

Education for the Most Vulnerable

Reflections on Refugee Education for the Start of a New School Year



Jesuit Refugee Service/USA



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Cover Photo: Girls laugh as they hold chalkboard tablets in a primary school in Bunj, South Sudan. (Paul Jeffrey/Misean Cara)



An adolescent boy who attends the JRS Daycare in Maban, where mothers of disabled children come to learn about how to care for their children and interact with other mothers of disabled children. (Rashidah McCoy/Jesuit Refugee Service)

Introduction



Student leads class in recitation of the English alphabet in a training center for Burmese children. (Don Doll SJ/Jesuit Refugee Service)

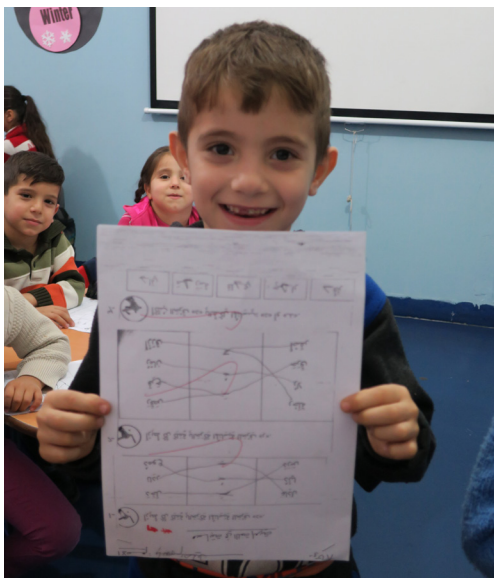
In August and September, children across the United States fill unused backpacks with fresh pencils and notebooks, take a reluctant first-day photo, and head back to school. At this time of year, as we feel the excitement of a new academic year and the start of endless opportunities, it is important to reflect on the importance of education to all people, especially the most vulnerable in our world - displaced people.

In 2017, 16.2 million people, the highest number recorded, half of whom are children, were newly forcibly displaced because of persecution, conflict, or generalized violence. Education is particularly important for forcibly displaced people as it can provide normalcy and prevent sexual violence, human trafficking, child labor, recruitment into armed groups, and early or forced marriage. Yet, refugee and displaced children remain out of school at a higher rate than their peers. Only 61 per cent of refugee children attend primary school, compared with a global average of 91 per cent.

At Jesuit Refugee Service, we are committed to education for refugees and displaced people. We provide educational services and believe that everyone, especially those forced to flee their homes, have the right to an education. JRS serves families and children in traditional pre-primary, primary, secondary, and tertiary education programs, but also works to provide better access to formal, informal skill-building, and vocational training programs for refugee children, youth, and adults. JRS also provides services that allow refugees to overcome barriers to education such as child care support, menstrual hygiene management, or counseling and psychosocial support. We understand that education during times of conflict and crisis provides vulnerable children and adults an opportunity to re-build their communities and create more hopeful futures.

We invite you to explore this publication, "Education for the Most Vulnerable" filled with stories and resources from our encounters with refugees and experience providing refugee education around the world. As many head back to school, become informed about the men, women, and children who have used the gift of education to foster bright futures, empower their minds, and provide opportunities for themselves and their loved ones.

A Teacher's Love



"I FEEL A RESPONSIBILITY TO KEEP THEM HAPPY, BECAUSE I KNOW HOW MUCH THEY SUFFERED IN THE WAR... **MOST OF THE CHILDREN'S PROBLEMS ARE SOLVED IF THEY FEEL LOVE.**"
HANNA KHOURY, JRS KINDERGARTEN TEACHER

Outside Beirut, in a neighborhood called Bourj Hammoud, JRS provides learning support and early childhood education for Syrian refugees at the Frans van der Lugt Centre. The Centre is named after a Jesuit priest who dedicated his life to peace and helping the most vulnerable.

Since 2014, the Centre has carried forward Fr. van der Lugt's legacy by serving the Syrian refugee population. The Centre's teachers and staff conduct home visits and provide a variety of services to refugee youth including homework support, language instruction, a summer program in July and August, and a Youth Club primarily for out-of-school students.

Aida Akl from Lebanon and Hanna Khoury from Syria are both compassionate Kindergarten teachers at the Centre. Aida has taught Kindergarten for two years and says she feels "indescribable happiness" in her job. Hanna arrived in Lebanon over a year ago to flee the civil war in Syria. He understands the challenges his students face and says, "I feel a responsibility to keep them happy, because I know how much they suffered in the war."

The Centre's largest program focuses on early childhood education, with a series of eight Kindergarten classes that serve 240 students. The kindergarten classes offered in the morning and afternoon also provide breakfast and snacks to the children. Students receive critical instruction in a loving environment to prepare them for entry into the Lebanese public school system.

The Centre is also a safe haven for the children and provides peace of mind to their families. Many of the children live in difficult conditions and suffer from neglect and stress, given the trials they and their families have been through and continue to endure. The parents of the children are also appreciative and supportive of the work JRS does to improve the lives of their loved ones, "The school has helped build self-esteem and give them a strong foundation for their futures," said a parent of a student.



*Top Left: A student proudly holds his completed class assignment.
Bottom Right: Hanna and Aida smile brightly in their classroom.
(Giulia McPherson/Jesuit Refugee Service)*

A Prayer for Education

We pray that education continues to provide a lifeline to the future for refugees, migrants, and displaced individuals.

May the education, workshops, psychosocial care, and trainings help the most vulnerable to determine their own future.

We pray for the men and women who teach and lead to be role models and mentors for those they educate.



(Photo courtesy of Entreculturas)

May they have the wisdom, knowledge, and skills to help children overcome their displacement through learning.

We pray that we may all work together to help displaced people gain access to education.

May we work together to advocate on their behalf and share our love, hope, and resources for their benefit.

Amen.

Without Education Society is Built on Sand



*Joyce poses in front of a chalkboard in her classroom in Pagirinya.
(Jesuit Refugee Service)*

A group of about 60, mostly young men and a handful of girls, are crowded in a makeshift classroom, their attention fixed to the front of the room. The classroom consists of a weather-beaten tarpaulin tent supported by thin wooden beams. Somehow someone managed to mount a medium sized blackboard on this structure, lending it an air of a legitimate learning space. Unfazed by this glaring lack of basic school necessities, the students carry on with the activities, which in this moment consist of transcribing the contents of the blackboard into their exercise books.

A few years ago, this classroom didn't exist. There were no secondary schools for refugees in Pagirinya, the new sprawling refugee settlement in Adjumani district in northern Uganda. Although Uganda's progressive refugee regime allows refugee children to attend any

school anywhere in the country, most refugee parents could not afford the tuition fees. Many secondary school-age children were spending their days idle in the settlements. So, the parents and the community banded together to develop their own school.

With the local community contributing land, and some support from NGOs, including JRS, the school is now up and running. The school currently has over 800 students and this number is expected to rise to about 1000 within the year, because of the continued influx of refugees from South Sudan and the high demand for secondary education. "We are unable to take in more students because we do not have space," says Geoffrey, the school's deputy head-teacher. "But if we do not take them, where else will they go?"

18-year-old Joyce arrived in Uganda in 2016 from South Sudan and she has been enrolled in the school since last year. She feels fortunate to be in school and she hopes she can complete her secondary education here. Her determination to secure a better future for herself through education is unflinching. Her dream is to become a surgeon. "If I see others suffering, it really pains me," she says, stressing the importance of studying hard and finishing her studies in order to "become a responsible person who can also care for others."

To keep girls like Joyce in school, there is a need to engage with the cultural biases that underpin the exclusion of women. Success in this area, however, is likely to remain elusive unless these efforts are complemented with investments in education with a view to increasing access and improving quality. Without education these girls have a very limited future.

"If you drop out of school before you finish your studies, you will get a lot of suffering." With this simple and yet indisputable piece of wisdom, Joyce sums it all up. Women's empowerment is through education and, without it, society as a whole is built on sand.

Reminder to Support



Children in Maban, South Sudan form a pyramid as they participate in recreational activities. Recreational activities like sports, dance, or music can be important tools for helping children and young adults overcome the trauma of their displacement. (Paul Jeffrey/Jesuit Refugee Service)

Access to schools and quality education is an urgent priority for all displaced children and youth.

When Pope Francis met with JRS to discuss the Global Education Initiative, an effort to expand and strengthen our education programs, he encouraged JRS in our efforts and told us, "To give a child a seat at school is the finest gift you can give."

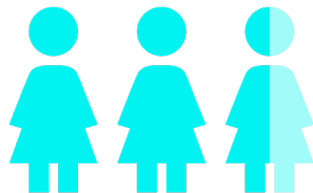
It's easy to forget this priority when we're wrapped up in getting ourselves, our children, or our loved ones back to school. Use this magnet to remind you that all children, especially those displaced, have a right to education.

Education for Refugee Girls

Refugee women and girls are amongst the most vulnerable of migrants and displaced individuals around the world. Every day, refugee girls face barriers to education caused by poverty, cultural norms and practices, poor infrastructure, violence, and fragility. Keeping girls in school will not only keep them healthy, safe, and offer them the opportunity for a better life, but it will also have many benefits for societal development.

refugee girls are less likely to be in school

IN COUNTRIES EFFECTED
BY CONFLICT GIRLS ARE
2.5X MORE LIKELY



TO BE OUT OF
SCHOOL THAN BOYS

BECAUSE

Refugee girls are more likely to face barriers to enrollment

BARRIERS LIKE,

BUT



DANGEROUS JOURNEYS
TO SCHOOL



LACK OF ACCESS TO
MENSTRUAL HYGIENE



HOUSE-HOLD DEMANDS
AND EARLY MARRIAGE

If refugee girls are allowed a seat in school, the benefits go beyond their education

TO HELP

EDUCATION
FOR
REFUGEE GIRLS



THEIR SOCIAL AND
ECONOMIC POSITION



VULNERABILITY TO EXPLOITATION,
SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED
VIOLENCE, AND
TEENAGE PREGNANCY

We must invest in education for refugee girls.

An Oasis at the Margins

"WOMEN AND GIRLS ARE AFRICA'S GREATEST UNTAPPED RESOURCE, AND IT IS THEY, NOT DIAMONDS OR OIL AND MINERALS, THAT WILL BE THE FOUNDATION FOR SOLID, SUSTAINABLE AND EQUITABLE PROGRESS."

- JOAQUIM CHISSANO

Education remains out of reach for many girls around the world. In Kakuma Camp in Kenya and other refugee camps, girls continue to face difficulties when it comes to accessing education. They are the first to be kept out of school to help with family chores, such as collecting water and childcare. The vulnerability of girls in refugee camps can lead to more serious problems that are particularly linked to gender including forced early marriage, domestic violence, sexual abuse, and rape. In Kakuma, JRS tackles these issues through a variety of interventions. We provide access to education and help women and girls tackle the barriers to education.

Safe Haven is a JRS protection center in Kakuma for women and girls who have experienced gender-based violence. The center empowers women by providing them with skills training and other capacity-building activities. The women receive instruction in child protection and personal hygiene to improve the quality of parental care given to their children, many of whom still exhibit signs of trauma. They also attend tailoring, bead work, and catering classes, which give them the skills they need to generate some income for themselves.

Another intervention is the Sunshine School, an early childhood education program for children from the age of six and up who are admitted to Safe Haven with their mothers. The children receive weekly art and play therapy in addition to the normal learning activities. The therapy helps improve their social well-being and enhances their ability to positively cope with trauma and to develop healthy interpersonal relationships. After the age of 14, when girls are discharged from the center, they are enrolled into primary and secondary boarding schools within the camp to help smooth their transition into mainstream education.

Girls with special needs in Kakuma comprise a particularly vulnerable group in the resource-deprived context of the camp. Some of these girls receive scholarships from JRS to enable them to attend specialized schools outside the camp, as this is the only way for them to access education. Camp schools are too overcrowded and have neither the personnel nor the requisite equipment to adequately manage the education of special needs children.

Through efforts to break down the obstacles to their studies, JRS continues to ensure that refugee girls receive an education. It is our hope that these programs will help release the untapped potential of girls and women in Kakuma, which is just waiting to be harnessed.



Girls at a school for children with special needs, use Legos to help them learn. (Jesuit Refugee Service)

Student Testimonies

JRS works with refugee students around the world. We know that when refugees are given an opportunity to learn, it can have valuable and lasting impact on their lives.

Nakio

FROM

Sudan

HER EDUCATION

Nakio is a student at Mikese University in Yambio, South Sudan and a recipient the JRS teacher-training scholarship. She is currently in her third-year of schooling to receive her Bachelor of Arts in Education.

INSPIRATION

As a mother, the education of future generations means a lot to Nakio as does how she educates her children- within and outside the classroom. The balance of being a mom and

teaching children each day can be challenging, Nakio said as she discusses her work-life balance. "I'm doing this because I don't want others behind me to suffer the same way or go the same route as me...I want them to be knowledgeable."

As a nurturing mother, caring for children comes naturally and with ease for Nakio. Each morning she wakes her children up early and prepares to send them off to school. Then, she returns to get herself ready to travel to the primary school where she teaches 80 or more students with the bare minimum of resources. During the evenings, she attends classes at Mikese University.

Having the support of her family, school cohort, and JRS has helped Nakio not give up on her lifelong dream of being a teacher. Her determination is one that continues to inspire her children and the children she teaches each day.

HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

Because I have started to see the changes, I'm sure after my graduation from Mikese University I will help change the education standard here in South Sudan", says Nakio. "...I will help adjust the standards of the curriculum and learning to help the students understand better."



(Rashidah McCoy/Jesuit Refugee Service)

Farzana

FROM

Afghanistan

HER EDUCATION

Farzana received a JRS scholarship to study at a Jesuit University in Goa, India. Her scholarship comes from the generous support of Jesuit colleges and universities in India. She is expected to use the education she receives to return to Afghanistan to continue to serve her community.

INSPIRATION

"As a little girl, a quote my parents kept repeating to me was: "A young girl is dependent on her father. When she marries, she is dependent on her husband; and when she is old, she is dependent on her son. We don't want you to be that woman. We want you to be an independent girl, and to do so, you need to educate yourself and stand on your own feet."

At that time, I didn't know much of its meaning, but as I grew I realized the importance of being independent and being educated. To accomplish my dreams, I desired to pursue my education abroad, where I could exchange my ideas with people from different cultures and religions. The best choice was India, because it's a country that celebrates diversity."

"I'm greatly indebted to JRS, to the principal and teachers of the college for their assistance and accompaniment. I'm proud to be a JRS scholar."



(Jesuit Refugee Service)

Aron*

FROM

Eritrea

HIS EDUCATION

Aron fled Eritrea from forced conscription into the military. His family, including his mother and three siblings rely on him provide for them. To help him to earn an income and reach his goals, JRS provided training so that he could become a peer counselor. He now is a counselor for JRS and helps others, like himself, with psychosocial support .

INSPIRATION

"I have taken this bitterness with grace and turned my lemons into lemonade." Aron's passion is to help those in need, which stems from years of neglect, abuse, and his knowledge that changing the world starts with helping one person. "I feel like my reason for being on Earth is because I'm destined for greatness and want to help others heal and reach their dreams."

*Name has been changed for security reasons

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Jesuit Refugee Service is an international Catholic organization serving refugees and other forcibly displaced people. Founded as a work of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) in 1980, in direct response to the humanitarian crisis of the Vietnamese boat people, JRS today works in more than 50 countries worldwide to meet the educational, health, and social needs of more than 635,000 refugees.

JRS/USA is the U.S. office for JRS based in Washington, DC. JRS/USA provides support to the broader JRS network - through funding, oversight, monitoring, and evaluation - to JRS projects and programming throughout the world. JRS/USA also serves forcibly displaced migrants in the US through our Detention Chaplaincy Program.

You can support the mission of Jesuit Refugee Service through a financial contribution. Support from the Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States covers nearly all of our fundraising expenses, allowing us to direct at least 98 percent of your contribution straight to the programs that assist refugees. Ways to give: Combined Federal Campaign, matching gifts, estate gifts, gifts of securities, recurring donations.

Contact the JRS/USA Development Team at 202-629-5948 or visit www.jrsusa.org/donate to learn more about ways to support our work.

visit www.JRSUSA.org to get more information and get involved