POLICY DIALOGUE TOOL:

INCLUSION OF REFUGEES IN NATIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEMS

June 2024

Acknowledgments

Entry points for supporting refugee inclusion within GPE's operating model

Purpose and use of this tool

This tool is intended to be used primarily by GPE Secretariat country teams but may also be useful to GPE partner countries and their education sector partners. This tool is part of GPE's commitments to support inclusive, evidence-based policy dialogue to include refugees in education systems.

Our commitments align and support the multistakeholder pledge made at the second Global Refugee Forum to ensure every child living as a refugee realizes their right to a quality education and is included in national education systems that are adequately supported to cater to the needs of every child, both from the host community and those living as refugees. This tool is complemented by more detailed guidance on designing programs to support refugee inclusion (World Bank 2024 forthcoming).

Conceptual framework for the inclusion of refugees

A holistic approach is needed to transform education systems to be truly inclusive for children living as refugees. UNICEF Innocenti (2023) highlights five areas of policy and practice which are especially relevant for the inclusion within education systems of every child living as a refugee, irrespective of their gender, nationality or disability status:

- Governing inclusion
- Resourcing inclusion
- Developing capacity to manage inclusion
- Promoting school-level interventions to support inclusion
- Evaluating and monitoring inclusion in education (adapted from Cerna et al. 2021).

Within this framework, there are 10 dimensions that affect the level of inclusion within an education system: legal frameworks, type of school, system financing, social protection, school infrastructure, teachers, curriculum, language of instruction, assessment and certification, and education data systems (a visual of these areas and dimensions can be found in the annexes of UNICEF Innocenti 2023).

This tool highlights ways to address dimensions of the above framework within the policy dialogue on partnership compacts (which identify partner countries' priority reforms), GPE-funded grants and broader education sector dialogue. This document is organized by selected priority areas drawn from the GPE 2025 strategy, preceded

by one overarching consideration. The areas are: Policies and financing; Data systems; Access; Learning, including early learning; and Quality teaching. Gender equality and intersecting vulnerabilities are considered throughout. As such, if a country is focusing its priority education reform on improving teaching and learning, for example, it will be particularly relevant to examine those sections of this tool.

Entry points within GPE 2025

- The **partnership compact** process is an opportunity to have broad dialogue on sector challenges, including on gender equality and inclusion, as well as the barriers and opportunities for refugees to access a quality education within the national system. As part of this, the **enabling factors analysis** prompts countries to examine whether there are legal frameworks in place that guarantee education for all with specific reference to different marginalized groups and whether sector coordination mechanisms are inclusive.

- **System capacity grants** offer dedicated support for analysis and planning depending on a country's needs, particularly specific weaknesses identified during the enabling factors analysis. The grant can support activities such as:
  - Review and update of national legal frameworks within a country around the right to education to be in better accordance with the state's obligations under international human rights law, as well as of activities to ensure direct links between such legal frameworks and education sector policies.
  - Analysis of displacement trends, impacts on the education system and pathways to improving inclusion within the national system of every child who is displaced, irrespective of their gender, nationality or disability status.
  - Development or strengthening of data systems that track the education needs of populations who are displaced and refugees.
  - Revision of education sector plans and budgets to be inclusive of the needs of every child living as a refugee.

- **System transformation grants** support the implementation of a priority reform that is decided on by a country and its partners. These grants can support the inclusion of every child living as a refugee, irrespective of their gender, nationality or disability status, into national systems over multiple years in instances where partners have prioritized this in the priority education reform. A portion of grant resources may be used as **accelerated funding** in

cases of a crisis that poses substantial risks to the education system or continuation of education for a particular group of children.

- The **GPE Multiplier** attracts more investment in education and can be used to bring in additional financing for refugees as has happened in several GPE partner countries.

- The **Girls Education Accelerator** provides resources to support gender equality in countries and regions where girls' education has been identified as a main challenge. These resources can be leveraged to support girls living as refugees and those in host communities.

- Inclusivity in partner country **local education groups** is essential, including that of civil society actors with human rights expertise or representatives of humanitarian coordination mechanisms in crisis-affected contexts. GPE supports civil society through Education Out Loud: in 2023, 47 percent of Education Out Loud-supported national education coalitions had at least one organization representing internally displaced persons or refugees among their members.

For further information on all GPE grants, please consult <u>our website</u> for grant guidelines.

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The case for including refugees in national education systems

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1. **Legal basis: There are several international political and legal frameworks to support the right to education of refugees, some of them legally binding.**
   - These include: the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, the Global Compact on Refugees and the Djibouti Declaration on Refugee Education. Please find further information on these in annex A.
   - Based on data from 51 countries, 73 percent of countries have laws allowing refugees to access national primary education systems. However, legal rights do not always translate to access in practice and positive policy shifts in education may not be supported by broader management policies for refugees (UNHCR 2023a).

2. **Sustainability: More than half of all school-age children living as refugees are out-of-school and most are in protracted situations, highlighting the need for a long-term solution.**

- Over half of all refugees who are school-age are hosted by low- and lower-middle-income countries where learning poverty is high and education systems are already severely constrained by shortages in qualified teachers, classrooms, facilities, learning materials and other resources. Refugees are often settled in poor and vulnerable communities where education services are relatively substandard.

- There is a clear disparity in refugee versus national enrolment rates in both primary and secondary school (UNHCR 2023b).

- Globally, there is gender parity in access to education for refugees with male and female students accessing education at the same rates, but this does not mean that parity has been achieved everywhere (UNHCR 2023b). Gender is also a relevant determinant on the barriers to education and the experiences within education for children living as refugees, including their vulnerability to different types of violence, sexual exploitation and abuse.

- Children living as refugees who are ages 3 to 5 as well as 15 years and older are frequently excluded because national legislation prioritizes children whose ages align with compulsory schooling (UNHCR, UNICEF and IOM 2019).

- Historically, education for refugees has been managed through parallel systems as a temporary response. These parallel systems are neither funded for the long term nor do they provide a clear pathway for refugees into the national system. Considering that refugees often remain in host countries for decades, education for students living as refugees requires long-term planning, technical support and funding.

3. **Effectiveness: Provisions to include refugees in national education systems benefit all students, both from the host community and those living as refugees.**

- Education within national systems allows students living as refugees to contribute to host country economies after education by creating pathways to recognized qualifications, employment and self-reliance. Critical to social cohesion and stability, including children living as refugees within national education systems is a sustainable way to ensure their continuity of learning and education.

- The resources that accompany the transition to refugee-inclusive education systems like additional classrooms, teaching materials and teacher development also benefit children part of the host community (Bilgili et al. 2019; Tumen 2018). Practices for refugee inclusion can generate positive

feelings and a welcoming attitude from local communities when they are understood to benefit every child (Zhou, Grossman and Ge 2022).

- Inclusive systems allow governments to cost education investments for refugees and citizens in the same way, meaning improvements in access, the quality and quantity of teachers, teaching and learning materials, and learning environments are spread across all students. Investments in education can take advantage of economies of scale—in other words, these investments have the potential to reduce the cost per student overall (World Bank and UNHCR 2021).

POLICIES AND FINANCING

Evidence

- Inclusive policy frameworks cannot be separated from the larger geopolitical environment of the country and region. Education for refugees can be highly politicized which may undermine access to education for children living as refugees (Mendenhall, Garnett Russell and Bruckner 2017). In an analysis of 48 low- and middle-income countries hosting refugees, 54 percent do not formally restrict refugees from national schools, 35 percent have some restrictions (such as second-shift schools or documentation-related barriers) and 10 percent explicitly exclude refugees from national schools. In countries with explicit exclusionary practices, such as Bangladesh, Tanzania and Nepal, children living as refugees access learning opportunities through informal or temporary provisions, with little to no involvement from the host government (Dupuy, Palik and Østby 2022; UNICEF Innocenti 2023; Carvalho and Dryden-Peterson 2024).

- There is a gap between inclusive policy and practice. Despite increasingly inclusive policies for the education of refugees at the national level, the reality is that many gaps remain for refugees to access national education systems in practice (Dupuy, Palik and Østby 2022).

- Levels of inclusion within national systems can be understood on a continuum (UNICEF Innocenti 2023; GIZ and WINS Global Consult GmbH 2023). There are numerous dimensions affecting the inclusion of children living as refugees within national education systems, with each dimension existing on a continuum from exclusionary to inclusionary (see annexes of UNICEF 2023 for visual of continuum). For example, in Egypt, most refugees who speak Arabic are included in the national education system, but sometimes refugees who are Palestinian or Sudanese are excluded. In Lebanon and Jordan, refugees

have access to national schools, but there is also a second-shift system making the level of integration of refugees within the national education system vary as a result. In contrast in Djibouti, not only are there no restrictions for refugees to access national schools, but there are also further measures to support inclusion such as the translation of national curriculum into English and Arabic (UNICEF Innocenti 2023).

- Policies on the inclusion of refugees within the national system are also likely to fall along a gender-equality continuum, ranging from being gender discriminatory and reinforcing existing inequalities to being gender transformative and explicitly seeking to redress gender inequalities and empower populations who are disadvantaged (UNICEF 2019).

- Globally, one major barrier to implementing inclusive policies is the lack of predictable multiyear financing (World Bank 2023), with lower-income host countries unable to plan for adequate long-term financing (Save the Children 2023; Pacifico 2024). The estimated annual global cost of inclusion of children living as refugees into national education systems in low- and middle-income countries is US$4.85 billion (World Bank and UNHCR 2021). The total annual cost of including children living as refugees into the national education systems of low-income countries is $309 million and $2.3 billion in lower-middle-income countries, with these two groups of countries hosting 64 percent of every child living as refugees in the world (World Bank 2023).

- Coordination mechanisms for refugees and their respective working groups exist separately from education clusters, seeking to adapt strategies to address the needs of refugee groups. When the education sector, refugee coordination mechanisms and clusters coordinate with each other, they can reduce duplication of efforts and achieve more cost-effective and sustainable results for populations affected by crisis (GPE 2023).

Considerations for dialogue

- An **enabling environment, both through legal frameworks and policies**, is foundational for ensuring refugees can access formal schooling. An explicit policy for inclusion in national education systems is one of the first steps to ensuring every child living as a refugee can thrive, prosper and participate in host communities irrespective of their gender, nationality or disability status, alongside children from the host community. If the political climate is not currently open to inclusion, then adequate consideration needs to be made to ensure the right to education for children living as refugees through parallel systems of provision. This may include additional gender-specific

considerations. Understanding the political economy of inclusion across the spectrum of national governance is critical in the overarching effort to include refugees in national education systems. In addition to approaches for education, national policies for refugees that address their right to work and freedom of movement within host countries are needed.

- Once a GPE partner country has committed to including refugees in national education systems through general inclusive policies, there is a need to include refugees in **national education plans**, **strategies**, **and budgets**, and to consider **specific and detailed policies** to ensure refugees are thriving while in school. These policies will depend on the context, but may relate to supporting teachers, education access for students with intersecting vulnerabilities, ensuring targeted support for refugees and measures to ensure well-being while at school.

- **Financing the inclusion of refugees** can be framed through a lens of supporting not just children who are refugees but also children from the host community who will benefit from increased resources and investments (Save the Children 2023; Nicolai, Khan and Diwakar 2020). A shift from short-term humanitarian financing to long-term development financing is needed, with adequate planning for the transition phase. For that reason, policy dialogue on and planning for funding education for refugees needs to include humanitarian and development partners, host governments and donors (World Bank 2023).

- To improve **coordination** in the education response for every child living as a refugee, irrespective of their gender, nationality or disability status, there is a need for clarity and transparency around the roles, leadership functions, responsibilities and levels of involvement expected of coordination mechanisms for refugees and development organizations (local education groups or equivalent)(GPE 2023).

DATA SYSTEMS

Evidence

- According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) and UNHCR (2021), collecting data on refugees and ensuring disaggregation is challenging on multiple fronts. It is difficult to identify refugees or distinguish them from other children who are displaced (such as children who are internally displaced or with migrant status). Identifying students living as refugees may heighten protection concerns, including the potential for stigmatization or

discrimination in classrooms. Data on refugees can be sensitive in certain settings, namely those of conflict or political unrest. The actual collection of data on students living as refugees can be difficult if there are security concerns in areas hosting refugees. While many living as refugees are in protracted situations of displacement, populations of refugees can change rapidly which causes data to become quickly outdated.

- Data tied to education for refugees usually has a narrow focus on access to education with less attention to other data points including school dropout, grade progression, education quality and learning (including the acquisition of foundational reading, mathematics and socio-emotional skills), psychosocial services, and safety and protection (UIS and UNHCR 2021).

- There is a specific lack of data on pre-primary/early childhood education in refugee contexts (Ereky-Stevens, Siraj and Kong 2023).

- In many countries hosting refugees, there is an over-reliance on humanitarian organizations, like UNHCR and OHCA, to provide official statistics on refugees and their education, highlighting poor integration of data on refugees into national data systems. This can also lead to the duplication of efforts as well as overcounting in situations where refugees attend both non-formal education through humanitarian mechanisms as well as national schools (UIS and UNHCR 2021; UNHCR, UNESCO and UNICEF 2023).

Considerations for dialogue

- Data collection should reflect the needs of students living as refugees and from the host community, including data on education **quality, safety and continuity** (UNESCO and UNHCR 2023).

- **Disaggregated data** is important to understand the educational needs of students living as refugees. Nationality may not always be a proxy for protection status (for example, in contexts where there have been long-term flows of migration) (UNHCR, UNESCO and UNICEF 2023). An alternative to disaggregate data on students living as refugees is through questions in education management and information systems that ask about student country of citizenship and birth and/or mother tongue. For census or household surveys, there should be questions on year of arrival in the country and reason for migration (UIS and UNHCR 2021).

- **Gender and disability**, alongside protection status, are also important to disaggregate in data efforts as the lack of data related to the educational

needs of girls living as refugees and those with disabilities are major data gaps (Plan International 2023; UNICEF 2023).

- In situations of conflict or political unrest, data should be **anonymized or aggregated** as there may be further protection risks for refugees. If certain areas with refugees are not safe for data collectors, these limitations on representativeness of statistics need to be clearly stated in data estimates (UIS and UNHCR 2021).

- Education and migration **data systems need to be synced** to understand the educational realities of every child living as a refugee, irrespective of their gender, nationality or disability status and including the many who are out of school (UNESCO and UNHCR 2023). This includes harmonizing existing data sources such as household surveys, learning assessments and multisector needs assessments (UNHCR, UNESCO and UNICEF 2023).

- Data on refugees needs to be accompanied by **real-time monitoring**, including of **learning outcomes**, to ensure data remains useful for policies and programming (UIS and UNHCR 2021; UNESCO and UNHCR 2023).

- When refugees are included in **learning assessments** (regional, national and international), data should be disaggregated by protection status to allow for reporting on the learning outcomes of students living as refugees. Furthermore, students living as refugees need to be included at the outset of sampling exercises for learning assessments in a purposeful way so that statistics produced are representative of this population and comparisons can be made between the academic outcomes of students living as refugees and those of students from the host community (UNESCO and UNHCR 2023).

> **Results-based school grants and teacher workforce support in Kenya**
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> In Kenya, GPE, the World Bank and the Ministry of Education are working closely together through the Primary Education Equity in Learning (PEEL) Program which pools resources from GPE, the World Bank and the LEGO Foundation. The PEEL Program supports the education of refugees through results-based school grants (for both schools for refugees and for the host community) in Dadaab, Kakuma and Kalobeyei, national sample-based learning assessments in schools for refugees, student scholarships and school meals.
>
> The program also supports teacher management through increased recruitment, continuous teacher professional development and monitoring of teacher presence in the classroom in public primary schools that have students living as refugees and from host communities.
>
> The program was developed through a collaborative process, convening humanitarian and development partners supporting education for refugees. For example, the Ministry of Education collaborated with UNHCR and other partners to revise the criteria for school grants to better account for the needs of schools for refugees.

ACCESS

Evidence

Barriers to access

- On average, children living as refugees are out of school for at least three to four years (UNHCR 2016). Barriers include the lack of multiyear, predictable financing to ensure there are adequate school buildings and teachers (World Bank and UNHCR 2021), poor learning environments, gaps between home and host country curriculum, challenges with safety and social cohesion, and lack of individual learning support such as language and catch-up classes (Ndibalema 2024).

- Children with disabilities living as refugees face additional barriers such as a lack of necessary infrastructure and teachers who are qualified and supportive. They also experience higher levels of stigmatization and social exclusion (Crea et al. 2022; Crea et al. 2023).

- Girls living as refugees are less than half as likely as boys to attend and complete secondary school (UNHCR 2018).

Type of provision

- Depending on the political landscape and location of children living as refugees (urban, rural, camp, etc.), educational access is provided through national education systems, non-governmental organizations or community-based provisions (Dryden-Peterson 2016; Dupuy, Palik and Østby 2022). The educational quality of each varies considerably across contexts. In areas of protracted or acute conflict, community-based education can increase access at the primary level, especially for girls (Burde et al. 2015; Burde et al. 2023).

- Emergency education programs in camps for refugees can quickly provide education for children who may otherwise miss out on the opportunity to attend school for various reasons, whether a lack of capacity of the national system or infrastructure damage, for example (Dupuy, Palik and Østby 2022). However, in general, schools located in camps for refugees are often overcrowded and have less resources (Mendenhall, Garnett Russell and Buckner 2017).

School environment and norms

- Access to education is linked to the demand for education for refugees which can be influenced by cultural norms (including gender norms), safety and protection concerns, the lack of proper sanitation or school infrastructure, trauma and discrimination by teachers and peers (Dupuy, Palik and Østby 2022). The barriers to the demand of education interact with gender, with some studies finding harmful gender norms limiting household demand for girls' education, and refugee households being less willing to send their daughter to school due to security concerns (Yotebieng 2021).

- For refugees in urban settings and those living outside formal camps for refugees, discrimination from host communities is a challenge (Mendenhall, Garnett Russell and Buckner 2017). For example, in the Gambella region in Ethiopia, planned inclusion of children living as refugees into the national system is heightening tensions. However, members of the host community can be proponents of including refugees in national systems with the knowledge that additional resources brought in to support refugee inclusion can increase access to quality education for every child (Kemisso Haybano 2023).

- Students living as refugees are at a heightened risk to experience bullying and school violence (Gönültaş and Mulvey 2021; Maynard et al. 2016).

- In addition to improving general health outcomes and diet diversity, the provision of school meals has been shown in certain contexts to increase

school attendance for children living as refugees (Jamaluddine et al. 2020; Nisbet, Lestrat and Vatanparast 2022).

- Integrating refugees into national systems allows them to benefit from non-education resources available through the education system such as health and social services, and services to prevent and respond to violence against children, including gender-based violence (Block et al. 2014).

Considerations for dialogue

- **Continuity of education** is essential. Short-term educational provision, such as community-based programs or those led by nongovernmental organizations, can be developed quickly to meet urgent needs. However, these short-term provisions need to move away from a temporary perspective and become long term to ensure a sustainable and continuous approach to education for every child living as a refugee, irrespective of their gender, nationality or disability status (Bensalah et al. 2001).
  - For example, **alternative educational models** used in the short term can also have a place in situations of protracted displacement by remaining as a component of national education systems (Burde et al. 2015; Beißert et al. 2022; UNESCO and UNHCR 2023). Accelerated education programs are designed to promote education access, often for children who are out of school, over age or from other disadvantaged groups (such as children living as refugees) who may be excluded from formal education.
  - A development perspective also includes **certification/accreditation**, to ensure students living as refugees have the necessary recognition of learning during displacement to continue their studies, whether in their home or host counties (Bensalah et al. 2001). Refugees can benefit from national or cross-border approaches to recognize prior qualifications.

- National systems in areas hosting refugees need to expand in step with the increased population, including increasing the availability of **adequate school buildings, teachers and sustained funding**. Allocation systems that automatically place students in far-away schools will need to be sensitive to students living as refugees who may lack transportation or have other challenges to travel far to school (UNHCR, UNESCO and UNICEF 2023).

- **Early learning** needs special consideration for the education of children living as refugees as its availability and prioritization varies by context. Some donors restrict funding to certain levels of education for refugees—with primary education often receiving the most support—which, in many cases, can result

in severely underfunded early childhood education (Jalbout and Bullard 2021, 2022).

- Inclusion of **children with disabilities who are refugees** into national schools requires both mainstreaming and targeted support, including through multimodal communication, campaigns to reduce stigma and capacity building for teachers and staff (Crea et al. 2022; Crea et al. 2023).

- **Information campaigns** on the importance of education can be an important tool to boost education access for children living as refugees (Burde et al. 2015), including on the value of education for every child regardless of gender.

- To counter **bullying and school violence** against students living as refugees, mitigation, reporting, support and follow-up systems should be ensured (UNESCO and UNHCR 2023; UNHCR, UNESCO and UNICEF 2023) including a gender lens. In addition, national policies in areas hosting refugees that are affected by conflict should include provision to prevent and mitigate the impacts of **attacks on education** (UNESCO and UNHCR 2023).

- Expanding access to education for every child living as a refugee must be accompanied by an **equal focus on improving education quality** for every child irrespective of their gender, nationality or disability status.

- **Multisectoral coordination** is essential to addressing the needs of refugee populations, including around the areas of social protection, employment, health and nutrition, among others.

Inclusive education for refugees in Djibouti

The government of Djibouti has demonstrated openness and commitment to educating children living as refugees, signing the Djibouti Declaration of Education of Refugees in 2017 (see annex A). Since 2019, GPE, alongside the World Bank and Education Above All, has supported the Expanding Opportunities for Learning Project that aims to increase equitable access to basic education, improve teaching practices and to strengthen the management capacity of the Ministry of Education.

The project supports the inclusion of students living as refugees within the national education system, with the managing of schools in camps for refugees ('villages' as they are known in Djibouti) transitioning from nongovernmental organizations or the UNHCR to the Ministry of Education. Teachers who were previously untrained and teach students living as refugees also now have access to specialized pedagogical training to improve their quality of instruction in addition to coaching and mentoring. Financing for the project is supplemented by the Ministry of Education's contribution that will allow for multiyear planning and sustainability.

LEARNING, INCLUDING EARLY LEARNING

Evidence

- Quickly expanding access to education for every child living as a refugee within national systems, irrespective of their gender, nationality or disability status, has been a high priority (see UNHCR 2022, 2023a, 2023b and the multistakeholder pledge), but in certain countries there has not been equal priority given to improving the quality of education (Wales, Khan and Nicolai 2020).

- While including refugees in national education systems can improve access, most times wider improvements to the system are needed to improve learning for all. As such, there may not be immediate gains in learning for refugees making the transition to national schools (Sakaue and Wokadala 2021). For example, in Lebanon, refugees are frequently restricted to attending public schools of lower quality (Carvalho and Dryden-Peterson 2024). In contrast, sometimes communities perceive schools for refugees to be of better quality (Kemisso Haybano 2023).

- Targeted support helps students living as refugees to regain lost ground. There is emerging evidence that well-designed accelerated programs in

contexts affected by crisis and conflict can boost learning outcomes, outperforming government or formal schools (Menendez et al. 2016).

- In addition to being vital to learning, acquiring the language of host communities fosters social cohesion as it increases the openness of the host society toward 'outsiders' and promotes integration (Beißert et al. 2022).

- Including students living as refugees in the design and sampling of national learning assessments at the outset allows for a more thorough understanding of their learning outcomes and the barriers they face (UNHCR, Oxford MeasurEd and Cambridge Education 2022; UNESCO and UNHCR 2023).

- Emerging research shows that socio-emotional learning can support the academic outcomes and well-being of children living as refugees (Tubbs Dolan et al. 2022; Kattan and Oviedo 2023). Mental health and psychosocial support provided through the education system or outside of it can help students who are refugees to process trauma and gain socio-emotional skills that can further their learning in the classroom and lead to successful integration within society (UNESCO and UNHCR 2023; McBrien 2022).

- Like all students, those living as refugees need access to safe learning environments. Unsafe physical spaces and violent environments, particularly those where peer bullying is present, have significant negative impacts on learning outcomes and student well-being (Chavez et al. forthcoming). Students attending schools without safe physical spaces (such as those lacking proper ventilation, lighting or furniture) score lower on academic assessments than students in safe environments (Earthman 2004 as cited in Barrett et al. 2019).

Considerations for dialogue

- Making **system-wide improvements** to the quality of education is essential. Examples of **targeted support** for students living as refugees include additional classes that can be remedial (in subjects such as literacy or numeracy), accelerated, bridging or part of catch-up programs which can prepare them for the transition to national schools (Save the Children 2018; UNESCO and UNHCR 2023).

- No child should be completely immersed in a classroom where they do not understand the language of instruction without **robust language support**. This support can come from having teaching assistants or teachers who are refugees in classrooms, additional language classes and translated learning materials in the language spoken by refugee populations. Students living as

refugees should not be placed in lower grade levels because of language barriers (UNHCR 2015; UNESCO and UNHCR 2023).

- Conditions for **learning assessments** can be adapted according to the needs of students living as refugees to include provisions such as additional time, language support, translated materials and access to dictionaries (UNESCO and UNHCR 2023).

- **Young children** also need safe and predictable learning environments with clear routines and rules to help them develop a sense of normalcy (Ereky-Stevens, Siraj and Kong 2023). Beyond that, play-based learning has been identified as a good practice for the education of children living as refugees (Jalbout and Bullard 2021; Ereky-Stevens, Siraj and Kong 2023).

- **Socio-emotional support** for students living as refugees should be integrated into all educational interventions by using the socio-emotional learning model adapted for children affected by conflict, whether the intervention is in a formal or non-formal learning setting, or within a government or international nongovernmental organization school (see Stark et al. 2021).

- There are frameworks to guide the development of **safe learning environments** for every child living as a refugee, irrespective of their gender, nationality or disability status. For example, the INEE (Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies) Minimum Standards handbook for education aims to increase access to learning in crisis situations by outlining standards on protection and for facilities (INEE 2024).

QUALITY TEACHING

Evidence

- Teachers living as refugees face many challenges to validate their teaching credentials, including lost or missing official documents from their country of origin, the administrative fees for processing paperwork and a lack of access to or inability to manage online platforms to validate credentials (Mendenhall, Telford and Hure 2023; St. Arnold and Fouda 2023). The absence of mechanisms to recognize the qualifications of teachers who are refugees and to support both their right to work and related freedom of movement can be a waste of valuable assets, especially in contexts where teacher supply is a challenge (Mendenhall, Gomez and Varni 2018).

- While many teachers who are refugees will not have formal teaching certification that is valid in the host country, they may have other in-demand skills such as fluency in the language of students who are refugees as well as

shared cultural background and experience of displacement. Where refugees are not legally authorized to work, they may sometimes be able to take up stipend, volunteer or assistant teaching positions (Mendenhall, Gomez and Varni 2018).

- Gender is also likely to make the experiences of male and female teachers different within the host country, whether they are teachers living as refugees and/or of students with refugee status. A study in Ethiopia found there were perceptions of men being better suited to teach math and a variety of cultural barriers preventing women from entering the teaching profession. Schools located within camps also required teachers to live at the camp which precluded many women from the host community from taking on this teaching role, especially if they had a family (Bengtsson et al. 2020).

- Lack of adequate teacher compensation is cited as the biggest barrier to improving teacher quality in refugee contexts. Other barriers include a lack of employment benefits, pathways to obtain formal teaching certifications and opportunities for professional development (Mendenhall, Telford and Hure 2023).

- There is currently a lack of adequate teacher training to address the psychosocial and socio-emotional needs of students living as refugees. At the same time, teachers in refugee contexts are also exposed to trauma whether from their own personal lives or vicariously through their students. The mental health of teachers in refugee contexts must be considered so that they receive support and professional development to process, cope and be able to provide quality education for students living as refugees (UNESCO 2019).

- Much of the evidence at the intersection of teaching and education for refugees pertains to teachers living as refugees who also teach children who are refugees, mainly about their management and training. There is not substantial evidence on best teaching practices in refugee contexts.

Considerations for dialogue

- Ensuring there are **sufficient teachers** is critical, however it is also a particular challenge as teacher salaries and management are recurrent costs that donors are usually reluctant to support during the transition to inclusion of refugees within national education systems (Mendenhall, Telford and Hure, 2023).
- Adapt recruitment policies to attract and keep **sufficient female teachers**, including through tailored incentives, capacity building and the promotion of female teacher assistants (Bengtsson et al. 2020).

- Teachers need **specialized training** for classrooms with students living as refugees as they have distinct psychosocial, academic and linguistic needs. Depending on the context, this may require teachers to work with students who are learning a second or third language (or more). Teachers need to be well-equipped with pedagogies to teach a range of learning levels, cultural awareness and other skills to effectively support learners who have been displaced (Reddick and Dryden-Peterson 2021; Wiseman and Galegher 2019). Professional development and training are especially important considering that untrained teachers can unintentionally reinforce lived trauma by using harsh discipline methods (Kristiina Montero and Al Zouhouri 2022; UNESCO 2019; Kostouros et al. 2023).

- **Teacher educators** who are able to train and support a diverse group of teachers and equip them with effective strategies for their context are an important and often overlooked strategy for effective teacher professional development in refugee contexts (Mendenhall, Gomez and Varni, 2018).

- To streamline teachers who are refugees into the national education system, there needs to be **alternative pathways for formal certification** or opportunities for them to work as **formal language assistants** within classrooms as they speak the same language as students living as refugees and can provide support to teachers from the host community. This may take the form of accredited bridging programs, diploma programs or in-service certificates for unqualified teachers with refugee status (International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030 2022).

- **Teacher management systems** should include data on teachers living as refugees to lead to a better understanding of their education, training, years of experience and professional development needs. This information should be reflected in national education sector plans.

- Both teachers from the host community and living as refugees should have meaningful access to and engagement with **teachers' unions** that can support and recognize their work. Unions should be represented on **local education groups** so that teacher voice is included in policy making and practice (Telford 2024; Henderson 2023).

- **Communities of practice** can be used for professional development and support for teachers living as refugees and from the host community. In Lebanon, where Syrian teachers living as refugees cannot join teacher unions due to labor restrictions, communities of practice have been an important outlet for peer learning and support (INEE 2019; Henderson 2023).

Quality education for refugees in South Sudan

South Sudan hosts a significant number of refugees and internally displaced persons who are fleeing conflict within the region. Additionally, many refugees originally from South Sudan have returned home in recent months, with over 350,000 returning from Sudan since April 2023 (UNHCR data portal). The South Sudanese government has prioritized inclusive education so that every child, including those living as refugees, have access to quality education in national schools.

The Building Skills for Human Capital Development in South Sudan Project, funded by GPE and the World Bank, has multiple interventions focused on teachers from the host community and living as refugees that will help support an inclusive education system in the country. The program focuses on strengthening teaching and learning through pre-service teacher training and in-service teacher professional development.

Untrained but practicing teachers who have students living as refugees will also have access to an accelerated secondary education program to complete secondary education—a necessary requirement for formal teacher certification. Local teachers (both living as refugees and from the host community) will be recruited for select schools in areas hosting refugees, with GPE and the World Bank financing the salaries of these newly hired teachers for two to three years, after which they will be transferred to the government payroll.

Note. UNHCR data portal, https://data.unhcr.org/.

Refugee inclusion for children and teachers in Ethiopia

Ethiopia has a long history of supporting the educational needs of refugees and has committed to integrating children living as refugees into national primary and secondary schools. In support of this commitment, GPE approved a grant in 2021 which mobilized co-financing from the World Bank and Denmark. The program contributes to the integration of refugees into Ethiopia's education system by extending the activities and incentives of the General Education Quality Improvement Program for Equity (GEQIP-E) to schools for refugees.

The program develops an improved in-service training for teachers living as refugees with possible accreditation as qualified teachers within the national system depending on past qualifications and educational background. The program intends to culminate with the transfer of all teachers employed by the parallel management system in schools for refugees (the Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs) to the national payroll.

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Annex A. Legal basis for refugee inclusion

- The **1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol** legally bind signatory countries to "accord to refugees the same treatment as is accorded to nationals with respect to elementary education." These frameworks have led to a more inclusive policy environment both globally and nationally. In general, countries that commit to the various frameworks have inclusive education policies for refugees (Mendenhall, Garnett Russell and Buckner 2017). The Global Compact on Refugees Indicator Report 2023 found, based on data from 51 countries, that 73 percent of countries had laws allowing primary school students living as refugees to access national education systems. However, legal rights did not always translate to education access in practice (UNHCR 2023a) and positive policy shifts in education may not be supported by broader management policies for refugees.

- The **New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants** was adopted by the United Nations in 2016 and includes specific commitments to the education of students living as refugees, highlighting the need to provide inclusive and equitable, quality early childhood, primary and secondary education.

- The **Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF)**, introduced as part of the NY Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, underscores the importance of providing every child living as a refugee access to quality and inclusive education. The CRRF promotes a more sustainable and comprehensive approach to the educational needs of students living as refugees and is a collaborative effort involving host countries, donor countries, UN agencies, nongovernmental organizations and other partners. There are nine GPE partner countries who have piloted/rolled-out the CRRF and who host either a large population of refugees or potential returnees: Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Uganda, Zambia, Afghanistan, Rwanda and Chad. Tanzania withdrew as a CRRF pilot country in January 2018 (Fellesson 2021).

- The **Global Compact on Refugees**, adopted by the United Nations in 2018, is a nonbinding international framework to enhance international cooperation and responsibility-sharing in responding to refugee contexts, highlighting the principles of access and inclusion in national education systems.

- In 2017, the **Djibouti Declaration on Refugee Education** was produced by the eight member states of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)—Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda—to frame their commitments to quality, inclusive education in national education and legal systems. An accompanying action plan included

the commitment to integrate every child living as a refugee into national education systems by 2020, which was not actualized. As of November 2022, six IGAD member states had drafted and adopted national action plans on refugee-inclusive education, representing a substantial milestone for enacting the Declaration in national legislation (IGAD 2022).