



Refugee's Right to Education: A Review of International Initiatives by Unhcr

KEYWORDS

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RIGHT TO EDUCATION FOR REFUGEES

Access to education is a basic human right. United Nations from its inception has taken various steps to ensure this right to refugees of all countries. In 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognised compulsory primary education as a universal entitlement. The 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (United Nations, 1979) called for no discrimination in educational provision for men and women, and the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) affirmed the right of all children, regardless of status, to free and compulsory primary education. The right to education for refugees is articulated in Article 22 of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees of the Human Rights. **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (Hereinafter Referred to as UNHCR)** is an International Organ of UN UNHCR committed to realizing the right to free and safe quality education for refugees. The Education Strategy is framed by the 1951 Refugee Convention and relevant human rights instruments. It aims to meet Education for All targets, Millennium Development Goals and UNHCR Global Strategic Priorities.¹

UNHCR'S ROLE IN ENSURING EDUCATION TO REFUGEE

UNHCR has always advocated the education to refugee as it considers "education is always needed to for refugee children's personal and social development, to meet psychological trauma to convey life skills fir survival and for durable solution"

UNHCR has been supporting education programmes for refugees since the 1960, when 'Primary' education activities were funded under its General Programme and 'secondary', 'tertiary' and 'vocational' education were funded under a special 'Education Account'. 'Junior secondary' education has been funded under the UNHCR Annual Programme rather than the Education Account from the mid 1970's and 'Higher Secondary' was included under the Annual Programme from 1989.

Tertiary education is now funded under the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI).²

Introduction of DAFI

The UNHCR provides a limited number of scholarships for refugee to peruse further studies that will improve their employment prospects and contribution to socio-economic development.

The Education Account was created in 1967 in order to bring together, Outside UNHCR's General Programme,

contributions earmarked specifically for refugee education. After 1990 the Education Account was utilized specifically for educational assistance to refugee students at post-secondary level. No new students will be awarded EA scholarships. From 1992 DAFI came in existence to enable UNHCR to provide more educational opportunities to needy and deserving refugee students, the Federal Republic of Germany has, since 1992, donated funds for scholarships at university level and/or institutions for higher education. This donation is administered by the Education-Unit/PISS under a Trust Fund programme called the **Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative**. The DAFI scholarship has been proved to be a step stone, turning dreams into reality.

In New Delhi, India's capital, the DAFI programme remains a crucial incentive to help Afghan refugees build their skills and find employment, despite the competitive job market. For refugees from Myanmar, access to university is key to promote continued access to education for younger students. According to the DAFI Annual Report 2011, the scholarship has benefitted the 21 refugee student in India out which 7 were male and 14 were female.³

According to the Annual Report of DAFI programme 2012, the scholarship has benefitted the around 39 refugee student out of which 19 were female and 20 were male.⁴

UNHCR GUIDELINES FOR EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE 1995

From 1993, UNHCR itself funded or co-funded the schooling of over 600,000 refugee children, together with about 2,500 students at post-secondary level, 1,1,000 trainees on vocational courses, 16,000 students on literacy courses and 3,000 refugees learning a needed foreign language. The education Projects for refugee schooling funded by UNHCR in 1993 in Third World countries mostly show an 'education pyramid' with a broad base and narrow top. This reflects the situation in the rural areas of the countries from which most of the refugees originated.⁵

The UNHCR for the purpose of ensuring education has made recommendation in following aspects.

Assistance Policy in Schooling

The UNHCR ensure access education to refugee children and youth to primary and secondary schooling. The concept of access Children and youth who have become refugees continue to have access to education and training. The trauma of exile not be aggravated by the trauma of loss of educational opportunity. It is important also in the

context of durable solutions to promote continued access to study opportunities for those refugee students who have reached the upper levels of the schooling pyramid as well the larger numbers in the lower grades. This is to ensure that there will be a cadre of middle level opinion leaders Administrators and technicians to promote the future social and economic development of the community.

Assistance Policy at Secondary School Level UNHCR scholarship programmes:

Post-secondary refugee students have been supported or university or other formal studies under a special 'Education Account', since the 1960s. Since 1992, a Trust Fund known as DAFI (Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative), funded by the Federal Republic of Germany, has also supported students attending university or other courses with similar entry requirements.

INTEMSHIPS/WORK EXPERIENCE FOR DAFI AND ANNUAL PROGRAMME SCHOLARSHIP HOLDERS:

In future, greater emphasis be placed on the constructive use of vacation periods, and of any lengthy period of closure of institutions due to disturbances. Allowances normally be paid during these periods on the basis that, if practicable.

Opportunities for Non-Scholarship Holders:

In some rural locations there are large numbers of refugee students who have completed secondary school, have few opportunities for employment, and wish to continue their studies or to resume their studies, if they were at university prior to displacement. Low-cost and self-help approaches to continuing education or non-scholarship-holders should be encouraged, such as afternoon or evening classes in language studies and office administrative small business management skills or in other areas in which expertise is available.

Assistance Policy in Skill Training

UNHCR may carefully designed low cost skills training projects, subjected to availability of funds priority should be given to disabled refugee from vulnerable families.

MODALITIES OF ASSISTANCE:

In some circumstances, UNHCR may support placement of selected individual refugees for skills training in host country training centers, through award of scholarships with special consideration to the needs of vulnerable refugee groups, such as the disabled. Another option is to negotiate a 'block' enrollment of a group of refugee students in a host country institution alongside national students, or in a separate 'shift' using their own language. Where refugee members are large, then new 'skills training' projects may be established.

Assistance Policy in Other Educational Activities Foreign language training cultural orientation:

When refugees arrive in a country where a language is used that they do not know, it may be appropriate to fund language training. Language classes may also be needed for resettlement cases. Initial or further study of an international language can be constructive activity for young refugees. Group tuition can sometimes be organized by refugees on a self-help basis in which case UNHCR should be willing to provide study materials and perhaps other support.

UNHCR GUIDELINE WITH REFERENCE TO NEW DELHI IN 2000

The UNHCR has recommended that assistance to refugees should be given in a manner that encourages self-reliance and does not foster long-term dependency. Where assistance has to be provided by UNHCL care and maintenance assistance should be strictly limited to those cases where early self-reliance is not possible, and the continuing appropriateness of this form of assistance must be confirmed at regular intervals. UNHCR assistance that is selective for example, access to higher education be made available only on the basis of the same criteria as apply for refugees elsewhere.⁶

According to the report the UNHCR has, financially assisted many student who were willing to continue their studies, the UNHCR in 1995, has given financial assistance to 4163 student for primary education, in 1996 assistance was given to 4239 student, in 1997 assistance was given to 3153, in 1998 assistance was given to 2296, in 1999 assistance was given to 1842 student and in 2000 assistance was given to only 91 people.⁷

UNHCR GUIDELINES FOR ENSURING EDUCATION IN 2002

After the 86th amendment in 2002, in the Constitution of India, which made the right to education as a fundamental right under Article 21A which states "the state provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen in such manner as the state may, by law, determine." The UNHCR has suggested that all refugees and asylum seekers have access to primary education as well as the national legal system. Under Indian law every child, whether an asylum seeker or a refugee has the right to education and all parents have a duty to send their children to school. All refugee and asylum seeker children have access to government schools. In case any person experience difficulty in getting admission in any government school person may contact Don Bosco Ashalayam (DBA). DBA supports educational programmes, including enrollment of children above the age of 12 years into the national open school system.

UNHCR FIELD GUIDELINE FOR EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE 2003

UNHCR advocates for education as a basic right in the context or 1951 refugee Convention and all other international declarations and instruments. The Agenda for Protection and the subsequent Action Plan approved by the Executive committee October 2002, specifically underlined the Importance of "education as a tool for protection". UNHCR":

Safeguard the right or refugees to education and implement the six goals or Education for All (EFA) which include;

- free access to primary education,
 - equitable access to appropriate learning for youth and adults,
 - adult literacy,
 - gender equity and
 - Quality education.
1. Ensure the basic education for refugees, to ensure their protection and security.
 2. Guarantee the availability of standard primary education for first eight grades of schooling as a first priority including community based Initiatives providing early childhood and pre-school education.
 3. UNHCR support the enrolment and retention or

achieving students in higher secondary as a pre-requisite to post-secondary education.

4. Provide low-cost adolescent and adult non-formal education linked to the psychosocial development, technical and vocational education.
5. Promote quality of education as a high priority commitment through teacher training and the development of quality teaching and learning materials.
6. Support innovative enrichment programmes in life skills and values to improve the quality of education.
7. Ensure early intervention and development of education programmes for children and adolescents upon arrival.
8. Co-ordinate local, national, regional and global inter-agency mechanisms and partnerships regarding refugee and returnee education issues including educational materials, certification or studies, teacher training and support for education.
9. Monitor and evaluate all refugee education programmes in line with the established standards and indicators, ensuring that these programmes receive the necessary human resources and appropriate funding at all levels and phases or UNHCR's operations.⁸

ued focus on scholarships in host countries.

- Expand special consideration to applications from female students and persons with specific needs.
- Develop access to Distance/Blended Learning programmes.

CONCLUSION

Children have an absolute right to education. This right applies without any discrimination whether children are at home, displaced, refugees, or asylum seekers. No government can deny a child within its borders this right to education. UNHCR has made a mark in elevating the literacy level of refugees at a countless scale & has innovative peace education programmes for refugee schools and communities.

UNHCR STANDARDS 2006

In 2006 the UNHCR has fixed certain standards relating to "enrolment, challenges in enrolment, gender equality and suggested guidelines for achieving gender equality and ensuring education to refugee women. The UNHCR has also suggested guidelines for ensuring education to adolescents from the age of 15 to 24.⁹

UNHCR PROPOSAL FOR HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION IN REFUGEE CAMPS IN 2012¹⁰

The UNHCR in 2012 has suggested the human right education in refugee as well as in internally displaced person's camps with an object to ensure education as well as making them aware of their rights and the policies of the government of the host country. Under this programme the UNHCR has conducted teaching programme for the person living in camps.

UNHCR'S EDUCATION STRATEGY 2012-2016

UNHCR has developed a 2012-2016 Education strategy that aims to develop refugees skills and knowledge & with aims at making life-long learning accessible to all from early childhood development to tertiary education, including adult education and vocational training to enable them to live healthy and productive lives, and to promote self-reliance and sustainable peaceful coexistence.¹¹ The key initiatives in this policy are¹²;

- Increase the number of scholarships for tertiary education through expanded partnerships with donors, academic institutions and foundations, with a contin-

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