

**Leaving no one behind:
The challenges of securing the right to education for internally displaced people, asylum seekers and refugees**

Statement by the Global Campaign for Education for the 2020 International Education Day: "Education for people, planet, prosperity and peace".

The **Global Campaign for Education** joins the celebration of International Education Day, renewing its commitment to the realisation of the 2030 education agenda / SDG4. GCE's mandate is to advance the right to education for all, especially of marginalised populations, and for Education Day the movement has decided to highlight challenges internally displaced people, asylum seekers and refugees face to enjoy this fundamental right.

Conflict and climate change-related emergencies are leaving millions of internally displaced people, refugees and asylum seekers without the opportunity to enjoy their right to education. At the end of 2018, UNHCR estimates that the world count 41.3 million internally displaced people, 25.9 million refugees, and 3.5 million asylum seekers, pushing the total number of displaced people to a record high of 70,8 million people (UNHCR, June 2019). Along with the loss of livelihoods and social and cultural attachments to people's communities of origin, displacement often entails the loss of education opportunities. For hosting countries, welcoming displaced person, especially when displacement happens suddenly and massively, also impose significant challenges to educational systems.

The **Global Campaign for Education** is truly concerned about the fact that more than 50% of displaced people of school age are unable to attend school. Only 6 out of 10 children with refugee background attend primary school, 2 out of 10 attend secondary school, and less than 1% attends higher education (UNHCR, 2017). Girls are disproportionately affected, with increased risk of exploitation, school dropout, and psychosocial distress. Displacement and migration are a significant barrier to people's right to education that affect countries all around the world, from low income countries in Africa, Asia and Central America, to middle-income countries in the Middle East and Latin America, and wealthy nations in the heart of Europe and North America. Following displacement, children, youth and adults consistently struggle to attend school and universities and their lack of education opportunities often mean long-term poverty traps and a significant waste of talent and skills for social development.

Despite the magnitude of children, youth and adults who are currently left behind by education systems, humanitarian responses tend to focus on the provision of shelter, food, and sanitation. Education for internally displaced people, refugees and asylum seekers, however, needs immediate attention, not only because it is a fundamental human right for

all, but also because education will enhance their opportunities for recovery and self-reliance.

A range of international Human Rights instruments make provision for the right to education of these populations with clear binding obligation on States, such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the European Social Charter (revised), and the Additional Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights in the Area of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Specific to refugee concerns, the New York Declaration for refugees and migrants, the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its Protocol and the Migrant Workers Convention reiterate the right to educational choice and the obligation of the contracting States to accord to refugees the same treatment as is accorded to nationals with respect to “elementary education” and to ensure “equal opportunities” with respect to non-elementary education. Moreover, according to the Committee on the Rights of the Child (General Comment No. 6), equality of treatment irrespective of nationality, immigration status or statelessness should also be guaranteed to unaccompanied and separated children.

The **Global Campaign for Education** is concerned about the fact that refugees and displaced people are often excluded from education or enrolled in parallel systems. Unequal access to education is severe amongst people who move within and across national borders. In the heart of Europe, children with low performance are not allowed to attend schools and, following an assessment, can be transferred to non-regular courses. In some countries, students with refugee background can be enrolled into less demanding tracks, which compromise their opportunities for higher education.

Against this backdrop, the **Global Campaign for Education** encourages governments and the international community to develop and implement comprehensive frameworks to secure the right to high quality education for internally displaced people, asylum seekers and refugees all across the world. Special measures should be taken in terms of securing funding to address education needs in contexts of natural disasters, emergency and post-conflict reconstruction, including the reconstruction of school facilities, and the adaptation of schools and the entire education systems to respond to the specific needs of displaced people, including language of instruction, curricula adaptation to students’ cultural background, and emotional and psychological support when needed.

The **Global Campaign for Education** is actively campaigning across the world for more financial commitment from governments and the international community to secure the

right to education for all, including internally displaced person, refugee and asylum seeker. Only by designing, implementing and securing sufficient funding and culturally respectful curriculum, for comprehensive public policies, able to address the needs of all people according to their age, abilities to learn, disabilities, and the risks and harms present in their every social, cultural, political and geographical context, we can secure that displaced people are not left behind.