

**Statement by Joan Rosenhauer
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FY20 State & Foreign Operations Appropriations**

House Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs

March 12, 2019

Thank you, Chairwoman Lowey, Ranking Member Rogers, and members of the Subcommittee. On behalf of Jesuit Refugee Service/USA (JRS/USA), I appreciate the opportunity to present our views on the importance of investing in refugee education programs as a critical component of the U.S. Government's foreign assistance efforts. We urge the Subcommittee to include at least \$925 million in funding for basic education programs in the FY20 State & Foreign Operations Appropriations bill and to support at least \$21 million in additional funding for Education Cannot Wait.

The plight of refugees around the world is at a tipping point, with more than 68 million individuals who have fled their homes due to war, conflict or persecution. Not only are new crises emerging every day, but the number of people living in protracted crises – in exile for more than five years – is on the rise.

Access to education for refugees and others who are forcibly displaced is critical. Not only does education offer an important form of protection for children, education also engenders hope as it prepares refugees to meet future challenges. Education provides stability and a sense of normalcy, and acts as a form of vital psychosocial support to children whose lives have been disrupted by crisis. Helping the millions of children around the world who have been traumatized by violence and forced displacement recover and build toward a brighter future is not only a moral obligation but a wise global development strategy. How will these children lead a more peaceful world in the future if we turn our backs on them today?

Yet, more than half of all school-age refugees – 4 million children – are out of school. Only 61 percent of refugees are enrolled in primary school; 23 percent in secondary school, and the lucky few – only one percent – have access to tertiary education.¹

The global response to this tremendous need has not kept pace. In 2016, education was only 2.7 percent of total humanitarian aid available, and amounted to 48 percent of the amount requested.² Continued support from the U.S. Government, as well as new and existing multilateral partnerships like Education Cannot Wait (ECW) and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), can play a critical role in helping forcibly displaced people build a future for themselves and the communities in which they live.

¹ UNHCR (2018). Turn the Tide: Refugee Education in Crisis. <https://www.unhcr.org/5b852f8e4.pdf>

² UNESCO (2017). "Aid to education falls for the sixth consecutive year." <https://en.unesco.org/news/aid-education-falls-sixth-consecutive-year>

Prioritizing Refugee Education

Jesuit Refugee Service is an international Catholic organization with a mission to accompany, serve, and advocate on behalf of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons. Operating in more than 50 countries, JRS considers education a life-saving intervention and offers a variety of opportunities for refugees and displaced persons to achieve an education both in refugee camps and in non-camp settings. These include access to pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary education. In addition, JRS offers vocational and teacher training programs, targeted outreach to women, girls and those with disabilities, and supports the building of new schools and distribution of school books and materials.

Providing access to education for refugees, and those caught in crisis and conflict settings, first requires planning. Education needs to be incorporated into emergency response plans and funding mechanisms, at the host-country and international levels. All too often, education is not seen as a priority and is overlooked at the onset of an emergency. Yet, early investments and ensuring that children are quickly provided with a safe educational setting are crucial not only for their current well-being but for their futures—and ours.

If families are living in a conflict zone, schools are often destroyed, or the threat of violence makes it unsafe for children to attempt going to school. Once a refugee, children face a long list of obstacles in gaining access to school in their host countries. This can include a lack of infrastructure and materials, language barriers, inability to pay fees, psychosocial challenges due to trauma experienced, discrimination and lack of security, and learning gaps.³ Many refugee children have missed out on months or years of education - on average, a refugee is out of school for three to four years.⁴

This reality requires creative programming that meets the needs of children and adolescents who are facing significant educational gaps and have suffered the effects of war and conflict. As a result, accelerated education programs, language training programs, ongoing tutoring and learning support, and psychosocial services are important ways to ensure a child's success.

Today, 85 percent of refugees are hosted by developing countries whose own citizens are struggling to achieve an education and earn a livelihood.⁵ Given this, it is important to consider the impact of refugees on the host community and develop programs that work closely with local partners and host governments, from the onset of an emergency. Programs that benefit both refugee and host populations offer the greatest opportunity for success.

For children in crisis situations, education is an absolute necessity. Neglecting refugees' right to education – and the protection it affords – undermines not only their future, but also the future of their societies. Lack of education leaves children more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, including recruitment into armed groups, child labor, and early marriage.

³ Jesuit Refugee Service/USA (2016). Providing Hope: Investing in the Future. Education in Emergencies and Protracted Crises. https://www.irsusa.org/assets/Publications/File/Ed_Policy_web.pdf

⁴ UNHCR (2016). Missing Out: Refugee Education in Crisis. http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/missing-out-refugee-education-in-crisis_unhcr_2016-en.pdf

⁵ UNHCR (2018). Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2017. <https://www.unhcr.org/statistics/unhcrstats/5b27be547/unhcr-global-trends-2017.html>

Girls' Education

For millions of refugee girls, education is out of reach. Despite substantial progress in increasing access to girls' education around the world over the last two decades, refugee girls remain left behind.

In countries affected by conflict, girls are 2.5 times more likely to be out of school than boys.⁶ Girls make up half of the 7.4 million school-age refugees yet face disproportionate challenges in accessing and sustaining their education. Notably, refugee girls are only half as likely to be enrolled in secondary school as boys.⁷

Limited access to education further perpetuates the challenges and vulnerabilities that displaced girls face. The isolation of being out of school can harm girls who've experienced trauma during their displacement as they may be more vulnerable to trafficking or early marriage. Without school, refugee girls may find it more difficult to heal, build hope, and find safety.

The benefits of investing in education for all girls – including refugees and those who are forcibly displaced – transcends the individual. If refugee girls have access to an education, their families and communities are more likely to improve their social and economic position. The further girls progress with their schooling, the more they develop leadership skills, become income generators, and build self-reliance.⁸ These are personal qualities that will help their communities flourish as they strive to adapt to their host countries or as they prepare to return to their home countries.

A recent JRS/USA policy brief, "Her Future: Challenges & Recommendations to Increase Education for Refugee Girls"⁹ provides more information regarding efforts to keep refugee girls in school.

Financing

Through robust funding of global education programs, and by ensuring that education is a core part of humanitarian assistance, we can ensure that more displaced children are gaining access to a quality education. This includes encouraging bilateral donors, multilateral entities and corporate donors to take part in these efforts.

We applaud the Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations & Related Programs for providing crucial support to these life-changing programs. From 2011-2017, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) education programs directly benefited 22.6 million children and youth

⁶ Overseas Development Institute (2016). Education Cannot Wait: Proposing a Fund for Education in Emergencies. <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/10497.pdf>

⁷ UNHCR (2018). Turn the Tide: Refugee Education in Crisis. <https://www.unhcr.org/5b852f8e4.pdf>

⁸ UNCHR (2018). Her Turn: It's Time to Make Refugee Girls' Education a Priority. <https://www.unhcr.org/herturn/>.

⁹ Jesuit Refugee Service/USA (2019). "Her Future: Challenges & Recommendations to Increase Education for Refugee Girls." <https://www.jrsusa.org/resource/her-future-challenges-recommendations-to-increase-education-for-refugee-girls/>

living in crisis-and conflict-affected environments, including 4.1 million who were previously out of school.¹⁰

The Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) is also a key partner through its efforts to expand access to education for refugees and others affected by conflict. PRM actively supports humanitarian programs that provide education and advances access to education through humanitarian diplomacy.

The U.S. Government has also made significant strides in coordinating international basic education programs across agencies as evidenced by the new Strategy on International Basic Education for Fiscal Years 2019-2023, which was launched in 2018. This ground-breaking strategy, mandated by the Reinforcing Education Accountability in Development (READ) Act championed by Chairwoman Lowey, prioritizes the need for educational programs in conflict and crisis settings.

Yet, the U.S. cannot tackle this global challenge alone. Multilateral partnerships play an important role in building the political will necessary to create sustainable change and help bring a diverse group of actors to the table to achieve these immense goals.

Education Cannot Wait is the first global movement and fund dedicated to education in emergencies and protracted crises. It was established during the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016 by international humanitarian and development aid actors, along with public and private donors, to help reposition education as a priority on the humanitarian agenda, usher in a more collaborative approach among actors on the ground and foster additional funding to ensure that every crisis-affected child and young person is in school and learning.

To date, ECW has raised over \$336 million, including a \$21 million contribution by the U.S at its launch in 2016. With both rapid response and multi-year funding platforms, ECW has already invested \$134.5 million to support education in 19 crisis-affected countries. By 2021, ECW aims to reach 8.9 million children and youth living in areas affected by fragility, conflict and violence – half of whom will be girls.

We urge the Subcommittee to include at least \$925 million in funding for basic education programs in the FY20 State & Foreign Operations Appropriations bill and to support at least \$21 million in additional funding for Education Cannot Wait.

Thank you again for your time and consideration.

¹⁰ USAID (2018). "U.S. Government Strategy on International Basic Education for Fiscal Years 2019-2023." https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1865/USG-Education-Strategy_FY2019-2023_Final_Web.pdf