

KEY ASPECTS ABOUT EDUCATION FOR REFUGEE CHILDREN: REFUGEE CAMP SITUATION

*María Jesús Vega Pascual**

«Healthy, cognitive and emotional development of children and adolescents is promoted by a secure environment and opportunities for learning. Yet, there are many hundreds of thousands of children living in refugee camps and settlements, or internally displaced, whose security has been shattered, often violently, and who have lost or have been separated from friends and family members. Education provides a vehicle for rebuilding refugee children's lives, through social interaction and gaining knowledge and skills for their future lives. For some, the alternative is depression and idleness, and for others, a range of anti-social activities and the thought of revenge through a renewal of arm conflict» (ACNUR 2001: VII).

According to UNHCR's experience, once refugees have met their basic need for food, water and shelter, their primary concern is to ensure that their children can go to school. However, the international community has tended to place less value on education than refugees themselves, as Ruud Lubbers, High Commissioner for Refugees mentioned in a UNHCR publication entitled «Learning for a Future», in 2001. Lubbers goes on saying:

* *M.^a Jesús Vega Pascual* es diplomada en trabajo social por la Universidad Complutense de Madrid (1986), se inició en el trabajo con refugiados en el servicio de atención a extranjeros y refugiados de la cruz roja española en Madrid. Recibió una beca *fulbright* con la que estuvo 15 meses en Estados Unidos, realizando trabajos de investigación principalmente sobre «refugiados y salud mental» en la *Case Western Reserve University* de Cleveland (Ohio, EEUU, 1990-91). Ha trabajado en el Comité Internacional de Rescate en Madrid y en el ACNUR desde 1992, con programas de repatriación, reasentamiento, reunificación familiar, menores no acompañados y aspectos legales. Actualmente es responsable adjunta de relaciones externas e información pública de la delegación en España del ACNUR.

Delegación en España del ACNUR: Avda. General Perón n.º 32, 2.ª, Madrid 28020. Teléfono de contacto (34) 91 5563649, fax: (34) 91 5563503 e-mail: vegam@unhcr.ch.

«With humanitarian needs growing in many parts of the world, the funding available for refugee assistance has become progressively tighter. In many situations, this has meant that the resources available for education have declined (.....). The education of refugees is an important but neglected humanitarian issue. (...). It is impossible to calculate the immense costs that are incurred by depriving refugees of education. A refugee who goes without education cannot look forward to a more productive and prosperous future. A refugee who is unable to attend school or a vocational training course is more likely to become frustrated and involved in illegitimate or military activities. A refugee who remains illiterate and inarticulate will at a serious disadvantage in defending his or her human rights.» (UNHCR, 2001).

Children have an absolute right to education. This right applies without any discrimination whether children are at home, displaced, refugees, or asylum seekers. No government can deny a child within its borders this right to education. Education is most often considered solely as a development issue

The publication of *UNHCR Education: Field Guidelines* in 2003, is the result of extensive consultations involving UNHCR field offices, and has been made possible through the support of colleagues and implementing partners, both in the field and at Headquarters, who demonstrated their commitment to the fulfilment of refugees' rights to education, by sharing their expertise and valuable comments to improve the document. The publication replaces the 1995 Education Guidelines. The document elaborates UNHCR's continuing commitment and efforts to improve education assistance to refugees and other persons of concern. This publication is particularly significant in the light of the Millennium Development Goals and the Dakar Framework for Action on Education for All. UNHCR is committed to contributing to the fulfillment of the goals of the world community.

The document includes UNHCR's *Education Policy and Commitments*. Although we will mention the 10 Policy commitments, for the purpose of this article and due to its limited scope, we will only review some of them (points n.º: 1, 2, 3, 7 and 8). This provides managers, programme and technical staff as well as partners, with practical guidance in the management of refugee education programmes and in ensuring that access, quality and equity in education are improved. The *Guidelines* also highlights the critical role that education plays in supporting other sectoral objectives.

UNHCR EDUCATION POLICY COMMITMENTS

UNHCR *advocates for education as a basic right* In the context of 1951 Refugee Convention and all other international declarations and instruments (see Annex 1).

The Agenda For Protection, and the subsequent Action Plan approved by the Executive Committee in October 2002, specifically underline the importance of «education as a tool for protection».

UNHCR is committed to the key principles of refugee participation, local capacity building, gender equity and addressing the specific needs of groups at risk.

In implementing education programmes, UNHCR will:

1. Safeguard the right of refugees to education and implement the six goals of Education For All (EFA) which include free access to primary education, equitable access to appropriate learning for youth and adults, adult literacy, gender equity and quality education.
2. Ensure the provision of basic education, for refugees and other persons of concern, to ensure their protection and security and to enhance the possibility of durable solutions.
3. Guarantee the availability of primary education (standardised as the first eight grades of schooling) as a first priority, including community based initiatives providing early childhood and pre-school education where these are pre-requisites for formal education.
4. Support the provision of lower secondary education (standardised as grades 9 and 10). In addition, UNHCR will support the enrolment and retention of achieving students in higher secondary (grades 11 and 12) as a prerequisite to post-secondary education. Moreover, UNHCR will advocate for tertiary education and will support the effective use of resources donated for this purpose.
5. Provide low-cost adolescent and adult non-formal education linked to the psychosocial development and specific education needs of the groups. Where appropriate, this will include technical and vocational education.

(ANNEX I)

**INTERNATIONAL DECLARATIONS AND INSTRUMENTS
DEFINING EDUCATION AS A BASIC RIGHT**

I. 1951 CONVENTION RELATING TO THE STATUS OF REFUGEES

Article 22: Public Education

1. The Contracting States shall accord to refugees the same treatment as is accorded to nationals with respect to elementary education.
2. Contracting States shall accord to refugees treatment as favourable as possible, and, in any event, not less favourable than that accorded to aliens generally in the same circumstances, with respect to education other than elementary education and, in particular, as regards access to studies, the recognition of foreign school certificates, diplomas and degrees, the remission of fees and charges and the award of scholarships.

II. 1989 CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Article 2:

1. States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.
2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinions, or beliefs of the child's parents, legal guardians, or family members.

Article 28:

1. States Parties recognise the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular:
 - a) Make primary education compulsory and available free to all;
 - b) Encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education;
 - c) Make higher education accessible to all on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means;
 - d) Make educational and vocational information and guidance available and accessible to all children;

- e) Take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of dropout rates.
2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity and in conformity with the present Convention.
- States Parties shall promote and encourage international co-operation in matters relating to education.

III. 1948 UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Article 26:

1. Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.
2. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace. Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children

IV. CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women)

Art. 10:

«State parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure to them equal rights with men in the field of education and in particular to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women:

- a) The same conditions for career and vocational guidance.....
- b) Access to the same curricula, the same examination, teaching staff.....
- c) The elimination of any stereotyped concept of the roles of men and women at all levels and in all forms of education...
- d) The same opportunity to benefit from scholarships and other study grants...
- e) The reduction of female students' dropout rates...
- f) The same opportunities to participate actively in sports and physical education.... Access to specific educational information...

6. Promote quality of education as a high priority commitment through teacher training and the development of quality teaching and learning materials.
7. Support innovative enrichment programmes in life skills and values education that improve the quality of education.
8. Ensure early intervention and development of education programmes in the earliest stages of an emergency, and access to education programmes by children and adolescents upon arrival.
9. Co-ordinate local, national, regional and global inter-agency co-ordination and partnerships regarding refugee and returnee education issues including educational materials, certification of studies, teacher training and support for education. In addition, there will be inter-sectoral collaboration to ensure a cohesive and integrated approach.
10. Monitor and evaluate all refugee education programmes in line with the established standards and indicators, ensuring that these programmes receive the necessary human resources and appropriate funding at all levels and phases of UNHCR's operations.

Please note that for the purpose of this article and due to its limited scope, we will only review in a schematic way, UNHCR policy commitments number: 1, 2, 3, 7 and 8. Equity and quality education.

I. POLICY STATEMENT 1: SAFEGUARD THE RIGHT OF REFUGEES TO EDUCATION AND IMPLEMENT THE SIX GOALS OF EDUCATION FOR ALL (EFA) WHICH INCLUDE FREE ACCESS TO PRIMARY EDUCATION, EQUITABLE ACCESS TO APPROPRIATE LEARNING FOR YOUTH AND ADULTS, ADULT LITERACY, GENDER EQUITY AND QUALITY EDUCATION

The objective of universal primary education by 2015 was adopted at the World Education Forum, held at Dakar in April 2000. The Forum stressed the importance of promoting education for all, even in situations of conflict and instability and the parity of enrolment between boys and girls which is to be

achieved by 2005¹. UNHCR has a collective responsibility to fulfil these targets, by giving utmost priority to refugee schooling. Secondary education and in-service teacher training make a particular contribution to these long-term objectives after the refugees' return to the area of origin. Adult education also makes a major contribution to EFA, since literate parents are better able to help their children keep up with their studies.

I.1. The right to education

I.1.a. Education is a human right

The right to education has been endorsed by the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child. Primary education should be free at the point of delivery and universal. Secondary education should be available and accessible to all. Tertiary education should be accessible to all on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means². Education should promote the full development of the child's personality, mental and physical potential and should develop respect for human rights, tolerance and international understanding, and for the natural environment³. The child has the right to play, to recreation and cultural activities⁴.

I.1.b. Education is a tool of protection

Education is an essential and effective tool of protection of children and adolescents. Measures to promote universal primary education will help identify children who are being exploited as labourers or servants, who are subject to physical and sexual abuse, who are disabled or who need medical help. The process of education helps children to learn about the way society functions, their duties and their rights. Education should include awareness that children under 18 should not be recruited into military forces.

¹ World Education Forum (2000) *Education for All Assessment: Framework for action* International Consultative Forum on Education for All, UNESCO, Paris.

² CRC Article 28.

³ CRC Article 29.

⁴ CRC Article 30.

1.1.c. Education helps meet psychosocial needs

Crisis situations involving conflict and displacement cause disruption of children's lives, the break up of their families and societies, and uncertainty regarding their future. Often children have been subject to extreme violence including seeing their parents and relatives killed, and so fear for their own lives; and some are recruited or abducted by militias. Parents and guardians are often traumatised and unable to provide normal care and guidance. «Structured activities» such as simple education programmes, singing, dancing, games and sport are needed as soon as possible after a crisis situation, to restore a sense of routine and normality, and to provide support through peer interactions and through the interaction with teachers and youth leaders.

1.1.d. Education promotes self-reliance, social and economic development

Education builds personal self-reliance and provides for the «human capital» needed for the future reconstruction and economic development of areas of origin or settlement. Appropriate education builds the foundations for social cohesion, peace and justice. Education that has been disrupted means that a generation of young people may miss out on education altogether and become a drain on the economy or social fabric of a country as well as become a force for future conflict.

1.2. Promoting education for all (efa)

1.2.a. Role of the community

Refugee communities often begin to organise education activities as soon as shelter and food problems have been temporarily resolved. UNHCR should support and reinforce these initiatives within the context of EFA. The community should retain ownership and most functions while skills are being developed and refined.

I.2.b. Community support for school attendance

The community has a major role to play in promoting Education for All. Community groups such as school committees, women's groups and community leaders can solve problems such as community awareness of the need for school, conflict of time-tabling (food distribution and school hours) lack of clothing for children, sanitation in schools, absenteeism etc. This must be co-ordinated in conjunction with Community Services and Camp Management personnel.

I.2.c. Capacity-building for community education committees/parent teacher associations (ptas.)

Education programmes should have staff with specific responsibilities for motivating the establishment of training and guiding school or community education management committees.

The responsibilities of the latter should include:

- Mobilising the contribution of voluntary labour for the construction, maintenance and repair of classrooms, latrines and other facilities and for school security;
- mobilising supplementary materials and volunteer resources for school and youth activities;
- organising home visits by teachers and community volunteers to promote enrolment in school and prevent drop out;
- promoting the education of girls and generally ensuring gender equity and sensitivity, including advocacy within the community, and advising the education programme on measures to prevent drop out;
- supporting community-based pre-schools with volunteer teachers (important for promoting girls' education);
- promoting the enrolment and retention of children in primary school from the initial grades of school through to the end of the eighth year of schooling;

- ensuring good use of school resources including teacher attendance;
- reporting any harassment by or of teachers or students, and making arrangements for their safe transit to and from school, in groups if necessary;
- organising voluntary systems of mentoring and after-school child to child tutoring for students in danger of dropping out;
- liaising with community groups and with administrators regarding problems such as absenteeism due to timings of food distribution, water supply etc;
- working with the head-teacher and senior school staff to prepare and update the school development plan.

I.2.d. Use of refugee teachers and youth leaders

It is important to involve educated refugees as teachers. This has the advantages of economic independence, (or less dependency), restoration of self-esteem for the individual and the group, familiarity for the students and the teacher and a sense of community.

I.3. Promoting girls' education, gender equity and sensitivity

I.3.a. Action research

Community groups must be consulted on community perceptions of gender equity and reasons why girls or boys do not enrol in school, enrol at a late age, or drop out prematurely. The focus groups should be asked to identify steps they can take to promote girls' completion of the full cycle of schooling, as well as steps that could be taken by the education programme.

I.3.b. Gender sensitivity training for the community

Training and workshops must be conducted in the community to raise awareness of gender issues and to develop possible solutions to problems of

inequities. Gender issues should be included in progress reviews and feature on the agenda of parent teacher or camp management meetings. This should be combined with gender sensitivity training associated with SGBV, Human Rights, income generation etc.

I.3.c. Gender-sensitivity training for teachers, youth leaders and educational administrators

In-service training of teachers should emphasise equitable treatment of girls in the classroom. Anti-harassment and anti-bullying policies should be put into place and monitored.

I.3.d. Preventing harassment and unwanted pregnancies

Sensitisation of the community should address ways of preventing the harassment of girls and women teachers, in transit to and from school, or in school itself. There should be vigilance regarding possible pressures from teachers for sexual favours⁵, in return for good marks in school.

I.3.e. Employing female staff

The employment of female teachers and/or teaching assistants is important as it provides role models for girls. The presence of female teachers enhances protection of girls from sexual harassment by male pupils and teachers. UNHCR endorses affirmative action for recruitment of female teachers including intensive courses to ensure parity of qualifications. Schools should have a female head-teacher or deputy head whenever possible. A female teacher should be designated to provide counselling to older girls.

⁵ SGBV Against Refugees, Returnees and IDPs Guidelines: for Prevention and Response (Draft) 2003.

1.3.f. Schooling for adolescent mothers

Girls who are pregnant or with children should not be prevented from continuing with their school studies. There should be strong advocacy for the reverse: that girls be encouraged to return. In UNHCR funded schools this is a requirement. UNHCR endorses the implementation of child-care facilities adjoined to the school to ensure young mothers' participation.

1.3.g. Helping girls combine school and household duties

In many families, girls are expected to undertake collection of food rations, water or firewood or watching over younger children outside the home. These matters can be addressed by suitable timings of food distribution and water supply, community child-care and pre-school arrangements.

1.3.h. Cultural sensitivity regarding school facilities and arrangements

In conservative societies it is necessary to work with the community to find ways of meeting their concerns about girls' education. It may be necessary to have separate schools or separate classes for girls or for older girls. In all situations, there should be separate latrines for girls and female teachers.

1.4. Support for the education of vulnerable groups

1.4.a. Persons with disabilities

It is important to discuss with the community the importance of education for children and adolescents with disabilities in line with Human Rights and CRC. In many cases, they can attend normal school or youth activities, especially if teachers arrange for student helpers to meet their special needs. Where possible there should be special classes for children and adults with severe disabilities in each major camp or settlement. If these cannot be established there should be at least a «club» for children with severe disabilities, to provide regular group activities.

Persons with disabilities should have priority access to vocational training in suitable skills⁶, e.g. tailoring or secretarial skills for those who have lost the use of their legs. Sports programmes should include special events for the physically handicapped.

I.4.b. Special Education

Children with special needs (hearing and visually impaired, mentally handicapped, specific learning difficulties, etc.) must also be catered for within the context of basic education. Special provision must be made for materials such as hearing aids and spectacles. If necessary, community awareness as well as specialised teacher training should be provided.

I.4.c. Ex-child soldiers and militia workers

In many cases, refugee schools accommodate young persons who have been recruited into militias at some point. Teachers in such schools may need help in dealing with these students. In some locations, there have been special programmes for ex-child soldiers, comprising an initial healing period of expressive activities and conversations with counsellors, followed by compressed primary school courses and / or vocational training. The precise programme needs to be tailored to local circumstances, and designed in participation and consultation with some of the ex-militia adolescents themselves and the community to which they belong.

I.4.d. Separated Children

These children and adolescents may be fostered in families or may be in child-headed households. Every effort must be made to ensure that all children in these situations attend school, in spite of household duties and poverty. In the community-based approach to education, Parent-Teacher Associations should develop measures to overcome this problem.

⁶ Assisting Disabled Refugees: A Community Based Approach.

I.4.e. Other at-risk groups

The education programme and the community education committees should identify other at-risk groups such as children and adolescents involved with drugs, prostitution, exploitative labour or street children etc. The Education sector in conjunction with Community Services should ensure that steps are taken for their protection and health, and to support their integration into education programmes.

II. POLICY STATEMENT 2: ENSURE THE PROVISION OF BASIC EDUCATION, FOR REFUGEES AND OTHER PERSONS OF CONCERN, TO ENSURE THEIR PROTECTION AND SECURITY AND TO ENHANCE THE POSSIBILITY OF DURABLE SOLUTIONS.RE THE PROVISION OF BASIC EDUCATION NCERN, TO ENSURE THEIR PROTECTION

II.1. Curriculum for refugee schools

II.1.a. Emergency Curriculum

The curriculum in an emergency period should begin with structured activities (predominately recreational in the first instance). Any formal curriculum should be based on what the students used before displacement, based on the memory of their teachers and any educational materials they had brought with them. Controversial elements should be omitted. There should be speedy and ongoing monitoring by staff with knowledge of the language of instruction, to identify and eliminate any messages of hate and revenge.

II.1.b. Curriculum Choice

As soon as possible, the curriculum should be formally defined, through a consultation process which includes refugee educators and, ideally, staff of the Education Ministries of the countries of origin and asylum as well as the Implementing Partners. The language of instruction should be that of the country

of origin as should the curriculum, but with additional «subject-time» given to language instruction of the host country as well as thematic messages in line with CRC and EFA. If the initial discussions conclude that the curriculum of the host country is chosen, then again additional «subject-time» must be given to language instruction of the host country as well as the thematic messages.

II.1.c. Standards for Instruction

UNHCR standards for school hours are at least 4 hours of schooling per day for classes 1 to 4, and at least 6 hours of schooling per day for grades 5 and above where a single shift system is in operation. Instructional time is often limited by the operation of a two-shift system and by interruptions to schooling caused by camp or settlement activities. It is important therefore, to timetable the proper number of hours of study per year (for example those specified in the country of origin or asylum), even if this means shorter vacations. Another approach is to timetable «vacation courses» on topics not receiving sufficient time in school.

II.1.d. Curriculum enrichment

Given the special needs of displaced populations, it is important to meet psychosocial needs through enriching the school programme with recreational activities. Curricula should also be enriched through inclusion of learning activities in the fields of health (including HIV/AIDS prevention), safety, peace/human rights/citizenship, and environmental conservation.

II.1.e. Completion of cycles of education

Good practice requires minimising drop out so that students complete the cycle of education that they have begun. This requires adequate quality of education so that students can achieve the required competencies. Fewer students drop out if they believe that studies will be recognised and will lead to further studies or employment. It is wasteful if education and training does not result in documented, officially recognised certificates.

II.1.f. Assessment and examinations

Discussions should be held with the education authorities in the countries of origin and asylum regarding recognition of studies and examinations. It may be necessary to arrange for monitoring or administration of examinations by an official from the relevant Ministry/Ministries of Education. Logistical support should be provided where necessary to ensure that qualifications are recognised.

II.2. Organisational support

II.2.a. Co-ordination with national education authorities

UNHCR should liaise with government education authorities, to ensure the access of individual refugees to education institutions. When there is a major influx of refugees, UNHCR must be in contact with local and national education offices as appropriate. UNHCR must insist on the right of newly arrived refugee populations to begin «emergency education» immediately, using a community-based approach with refugee volunteer teachers and the core curriculum of the country of origin. Refugee education is often the responsibility within government of a special refugee authority or a particular Ministry, rather than the Education Ministry as such. It is essential to liaise with the Ministries of Education in the concerned countries to gain official recognition for studies in refugee schools and training programmes, and especially for the school leaving and other end-of-course certificates.

II.2.b. Implementing partners

UNHCR's support for education is normally channelled through «implementing partners». These may be government agencies but are most often Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), registered to work within the country concerned. The NGO should have a good record of work in the education sector, and in management of valuable resources. Its national and refugee staff should be recruited through a transparent process, based on educational qualifications and teaching/school administration experience; but the predominance of a particular

ethnic or political group should be avoided. The project description should require observance of the principles set out in these guidelines⁷, as well as reporting requirements using relevant indicators.

II.2.c. Infrastructure

Infrastructure should be based in the principles of rapid response, followed by cost-effectiveness. Thus, plastic sheeting is often the first form of classroom shelter. Canvas tents of appropriate size are another possibility but are not necessarily more durable. Later, it may be more cost-effective and healthy to have a permanent roof and cement floor, even where walls are made of local materials. Care should be taken to ensure site drainage, to protect mud or woven walls from rain by having a good roof overhang, to ensure adequate natural lighting and ventilation, and to design facilities to provide protection from heat and cold, as appropriate.

II.2.d. Site planning

This should allow for expansion in the number of classrooms in future years, and for a staff room, principal's room, store, laboratory/practical room and library/resource centre. There should be adequate space for recreation and sports activities and gardening (with access to a sports-ground and garden if space is insufficient near the school). There should be a notice board and display space, for awareness-raising posters and display of students' work.

II.2.e. Sanitation

Schools should have priority coverage under water and sanitation schemes. Good quality latrines with walls are needed, with separate latrines for girls and women. If water pumps are provided then at least one should be sited in each school compound.

⁷ Project Planning In UNHCR: A Practical Guide on the Use of Objectives Outputs and Indicators For UNHCR Staff And Implementing Partners, March 2002.

II.2.f. Basic furniture

As soon as possible, children should have floor covering to sit on and teachers should have a chair and table. Thereafter, furniture should be progressively acquired to meet local standards. Where possible, youth should be hired as apprentices to assist in production of school furniture, thereby giving them useful work experience. The furniture should be given to the older students first.

II.2.g. Staffing levels and class size

UNHCR specifies that there should be a maximum «class size» of 35 to 40 students in actual attendance on an average day. (i.e. a pupil/teacher ratio of 40:1 in a single teaching session). This complies with general standards in developing countries. This is the maximum number possible for successful learning.

II.2.h. Education supplies

Education equipment and materials such as blackboards, chalk, slates, exercise books etc should be made available as part of rapid response. In refugee situations, these supplies need to be continued indefinitely, as earnings opportunities are often limited. The same applies to other situations where poverty is a severe constraint on participation in schooling.

II.2.i. Standards for supplies

These should take note of previous educational practices, for example whether slates were used in primary school classes (this should be encouraged for early primary). It is important to supply adequate numbers of exercise books for students in upper primary and secondary classes, (exercise book x 2 per subject per year as a minimum) since note-taking is the primary source of study materials in cases where children are not provided with their own textbooks.

II.2.j. Teaching-learning materials

UNHCR, in conjunction with the implementing partner, should obtain a single complete set of textbooks as soon as possible. These should be accessed by all students through the school library. Schools should then aim for «sets» of 20 textbooks (ratio of 2 students to 1 text) for each grade that are used by different classes in turn. Resource materials should be developed to compensate for a lack of appropriate texts or numbers of texts.

II.2.k. Supplementary materials

These are needed so that students maintain functional literacy. As soon as possible, schools should have sets of supplementary reading materials and a basic library. There should be a set of basic education aids including a globe and maps, so that refugee children can gain a more global perspective from which to view the problems of their particular country.

II.2.l. Recreation, sports and cultural activities

Certain items such as softballs, footballs, and skipping ropes are considered to be of universal appeal and should be included in initial equipment. Subsequently, the choice of recreational and cultural activities and purchase of needed materials should be decided on a participatory basis, including consultation with adolescents and youth of both sexes. These activities should be planned to meet the needs of in-school and out-of-school youth.

II.3. Resource allocation

II.3.a. Need for external resources

In crisis situations, emergency inputs should be provided within weeks, but then a process of quality improvement is needed, e.g. constructing new buildings and adding equipment, enlargement of library collections, teacher-training etc. Refugee schools do not have a stock of materials accumulated over the years, and so the resource allocation needs to be structured and on-going to ensure quality.

II.3.b. Standards of resources

School resources (e.g. buildings, equipment) should in general be of a standard similar to that in the country of asylum. UNHCR has certain minimum standards that must be met, so that implementing partners can help students achieve the relevant curriculum goals. These minimum standards will also be available in the Education Tool Kit.

II.3.c. Support for schools adjacent to refugee settlements

UNHCR should provide immediate assistance to schools within walking distance of refugee settlements, to create positive rather than negative attitudes towards refugees. In parallel UNHCR should advocate with the host government and with assistance agencies, to make efforts to bring the services in refugee-receiving districts up to national standards. This should be foreseen as part of normal work plans and programme budgets.

II.4. Education and training in the host country

II.4.a. Advocacy

There are often administrative barriers to refugees having access to schools in a host country. UNHCR should, through discussions with the national authorities, ensure that barriers are overcome and ensure the right to education.

II.4.b. Block admissions

UNHCR may provide resources to local institutions that admit refugee students in substantial numbers. This may be in the form of materials and equipment, additional classrooms etc. One approach is to offer to construct additional classrooms in return for the admission of refugee students. This is more cost effective than paying fees for each student or paying teachers' salaries, which is not sustainable.

II.4.c. Scholarships

UNHCR may support individual students with scholarships to help meet the fees and/or other costs charged by national schools or colleges. Details should be arranged locally but certain principles should be met⁸. Each student should sign a contract setting out his or her responsibilities and stating the assistance that UNHCR will seek to provide (resources permitting).

II.4.d. Meeting the special needs of refugee students

Refugee students may have had a gap in their studies, suffered trauma and separation from families, have knowledge gaps due to differences in national curricula, and so on. There should be specific persons in the school or implementing partner responsible for counselling the students, and arranging bridging or remedial courses, if necessary.

III. POLICY STATEMENT 3: GUARANTEE THE AVAILABILITY OF PRIMARY EDUCATION (STANDARDISED AS THE FIRST EIGHT GRADES OF SCHOOLING) AS A FIRST PRIORITY, INCLUDING COMMUNITY BASED INITIATIVES PROVIDING EARLY CHILDHOOD AND PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION WHERE THESE ARE PRE-REQUISITES FOR FORMAL EDUCATION

III.1. Access to Primary Education

III.1.a. Grades/years of schooling

The distinction between «primary» and «secondary» education is one of administrative convenience within a given country at a given time. For programming purposes within UNHCR, primary education has been standardised

⁸ On scholarships, see UNHCR (1999) *DAFI Policy and Guidelines for the Implementation and Monitoring of DAFI Scholarship Projects* (Geneva).

as covering at least grades 1 to 8. UNHCR will give priority to these grades in terms of rapid establishment of education for all, and in terms of needed resources. This should be the case even where some of these grades are termed «middle» or «lower secondary» education in the countries concerned, as UNHCR cannot support five years of first level schooling in one country and eight years in another, based on different usage of terms.

III.1.b. Modalities of support for primary schools

Primary education may be assisted through:

- Support through an implementing partner, for school construction and teacher incentives.
- *[If, in situations of budgetary constraints, the education budget is cut, staff should ensure that building maintenance does not take precedence over teachers (as the teachers are the essence of an education programme)];*
- assistance with application procedures for admission to local/national schools;
- assistance to local schools accommodating a substantial number of refugee students;
- material assistance for needy refugees admitted to local schools;
- special home-based or afternoon schools for children who cannot attend normal schools;
- Accelerated learning programmes for adolescents.

III.1.c. Site planning and security

Primary schools are needed within walking distance of young children. Where necessary, satellite schools for lower primary classes can be established in every neighbourhood, and schools with upper primary classes and lower primary classes for over-aged students can be located more centrally. Security of children and of

older girls walking to and from school must be considered. The holistic approach requires that pre-school, school, recreational space and multi-purpose centres should be clustered to ensure a «safe haven».

III.1.d. Recreational activities

Games, singing, dancing, sport, art, drama and similar activities should be included in the school programme, during lessons, and as extracurricular and vacation activities, to counter the trauma and distress experienced by children in refugee and internally displaced families and the breakdown of previous social networks.

III.1.e. Out-of-Age Schooling

Many adolescents and young adults attend primary and secondary school. Instability associated with conflict can mean the breakdown of schooling, such that children may miss several years of schooling before becoming refugees. Adolescents often resume or begin schooling when the opportunity arises in a refugee camp. In some cases, it may be appropriate to centralise lower primary classes for adolescents, especially for boys, who may be perceived as a threat to younger children (especially girls) or who may not wish to sit with younger children. Care should be taken to ensure that the recreational needs of out-of-age students are met (in school or otherwise) and that they receive messages relevant to their age, including reproductive health messages. In some societies, special arrangements may be needed for adolescent girls.

III.2. Addressing poverty issues

III.2.a. Clothing

Low cost clothing should be made available at least to the poorest children, so that they can attend school. If school uniforms are considered by the community to be imperative then these should be provided through refugee income generation programmes (where possible). Coats and footwear are needed in cold climates.

III.2.b. Hygiene materials

Lack of hygiene materials such as soap and sanitary materials contribute to drop out (especially older girls). These should have priority in non-food item distribution and school-going children should have first access.

III.2.c. Food

Non-participation in schooling is often linked to food shortage and insecurity. Provision of a nutritious snack, or dry food rations or provision of school feeding can help overcome this problem.

III.2.d. Arrangements for working children

Often children are withdrawn from school to earn money through low paid employment or scavenging. If this is unavoidable, separate late afternoon classes can be held, offering the core curriculum, and accepting that students come in their working clothes.

III.2.e. Targeting vulnerable households

Training, grants of tools and equipment, labour opportunities on income generation projects, and so on, can be targeted to benefit households unable to send their children to school due to poverty. These initiatives need to be linked to the children's attendance in school.

III.2.f. Exemption from fees

Where fees are charged for schooling or for extra-curricular activities, there should be exemption for students identified as vulnerable by a Parent-Teacher committee.

III.3. Community Based Child Care and/or Pre-schools

III.3.a. Importance of early childhood development for crisis-affected children

Every encouragement should be given to ensure community child-care and/or pre-school education. Structured activities of various kinds for very young children provide opportunities to relieve psychosocial tensions and assist child development. This is especially important where parents may be too distressed to provide normal parenting, and the extended family is disrupted.

III.3.b. Early childhood education as support for girls' education

Kindergarten /pre-school classes provide the opportunity for older siblings (especially girls) to attend school as in many societies; older children are expected to supervise the younger ones. It has been observed that parents put both girls and boys into pre-school classes, especially if a snack is provided. This can act as a precedent to send girls to school.

III.3.c. UNHCR Support

UNHCR will support the provision of consumable materials for pre-schools however, generally UNHCR will not support the payment of incentives for pre-school teachers.

IV. POLICY STATEMENT 7: SUPPORT INNOVATIVE ENRICHMENT PROGRAMMES IN LIFE SKILLS AND VALUES EDUCATION THAT IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

IV.1. Life Skills

IV.1.a. Objectives and Rationale

It is important to create education programmes that help refugees, internally displaced persons or returnee communities cope with current problems and acquire skills and understandings that can help build a better future. In the short

term, health, safety, peace-oriented and environmental messages help newly displaced populations to cope with problems such as:

- using unfamiliar foods;
- avoiding epidemics in crowded settlements;
- treating local ecosystems with sensitivity;
- thinking constructively about relationships with new neighbours as well as old ones (who may have been members of a different social or political group).

In the longer term, the aim is to convey knowledge, skills and values that will help build a healthy, peaceful and sustainable long-term future.

IV.1.b. Community approach

Messages are more successfully absorbed if they are transmitted by multiple channels and reach all the different groups in a community. Hence it is desirable to use channels such as:

- schools (enrichment of the curriculum; vacation courses);
- non-formal education programmes (enrichment of literacy courses, skill training courses, etc.);
- recreational and cultural activities (outreach through sports groups and events, etc.);
- inclusion on the agenda of community group meetings (e.g. community leaders, youth/women's groups);
- public awareness campaigns (posters, participatory theatre etc.).

IV.2. Health education (including HIV/AIDS awareness)

IV.2.a. Interactive Approaches

For effective approaches to health education for children, youth and adults, it is necessary to talk informally with the concerned groups, in order to discover

their current health-related beliefs and practices, and jointly develop relevant course content, methodology and materials. These discussions may identify important local concerns not normally covered in core health curricula, such as abuse of drugs and alcohol.

IV.2.b. Awareness

Initially there should be campaigns covering issues such as hygiene and sanitation, infectious diseases, nutrition and breastfeeding, malaria, etc., in accordance with local circumstances. Young adults should be targeted with messages related to the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases (STD) and HIV/AIDS.

IV.2.c. Formal Education

Subsequently the school curriculum should be developed with skills-based health education as a separate subject, or as a major feature of other school subjects, - ensuring that all the key topics are covered. Active learning is vital, including role-plays and guided discussions. Science curricula should be reviewed to ensure that topics relevant to health are given special attention and enriched to reinforce practical aspects of healthy living.

IV.2.d. Non-formal Education

Adolescents and youth need special, clearly labelled, structured courses, incorporated into extra-curricula and non-formal programmes, teaching them about reproductive health and the dangers of unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. These courses should combine factual information and discussion. Students should learn, and learn to value, the «life skills» or «relationship skills» needed to refuse unwanted sex or unprotected sex, through role plays, stories and presentations by persons suffering from HIV / AIDS (where applicable).

IV.3. Landmine and Unexploded Ordnances Awareness and Safety

IV.3.a. Landmine education

Displaced populations should be informed about landmines and unexploded ordnances (UXO) associated with the places in which they have taken refuge or to which they have just returned after a period of absence. If developing school and community programmes for landmine awareness utilise the existing materials and work closely with mine clearance agencies for information and diagrams of the types of mines or ordinance in the area.

IV.4. Peace Education

IV.4.a. Analysis and rationale

Refugees and other populations affected by conflict initially react to their situation with a mixture of despair and a desire for revenge among some. Many people do not understand that they carry the seeds of further conflict with them into the refugee situation. Focus group discussions should be established to ensure that the need and desire for a Peace Education Programme (PEP) exists.

IV.4.b. UNHCR/INEE Peace Education Programme

PEP represents an opportunity to learn how conflict arises in human behaviour and the skills for dealing with it non-violently. Key skills in the UNHCR/INEE Peace Education programme are learned through generic activities; self-generated role-plays and guided discussion, leading to the development of values favouring peace and justice. Because of the activity-based approach, it is best to have full-time peace education teachers for schools and community facilitators for youth and adult groups. Well-documented previous practice and lesson plans mean that programmes can be established quite rapidly, after local review and necessary teacher training.

IV.4.c. Gender Equity and Assertiveness

Where beneficiaries are adolescents and women, then it is important to practice skills relating to sexual relationships, and how to deal with pressure for unwanted or unprotected sex, or gender-based violence. Practising peaceful management of conflicts at the level of personal relationships is important *per se* and also gives understanding of peace building at community and national level.

IV.4.d. Early emergency situations

The full-scale UNHCR/INEE Peace Education Programme (PEP) cannot be introduced at once, but the various games, which form part of the programme, can be introduced as structured activities to meet children's psychosocial needs, and to give practical experience of co-operation. Discussion of the lessons learned through these activities can await the training of the Peace Education teachers.

IV.4.e. Formal and Non-formal Education

The full PEP programme should be implemented as soon as formal and non-formal education is established in the refugee community.

IV.4.f. Reconstruction situations

PEP can integrate the understanding of how peace in society is, or should be, promoted through the constitution and legal system. Citizenship education must also show how refugees or citizens can contribute to each other's welfare through peaceful problem solving and co-operation to provide services at community level. Special attention should be paid to ways that participants can help promote the rights of the child and of women.

IV.5. Environmental education

IV.5.a. Early Emergency Situations

Some environmental messages should be disseminated early in an emergency, to ensure a sanitary environment and avoid contamination of water sources, to protect particular species of trees, and so on.

IV.5.b. Formal Education

Environmental education, like health education, overlaps substantially with science and other school subjects. The core school curriculum should be enriched with activities that reinforce the practical aspects of environmental conservation, in relation to soils, water, trees/fuel and plants, animal life, shelter and sanitation, and ecosystem maintenance. Where possible, separate environmental education lessons, using teacher-friendly lesson plans, should be introduced, to ensure that it receives the necessary priority.

IV.5.c. Non-Formal education

Interactive community awareness programmes to teach the skills associated with sustainable environmental living are available⁹ and should be utilised. The seven core areas are covered and include factual information and discussion.

IV.5.d. Reconstruction Situations

Refugees must be strongly encouraged to restore the environment of the host area prior to repatriation. Tree planting, prevention of soil erosion etc. should be included in preparations for reconstruction and repatriation.

⁹ Environmental Education programme.

**V. POLICY STATEMENT 8: ENSURE EARLY INTERVENTION
AND DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION PROGRAMMES
IN THE EARLIEST STAGES OF AN EMERGENCY, AND ACCESS
TO EDUCATION PROGRAMMES BY CHILDREN
AND ADOLESCENTS UPON ARRIVAL**

V.1. Meeting Protection and Psychosocial Needs

V.1.a. Protection needs

The fundamental objective of education for refugee children is to enhance their protection. Provision of structured play and learning activities early in an emergency helps to protect children from exploitation, including forced labour, recruitment into military formations, prostitution and criminal activities¹⁰.

V.1.b. Meeting psychosocial needs

In any refugee or other emergency situation, there should be immediate support to community-based «structured activities» for children and young people, to help them cope with trauma or stressful and uncertain circumstances.

V.2. Rapid Educational Response

V.2.a. Needs and resources assessment

Initial needs for education supplies may be estimated from the population figures expected, assuming that about 45% of the total population will be children and adolescents requiring immediate access to basic recreation and education. This estimate should be quickly followed by a structured random survey in representative locations, which will indicate the age and gender of household members, the highest grade (year) of schooling or other studies, and likely interest

¹⁰ Action for the Rights of the Child: ARC material.

in education and youth activities. This survey can be used to estimate total needs. Subsequently, each community should review needs of education on an ongoing basis. There should be regular «mapping» exercises to show population groups and existing facilities in order to determine further needs. Resources available within the refugee community will include educated persons, with and without teaching qualifications or experience, family members willing to contribute their time, and often a number of textbooks that can be used as the basis for preparing curricula and teaching materials.

V.2.b. Supplies

Where possible, it is preferable to procure education supplies in the country or immediate region concerned. In many cases this is feasible, especially where procurement is through NGOs. Supplies obtained in this way may be cheaper (especially if transport costs are taken into account), logistics may be easier, and there will be a benefit to the local economy. If this is not feasible both UNICEF and UNESCO have emergency kits that can be accessed.

V.2.c. Rapid response: structured activities developing into primary education

The aim is to create structured activities for children and adolescents in most locations within a month of displacement, and in all locations within 3 months. The initial activities should include games, storytelling, songs, dance and improvised sports, as well as simple number and language lessons, with minimal equipment and supplies. Within 6 months after the first major displacement, there should be a formal programme with an accepted curriculum that enables children to undertake normal schooling.

V.2.d. Rapid response: secondary and non-formal education

Initial activities should be planned to ensure outreach to all interested children and adolescents. These should include study skills maintenance classes for

secondary students, literacy/numeracy courses for interested older students and recreational activities. These should be planned on a participatory basis, using experienced youth leaders where available.

V.2.e. Selection of teachers and youth leaders

It should be made clear to the initial volunteer teachers that selection tests will be held as soon as is practicable. Payment of «incentives» should not begin before transparent testing and selection procedures have been carried out and properly documented.

V.2.f. Standby arrangements

UNHCR has agreements in place for education sector standby arrangements. These secondments can be deployed within the first emergency response team or within the first week. The co-ordinator will be responsible for identifying implementing partners, sources of basic supplies for education and recreation activities, and for liaison with local education authorities as necessary. The co-ordinator should be responsible for organising education, recreational and special activities for children and adolescents, to help them overcome the effects of trauma.

V.2.g. «New arrivals» joining existing programmes

Community mechanisms are needed to put new arrivals in touch with the schools and other education programmes. Newly arrived children should be admitted where possible to ongoing programme. If the numbers arriving are too large for this, then special emergency education programmes should be arranged, pending inclusion of new classes or schools in the ongoing programme from the beginning of the next school year.

REFERENCIAS BIBLIOGRÁFICAS

- AGUILAR, P. and RETAMAL, G. (1998): *Rapid Educational Response in Complex Emergencies* (Geneva, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNESCO).
- DESTA, F. (1998): *Uduk Refugees in Ubonga* (Stockholm, Radda Barnen).
- GEZELIUS, H. (1996): *Refugee-Run Education* (Stockholm, Radda Barnen). Inter-agency manual (1999): *Reproductive Health in Refugee situations, an inter-agency Manual*.
- SAVE THE CHILDREN ALIANCE (1996): Working group on Children Affected by Armed Conflict and Displacement. *Working paper No.1: Promoting Psychosocial Well-Being Among Children Affected by Armed Conflict and Displacement* (Geneva, International Save the Children Alliance).
- TOLFREE, D. (1996): *Restoring Playfulness* (Stockholm, Radda Barnen).
- UNHCR (1999): *DAFI Policy and Guidelines for the Implementation and Monitoring of DAFI Scholarship Projects* (Geneva).
- UNHCR and SAVE THE CHILDREN (2000): *Statement of Good Practice*.
- UNHCR and SAVE THE CHILDREN (2001): *Training Guide*.
- UNHCR, SAVE THE CHILDREN, UNICEF, OHCHR, and NOSWORTHY, D. (2002): Action for the Rights of the Children, *Critical Issues: Education* (Geneva).
- UNHCR (2003): *Education: Field Guidelines* (Geneva, UNHCR).
- UNHCR (2003): *Sexual and Gender Based Violence Against Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons*. Draft Guidelines for Prevention and Response (Geneva).
- UNHCR (2002): UNHCR Regional Education Conference and Peace Education Design Workshop Report.
- UNHCR (2001): *Peace Education Programme Brochure* (Geneva).
- UNHCR (1996): *Urban Refugee. A Community Based Approach* (Geneva).
- UNHCR (1996): *Working with Unaccompanied Children: a Community Based Approach* (Geneva).
- UNHCR (1994): *Refugee Children: Guidelines on Protection and Care* (Geneva).

UNICEF (2002): *HIV/AIDS and Child Affected by Armed Conflict*.

UNICEF (1998): *The Needs of Internally Displaced Women and Children: Guiding Principles and Considerations*.

UNITED NATIONS (1996): *Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Children. The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children* (Machel Study).

PÁGINAS WEB

UNHCR

www.unhcr.ch

www.acnur.org

www.eacnur.org

UNICEF

UNESCO

<http://www2.unesco.org/wef/en-conf/dakframeng.shtm>.

Information on Education for All, including various legal instruments on this subject are presented in this website.

A web page on Peace Education.

OHCHR

<http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu2/hrissues.htm>

This site is dedicated to human rights issues with links to education including documents by the Special Rapporteur.

Partnership on Sustainable Strategies for Girls Education

http://www.girlseducation.org/PGE_active_pages/CurrentActivities/main.asp

Provides information on the UNGEI initiative, designed to contribute to the elimination of gender discrimination and gender disparity in education systems.

SAVE THE CHILDREN

www.savethechildren.ch

RESUMEN

Esta presentación titulada «Consideraciones esenciales sobre la educación de los niños refugiados: la situación en los campos de refugiados», está basada en las Directrices del ACNUR sobre Educación de 2003, y pretende resaltar la importancia de la educación en las situaciones de refugiados, incluso en situaciones de emergencia o crisis, y cómo ésta juega en favor de la protección y del bienestar psicosocial de los niños. Se mencionan las peculiaridades más relevantes que deben tenerse en cuenta cuando se trabaja con refugiados, desplazados internos, solicitantes de asilo, apátridas y otras poblaciones de las que se ocupa el ACNUR. Se verán aspectos como los derechos de los niños refugiados, los compromisos del Alto Comisionado en materia de Educación, la participación de los refugiados y sus comunidades para diseñar, establecer e impartir programas de educación especialmente necesarios en situaciones de emergencia. También se abordarán los factores que influyen en el absentismo escolar en los campos de refugiados, el apoyo a los grupos más vulnerables y la importancia de tener siempre presente un enfoque de género en este ámbito, sabiendo que la dura experiencia del exilio, la re-estructuración de las unidades familiares, así como las diferencias étnicas, culturales, religiosas, legales y de otra índole, juegan un papel especialmente relevante en el trabajo con este colectivo.

ABSTRACT

This presentation entitled «Key Aspects about Education for Refugee Children: Refugee Camp Situation», is based on the 2003 UNHCR Guidelines on Education and highlights the relevance of the education even in situations of emergency and crisis, in terms of protection and psychosocial well-being of children. It also mentions key issues to consider when working with refugees, internally displaced people, asylum-seekers, stateless and other populations of concern to UNHCR. Aspects such as refugee children's rights, UNHCR policy commitments to education, participation of refugees and their communities in the design, establishment and implementation of education programmes, specially in emergencies, will be dealt with in this presentation. It will also mention topics such as the school drop out, education for vulnerable groups and the need for promoting a gender sensitive approach, bearing in mind that the hard experience of exile, the changes of family structure, the ethnic, cultural, religious and legal differences are key when working with this population.