

WE
WELCOME
SUPPORT
STAND #WithRefugees

 WORLD ASSOCIATION
OF GIRL GUIDES
AND GIRL SCOUTS

**WORLD
REFUGEE
DAY**

20 JUNE 2018

We are facing the largest humanitarian crisis since World War II

In a world shaped by climate change, conflict and violence, *Sustainable* Development Goals cannot be achieved without taking into account the rights of refugees and internally displaced people. Today, global forced displacement hit a record high of 65.6 million individuals forcibly displaced worldwide. This is a result of persecution, conflict, violence and human rights violations. There are 22.5 million refugees in the world—the highest ever seen. More than half (54%) of all refugees worldwide came from just three countries: the Syrian Arab Republic (4.9 million)¹, Afghanistan (2.7 million), and Somalia (1.1 million)².

“Leaving no one behind” as the distinctive principle of Agenda 2030 and provides a powerful basis for inclusion of refugees under the SDGs framework.

The 2016 historic New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants tasked UNHCR with developing a ‘Global Compact on Refugees’, the text of which will be proposed by the High Commissioner in his 2018 annual report to the General Assembly. In December 2018, the UN General Assembly will hold an intergovernmental conference with a view to adopt the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

On this World Refugee Day, we call on world leaders attending these fora to adopt an approach based on shared responsibility, empathy and a recognition of the fundamental human rights of refugees.

A Holistic Response

In their response to the refugee crisis, we urge governments and humanitarian agencies to ensure services offered to refugees are holistic and comprehensive. Refugees need more than just food, water and shelter to rebuild and move forward with their lives. When policies and programmes are gender-blind, they place refugee women and girls at a heightened risk of human rights violations. We ask that particular attention is paid to the specific needs and

¹ <https://www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/statistics/>

² UNHCR Report Global Trends Forced displacement in 2015, available at <https://s3.amazonaws.com/unhcrsharedmedia/2016/2016-06-20-global-trends/2016-06-14-Global-Trends-2015.pdf>

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vulnerabilities of girls and young women, which too often go unrecognized. We ask for additional resources to be devoted to the following areas:

1. Protection and support for victims of SGBV

For all refugees, the journey to safety can be a harrowing experience, but particularly for women and girls. At all stages of their journey – in their country of origin, while in transit and in the cramped quarters of camps or settlements – women and girls are exposed to the

constant threat of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and human trafficking. It is obviously difficult to obtain reliable statistics on the percentage of women affected, but leading experts concur the risks are ubiquitous and the rates are staggering.

Given the levels of physical and sexual violence experienced by women and girl refugees, it must be recognised that protection and safe spaces for women and girls are not a luxury, but a basic necessity in the delivery of a humanitarian response. As women and girls are now fleeing in increasing numbers, it is becoming an even higher priority to address protection issues around SGBV. As of January 2016, roughly 55 per cent of refugees arriving in Europe were women and children – a sharp jump from 27 per cent in June 2015.

The current humanitarian response is failing to recognise or prioritise the needs of women and girls. We call on member states and humanitarian agencies to act on the recommendations made jointly by the UNHCR, UNFPA and Women’s Refugee Council and take immediate steps to:

- Establish a coordinated response system within and across borders which protects women and girls, including cross-border referral mechanisms
- Deploy specialist personnel – not only in camps, but also along migration routes – specifically to prevent, identify and respond to SGBV
- Create safe spaces in camps for women and girls which give them privacy and dignity and create opportunities for survivors to access psychosocial support and health services
- Ensure the response to SGBV is appropriately tailored to the needs and circumstances of refugee women and girls, recognising they will often be moving on quickly and will be unlikely to stop to access comprehensive services

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- Provide legal pathways to protection and justice for SGBV survivors and prioritise these refugees in relocation and resettlement opportunities³
- Increase funding for gender based violence programmes within the refugees response plans
- Ensure refugee women's and girls' participation in decisions affecting them.

³ UNHCR, UNFPA, WRC. (2016). Initial Assessment Report: Protection Risks for Women and Girls in the European Refugee and Migrant Crisis. <http://www.unhcr.org/569f8f419.html>.

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2. Education

As the conflicts in Syria and elsewhere become increasingly protracted, we face the prospect of a lost generation: millions of children and young people, traumatised by conflict, deprived of their right to education, demoralised and ill-equipped for an uncertain future. In Syria alone, six million girls and boys have been affected by the conflict, and more than half of Syrian refugees living in neighbouring countries are not in school.

Education is a critical factor in restoring some semblance of normalcy and hope to the lives of displaced children and young people. In order to expand access to educational opportunities, we call on governments to:

- Allow for inclusive and flexible registration and documentation systems which allow refugee children to enroll in and attend formal education wherever they are
- Ensure all educational opportunities – whether formal, non-formal, or informal – are inclusive and accessible for all children and young people, including girls
- Allocate increased resources to non-formal and informal educational opportunities, recognising and supporting the vital role of NGOs as collaborative partners in this provision⁴.

3. Livelihoods and Skills

Many refugees arrive having left the majority of their assets behind and paid exorbitant fees to smugglers for safe passage. Protracted stays in camps where they are unable to work further deplete their remaining reserves and push refugees into deeper debt. These economic pressures are driving parents to send their children into exploitative labour or forcing desperate women and girls into survival sex and early marriage. Livelihoods and skills training can provide young people with a pathway out of debt and poverty, giving them an opportunity to realise their potential and create a safer future.

We urge host countries to:

- Integrate jobs training and skills development programmes into the humanitarian response

⁴ NGO Joint Position Paper. (2016). Supporting Syria and the Region https://plan-international.org/sites/files/plan/joint_ngo_position_paper_london_syria_conference.pdf

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- Take steps to ensure these opportunities are accessible for young women as well as young men
- Lift restrictions on refugees entering the labour market and allow refugees to work legally, so they can support themselves and their families⁵.

To make any of these activities possible – and to ensure the full range of refugees’ needs are met – much greater levels of funds must be devoted to the humanitarian response. We urge governments and humanitarian agencies to:

Allocate more resources to the response

The current response to the refugee crisis is severely inadequate. We call on governments to firstly honour existing resource commitments – including those pledges made at the Supporting Syria conference in London and the commitments to provide additional and predictable humanitarian funding under the New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants. Then increase levels of financial resources dedicated to supporting vulnerable refugee populations.

Track whether those resources help women and girls

Currently many humanitarian agencies do not break down their resource allocation by gender and cannot track whether their resources specifically support the needs of women and girls. We urge humanitarian agencies to put in place systems to track the gendered impact of their resource allocation and demand at least 15 per cent of humanitarian aid be demonstrably shown to meet the needs of women and girls.

Work with NGO partners

Local and international NGOs can provide essential support and prove a valuable asset to the humanitarian response. We encourage governments and traditional humanitarian agencies to explore partnerships with civil-society organisations – in particular youth and women’s organisations – to pool resources and expertise to meet the demands of this unprecedented crisis.

⁵ Ibid

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Finally, we urge Member States of the UN to keep their borders open to all those fleeing active conflict and to respect refugees' human right to seek asylum from violence and persecution. We encourage governments to act with compassion and to accept greater numbers of refugees into their countries in line with their New York Declaration acknowledgment that protection of refugees and assistance to host States are a shared international responsibility. We call on leaders, and on all peoples, to reject the logic of fear, hatred, and austerity, and instead to welcome refugees in recognition of our common shared humanity.