



## Education and **Refugees**



**Educating refugees provides young people with the opportunity to shape their own futures, whether in their own countries, or as meaningful contributors in their host countries.**

Education unlocks critical economic and social opportunities, providing refugees with the skills needed to think critically, problem solve, and become self-reliant, improving self-esteem and job prospects. Education provides refugee children with a safe space to learn and grow, away from child labour, child marriage, exploitation and conflict, contributing to a safer and more sustainable society.

### **Key challenges**



- **Crisis and conflict disrupt education.** About 75 million children have their education interrupted each year because of conflict, emergency and disaster ([ODI, 2016](#)).
- **The number of displaced children is larger today than any time since World War II.** Today, 40% of the 79.5 million refugees are children ([UNHCR, 2020](#)).

- **Communities suffer if refugee children are uneducated.** The less education a child receives, the more likely they are to live in poverty and poor health, adding strain to host communities ([Save the Children, 2018](#)).
- **Refugees are more likely to be out of school.** Refugee children are five times more likely to be out of school than other children and youth around the world ([UNESCO, 2016](#)).
- **Higher education is not a reality for most refugees.** Only 3% of refugees have access to higher education ([UNHCR, 2019](#)).

## Make the case



- **Providing educational opportunities for refugees creates more productive members of society.** Education lays the base of foundational skills, preparing students for technical or vocational training, or university-level opportunities, leading to better job prospects and greater self-reliance for refugees ([UNHCR, 2016](#)).
- **Schools are a safety net for refugee children.** Without opportunity to attend school, refugees become increasingly vulnerable to child labour, recruitment by armed groups, child marriage, or sexual exploitation ([UNHCR, 2016](#)).
- **Schools connect refugees to their host community's culture and language, creating more tolerant, peaceful societies.** Successfully integrating refugees promotes social inclusion, reduces tensions with locals, and creates more equal societies ([OECD, 2019](#)).
- **Education is a priority for refugee children and their families.** Refugee parents consider education for their children to be their number one priority ([Save the Children, 2015](#)).

- **Schools can serve as a stabilising force for refugee children, addressing social exclusion and mental health.** Simply being in school can help refugee children’s psychosocial recovery, and school-based interventions can play a fundamental role in supporting children to deal with psychosocial transitions

(UNHCR, 2017; Pastoor, 2016).

- **Quality education provides children with hope for a better future.** A growing number of studies show that refugee students with access to education have hope and purpose in the future

(Save the Children, 2015).

- **Education integrates refugees into the local economy.** Among refugees in Germany, good German speaking, reading and writing skills were associated with a 19% higher probability of employment and 18% greater wages

(Hanemann, 2018).

- **Strengthening the capacity of national education systems to accommodate refugees can benefit local communities too.**

In Pakistan, more than US\$45 million was invested in more than 730 educational projects over nine years. 84% of the 800,000 who benefitted were local Pakistani children, while 16% were Afghan refugees

(UNHCR, 2019).

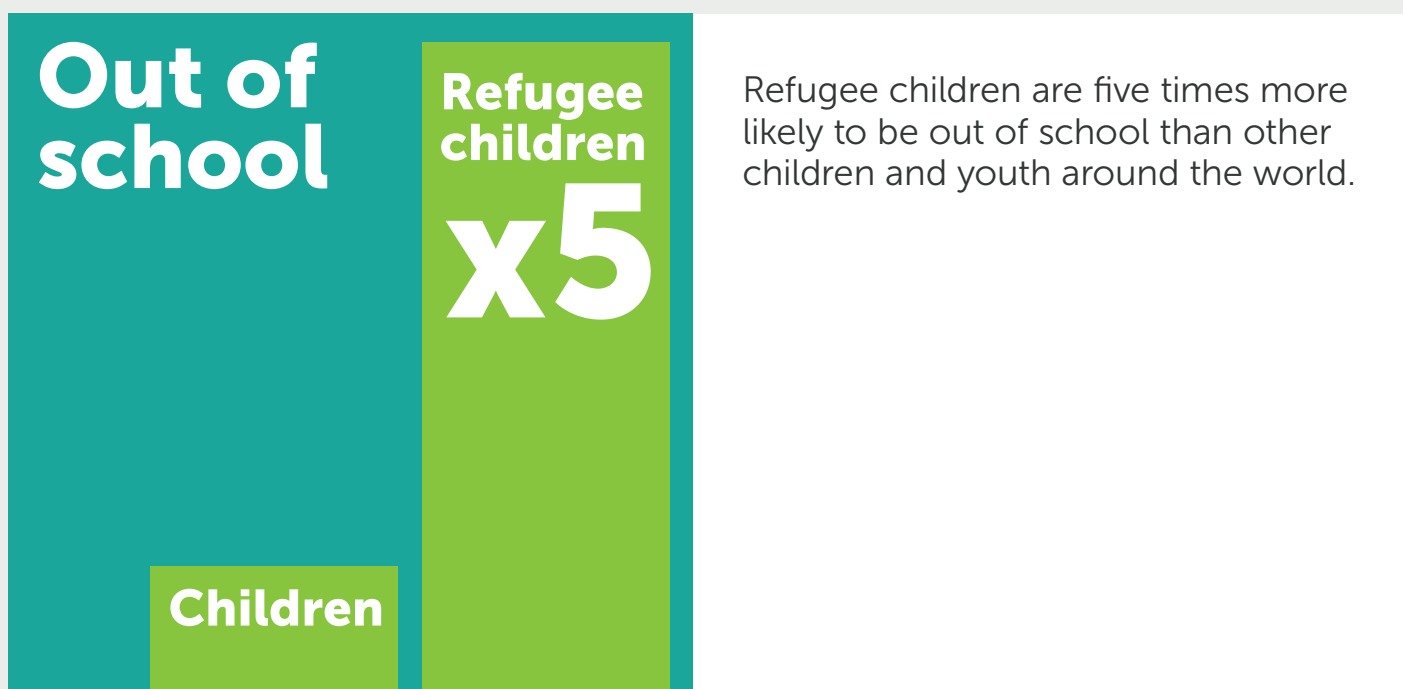
In Lebanon, the double-shift school system supports public schools which serve both Lebanese and Syrian refugee children. More than 200 public school buildings have been rehabilitated in line with national standards, of which 50 were individually restored to improve accessibility to children with physical disabilities

(UNICEF, 2018).

- **Simple, cost-effective programmes can boost refugee enrolment.** Cash transfer programmes for refugee children to support their transportation and other education costs can help increase school attendance by 20%, as was found in a randomized control study in Lebanon

(Hoop et al., 2018).

## Key infographic



## Key talking points



- A record number of young people are refugees around the world.
- Investing in education for refugees provides hope and opportunity for children who have experienced unthinkable tragedy and disruption to their lives.
- Supporting refugee education can also help improve education for host communities.
- Refugee education creates more tolerant, peaceful societies and helps ensure people are able to contribute to their host communities and be prepared to return home and rebuild their communities.