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OFFICE OF THE UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES BACKGROUND GUIDE 2017

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Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2017 National Model United Nations Conference in Washington, DC (NMUN•DC)! We are pleased to introduce you to our committee, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). This year's staff is: Director Jeffrey Thorpe and Assistant Director Nicolette Stanley. Jeffrey completed his B.A. in Political Science and International studies in 2011 and his Master's of Public Administration with a focus in public management in 2013. Currently, Jeffrey is the Research and Statistical Analyst for the Judicial Council of Georgia Administrative Office of the Courts. This will be his fourth year on DC staff, and he is excited to return to NMUN•DC. Nicolette graduated with a B.S. in Political Science from Texas Christian University in 2015, and currently works in Government Relations in Washington, D.C. This will be her first year on DC staff.

The topics under discussion for UNHCR are:

1. Addressing the Needs of the Internally Displaced
2. Improving Housing and Food Security for Urban Refugees

UNHCR is an important organization within the UN system, and it plays a critical role in ensuring the protection, welfare, and rights of refugees, internally displaced persons, and asylum seekers across the globe. UNHCR offers a forum for the international community to communicate, offer financial assistance, and share ideas on issues of displacement. Working closely with governments and other stakeholders, UNHCR is a crucial coordinator and facilitator for the implementation and monitoring of projects related to those that have been displaced around the globe.

This Background Guide serves as an introduction to the topics for this committee. However, it is not intended to replace individual research. We encourage you to explore your Member State's policies in depth and use the Annotated Bibliography and Bibliography to further your knowledge on these topics. In preparation for the Conference, each delegation will submit a [Position Paper](#) by 11:59 p.m. (Eastern) on 13 October 2017 in accordance with the guidelines in the [NMUN Position Paper Guide](#).

Two resources, to download from the [NMUN website](#), that serve as essential instruments in preparing for the Conference and as a reference during committee sessions are the:

1. [NMUN Delegate Preparation Guide](#) - explains each step in the delegate process, from pre-Conference research to the committee debate and resolution drafting processes. Please take note of the information on plagiarism, and the prohibition on pre-written working papers and resolutions. Delegates should not start discussion on the topics with other members of their committee until the first committee session.
2. [NMUN Rules of Procedure](#) - include the long and short form of the rules, as well as an explanatory narrative and example script of the flow of procedure.

In addition, please review the mandatory [NMUN Conduct Expectations](#) on the NMUN website. They include the Conference dress code and other expectations of all attendees. We want to emphasize that any instances of sexual harassment or discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, or disability will not be tolerated.

If you have any questions concerning your preparation for the committee or the Conference itself, please contact the Deputy Secretary-General, Jess Mace, at dsg.dc@nmun.org.

We wish you all the best in your preparations and look forward to seeing you at the Conference!

Jeffrey A. Thorpe II, *Director*
Nicolette Stanley, *Assistant Director*

Committee Overview

“Instead of burden sharing, we see borders closing, instead of political will there is political paralysis...yet, there is cause for hope. In contrast to the toxic narrative repeatedly played out in the media we have often witnessed an outpouring of generosity; by host communities, by individuals, and by families opening their homes.”¹

Introduction

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is the United Nations (UN) agency whose primary purpose is the protection of the welfare and rights of refugees.² It was established by the UN General Assembly in 1951 as a result of the aftermath of World War II.³ Initially, it had a three-year limited mandate to address the high number of Europeans who were displaced due to the war.⁴

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is a programme and fund of the United Nations, reporting to the Economic and Social Council and General Assembly.

Since its initial mandate, UNHCR has expanded to address refugee crises around the globe and continues to protect the welfare of refugees.⁵ Due to the necessity of UNHCR’s continued work, the General Assembly repeatedly extended UNHCR’s mandate every three years until 2003, when it decided to prolong the mandate indefinitely.⁶

Most of UNHCR’s resources are dedicated to supporting operations at the field level, in order to address the needs of specific groups, such as refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and asylum seekers.⁷ A refugee is a person who, reasonably fearing persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political conviction, has left the country of their nationality or habitual residence.⁸ Further, the definition states that they are unable to or, because of such fear, are not willing to return to the sovereign territory of the country they fled.⁹ IDPs are defined as individuals who have had to flee their homes, but have not crossed an international border.¹⁰ Asylum seekers are those who look for protection in a different country, but whose claim for refugee status has not been ascertained; 2015 saw the highest number of asylum seekers ever recorded.¹¹ All of these groups can be categorized as victims of “forced migration.”¹²

UNHCR provides humanitarian aid in a variety of forms, including food and nutritional supplements, basic shelter, as well long-term accommodation such as camps or other forms of housing, cash assistance, and legal services.¹³ The agency is also involved in efforts to integrate refugees into their host state or, if refugees are able to return, to resettle and reintegrate them into their state of origin.¹⁴ UNHCR also works closely with other agencies to address the needs of individuals who have been displaced due to natural disasters, as was the case this year with a major earthquake occurring in Ecuador, leaving nearly 73,000 people displaced.¹⁵ An additional area of concern are stateless individuals, who lack an official nationality due to discrimination, state succession, or conflict.¹⁶

¹ UNHCR, *High Commissioner, Filippo Grandi on World Refugee Day*, 2016.

² UNHCR, *What We Do*, 2017.

³ UN General Assembly, *Refugees and Stateless Persons (A/RES/319 (IV))*, 1949; UNHCR, *History of UNHCR*, 2017.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ UN General Assembly, *Implementing actions proposed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to strengthen the capacity of his Office to carry out its mandate (A/RES/58/153)*, 2003.

⁷ UNHCR, *Executive Committee*, 2017.

⁸ *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 1951; *Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 1967; UNHCR, *Refugees*, 2017.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ UNHCR, *Internally Displaced People*, 2017.

¹¹ UNHCR, *UNHCR 2015 Global Trends, Forced Displacement*, 2016.

¹² Forced Migration Online, *What is forced migration?*, 2012.

¹³ UNHCR, *Cash in Hand*, 2011; UNHCR, *Protection*, 2017.

¹⁴ UNHCR, *UNHCR Policy on Alternatives to Camps*, 2014; UNHCR, *Public Health*, 2017.

¹⁵ UNHCR, *One month after the earthquake, humanitarian needs persist in Ecuador*, 2016.

¹⁶ UNHCR, *Ending Statelessness*, 2017.

UNHCR evolved over the decades and has since seen a dramatic shift in the dialogue surrounding the situation of refugees.¹⁷ From 1945 to 1985, UNHCR focused mainly on the resettlement of refugees; however, after this period, as the causes of displacement varied, the agency shifted towards the concept of repatriation as a possible solution.¹⁸ In 1993, the idea of providing refugees with the possibility to return safely to their homes by offering temporary protective measures, including providing the basic necessities of life, was solidified.¹⁹ From the mid-1990s, the number of cases related to refugees seeking to return home expanded, as measures to resolve Cold War conflicts increased.²⁰ As a result, UNHCR's role in reintegration evolved to include infrastructure and community development, as well as a focus on the importance of reconciliation and peacebuilding in affected communities.²¹

Governance, Structure, and Membership

UNHCR employs over 10,800 national and international staff members working in 128 Member States, including in Geneva, Switzerland, where UNHCR's headquarters are located.²² Additionally, UNHCR has increased its budget from \$300,000 in its first year to \$7,184.7 million in 2016, and now addresses the needs of over 65 million forcibly displaced persons worldwide.²³ UNHCR falls under the UN's Programmes and Funds, reports directly to the General Assembly, and is governed by the Member States that make up its Executive Committee (ExCom).²⁴ The ExCom approves the agency's annual program priorities and budget.²⁵ Member States are elected by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to become members of the ExCom, and are selected according to equitable geographical allocations.²⁶ At its creation, the ExCom was comprised of 24 members; the membership has since grown to 98 Member States.²⁷ The ExCom reports directly to the General Assembly Third Committee, and it must follow directives issued by either the General Assembly or ECOSOC.²⁸ The ExCom meets once per year, usually in October, to review financial matters for the coming year, to give advice to the High Commissioner, to authorize appeals for funds, and to approve biennial targets.²⁹ In 1995, the ExCom created a Standing Committee, which meets three times per year to discuss the work of the body as a whole, and any new situations to be addressed.³⁰ In January 2016 the General Assembly elected High Commissioner, Filippo Grandi, to serve a five-year term.³¹ Grandi works in close collaboration with the Deputy High Commissioner and the Assistant High Commissioner for Protection and Operations to oversee the work of the agency's secretariat and its regional offices.³²

UNHCR's budget rests on four pillars: refugees, stateless people, reintegration programs, and IDPs.³³ This translates to a revised projected budget of \$7,184.7 million for 2016 and an expected \$7,309.7 million for 2017.³⁴ The budget stems almost entirely from voluntary donations by Member States, intergovernmental institutions, corporations, foundations, and individuals worldwide.³⁵ As a means of acquiring these donations, UNHCR releases an annual Global Appeal that provides detailed information regarding the major areas of concern for UNHCR, as well as supplementary appeals that address specific situations worldwide.³⁶ Included in this budget are contributions from the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), which provides funding in the case of situations that require an

¹⁷ Chimni, *From Resettlement to Involuntary Repatriation*, 2004, p. 54.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Macrae, *Aiding Peace...and War: UNHCR, Returnee Reintegration, and the Relief-Development Debate*, 1999.

²¹ Ibid.

²² UN General Assembly, *Refugees and Stateless Persons (A/RES/319 (IV))*, 1949; UNHCR, *History of UNHCR*, 2017.

²³ UNHCR, *2015 Global Trends, Forced Displacement 2016*; UNHCR, *Fact Sheet: Global Forced Displacement*, 2016.

²⁴ New Zealand, *United Nations Handbook 2016-17*, 2016, p. 264.

²⁵ UNHCR, *Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*, 2010, p. 2.

²⁶ Ibid, p. 3.

²⁷ UNHCR, *ExCom Membership*, 2017.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ UNHCR, *ExCom Membership*, 2017; UNHCR, *ExCom Structure and Meetings*, 2017.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ UNHCR, *The High Commissioner*, 2017.

³² UNHCR, *Governments and Partners*, 2017.

³³ UNHCR, *Biennial programme budget 2016-2017 (revised) of the Office of UNHCR*, 2016.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ UNHCR, *Donors*, 2017; UNHCR, *UNHCR Global Appeal 2016-2017: Working in Partnerships*, 2016; UNHCR, *Partnerships*, 2017.

³⁶ UNHCR, *The Global Appeal and Supplementary Appeals*, 2016; UNHCR, *UNHCR Global Appeal 2016-2017*, 2016.

immediate response, such as a natural disaster or violent conflict.³⁷ UNHCR is facing unprecedented challenges with displacement and migration creating the ever-rising funding gap, which corresponded to 42% of the 33 UN appeals being funded in 2015.³⁸ UNHCR's 2017 Projected Global Resettlement Needs reports that 1.19 million refugees will need to be resettled next year.³⁹

Mandate, Functions, and Powers

The basis for UNHCR's mandate is Article 14 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948), which specifically recognizes the right of all individuals to seek asylum in another country.⁴⁰ The founding document of UNHCR is General Assembly resolution 428 (V), known as the *Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees* (1950).⁴¹ Here, UNHCR's mandate is defined as: "providing international protection, under the auspices of the United Nations, to refugees who fall within the scope of the present Statute and of seeking permanent solutions for the problem of refugees by assisting Governments and [...] private organizations to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of such refugees, or their assimilation within new national communities."⁴²

Other fundamental documents for UNHCR include the 1951 *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, which defines the term "refugee" as well as the rights and obligations of refugees; and the 1967 *Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, which expanded the 1951 Convention and UNHCR's mandate to include refugees from conflicts occurring after 1951.⁴³ UNHCR's mandate also includes other groups, such as stateless people, as defined in the 1954 *Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons*, and the 1961 *Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness*.⁴⁴ While its mandate does not extend specifically to IDPs, UNHCR's expertise in displacement has resulted in the gradual inclusion of IDPs in its work.⁴⁵ The 1998 *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, adopted by ECOSOC, outline the rights and protections for IDPs.⁴⁶ In 2007, after a series of inter-agency consultations, the ExCom adopted the policy framework and implementation strategy titled *UNHCR's role in support of an enhanced humanitarian response to situations of internal displacement*.⁴⁷ The framework emphasizes the agency's primary responsibility to refugees and stipulates that aid to IDPs must be given in collaboration with national governments, local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other UN agencies.⁴⁸ The mandate of UNHCR was further expanded in the 2011 ExCom report entitled *UNHCR's role in support of an enhanced humanitarian response for the protection of persons affected by natural disasters*.⁴⁹ The report emphasizes UNHCR's primary focus on conflict-related disasters, and that its role in natural disaster relief should be limited to pre-existing refugee or displacement operations.⁵⁰ Notably, paragraph seven of this report draws attention to the framework's implications for state sovereignty, particularly when it comes to natural disasters.⁵¹

In recent years, partnerships have become more central to the organization's activities and priorities.⁵² For the first time ever, the Secretary-General called for a World Humanitarian Summit, which was held between 23-24 May

³⁷ UNHCR, *UN Sister Organizations*, 2017.

³⁸ UNHCR, *Needs and Funding Requirements*, 2016.

³⁹ UNHCR, *UNHCR's Projected Global Resettlement Needs 2017*, 2016.

⁴⁰ UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*, 1948; UNHCR, *Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 2010.

⁴¹ UNHCR, *Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*, 2010, p. 2.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁴³ UNHCR, *Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 2010; UNHCR, *History of UNHCR*, 2017.

⁴⁴ UNHCR, *Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons*, 1954; UNHCR, *Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness*, 1961; UNHCR, *Ending Statelessness*, 2017.

⁴⁵ UNHCR, *Internally Displaced People*, 2017.

⁴⁶ UN ECOSOC, *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (E/CN.4/53/Add.2 (1998))*, 1998.

⁴⁷ UNHCR ExCom, *UNHCR's role in support of an enhanced humanitarian response to situations of internal displacement: Policy framework and implementation strategy*, 2007.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ UNHCR ExCom, *UNHCR's role in support of an enhanced humanitarian response for the protection of persons affected by natural disasters*, 2011.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² UNHCR ExCom, *Strategic partnerships, including coordination and the World Humanitarian Summit*, 2016.

2016 in Istanbul, Turkey.⁵³ UNHCR was involved in multiple thematic and regional consultations leading up to the Summit with key messages to the international community and partners echoing an inclusive humanitarian system, the imperative need to bridge the humanitarian-development divide, and restructuring how the humanitarian field meets its financial needs.⁵⁴ It was at the Summit where the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2015) was discussed in the context of providing a framework to overcome the humanitarian-development divide.⁵⁵ UNHCR continues to play a crucial role in advocating for the inclusion of displacement issues in national development priorities and for people of concern to be included in the policy framework for implementing the 2030 Agenda.⁵⁶

Recent Sessions and Current Priorities

UNHCR held its 67th ExCom session between 3-7 October 2016.⁵⁷ The ExCom mainly focused on financial matters, especially concerning adjustments required due to a rise in crises worldwide, and the fiscal gap currently facing UNHCR.⁵⁸ It also appealed for more generous donations by the international community.⁵⁹ Last year's ExCom session highlighted two themes for 2016: (1) international cooperation from a protection and solutions perspective; and (2) youth.⁶⁰ A few weeks before the scheduled ExCom session took place, the UN General Assembly convened a UN Summit for Refugees and Migrants on 19 September 2016 that fed into the decisions of the ExCom session for 2016.⁶¹ Following this summit, on 20 September 2016, a Presidential Summit led by United States President Barack Obama convened with the following key goals: to raise financial commitments from governments to the refugee crisis, and to make further commitments towards resettling refugees.⁶² Lastly, the ninth annual High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges will take place on 8-9 December 2016.⁶³

UNHCR's *Strategic Framework* for 2016-2017 includes the pursuit of comprehensive solutions, efforts to strengthen the international protection regime and to increase host countries capacities to provide asylum and protection.⁶⁴ However, the Strategic Framework for 2018-2019 is the most comprehensive and includes goals set under the 2030 Agenda, as well as durable solutions in the context of bridging the development and humanitarian gap.⁶⁵ There are two regions with ongoing crises that have been particularly of focus for UNHCR this year, the first being Central America, dealing with migrants trying to cross to the United States, and the other in Syria where the civil war remains ongoing.⁶⁶ To highlight the crisis in Central America, UNHCR held its first international meeting of its kind focused on forced displacement in San Jose, Costa Rica 6-7 July 2016.⁶⁷ There have already been over 100,000 people displaced in 2015 from the region.⁶⁸ To bring attention to the Syrian conflict that has caused millions to flee and many more millions to become internally displaced, UNHCR convened a ministerial-level meeting on 30 March 2016 to promote global responsibility sharing through pathways for admission of Syrian refugees.⁶⁹ The meeting explored various mechanisms for the admission of Syrian refugees from resettlement and providing special

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ UN General Assembly, *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

⁵⁷ UNHCR, *2016 Executive Committee Session*, 2016; UNHCR, *67th Session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme*, 2016.

⁵⁸ UN General Assembly, *Report of the sixty-sixth session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme: Report of the Executive Committee (A/AC.96/1154)*, 2015, p. 9.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ UNHCR, *Oral Update on ExCom Conclusions Process*, 2016.

⁶¹ UNHCR, *United Nations Summit for Refugees and Migrants*, 2016.

⁶² United States Department of State, *Leaders' Summit on Refugees*, 2016.

⁶³ UNHCR, *High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges*, 2016.

⁶⁴ UNHCR, *Proposed Strategic Framework for the Period 2016-2017*, 2014.

⁶⁵ UNHCR, *Proposed Strategic Framework for the Period 2018-2019*, 2016.

⁶⁶ UNHCR, *Roundtable on Protection Needs in the Northern Triangle of Central America*, 2016; UNHCR, *UN Secretary General says more help needed for Syrian refugees*, 2016.

⁶⁷ UNHCR, *Roundtable on Protection Needs in the Northern Triangle of Central America*, 2016.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ UNHCR, *Pathways for Admission of Syrian Refugees*, 2016; UNHCR, *UN Secretary General says more help needed for Syrian refugees*, 2016.

humanitarian visas to additional pathways such as family reunification and labor mobility schemes.⁷⁰ The ministerial meeting will feed into the larger high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly on 19 September 2016.⁷¹

UNHCR has also provided further guidance on best practices for addressing specific needs for refugees and displaced persons. In December 2016, UNHCR updated its protections ‘toolkit’ which builds on the 10-Point Plan of Action to collectively collaborate on maintaining human mobility smoothly.⁷² The updated plan includes best practices for Member States, Civil Society Organizations (CSO), and other UN partners which account for changed patterns of flows of people today compared to 2006 when the original 10-Point Plan of Action was first published.⁷³ Also in December, UNHCR issued the “Guidelines on International Protection No. 12” complementing the UNHCR “Handbook on Procedures and Criteria for Determining Refugee Status” to help Member States assess in what kind of circumstances people displaced by conflict could be eligible for receiving a refugee status.⁷⁴ Subsequently, the ninth annual High Commissioner’s Dialogue on Protection Challenges, held in Geneva, Switzerland, from 8-9 December 2016, focused on the specific needs of young children who are facing heightened risks of violence and conflict.⁷⁵ The Dialogue involved many actors including child protection experts who discussed protection initiatives and responses which would assist children that are being persecuted and or eluding violence and conflict.⁷⁶ The recommendations aim to guarantee children on the move protection from violence by mainstreaming their best interest regardless of their migration status and to provide them with access to “quality education within 30 days of their initial displacement.”⁷⁷

Conclusion

This year presents itself as both a challenge and an opportunity for the international community to come together. The Global Trends report for 2015 recorded 1.8 million people have fled their state, with only 340, 500 refugees returning back home.⁷⁸ UNHCR’s upcoming work will need to address these unprecedented figures of displacement leaving nearly 6.7 million in protracted displacement situations at the end of 2015.⁷⁹ The world is at a crossroad for action, and that action must have an integrated approach.⁸⁰ Durable solutions will become the key for finding greater synergy between the humanitarian and development fields.⁸¹ It is imperative for the international community to rethink its past approaches and find new creative solutions.⁸² However, as we see in Syria, political will must be agreed upon as a stepping-stone towards ending the violence and further displacement.⁸³ The situation of the Syrian refugee crisis in Europe was able to draw attention to the millions fleeing, but the challenge remains in sustaining the support in order to end the conflict, as well as foster openness for the protection of those in need.⁸⁴

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Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2010). *Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees* [Report]. Retrieved 20 May 2017 from: <http://www.unhcr.org/3b66c39e1.html>
This document contains not only the Statute, but also a helpful introductory note on UNHCR’s history and membership. Delegates should begin their research by reviewing the Statute, as it

⁷⁰ UNHCR, *Pathways for Admission of Syrian Refugees*, 2016; UNHCR, *UN Secretary General says more help needed for Syrian refugees*, 2016.

⁷¹ UNHCR, *United Nations Summit for Refugees and Migrants*, 2016.

⁷² UNHCR, *UNHCR updates protection ‘toolkit’ for a world on the move*, 2016.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ UN DPI, *UN agency urges Governments to recognize people fleeing war-plagued countries as refugees*, 2016; UNHCR, *Guidelines on International Protection NO. 12, HCR/GIP/16/12*, 2016.

⁷⁵ UNHCR, *High Commissioner’s Dialogue on Protection Challenges*, 2016, 2016.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Terre des Hommes International Federation, *Joint messages to the HC Dialogue on Children on the Move*, 2016.

⁷⁸ UNHCR, *New Approaches to Solutions*, 2016.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Wilton Park, *Forum on new approaches to protracted displacement*, 2016.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

contains integral information in regards to the function of the committee. The Statute details the rules of procedure for UNHCR, its mandate and functions, and the structure of the organization. Through this source, delegates will gain a better understanding of why this body was created, as well as the intended work of the body and the constraints within which it must function.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2015). *Executive Committee* [Website]. Retrieved 20 May 2017 from <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c83.html>

This Website provides a detailed explanation of ExCom, its history, and its role. It also provides links to all major forms of documentation produced by ExCom, including documents that have been submitted by the Standing Committee. In addition, it provides a better understanding for delegates of the process Member States must undergo to become members of ExCom, as well as of the role of observers in the annual meeting. Delegates should use this resource as a means of better understanding the current work being done by ExCom, as well as a source of documentation regarding the topics discussed.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2015). *UNHCR 2015 Global Trends, Forced Displacement* [Report]. Retrieved 20 May 2017 from: <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/latest/2016/6/5763b65a4/global-forced-displacement-hits-record-high.html>

The 2015 Global Trends report tracks forced displacement each year and will give delegates an updated look at what is currently being done in this field. The report shows 2015 recording the highest number yet, 65.3 million people displaced. It highlights the dire situations in Syria, Afghanistan and Somalia, which remain the three countries that produce half of the world's refugees. Delegates will be able to determine the main priorities that UNHCR will encounter in the coming years and gain a better understanding of the Committee as it gives a broad overview of the work of the body.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2017). *History of UNHCR* [Website]. Retrieved 18 June 2017 from: <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646cbc.html>

Using this source, delegates may delve into the history of the agency since its formation in 1950. This site explains not only the history of UNHCR but also shows how UNHCR has evolved to its work in present day conflicts. This source will also assist delegates with understanding what world events factored into the creation of UNHCR and why its mandate has been modified and extended past the original mandate.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Executive Committee. (2014). *Proposed Strategic Framework for the Period 2016-2017* [Report]. Standing Committee, 59th meeting. Retrieved 20 May 2017 from: <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/excom/standcom/5319e6a09/unhcrs-programme-united-nations-proposed-strategic-framework-period-2016.html?query=Strategic%20framework%202016>

The Strategic Framework for 2016-2017 will be a useful resource for delegates in order to determine the main activities UNHCR will be implementing throughout this period. Such activities include: promoting gender equality and ensuring UNHCR collaboration with other UN bodies. The biennial programme plan includes wider goals for international protection, durable solutions and assistance to refugees. These goals will be reflected in the activities and guided by UNHCR's GSPs. Delegates should closely study both the Strategic Framework of 2016-2017 together with UNHCR's current GSPs.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Executive Committee. (2016). *Proposed Strategic Framework for the Period 2018-2019* [Report]. Standing Committee, 65th meeting. Retrieved 20 May 2017 from: <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/excom/standcom/56dedef366/unhcrs-programme-united-nations-proposed-strategic-framework-period-2018.html>

The Strategic Framework outlining the work for UNHCR for 2018-2019 will be complementary to the biennial plan for 2016-2017. In this framework, UNHCR's work will continue to incorporate the larger goals of 'international protection, durable solutions and assistance to refugees' as detailed in the Strategic Framework for 2016-2017. A notable difference from the previous Strategic Framework is that 2018-2019 will be presented to the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC); then the CPC will issue a report with conclusions and recommendations

(A/71/6) for approval by the General Assembly. Delegates will also note that this framework will include progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals as well as follow up on relevant recommendations from international conferences and other humanitarian and development organizations.

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I. Addressing the Needs of the Internally Displaced

“We have to do better for these people. For a world in conflict, what is needed is determination and courage, not fear.”⁸⁵

Introduction

The Office of the United Nations (UN) High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) defines internally displaced people (IDPs) as “people or groups of individuals who have been forced to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of, or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of widespread violence, human rights violations, or natural or man-made disasters, and have not crossed an international border.”⁸⁶ Displacement can occur for various reasons, such as economic instability, conflict and violence, natural disasters, poverty, and inequality.⁸⁷ According to UNHCR’s most current records, by the end of 2015 there were an estimated 40.8 million IDPs worldwide as a result of conflict and violence alone, the highest number ever recorded.⁸⁸ In 2016 31.1 million new internal displacements were recorded as a result of conflict, violence, and disaster.⁸⁹ While there are no statistics for the total number of people displaced by disasters, there was an estimated 24.2 million new displacements associated with disasters in 113 Member States across all regions in 2016.⁹⁰ These estimates, however, remain conservative, particularly because IDPs seldom register, and those displaced for prolonged periods become difficult to identify.⁹¹ The average duration of internal displacement in 2014 was 17 years.⁹² While IDPs and refugees may flee their homes for similar reasons, IDPs do not retain the same legal rights and protections under international refugee law since they have not left their state of origin to relocate, making them more susceptible to human rights violations.⁹³ Therefore, the fundamental objective of UNHCR’s involvement with IDPs is to promote their protection and well-being through collaborative humanitarian assistance and advocacy.⁹⁴

International and Regional Framework

The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) (1948) is the primary document that outlines the basic rights all humans are entitled to.⁹⁵ Article 25 of the UDHR, and Article 11 of the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (ICESCR) (1966), specify that all people have the right to an adequate standard of living and security in the event of loss of livelihood in circumstances beyond their control.⁹⁶ The *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* (Guiding Principles) (1998), an international standard for providing assistance and protection to IDPs, states that at minimum, regardless of circumstances and without discrimination, authorities should provide and ensure IDPs have safe access to essential food, potable water, basic shelter, and essential medical services.⁹⁷ Although not binding, the Guiding Principles are consistent with international human rights and humanitarian law.⁹⁸

Adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015, the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* builds upon the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals, and seeks to complete what they did not achieve.⁹⁹ Ensuring all people have access to adequate housing and nutrition is important in order to make progress towards meeting sustainable development goal (SDG) two, which aims to achieve food security and improve nutrition by ensuring

⁸⁵ UNHCR, *Flippo Grandi*, 2017.

⁸⁶ OHCHR, *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, 2004, p. 1.

⁸⁷ IDMC, *Understanding the root causes of displacement: towards a comprehensive approach to prevention and solutions*, 2015.

⁸⁸ IDMC, *Global Report on Internal Displacement*, 2016.

⁸⁹ Bilak et al, *Global Report on Internal Displacement 2017*.

⁹⁰ IDMC, *Global Report on Internal Displacement*, 2016.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² UNHCR, *Global Appeal 2017 Update*, 2017, p. 104.

⁹³ UN OHCHR, *Monitoring and Protecting the Human Rights of Refugees and/or Internally Displaced Persons Living in Camps*, 2001, p. 168.

⁹⁴ Executive Committee of the High Commissioner’s Programme, *Internally Displaced Persons: The Role of The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*, 2000.

⁹⁵ UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*, 1948.

⁹⁶ UN General Assembly, *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (A/RES/2200A (XXI))*, 1966.

⁹⁷ UN OCHA, *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, 1998, p. 9.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ UN General Assembly, *Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

secure and equitable access to land, productive resources and markets, as well as SDG 11, which strives to achieve safe and affordable housing for all.¹⁰⁰ The SDGs present UNHCR with an opportunity to foster a closer link between humanitarian assistance and development assistance, and to expand its partnerships with development actors to address the needs of displaced persons and advocate for the inclusion of IDPs in development planning.¹⁰¹

In 2009, the African Union (AU) adopted the *AU Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Person in Africa* (Kampala Convention) which, in Article 5(4), established that Member States should bear responsibilities for the protection and assistance of IDPs whose displacement is the result of “natural or human made disasters.”¹⁰² The Kampala Convention is the first continental instrument to legally bind governments to protect the rights and well-being of people forced to flee their homes by conflict, violence, disasters, and human rights abuses.¹⁰³ In 2016, the UN General Assembly adopted the *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants* (New York Declaration) expressing the commitment of all Member States to strengthen and enhance mechanisms to protect people on the move.¹⁰⁴ Additionally, the New York Declaration paved the way for negotiations to start on the adoption of a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration in 2018.¹⁰⁵

Role of the International System

While UNHCR’s statute makes no explicit reference to IDPs, a series of resolutions over the decades have affirmed UNHCR’s humanitarian expertise and, upon receiving consent from the concerned Member State, encouraged its involvement in situations of internal displacement.¹⁰⁶ In 1992, the UN Secretary-General appointed his first representative on IDPs, now referred to as the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of IDPs, to promote, disseminate, and ensure the application of the Guiding Principles at the national, regional, and international levels.¹⁰⁷ In 2007, the High Commissioner’s Executive Committee established and adopted a policy framework and implementation strategy, which now forms the basis of UNHCR’s evolving role in displacement situations.¹⁰⁸ This is further emphasized in General Assembly resolution 62/153, “protection of and assistance to internally displaced persons” adopted on 6 March 2008, which notes that Member States have the primary responsibility to provide protection and assistance to IDPs within their jurisdiction in appropriate cooperation with the international community.¹⁰⁹ The UNHCR relies on partnerships with Member States, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international and regional organizations, and the private sector to develop both short- and long-term solutions for internal displacement situations.¹¹⁰ In 2017, the UNHCR’s budget reached a new annual high of \$7.7 billion, 40% of which is allocated to partners to undertake programs and projects that provide protection, assistance, and solutions to IDPs.¹¹¹

In 1992, in response to General Assembly resolution 46/182 on the “strengthening of humanitarian assistance,” the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) was established and is now a primary forum for interagency coordination, policy development, and decision making on humanitarian issues at the global, regional and country levels.¹¹² In 2005, IASC established the “cluster leadership approach” to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian response by grouping humanitarian organizations, both UN and non-UN, into specific issue focused “clusters.”¹¹³ UNHCR is an active and longstanding member of the IASC and is committed to the principles of collective action, including

¹⁰⁰ UN General Assembly, *Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

¹⁰¹ UNHCR, *Global Appeal 2017 Update: Safeguarding Fundamental Human Rights*, 2017, p. 100.

¹⁰² AU, *African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (“Kampala Convention”)*, 2009.

¹⁰³ IDMC, *The Kampala Convention*, 2014.

¹⁰⁴ UNHCR, *Quick Guide: New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants*, 2016.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ UN General Assembly, *Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (A/RES/48/116)*, 1993.

¹⁰⁷ OHCHR, *Introduction to the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of IDPs*, 2017.

¹⁰⁸ UNHCR Executive Committee of the High Commissioner’s Programme, *UNHCR’s Role in Support of Enhanced Humanitarian Response to Situations of Internal Displacement*, 2007.

¹⁰⁹ UN General Assembly, *Protection of and assistance to internally displaced persons (A/RES/62/153)*, 2008.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ UNHCR, *Global Appeal 2017 Update: Responding with Lifesaving Support*, 2017, p. 154.

¹¹² IASC, *Welcome to the IASC*, 2017.

¹¹³ UNHCR, *Global Appeal 2008-2009*, 2009.

strengthening partnerships with the development sector.¹¹⁴ Additionally, co-led by the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the global Food Security Cluster was established in 2011 to coordinate food security responses during humanitarian crises to support country-level operations.¹¹⁵ Through partnership with the WFP, UNHCR continues to work to improve food security and explore other flexible forms of assistance, such as cash-based interventions (CBIs), which gives those who have minimal or no income the ability to make their own choices about how to fulfill their needs and contribute to the local economy.¹¹⁶ UNHCR began using CBIs in the mid-1980s, and has since expanded the use of this modality of assistance to more than 60 Member States, eventually hoping to expand the use of CBIs in all state operations.¹¹⁷ Additionally, there is the Global Shelter Cluster, co-led by UNHCR and the International Federation of the Red Cross, which is responsible for fulfilling emergency needs, such as shelter and funding, as well as longer-term needs, such as transitional shelter, building or reconstruction of houses, and capacity building.¹¹⁸

Civil society organizations also play a vital role in addressing IDPs' needs. Unplanned migration often leaves families traumatized, vulnerable, and in need of humanitarian support to survive.¹¹⁹ In this regard, housing has been identified as one of the UNHCR's highest priorities.¹²⁰ In order to meet this need, UNHCR has developed many partnerships aimed at providing adequate housing.¹²¹ The IKEA Foundation has been UNHCR's largest private sector partner since 2010, providing funding and support for field operations and programs for those forced to leave their homes due to conflict and disasters.¹²² In 2015, through collaboration with the IKEA Foundation, the UNHCR established the social enterprise known as "Better Shelter," with the goal of creating safer and more durable shelter solutions that can be built quickly, providing those who lose their homes during conflicts and disasters, a more dignified life.¹²³

Fulfilling Basic Needs: Access to Shelter and Food

Often with few, if any, resources available, displaced persons are forced to settle for non-traditional housing solutions that provide little security.¹²⁴ Shelters, camps, and settlements in urban areas, while concentrated and easier to access and deliver humanitarian aid to, often become overcrowded and particularly at risk of contagious diseases, sexual and gender-based violence, or attacks by armed groups.¹²⁵ Rural areas tend to be more amenable to the establishment of camps in ways that urban areas are not, because there is typically more land, less municipal and political oversight, and significantly fewer legal and administrative barriers.¹²⁶

In May 2016, UNHCR launched its first global private sector fundraising campaign, "Nobody left outside," which calls on individuals, companies, and foundations worldwide to come together to provide and improve shelter solutions for displaced persons.¹²⁷ The use of Housing Purchase Vouchers (HPVs), piloted in the state of Georgia in 2005, is one example of a cost-efficient program that has seen success in offering IDPs a durable housing solution.¹²⁸ HPVs are subsidies that may be used to help IDPs with renting or purchasing a temporary dwelling.¹²⁹ In Georgia, IDPs residing in makeshift shelters, such as schools, hospitals, or other public buildings, were issued vouchers to purchase a temporary home.¹³⁰ Through this approach, communities were successfully able to free up public

¹¹⁴ UNHCR, *Global Appeal 2017 Update: Supporting UNHCR's Work*, 2017.

¹¹⁵ WFP, *Food Security Cluster*, 2017.

¹¹⁶ WFP, *Food Security Cluster*, 2017; UNHCR, *Global Appeal 2017 Update: Responding with Lifesaving Support*, 2017.

¹¹⁷ UNHCR, *Global Appeal 2017 Update: Responding with Lifesaving Support*, 2017.

¹¹⁸ UNHCR, *Emergency Handbook*, 2017.

¹¹⁹ Gupta, *Home Sweet Home: House practices and tools that support durable solutions for urban IDPs*, 2015.

¹²⁰ UNHCR, *Global Appeal 2017 Update: Responding with Lifesaving Support*, 2017, p. 123.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² IKEA Foundation, *About Us*, 2017.

¹²³ IKEA Foundation, *Circles of Prosperity: Annual Review*, 2015.

¹²⁴ Gupta, *Home Sweet Home: House practices and tools that support durable solutions for urban IDPs*, 2015.

¹²⁵ Brookings Institution, *Protecting Internally Displaced Persons: A Manual for Law and Policymakers*, 2008, p. 290.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

¹²⁷ UNHCR, *Global Report*, 2016.

¹²⁸ Golda, *Use of housing vouchers in Georgia*, 2009, p. 55.

¹²⁹ Gupta, *Home Sweet Home: House practices and tools that support durable solutions for urban IDPs*, 2015.

¹³⁰ Golda, *Use of housing vouchers in Georgia*, 2009, p. 55.

buildings and open space for redevelopment, a key obstacle to local economic development in many of the post-conflict societies.¹³¹

Displacement disrupts access to food by separating both suppliers and producers from the consumer.¹³² Food-related aid to IDPs often takes two forms.¹³³ First, free food aid, which involves either direct distribution of food or the means of procuring food, such as cash or vouchers.¹³⁴ Second, supplementary and therapeutic feeding programs are created to mitigate malnutrition and its detrimental consequences.¹³⁵ In situations of food insecurity, women often travel alone to secure food and become more vulnerable to violence.¹³⁶ To avoid potentially dangerous situations, food distribution points can be established at locations that are safe and convenient for IDPs, and remain open at times of the day that do not discourage self-reliant economic activities or overlap with times when IDPs are normally engaged in work or childcare.¹³⁷

“Invisible People” – Challenges to Providing Assistance to IDPs

The general lack of information about IDPs is a challenge for those advocating for the fulfilment of their rights.¹³⁸ In many Member States, IDPs, particularly those living outside of camp settings, remain “invisible” and are unable to be identified or to receive assistance.¹³⁹ One tool that has been used to resolve this problem is profiling, by which local authorities combine efforts with their humanitarian and development partners to collect information on the demographics, migration patterns, and factors related to the process of attaining durable solutions.¹⁴⁰ In 2014, Côte d’Ivoire, with support from UNHCR, profiled over 4,000 households in areas affected by displacement since 2002, collecting data on their geographical distribution, socio-economic characteristics, current living conditions, and future intentions to gauge the extent to which IDPs had brought their displacement to a sustainable end, in line with the criteria set out by the IASC’s framework on durable solutions.¹⁴¹ The profiling exercise revealed that of the 2.3 million people displaced since 2002, 301,000 were still living in displacement situations.¹⁴² This program also provided the necessary information on needs and obstacles to develop targeted strategies and intervention.¹⁴³

Conclusion

Forced displacement has reached unprecedented levels, with 2016 seeing the highest amount of people displaced since the Second World War.¹⁴⁴ Developing new approaches and diversifying innovative partnerships remains essential for UNHCR.¹⁴⁵ This past year saw several successful initiatives to strengthen UNHCR’s relationships with traditional and non-traditional partners to place IDPs firmly on the international agenda, such as the adoption of the New York Declaration.¹⁴⁶ As the 20th anniversary of the Guiding Principles approaches, UNHCR continues to work to strengthen its collaboration with partners, including development actors, to better meet both the short- and long-term humanitarian and financial needs of displaced people.¹⁴⁷ As the cost to address global displacement continues to grow, UNHCR also hopes to increase and diversify private partnerships and funding, in particular through cash donations which are vital to ensuring life-saving assistance to sometimes invisible crises.¹⁴⁸

¹³¹ Golda, *Use of housing vouchers in Georgia*, 2009, p. 55.

¹³² Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement. *Protecting Internally Displaced Persons: A Manual for Law and Policymakers*, 2008, p. 107.

¹³³ Gupta, *Home Sweet Home: House practices and tools that support durable solutions for urban IDPs*, 2015.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ Brookings Institution, *Protecting Internally Displaced Persons: A Manual for Law and Policymakers*, 2008, p. 19.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ Brookings, *Under the Radar: Internally Displaced Persons in Non-Camp Settings*, 2013, p. 8.

¹⁴⁰ Gupta, *Home Sweet Home: House practices and tools that support durable solutions for urban IDPs*, 2015, p. 53.

¹⁴¹ IDMC, *Leaving no one behind: Internal displacement and the 2030 agenda for sustainable development*, 2015.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ UNHCR, *Global Report*, 2016.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 175.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary General on the protection of civilians in armed conflict (S/2017/414)*, 2017.

¹⁴⁸ UNHCR, *Global Appeal 2017 Update: Supporting UNHCR’s Work*, 2017.

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Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement. (2008). *Protecting Internally Displaced Persons: A Manual for Law and Policymakers*. Retrieved on 18 April 2017 from: <http://www.unhcr.org/50f955599.pdf>

This comprehensive manual represents the culmination of a three-year process of research and consultation initiated by Walter Kalin shortly after he was appointed Representative of the Secretary-General on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons. The manual looks at internal displacement from a legal point of view, in order to provide guidance to national authorities seeking to enact domestic legislation, and country specific policies. Additionally, it offers advice on how to shape policies addressing the protection and assistance needs of IDPs, without sacrificing their rights. Delegates should use this handbook as a basis for understanding the needs of the internally displaced during and after displacement.

Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme. (2007). *UNHCR's Role in Support of Enhanced Humanitarian Response to Situations of Internal Displacement* [Report]. Retrieved on 23 April 2017 from: <http://www.unhcr.org/46641fff2.html>

In 2007, to guide the UNHCR's evolving role in addressing the issue of internal displacement, the ExCom established and adopted this policy framework and implementation strategy. The framework consists of eight key principles and stipulates that aid to IDPs must be given in collaboration with national governments, NGO's, and other UN agencies. Delegates should use this document to better understand the UNHCR's evolving role in IDP situations, but should note that this paper does not claim to offer a comprehensive account of UNHCR's engagement with the issue of IDPs, and has been complemented by an additional paper that focuses on the legal and protection dimensions of UNHCR's involvement in situations of internal displacement.

Global Protection Cluster Working Group. (2010). *Handbook for the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons*. Retrieved on 18 April 2017 from: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4790cbc02.html>

This handbook provides operational guidance and tools to support effective protection responses in situations of internal displacement. It is the result of a collaborative effort involving staff from over thirty UN agencies, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and other humanitarian actors. UNHCR facilitated the process in coordination with the Global Protection Cluster Working Group. Over the course of six chapters, it provides suggestions and tools to support effective protection responses in situations of internal displacement.

Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre. (2017). *Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre* [Website]. Retrieved 23 April 2017 from: <http://www.internal-displacement.org/>

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) was set up in 1998 for the purpose of providing interpretation of global data with expert analysis of the drivers, patterns, and impacts of internal displacement across different situations and contexts. The IDMC's Global Internal Displacement Database is an interactive database that provides the latest displacement statistics as well as an overview of the recent developments and key concerns facing internally displaced people in 169 different countries and territories around the world. Delegates should utilize this resource and database to better understand how individual Member States and specific regions are affected by IDPs, as well as developments made in addressing the needs of those individuals who have been displaced due to various circumstances.

United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. (1998). *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (E/CN.4/1998/53/Add.2 (1998))* [Report]. Retrieved 20 April 2017 from: <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/protection/idps/43ce1cfff2/guiding-principles-internal-displacement.html>

Adopted by the UN Economic and Social Council in 1998, these Guiding Principles address the specific needs of IDPs worldwide. They identify rights and guarantees relevant to the protection of persons from forced displacement and during displacement, as well as during their resettlement and reintegration. The Guiding Principles, which are based on existing international humanitarian law and human rights instruments, were established to serve as an international

standard, and should be consulted when working to address issues related to internally displaced persons.

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II. Improving Housing and Food Security for Urban Refugees

“As I walked through the detention center, I realized, these people were invisible. No one knew they were there, except their community members. In a humanitarian system that focuses on camps, urban refugees are often overlooked.”¹⁴⁹

Introduction

In 2015, the Office of the United Nations (UN) High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported that there was an estimated 65.3 million people forcibly displaced worldwide.¹⁵⁰ Of the 65.3 million, the UNHCR classified 21.3 million as refugees.¹⁵¹ Among all refugees, there exists a constantly increasing sub-set called urban refugees.¹⁵² Urban refugees are refugees that flee to urban areas for greater opportunity instead of residing in large refugee camps.¹⁵³ Currently, the UNHCR reports that over 60% of the world’s refugees and 80% of the world’s internally displaced population live in urban areas.¹⁵⁴ This particular group is faced with specific challenges that come with living in already, sometimes overly, populated areas.¹⁵⁵ Though the issues of employment, exploitation, and legal discrimination remain concerns facing urban refugees, other more direct issues, such as the access to safe housing and food security, must also be addressed.¹⁵⁶ Organizations such as the UNHCR, the UN Human Settlements Programme, civil society organizations, and the international community have actively attempted to address these issues through international declarations and collaborative efforts.¹⁵⁷ Nonetheless, urban refugees still struggle to have their basic human rights recognized and met by local authorities.¹⁵⁸ The following guide will provide greater insight into how the international community can improve urban refugees’ access to housing and food through an evaluation of international laws, an assessment of on-going partnerships, and an overview of current operations.

International and Regional Framework

The UN and its many agencies have created international laws, declarations, and treaties that focus on the protection of refugees.¹⁵⁹ Among the most fundamental international conventions and declarations is the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) (1946), adopted by the General Assembly.¹⁶⁰ Though refugees are not explicitly referenced within the UDHR, this document states that everyone is entitled to life, liberty, and security.¹⁶¹ In particular, Article 25 specifies certain necessities, such as food and security, as rights shared by everyone and most importantly are the responsibility of all Member States to promote and protect.¹⁶² Moreover, the 1951 *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* was established to provide specific protections to refugees that were not specifically referenced in the UDHR.¹⁶³ The Convention addresses the right to housing and asylum for refugees in Article 21.¹⁶⁴ In order to strengthen the effectiveness and reach of the Convention, the 1967 Protocol was created so that provisions of the Convention would not be restrained by geographical boundaries.¹⁶⁵ Though the Convention and the Protocol go into great detail about the protection of refugees and other potential issues that refugees may

¹⁴⁹ Urban Refugees, *Our Story*, 2015.

¹⁵⁰ UNHCR, *Figures at a Glance*, 2017.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² Urban Refugees, *UrbanRefugees.org*, 2015.

¹⁵³ UNHCR, *Urban Refugees*, 2017; Urban Refugees, *UrbanRefugees.org*, 2015.

¹⁵⁴ UNHCR, *Urban Refugees*, 2017.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ UNHCR, *Urban Refugees*, 2017; UNHCR, *Alternatives to Camps*, 2017; Rise Against Hunger, *Food Relief en Route to Syrian Refugees*, 2017.

¹⁵⁷ UNHCR, *Urban Refugees*, 2017; UN Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants, *New York Declaration*, 2016.

¹⁵⁸ UNHCR, *Urban Refugees*, 2017.

¹⁵⁹ UN DPI, *Uphold International Law*, 2016.

¹⁶⁰ UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*, 1948.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 1951.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

face, such as ration provisions, access to education, and education of refugees, the Convention does not mention providing or strengthening access to food even in times of emergency.¹⁶⁶

Through the sustainable development goals (SDGs), established by the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2015), the international community committed itself to providing food and homes to refugees.¹⁶⁷ In particular, food security is highlighted in goal two, “end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture,” which the UN hopes to achieve by 2030.¹⁶⁸ Goal 11, “make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable,” focuses on providing access to safe, affordable, and adequate housing.¹⁶⁹ In 2016, the General Assembly adopted the *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants*.¹⁷⁰ Through this new declaration, the UN recognized a shift in refugee housing from the traditional camps to refugees living in urban settings.¹⁷¹ This declaration noted that 60% of refugees currently live in urban dwellings.¹⁷² Additionally, the document renews the international community’s commitment to addressing the needs of refugees including access to adequate food, housing, education, and security.¹⁷³ Among those commitments, food security and housing are addressed in operative clause 80 with the General Assembly expressing its commitment to providing humanitarian aid.¹⁷⁴ Additionally, the Declaration calls for a comprehensive response framework to be developed to respond to the needs of refugees and to be carried out by UNHCR.¹⁷⁵ This comprehensive framework is the UN’s response to the growing needs and demands of refugees internationally.¹⁷⁶

Role of the International System

The UN organization tasked with addressing the needs of refugees is UNHCR.¹⁷⁷ UNHCR focuses its work through several core principles, which are: protection, diversity, equity, access, and sustainability.¹⁷⁸ UNHCR’s mission regarding urban refugees dates back to the late 1990’s with their *Comprehensive Policy on Urban Refugees* (1997).¹⁷⁹ Through this policy, a needs assessment was performed which included the following areas: health, food security, risk of sexual violence, access to shelter, sanitation, and education.¹⁸⁰ This allowed UNHCR to better understand the specific needs of urban refugees, and in turn allowed them to better equip themselves to assist refugees in these areas.¹⁸¹ Today, UNHCR works in a wide variety of areas, including on projects targeted at the education of urban refugee groups so as to maximize their skills, productivity, and experience.¹⁸² Likewise, UNHCR recognizes the importance of housing for refugees to succeed in their new communities, as well as the need for security, self-sufficiency, and a certain level of dignity.¹⁸³ To ensure urban refugees have access to secure housing and food, UNHCR focuses on engaging refugees in livelihood activities to further their engagement within their communities and their own self-reliance.¹⁸⁴ As noted within the *Global Strategy for Livelihoods: A UNHCR Strategy 2014-2018*, by improving the livelihoods of urban refugees, they are able to increase their own revenue stream in a more sustainable way.¹⁸⁵ The basis for the strategy comes from the *UNHCR Policy on Refugee Protection and*

¹⁶⁶ *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 1951.

¹⁶⁷ UN DPI, *Sustainable Development Goals*, 2017.

¹⁶⁸ UN General Assembly, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ UN Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants, *New York Declaration*, 2016.

¹⁷¹ UN General Assembly, *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (A/71/L.1)*, 2016, p.14.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.15.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.15.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p.16.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ UNHCR, *The 1951 Refugee Convention*.

¹⁷⁸ UNHCR, *Livelihoods*, 2017.

¹⁷⁹ UNHCR, *UNHCR Comprehensive Policy on Urban Refugees*, 1997, p. 16; UNHCR, *UNHCR’s Global Needs Assessment Pilot Shows Gaps*, 2008.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸² UNHCR, *Urban Refugees*, 2017.

¹⁸³ UNHCR, *Shelter*, 2017.

¹⁸⁴ UNHCR, *Global Strategy for Livelihoods: A UNHCR Strategy 2014-2018*, 2014, p. 7.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

Solutions in Urban Areas created in September 2009.¹⁸⁶ The strategy has four objectives: (1) Promote a right to work; (2) Enable people to protect and secure their money-making assets; (3) Develop and promote ways to help individuals' self-reliance in their personal economic situations; and (4) Improve planning, learning, and practice on ways to identify personal livelihoods and their ability to help people be more self-reliant.¹⁸⁷ Another similar policy is the *UNHCR Policy on Alternatives to Camps* (2014), which was established to serve as a directive for UNHCR staff assisting refugees in urban settings, and addresses similar needs that are unique to this group of refugees.¹⁸⁸

In 2017, the General Assembly adopted the *New Urban Agenda* through resolution 71/256.¹⁸⁹ This resolution outlines the commitment of the General Assembly to sustainable urban development and the inclusion of all peoples in urban and human settlements.¹⁹⁰ Like the UNHCR, the General Assembly addresses the importance of livelihoods and employment in order to increase self-reliance amongst refugees.¹⁹¹ Also, the resolution highlights support for sustainable infrastructure development to lead to more affordable housing options for individuals within urban areas.¹⁹² Lastly, the resolution highlights the General Assembly's commitment to food security and the resilience of communities to provide food during disasters through better sustainable planning.¹⁹³

The needs of urban refugees internationally are addressed by a number of non-governmental organizations (NGO); one in particular is Urban Refugees. Urban Refugees' mission is to help the international community assess the needs of urban refugees and find new ways to support them.¹⁹⁴ Urban Refugees works directly with refugees through 80 organizations and support groups in over 40 Member States.¹⁹⁵ One new innovation in their attempts to address the needs of urban refugee is the "Incubator," a six-month training program used to train refugee organizations.¹⁹⁶ The program focuses on project management, fundraising, communication with media and on social networks, and relationship-building with NGOs, so that organizations are better equipped to handle the needs of urban refugees.¹⁹⁷ The pilot program was launched in Malaysia with an Afghan Community Centre, and yielded a major increase of the organization's budget and the creation of four new programs that allowed the community center to increase their services to over 600 urban refugees.¹⁹⁸ Currently, Urban Refugees is connected with organizations that are mostly centered within the Middle East and Africa, although projects are also underway in other geographical areas.¹⁹⁹ Asylum Access is another internationally focused NGO addressing the needs of refugees.²⁰⁰ Asylum Access attempts to increase the self-reliance of urban refugees by equipping them with skills and the initial support to establish themselves within their new communities.²⁰¹ Asylum Access has assisted individuals with filling out the necessary permits to be classified as refugees in their new country of residence in hopes of gaining employment and assistance for food and housing.²⁰²

Case Study: Thessaloniki, Greece

The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) requested to review the refugee housing situation in the city Thessaloniki, Greece in order to start an urban housing program for the most vulnerable refugees in Greece.²⁰³ The evaluation of

¹⁸⁶ UNHCR, *UNHCR Policy on Refugee Protection and Solutions in Urban Areas*, 2009, p. 2.

¹⁸⁷ UNHCR, *Global Strategy for Livelihoods: A UNHCR Strategy 2014-2018*, 2014, p. 4.

¹⁸⁸ UNHCR, *UNHCR Policy on Alternatives to Camps*, 2014, p. 3.

¹⁸⁹ UN General Assembly, *New Urban Agenda (A/RES/71/256)*, 2017.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁹⁴ Urban Refugees, *Our Story*, 2015.

¹⁹⁵ Urban Refugees, *The Incubator*, 2017.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ Urban Refugees, *Incubator Program*, 2017.

¹⁹⁸ Urban Refugees, *The Incubator*, 2017.

¹⁹⁹ Urban Refugee, *The NGO Network*, 2017.

²⁰⁰ Asylum Access, *Our Story*, 2014.

²⁰¹ Asylum Access, *Forging a New Path for Urban Refugees*, 2012.

²⁰² *Ibid.*

²⁰³ ETC, *Study on Adequate Urban Housing for Refugees*, 2016, p. 6; NRC, *Study on Adequate Urban Housing for Refugees in Thessaloniki*, 2016.

the city's capacity to handle refugees came as a result of the Grecian border closing in March 2016.²⁰⁴ Since the border closing, the majority of the housing projects in the city have been funded by UNHCR.²⁰⁵ The migration of refugees is not a new event to the city of Thessaloniki, however, the city was heavily affected by the recession that plagued the entire country and housing developments suffered.²⁰⁶ One of the major development, funded by UNHCR, was a large scale housing project, where hotels were rented out to large groups and families, in order to keep them in the same area.²⁰⁷ Despite being able to secure shelter, the project faced limitations, including the lack of access to medical resources and a disconnection regarding urban centers, which help integrate individuals into new communities.²⁰⁸

Within this study, UNHCR also partnered with the Municipality of Thessaloniki to help with local legal matters associated with providing aid to refugees.²⁰⁹ Through the partnership with UNHCR the Municipality of Thessaloniki has been able to regulate the cost of apartments and hotels used for temporary housing by providing tax incentives to the owners that would rent to refugees.²¹⁰ Through this project, housing for refugees in the city improved, but food security remained a concern.²¹¹ Many of the housing accommodations lacked appropriate cooking facilities.²¹² Kilkis, a small city in the northern part of the Thessaloniki metro area, set up food vouchers to address this issue.²¹³ However, the vouchers issued could not be used at major supermarkets, only in local shops.²¹⁴ As a recommendation, the NRC suggested a checklist of needs for refugees in the area.²¹⁵ Among those needs, food and cash vouchers were listed, as well as housing and shelter that provided adequate space and protection from the elements.²¹⁶

Conclusion

Improving housing and food security for urban refugees is an issue that is important to UNHCR. In order to address the specific needs of urban refugees a great deal of financial support is still required, in addition to an increased focus on partnerships, particularly between the UNHCR and organizations already working with urban refugees.²¹⁷ Organizations working on the ground like the Urban Refugees and Asylum Access consistently strive to address the everyday issues facing urban refugees, including meeting their basic needs.²¹⁸ Though some issues faced by urban refugees can be addressed through state policies, local governments may need help in making the transition to more refugee-friendly policies as seen in Thessaloniki, Greece.²¹⁹ UNHCR must continue to work diligently with their partners and Member States to help urban refugees have access to the resources they need in order to become more self-reliant.²²⁰

Annotated Bibliography

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²⁰⁴ ETC, *Study on Adequate Urban Housing for Refugees*, 2016, p. 6.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Ibid, pp. 6-7.

²⁰⁷ Ibid, p. 13.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid, p. 16.

²¹⁰ Ibid, p. 17.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ibid, p. 18.

²¹³ Ibid, p. 19.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid, p. 39.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ UNHCR, *Third Committee of the General Assembly, 70th Session (New York, November 3) United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres' statement on questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons*, 2015.

²¹⁸ Asylum Access, *Our Story*, 2014; Urban Refugees, *Our Story*, 2015.

²¹⁹ Asylum Access, *What are Refugee Rights*, 2014.

²²⁰ UNHCR, *Urban Refugees*, 2017.

The Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees is the oldest document concerning the rights of the refugees internationally. Like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, this convention outlines the most basic rights that are awarded to individuals who have been forced to flee their country of origin. It focuses on the specific rights and protections awarded to refugees. More importantly, the Convention addresses the protections that should be awarded to this specific group of people but housing is explicitly noted in Article 21.

ETC. (2016). *Study on Adequate Urban Housing for Refugees*. Retrieved 12 May 2017 from: https://www.nrc.no/globalassets/pdf/reports/adequate-housing-study-report_etc_18-11-2016_final.pdf

The Study on Adequate Urban Housing is an interesting case study that gives detailed insight into a large scale refugee support operation. This case study outlines the actions and successes that public collaborations engage in to address the needs of urban refugees. Most importantly, it provides a very clear outline of the needs of urban refugees that delegates should be mindful of when addressing this topic. Lastly, the study highlights that the issue is more complex than just providing refugees with housing and food, but the need to empower refugees to create those opportunities for themselves to become sustainable.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2017). *Urban Refugees* [Website]. Retrieved 21 April 2017 from: <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/urban-refugees.html>

Urban refugees are the largest growing classification of refugees internationally. For that reason, the needs of refugees have changed and thus the way organizations, such as the UNHCR, deliver their services has also adapted. This source provides the background information identifying urban refugees and a primary start for delegates looking to explore more information about urban refugees. Additional resources that can be found from this site include information on shelter operations and related news articles about urban refugees.

United Nations, General Assembly, Seventy-first session. (2016). *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (A/71/L.1)*. Retrieved 23 April 2017 from: <http://undocs.org/A/71/L.1>

The New York Declaration was adopted by the General Assembly in 2016. This declaration addresses the issues surrounding the rights and protections of refugees internationally. Unlike previous documents, this source focuses on the positives of integrating refugees into their new communities. The emphasis on local communities helping refugees shows an international understanding and recognition that the large numbers of refugees living in urban areas can cause an increase burden on local populations. Specifically, it outlines a plan of action to help provide humanitarian assistance to those groups of people.

Urban Refugees. (2017). *UrbanRefugees.Org* [Website]. Retrieved 21 April 2017 from: <http://urban-refugees.org/>

UrbanRefugees.org is an international NGO that focuses on urban refugees. This source will give delegates an insight into current projects regarding Urban Refugees and the groups supported by this particular NGO. This NGO has projects like the aforementioned Incubator project all around the world and provides services that assist urban refugees directly and the organizations that support refugees. Delegates can also find other NGOs that assist urban refugees from this source as they continue to research ways to help address issues of urban refugees.

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