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CHAIR: Alexia Creeden

GWCLA XXIX

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Letter from the Chair

Dear Delegates,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the Economic and Social Council Committee (ECOSOC) at GWCIA XXIX. My name is Alexia Creeden and I am incredibly excited to be your chair for this committee!

I am a second-year at George Washington University studying International Affairs and History with a concentration in Europe and Eurasia and a minor in Economics. Additionally, I am on the Model UN team here at GW and have attended conferences in the DC area like NCSC. This past year, I also worked on the dias for WAMUNC, GW's highschool conference. That being said, for those of you who may be new to Model UN, know that I was in the same boat a little over a year ago. Joining the Model UN team at GW and working at our conferences has been one of the highlights of my college experience.

Aside from Model UN, I am a member of the Kappa Alpha Theta sorority on campus, and the Sigma Iota Rho honor society for international affairs. Additionally, when I'm not debating global issues, you can find me at an art museum in DC. I am forever grateful to be living in a city with such an abundance of them! Finally, at home I teach preschoolers, which has been one of the most interesting and slightly chaotic parts of my life!

As an educator and student, this topic is extremely important to me, and I hope as fellow students you all can relate to the topic as well! Education has always been a broad global issue, but with increasing conflicts and displaced persons around the globe, educating the next generation has become even more complex. Additionally, accessing education can be a serious challenge, especially for refugees, who already face significant obstacles to various necessities. I am eager to see your innovative

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solutions, conversations, and collaborative efforts to address these issues.

Finally, as this is not only a complex topic, but also a novice committee, I want to assure you that questions are welcome! Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions about the topics, committee, or just want to introduce yourself.

Looking forward to meeting you all in December!

All the best,

Alexia Creeden

Chair of ECOSOC

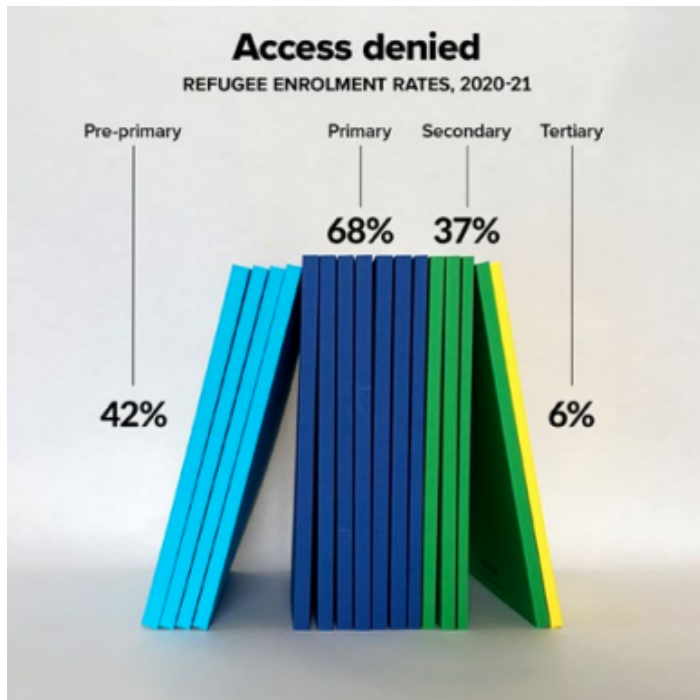
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Topic 1: Promoting Quality Education for Refugee Children

While education is a priority around the globe, many children do not have access to quality resources and facilities for their educational needs. This is especially true for refugee children whose enrollment in schools is exceptionally low. Some estimates even highlight the staggeringly low numbers. For example, the United Nations highlights that “Average gross enrolment rates at primary level stood at 68 per cent, almost unchanged from the previous year. For secondary education, however, the rate is significantly lower at 37 per cent. At pre-primary level, the enrollment rate was 42 per cent.” This data from the United Nations demonstrates that not only are children limited in their school involvement, but it gets worse as children age. By the time they have reached adulthood, many have already left their education behind. This is in part due to lack of access to educational resources such as the financial ability to attend school, technological deficiencies, and limited teacher training. Additionally, this can be caused by social factors such as the necessity of teenagers to take on a more prominent caregiving or breadwinning role within their family. Either way, the data demonstrates that refugee children are unable to access quality education. The United Nations works to provide refugee children with access to necessities such as education, however, financial, social, and logistical issues are barriers to solutions for these challenges. The financial barriers are evident in higher education, but can also be due to the pressure to earn for many refugee children. There can be a perceived opportunity cost with regards to education for young adult children due the necessity for them to begin domestic tasks or even earn a wage to support their family. Similarly, the logistical barriers to education for refugees such as limited resources, issues of displacement, and lack of documentation are important factors in the growing gap between primary and secondary education enrollment. For example, entrance into a new school can

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require documents such as birth certificates and medical records, however for families that were forcibly displaced from their homes, these documents may be inaccessible. Similarly, due to displacement, many children end up missing large chunks of their schooling, and even a year or two can hinder their ability to catch up in a different grade level in a completely different school system. Because these children have been uprooted from their communities and schools, their education is already disrupted, and then the addition of displacement and entry into a foreign system significantly worsens the blow. Similarly, access to education can be difficult when resources are stretched thin. Many regions of the world that deal with an influx of refugees over a short period of time see their educational resources dwindle, and are unable to scrounge up the funds to hire more teachers, build more schools, and develop new curriculum. For example, Jordan's Ministry of Education faced unprecedented



challenges in 2016 with the influx of Syrian refugee students, and had to take drastic policies to accommodate the large new student body. Overall, these challenges make it difficult for refugee students to access quality education across the globe.

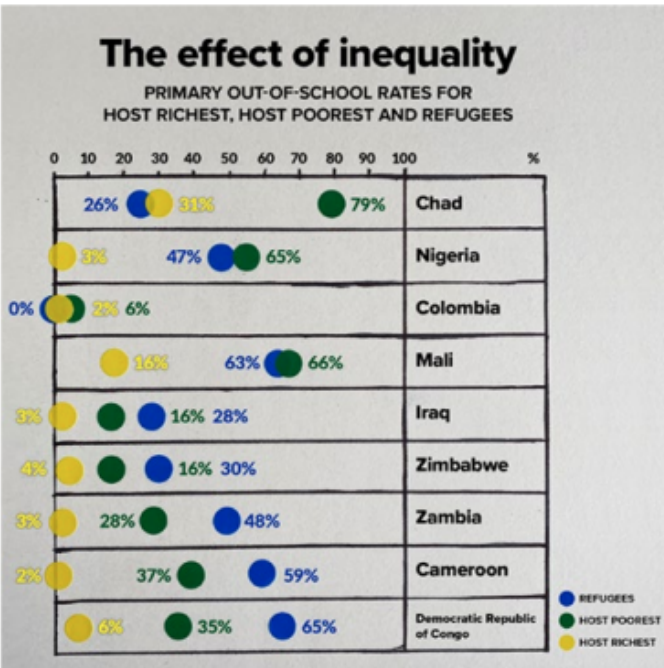
Another factor that can not go unnoticed is the obstacles faced by young refugee women with regards to access for education. The barriers that are faced by women around the

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globe with access to education are evident, and when compounded with the barriers that refugees face with regards to access to education, there are significant limitations on the access to education for refugee women. As mentioned, the issue of opportunity cost is a significant barrier to education for refugee children as they get older. This can be amplified for young girls, when domestic labor is prioritized above an education. Similarly, child marriage is a barrier for young girls access to education. This is important because there are studies that show supporting refugee women in their access to education can help to reduce girl's vulnerability to exploitation, teenage pregnancy, and child marriage. Therefore, overall, it is important to highlight how gender can be a significant obstacle for the already challenging access to education for refugee children.

Some solutions to this problem have already appeared. For instance, scholarships, technology and funding from donors has led to the creation of schools and access to primary, secondary, and post-secondary education for refugees in host countries. An example of this is the DAFI Tertiary Scholarship Programme, which is a part of the United Nations strategy to enroll more refugee men and women in higher education. The scholarship allows refugee students who seek a higher education to network, gain financial and academic support, as well as take preparatory classes for their chosen curriculum. Additionally, successful attempts at using technology as an advantage in refugee education are evident in programs like the Connected Learning in Crisis Consortium. In areas of conflict and displacement, the program allows refugee students to use online materials from other universities in the completion of their education. In effect, this allows refugee students who may be in locations where there is an obstacle to in-person classes, to still complete their university degree requirements. In addition, countries that have established large donor programs such as Rwanda, allow students

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to be well-supported financially in their educational journey. The ultimate goal of programs like these is to alleviate the high costs associated with education which is a significant barrier for many refugees as they reach post-secondary levels of education. Similarly, online programs such as the Connected Learning in Crisis Consortium try to bridge the gap between refugees in conflict affected areas and educational institutions. While these

attempts show some of the possible solutions to the barrier to access of quality education for refugee children, the social, financial, and logistical obstacles still remain as a significant barrier for refugee children's educational journey.

Research Questions:

- What are the main barriers that refugee children face in accessing quality education, particularly in terms of infrastructure, funding, and policy?
- How do language barriers impact refugee children's ability to fully participate and succeed in educational settings?
- What innovative approaches or models have been successful in providing quality education to refugee children in challenging environments?
- What role does technology play in the development and access of quality

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education?

- How do social cultural factors such as gender influence the quality and access of education for refugee children?
- Does discrimination play a role in the quality of education for refugees?

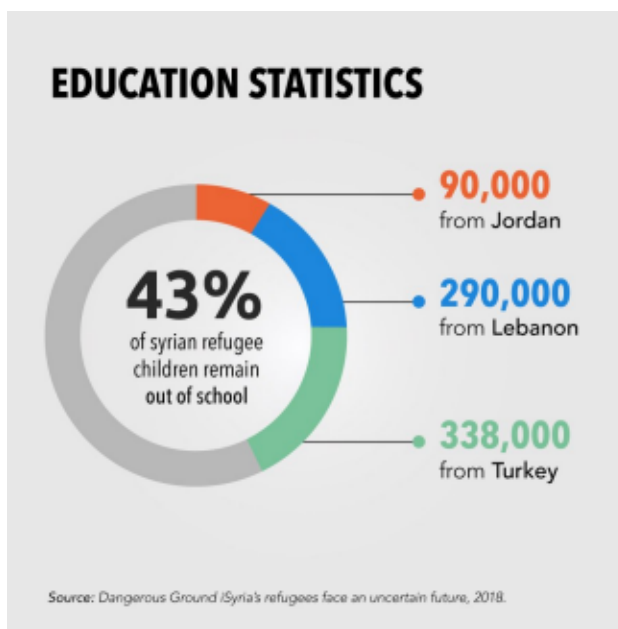
Topic 2: Integration of Linguistic and Cultural Diversity in Refugee Education

Realistically, even if it is possible to open access to education for refugee students, many still unfortunately do not attend. This happens for a variety of different reasons, one of which is the limited support to their linguistic or cultural identities. In some countries this presents itself in forms of discrimination in schools, while in others it is a result of a lack of infrastructure that adequately represents the cultural needs of different students. An important term here is xenophobia, which is defined as discrimination or prejudice against those from other countries, and this can be a strong barrier for refugees in the access of education. Additionally, another important term is assimilation, which can be defined as adopting the language or culture of the dominant social group. There are six official languages of the United Nations; Arabic, English, French, Chinese, Russian, and Spanish, however many refugees speak languages outside of this group and as such have difficulties with accessibility to proper translators and resources. This is especially evident in education, and can make for a significant barrier with regards to language for refugee children. All of these concepts like xenophobia and assimilation, as well as issues of infrastructure and accessibility, can all be important topics for discussion with regards to diversity and integration of language and culture in refugee education. Without inclusive and diverse schooling for refugee children, it is likely that they will not attend schools in the host country despite resources that may be available to them.

One common issue with integration of refugee students into local schools is just that – lack of integration. Many refugees attend systems of parallel schooling where they are not going to school with the community. These systems of segregation can take the form of not being accepted into the national curriculum, or they can be set up when

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a country receives a large influx of refugees and their school system becomes oversaturated. Either way, parallel schools are usually non accredited or informal, and therefore students are unable to keep up with their education properly when attending these schools. Additionally, the services that parallel schools offer are unpredictable, and not a sustainable way for refugee children to become acquainted with a community or to continue their education. Unfortunately, this is not the only way in which refugee children are separated within school systems. Language barriers can be significant obstacles for refugees in education. For example, in Turkey, it is only in the past few years where teachers have been trained in teaching Turkish as a second language. Turkey, which as of 2023 hosts the most refugees in the world, is a primary example of the lack of inclusivity in the variety of languages of refugee children. Therefore out of the 3.4 million refugees currently being hosted in Turkey, those unable to speak Turkish are also severely limited in their inclusion into the educational system.



Ultimately, without proper integration into the school system of a host country the refugee children are unable to form proper communities or develop a network of support to continue their education.

While separation is a significant issue in itself, there is also the issue of compulsory education within other systems. Many forms of compulsory education serve as a method to cultural and socially assimilate refugees to their host country. However,

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while it can be beneficial for refugee children to form a community in their host country, sometimes systems of compulsory education lack language tolerance and make it difficult for students who were already in school in their home country to properly continue their education in their host country. This is especially evident in countries like Germany, which is known for its complex compulsory education system. The preparatory classes, also known as welcome classes, serve as an introduction for refugee students to the German education system. However due to language barriers many students do not succeed in preparatory classes and are thus at a disadvantage when deciding on a path to secondary education. This is also not helped by the lack of recognition for previous education. Because refugee students are displaced from their home country and placed in a host country with a completely different education system, many who have already completed primary or secondary education are at a significant disadvantage. While their education may have garnered certain credentials in their home country, lack of inclusion of those credentials abroad may mean that they have to repeat classes or even grade levels. Overall, problems with assimilation and



compulsory education can make it difficult for refugee children to develop support systems and community within their education.

There have been a few solutions to combat these issues. For example, Sweden is known for its Swedish for

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Immigrants Programme (SFI) as well as its declaration of importance for first language acquisition. The SFI program allows refugees to learn Swedish when they enter the country, making it easier to form a community and adjust to a new environment. Similarly, the idea of first language acquisition, or the importance of retaining one's native language, is evident in Sweden's declaration that "All school-age children, in the custody of a person or persons whose native language is not Swedish, are entitled to tuition in their native language at primary and secondary schools." Therefore, there are ways to value refugee children's native language while also allowing them to form connections to a new country. Similarly, declarations of a "right to education" can be a helpful solution to some of the issues with the lack of integration of refugee children into their host countries' education systems. For example, Mexico has a right to education within their Constitution, and recently in order to implement this they have adopted a Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS). Programs like this one allow refugee communities to be well supported by the host government with inclusion as a top priority. Even so, these solutions are still limited by funding, implementation, and global reach. Ultimately, there must be a balance for refugee education. Children must retain their culture and language of origin, while still being able to find community and grow within their host countries' education systems. This is a difficult task, and one that requires innovative, inclusive, and diverse approaches.

Research Questions:

- What are the cultural and linguistic diversity profiles of refugee populations in different regions of the world?
- What are the barriers to cultural and linguistic diversity in refugee education?
- How does incorporating students' cultural backgrounds and languages into the

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curriculum impact their academic success and well-being?

- What is the balance between assimilating to a new culture and language while continuing to retain your own?
- How does this impact the career prospects of refugees?
- How can educational materials be adapted to fit the cultural and linguistic needs of children?

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