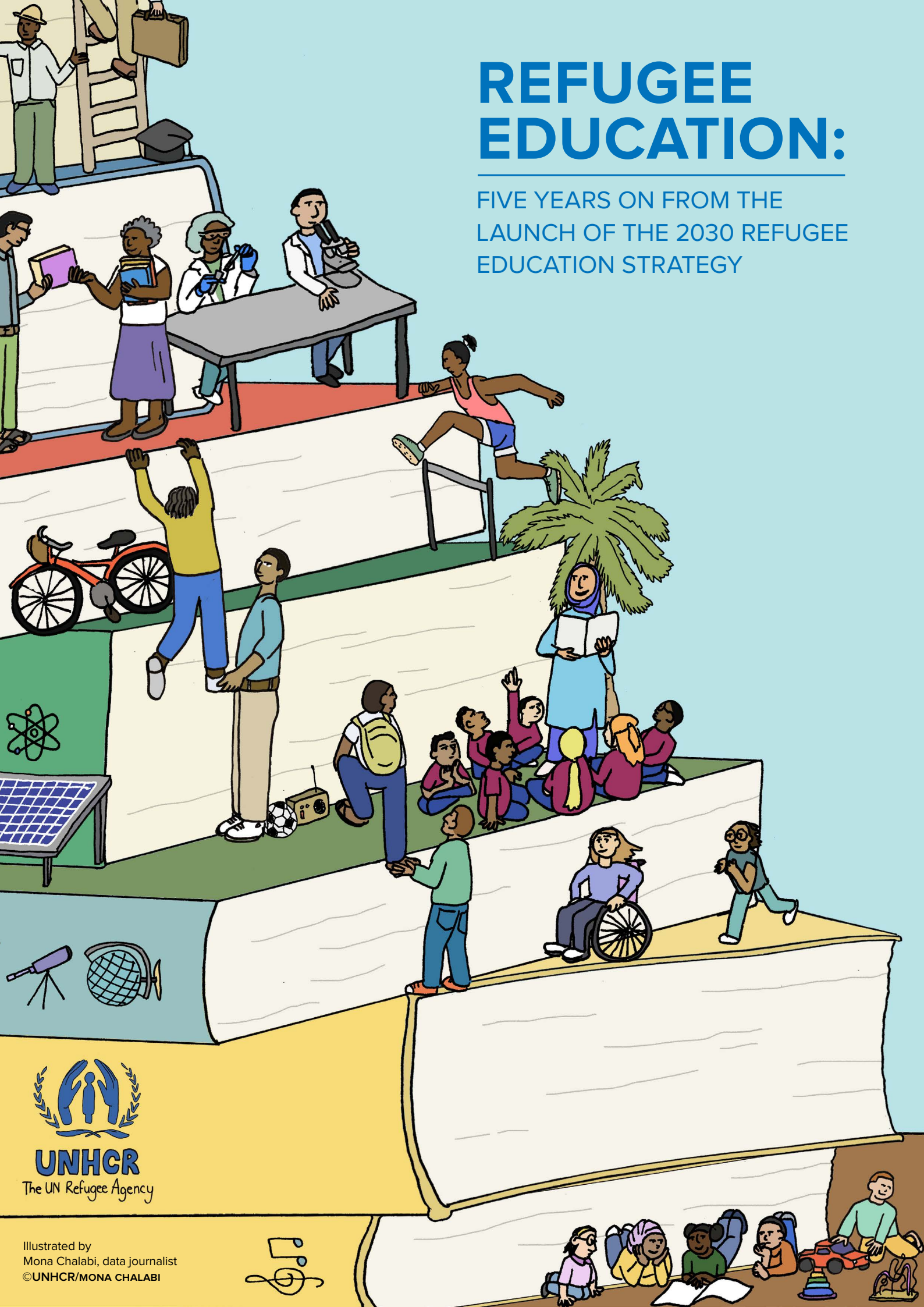


REFUGEE EDUCATION:

FIVE YEARS ON FROM THE
LAUNCH OF THE 2030 REFUGEE
EDUCATION STRATEGY



UNHCR

The UN Refugee Agency

Illustrated by
Mona Chalabi, data journalist
©UNHCR/MONA CHALABI



This report was authored by **Cirenia Chavez Villegas** and **Kate Bond**, with support from **Alanna Heyer**, **Becky Telford**, **Charlotte Berquin** and **Frederik Smets**. Communications supported by **Jasper Nolos** and **William Spindler**.

With thanks to **Xinxin Yu** from UNESCO's Section for Migration, Displacement, Emergencies and Education (EME) for their contribution to the data and policy analyses on Ukrainian refugee children.

Special thanks to Data Journalist **Mona Chalabi** for her original design of the cover and illustrations included throughout the report.

To contact the education team at UNHCR for more information on our education work or to discuss donations, funding, scholarships, data, partnerships and other forms of collaboration, please email **Becky Telford** at telfordm@unhcr.org.

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is a global organisation dedicated to saving lives, protecting rights, and building a better future for people forced to flee their homes because of conflict and persecution. We lead international action to protect refugees, forcibly displaced communities, and stateless people.

We deliver life-saving assistance, help safeguard fundamental human rights, and develop solutions that ensure people have a safe place called home where they can build a better future. We also work to ensure that stateless people are granted a nationality.

We work in over 130 countries, using our expertise to protect and care for millions.

JORDAN. Rania Burgush, 17, joyfully shares her result with her father. *"Despite all of the hardships and obstacles, I passed high school and got 83.80 out of 100. I thank everyone who contributed to my success: my supportive family, teachers, and friends for continuously supporting me. My dream is to get a scholarship and study media and press."* Rania said.

©UNHCR/SHAWKAT ALHARFOUSH



SYRIA. UNHCR helps children to continue their education.
©UNHCR/SAAD SAWAS



ECUADOR. Refugee children and youth find hope in inclusive schools nationwide.
©UNHCR/JEFFREY GUILLEMARD



CONTENT



FOREWORD	4
RECAP OF THE 2030 REFUGEE EDUCATION STRATEGY	6
The targets	7
The way forward	7
FIVE YEARS ON FROM THE LAUNCH OF THE 2030 REFUGEE EDUCATION STRATEGY - DATA ANALYSIS	8
Remarkable progress has been made on refugee education, but significant hurdles remain	8
Expanding access to pre-primary education	10
In top refugee hosting countries, recent progress to increase access to education has been mixed	11
Gender parity is still a goal that has not been achieved	14
The work of UNHCR in education	19
What about quality?	20
THE SITUATION IN UKRAINE	24
A significant proportion of refugee children and youth from Ukraine remain out of school in host countries	24
There are significant differences in enrolment between countries	24
Secondary school-age children and youth are at particular risk of being out of school	25
Drivers for non-enrolment	25
Risks	26
FROM THE FIELD	27
How violence and xenophobia threaten access to education in Ecuador	27
Young Ukrainian refugees stay focused on studies in Hungary	29
Breaking down barriers with DAFI	32
THE GLOBAL REFUGEE FORUM: PROGRESS IN 2023	33
FINAL WORD	36



FOREWORD

Filippo Grandi, UN High Commissioner for Refugees

Whenever I travel and meet the people whom we care for – be they students, families or children – I invariably witness the transformational power of education. And I see how the rhythms of refugees’ lives, like ours, are also built around the everyday routines – and the predictable safety – of going to school. Of studying for exams. Of being with friends. Of learning.

That safety is simply lost – along with so many other hopes and dreams – when families are forced to flee and when classrooms empty.

But leaving your home does not have to mean abandoning your dreams. We can still help shape a better future for millions forced to flee.

This year, as we move towards the 2030 horizon of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, it is important to reflect on what we have accomplished, and to take stock of the work that remains. Our [Education 2030: A Strategy for Refugee Education](#) outlines that, by 2030, refugees will have access to equitable, quality education in national systems. It aims to bring refugees closer to the communities in which they live, and with whom they learn, while they contribute to building cohesive societies.

Education can be life-saving – the evidence is clear. Education is associated with a lower likelihood of adolescent pregnancy and early marriage, giving girls the possibility to shape their own destinies.



SUDAN. UN High Commissioner for Refugees meets family at gathering site for displaced people in Kosti, White Nile State.

©UNHCR/SAMUEL OTIENO

We cannot do it alone.

The leadership of hosting states is critical, including in adopting policies that enable refugees to follow an accredited curriculum in registered schools, with qualified teachers. Policies that remove any remaining barriers based on factors such as nationality, legal status and documentation.

We also need the continued support of the donor community – from global and regional financial institutions to high-income states and the private sector – to provide predictable, multi-year funding. To show solidarity with hosting states who cannot take on that responsibility alone.

And we need to join forces with all partners to provide a comprehensive response to education. One that looks – beyond just attendance – to providing nutritious meals and building vocational skills. A response that empowers refugees to make decisions about what is best for them.

Sport also offers a lifeline. Sport brings together children and youth of all backgrounds around play, around a shared interest that not only builds relationships, but also fosters a child's sense of worth, safety and belonging.

In this year's report, we reflect on our Education 2030: A Strategy for Refugee Inclusion through the lens of key stories. Stories that reflect our ambition to provide safe and enabling learning environments.

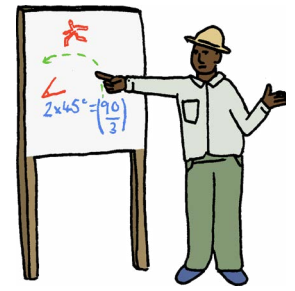
Stories about how the power of education makes it possible for refugees, and for all of us, to dream again.

For boys, more years in education translates into a lower likelihood of risky behaviour, and hence into less violence and victimization. And for all, education opens doors for greater access to the labour market and enables refugees to earn a living and support their families. Unequivocally, education translates into better lives.

That is why, for decades, we have invested so much, with our partners, in increasing access to education for refugee children and youth. In the five years since we launched our education strategy, we have made tremendous progress, including through our flagship initiatives – [Educate A Child](#) (in partnership with Education Above All) and the [DAFI scholarship programme](#). But more work is needed. Many barriers remain – tuition and other expenses, burdensome administrative requirements or the lack of qualified teachers, to name a few.

As we approach 2030, let us reaffirm our commitment to the right of children and youth to learn. To build on the momentum of the Global Refugee Forum and push for education systems that include all, refugees and their hosts, and that give them equal access to opportunities.

Recap of the 2030 Refugee Education Strategy



Five years ago, following a global collaboration with stakeholders across UNHCR and partners, the 2030 Refugee Education Strategy detailed a bold new vision – one that laid the foundations for a future that would enable refugee children and youth to learn, thrive and develop their potential.



AFGHANISTAN. UNHCR-supported school in Jalalabad inspires Afghan children's futures.

©OXYGEN EMPIRE MEDIA PRODUCTION ARNOLD

This vision, which united international organizations, governments, the private sector, refugee communities, education networks and United Nations agencies, paved a way forward that would ensure the inclusion of refugee children and youth in equitable quality education, contributing to their resilience and preparing them for participation in cohesive societies. In doing all of this, its authors strived to apply the fundamental principles of solidarity and responsibility-sharing, and to translate the goals of the Global Compact on Refugees into coherent action.

The strategy's own data analysis demonstrated precisely why such plans are necessary. In 2018, at least 35 per cent of refugee children were not attending primary school programmes and at least 75 per cent of adolescents were not attending secondary school. And while innovations and partner actions had improved access to tertiary education, only 3 per cent of refugees were enrolled in tertiary education globally, compared to 37 per cent of non-refugee students.

With the forcibly displaced population rising every year, this means there is a significant and increasing proportion of the world's children who are missing out on their education. However, inclusion in national systems for those who have not had access to education takes time.

It was clear that steps towards this goal needed to reflect both system preparation and student preparation, leading to three strategic objectives of Refugee Education 2030:

1. Promote equitable and sustainable inclusion in national education systems for refugees, asylum-seekers, returnees, stateless and internally displaced people;
2. Foster safe, enabling environments that support learning for all students, regardless of legal status, gender or disability;
3. Enable learners to use their education toward a sustainable future.



KENYA. Football Festival for school children from the Kakuma refugee camps and the Kalobeyei Integrated Settlement ©UNHCR/SAMUEL OTIENO

The targets

For pre-primary, primary and secondary education, we have improved our capacity to report on enrolment rates in refugee hosting countries, comparing those against the average gross enrolment reported for hosting countries. This country-by-country approach has allowed UNHCR to better monitor progress and direct resources to address enrolment gaps in specific countries and regions. It also helps draw attention to the contexts with the greatest needs, since global averages tend to obscure disparities.

Tertiary education enrolment targets followed a slightly different logic. As the strategy noted, achieving parity or close-to parity with national higher education enrolment rates is not realistic by 2030 given the barriers refugee students face when it comes to higher education. The primary barrier is the currently limited number of eligible refugee secondary school graduates. Other barriers include high tuition fees, and a lack of reliable power and connectivity. Raising the level of refugee participation in higher education

from 3 to 15 per cent over the next ten years would represent an ambitious but feasible goal, with enrolment of young refugee women on par with men.

The way forward

Since the creation of the 2030 Refugee Education Strategy, significant progress has already been achieved through partnership, collaborative learning, capacity development and innovation. A coherent global effort has worked to boost resources, expand programmes and use effective tools to reach displaced or stateless children, easing the pressure on host communities and opening up a world opportunity for children and youth in the future.

But there is more that still needs to be done to continue and accelerate this progress, and to unlock the positive contribution that refugee children and youth can make to our societies. We hope this update provides inspiration and guidance, as we continue to work on our shared vision to ensure that safe, quality learning opportunities lead to a brighter future for millions.

Five years on from the launch of the 2030 Refugee Education Strategy – Data analysis

Remarkable progress has been made on refugee education, but significant hurdles remain

At the end of 2023, the number of forcibly displaced people across the globe had reached 117.3 million, and by April 2024 it was estimated to have exceeded 120 million, including 31.6 million refugees.¹ The school-aged refugee population is estimated to stand at 14.8 million this year.²

Of those children, 49 per cent are estimated to be out of school – that means approximately 7.2 million refugee children are missing out on education.

For this report covering the academic year 2022 to 2023, 65 refugee hosting countries are included in our analysis. In 2020, only 12 refugee hosting countries reported gross enrolment figures for the academic year 2018 to 2019.³



BELIZE. Maskall Primary School classrooms. Access to education is an irreplaceable right for refugee and asylum-seeking children to integrate and rebuild their lives in Belize.

©UNHCR/JEFFREY GUILLEMARD

Data from these countries indicates that the average gross enrolment rates for refugees for the academic year 2022-23 stood at **37 per cent** for pre-primary, **65 per cent** for primary, **42 per cent** for secondary and **7 per cent** for tertiary⁴ (Figure 1).

These figures exclude the situation for refugees from Ukraine, with the exception of the tertiary gross enrolment rate. We report on the situation in Ukraine separately in a later section in this report.

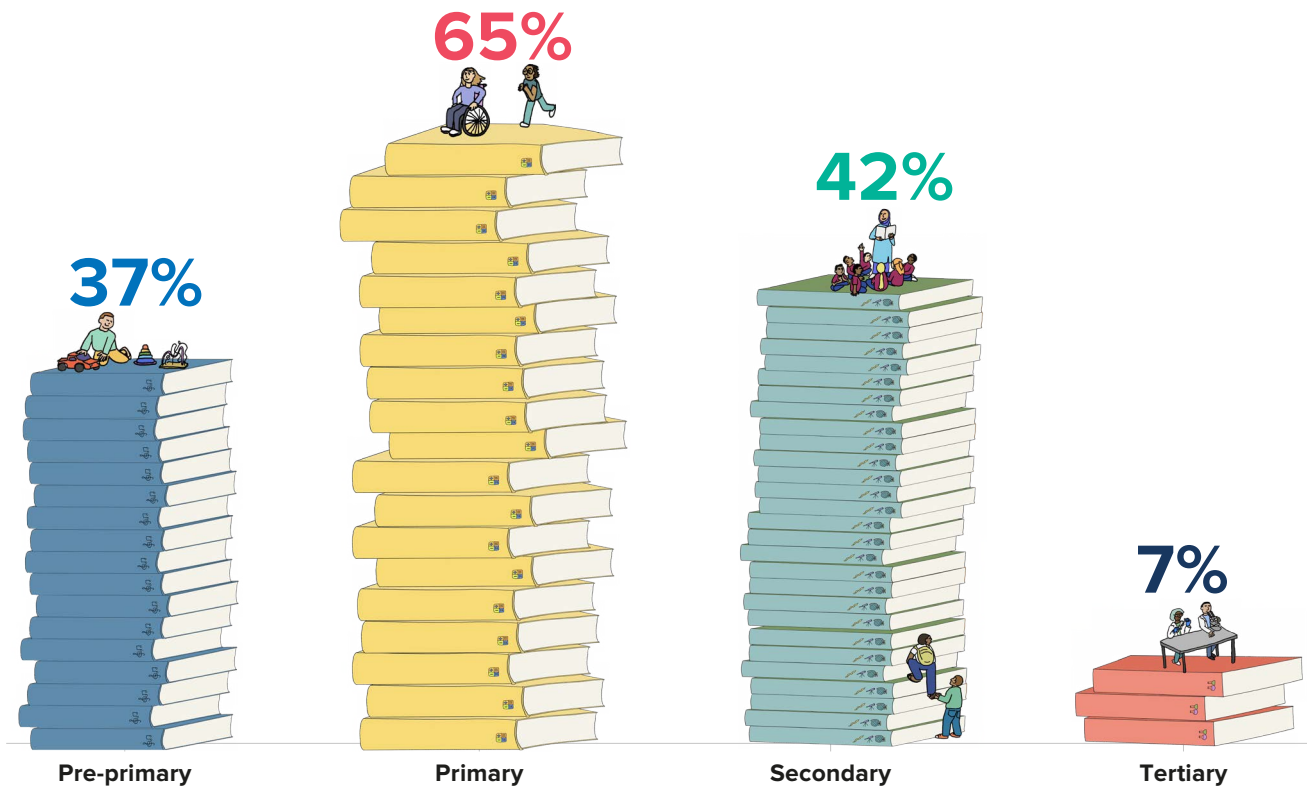
¹ UNHCR, “Global Trends Report 2023” (Copenhagen: UNHCR, 2023), <https://www.unhcr.org/global-trends-report-2023>.

² According to the Global Trends 2023 report, 17.3 million is the number of children aged 0 to 17 who are refugees, people in refugee-like situations and other people in need of international protection. This is roughly 40 per cent of 43.4 million.

³ We avoid comparing the gross enrolment ratios from previous years since they do not consistently rely on the same set of countries.

⁴ UNHCR country operations.

Figure 1 | Refugee gross enrolment rates – Average, reporting countries



Source: Author's analysis using data from UNHCR operations

NIGER. Nigerian refugees and locals work together in 'opportunity village'. ©UNHCR/COLIN DELFOSSE

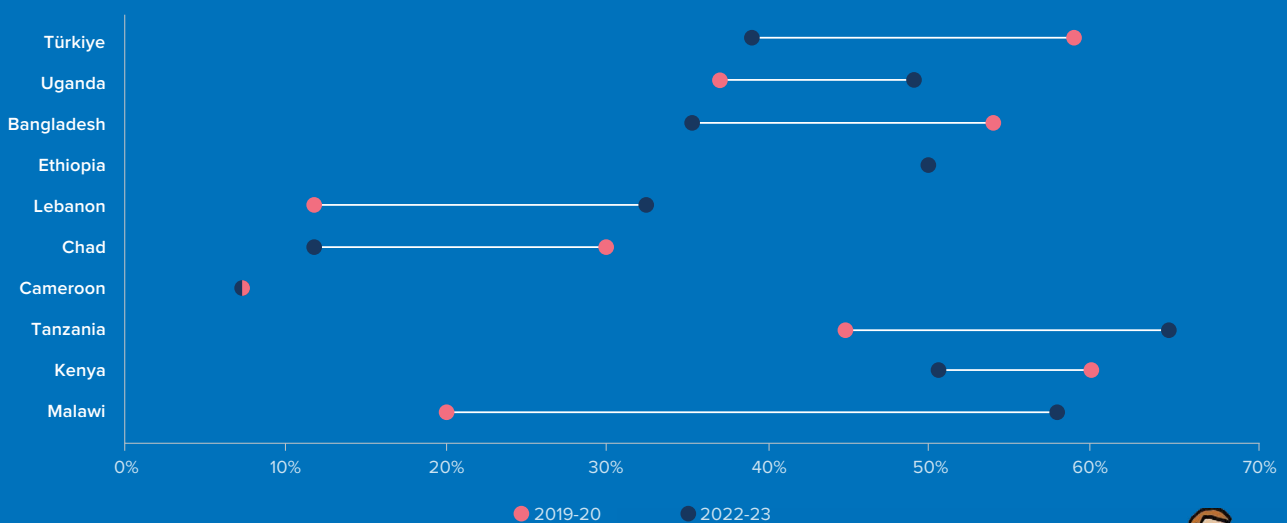


EXPANDING ACCESS TO PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION

In our education report for 2021, we highlighted how pre-primary education access increases readiness for primary school,⁵ improves learning in later grades in schools⁶ and boosts life skills.⁷ For this reason, many countries have been making notable progress in increasing access to education for young learners. For example, in Ethiopia, which had one of the lowest pre-primary education enrolment rates in the early 2000s, access to pre-primary education for nationals increased from 1.6 per cent in 2000 to an astounding 46 per cent in 2017.⁸ Globally, average access to pre-primary education has increased from 33 per cent to 59 per cent in the same time period, indicating a move in the right direction.⁹

Notably, the data also indicates that access to pre-primary education for refugees has expanded in key hosting countries. For example, in Malawi, the pre-primary enrolment rate has increased by 36 percentage points, up from 20 per cent in 2019-20 to 56 per cent in 2022-23. Likewise, in Lebanon, the rate has increased by 20 percentage points, from 13 per cent to 33 per cent in the same time period (Figure 2).

Figure 2 | Refugee participation rate in organized learning before primary – Major hosting countries



Source: UNHCR country operations

Note: Chad has had a significant increase in the number of refugees hosted, which could be a contributing factor to the decreased enrolment rate in pre-primary.



⁵ Samuel Berlinski, Sebastian Galiani, and Paul Gertler, “The Effect of Pre-Primary Education on Primary School Performance,” *Journal of Public Economics* 93, no. 1/2 (February 2009): 219–34.

⁶ UNICEF, “A World Ready to Learn: Prioritising Early Childhood Education” (New York, NY: UNICEF, 2019).

⁷ Frances E. Aboud, “Evaluation of an Early Childhood Preschool Program in Rural Bangladesh,” *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 21, no. 1 (January 1, 2006): 46–60, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2006.01.008>.

⁸ UNICEF, “A World Ready to Learn: Prioritising Early Childhood Education.”

⁹ World Bank, “World Bank Open Data: School Enrollment, Preprimary,” World Bank Open Data, accessed June 27, 2024, <https://data.worldbank.org>

In top refugee hosting countries, recent progress to increase access to education has been mixed

Data from key refugee-hosting low and middle-income countries – those that host the highest number of refugees – suggests that, in some, progress in primary education enrolment has been increasing, though refugee enrolment rates still trail behind the global average. In Uganda, for example, data indicates that the gross enrolment ratio was 73 per cent in 2018-19 and that this increased to 96 per cent in 2022-23 – more than 20 percentage points. Back to school

campaigns have been strengthened at the beginning of the school term and deliberate investments made to expand primary education access through the construction of classrooms and reduction of pupil to teacher ratios. The presence of accelerated education, as well as the provision of school supplies, are some of the factors explaining this increase.

In Iraq, there has also been an increase in enrolment, from 50 per cent in 2018-19 to 73 per cent in 2022-23. The leadership of the Government of Kurdistan Region (KRI) on the implementation of the Refugee Education Integration Policy (REIP) – which allows for refugee children, including those who were out of school, to be re-enrolled in a public school – contributes to explaining this increase.

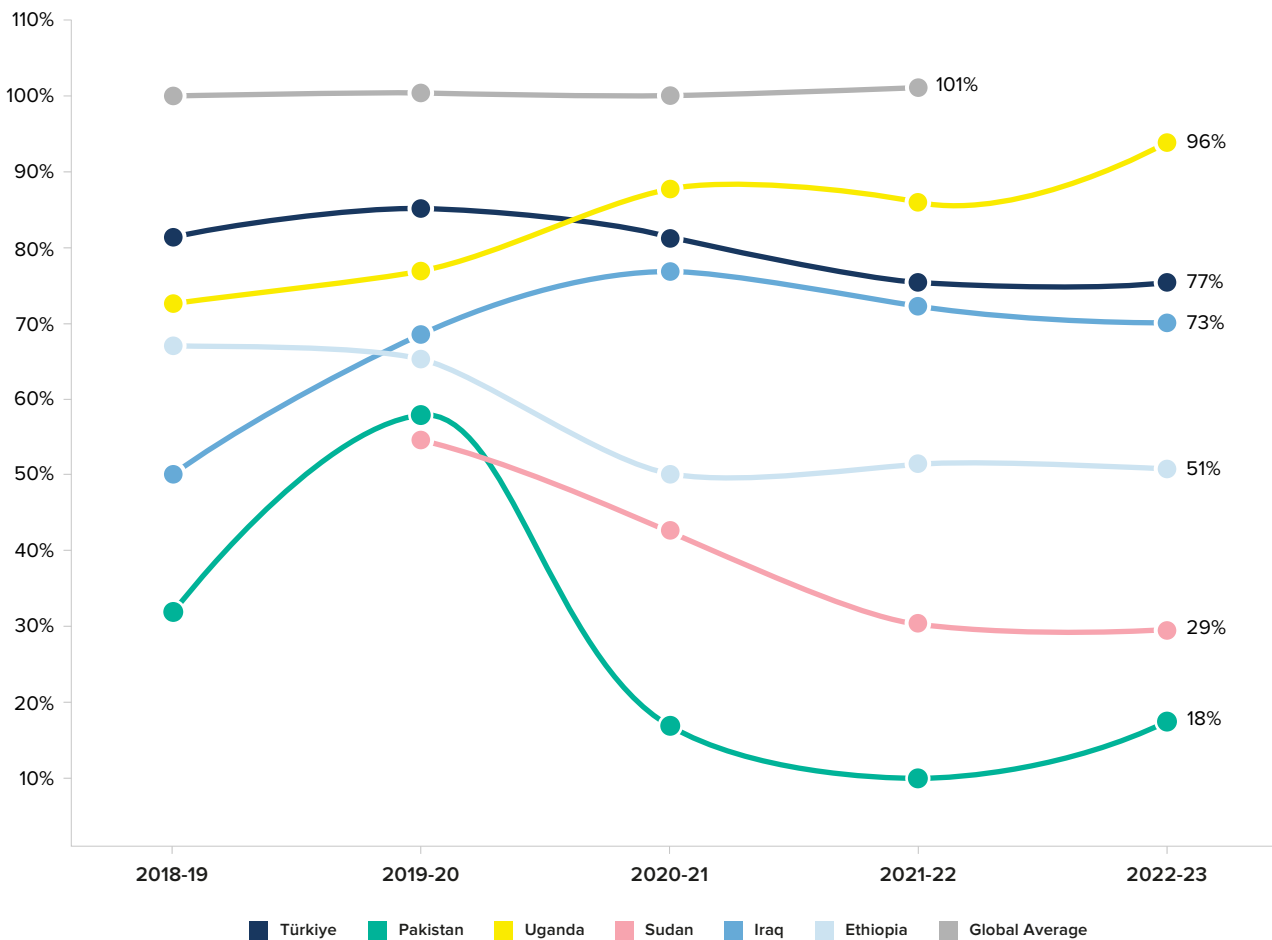
BELIZE. Maskall Primary School classrooms. Access to education is an irreplaceable right for refugee and asylum-seeking children to integrate and rebuild their lives in Belize. ©UNHCR/JEFFREY GUILLEMARD



In others, the situation has not been as positive. In Türkiye, one of the countries hosting the highest number of refugees globally, the refugee gross enrolment ratio at the primary level has generally been high. Yet, there has been a slight decrease in gross enrolment from 81 per cent in 2018-19 to 77 per cent in 2022-23. Elsewhere, in countries like Sudan and

The evolution of secondary enrolment rates in key hosting countries is also a sobering reminder of how difficult it is to maintain progress at this level of education. For example, in Pakistan, the secondary gross enrolment rate has not risen to more than 5 per cent over the past five years. In Colombia (not featured in Figure 4 due to lack of consistent

Figure 3 | Primary refugee gross enrolment rates – Major refugee hosting countries



Source: Author's analysis using data from UNHCR operations

Pakistan, the data indicates a marked and consistent decrease in the refugee gross enrolment ratio over the years. In Sudan, for example, enrolment decreased from 57 per cent in 2019-20 to 29 per cent in 2022-23, which could be influenced by the increase in the number of refugees and ongoing civil war (Figure 3).

reporting across the five years), the rate of secondary enrolment for refugees has decreased from 30 per cent in 2019-20 to 22 per cent in 2022-23.

But progress is not impossible. In Türkiye, where a small slump in primary enrolment was highlighted, there has been a remarkable increase in the secondary

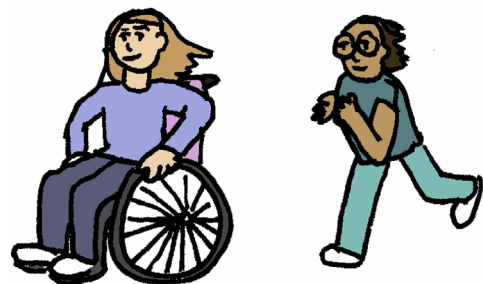


RWANDA. Senior high-school students and top scorers from Kiziba camp dream of making it to university. Zaninka, Frank, Tuyishime and Dieu Merci (from left to right) are Senior 6 students at College Amahoro, in Kiziba refugee camp, Rwanda.. ©UNHCR/ANTOINE TARDY

enrolment rate for refugees, from just 25 per cent in 2018-19 to 63 per cent in 2022-23. In Ethiopia, where there has been a strong commitment to invest in secondary education, we also see modest gains, with the enrolment rate increasing from 11 per cent in 2018-19 to 15 per cent in this year's data collection.

Likewise, in Nigeria, we see an increase in the enrolment rate from only 17 per cent to 37 per cent in 2022-23. The increase in enrolment in Nigeria can be attributed to several factors, including ongoing sensitization efforts by UNHCR,

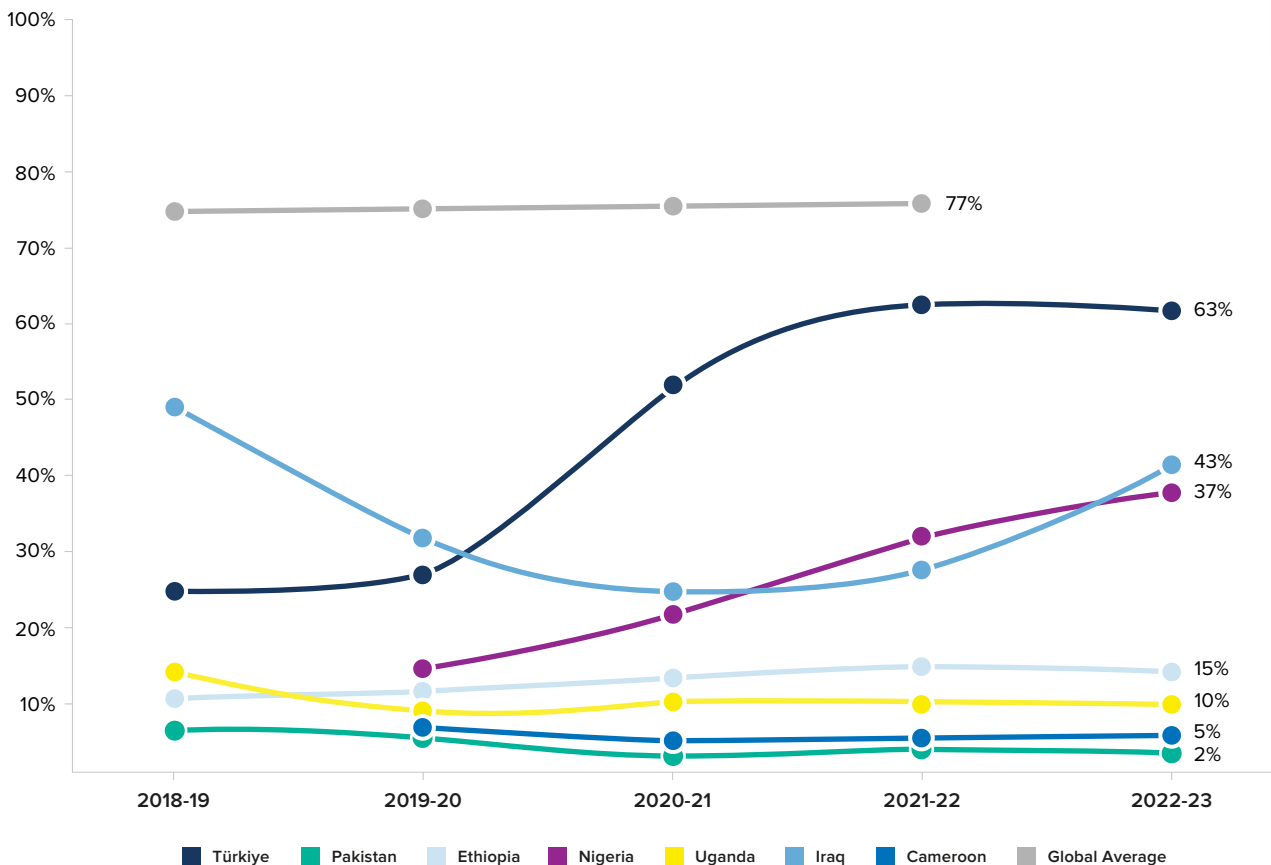
partners, community representatives and parents on the importance of education, as well as financial support from partner organizations. Likewise, the expansion of higher education opportunities¹⁰ and scholarships have played a significant role in motivating refugees to enrol their children in secondary education (Figure 4).



¹⁰ Through programmes like UNICORE, EU-Passworld and DAAD.



Figure 4 | Secondary refugee gross enrolment rates – Major refugee hosting countries



Source: Author's analysis using data from UNHCR operations

Gender parity is still a goal that has not been achieved

In past reports, we have highlighted how gender disparities in access to education for refugees remain. In this year's edition, we have tracked the evolution of gender disparity in recent years by computing the refugee Gender Parity Index (GPI). Figure 5 depicts the change in the refugee GPI over the years. The GPI is calculated by dividing the female gross enrolment ratio by the male gross enrolment ratio for the different levels of education. A value of 1 indicates that country has achieved gender parity in access to education. A closer value to 1 indicates that the country is closer to gender parity.

We have mapped the countries that had the largest gender disparities, as featured in last year's education report. The data indicates that none of the countries have achieved gender parity in access to primary education – failing to reach 1 – but some important increases have been made. In three countries, there have been modest increases in the GPI. For example, in Kenya, the GPI has increased from 0.77 to 0.82, and in Ethiopia there has been an increase from 0.69 to 0.76 in the past four years. This means that disparities affecting girls have been reduced, moving closer to gender parity (Figure 5).



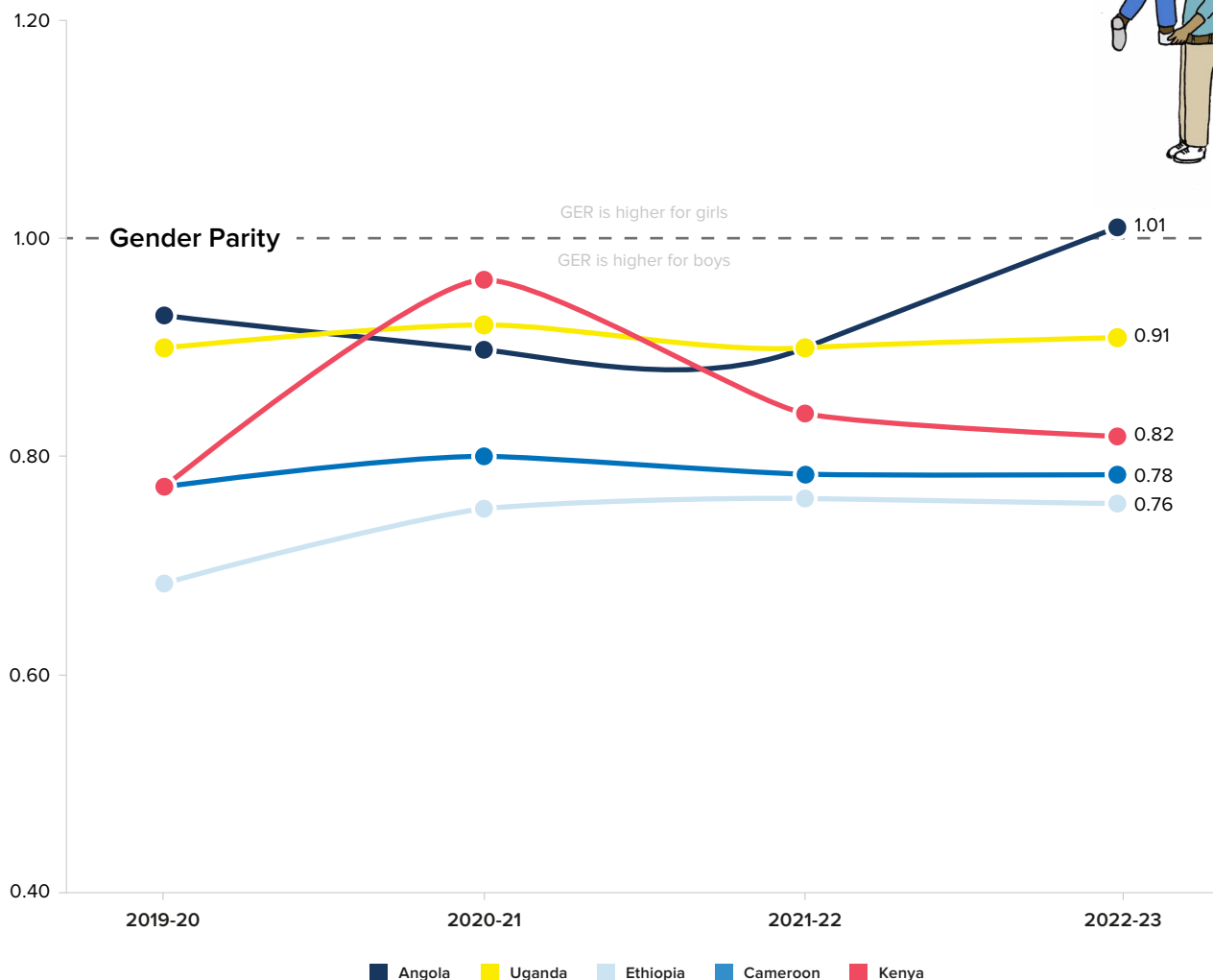


SLOVAKIA. Varvara, from Kramatorsk, in the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine, is a first-year bachelor's student of Dance Arts (Dance for Children and Youth) at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava, Slovakia, on a DAFI scholarship.

©UNHCR/ANTOINE TARDY



Figure 5 | Closing the gaps – Getting girls in school: Primary refugee Gender Parity Index



Source: Author’s analysis using data from UNHCR operations
 Note: Includes countries where girls were most disadvantaged in access to education.

Table 1 | Primary gross enrolment ratios and Gender Parity Index

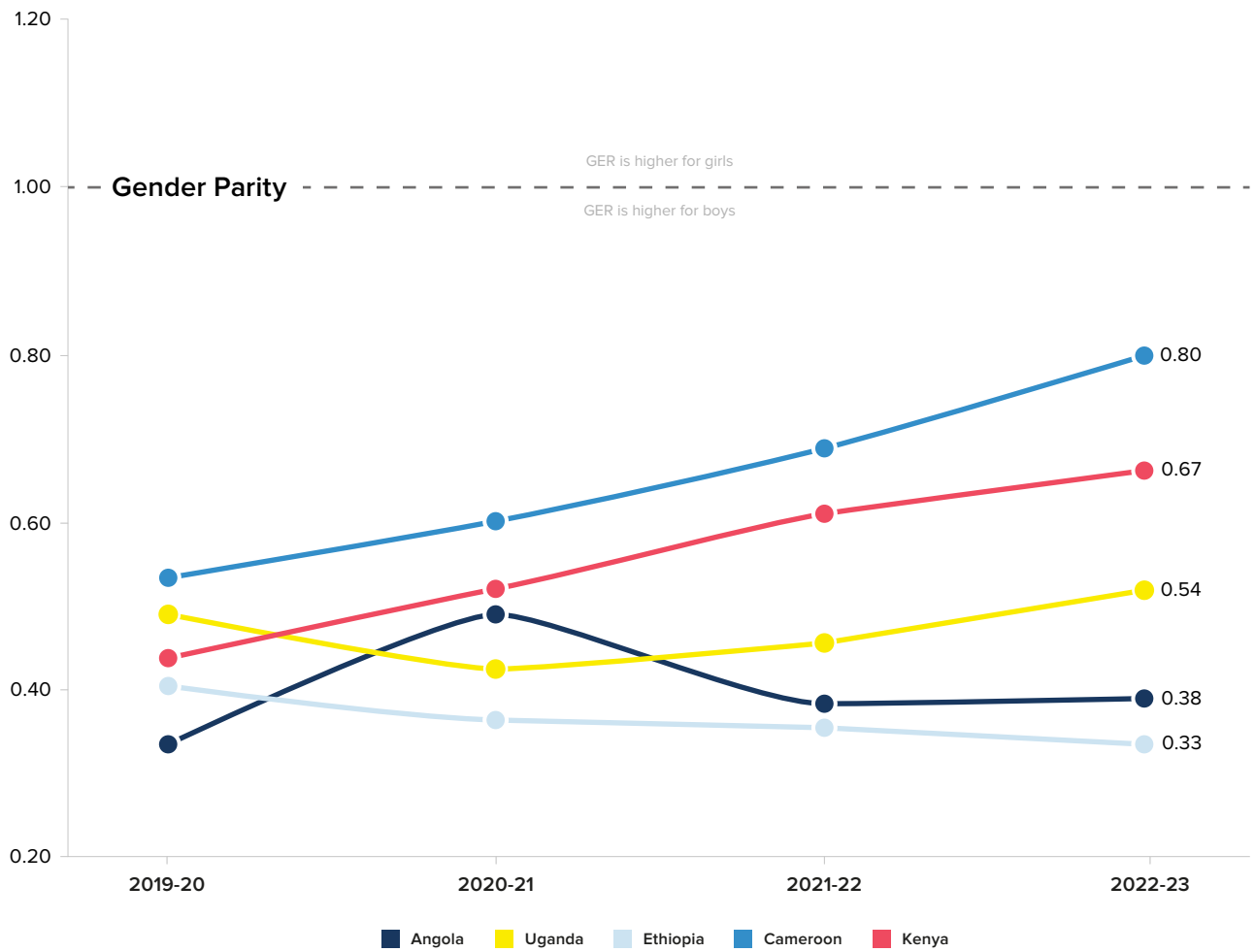
COUNTRY	2019-2020			2022-2023		
	♀	♂	GPI	♀	♂	GPI
Angola	145%	155%	0.94	106%	105%	1.01
Uganda	71%	79%	0.90	91%	100%	0.91
Kenya	85%	111%	0.77	78%	95%	0.82
Ethiopia	54%	78%	0.69	44%	58%	0.76
Cameroon	37%	48%	0.77	42%	54%	0.78

Source: Author’s analysis using data from UNHCR operations

At the secondary level, we see much larger gaps in the achievement of gender parity, as none of the countries featured have a GPI that is larger than 0.8. In Kenya and Cameroon, however, we do

see improvements. In Kenya, the GPI for secondary has increased from 0.46 to 0.67, and in Cameroon, the figure has increased from 0.55 to 0.80, indicating positive progress towards achieving parity (Figure 6).

Figure 6 | Closing the gaps – Getting girls in school: Secondary refugee Gender Parity Index



Source: Author’s analysis using data from UNHCR operations
 Note: Includes countries where girls were most disadvantaged in access to education.

Table 2 | Secondary gross enrolment ratios and Gender Parity Index

COUNTRY	2019-2020			2022-2023		
	♀	♂	GPI	♀	♂	GPI
Angola	5%	15%	0.33	16%	42%	0.38
Uganda	7%	14%	0.50	7%	13%	0.54
Kenya	31%	67%	0.46	47%	70%	0.67
Ethiopia	7%	17%	0.41	7%	21%	0.33
Cameroon	6%	11%	0.55	4%	5%	0.80

Source: Author’s analysis using data from UNHCR operations



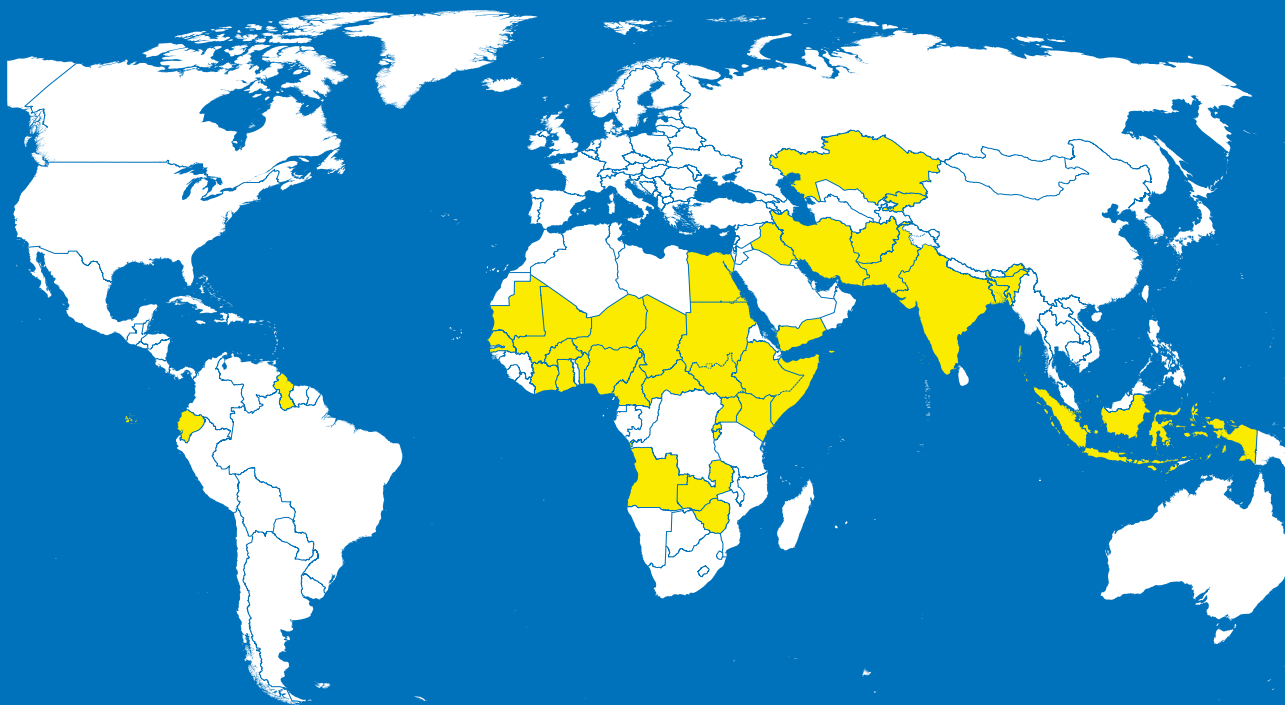
PAKISTAN. Female Afghan students of primary grade posing for the camera at Girls Primary School in New Saranan refugee village, Balochistan. ©UNHCR/MERCURY TRANSFORMATIONS



THE WORK OF UNHCR IN EDUCATION

While UNHCR’s mandate on education is global in scope, there are key refugee-hosting countries where UNHCR or our implementing partners are working to deliver education for refugees. As illustrated in Figure 7, the bulk of our primary and secondary education programmes are in the Eastern Horn of Africa, with a more limited presence seen in the Middle East, Asia and the Americas. In many other settings, we advocate for refugees to be included in national education systems. UNHCR plays a range of different roles in all refugee-hosting countries, from delivery of services or payment of teacher salaries, to supporting families with information on accessing education and working on policy agendas. We strive for all refugees to access quality education.

Figure 7 | **Closing the gaps – Getting girls in school: Secondary refugee Gender Parity Index**



Note: Map reflects where UNHCR has primary and/or secondary education programmes for refugees.

A significant part of the support in education that UNHCR provides is the payment of teacher salaries. In some key host countries, a significant share of the teachers engaging with refugee learners are refugees themselves. In the Eastern Horn of Africa region, roughly half of primary school teachers engaging with refugee learners are refugees themselves.



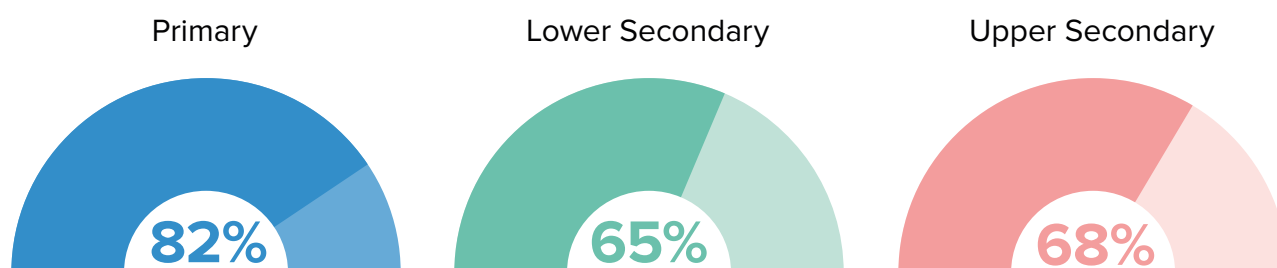
PAKISTAN. UNHCR's staff member Suraiya Fawad, interacting with one of the teachers at New Saranan refugee village, Balochistan.
©UNHCR/MERCURY TRANSFORMATIONS

What about quality?

Enrolment is a start, but when refugees are in school, we need to ask if they are learning.

There are indications that refugee learners can excel with the right opportunities. While few refugees sit for national examinations, where they can their pass rates at all levels are high, at times exceeding the national average (as reported in previous editions of this report). In our reporting countries, 82 per cent of refugee students who sat primary exams passed them in the academic year 2022 to 2023. The figures were 65 per cent and 68 per cent for lower and upper secondary, respectively.¹¹

Figure 8 | National examination refugee pass rates – Average reporting countries

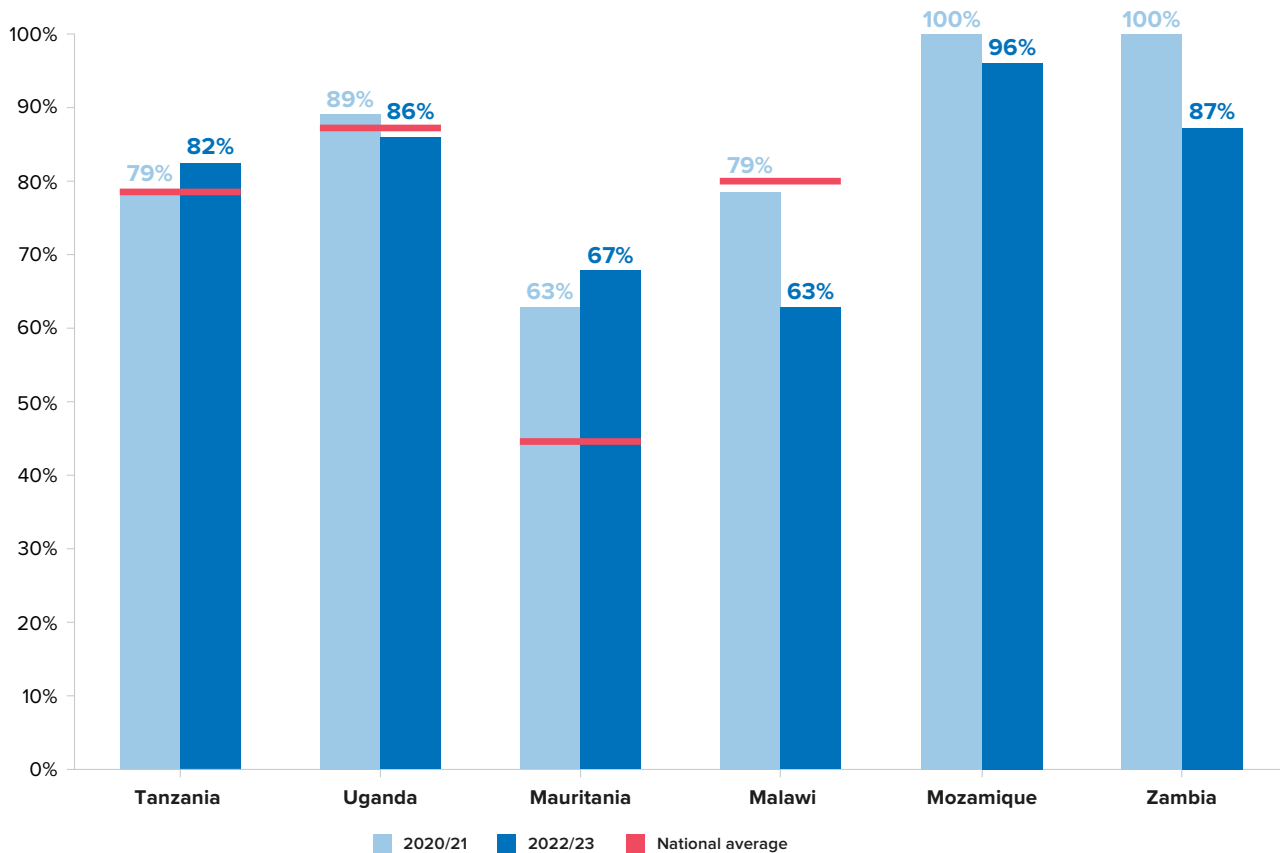


Source: Author's analysis using data from UNHCR operations
N=27 countries

When looking at pass rates across years, we see consistently that refugee pass rates are high across both academic years – 2020/21 and 2022/23 – although we have begun to see some decreases. For example, in Zambia and Mozambique, while the primary examination pass rates were 100 per cent in 2020-21, they have decreased to 87 per cent and 96 per cent in 2022-23, respectively. In Mauritania, a slight increase in the primary examination pass rate is observed during the same time period, from 63 per cent to 67 per cent. Notably, pass rates in Tanzania and Uganda are similar to the national average pass rates, which were 82 per cent and 91 per cent, respectively (according to the latest available data) (Figure 9).

¹¹ UNHCR country operations.

Figure 9 | Primary examination pass rates – Refugee and national averages, select countries



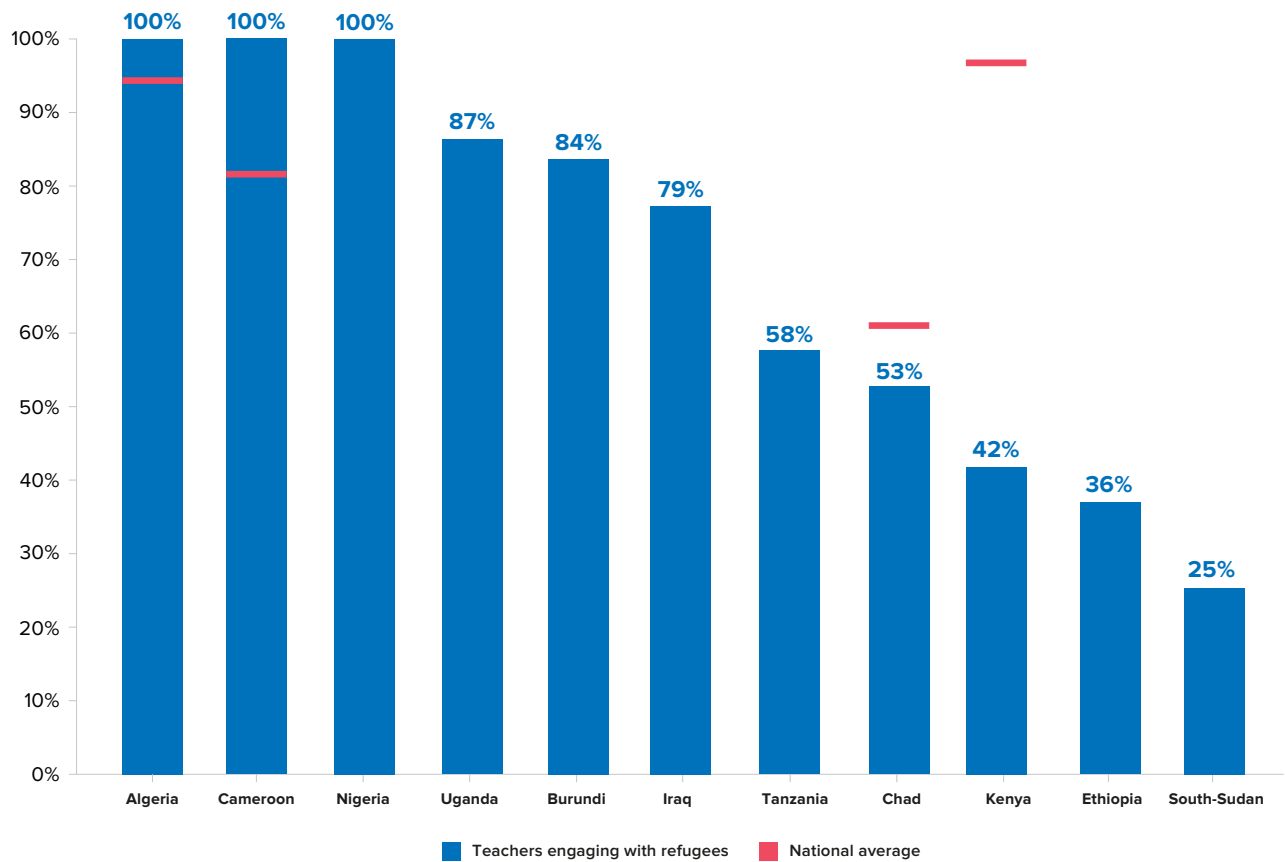
Source: Author’s analysis using data from UNHCR operations and Center for Global Development (2022)
 Note: National average pass rates are for the latest available year.

Many factors affect learning, but one of the most obvious is the quality of teaching. We lack sufficient data to know the proportion of teachers engaging with refugee learners who have acquired a minimum level of qualifications, but the scarce data we have suggests that the proportions are not very high. On average, for 13 reporting countries that provided data on the proportion of qualified teachers at primary level, the figure for those engaging with refugee learners was 67 per cent.

Comparison to the national average proportion of teachers with the minimum required qualifications in primary education finds that the proportion of teachers with qualifications engaging

with refugee learners can be lower. For example, in Kenya, 42 per cent of primary teachers engaging with refugees have the minimum required qualifications, while the corresponding national average was 100 per cent in 2020. In Chad, where the national average of qualified primary teachers is 65 per cent, the corresponding rate for teachers engaged with refugee learners is 53 per cent. One important aspect to note is that the availability of data on this indicator is limited, with few countries listed in the graph below (Figure 10).

Figure 10 | Proportion of primary teachers with minimum required qualifications – Select countries



Source: Author’s analysis using data from UNHCR operations and World Bank (2024)
 Note: National averages are for the latest available year.

We also know from previous editions of this report that pupil to teacher ratios in classrooms where refugees learn tend to be high, and that this can have an impact on their learning experiences. It is agreed that younger children and learners from disadvantaged backgrounds benefit from a lower pupil-to-teacher ratio (PTR), which we do not see in refugee classrooms.¹²

While few countries are able to report reliable figures, some appear to have very high ratios – Zambia, for instance, has an average of 110 refugee primary pupils for each teacher.¹³ Ratios between refugee classrooms and national averages also



tend to have wide differences, as illustrated in Table 3. Countries marked in red indicate that the refugee PTR is higher than the national average, those marked in green have lower PTRs than the national average.

¹² OECD, “Education GPS: Class Size & Student-Teacher Ratio” (Paris: OECD, 2022), <https://gpseducation.oecd.org/revieweducationpolicies/#!node=41720&filter=all>

¹³ UNHCR country operations.



BURUNDI. Amani, from the Democratic Republic of Congo, is a DAFI alumnus currently working as a high-school teacher in Musasa refugee camp. ©UNHCR/ANTOINE TARDY

Table 3 | **Primary education pupil to teacher ratios – Refugees and national average**

COUNTRY	# OF PRIMARY TEACHERS	# OF REFUGEE STUDENTS ENROLLED IN PRIMARY	REFUGEE PRIMARY PTR	NATIONAL AVERAGE PTR	COMPARISON	
Zambia	98	10791	110	42	Refugee PTR higher than national average	
Malawi	92	9651	105	59		
Kenya	1210	11035	92	31		
South Sudan	747	54397	73	47		
Burundi	193	13791	71	43		
Iraq	577	35550	62	17		
Chad	1229	75205	61	57		
Ethiopia	2090	114076	55	55		
Uganda	5963	320677	54	43		
Nigeria	194	9811	51	38		
Angola	31	1559	50	50		Refugee and national PTR equal
Algeria	421	19134	45	24		Refugee PTR higher than national average
Zimbabwe	49	2103	43	36		
Tanzani	1292	51727	40	51		Refugee PTR lower than national average
Rwanda	677	23507	35	60		
Djibouti	75	2410	32	29	Refugee PTR higher than national average	
Bangladesh	9059	266091	29	30		
Mozambique	60	1505	25	55	Refugee PTR lower than national average	

■ Refugee PTR higher than national average
 ■ Refugee and national PTR equal
 ■ Refugee PTR lower than national average

Source: Author's analysis using data from UNHCR operations and World Bank (2024)
 Note: National averages are for the latest available year.

The situation in Ukraine

A significant proportion of refugee children and youth from Ukraine remain out of school in host countries

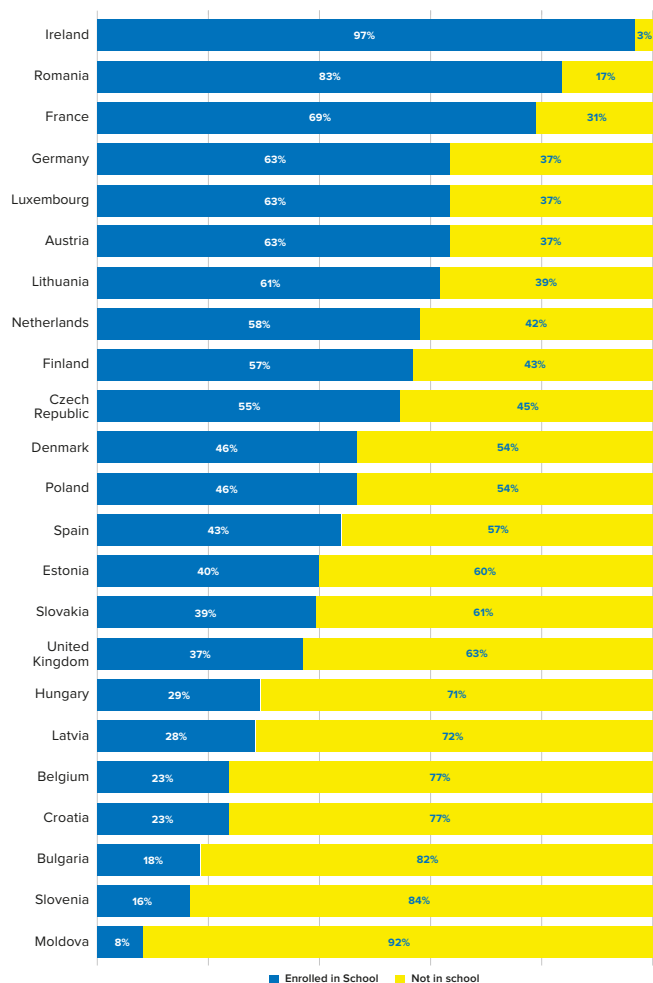
A considerable proportion of children and youth from Ukraine that have arrived in Europe since the start of the full-scale war remain out of school. Best estimates based on refugee population data and enrolment data from host country education systems show that, currently, around 700,000 children and youth from Ukraine are enrolled in host country national education systems. With the total child population standing at an estimated 1.3 million, this leaves around 600,000 school-aged refugees and youth from Ukraine – including those of pre-primary school age – out of school.

While significant gains in the enrolment of Ukrainian children and youth have been recorded in some countries, enrolment has been stagnant in some of the major hosting countries in the current school year. Overall enrolment rates of refugee children and youth remain well below the average enrolment of local school-age populations in most host countries.

There are significant differences in enrolment between countries

Data from European countries hosting Ukrainians shows significant differences in enrolment rates, irrespective of the size of school-age refugee populations. While estimates in Ireland show 97 per cent of Ukrainian school-age refugee children are enrolled in school, in Bulgaria this figure is only 18 per cent.

Figure 11 | **Estimated percentage of Ukrainian refugee children in and out of school by country at start of 2023-2024 school year**



Secondary school-age children and youth are at particular risk of being out of school

A survey conducted by UNHCR and partners, consulting over 11,000 refugee households from Ukraine at the start of the 2023-2024 school year in seven refugee hosting countries, reveals that households of refugee children of **primary school age** (typically ages 5 to 11) are more likely to report children to be enrolled in host country school systems than older children. In the countries surveyed, over 59 per cent of households report that their children aged 5 to 11 are enrolled in national schools, but only 25 per cent report the same for their children aged 12 to 17. This indicates that refugee children and youth of **secondary school age** (typically ages 12 to 17) are far more likely to be out of school than others.

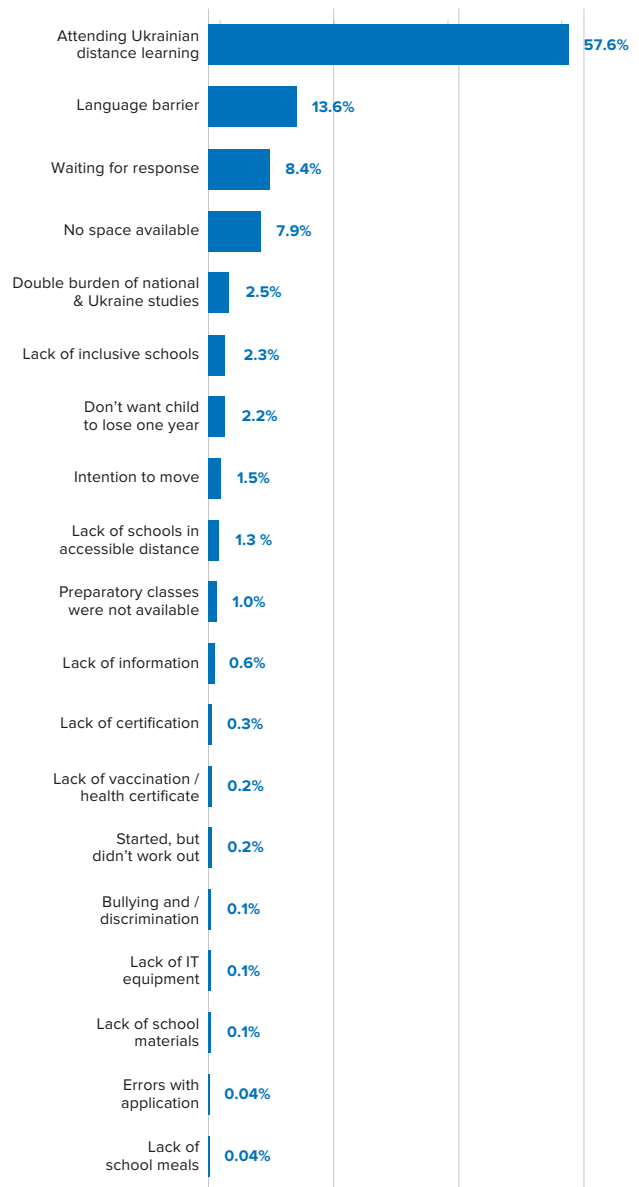
Drivers for non-enrolment

Data from the recent household surveys indicates that low enrolment is the result of a complex combination of factors. These include the capacity for inclusion and other characteristics of the education systems in host countries, existing barriers to education, enrolment in online learning, hesitancy of parents to enrol children due to expectations of returning home, and a lack of information on educational options in host countries. The main reasons for non-attendance were availability of online and remote learning as an alternative to enrolment in schools in host countries

(indicated by 57.6 per cent of respondents who did not put children in school in host countries), language barriers (13.6 per cent), waiting for a response from the school (8.4 per cent) and a lack of space in the school (7.9 per cent).

Some respondents who have not enrolled children in national school systems in host countries attribute this to the so-called 'double burden' of studying both the host country curriculum in school and the Ukrainian curriculum.

Figure 12 | Reasons for not enrolling children in national education systems of host countries





UKRAINE. Children in Kharkiv attend school underground to stay safe. ©UNHCR/ELISABETH ARNSDORF HASLUND

Risks

Unless significant shifts in the inclusion of refugee children and youth from Ukraine in national education systems happen in the next few months, hundreds of thousands are at risk of remaining out of school in September 2024, which is on course to be the fourth school year disrupted by mass displacement since the start of the full-scale war.¹⁴

Many displaced children and youth from Ukraine continue to rely solely on non-formal, remote and online methods of education that are not as effective as face-to-face education delivered by professionals in a school environment.

This suggests that the Ukraine refugee emergency is evolving into a protracted refugee education crisis, with hundreds of thousands of children and youth at risk of learning losses and other detrimental effects that may affect their well-being, safety and future prospects for many years to come. This could lead to a lower likelihood of completing **secondary education** and entering **higher education**, negative effects on **academic performance, mental health and psychosocial well-being**, and **resorting to negative coping mechanisms**.¹⁵

¹⁴ School years in Europe typically start in September and end in June. The school year 2021-2022 was disrupted by the start of the full-scale war in Ukraine in February 2022 and subsequent mass displacement. Since then, the school year 2022-2023 and most of the current school year of 2023-2024 have been marked by severe disruption, as a result of continued displacement. The school year 2024-2025 will start in most European countries in September 2024. With the conflict not expected to end before that, education systems across the region are anticipating that hundreds of thousands of children and youth from Ukraine will continue to need to be included in host country education systems.

¹⁵ For more background, see <https://www.unhcr.org/what-we-do/build-better-futures/education>. Arguments for the importance of bringing displaced learners back into school are also reflected in UNHCR's global strategy on refugee education, see <https://www.unhcr.org/fr-fr/en/media/education-2030-strategy-refugee-education>

From the field

How violence and xenophobia threaten access to education in Ecuador

Objective: Foster safe, enabling environments that support learning or refugee students

Gloria Fernández*, 18, jiggled her leg impatiently as she waited her turn to use the cell phone she shares with her two siblings to finish her schoolwork. It was 10 p.m. and she still had an important assignment to submit before graduation.

“We have to rotate so each of us has a turn for all our assignments. We can stay up till 11 p.m. doing our homework now,” said Gloria, who was displaced from Venezuela two years ago with her family, and now lives in Guayaquil, a port city in southern Ecuador.

Gloria and her siblings were studying remotely, but unlike in 2020 when COVID-19 was the reason, the recent school closure was due to increased violence and the declaration of an internal armed conflict in Ecuador earlier this year to combat rampant criminality. Gloria and her classmates were afraid they would not be able to gather for graduation.

“It’s hard for them to stay indoors, but I am thankful they are home and safe,” said Gertrudis Osorio*, Gloria’s mother. She described how she would wait for her children to make the one-hour walk

home from school before classes were suspended, and how minutes would feel like hours as she prayed nothing had happened to them.

“When we came from Venezuela two years ago, we never thought things would be like this here. Now we juggle between fear of something happening to us and trying to make ends meet so we can give our children a better future,” Gertrudis added.

Ecuador has experienced an upsurge in violence in recent years, largely fuelled by disputes between criminal groups across the country. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the homicide rate has more than quadrupled in the last decade – from six homicides per 100,000 population in 2015 to a rate of 27 homicides per 100,000 population in 2022. Violence has become commonplace in many communities, including those hosting the more than half a million refugees and migrants in Ecuador.

According to a 2023 assessment conducted by UNHCR, refugees and migrants are increasingly afraid, particularly of the violence affecting young girls and boys. Many have opted to stay home, stop working or avoid sending their children to school, while others are considering moving to places they consider safer. In the past year, the number of Venezuelan children enrolled in schools in Ecuador has halved, with enrolment at the primary and secondary levels reported to have dropped from 46 per cent and 88 per cent, respectively, in 2022, to 39 per cent and 31 per cent in 2023, respectively. This has been mainly due to

relocation within or outside the country for several reasons, including violence.

The displacement of Ecuadorians has also increased sharply, with over 57,000 crossing the Darien jungle in 2023 alone and a total of 46,000 Ecuadorian asylum-seekers worldwide. Three out of four Ecuadorians interviewed by UNHCR in Panama after crossing the Darien cited violence and insecurity as their reason for leaving the country.

Now, an entire generation of young people fear for their futures and mental health, while families face increasing financial and social pressures because of the violence.

“There is a lot happening outside and I [was] often afraid walking to and from school, especially when we finished late,” said Gloria. *“But what has really made a difference for me is the support I’ve found here and the friendships I have been able to make in school in the past two years.”*

For displaced young people like Gloria, school became a place to build a network

where she felt welcome and safe, despite the violence in the streets outside.

“One time, my classmates asked me about our situation, how I couldn’t afford bus fees or school supplies, and all of a sudden they collected money and supplies for me,” she recalled with a smile.

Although Ecuador has a generous policy enabling children of all nationalities to attend school, a lack of resources for school supplies and uniforms, as well as discrimination and xenophobia, pose additional barriers for them to integrate, flourish and finish their education. UNHCR and partners work directly with communities and schools across the country to assist families most in need. One approach, carried out in over 250 schools since 2019, is called ‘Breathing Inclusion’ (*Respiramos Inclusión* in Spanish). It encourages children and teachers to explore concepts of identity, diversity, justice and social change to help combat prejudice and discrimination. It also tackles xenophobia through games and community activities.

ECUADOR. Refugee children integrate into their host neighbourhoods through community sports activities. © UNHCR/JEFFREY GUILLEMARD



“Going to school is not just the academic part. It’s a place where children interact with peers and find their place in society,” explained Ismenia Íñiguez, UNHCR’s Senior Education Assistant in Ecuador.

“Investing in the education of refugee and local children translates to an investment in the communities where they both live. In the end, it means the protection circle around children expands further.”

In places like Otavalo, an Andean town in Ecuador’s northern province of Imbabura, UNHCR and partners complement this methodology with ‘Community Champions’, an afterschool programme where refugee and Ecuadorian children meet to learn about sports, reinforce soft skills and find a safe space away from the violence lurking in their neighbourhoods. For young Venezuelan boys like 11-year-old Ernesto Suárez* and his siblings, it has made a big difference.

“On my first day, I was very shy, I didn’t play with anyone. But now the whole classroom welcomes me and plays with me,” said Ernesto, who attends one of the schools implementing UNHCR’s Breathing Inclusion methodology.

Fortunately for Gloria and her classmates, schools reopened in early March, allowing them to attend their graduation in person. Now she is thinking about how to turn her experiences to positive use in the future.

“I dream of going to university and becoming a psychologist, to help other children like me find a safe place in school.”

*Names changed for protection reasons.

Young Ukrainian refugees stay focused on studies in Hungary

Objective: Promote equitable and sustainable inclusion in national education systems for refugees, asylum-seekers, returnees, stateless and internally displaced persons.

In downtown Budapest, seven refugee children from Ukraine anxiously await the result of a quiz about their teacher’s favorite fruit. The answer – raspberry – elicits a range of reactions, from triumph to disappointment. One boy can barely hide his dismay.

“Most children from Ukraine whom we work with are perfectionists,” says Eszter Greskovics from the Foundation for Global Human Dignity NGO, which, together with UNHCR partner Hungarian Interchurch Aid, runs these computer programming courses for refugee children. *“This is probably because of what they had to go through, and the emotional challenges of having to adapt to a new life in a new country far away from their homes. We are very much aware of this sensitivity and try to give them positive experiences.”*

Nine-year-old Ruslan Mustafaiev is one of the children who guessed the fruit correctly. He fled Melitopol in eastern Ukraine in April 2022, with his mother Lyudmila and father Sergii. The family sought safety in Hungary, where they enrolled Ruslan into a local school.

However, forced to restart first grade and already proficient in Hungarian in just a few months, Ruslan soon felt frustrated.



HUNGARY. Ruslan, 9, a refugee boy from Ukraine, with his teacher Eszter at a computer programming workshop organised by UNHCR's partner Hungarian Interchurch Aid. ©UNHCR/ZSOLT BALLA

With help from a social worker at Hungarian Interchurch Aid, the family found another school, where teachers were experienced in working with non-Hungarian children. Confidently counting beyond 20 in Hungarian when tested by the new school director, Ruslan was admitted to second grade and awarded honours in language and literature.

“Our school is far away from where we live, Ruslan must get up at 6 a.m. and travel one hour every day with me to get there,” says Lyudmila. *“We would like to rent an apartment closer to the school, but we have failed to find a decent and affordable one for over a year now.”*

Today, even far from home, Ruslan loves his school, his teachers and classmates, and he is fully accepted and loved, too.

“I adore him,” the headmaster tells Lyudmila.

While his mother talks with UNHCR staff, Ruslan gets a rare chance to use her smartphone. When she asks him to put it down, he protests. Then, to her delight, she notices what he was doing – not playing a game but studying Dmitri Mendeleev's periodic table.

In parallel with his Hungarian school, Ruslan also continues to study the Ukrainian curriculum through a video link with his teacher in Melitopol. Lyudmila is determined to help Ruslan preserve his Ukrainian identity and learn about the culture, literature and language. However, for many young refugees, following the national curriculum and the Ukrainian online curriculum places a double burden on the learner and may not be sustainable in the long run.

As highlighted by a [recent](#) report issued by UNHCR and partners, many refugee families struggle with the decision to enrol their children in local schools or continue

with the Ukrainian curriculum online. Older children face greater adaptation challenges and sometimes experience bullying. Language barriers and lack of supportive programmes can lead many children from Ukraine to drop out of school in host countries due to these persistent difficulties.

“We have been offering Hungarian language classes to adult refugees in our support center since the very beginning to help them feel included into the local community,” says Ulyana Knyahinetskaya, the programme organiser for Hungarian Interchurch Aid. *“Increasingly often, however, parents ask us to also launch Hungarian classes for their children, since it would help them to cope with difficulties when they start a Hungarian school.”*

Ruslan’s school is well equipped to support refugee students. His English language teacher, Olga Ködöböcz, is responsible for the school programme that helps refugee children from Ukraine to catch up. An ethnic Hungarian from Transcarpathia, Ukraine, she understands the challenges of studying in another language.

“We see that a lot of Ukrainian parents are afraid of what will happen to their children once they start attending a Hungarian school,” she says. *“I always tell them they should not be worried. Children, especially under the age of ten, usually need a maximum of one year to catch up with the curriculum and learn the language.”*

Olga says a new school and language can open up a new world for refugee children from Ukraine, with school becoming not only a learning environment but also a social and safe space where children can heal from the traumatic experience of fleeing their homes. At the same time, their presence in class is also beneficial for local students and can help them develop, too.

Thanks to his new school, Ruslan is thriving. And there is much the world can learn from him.

“I do not have one best friend,” the young boy says, happily. *“All children are my friends.”*

HUNGARY. Ruslan, 9, a refugee boy from Ukraine at a computer programming workshop organised by UNHCR’s partner Hungarian Interchurch Aid. ©UNHCR/ZSOLT BALLA



BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS WITH DAFI



©UNHCR/ANTOINE TARDY

Grace, Murielle, Joséphine and Dorcas are members of the DAFI Women Power Club in Burundi. This mentoring initiative was launched in November 2022 with the aim of preparing young female DAFI scholars for future leadership roles and positive community change.

The four women, who are all originally from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, have found new confidence thanks to the initiative.

“The DAFI Women Power Club has helped us a lot,” says Dorcas, 32, who is a final year student of Administration and Accounting. “It has helped shake off the idea that we are not capable. It has given us confidence, in terms of public speaking for instance.”

“I see my future bright,” adds Josephine, 24, a final year student of Clinical Psychology. “I would like to contribute to improving mental health across refugee camps in the country. As refugee women, we are sometimes perceived as being powerless, but we are determined to reinforce female leadership and foster creativity among women.”



SWITZERLAND. High-level event on refugee education at the Global Refugee Forum 2023 ©UNHCR/ANTOINE TARDY

The Global Refugee Forum: Progress in 2023

Four years on from its first landmark meeting, the Global Refugee Forum 2023 represented a critical opportunity to translate the principle of international responsibility-sharing into concrete action. This was achieved through high-level pledges and contributions, as well as the exchange of evidence-based good practices. Co-convened by, Colombia, France, Japan, Jordan and Uganda, and co-hosted by Switzerland together with UNHCR, the Forum took place in Geneva from 13 to 15 December 2023, with an advance day for side events on 12 December 2023. These included the GRF Education Campus, hosted by the Education Alliance, for stakeholders to

reflect on the progress made in realizing the vision for education set out in Refugee Education 2030 and the Global Compact on Refugees, as well as to commit to concrete actions over the next four years.

In total, 1,750 pledges were made to improve the lives of refugees and their host communities, including 43 multi-stakeholder commitments led by governments. All of these pledges aim to secure one or more of the eight key outcomes for the GRF and are a testament to the significant progress made since 2019 to advance key policy priorities under the four Global Compact on Refugees objectives.

GRF 2023 at a Glance

OVER
 **4,000**
PARTICIPANTS
ATTENDED

MORE THAN
 **300**
REFUGEE DELEGATES
PARTICIPATED, FOUR
TIMES MORE THAN AT
THE FIRST GRF IN 2019

MORE THAN
 **10,000**
WATCHING
ONLINE

168 GOVERNMENTS AND **427** ORGANIZATIONS PARTICIPATED

THERE WAS AN ESTIMATED
USD 2.2
billion
IN FINANCIAL
COMMITMENTS

WITH
USD 250
million
IN PLEDGES COMING FROM
THE PRIVATE SECTOR

 **6,000** SCHOLARSHIPS WERE MADE AVAILABLE

Within the education setting, there were three multi-stakeholder pledges:

- 1. Securing sustainable futures: Towards a shared responsibility to uphold the right to education and include refugee children in national education systems**

Aiming to ensure that all refugee children realize their right to a quality education and are included in national education systems, and that temporary education programmes, when needed, are designed and implemented to support a transition into the national education system.

A total of 149 pledges were made within this area, including key commitments from host governments to increase access to strengthened education systems through policy shifts, improving the number of qualified teachers and construction of new schools. These were matched by pledges from the United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and the World Bank to provide technical assistance to help host governments make faster progress on the inclusion of refugees into their national education systems, from Education Cannot Wait to commit one-third of their USD 1.5 billion target toward refugees, from Global



Partnership for Education to mobilise more financing for refugee inclusion, from UNESCO to support national education systems in the inclusion of refugees, and from the European Union to prioritise inclusive, resilient and equitable learning for all.

2. 15% by 2030: Global pledge on refugee higher education and self-reliance

Aiming to achieve enrolment of 15 per cent of refugee youth in higher education by 2030.

While progress has been made in increasing the percentage of refugee youth enrolled in higher education from 1 per cent in 2019 to 7 per cent in 2023, much more needs to be done if we are to collectively ensure that at least 500,000 refugee youth are enrolled in higher education by 2030.

In 2023, a total of 107 pledges were made within this area, including technical/vocational training centers in Zimbabwe's Tongogara Refugee Camp, at least 220 scholarships for refugee scholars in Zambia, upgrades to schools and increasing the number of classrooms in Rwanda, and providing quality and accredited skills training to 20,000 people in refugee and host communities in Ethiopia.

3. Expanding connected education for refugees through the Refugee Connected Education Challenge

Aiming to ensure universal access to high-quality connected education for refugees by 2030.

In 2023, ambitious, multi-partner pledges leveraged expertise, innovation and



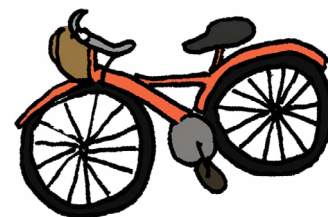
RWANDA. A refugee learner poses for a photo holding a ProFuturo tablet. ©UNHCR/SAMUEL OTIENO

financing to demonstrate tangible progress towards access to quality connected education for refugees, with a total of 38 pledges made within this area.

Significant progress has been made since the 2019 pledge through the expansion of the Vodafone Foundation's Instant Network Schools (INS), which now reaches more than 327,000 refugee and host community students and has trained more than 6,000 teachers across six countries: The Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Kenya, Mozambique, Tanzania and South Sudan. Similarly, the ProFuturo Foundation partnership, launched in Rwanda in 2021 and expanded to Nigeria and Zimbabwe in 2022, has impacted over 25,000 students in 24 refugee-hosting primary schools. These initiatives demonstrate tangible progress in digital education for refugees and host communities and showcase effective strategies to bridge the digital divide and promote inclusive, quality education.

Final word:

Masomah Ali Zada



Education: The pedal powering my journey

Education, to me, is not just about acquiring knowledge. It is a beacon of hope, a catalyst for change and a vehicle for empowerment. It is the pedal that has powered my journey from a young girl to an Olympic athlete.

Growing up in Iran and Afghanistan, my path was fraught with obstacles. I was born in Afghanistan but spent the first years of my life in exile in Iran. There, because I was not recognized as a refugee, I was not allowed to go to school. It was my neighbour who taught me to read and

write, and it was very difficult for me at first. Later, when my family and I returned to Afghanistan, I did not like school because the teachers were very strict – and I often wanted to quit. Even though my parents had not gone to school themselves, they insisted that I continue my studies, even though it was difficult. They were convinced that it was the only way for me to have a future. Now, looking back, and fully aware of how education changed my life, I'm so grateful that they forced me to stay in school. I will never be able to thank them enough. Once in France, where I became a refugee, I went to university and got my master's degree, and I can now work and build a future for myself.

FRANCE. International Olympic Committee Scholarship Holder Masomah Ali Zada in training. ©UNHCR



Education is not just a right. It is the key to knowledge and independence, and the foundation on which we can build a better future for all and a world of peace. Unfortunately, many displaced women around the globe do not have the opportunity to study or play sports. And I want to tell them – do not give up, do not desist. Throughout my life, I faced a lot of cultural resistance and gender stereotypes, even attacks, due to my pursuit of cycling and my education. But despite the challenges and fear, I felt I had a responsibility towards the girls in my society. With the support of my family, I kept going. Always forward. While continuing my education.

Education is essential to prepare for the future. It is not a privilege – or at least it should not be. It is a universal right that should be available to everyone, regardless of status or gender. It is the key to unlocking potential, breaking down barriers and creating opportunities. Education has helped me overcome many personal and professional obstacles. It has given me the courage to challenge societal norms, the strength to persevere in the face of adversity and the confidence to stand up for girls' rights. It has opened doors I never thought possible and allowed me to represent my country and my people on the global stage.

I was told that women were not strong enough, and that women cannot have the same dreams as men. I was told that some careers are not appropriate for women. But that is not true. That was a belief imposed on me. I know that women are powerful – they are ministers, they are doctors, athletes, engineers, mothers, friends, teachers, world leaders. If there is one message I want to convey to girls and women, it is that ***you***



SWITZERLAND. Masomah Ali Zada, Olympic cyclist, Refugee Olympic Team, speaks at the High-Level Event on the potential of sports in fostering inclusion and protection, one of a series of discussions at the Global Refugee Forum 2023. ©UNHCR/ANTOINE TARDY

are smart, you can do whatever you want, you can study whatever you want. You should never be afraid. I urge all refugee girls and women to take advantage of learning opportunities where they exist. Do not let barriers stop you. With hard work and perseverance, the sky is the limit.

Education can change lives. It changed mine – sport and education changed my life. And ***yes, we are refugees, but we are human beings, and we have the same rights as everyone else.*** Together, we can and must break down barriers and create a world in which education is a reality for every child, every youth, every refugee. ***Together, we can make a difference. Together, we can build a future in which education is the cornerstone of society, in which every girl and boy has the chance to achieve their dreams. For it is through education that we will truly change the world.***

REFUGEE EDUCATION:

FIVE YEARS ON FROM THE
LAUNCH OF THE 2030 REFUGEE
EDUCATION STRATEGY



© 2024 United Nations
High Commissioner for Refugees

This document along with further
information is available on UNHCR's
education website: www.unhcr.org

