

Trends and Challenges of Refugee Education in the ECO Member States (With an Emphasis on Iran, Turkey, and Pakistan)

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1. Introduction

Today, the commonalities of countries are increasingly manifested by transformations caused by globalization, and almost all of the major human issues are becoming globalized. Displacement and asylum are important global challenges that have become the most important issues for statesmen and countries in the crisis-stricken region of Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) because these issues have a significant impact on both refugees and hosts. Iran, Turkey, and Pakistan, which are three founding members of the ECO, face this phenomenon more than other member states. The issue of education and training of refugees residing in these countries and the associated trends and challenges are directly

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In this paper, the term “refugee” is used to refer to migration forms including displaced people, asylum seekers and refugees and applies to both those who have been registered by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and those who are undocumented. Displacement is a particular form of migration and displaced people are individuals who are forced to move against their will (definition by the International Organization for Migration - IOM). Asylum-seekers are those whose requests to seek refuge from persecution in another country need to be processed. If successful in their requests, asylum seekers obtain refugee status, which protects them and provides rights under international conventions. (UNESCO. *Global Education Monitoring Report 2019: Migration, Displacement and Education – Building Bridges, not Walls*. Paris: UNESCO, 2018.) According to the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol refugees are persons who flee their country due to “well-founded fear” of persecution due to reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, and who are outside of their country of nationality or permanent residence and due to this fear are unable or unwilling to return to it. (UNESCO. *Global Education Monitoring Report 2019: Migration, Displacement and Education - Building Bridges, not Walls*. 2018)

related to the core theme of the conference, which is the shared heritage of member states.

According to available statistics, Iran, Turkey, and Pakistan are among the top refugee-hosting countries in the world. The presence of these three countries in an important, risky and strategic territory that witness dispersed conflicts, wars, insecurity, internal conflicts, and violence has made these countries to host millions of refugees, displaced people, and asylum-seekers. Obviously, each of these countries is dealing with different issues and pursuing their own specific patterns in rendering services, depending on the country's macro policies, their view to refugee phenomenon, beliefs, public opinion with regard to the acceptance of aliens, the management of multiculturalism, economic power, international trade, and the personal views of their statesmen. It is generally believed that hosting refugees and providing them with a variety of services will strengthen public diplomacy and make the understanding-based discourse dominant in the world and providing educational services by refugee-hosting countries is considered as an added value and leads to the promotion of diplomacy. Providing general education to refugees, as well as providing the required grounds for school-aged refugee children to receive the right to education is one of the most important issues. Therefore, examining and comparing patterns can open the door to sharing successful, sensitive strategies and ideas, sensitize the international organizations supporting refugees, and garner a positive attitude from the public as well as elite, thinkers, and policymakers.

Given the membership of Iran, Turkey, and Pakistan in the ECO, the existence of cultural and climatic commonalities among the three countries hosting millions of displaced and homeless people, this article examines the trends and challenges of refugees education, as their most pressing and important need.

This descriptive study is an applied case study that examines trends, achievements, and challenges related to the provision of educational services in Iran, Turkey, and Pakistan, through the method of analyzing documents, statistics, and information. In this study, Iran's policy in integrating refugee education into formal education and its experience in providing maximum educational coverage of refugees (even undocumented refugees) has also been

discussed. This paper first presents the status of refugees in the world then describes the status of refugee education in Iran, Turkey, and Pakistan with related statistics, and finally discusses the issues and challenges related to refugees' education.

2. State of Refugee Education in the World

By the end of 2018, there were more than 25.9 million refugees and 3.5 million asylum-seekers all around the world. 57% of refugees come from three countries: Syria, Afghanistan, and the South Sudan. About 80% of refugees live in countries neighboring their countries of origin. More than half of the global refugee population is under the age of 18.

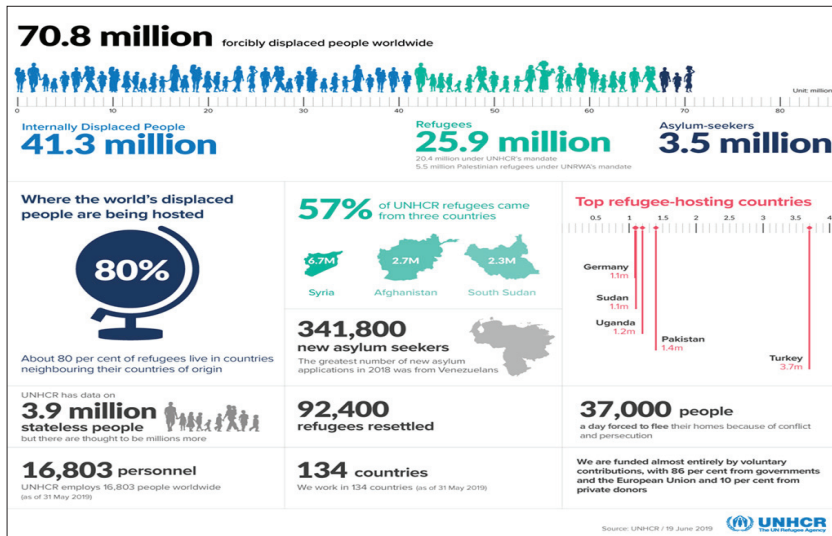


Figure 17.1. The state of displaced people of the world

Source: UNHCR, "Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2018," 2019. <https://www.unhcr.org/statistics/unhcrstats/5d08d7ee7/unhcr-global-trends-2018.html>

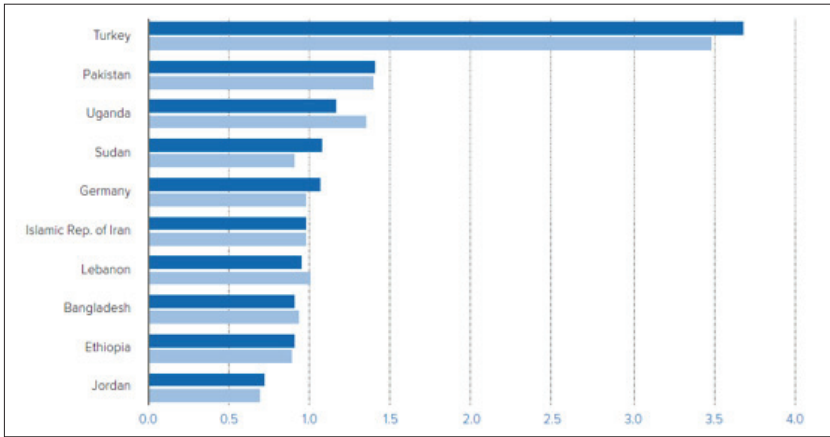


Figure 17.2. Major host countries of refugees (end of 2017 to end-of 2018)

Source: UNHCR, “Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2018.”

Figure 17.2 shows the major host countries of refugees. For the fifth consecutive year, Turkey hosted the largest number of refugees worldwide, with 3.7 million people. Pakistan is the second, whereas Iran occupies the sixth place.¹ Among different issues related to refugees, the right to education is a fundamental human right. It is essential to the acquisition of knowledge and to “the full development of the human personality,” as stated by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Yet for millions of refugees, education remains an aspiration, not a reality.² By the end of 2018, there were around 30 million refugees and asylum-seekers all around the world, with more than half of that number being children under the age of 18, including many unaccompanied or separated from their families. At odds with the fundamental and universal status of the right to education, refugee children remain five times more likely to be out of school compared to their non-refugee peers. Today, there are around 4 million refugee children out of school – more than half of the 7.4 million school-age refugee children.³

Education affects not only immigrants’ attitudes, aspirations, and beliefs but also those of their hosts. Increased classroom diversity

¹ UNHCR, “Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2018.”

² UNHCR, “Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2018”

³ UNHCR, “Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2018”

brings both challenges and opportunities to learn from other cultures and experiences. Appropriate education content can help citizens critically process information and promote cohesive societies; inappropriate content can spread negative, partial, exclusive, or dismissive notions of immigrants and refugees. Education provides immigrant children with opportunities for their advancement as well as a chance to contribute both to their country of residence and, in many cases, eventually also to their country of origin.⁴

The inclusion of refugee children and youth in national systems can provide the necessary tools for the successful integration of individuals and communities and can foster mutual acceptance, tolerance, and respect in situations of social upheaval. More globally, education for refugees can provide hope and long-term prospects for stability and sustainable peace for individuals, communities, countries, and global society. But at the same time, the realization of the right to education for refugees poses some challenges everywhere, but particularly in low-or middle-income countries where about 85% of refugees worldwide are hosted. Countries with high numbers of refugees such as Turkey, Pakistan, Uganda, Lebanon, the Islamic Republic of Iran, and many more are already dealing with substantial challenges.⁵ In the next section, Iran, Turkey, and Pakistan are analyzed as case studies concerning the state of refugee education.

3. Refugee Education in the Islamic Republic of Iran

3.1. Background

Iran has a centralized education system. The Ministry of Education is the main provider of public and formal education in the country. Public education is compulsory and free for all. Today more than 90% of adults are literate and according to UNESCO Statistics, Iran is among the countries, which have achieved universal primary education. The main language of instruction is Persian (Farsi). It consists of pre-school Education (4-6 years old children); Primary Education (last six years in two – three year stages) and Secondary Education (lower secondary and upper secondary last six years). The upper secondary stage is specialized and the students follow

⁴ UNESCO, *Global Education Monitoring Report 2019: Migration, Displacement and Education –Building Bridges, not Walls*. (Paris: UNESCO, 2018).

⁵ UNHCR, "Global Trends Forced Displacement in 2018."

their studies according to their interest and aptitude. The fields of study in this stage are mathematics & physics, science, humanities, vocational and technical education.

During the past decades, Iran has always been among the top six refugee-hosting countries; the other five being Turkey, Pakistan, and Uganda, Sudan and Germany. Iran is the second-largest host country of Afghan refugees and the sixth-largest refugee-hosting country worldwide. Iran hosts some 951,140 Afghan refugees (Amayesh cardholders⁶), 26,270 Iraqi refugees, and refugee groups from twenty five other countries. The majority of refugees, 97%, live in urban areas while 3% reside in 20 state-managed refugee settlements. The government estimated that approximately 2.5 million undocumented Afghans also reside in the country. The thirteenth round of Amayesh registration was completed in 2018. In spite of the socio-economic challenges Iran has continually faced, it has generously hosted a large population of refugees for four decades.⁷ In response to this situation, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), developed “The Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR)” in 2012 to identify and implement comprehensive solutions for Afghan refugees in the region through joint interventions.

The Solutions Strategy aims to provide vital support for the Islamic Republic of Iran, which for more than 30 years has hosted and provided for millions of Afghan refugees. Since the launch of the Solutions Strategy in May 2012, the Islamic Republic of Iran has made considerable strides in operationalizing the Strategy. The National Steering Committee (NSC) was established in December 2012. 29 participating agencies are involved in the provision of essential services to refugees in the Islamic Republic of Iran including the Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs, under the Ministry of Interior (BAFIA), the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health and Medical Education, United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNHCR, Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Association for Protection of Afghan Women and Children

⁶ Amayesh is a kind of registration card which enables refugees to access basic services. This registration scheme started in 2003 and the registration has been carried out periodically (UNESCO, *Global Education Monitoring Report 2019*).

⁷ UNHCR, “Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2018.”

(HAMI), and Behnam Daheshpour Charity Organization (BDCO) among others. In order to ensure more inclusive participation in the coordination of in-country Solutions Strategy activities, a working group, consisting of NSC members (include BAFIA as chair, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and UNHCR) and representatives from government ministries, UN agencies, NGOs, and donor countries, has been created in 2013.⁸ The working group meets periodically to monitor and evaluate the process.

Iran has issued identification documents for all refugees in the form of annual preparation plans for approximately one million refugees; held literacy courses for more than one million refugees during this period and have been upgrading their literacy rate from 6% at entry to over 60% at present and has been providing free health care services to all refugees from entry date, such as vaccination, care for pregnant women, children, and individual healthcare. Iran included all refugees since 2015 in the same health insurance scheme as that of Iranians and the issued free insurance for vulnerable groups including special patients and those suffering incurable or difficult to treat diseases with the support of UNHCR office in Iran. Iran has also been providing free services to refugees living in guest cities, which make up 3% of all refugees and distributing foodstuff and topping up their cards monthly to provide for other family nutrition needs. Iran has been holding technical and vocational training classes for refugees to empower and promote their subsistence; launching and expanding business workshops, especially for women-headed households and issuing temporary work permits for eligible individuals and benefiting from the services offered by “Social Security Organization.”

Education is one of the most important services that Iran provides for refugees. Education is nowadays referred to as a tool to improve the quality of life of individuals in a society. In all human societies, the primary concern of governments is to increase access to suitable and equitable education for all children belonging to all groups, races, and genders. This issue is important in Iran because, after the Islamic Revolution of 1979, Iran hosted more than three million refugees, predominantly Afghans. The experience of four decades of refugees’ life in Iran with its young structure and high fertility

⁸ UNHCR, *Missing Out: Refugee Education in Crisis*. (Geneva, 2016).

pattern has led to a large volume of children of refugees (second and third generations) at present. One of the institutions affected by this condition is the Ministry of Education. The enrollment rate of Afghan students in Iranian schools is about 85%.

The large population of refugee students, especially Afghans who lack identity documents, led the Iranian leader to emphasize in his historic decree of May 2015, on the enrollment of all Afghan students in Iranian schools. Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei: "No Afghan child, even those who illegally live in Iran without documentation, should be deprived of education. They should all be enrolled in Iranian school." In addition to domestic audience the decree was also reflected in political and international circles and displayed the humanitarian vision of the Iranian leadership and nation. In this regard, the cabinet approved the instruction on the education of foreign nationals on April 27, 2016, and the necessity of their enrollment and schooling. Consequently, the Center for International Affairs and Schools Abroad regulated the circulars on enrollment of foreign national students and notified the host provinces.

In the school year 2018-19, some 489,254 refugee students were enrolled in the formal education system of the country, of which 460,053 were Afghan refugees. Education Ministry has taken on a huge responsibility to meet the educational needs of these children. Other refugee students are from countries such as Syria, Iraq, Pakistan, etc., which make up less than 5% of the total. Since 2014, Iran has 33% rises in enrollment of refugee students. Table 17.1 shows the per capita cost price of refugee students in the school year 2018-19 which is about 722 dollars (USD).

Table 17.1. Cost of Refugee Education in Iran in 2018-2019

School year	Per capita Cost price (USD)	The total number of refugee students	The total cost of refugee students (USD)	The number of Afghan students	Total price for Afghan students
2018-19	722	489,254	353,241,388	460,053	332,158,266

Table 17.2. Humanitarian aid by International Organizations (IO) for Refugees in Iran in 2018

Total aid by IOs for refugee education (USD)	Per capita Cost (USD)	Cash grants by IO for each refugee student (USD)	The ratio of per capita cash grant to the per capita cost of refugee students	IO cash grants for each Afghan student (USD)	The ratio of the cash grants and cost for Afghan students
2,690,575	722	5.76	0.63%	6.06	0.66%

As you see in table 17.2, despite the annual per-capita cost incurred by Iran for refugee students, the international humanitarian aid amounts to less than 1% of the total cost.

Iran was one of the original signatories to the 1951 Refugee Convention. Article 30 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran emphasizes the right to education and establishes free and compulsory primary education which presumably applies to Iranian nationals. Article 3 of the Constitution obliges the government to provide the means and facilities for the education of all and in its paragraph 9 prohibits unjustified discrimination. Moreover, Article 20 of the Constitution states that the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran is obliged to respect human rights within the framework of Islamic law for all. The roadmap of the education system is established by the Document on Fundamental Reform in Education of the Islamic Republic of Iran (FRDE) adopted in 2011 by the Supreme Council of Education, the Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution and the Ministry of Education. The Document aims to enhance the quality of education in Iran.

Accordingly, the observance of the right to education of refugee students has always been included in the planning of policymakers and educational executives in line with Iran’s adherence to Islamic teachings and values. Especially by the progressive leadership decree on the unconditional education of school-aged children, the task to ensure that every foreign child will receive free and equal education along with their Iranian peers has become clear for policy implementers and educators. The government of the Islamic Republic of Iran strives to increase refugee student enrollment rate to 100%, which may only be dampened by the family problems of

refugees. Half a million refugee students in Iran are a testament to the Iranian government's commitment.

3.2. Challenges and Achievements of Refugee Education in Iran

The influx of immense refugees into any country can be both an opportunity and a challenge for that country and its people. This part focuses on the challenges and opportunities that Iran faces in relation to refugees' education based on the standards and principles introduced by UNHCR to improve education both qualitatively and quantitatively. These principles are access, integration, quality protection, participation, partnership, monitoring, and evaluation of refugee education. Below is a description of the attempts by Iran to meet these standards in rendering the educational services to foreign students.

Access is ensuring that refugees have access to all education services in the same way and at similar cost to that of nationals. About 82% of Afghan students were enrolled in Iranian schools by the end of 2018. After Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei ordered that all Afghan children in Iran be permitted schooling regardless of their residency status, the process speeded and this decision affected hundreds of thousands of children and helped improve the status of the approximately 3 million Afghans in Iran. In Iran, even the undocumented refugee and immigrant children are allowed to enroll in public primary and secondary schools. About 489,000 Afghan children who were enrolled schools by the end of 2018, 103,000 are undocumented children.

Integration refers to education services for refugees integrated within the national public system. Iran's policy to integrate refugee education into formal education is an important step towards realizing the right to education of children regardless of color, ethnicity, and nationality.

Quality is ensuring that the education offered to refugees conforms to national and international standards and provides a safe and child-friendly learning environment carried out by well-educated teachers. As Iran's policy for rendering the educational services for refugees is integrating refugee students within the national public system, the quality of education for refugee children is the same as the quality of education of national children. In other words, the same curricula, instruction, and teachers for Iranian students

are used for refugee students. The Ministry of Education of Iran improves the quality of education based on The Fundamental Reform Document of Education (FRDE). To ensure that the education offered to refugees conforms to national and international standards, the Ministry of Education holds some workshops and training courses on the subject of migration, multicultural issues for teachers, experts, parents, and students. Also, the technical and vocational skills of young Afghan refugees are supported through holding teacher trainings on life skills to improve the lives of Afghan refugees and prevent social pathologies. Moreover, the Ministry of Education puts emphasis on language learning support for refugee students. For this reason, students in some cities are provided with language learning classes prior to their primary schools.

Protection refers to providing protection and special assistance to the most vulnerable groups and individuals among refugee communities so they can access education equitably, including separated and orphaned children, girls and women at risk, the elderly, persons with disabilities and refugees in need of special education. Protection is a fundamental component of meeting the protection needs of refugee children and young people in the provision of education. Schooling also provides essential physical protection to children, with regular attendance helping to prevent child labor and gender-based violence. Improving the health status of refugees is critical to refugee protection and assistance projects in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Inadequate international support has placed strains on the government not only in terms of its resources but also its ability to prevent disease, treat patients with special medical needs, and provide maternal and child health care.⁹ It is very important for Iran to provide a safe learning environment for refugee children exactly like national children and has the same policy toward the most vulnerable groups and individuals among refugee communities. Providing health care services like vaccination to all refugee students is another action that Iran has taken.

Partnership is partnering with a wide range of actors, especially governments, local authorities, other UN agencies, international agencies, NGOs, civil society and community organizations,

⁹ UNHCR, *Breaking The Cycle: Education And The Future For Afghan Refugees*, (September 2015).

academic institutions and the private sector to ensure the availability of quality education services for refugees. A range of participating agencies is involved in the provision of essential services to refugees in the Islamic Republic of Iran (29 agencies). This includes BAFIA, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health and Medical Education, State Welfare Organization (SWO), UNHCR, WFP, HAMI, Society to Support Children Suffering from Cancer (MAHAK), Chain of Hope (COHE), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Behnam Daheshpour Charity Organization (BDKO). United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Danish Refugee Council (DRC), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), International World Relief Foundation (WRF), Pars Development Activists Association (PARS), Kiyana Socio-Cultural Group (Kiyana), Iranian Life Quality Improvement Association (ILIA) and RI.

Participation is ensuring that community members participate actively, transparently and without discrimination in assessment, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of education programs in urban settings. *Monitoring and evaluation* involve establishing and utilizing efficient monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems to improve program implementation, prioritization and impact. In order to ensure more inclusive participation in the coordination of in-country Solutions Strategy activities, a working group was created, consisting of NSC members and representatives from government ministries, UN agencies, NGOs, and donor countries. The Ministry of Education also plays its role in this working group to operate in close conjunction with the National Secretariat to ensure that proposed activities are in line with the objectives of the Solutions Strategy. Furthermore, The Ministry of Education has a central and a provincial system for monitoring and evaluation of the process of teaching and learning.

In short, the main challenge that Iran faces in the education system is the limited resources available to realize the right to education of their citizens, yet it is also obligated to deal with large numbers of refugees and the fulfillment of their universal rights, including the right to education. Unfair sanctions against the Islamic Republic of Iran and negative propaganda and public opinion have all led to a decrease in the amount of international aid to be offered to Iran and a variety of responsible agencies and institutions, which are willing

to help refugees but their activities are not coordinated and unified. Other challenges are lack of hygiene by refugees, lack of awareness of parents of refugee children, child labor, multicultural issues, and shortage of educational accessories.

4. Refugee Education in the Republic of Turkey

4.1. Background

The state education system in Turkey involves five main sectors. Primary education, which is free and compulsory, begins at age six and lasts four years. Nearly all eligible children are enrolled. Secondary education continues for another six years and includes middle school and high school programs of four years each. There are a large number of technical and vocational schools, which may be entered after completion of the middle school level.

Culturally, as in so many other respects, Turkey sits between East and West, drawing elements from both to produce its own unique blend. The territory that now constitutes the Republic has been subject to a striking range of cultural influences; these have left a rich archaeological legacy, still visible in the landscape, from the civilizations of Classical Europe and the Islamic Middle East.¹⁰ Since its inception in 1923, Turkey has operated a mixed economy, in which both state and private enterprises contribute to economic development. The economy has been transformed from predominantly agricultural to one in which industry and services are the most productive and rapidly expanding sectors. A decade into the 21st century, the services sector engaged about one-half of the workforce, while agriculture and industry each occupied about one-fourth.¹¹

Turkey, which has been referred to as an emigration country, is currently the top refugee-hosting country in the world with about 4 million refugees, approximately 3.7 million Syrian refugees.¹² Turkey hosts the largest registered refugee population in the world. There are 3.7 million Syrian refugees in Turkey as of December, including 1.7 million children. The majority are living in host

¹⁰ Yapp and Dewdney, "Turkey." Encyclopedia Britannica, 2019.

¹¹ Yapp and Dewdney, "Turkey." Encyclopedia Britannica, 2019.

¹² UNHCR. "Turkey Operational Update June 2019," <https://www.unhcr.org/tr/wp-content/uploads/sites/14/2019/08/UNHCR-Turkey-Operational-Update-June-2019.pdf>

communities throughout Turkey, with the proportion of refugees living in temporary accommodation centers (camps) falling to about 4 percent. There are also around 370,000 non-Syrian refugees and asylum-seekers in Turkey, including approximately 120,000 children,¹³ non-Syrian refugees are from other countries around the world: As of 2017, about 44% are from Afghanistan, 42% are from Iraq, and 10% are from Iran.¹⁴ The bulk of the refugees are located in Turkey's southeast region. Almost 50 percent of all refugees in Turkey are registered in four key provinces: Gaziantep, Hatay, Istanbul, and Şanlıurfa.¹⁵ Some irregular immigrants, including children, continued to reach or attempt to reach Europe via Turkey, many of them risking their lives at sea. The numbers apprehended or rescued in Turkey continued to increase.¹⁶

DISTRIBUTION BY AGE AND GENDER OF REGISTERED SYRIAN REFUGEES RECORDED BY TAKING BIOMETRIC DATA

AGE	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
TOTAL	1.957.686	1.649.957	3.607.563
0-4	298.410	278.683	577.093
5-9	246.709	231.564	478.273
10-14	192.566	176.610	369.176
15-18	161.028	128.451	289.479
19-24	319.978	225.016	544.994
25-29	197.303	141.494	338.797
30-34	162.726	120.981	283.707
35-39	113.797	90.044	203.841
40-44	76.089	69.189	145.278
45-49	57.426	53.925	111.351
50-54	46.459	46.696	93.155
55-59	31.094	31.197	62.291
60-64	22.361	23.152	45.513
65-69	14.522	14.644	29.166
70-74	8.044	8.908	16.952
75-79	4.535	5.505	10.040
80-84	2.550	3.321	5.871
85-89	1.321	1.681	3.002
90+	488	896	1.584

1.7million

Nearly 1 million

Figure 17.3. Distribution of Registered Syrian Refugees

Source: Aysegül Komşuoğlu, "Access to Higher Education and Recognition of Foreign Credentials in Turkey: Case of Istanbul University," Presentation at Coimbra University, January 2019, <https://www.uc.pt/en/refugee-help/Events/workshop/8>.

¹³ UNICEF, "Turkey UNICEF Country Programme Cooperation 2016-2020, Annual Report 2018," <https://www.unicef.org/turkey/en/reports/turkey-unicef-country-programme-cooperation-2016-2020-annual-report-2018>.

¹⁴ UNHCR, "Turkey Operational Update June 2019."

¹⁵ UNHCR, "Turkey Operational Update June 2019."

¹⁶ UNICEF, "Turkey Annual Report 2018."

In Turkey, national legislation supports the right of all children to receive education, including children whose families have sought international protection. Public schools are free of charge and all refugee children have the right to attend these schools. UNHCR works with its network of partner organizations to ensure that refugees are aware of these rights and are assisted with the procedures to be followed to enroll their children and benefit from available financial assistance programs. UNHCR also works closely with the Ministry of National Education, in coordination with UNICEF, to support and complement their efforts to enroll refugee children in Turkish schools. As proficiency in Turkish is key to academic success, UNHCR works with the Ministry to ensure that children receive additional assistance in learning Turkish.¹⁷

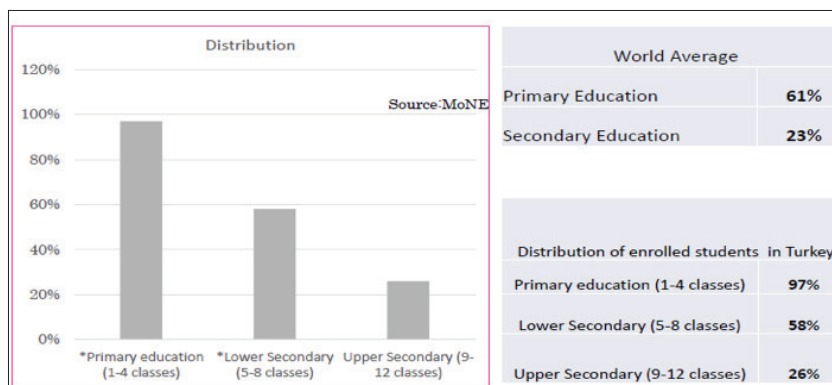


Figure 17.4. Enrolment rates for refugee Syrian children and youth

Source: Komşuoğlu, “Access to Higher Education.”

Figure 17.4 shows the enrolment rates for refugee Syrian children and youth which are above the world average for refugees elsewhere in basic education (97,200-%62). Higher education enrolment rates for Syrians in Turkey have reached 3,8 % which is also higher than the world average which is 1%.

¹⁷ UNICEF, “Turkey Annual Report 2018.”

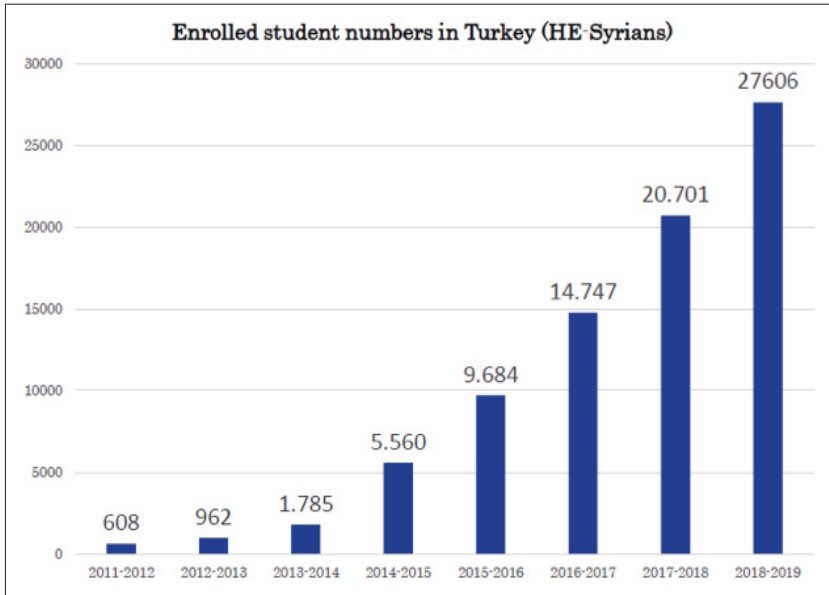


Figure 17.5. Higher education enrolment rates for Syrians in Turkey

Source: UNHCR

Turkey was one of the original signatories to the 1951 Refugee Convention. However, Turkey adopted the Convention with a “geographical limitation.” This means that Turkey assumes full responsibility for refugees coming from countries that are members of the Council of Europe. For those coming from outside of this zone, Turkey may grant limited protection in the form of one of many temporary statuses (conditional refugee status, humanitarian residence permit, or temporary protection). In turn, individuals qualifying for international protection may be granted a permit to stay in Turkey and not be subject to return to their home country, but must ultimately find a long-term solution outside Turkey.

Turkey has also introduced some legal and institutional frameworks for the protection of the refugees in the aftermath of the Syrian crisis. These are “Law on Foreigners and International Protection” (2013) which regulates migration and residence of foreigners, Directorate General of Migration Management (2014) which oversees all migration policy implementation, and “Temporary Protection Regulation” (2014) which regulates registered Syrian’s access to

health, education, social assistance, and access to the labor market and enshrines a range of rights, services, and assistance.¹⁸

4.2. Challenges and Achievements of Refugee Education in Turkey

Language is one major barrier to the participation and retention of refugee children in education. Students who attend Turkish schools are also facing some problems in this regard. Firstly, students do not comprehend much of classroom talk and are unable to express themselves, which decrease their engagement. Secondly, teachers are not given adequate information about students who are placed in their classes, and they are not given opportunities to develop their potential to better deal with refugee children. Finally, parents who do not speak Turkish refrain from being involved in their children's education.¹⁹ Refugee students also face challenges in social life due to lack of communication between local and Syrian students because of the language barrier.

Some other issues in the double-shift school system in Turkey are the lack of trained teachers who are able to deal with the language barrier or children who have missed years of schooling. In addition to language problems, many Syrian and Turkish children report bullying and teasing. Some families rely on income from child labor and say they can't afford to send their children to school. For other families who are able to send their children to school, many of the makeshift private schools lack the credentials to count within the Turkish public system.²⁰

Turkey has taken some steps to reduce the problems of educating refugees. In Turkey, to address the language barrier, Syrian teachers are given permission to open "temporary education centers", which teach in Arabic and use a modified version of the Syrian curriculum (i.e., one in which the parts of textbooks that praised the Baath Party and the Assad family are deleted). Turkey's Ministry of National Education has certified the curriculum and the schools. This has allowed for more children to enroll in school than would otherwise

¹⁸ Komşuoğlu, "Access to Higher Education."

¹⁹ Thomas Collins Cooper III. "Refugee Students: Educational Challenges and Strategies for Leaders Working with Third World Populations." PhD diss., The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2014.

²⁰ Theirworld, "Education for Refugees in Turkey". <https://theirworld.org/projects/schools-in-turkey>

have been the case,²¹ given the Turkish language obstacle, economic hardship, the reluctance of some families to send their children to Turkish schools, and insufficient capacity in the public school system in some areas.²² Turkey has also taken steps trying to integrate the above children into the national public education system.²³ In doing so, it must be ensured that Syrian teachers continue to have a role to play, that Syrian children have the language training and the support they need to succeed in Turkish schools, and that no temporary education centers should be shut down until all students have been able to enroll in and attend a Turkish national school.

Educational Management Information Systems (EMIS) – such as e-schools, e-non-formal education, and the Foreign Students Education Management Information System – play a key role in developing long-term planning. For instance, e-school and e-non-formal education are linked with demographic database systems in Turkey and can contain information on Syrian students who attend Turkish public schools (approximately 354,000 Syrian students) or attend non-formal courses (approximately 284,000 Syrian students).²⁴

In 2018, UNICEF collaborated with the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MoYS) in providing Turkish language courses at youth centers in 24 provinces where the children can also participate in social activities with their Turkish peers. After completing the first two levels they are referred to Turkish public schools. As of December 2018, 4,406 children (2,012 girls and 2,394 boys) were attending Turkish language courses.²⁵

²¹ Burcu Meltem Arık Akyüz, Didem Aksoy, Aysel Madra and Ertuğrul Polat, “Evolution of National Policy in Turkey on Integration of Syrian Children into the National Education System,” Background Paper Prepared for the 2019 Global Education Monitoring Report, UNESCO, 2018.

²² Human Rights Watch, “When I Picture My Future, I See Nothing: Barriers To Education For Syrian Refugee Children In Turkey.” (2015). Quoted in UNESCO, *Enforcing The Right To Education Of Refugees: A Policy Perspective*, Working Papers on Education No 8, 2019. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000366839>.

²³ Katherine Parks, “Efforts To Expand Education For Syrian Refugees In Turkey”. 2018. Quoted in UNESCO, *Enforcing the Right to Education*.

²⁴ Ayşenur Bülbül, Presentation at the “International Expert Meeting on Public Policies Supporting the Right to Education of Refugees” in Barcelona, 13-14 December 2018. Quoted in UNESCO, *Enforcing the Right to Education*.

²⁵ UNICEF. “Turkey Annual Report 2018.”

Through a project funded by a direct grant (300 million euros) from the European Union, the Ministry of Education of Turkey provides Turkish-language as well as Arabic-language courses 390,000 and 10,000 Syrian children respectively.²⁶

5. Refugee Education in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

5.1. Background

Pakistan is a populous and multiethnic country in South Asia. Having a predominately Indo-Iranian speaking population, Pakistan has historically and culturally been associated with its neighbors Iran, Afghanistan, and India. Yet, Pakistan is, in general, linguistically heterogeneous, and no single language can be said to be common to the whole population, which comprises more than 217 million people.²⁷ Pakistan, the second host country for refugees in the world, hosts more than 1.4 million registered Afghans who have been forced to flee their homes.²⁸

In the Pakistani school system, the main languages of instruction are English and Urdu. Primary education takes 5 years, whereas middle school comprises of Grades 6–8. The subjects taught at middle school include Urdu, English, arts, Islamic studies, mathematics, science and social studies. Secondary education continues from Grades 9 to 12 and incorporates annual examinations. On completion of grade 10, pupils qualify for a secondary school certificate. If students proceed further and finish grade 12, they sit a final examination for their higher secondary school certificate. During this time, they opt for one of several pre-college tracks that include pre-medical, pre-engineering, humanities / social sciences, and commerce.²⁹

An estimated 2.8 million Afghans live in Pakistan. According to UNHCR, registered Afghan refugees in Pakistan is 1,410,155 (individuals). 32% of these individuals live in refugee villages and 68% outside refugee villages. UNHCR Funding for Pakistan is \$40,693,466 in 2019.

²⁶ Bülül, Presentation at the "International Expert Meeting."

²⁷ Burki, Sh. J. and Ziring L. "Pakistan". *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Accessed on September 20, 2019.

²⁸ UNHCR, "Turkey Operational Update June 2019."

²⁹ UNHCR, *Refugee Education Strategy 2016-2018/Pakistan*, 2018.

In terms of their legal status, Afghans living in Pakistan can be broadly divided into four main groups: PoR (Proof of Registration) cardholders, ACC (Afghan Citizen Card) holders, Afghan Passport holders with Pakistani visa and unregistered Afghans.³⁰

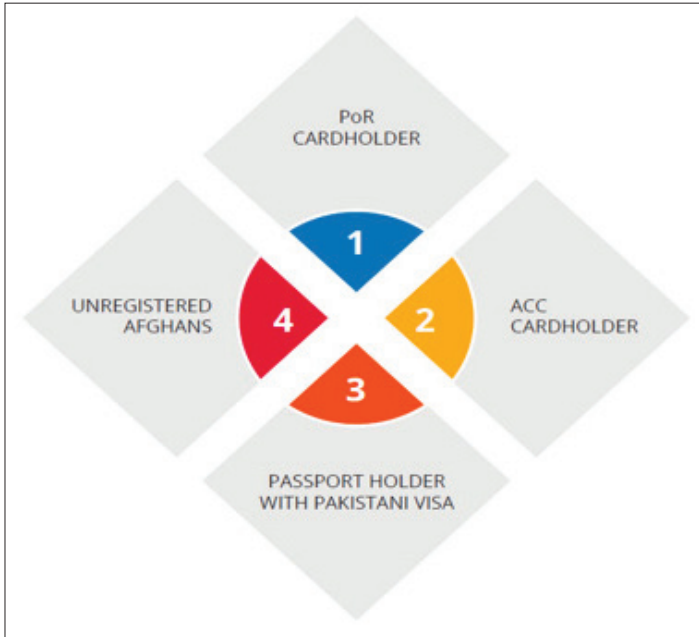


Figure 17.6. Afghans living in Pakistan by their legal status

Source: UNHCR

The legal status of Afghans living in Pakistan determines their ability to access services such as legal aid, health, and education. This is because each population group has access to a different level of service. PoR (Proof of Registration) cardholders have access to necessary registration documents whereas this service is available on a limited scale to ACC (Afghan Citizen Card) holders. Unregistered Afghans have no access to such services³¹. PoR cardholders have access to better education documentation

³⁰ Afghan Displacement Solutions Platform (ADSP), *On the Margins: Afghans in Pakistan*, December 2018. https://adsp.ngo/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/ADSP_Report_AfghansinPakistan-1.pdf

³¹ ADSP, *On the Margins: Afghans in Pakistan*.

compared to ACC holders and unregistered Afghans who have limited access to documentation. All Afghans can travel in Pakistan, but those without legal documentations or travel documents are at higher risk of apprehension when they travel outside of their usual place of residence.³² Pakistan is not a signatory of the 1951 Refugee Convention, but its constitution, as amended in 2010, guarantees the right to free, compulsory education for all children aged 5 to 16, with no discrimination between citizens and foreigners.³³

In practice, Afghan refugees have access to a range of schools, largely outside the public domain: private (from low-cost to elite); madrasas, which are free and provide food and boarding; community-based schools; and non-formal schools. Also, UNHCR-managed refugee schools cater to 57,000 Afghan students in 52 refugee villages in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province but have limited funding and struggle to hire and retain qualified teachers.³⁴

Refugee schools use the Afghan curriculum in preparation for return and reintegration into the Afghan education system, despite the fact that protracted displacement has led to the second generation of Afghan refugees in Pakistan.³⁵

On the other hand, access to education for refugees, especially girls, is extremely low. A 2011 survey identifying refugee status put the Afghan refugee primary net enrolment rate at 29%, less than half the national rate in Pakistan of 71%. The primary net enrolment rate for refugee girls (18%) was not only half the rate for boys (39%) but even less than half of the primary attendance rate for girls in Afghanistan in the same year. Only 5% of Afghan refugees attend secondary school.³⁶

A legacy of girls' low education access is an 8% literacy rate among female refugees,³⁷ compared to 33% among Afghan refugees overall in Pakistan and Pakistan's national average of 57%.³⁸ At the end of

³² ADSP, *On the Margins: Afghans in Pakistan*.

³³ UNHCR, *Missing Out: Refugee Education in Crisis*.

³⁴ Nicolle, Hervé, "Inclusion of Afghan Refugees in the National Education Systems of Iran and Pakistan". *Background paper for Global Education Monitoring Report 2019*. (2018). Quoted in UNESCO, *Global Education Monitoring Report 2019*.

³⁵ UNESCO, *Global Education Monitoring Report 2019*.

³⁶ UNHCR, *Missing Out: Refugee Education in Crisis*.

³⁷ UNHCR, *Missing Out: Refugee Education in Crisis*.

³⁸ Hervé, "Inclusion of Afghan Refugees."

October 2018, UNHCR supported 153 schools, 48 satellite classes, and 55 home-based schools with 57,000 refugee children.³⁹

5.2. Education Challenges and Achievements in Pakistan

The main challenges facing the Pakistan operation in the refugee education sector include contextual challenges such as persistent family poverty, social and economic barriers that prevent girls' attendance and influence their retention and completion rates, endemic socio-economic and quality issues that leads to low attendance and high dropout rates.

There are also several policy challenges, such as systematic inclusion of refugees in Provincial Education Sector Plans, the increasingly challenging political environment for refugees with possible repercussions on social cohesion between Afghan and host populations as well as uncertainty surrounding PoR card renewal.

On the supply-side, there is insufficient access to secondary and tertiary education for refugee children due in part to the low quality of primary education. There are not many opportunities for dropouts and youths to access quality vocational or para-professional courses which might help them acquire marketable skills. Moreover, recurrent soft costs associated with the provision of basic services indicate that access is prioritized over quality. UNHCR's financial outlook is not conducive to maintenance and upgrading of education services.

Quality-wise, there is significant difficulty maintaining quality education in RV schools in the absence of the requisite technical monitoring expertise and oversight by supervisory provincial education authorities or specialist entities. Although evidence has shown that for primary school-age children having grown up in Pakistan many may have already sufficiently assimilated the local language to permit them to undergo primary schooling without significant negative impact on the child's development,⁴⁰ there are still problems regarding curricula and language.

Despite the challenging education context in Pakistan, the government has maintained a policy of enabling Afghan refugee children to access public and private schools. However, Afghan

³⁹ ADSP, *On the Margins: Afghans in Pakistan*.

⁴⁰ UNHCR, *Refugee Education Strategy 2016-2018/Pakistan*, 2018.

children and youth continue to face difficulties in accessing schools due to the absence of a uniform policy/legal framework that allows for seamless admission of documented as well as undocumented children in public schools. UNHCR supported primary educational assistance is available only to PoR cardholders in refugee villages and some urban settlements.⁴¹

6. Conclusion

Refugees and inter- border displacement has long been an inevitable fact in the history of mankind. Due to the fact that ECO member states are located in an integrated geographical region, it is potentially capable of establishing a harmonized policy for refugees' education and training.

Prevailing wars, conflicts, and violations in the region have fueled the fire for the influx of refugees even from outside the member countries and impose some uncontrollable challenges to some of our nations. In fact, because of geographical vicinity, cultural and religious similarities, as well as cultural philanthropy and a sense of humanitarian sympathy, ECO member states' destinies are relatively tied together. Despite the efforts made by the subject host countries in terms of education of refugees, there are acute challenges ahead to meet the needs. Thus, to eliminate the challenges, ECO may take some initiatives including expansion and development of inter-cultural education and cooperation rendering services to refugees to integrate them into the host counties' education system.

⁴¹ ADSP, *On the Margins: Afghans in Pakistan*.

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