

Transforming our understanding of refugee teachers and teaching in contexts of forced displacement

Transforming Education Pre-Summit Side Meeting
Paris, June 30th, 2022.

Meeting Outcomes and Recommendations

Submitted Wednesday July 13th, 2022.

Meeting convenors

- **Mohamud Hure**, *UNHCR*
- **Charlotte Berquin**, *UNHCR*
- **Chris Henderson**, *INEE*
- **Sonia Grigt**, *Education International*

Moderator

- **Adrianna Elizabeth**,
Youth Representative

Panelists

- **Ms. Lilian Timotaus** from *Kakuma refugee camp, Kenya, Teacher Representative*
- **M. Abba Babo**, *refugee teacher, Chad, Teacher Representative*
- **M. Mahamat Seid Farah**, *Secretary General of the Ministry of Education of Chad*
- **Carlos Vargas Tamez**, *Chief of Section, Teacher Development and Head of the Secretariat UNESCO International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030.*
- **Antonia Wulff**, *Director of Research, Policy and Advocacy, Education International*
- **Dean Brooks**, *Director, Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies*

Background

In refugee-hosting contexts, teachers contribute more to children's learning and well-being than any other school-level factor. Refugee teachers also have strong local knowledge and the desire to contribute to better crisis response and recovery outcomes. However, despite their crucial role and the challenging contexts in which they ensure child and youth safety and learning continuity, refugee teachers do not receive the support they need. Amidst a global teacher shortage, this has implications for future teacher recruitment and retention.

Opportunities for refugee teachers are additionally limited because their work is rarely protected by the labour standards of member states. The lack of recognition and inadequate support systems for teachers in refugee-hosting areas has negative implications for their own job satisfaction, engagement, and well-being, which is shown to have a negative flow-on effect for refugee children's schooling, achievement, well-being, and future prospects.

Refugee teachers are visible to the humanitarian education sector but remain largely neglected in the national education system sector reviews that drive multi-year education planning and in the budgets that address teachers' needs. Thus, it is time to pay closer attention to the difficulties refugees face and to include them in the Transforming Education Summit Agenda and in plans to achieve SDG 4.

Objectives

With the aim of including the above issues on the Transforming Education Summit Action Track 3 Agenda on “Teachers, Teaching, and the Teaching Profession”, and to work towards a harmonized understanding of teachers and teaching in refugee-hosting settings, UNHCR, INEE, and Education International (EI) co-convened a meeting at the Transforming Education Pre-Summit in Paris titled:

“Transforming our understanding of refugee teachers and teaching in contexts of forced displacement”

Refugee teachers and youth from Chad, Kenya, and Venezuela; the Secretary General of the Ministry of Education, Chad; The Head of the UNESCO International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030; the Director of Research, Policy, and Advocacy for Education International; the Director of the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies; and three members of the Teachers in Crisis Contexts Collaborative discussed and debated three “provocations” relating to the work and well-being of refugee teachers. These are listed below with resulting recommendations from panelists and audience members.

Provocations and Recommendations

***Who do we consider to be “teachers” in refugee hosting settings?
Might new definitions and pre-conditions for entry into the profession be one part of the solution to the global teacher shortage?***

1. Equivalency recognition

In line with the ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers (paragraph 18), fair recognition of refugee teachers' qualifications acquired in their countries of origin should be granted in host countries or countries of exile, so that refugee teachers can be included in national education systems and access full professional status, including access to continuous professional development initiatives. Regional protocols such as the 2017 Djibouti Declaration on Refugee Education in IGAD member states, which outlines a plan to promote the inclusion of refugee teachers and facilitate accreditation across borders, is a promising model to learn from and build on.

2. The removal of tiered systems

We ask that tiered systems, in which refugee teachers occupy a lesser status than their host-country counterparts, are reformed through social dialogue with national education unions so that refugee teachers are provided pathways to access the full benefits of the profession and can contribute to the host-country education system. Removal of legal and policy barriers that restrict refugee teachers' right to work and employment needs to be addressed.

3. Reforming barriers to entry

For refugee, crisis-recruited, and community teachers' who are not formally qualified or members of teacher unions, we ask that barriers to entry for pre- and in-service teacher education and associated credentials and certification are addressed systematically, and that pathways to qualification are reconfigured in order to improve access to and performance in the profession and associated credentials and certification. Support for bridging, upskilling and teacher readiness programmes can support the attainment of teachers' qualifications for under qualified refugee teachers.

4. Recognize all qualifications and experience

We ask that the “alternative qualifications” of refugee teachers and teachers in refugee settings, including cultural and linguistic competences, as well as vocational experiences which add value to children's and youth's learning and well-being, are recognized and codified. Procedures should be established to document the professional experience of refugee teachers and education support personnel and ensure that it is counted towards the attainment of formal teacher qualifications through in-service education.

5. Devise and implement systems for rapid recruitment and deployment

Where sudden onset crises occur, accompanied by a massive exodus or influx of refugees, we ask that systems are set in place for the rapid recognition, screening, training, and recruitment of individuals who are able and willing to teach conflict or crisis-affected children and youth. From the outset, in line with ILO labour standards, recruitment, selection, and deployment process should be transparent, fair, non-discriminatory and reinforce inclusion in national education systems. Language training should be provided so that refugee teachers rapidly acquire the local language of instruction. In the meantime, temporary arrangements, including mother tongue support delivered by refugee teachers to refugee students, should be explored to ensure the continuity of learning.

6. Invest in and deliver psychosocial support for refugee teachers

A strength of refugee teachers is their connection with and understanding of the experiences and needs of refugee children and youth. Yet refugee teachers lack access to comparable psychosocial support services that enhance their own recovery from the acute and chronic trauma of conflict and displacement. We ask that this is remedied through the prioritization of teacher well-being through commensurate policy and humanitarian, national and international investments in the relevant social services sector in each country or region.

How, if at all, do we recognize and regularize community and refugee teachers as part of the professional teacher workforce in refugee hosting settings?

1. Improve the status of all teachers

The overarching priority is the improvement of the professional status of all teachers by ensuring adequate compensation, working conditions, terms of employment and access to quality and continuous professional development. Through social dialogue with national education unions, national strategies should be designed towards this aim, which include refugee teachers/teachers in refugee settings.

2. Provide pathways for professionalization and career progression

We ask that host-country governments and humanitarian agencies set in place harmonized professional pathways so that education support personnel, including refugee paraprofessionals and/or teaching assistants, have fast-tracked access to national teacher education and professional development initiatives that allow them to become qualified teachers within a national education system.

3. Recognize equivalent work experience within teacher credentialling systems

Ensure that the school and classroom experience of refugee teachers and paraprofessionals is documented and counts towards the attainment of formal teacher qualifications through in-service education.

4. Promote teacher qualification passports

With a view towards future repatriation or third-country resettlement and associated employment opportunities, we ask that bilateral and multilateral agreements between countries allow for the recognition of teacher qualifications earned during periods of exile. We also ask that accessible, enabling, and empowering pathways into teaching for refugee youth and adults with sufficient literacy and numeracy skills are promoted and provided.

5. Formalize opportunities for hybrid and bilingual curricula between origin- and host-country contexts

We ask that qualified refugee teachers are able to provide teaching and learning continuity through the mother-tongue delivery of host country curricula, while becoming familiar with and working towards the delivery of curricula in the host-country language.

6. Engage host-community teachers as mentors and advocates

With a view toward the inclusion of refugee teachers in national systems, we ask that mentoring systems are developed to foster collaboration between refugee and local teachers. Host-country teacher unions and professional associations should sensitise host-community teachers about the importance of refugee teachers' inclusion in national systems and advocate for the rights and opportunities of refugee teachers. This can only be achieved, however, if host-community teachers are situated to view refugee teachers as complementary to the improvement of their own professional status, quality of work, and career progression.

7. Include refugee and community teachers in national unions

We ask that refugee teachers enjoy the right to freedom of association and are able to join national teacher unions. Unions should organise and support refugee teachers/teachers in refugee settings, to ensure that the issues they face are addressed through social dialogue, collective bargaining, and national union campaigns.

What are the limitations or barriers of current legal frameworks and financing mechanisms, and what innovative approaches exist to overcome financing challenges?

1. Allow for the progressive certification of refugee teachers

We request that the value of progressive certification be acknowledged, and that minimum skills and knowledge required for stepped entry into the profession are outlined, as well as minimum

standards for the inclusion, employment, and fair compensation of refugee teachers within national education systems.

2. Provide predictable, reliable, and sustainable multi-year financing

We ask that this financing includes refugee teacher salaries and associated incentives to improve refugee teacher recruitment, integration within national education systems, and retention. We ask that adequate financing ensures that refugee teachers enjoy employment terms and conditions for fair and decent work as outlined in the 1966 Recommendation on the Status of Teachers including access to benefits medical cover schemes, pensions, and other associated benefits as required

3. Include personal and social security in refugee teacher financing

Within innovative financing mechanisms, we ask that teachers' immediate financial concerns are addressed, as well as their future social security through access to relevant and transferrable superannuation or pension schemes.

4. Produce case studies of promising practices on innovative financing for refugee education

We ask that UNESCO coordinates, publishes, and disseminates case study examples whereby national education systems have integrated and financed refugee teachers. Include examples where international institutions, multilateral donors, the private sector, and community actors have provided improved financing for refugee teachers.

5. Promote the inclusion of refugee teachers as a precondition of national education system financing

Donor risk-aversion relating to the inclusion of refugee and community teachers in national education planning and budgets needs to be addressed. Through progressive pathways and cumulative certifications resulting in full qualification, identify the ways and means to account for the contributions of refugee and community teachers as they progress towards full qualifications and status within national systems.

6. Promote the inclusion and status of refugee teachers in national education sector reviews

We ask that financing and policy-focused institutions such as the World Bank, OECD, and Global Partnership for Education promote criteria relating to the status and inclusion of refugee and community teachers in refugee settings within national education sector planning/reviews, including adequate funding provision through international multi-year sector financing.

7. Re-evaluate current barriers relating to the financing of recurring costs within national education systems

As a fundamental peacebuilding and recovery intervention, we ask that concessions are made for the financing of refugee teacher salaries in contexts of conflict and displacement. In line with the principles of responsibility sharing provided for in the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), external financing support to host countries remains key to refugee teachers' inclusion in national education plans, budgets, and programmes.

Abbreviations:

EI	Education International
GCR	Global Compact on Refugees
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority for Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
INEE	Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Annexes :

- <https://www.unhcr.org/afr/education.html>
- <https://inee.org/ticc-event-series/teacher-stories>
- <https://www.ei-ie.org/en>
- <https://www.globalpartnership.org/>