcock, who administered the research programme; and Daiana B. Cipollone, who served as the volume's Production Editor.

Full details of UNHCR's research, evaluation and policy analysis activities can be found on the UNHCR website, www.unhcr.ch.

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Preface

Healthy, cognitive and emotional development of children and adolescents is promoted by a secure environment and opportunities for learning. Yet there are many hundreds of thousands of children living in refugee camps and settlements, or internally displaced, whose security has been shattered, often violently, and who have been separated from friends and family members. Education provides a vehicle for rebuilding refugee children's lives, through social interaction and gaining knowledge and skills for their future lives. For some, the alternative is depression and idleness, and for others, a range of anti-social activities and the thought of revenge through a renewal of armed conflict.

UNHCR decided therefore to review the state of the art, identifying key issues and best practices, to assist in updating its guidelines for assistance to refugee education in developing countries. Margaret Sinclair prepared an overview of education response in the early stages of emergency situations in developing countries. Jim Williams reviewed research findings on factors promoting educational quality in Third World schools, to identify principles that might raise the effectiveness of refugee schools. Tim Brown visited refugee schools in Nepal, to examine issues of quality. Marc Sommers assessed the impact of UNHCR's innovative peace education programmes for refugee schools and communities in Kenya and Uganda. Erik Lyby evaluated skills training programmes for refugees in Tanzania.

In the first paper, Margaret Sinclair reviews the rationale for education in situations of emergency and crisis, in terms of the protection and psychosocial needs of displaced children and adolescents, the need to maintain and develop study skills as a contribution to individual and national development, and the dissemination of key messages regarding health, environment, conflict resolution and citizenship. All these are aspects of the rights of the child. The paper identifies key principles such as rapid educational response, using a community-based approach, with capacity-building through training of refugee teachers, youth leaders and school management committees. The debate on 'education kits' is reviewed. The objective of promoting durable solutions implies a curriculum similar to that in the area of origin, including survival and peace-building skills. The paper examines ways of promoting the participation of girls, adolescents, persons with disability and ex-combatants in refugee education programmes. Special attention is given to the situation of ongoing education programmes that receive a continuous or intermittent influx of new refugees from an unstable neighbouring country or region. The study looks at these elements of education response in several recent emergency situations. Recommendations include the strengthening of institutional commitment and preparedness, in terms of policy, staffing arrangements and training, and funding.

The focus of Margaret Sinclair's paper is on emergency response. Often, however, refugee situations continue for years or even decades, while refugees are unable to return to their homeland in dignity and security. In this situation, efforts must be made progressively to raise the quality of schooling, building on the foundations laid by appropriate rapid education response. In his paper on school quality and attainment in developing countries, Jim Williams looks at research on education in developing countries, to see what lessons can be learned for refugee education in 'care and maintenance' situations. He notes that there are

many interpretations of educational quality, from schools' reputation to levels of inputs, from process to content and outcomes. He examines the core dimensions of quality, linking research findings to recommendations for policy. A first theme is the influence of individual characteristics on educational attainment, including student age, gender, health status, parental support and so on. At system level, school quality reflects supporting and enabling dimensions such as community support, teacher competencies and training, material inputs and administrative structures. Teaching and learning processes are, of course, the essence of school effectiveness and quality, and should include well-designed assessment procedures. A separate dimension of quality is inclusiveness, with gender-sensitive approaches and participation of vulnerable groups. The paper concludes with suggested strategies for improving school quality and attainment in refugee situations.

Tim Brown reviews the theme of quality from a field-based perspective. He begins by drawing attention to the lack of consistent donor funding to maintain even the low-cost models of refugee education supported by UNHCR. This is an ongoing hazard for refugee school programmes worldwide, due to unified multi-sectoral budgets at global and country level, which mean that a refugee education project's budget can be cut whenever there is a funding crisis anywhere in the world. The shortfall in funding experienced by UNHCR in recent years has prevented the introduction of consistent programming standards, as recommended in UNHCR's internal evaluation of the education sector in 1997. Tim Brown visited one of the better-resourced programmes, serving Bhutanese refugee children and young people in Nepal, but focused on the elements of quality that were transferable at limited cost. He structures his analysis in terms of actors, tools, environment and outcomes. He found that the strengths of the Bhutanese programme include positive attitudes towards education on the part of children and youth, families and teachers, strong systems for teacher training and support, and good organization, including provision for certification of students' achievements. Weaknesses of the programme reflect factors not under the control of the implementing agency, notably the refugee situation itself, the decline in funding and the lack of further education opportunities for school graduates. Tim Brown recommends that actors in other refugee situations learn from the Bhutanese case study by building on such strengths as refugees' strong motivation to succeed in education, refugee teacher training and support, and cost-effective approaches.

The humanitarian community can contribute to a more peaceful future simply by supporting refugee education and ensuring that it does not contain negative messages of hate and revenge for ethnic or other groups perceived as enemies. More positively, the education programme can incorporate life skills needed for conflict prevention. Marc Sommers looks at the conceptual framework underlying 'education for peace', a term not popular with some analysts but greatly appreciated by refugee participants seeking a peaceful solution to the conflicts that have led to their refugee status. He distinguishes the field of conflict resolution, which often involves adults seeking ways to end specific conflicts, from education for peace, which seeks to promote skills, understandings and attitudes promoting non-violent resolution of conflicts in general. He

endorses the approach taken by UNHCR, that peace education in schools needs to be supported by education for the wider community. This is happening in the peace education programmes recently developed by UNHCR in the refugee camps in Kenya, and subsequently being adapted for other countries, including Uganda. His field visits indicated that participants identified with the UNHCR peace education initiative, and that its impact was strongly positive. His suggestions for improvement focus on ensuring wider access to the programme, notably finding ways to increase female participation. The paper also urges measures to incorporate school drop-outs, including the use of mother tongue where needed and practicable. He recommends the inclusion of this model of peace education as a standard component of refugee education programming, and the development of specific UNHCR peace education guidelines for this purpose.

Out-of-school refugee adolescents and youth often face very limiting life situations, if there is little possibility for them to enter the labour force due to lack of skills, political or economic constraints. This can lead to anti-social behaviour, such as excessive drinking, taking drugs and sexual violence. Alienation can also lead to recruitment into forced labour, military forces or prostitution. Such concerns underlie the initiation of skills training programmes, but these programmes often have limited impact, due to poor quality of training and lack of opportunities to use it. Erik Lyby evaluated the ongoing vocational training programmes for Burundian refugees in Tanzania, both formal and non-formal, to assess their functioning and propose a more comprehensive approach. He examined further the vocational training structures and economic opportunities in Burundi, with a view to linking training in exile to the needs of reconstruction after repatriation. He distinguishes three training structures, namely pre-entry institutional training, group-based training (for cooperative production), and enterprise-based training. Erik Lyby recommends the development of a camp-based training strategy incorporating these approaches. Enterprise-based apprenticeships should represent a strong element of this strategy, given its higher level of effectiveness in many situations. Group-based training in employable skills such as horticulture, useful after repatriation, represents another approach. Finally, he recommends the organization of group activities to occupy out-of-school youth who otherwise have little else to do, including the organization of sports teams and exploring the idea of computer centers or internet cafes which could provide the opportunity for informal learning.

The research papers presented here represent a step forward in the task of developing deeper professional insights into the field of refugee education and education in emergency situations in general. It is hoped that they will be of assistance to field practitioners and programme managers, but also to donors in understanding the need for consistent and adequate funding for refugee education.

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Notes on contributors

Margaret Sinclair is currently an independent consultant on education in humanitarian emergencies. She works in the field of educational planning, policy and programming. Since 1987 she has worked on issues of refugee education, training and income generation, including assignments in UNHCR's Peshawar office (1988-1993) and as UNHCR's Senior Education Officer (1993-1998). In 1997, she organised a design workshop on education for peace, conflict resolution and human rights in the refugee context, and helped set up UNHCR's programme of life skills and peace education. She can be reached by e-mail at: margaret_sinclair@yahoo.com

James H. Williams teaches at The George Washington University, where he directs the International Education Program at the Graduate School of Education and Human Development and the International Education concentration of the International Development Studies Program at the Elliott School of International Affairs. Professor Williams received his doctorate from Harvard University in administration, planning and social policy. His dissertation research examined the cross-national impact of educational expansion on health 1965-1990. He has worked for USAID; Obirin University, Tokyo; Ohio University. He has undertaken studies for numerous international organizations including UNHCR, UNICEF, the World Bank, USAID, UNESCO, CARE, and the International Institute of Research.

Dr Williams has written on diverse subjects in educational development including: approaches to improving educational quality; management issues in the decentralization of education; collaborative programs in education and health as a cross-sectoral development strategy; education in contexts of refugees, crisis, and reconstruction; best practices in girls' education; and the use and misuse of indicators and information systems. He is currently editing a book on education for social reconstruction. He can be reached by e-mail at: jhw@gwu.edu

Timothy Brown is currently Education Officer for the Refugee Education Trust at UNHCR in Geneva. He helped establish the independent Trust in December 2000 on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of UNHCR by carrying out a feasibility study and authoring the blueprint documents. He received his B.Sc. (Hons) in Physics (1971) and Ph.D. in Mathematics (1978) in London, United Kingdom.

Dr Brown has spent over 20 years in Africa in the field of education – as a lecturer, teacher trainer and education officer. He has been associate professor at Juba University in Southern Sudan, senior lecturer at Kenyatta University in Nairobi, and education adviser for UNHCR in Uganda. He is committed to the work of the Trust which advocates for, and researches into, refugee education. The Trust also fundraises for, and provides, post-primary education for refugees in less developed countries. He can be reached by e-mail at: brownt@unhcr.ch

Marc Sommers is an international consultant and Research Fellow at Boston University's African Studies Center. He has explored the impact of war on children and youth in Africa as well as Colombia, El Salvador and Kosovo. He has also worked on emergency and peace education, the human rights of forced migrants, urban refugees and migrants, community reconciliation and post-war transitions. Publications include a book: "Fear in Bongoland: Burundi Refugees in Urban Tanzania," (Berghahn, 2001); a monograph: "The Dynamics of Coordination" (Humanitarianism and War Project, Tufts University, 2000); and a report: "Emergency Education for Children" (Center for International Studies, MIT, 1999). He can be reached by e-mail at: msommers@bu.edu

Erik Lyby received his B.Sc. in Architecture and Civil Engineering from Aarhus Polytechnic (1965) in Denmark. He then went to Zambia as a bilateral volunteer in 1969. Inspired by his first African sojourn, he took up the study of social anthropology in 1972 and spent the next ten years studying and teaching at the university, including two years of field research in Botswana in preparation for his thesis on labour migration in Southern Africa. He received his Mag. Art. (magister artium) in social anthropology from the University of Aarhus (1982).

Between 1984 and 1992, he worked for the International Labour Organization in Geneva on programmes for the creation of employment for the unskilled in developing countries through the use of labour-intensive technologies – first in rural areas and later also in the exploding cities of Asia and Africa. Between 1993 and 1999, he was chief consultant in a Danish consulting firm. This included another two-year posting to Zambia, after which he established his own firm, Jacaranda Consult. Most of his work in more than 25 countries has been related to human resource development and job creation for the poor with special emphasis on vocational education and training systems as the entrance to a changing labour market. He can be reached by e-mail at: erik.lyby@inet.uni2.dk