

VANCOUVER YOUTH MODEL UNITED NATIONS 2020



UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR
REFUGEES

BACKGROUND GUIDE



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United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

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Dear delegates,

My name is Stephanie Hai and it is my sincere pleasure to be your director of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for VYMUN 2020. As your director, I hope to foster an inclusive, engaging, and memorable conference for all levels of delegates that will leave you fulfilled and educated in the foundations of Model United Nations. With that, the UNHCR will be participating in the “MUN Challenge” hosted by the United Nations this year. After the hopeful passing of our successful policy proposals, we will then submit the working papers to the office of the UNHCR. The resolutions that emerge from this year’s debates will be put before a jury composed of UNHCR members, young refugee leaders, and independent experts. These ideas will be shared with policymakers and promoted on the UNHCR’S social media channels — gaining international recognition if selected. This year, we will examine the two crafted topics: Countering the Toxic Narratives of Refugees and Migrants and Supporting the Economic Inclusion of Refugees.

Our first topic, Countering the Toxic Narratives of Refugees and Migrants, magnifies the ongoing and rising tensions regarding the status of refugees within our international community. As differing refugee crises continue to ensue, an outstanding amount of migrants, asylum-seekers, and refugees have been attributed to the product of deeply-rooted systemic xenophobia. While refugees heavily advance multiculturalism in societies, they are met with crumbling political institutions and groups determined to undermine the very basis of the refugee movement: to provide a better life for those fleeing tumultuous circumstances. Recent developments have demonstrated an increase in hostility towards refugees, surging in violent attacks and movements.

Navigating local economical routes for refugees and migrants can be extremely demoralizing upon integration. Our second topic, Supporting the Economic Inclusion of Refugees, holds international institutions accountable for the facilitation of refugees into the workforce. Easing the integration process by protecting, supporting, and enabling refugees in the formal economy is essential towards global integration, ultimately contributing to thriving economies in host nations.

As VYMUN harnesses a unique and tailored support towards the prosperity of all levels of delegates, please do not hesitate to contact myself at unhcr@vymun.com for any related questions from the topic content or to a general guideline and familiarization of Model United Nations. I am immensely looking forward to (virtually) meeting all of you in October!

Warmly,

Stephanie Hai

Director of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees | VYMUN 2020

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Countering the Toxic Narratives of Refugees and Migrants

Questions to Consider

1. How can we tackle toxic narratives about refugees and migrants in the political arena? What can political parties and movements, lawmakers, mayors and other public officials do to promote pro-refugee rhetorics?
2. Who should be responsible for monitoring and tackling hate speech and disinformation about refugees and migrants online?
3. How might government and UN bodies better regulate the rise of anti-refugee and migrant sentiments without infringing upon free speech? How should we contain rising far-right groups?
4. As the UNHCR, how are we able to transform the refugee movement into one that is inspiring and authentic? How can we better the integration process while simultaneously combating negative stereotypes in our current political climate?

Overview

Amidst our unsteady political climate, there are powerful voices around the world that are determined to vilify refugees and turn them into objects of fear and loathing. Oftentimes, this hostility is the result of harmful narratives and sentiments centred on a phobia of outsiders based on ethnicity and race, religion, income, language and similar signs of “otherness.” While these attitudes are divisive and can often lead to violence, persecution, and a negative perception of refugees as ‘intruders,’ they also pose an extreme disadvantage for incoming refugees already struggling to assimilate into the dominant culture. The difficulties in the navigation of one’s identity continue to persist within migrants, ruled by cultural differences and, often, a push for migrants to conform to Western ideals. Refugees are largely disconnected from their new communities, while simultaneously losing touch with their own culture and values in fear of xenophobia and racism. While refugees should be celebrated as advances to a multicultural society, this is often undermined by digressive foreign policy and a negative public perception of foreigners.

Through a Western lens, the concept of “outsiders” is often associated with terrorism and crime. A 2016 poll by the Brookings Institute in the US showed that 46% of Americans who opposed accepting refugees were concerned about perceived links to terrorism.¹ Yet, statistics show that refugees are the least likely section of a population to get involved in violence. Refugees have fled violence and persecution and largely have no desire to inflict injury onto others. These negative views are primarily linked to the subjective political response to the growing global refugee crisis. Political leaders have been at the forefront of advocating on behalf of their nations; as such, many have undeniably rejected or severely limited refugee and migrant quotas. Notably, the rise of isolationism from many nations, such as the United States of America, has been attributed to worsening refugee conditions and stigmas. The Trump administration called for the intake of 8,000 refugees in 2020, lowering the quota from 30,000 refugees.² Thus, even those who are able to successfully migrate into hesitant nations are often met with ill-supervision of human rights and a lack of integrative support, particularly in non-democratic governments.

¹ <https://www.unhcr.org/5df9f0417>

² <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/10/07/key-facts-about-refugees-to-the-u-s/>

As the UNHCR, our solution to rising narratives opposing refugees must be met with compassion, sincerity, and sympathy. Widespread stigma and uncorrected myths about refugees and migrants continue to exist today. While some nations graciously accept the refugees and their contributions to the nation, many nations continue to struggle in finding successful solutions for integrating refugees amidst their traditional values. As noted by prominent UK lecturer and politician, Norman Angell, “we certainly cannot slam the door upon some of the very best of the world’s people at the very moment that they perish – perish sometimes as the result either of conditions we may, even unwittingly, have helped to create, or as the direct outcome of behaviour we have asked them to adopt.”³ Practical measures such as refugee advocacy, fundraising, and lobbying all depend on public and political attitudes towards refugees.⁴ With this, there is an urgent need to find a multifaceted solution that addresses all nations and leads to the long term goal of successful integration of refugees into society.

Timeline

1939 - 1945: The disastrous and inhumane events of World War 2 saw the displacement of roughly 7 to 11 million forcibly removed migrants from their country of origin.⁵ Millions of expelled Germans and Holocaust survivors seek help from the international community, many of whom continue to struggle amidst the hostile conditions of the post-war climate.

1950: In the aftermath of the war, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is established and given a three-year mandate to solve the mass displacement of refugees, as well as to safeguard their rights and wellbeing.⁶

1951: Following the creation of the UNHCR, the Refugee Convention established internationally recognized guidelines relating to the “protection and acceptance of refugees.”⁷ 26 states were represented at the convention in Geneva, Switzerland, where the terms ‘refugee,’ ‘migrant,’ and ‘asylum-seeker’ were broadly defined. The convention encouraged nations to facilitate and secure the fundamental freedoms and liberties of refugees, including their integration into society.

1956: The Hungarians revolt against the USSR’s dominance and influence on Hungarian domestic policy. 3,000 people die in Budapest, with 250,000 refugees fleeing and some arriving in the United Kingdom to seek familiarity in the pre-existing UK Hungarian population.⁸ The British see this as a challenge, questioning the effectiveness of the Hungarian’s assimilation into British culture.

1979 - 1983: The Vietnam War brings forth the “boat people” movement, which consists of mass refugees fleeing Vietnam via boat. Circulation of these images sheds light on refugees as survivors and victims, rather than “rowdy freedom fighters.” Arriving in their host countries, many refugees face high levels of unemployment and growing hostility due to cultural barriers, unfamiliarity, and lack of support.

³ Norman Angell, *You and the Refugee* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1939), 27.

⁴ <https://www.unhcr.org/5df9f0417>

⁵ http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwtwo/refugees_01.shtml

⁶ <https://www.unhcr.org/history-of-unhcr.html>

⁷ <https://www.unhcr.org/1951-refugee-convention.html>

⁸ <http://refugeehistory.org/timeline-refugee>

2011: After months of raging political demonstrations, the Syrian War officially begins. Since then, 4.5 million people have fled Syria into neighbouring nations, most of whom are women and children.⁹ Known as the largest refugee exodus in recent history, the Syrian War has definitively mobilized a wave of refugee advocacy. Images from the civil war have brought forward a wave of sympathy and horror from the public media.

2012: The Identitarian Movement of Germany is founded. The group describes the ideology of the movement as "ethnopluralism,"¹⁰ a conviction of its followers that people of different ethnicities should not live in the same society. This anti-refugee group aims to eliminate foreigners from their culture, and often promotes white supremacist ideals.

2017: Donald Trump, the 45th president of the United States of America, announces his first prototypes of the US-Mexico border which attempts to slow down illegal migrants and prevent crime. In the following years, the Trump Administration will invoke new measures designed to limit the number of refugees and undermine the migrant movement, leading to a widespread shift of opinions in American citizens.

March 2019: Brenton Tarrant, the perpetrator of the Christchurch mosque shootings, kills 51 people and injures 49, explicitly targeting former refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers in New Zealand. It is later noted he was motivated by identitarian values, as evidence reveals that Tarrant previously served on multiple far-right groups.

April 2019: Sri Lanka faces a deadly attack that threatens and assaults primarily members of the Christian minority. Alleged Islamist militants targeted churches and hotels, killing more than 250 people.¹¹ In the aftermath, crowds began to threaten and assault Muslim South Asian migrants, encapsulating anti-refugee sentiments and perpetuating scapegoat stereotypes.

May 2020: A group of asylum seekers searching for hotel accommodation in Northern Greece is stopped by a group of protesters who set fire to the hotel. Months before, refugees in Greece were targeted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic due to their "foreigner" status, as travel is often attributed to the spread of the virus.¹²

Historical Analysis

The refugee movement has long stemmed from consequential world events that have driven our society to become more diverse, progressive, and multifaceted. However, it has simultaneously reinforced and built narratives that place refugees at an extreme disadvantage by spreading misinformation leading to harmful opinions. For a significant portion of human history, refugees, asylum-seekers, and migrants have lacked basic human rights, and have been dismissed by many governments as equal citizens. The concept of "foreigners" paired with deep-rooted nationalism has unsettled civilians for centuries, with these sentiments beginning post-World War 2 and continuing with recent anti-immigration views in the United States. A radical fear of "the other "

⁹ <https://www.unhcr.org/ph/13427-seven-years-timeline-syria-crisis.html>

¹⁰ www.politico.eu/article/who-are-europe-far-right-identitarians-austria-generation-identity-martin-sellner

¹¹ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/04/29/sri-lanka-refugees-threatened-attacked>

¹² <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/24586/greece-locals-set-fire-to-hotel-for-asylum-seekers>

has perpetuated misinterpretations and negative stigmas of refugees, leading to a hostile perception of refugees. The notions of “outsiders” or “foreign invaders” have been generally depicted by the far-right as a threat to Western values, culture, religion, jobs, public services, and a primary source of terrorism and crime. With that, members of the upper-class have historically viewed refugees as invasive threats to their society, with little regard for the heightened dangers refugees endure daily.

In the words of notable historian and professor Amos Goldberg, “On the one hand, the nation state inevitably creates refugees, while on the other their very being presages the disintegration of the nation state, which is necessarily founded on equality before the law ... That is why empathy toward the refugee presents such a great challenge and is so unsettling, since it is directed at the traumatic element within the modern nation state. ... The refugee is thus the ‘other’ of the political system made up of nation states.”¹³ Negative attitudes towards refugees and migrants can be traced back to individual values and an established personal connection between ‘them’ and the state. From the first refugee crisis to intervals of migrant movement, anti-immigration groups have evidently used subjective narratives of fairness and equality to their advantage. For instance, refugee boat arrivals in Australia were viewed as unfair to the immigration process, as they were seen as undermining and “queue-jumping” the often tedious process towards citizenship.¹⁴

The end of World War 2 resulted in the need for a safe haven for the Jewish community, with more than 300,000 Jewish migrants seeking refuge.¹⁵ Recipient nations were given the impossible task of treating millions who were suffering from chronic health concerns, both physical and mental, that had resulted from the countless inhumane acts committed throughout the war. World War 2 was one of the largest displacement events of the 20th century, with millions also forced to flee from the increasingly harsh USSR regime into neighbouring nations. Countries had mixed reactions toward the influx of refugees. Some accepted refugees and provided humanitarian assistance and aid; others failed to provide adequate financial or social support. However, many democratic countries sympathized with the mass refugee movement, establishing and extending refugee intake quotas.

In October of 1978, Vietnam’s ‘boat people’ images, which depicted 346 people crammed into a 60 feet fishing boat in the “greatest migration by sea in modern times,”¹⁶ began circulating the internet. During the voyage, many were killed, raped, and tortured by Thai pirates for months until the few lucky survivors were admitted into accepting countries. Politicians in the United Kingdom were firmly against the migration “ostensibly on the grounds of being fearful of UK public opinion.”¹⁷ Many political leaders believed it would lead to an uncontrollable influx of immigrants. While boats carrying hundreds of Vietnamese migrants were pending refugee status on foreign waters, countries continued to tolerate and instill anti-immigrant sentiments, which were worsened by post-war propaganda harbouring anti-Vietnamese opinions.

¹³ <http://refugeehistory.squarespace.com/blog/2016/12/15/a-bitter-road>

¹⁴ <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/queue-jumpers/>

¹⁵ <http://refugeehistory.org/timeline-refugee>

¹⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/global/2016/mar/20/vietnamese-boat-people-survivors-families>

¹⁷ Ibid.

In response to the catastrophic Syrian War, many public media developments have definitively shaped narratives surrounding Syrian migrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers. The severity of the war has significantly influenced public perception regarding the war, with the circulation of personal accounts from successful refugees and emotional photographs. The death of three-year-old Alan Kurdi was revealed online in a photograph that showed his body washed up on the shore of Turkish waters, following an attempt to reach the nearby Greek town, Kos. The photo exposed the extreme terror in Syria, illustrating the extreme lengths migrants take in order to survive. Following the circulation of the photograph on multiple social media platforms, the hashtag #KiyiyaVuranInsanlik (translated to “Humanity Washed Ashore”) began to gain international attention.¹⁸ The photograph served as a reminder to the international community about the inhumane conditions that Syrian refugees endure and how isolationist tendencies of governments contribute towards the worsening Syrian crisis.



A Turkish police officer carries the lifeless body of Alan Kurdi, who drowned in a failed attempt to sail to the Greek island of Kos.¹⁹

Past Action

On a large scale, narratives surrounding refugees and migrants are derived from a commonality in the cycle of hate speech, which can be attributed to major policy changes. Established in 1950, the United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees marked significant steps towards alleviating the displaced persons crisis in Europe.²⁰ Multiple policy proposals have been suggested from the UNHCR in response to anti-refugee sentiments, including transforming the refugee perception by sharing moving stories, to combatting stigmas by education and reform within nations. The UNHCR

¹⁸<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/02/shocking-image-of-drowned-syrian-boy-shows-tragic-plight-of-refugees>

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰<https://www.unhcr.org/history-of-unhcr.html#:~:text=The%20office%20of%20the%20United,our%20work%20and%20then%20disband.>

seeks to honour the 1951 Refugee Convention universally, with their presence in fields worldwide campaigning for a better life for all refugees, migrants, and asylum-seekers alike. Finding a stable and transformative set of solutions has been the agency's ultimate goal, ensuring each government's responsibility to safeguard the human rights of refugees as an equal counterpart to society.

The UN Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech outlines the prevention of discriminating remarks in hopes of reaching a long-term goal of global harmony. Although there is no internationally accepted legal definition of hate speech, the United Nations broadly constitutes it as "any kind of communication, in speech, writing or behaviour, that attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language with reference to a person or a group on a basis of who they are, in other words, based on their religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, colour, descent, gender, or any other identity factor."²¹ While this definition has largely been adopted by democratic countries, it is still heavily disputed. The definition gives social media corporations and governments leeway to interpret what they constitute as 'hate speech' in our modern world. Currently, the framework's most recent objectives are to "enhance UN efforts to address root causes and drivers of hate speech" and "enable effective UN responses to the impact of hate speech on societies."²² Many believe that it is important to note that addressing hate speech does not prohibit or infringe on the universal freedom of speech, but rather prevents rhetoric from progressing into something potentially harmful, such as an incitement to discrimination, hostility, and violence.

In response to rampant xenophobia specifically towards refugees, the UNHCR has launched a series of programs and statements that aim to counter the rise of harmful and defensive attitudes against refugees. For instance, in South Africa, largely considered an epicentre of xenophobia, the UNHCR has conducted multiple reports evaluating the effectiveness of past UN reports addressing xenophobia, using case studies.²³ The purpose of this report was to "to assess the extent and scope to which the UNHCR Regional Office of Southern Africa (UNHCR ROSA) has been able to provide timely and effective protection to refugees and asylum seekers who are victims of xenophobia in South Africa."²⁴ As xenophobia is a complicated concept warranting a multifaceted response, the 2015 UNHCR ROSA found that the rise of xenophobic narratives was attributed to "localised politics and a significant absence in trusted conflict-resolution mechanisms."²⁵ From this, the report concluded that an established collaboration between the state and humanitarian aid organizations, such as the UNHCR and related non-governmental organizations (NGOs), is essential towards creating an inclusive society. Bringing public awareness on continuous injustices, ranging from police brutality to a lack of lawful advocacy, was also highly suggested.

Besides official UN entities, a vast array of NGOs have committed to unfolding the personal, and often sensitive, stories of refugees and migrants. These stories are broadcasted towards the public in hopes of increasing awareness and easing existing stereotypes. For example, Amnesty International has been a dominant force in reporting human rights abuses worldwide. Established

²¹<https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/UN%20Strategy%20and%20Plan%20of%20Action%20on%20Hate%20Speech%2018%20June%20SYNOPSIS.pdf>

²² <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/>

²³ <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/55cb153f9.pdf>

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

in 1991, Amnesty International was founded as a democratic movement, striving to influence legislative policy and strengthen the international human rights framework.²⁶ With regards to solutions for refugees, they aim to implement initiatives such as family reunification, where refugees are able to join close relatives living abroad. Other proposals, such as academic scholarships, study visas, and medical visas, have been enacted to continue sharing the responsibility of protecting refugees, who are considered one of the most vulnerable populations within our current political climate.²⁷

World Refugee Day, first established by the UNHCR, takes place annually on June 20.²⁸ The purpose of the day is to celebrate and honour refugees around the globe in hopes of strengthening the courage of people who have been forcibly removed from their home country in order to escape conflict or persecution. The day promotes awareness on the human rights of refugees, mobilizing “political will and resources so refugees can not only survive but also thrive.”²⁹ Official dates, like World Refugee Day, bring positive awareness towards refugees by providing a public forum and resources for citizens to reflect upon.

Current Situation

The Rise of Far-Right Identitarians

Often overlooked and deemed Europe’s “blind spot,” the rise of the far-right identitarians has crept into dangerous pathways, advancing white supremacy and terrorizing refugees. For example, former neo-Nazi leader, Martin Sellner, is a driving force in the identitarian push in Austria. He is known for having supplied the money required for the deadly Christchurch mosque shootings in 2019. The Identitarians believes in the principle of “The Great Replacement,” claiming that white populations are gradually being replaced with migrants and opposing multiculturalism in Europe. Through active protests primarily organized in Austria and Germany, the group calls for remigration, “a euphemism for the mass deportation of all Europeans with a migrant background or non-white skin.”³⁰ Remigration is often interchangeable with “de-Islamization” and both concepts fuel Islamophobia and the normalization of violence.

Extending far beyond Europe and into North America and New Zealand, branches of identitarianism endorse their ethno-nativist ideology on social media platforms such as Twitter and Reddit. More recently, Twitter suspended dozens of accounts linked to the Identitarian movement in an attempt to tackle hate-speech and comply with modern practices. Following the Christchurch attack, media outlets began investigating the Identitarians’ past, revealing the lengths the group has gone to impose their beliefs. In 2017, Martin Sellner raised funds to sail a ship into the Mediterranean sea for the purpose of blocking migrants from Africa travelling to Europe, urging them to return back to their country of origin. Luckily, the mission failed. However, a year later, the group travelled to the English town of Luton and penalized Muslims with provocative slogans. The German government classifies the Identitarians as right-wing extremists and the German

²⁶ <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/1977/amnesty/history/>

²⁷ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/get-involved/i-welcome/>

²⁸ <https://www.unhcr.org/world-refugee-day.html?query=world%20refugee%20day>

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ <https://www.politico.eu/article/who-are-europe-far-right-identitarians-austria-generation-identity-martin-sellner/>

Intelligence Agency has been micro-monitoring the group's movements and actions. However, no official solution has been proposed.



Supporters of the Identitarian movement in a 2017 protest in Berlin, Germany.³¹

A Global Response to the Refugee Movement

A June 2017 report by the Royal Institute for International Affairs (RIIA) in the UK cited Ipsos MORI global data from 2016, which found that over half of those surveyed agreed with the statement that: “Most foreigners who want to get into my country as a refugee really aren’t refugees. They just want to come here for economic reasons, or to take advantage of our welfare services.”³² However, people in the UK were more inclined to be well-disposed toward refugees when they were isolated as a distinct category but were more likely to reflect negative attitudes if people were asked simply about “immigration.”³³ From a global perspective, the refugee crisis has been attributed to a lack of sympathy and understanding, giving license to a growing amount of attacks using hate speech or even physical means. While many governments convey their immigration laws as ones that are progressive and favouring with society, our current political climate proves this to be wrong. The widespread channels of hate continue to waver amongst other political issues, and the refugee crisis is often one that is seemingly disregarded. With increasing change towards immigration laws that hurt refugees, our international community must combat these harmful attitudes to create a more welcoming reception of refugees.

The Syrian Refugee Crisis

“Syria is the biggest humanitarian and refugee crisis of our time, a continuing cause of suffering for millions which should be garnering a groundswell of support around the world,” declared Filippo

³¹ <https://www.thelocal.de/20190712/who-are-the-identity-movement>

³² <https://www.unhcr.org/5df9f0417>

³³ Ibid.

Grandi, the spokesperson for the UNHCR High Commissioner.³⁴ As the Syrian refugee crisis nears its tenth year, more than 6.6 million citizens have been internally displaced due to the tyrannical, ongoing political oppression movement.³⁵ Alongside the demoralizing search for new homes with little financial resources, successful migrants are tasked with the uncertainty of their new communities. As the Syrian Refugee Crisis has caused an unprecedented displacement of refugees, the conflict has resulted in a rise of xenophobic and anti-immigrant ideals globally. Many Western nations link the influx of immigrants to a threat to national security, citing either a potential ISIS scheme or hostility to different religions. On the other hand, nations neighbouring Syria have been tasked with providing immediate humanitarian aid to the Syrian refugees, which has found to be nearly impossible due to citizen backlash and overpopulation. Hence, a variety of countries have shown an unwillingness to effectively coordinate the handling of Syrian displaced persons, perpetuating an endless stigma harming vulnerable refugees. However, changes in attitudes have been made due to waves of social media advocacy, citizen-journalism, and the circulation of shocking war images.

Anti-Immigration in the United States

During United States President Donald Trump's campaign in 2016, a significant portion of his platform was focused on anti-immigration and anti-Latino rhetoric. These harmful and extremely misinterpreted ideas, stemming from his disparaging remarks that illustrate Mexicans as rapists and drug smugglers, slowly crept into the American day to day opinions. The United States has drastically adjusted and dismantled its asylum laws, with the Trump administration deeming the asylum process as 'ridiculous.'³⁶ The treatment of migrants faces deadly and tumultuous consequences, with over two dozen migrant deaths in U.S. custody since 2017.³⁷

The publication of caged migrants in migrant detention centers along the US-Mexico border emerged online, revealing the secluded nature of the border and largely depicting children in the photographs. These photos conveyed the overpopulated and cramped cages refugees were forced into, many of whom are sick and face abominable hygiene conditions. Moreover, 2018 marked the onset of the 'Migrant Caravan' movement, where thousands of migrants arrived at the US-Mexico border in a caravan, travelling more than 4,000 km from Central America.³⁸ The leaders of the caravan spoke about "fleeing persecution, poverty, and violence in their home countries of Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador."³⁹ Despite growing public pressure, the Trump administration cited the movement as an 'invasion' on US soil, ultimately deploying roughly 5,800 troops armed with tear gas to violently halt the migration.⁴⁰

Since President Trump's inauguration, hate crimes in the United States have been on an alarming incline. With the president's limited annual refugee quota, the United States and its Republican states have set a precedent of discouraging refugee settlement and redirecting them elsewhere. The link between political narratives and public opinions is a driving factor in the rise of

³⁴ <https://www.unhcr.org/syria-emergency.html>

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ <https://time.com/5645501/trump-anti-immigration-rhetoric-racism/>

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-45951782.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

anti-immigration rhetorics, as the government plays a significant role in shaping and influencing the attitudes and patriotic values of its citizens.

Possible Solutions

Combating Misinformation about Refugees

A large factor in anti-refugee movements and hate speech is the circulation of misinformation and distorted accounts of migration journeys. Certain private companies and governments have taken steps to penalize and prevent the spread of fake news. Fact-checking media plays an important role in debunking myths about refugees. In 2018, a story claiming that an American teenager had killed a refugee who had raped his sister surfaced online, gaining widespread media attention.⁴¹ After fact-checking hubs, such as Snopes and Truth or Fiction, discredited the story, its validity was ultimately dismantled. However, the news had already begun to circulate and linger. Several technology firms, including Google, Twitter, and Facebook, have announced their commitment to fighting disinformation. Their plans include the development of an early-warning system for organizations to alert each other when they discover threatening disinformation, with the aim of undermining it before it can take hold.⁴² In 2019, Apple also launched a media literacy initiative to equip young people with the critical-thinking skills to enable them to detect fake news.⁴³

This solution would likely be unpopular to most non-democratic nations — many of whom rely on the control of state-run media and propaganda outlets as a source of legitimacy. In states where refugees are unwelcome, this solution would not be adopted by many nations due to narrow and strict political agendas. Moreover, it is difficult to detect links of fake news in these countries, given the growing prevalence of censorship and media laws. The rise of propaganda idealism continues to isolate citizens from participating as a global community. Nations who struggle with defining hate speech continue to cite the universal right of freedom of expression to counter any negative opinions revolving around clear hate crimes.

Countering Hostile Narratives

Focusing on rebutting false facts and figures may be tempting and, in some cases, necessary. However, it is equally important to address the fear of difference. The “conflicted middle” respond more to emotional appeals than statistics, to which anti-refugee groups have taken advantage of by capitalizing on fears of ‘foreigners’ and the threat of losing national or cultural identity.⁴⁴ Stories in the media humanizing refugees as unique individuals whose lives have been overturned by conflict or persecution have been particularly effective in influencing positive shifts in public opinion. Aside from physical protection, refugees are also seeking independence, self-sufficiency, and dignity, which can only be achieved when hostile narratives subside. UNHCR seeks to highlight positive stories of generous and compassionate people who welcome refugees. These accounts help foster an empathetic and morally complicit reception, shedding light on the inhumane acts occurring in our very own society. Past initiatives from the UNHCR have included “Awake at Night,” an official podcast highlighting the brave stories of refugees, migrants, and asylum-seekers. Further, high schools affiliated with the UNHCR invite refugees to share their stories among students in order to continue raising awareness. Using real, authentic accounts of refugees can

⁴¹ www.unhcr.org/5df9f0417

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

mitigate a fearful perception of the group, generating newfound sympathy and support while also paving ways to alleviate traumatic experiences.⁴⁵

Changing the Narrative through Public Forum

UNHCR runs online media campaigns that aim to put ordinary citizens at the forefront of positive messaging about refugees. For example, a targeted campaign such as the Somos Panas (“We are Friends” in Spanish) campaign in Colombia aims to reduce manifestations of xenophobia towards Venezuelans living in the country. The campaign promotes messages of solidarity and gratitude between Colombians and Venezuelans. Since its launch in December 2017, the campaign has reached more than six million people and has been supported by over 235,000 opinion leaders and members of the government. Other campaigns have included No Stranger Place, which showcases Europeans who took refugees into their own homes, and From Far and Wide, which showed Canadians who supported resettled refugees. The use of an established public forum dedicated to supporting, integrating, and championing refugees enables our society to practice open and meaningful dialogue.

The power of social media continues to rise to unparalleled heights today, greatly reforming our opinions and deep-rooted values.⁴⁶ Although the benefits of social media advocacy have brought forth countless helpful resources and information, the problem with echo-chambers on the social media realm has hindered many from obtaining new information. Echo-chambers are environments where a person only encounters information or opinions that reflect and reinforce their own. As such, echo-chambers can spread misinformation and distort perspectives so that the public has “difficulty considering opposing viewpoints and discussing complicated topics.”⁴⁷ This concept has impeded the spread of diversity in perspective and has contributed to confirmation bias.

Bloc Positions

Eastern Europe & The Middle East

The primary source of anti-refugee rhetoric stems from the geographical location of individual nations, as some are closer to areas with refugee conflicts, and thus have to host and accommodate more people. In countries such as Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, and Egypt, millions of Syrian refugees flee to their countries. Due to little refugee intake and adequate monitorization, immigration laws in these nations are spotty at best, and these nations have been increasingly frustrated at the international community due to a lack of aid, resources, and support.

In particular, rising tensions between locals and refugees living at the Turkey-Greece border refugee camp have resulted in detrimental living conditions for refugees. The Greek government has neglected their welfare by providing inadequate living conditions and a lack of protection of basic human rights. On one hand, locals are demanding tighter immigration and security laws due to an increase in food theft, crop theft, and damage to local towns caused by nearby refugees. However, the crimes are mostly a result of insufficient resources for refugees, forcing them to resort to illegal measures in order to survive.⁴⁸ As reports against the Greek government headline the

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ <https://edu.gcfglobal.org/en/digital-media-literacy/what-is-an-echo-chamber/1/>

⁴⁸ www.cnbc.com/2020/03/01/refugee-crisis-in-greece-tensions-soar-between-migrants-and-locals.html

unjust punishments against refugees and ongoing police brutality, thousands of refugees still continue to flee into the unwelcoming Greece borders.

Asia

An assortment of various socio-political, religious, and demographic factors contribute to the growing reluctance of refugee acceptance within Asian nations. This is largely due to traditional cultural practices and embedded xenophobic ideals that continue to burden refugees. As such, many Asian nations have visibly ignored the refugee crisis and, in turn, their citizens have suffered a lack of context-awareness, meaning their ability to access information about their outside environment is hindered.

China's history of refugee resettlement speaks volumes about the intolerance of cultural and religious diversity within its borders. The active discouragement of non-Chinese migrants is derived from draconian principles that can be traced back to decades of planned birth policies and hostile perceptions of foreigners. Many Chinese citizens are reluctant to accept foreigners, as a consequence of propaganda and state-run media. Public support for refugee resettlement is absent in China, where nationalistic ideals outweigh the inclusion of refugees into Asian culture.⁴⁹

Following the path of China, other wealthy nations such as South Korea and Japan have actively installed the most restrictive refugee policies. In 2015, Japan accepted 27 refugees while rejecting 99 percent of the record-high 7,586 asylum applications.⁵⁰ Similarly, South Korea accepted 600 non-ethnic Korean refugees in 2016, out of 18,800 applicants.⁵¹ Less wealthy and developed nations, largely in Southeast Asia, have better implemented more progressive measures for refugee intake. The Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia have hosted a large influx of refugees in recent years, primarily due to their geographical locations neighbouring nations with conflict such as Myanmar, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.

Western Europe & North America

Largely known to celebrate multiculturalism and adopt progressive and inclusive immigration laws, these nations publicly condemn any form of hate speech and advocate for refugee rights and freedoms. Nations such as Canada, Spain, Netherlands, Sweden, and France have acted in favour of taking in refugees. As well, anti-immigrant rhetoric is not prevalent, as evidenced by widespread citizen support for refugee intake. However, it is almost impossible to determine where potential attacks can occur in seemingly harmonious nations, as shown by the 2019 Christchurch Mosque shooting.

Further, the European Union has launched a two-year resettlement program for member nations where host countries receive payment of €10,000 for each person they resettle to better assist with integration efforts.⁵² In 2019, the refugee intake quota aimed to bring the safe passage to 50,000 refugees, yet was drastically unmet; on October 31, 2019 — the deadline for the refugee quota — only 37,520 migrants had safely reached Europe.⁵³ While they have continued to monitor the

⁴⁹ <https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/02/26/china-host-syrian-islam-refugee-crisis-migrant/>

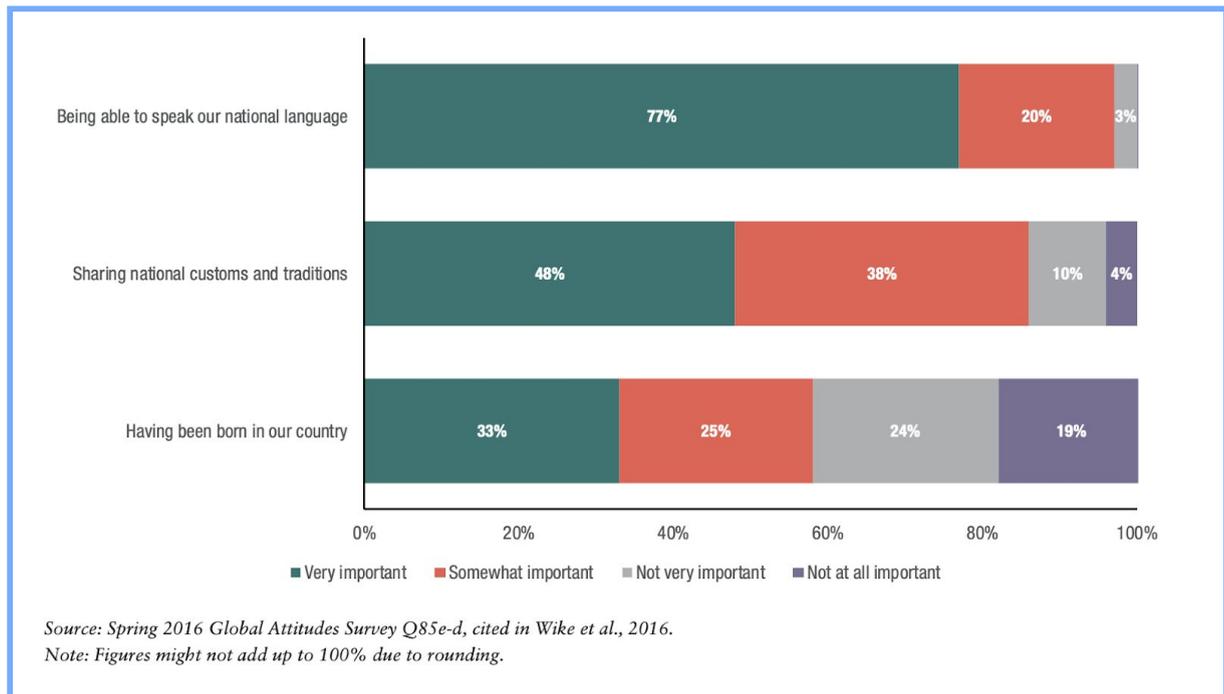
⁵⁰ <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2016/09/22/why-is-asia-mia-on-refugees/>

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² <https://www.dw.com/en/eu-breaks-promise-of-safe-passage-for-50000-refugees/a-50803664>

⁵³ Ibid.

program, Germany and Luxembourg have delayed the resettlement of many refugees by pushing back their arrival status. On the other hand, Sweden, France, the Netherlands, and Finland have resettled at least 80% of their pledged refugee numbers and have promised to continue granting asylum-seekers residential status for the remainder of the year.⁵⁴



A study conducted outlining the determinants of national identity in Europe.⁵⁵

Africa & South America

In an intense political uprising against President Nicolas Maduro, the Venezuelan economic crisis has been classified as an official refugee crisis. Under Maduro’s governance from 2013 until 2016, Venezuela’s economy collapsed, resulting in nearly 5 million Venezuelans to leave the country to seek basic essentials such as food and to find avenues of employment and dignity.⁵⁶ In the 2018 Venezuelan election, President Maduro was sworn in for a second term, yet was directly challenged by National Assembly leader Juan Guaidó when he declared himself interim president in 2019. As nations around the world, including the United States, Canada, and many European nations, flocked in support of Guaidó, President Maduro severed Venezuela’s remaining diplomatic ties with the United States, further halting international aid and sealing off the border with Columbia and Brazil.⁵⁷

With the onset of the Venezuelan refugee crisis, attitudes towards Venezuelan refugees have turned hostile due to recent social and political developments. The Venezuelan crisis has been amplified by human rights violations following years of economic mismanagement and governmental corruption. Each nation within South America possesses differing opinions in the treatment of

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey Q85e-d, cited in Wike et al., 2016.

⁵⁶ <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/30/world/americas/venezuela-crisis.html>

⁵⁷ Ibid.

Venezuelan foreigners; Brazil, Chile, and Ecuador have all opposed the increasing refugee presence within their borders, citing overpopulation and a competitive job market. Moreover, unwilling neighbouring nations have left Venezuelan refugees in search of a nation that prioritizes and upholds basic human rights, unlike the ongoing political crisis in Venezuela. Conversely, Colombia, Peru, and Brazil have taken substantial steps in ensuring fair treatment for Venezuela refugees. Colombia has begun providing special temporary residency permits to nearly 600,000 Venezuelan refugees, with Peru following in suit with an intake of more than 400,000 refugees and Brazil with 100,000 refugees.⁵⁸ Although these permits are a short-term measure that will be lifted upon the end of the crisis, they provide certain legal protections and the right to work.

As a whole, refugees living in South Africa have been prone to 'Afrophobia,' in which "negative attitudes and feelings towards black people or people of African Descent around the world" have caused them to become victims of xenophobia within their own region.⁵⁹ Violent protests have taken place in Johannesburg and Cape Town, where African refugees from Somalia, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo have been exclusively targeted. A 2017 social attitudes survey from South Africa's Human Sciences Research Council found that "three out of four South African adults agree that immigrants increase crime rates, steal jobs and spread disease."⁶⁰ Although no substantial evidence supporting these anti-immigrant claims were found, there continues to be a rise in toxic opinions harming African refugees, many of whom fled to the south in hopes of finding economic prosperity. As more refugees continue their journey down south, they are often met with xenophobic locals who regard them as unfair labour competition and illegal workers.

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⁵⁸ foreignpolicy.com/2020/02/07/could-venezuelas-loss-be-latin-americas-gain/

⁵⁹ red-network.eu/?i=red-network.en.thesaurus.1

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Supporting the Economic Inclusion of Refugees

Questions to Consider

1. How can we expand the ability of refugees to access the labour markets of their host countries?
2. How can we convince businesses to contribute to supporting the economic inclusion of refugees? What are the obstacles and how can they be overcome?
3. How can governments in refugee-heavy regions balance the need to support refugees with the needs of their own citizens when it comes to employment and business? How can the private sector help in this regard?
4. As the UNHCR, how can we better facilitate the need for refugee training and integration internationally?

Overview

Including refugees in the economies of host countries is widely recognized as an effective way of increasing their refugee independence, boosting the economic health of local communities and restoring dignity to forcibly displaced people who have lost the majority of their possessions and livelihoods. After fleeing war or persecution, the opportunity to work and earn a living is one of the most effective ways refugees and migrants can rebuild their lives. The UNHCR places economic inclusion at the heart of several of its core principles alongside protection, equality, access, and sustainability. Through safe employment, refugees who are forced to flee can meet their families' basic needs, maintain their dignity, improve their self-reliance and resilience, and contribute to society. Safe work also gives refugees the means to meet their own needs without resorting to negative coping mechanisms, such as finding work in the grey and black economies or resorting to child labour. Grey economies refer to the "buying and selling of goods and services that are not illegal, but the channels used in their distribution are either unauthorized or unofficial,"⁶¹ while black economies are the "the buying and selling of products and services... in an illegal manner."⁶² Further, safe employment protects refugees from being victims of exploitation by criminal organizations and reduces the likelihood of finding employment in dangerous workplaces.⁶³

Often, refugees are viewed by citizens of host countries as an economic burden, even though research provides ample evidence on the contrary. In Europe, for example, far-right parties often prey on the fear that refugees may be taking jobs, undercutting wages, and putting pressure on public resources (such as hospitals, schools, transport, and welfare) to rally their parties' voter base. Refugees who face obstacles to formal job opportunities may fall victim to exploitation in the labour market. There, they can face a broad range of challenges, including underpayment, risk of injury, job insecurity, lack of rights and discrimination. 85% of refugees currently live in developing countries, in which government support can be inadequate. As such, the lack of self-reliance can be even more detrimental.⁶⁴ The size of the host country's population and the strength of its economy will affect how they cope with the economic impact of refugee flows. Countries bordering Syria, such as Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan, have received the largest refugee populations relative to their

⁶¹ <https://www.economywatch.com/market/market-types/black-market.html>

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ <https://www.unhcr.org/5df9f0bc7>

⁶⁴ Ibid.

host populations. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), South Sudan, Chad, and Uganda host the largest refugee populations as a share of gross domestic product.⁶⁵ In Lebanon, where more than 1 million Syrian refugees reside, there are no formal refugee camps and approximately 70% of Syrian refugees live below the poverty line.⁶⁶ Host countries with limited economic growth and high unemployment rates need international support to cope with the cost of refugee arrivals and to facilitate the economic integration of refugees.⁶⁷

Many studies show that refugees can boost the economy of the countries that host them, even in low to middle-income countries. In Kenya, the UNHCR worked with the World Bank Group on a study that found that the 180,000 refugees in and around Kakuma camp were contributing to an economy worth USD 56 million a year, sparking a programme to encourage more private-sector investment.⁶⁸ Refugees with access to labour markets often enrich their host communities with their experience and skills. Those who are allowed to go to school and progress to higher education, including technical and vocational training, are better equipped for their futures, whether in their host communities, after resettlement to their country of origin or in a third country, a country that is not a member of the European Union.⁶⁹

Although the words ‘migrants’, ‘refugees’, and ‘asylum-seekers’ are often used interchangeably, it is important to note the differences between these groups. The definition and protection of refugees are clearly outlined in international law. Largely, refugees are deemed as any persons fleeing armed conflict and persecution, and crossing borders in order to find safety.⁷⁰ On the other hand, migrants are a group who voluntarily choose to flee to another country. Unlike refugees, they are not affected by a direct threat of persecution or death. In most cases, migrants choose to move for the purpose of improving their lives by seeking the opportunity for a better job or education. Asylum-seekers are defined as “a person who has left their home country as a political refugee and is seeking asylum in another country” where their claim for refugee status has not yet been determined.⁷¹ Thus, recognizing the productive potential of refugees can result in a mutual benefit for both refugees and nations economies. As such, the UNHCR seeks to find an adaptive solution, favoured towards the political agendas of all nations to better restore the self-sufficiency of refugees in the economy.

Timeline

1951: The Refugee Convention held in Geneva, Switzerland establishes basic rights guaranteed for refugees. These include the right to employment and to be “afforded the same treatment as nationals.”⁷² This framework has been internationally recognized and implemented, securing human rights for refugees, migrants, and asylum-seekers.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ <https://www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/statistics/>

⁶⁷ <https://www.unhcr.org/5df9f0bc7>

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ <https://www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/what-is-a-refugee/>

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² <https://ijrcenter.org/refugee-law/>

1962: Following the Cold War, the Migration and Refugee Assistance Act allows the United States Congress to contribute relief to refugees fleeing from communist countries impacted by the Cold War by providing monetary assistance towards the group.⁷³

2004: The Groningen Conference “Integration Policy: Turning Principles into Action” is held, with the aim being to “consolidate long term political support for integration as an issue of European concern, with particular attention to introductory programmes and minority youth.”⁷⁴

2009: EU Member States launch the Stockholm Programme to evaluate and monitor refugee integration in Europe through a set of core indicators in relevant policy areas. The core indicators include employment, education, social inclusion, and active citizenship.⁷⁵

2016: The UNHCR begins establishing and expanding cash-based assistance, enabling refugees to choose how they want to spend the money and further benefit local economies as they buy essential goods in local services. This program enables them to pay their rent, buy medicine and goods, pay off debt, start businesses and begin their futures.⁷⁶

2016: Germany creates a programme providing regional vocational centers with the funds to enroll refugees in a six-month apprenticeship scheme which includes training in trades such as metal and electrical work, as well as language and integration classes.⁷⁷

September 2016: The United Nations General Assembly launches the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), outlining 17 goals to accomplish by 2030 under the principle of “leaving no one behind.” The eighth goal, Decent Work and Economic Growth, includes “protecting labour rights and promoting safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment.”⁷⁸

December 2016: After two years of “extensive consultations led by the UNHCR with Member States, international organizations, refugees, civil society, the private sector, and experts,” the United Nations General Assembly launches the Global Compact on Refugees, safeguarding their rights and providing essential blueprints for officials.⁷⁹

2018: Following the procurement of the Kalobeyei Township site in 2015, the Kalobeyei Settlement is launched with the intent to “promote the self-reliance of refugees and host communities by providing them with better livelihood opportunities and enhanced service delivery.”⁸⁰ The objective of this initiative aims to better assist refugees to become self-reliant, rather than solely depending on humanitarian aid. Over the course of this project, refugees have been able to discover viable economic opportunities and benefit from the skills they had learned.

⁷³ <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/canada-role/timeline.html>

⁷⁴ <https://www.unhcr.org/52403d389.pdf>

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ <https://www.unhcr.org/5df9f0bc7>

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/envision2030-goal8.html>

⁷⁹ <https://www.unhcr.org/the-global-compact-on-refugees.html>

⁸⁰ <https://www.unhcr.org/ke/kalobeyei-settlement>

2018: A report conducted by the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security reveals that, in the 36 countries classified by the World Bank as fragile and conflict-affected states, only 4 in 10 women are in paid work, as compared to 7 in 10 men.⁸¹

Historical Analysis

Oftentimes, refugees take on low-paying jobs in their new communities for financial sustenance and stability. Due to the inclusion of refugees in the economy, many nations are shifting their views on the workforce. However, the informal job market has seen growing disparities between refugees and locals, which has led to rising xenophobia and disregard for refugee rights. Given the minute distinctions between refugees, migrants, and asylum-seekers, it is important to recognize these groups are given different legal protections.

Refugee Rights

Refugees are provided the same rights as any other citizen under the Universal Human Rights Declaration and are further protected under the 1951 Refugee Convention, in which special exceptions and circumstances are accounted for. However, a number of legal loopholes impede certain protections that are intentionally promised for refugees. For example, the right to social assistance and social security outlined in the 1951 Refugee Convention provides a guideline for refugees who are lawfully residing in a host country to benefit from social insurance and social assistance. These provisions outline specific situations where refugees are unable to find decent employment, as many states depend on contributory systems as primary sources of social security benefits. Yet, as refugees are more likely to work in the informal economy sector or to hold low-paying jobs, their employers may not provide them with social insurance schemes or pensions from unemployment. Further, “this problem may disproportionately affect women whose responsibilities to care for children mean they have not worked outside the home, or whose work histories have been interrupted, or who earn lower wages than men.”⁸²

Similarly, freedom of movement is severely limited by severe restrictions placed in refugee camps. As the access to equal educational and employment opportunities is obstructed, refugees tend to be unable to access social mobility and become reliant on aid. The skills migrants and refugees learn are not always useful in a formal working environment. Even in situations where refugees are able to integrate into local towns, formal or informal regulation may continue to obstruct opportunities to build self-sustainable livelihoods. For example, their integration into host communities is heavily dependent on if there is a national policy which allows refugees to choose where they would like to settle, so they can opt to live in areas with “stronger social networks and better market opportunities, [instead of being] subject to dispersal policies which spread them out across a host country.”⁸³

Past Action

As the economic inclusion of refugees has been a cornerstone of the United Nations refugee policy, UN bodies and non-governmental organizations have strived towards achieving sustainable solutions for refugees.

⁸¹ <https://www.unhcr.org/5df9f0bc7>

⁸² <https://www.unhcr.org/publications/legal/3d4aba564/refugee-protection-guide-international-refugee-law-handbook-parliamentarians.html>

⁸³ https://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/diae2018d2_en.pdf

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) drafted by the UN General Assembly has served as the principal framework for UN entities to refer to. These goals include promoting “decent work for all – by protecting labour rights and promoting safe and secure working environments for refugees and migrants, in particular women and those in precarious employment,” and reducing “inequality within and among countries – by providing options for improving the social and economic inclusion of migrants and refugees in host countries.”⁸⁴ The safeguarding of refugee rights within the Sustainable Development Goals gives a framework for policymakers who use the goals as a guiding force for recommendations and alignment strategies.

A 2018 strategic collaboration between OECD and UNHCR titled “Engaging with Employers in the Hiring of Refugees” outlines a cohesive “10-point multi-stakeholder action plan for employers, refugees, governments and civil society.”⁸⁵ Notably, the plan calls for “providing employers with sufficient legal certainty, identifying and verifying refugees’ skills, providing equal opportunities in recruitment and combat stereotypes, and developing skills for job-readiness.”⁸⁶ Each goal is extensively outlined with suggestions and recommendations for potential employers of refugees. The document suggests that employers should celebrate the skillsets of individual refugees, such as additional languages or natural skills (engineering, art, etc.), in the workplace to promote and foster encouragement. By using these individual skill sets, refugees are better equipped with pre-existing characteristics before delving into further training. For employers, the guideline calls to enforce a zero-tolerance harassment policy, offer short-term internships or apprenticeship schemes for the purpose of recommendations, and to be well-informed about refugee status rights and any challenges that may ensue.

The United Nations Global Compact on Refugees serves as an international blueprint designed through a cooperation between the United Nations General Assembly, member states of the UNHCR, international organizations, refugees, and civil society, and aims to provide a blueprint for “governments, international organizations, and other stakeholders to ensure that host communities get the support they need and that refugees can lead productive lives.”⁸⁷ The Global Compact has been associated with many of the guidelines, frameworks, and action plans that the United Nations has since created regarding the economic inclusion of refugees. Its four key objectives are to ease the pressures on host countries, enhance refugee self-reliance, expand access to third-country solutions, and support conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity.⁸⁸ Although the Global Compact is heavily recognized as a significant benchmark in the protection of refugee rights, it has been met with increasing criticism. For instance, Lama Mourad and Kelsey P. Norman, both fellows from prestigious universities, argued that “the well-meaning document sought to recast refugees as an economic benefit to nations that receive them, but by furthering the premise that refugees should be accepted because of their potential for self-sufficiency—rather than out of a commitment to upholding international norms and the rights of refugees—the global compact may actually worsen their plight.”⁸⁹

⁸⁴ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics/sustainabledevelopmentgoals>

⁸⁵ <https://www.unhcr.org/5ea823f14>

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ <https://www.unhcr.org/the-global-compact-on-refugees.html>

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/12/world-turning-its-back-refugees/604042/>

Despite countless policy proposals from the United Nations regarding the economic inclusion of refugees, there have been a series of local NGOs within specific regions that have explored different mechanisms of refugee inclusion. A notable NGO that has heavily influenced the refugee job market is Talent Beyond Boundaries, an organization that strives to integrate refugees into their host economies by matching them with potential employers, opening migration pathways, and scaling labour mobility. Their approach to mass displacement has warranted large impacts on refugees, employers, and the economy. Through their prioritization of self-reliance within refugees, their approach has ultimately seen a growing separation from unsustainable governmental aid and into self-driven refugee independence and dignity. Employers are also able to gain a diverse applicant pool with refugees, pulling from their individual unique experiences and skillsets.⁹⁰ Similarly, the “Open Road Programme” in New Zealand helps refugees gain the prerequisite skills necessary for employment, such as obtaining an active driver’s license in jobs that require a long commute. This program aims to provide equal opportunities in recruitment by preparing refugees for road tests from certified driving instructors. Programmes like this are funded by the National Transport Agency, alongside Innovation & Employment bodies, with the goal of better refugee integration.⁹¹

Current Situation

The Status of Refugee Camps

The original purpose of refugee camps was to better facilitate vast amounts of incoming refugees, migrants, and asylum-seekers into host nations. However, the influx of refugees has led to unparalleled challenges, including heightened xenophobia, thriving hubs for human trafficking, and gender inequality. Many refugee camps, particularly in Europe, fail to regard long-term refugee integration as a key priority. Thus, refugees are left with improper resources and are unable to achieve sustainable and fruitful lifestyles. Very few camps have put forth transformative proposals to cope with the mass numbers of migrants, but some, such as the Zaatari camp, are willing to make strides in promoting economic inclusion.

Currently, the Zaatari camp located in northern Jordan hosts nearly 80,000 Syrian refugees fleeing from persecution and war in the ongoing Syrian Civil War.⁹² Since 2012, the camp has been divided into 12 districts and has collectively transformed into a semi-permanent city. When faced with a civilian rebellion in the refugee camp against camp authorities, the camp partnered with private-sector and government-planning experts to better include the necessary resources and accommodations for refugees to truly thrive in. A plethora of innovative projects “fostering education, arts, technology, and entrepreneurship” were established, along with a variety of initiatives hosted by NGOs working in the camp.⁹³ Zaatari camp has a thriving marketplace for entrepreneurs, named the Champs-Elysees Market, which embodies a symbol of Syrian “resourcefulness and entrepreneurship.” The main street market includes a “vibrant assortment of bird shops, cafes, clothes stores, produce markets, and small restaurants.”⁹⁴

⁹⁰ <https://www.talentbeyondboundaries.org/impact>

⁹¹ <https://www.unhcr.org/5ea823f14>

⁹² <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/inpictures/syria-war-jordan-zaatari-refugee-camp-180326115809170.html>

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.



The Champs-Elysees market, the main marketplace comprising 3,000 informal shops and businesses in the Zaatari Camp.⁹⁵

Gender Inequality

Employment and entrepreneurship also have a crucial role to play in gender equality and protection from gender-based discrimination. In many cases, refugee women fear entering the workforce due to pre-existing cultural notions and norms, such as hostile perceptions surrounding women in the workforce or historical laws obstructing women from employment. However, women with income are better protected against gender-based violence, are more independent, and are better able to provide for and protect their families. Further, employing more female refugees alleviates the need to rely on child labour. Without the burden of providing for their families, children can now reach greater heights by focusing on their education rather than being forced into working dangerous jobs.

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) and the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security (GIWPS) conducted a report in 2018 that illustrated how the inclusion of female refugees in the workforce would significantly contribute to massive economic advantages. “The report found that refugee women could contribute up to USD 1.4 trillion annually to global GDP if employment and earnings gender gaps were closed in the 30 countries that host 90% of the world's refugees. Closing these gaps for all refugees — by equalizing wages and employment rates between genders in these countries — could boost global GDP up to USD 2.5 trillion.”⁹⁶ As such, given this report

⁹⁵ <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/inpictures/syria-war-jordan-zaatari-refugee-camp-180326115809170.html>

⁹⁶ <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/08/13/perspectives/refugees-jobs-global-gdp/index.html>

evidence, it is clear that by advocating for equal employment access and rights among refugees is imperative.

From a Global Perspective: *Venezuela Economic Crisis*

Due to a series of complex socio-economic and political factors, the Venezuelan economic crisis has been frequently ignored by the international community, resulting in a significant lack of humanitarian aid and global support. Following years of systemic official corruption, as well as a sharp decline in oil prices between 2013 and 2016, more than 4 million Venezuelan people fled the crumbling political atmosphere within Venezuela to neighbouring nations as refugees.⁹⁷ The Venezuelan economic crisis is now the second-largest source of refugees and migrants worldwide, nearly surpassing the volume of Syrian refugees. Venezuelan refugees often suffer from poverty, famine, and serious shortages of medicine and essential resources. As mass influxes of refugees spread into southern South America, host nations are struggling to provide adequate support without compromising their own healthcare, education, and economic systems.

Despite urgent calls for external aid, international assistance continues to be tenuous, likely because the crisis is characterized as a regional issue rather than an international one. Moreover, most humanitarian aid from developed nations has been directed into pre-existing refugee crises, such as those in South Sudan and Syria. Further, as Venezuelans are neither fleeing persecution, war, nor are “voluntarily” leaving their country, Venezuelan migrants do not fit into the traditional definitions of “refugee” and “migrant” as outlined by the 1951 Refugee Convention, thus causing confusion as to what protections nations are liable to provide.

While Venezuela succumbs to perpetual violence and public disorder, host nations currently face shortages in the labour market. Provisions for job creation and training will benefit not only the Venezuelan economy but also host nations. A 2019 report by the World Bank on Peru estimated that the inclusion of Venezuelan refugees in the economy would contribute to more than PEN 2.2 billion in tax revenue over the next five years. Labour productivity would also be increased by 3.2% due to the large number of young, qualified migrants eager to enter into the workforce.⁹⁸ The Venezuelan crisis embodies the potential that refugees are able to contribute to developing economies.

Possible Solutions

Refugee Training

When refugees flee to hostile environments where their diplomas and previous job training are not recognized or not in demand, adequate refugee training could provide a mutual benefit for both the host nation as well as the refugees themselves. A wide range of training programmes targeted to refugees or migrants, such as accounting, technology, law, and financial management, will help create productive skill sets necessary to equip refugees for a self-reliant lifestyle. Dedicated programs enable refugees to quickly learn essential assets needed for potential jobs and further encourages refugees to enter into the workforce.

⁹⁷ <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/understanding-the-venezuelan-refugee-crisis>

⁹⁸ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2019/11/26/migracion-venezolana-peru>

Long-term and tailored one-to-one mentorships for refugees to better grasp their individual experiences, as opposed to general and broad entrepreneurial support, have been found to establish trust and provide valuable local business knowledge. For example, in Sweden, the Ester Programme for women with migrant backgrounds “attributes its success to the longer-term and intensive guidance provided to participants, tailored to their particular needs.”⁹⁹ Participants in this entrepreneurial program are divided into small groups, meeting each week to discuss training, individual studies, and participate in field trips to gain real-life experience. Additionally, personal business advisers are assigned to foster a close working relationship that extends far beyond the establishment of their companies.

Besides tailored training, local businesses in refugee-heavy regions are encouraged to implement short-term training programmes in which refugees learn common trends and routines of given markets. Alternatively, governments could fund business internships or apprenticeships designed for refugees to improve chances at employment to normalize migrants in the workplace. Migrants continue to face unique language, cultural, and financial barriers that can limit effective economic inclusion. On top of integration struggles, many refugee camps and settlements are often physically far from competent entrepreneurship programmes, thus preventing proper and meaningful training. Provided that all nations are able to facilitate, adopt, and implement adequate refugee training, this solution is vital towards an effective future.

Supporting Host Communities

Ensuring that host countries who are already facing pre-existing economic difficulties are not left behind is a core principle of the Global Compact on Refugees. According to the Compact, “to foster inclusive economic growth for host communities and refugees, in support of host countries and subject to their relevant national laws and policies, States and relevant stakeholders will contribute resources and expertise to promote economic opportunities, decent work, job creation and entrepreneurship programmes for host community members and refugees, including women, young adults, older persons and persons with disabilities.”¹⁰⁰

Settling into a new country, finding employment, and recovering from the traumatic experience of fleeing war and persecution can all be extremely difficult. Host communities and NGOs play an important role in supporting the local integration of refugees by helping them access the job market. Moreover, community support in host nations can help refugees in all areas of refugee integration, including legal advice, language courses, support with writing CVs and preparing for interviews, and access to computers for job search. By ensuring that necessary funding is directed towards refugee-heavy communities, and by equipping refugees with the necessary skill sets to be successful in a wide range of job opportunities, refugees can finally contribute to the economy.

Integrated settlements are an example of initiatives that support the economic well-being of both refugees and host communities. For instance, the Kalobeyei Refugee and Settlement camp have been an international benchmark in the advancement of refugee camps. Following the influx of South-Sudanese refugees, the area of Turkana West in South Africa was transformed into a bustling space for refugees and host communities to promote self-reliance through economic and educational means. Both refugees and host populations are guaranteed equal rights of access to

⁹⁹ https://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/diae2018d2_en.pdf

¹⁰⁰ <https://www.unhcr.org/the-global-compact-on-refugees.html>

the labour market and are given the same opportunities to receive training, assistance, and other governmental resources.¹⁰¹ Initiatives such as the Kalobeyei Refugee and Settlement camp have also greatly relieved tensions between refugees and locals.

Including Private-Sectors

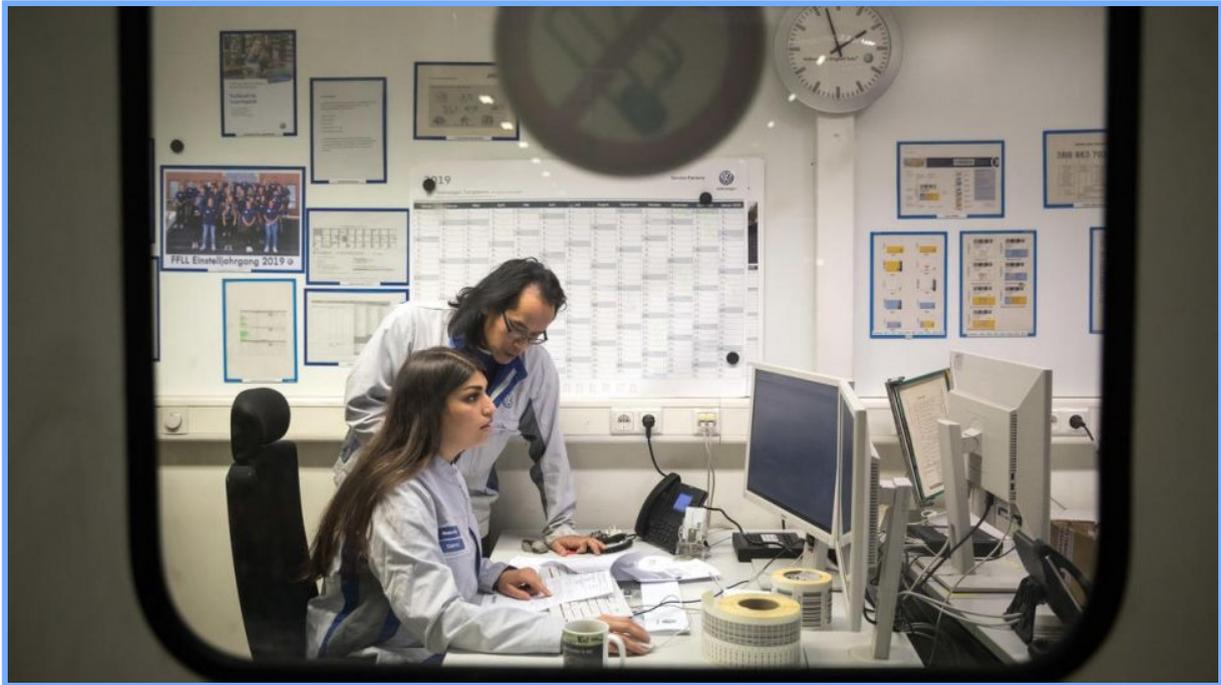
In most cases, dependency on governmental and non-governmental organizations for humanitarian aid can be problematic because they are often unable to enact quick solutions. The inclusion of private-sectors into the economic integration of refugees allows corporations to better market themselves as global citizens. Not only would businesses mitigate the disparity between refugees and locals in the job market by providing training and resources, but they would also benefit by tapping into a diverse applicant pool of refugees who are eager to work and learn, particularly following years of oppression in their country of origin. Private-sectors will also benefit the individualism of refugees by giving them the opportunity to be able to decide which mentorship or training programs are best suited for them.

Corporations have already begun establishing extensive training programs specifically designed for refugees, leading to higher employment possibilities in a career of choice. One example of this is Volkswagen's "Ausbildungsperspektive für Geflüchtete" (translated to "training program opportunities for migrants and refugees" in English) which was established in 2017. Many refugees in the program are hired following their training schemes. Throughout the duration of training, refugees who are interested in the engineering and automobile industries are given specialized training and additional language tutoring. The program has resulted in the economic integration of many extremely hardworking and resilient refugee workers who are grateful for opportunities to enhance and broaden their scope of the job market.¹⁰² Aside from large corporations, small businesses, such as local restaurants, have also begun playing their role in refugee integration by hiring inexperienced refugees to better ease the migration journey. Sierra Nevada, a fast-food firm in Colombia, began assisting Venezuelan refugees by hiring them as servers, despite the refugees having little to no work experience. The impacts from these programs bring forward long-term benefits for refugees, through either permanent employment at their training facilities, or providing time to find their foothold in their new communities.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ <https://www.unhcr.org/ke/kalobeyei-settlement>

¹⁰² <https://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/2019/12/5defd92d4/refugees-traction-germanys-auto-industry.html>

¹⁰³ <https://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/2019/11/5dcb00ab4/colombias-private-sector-begins-open-its-doors-venezuelans.html>



Mastura, a refugee from Afghanistan, at work at the VW logistics centre in Baunatal, Germany. She is supported by Johannes Gerhard, her training officer.¹⁰⁴

Bloc Positions

Countries With A Large Refugee Presence

Countries that have a large population of refugees, especially ones that are close to the conflict or have developing economies, tend to see refugees in a negative lens. Some countries within this bloc include Turkey, Uganda, and Chad. Negative attitudes are typically a result of the high costs associated with refugee camps; governments need to provide food, water, and shelter to the millions of people living there. Refugee camps, therefore, tend to be extremely underfunded and adequate governmental services are not available. For instance, the UNHCR estimated that USD 206 million was needed to help the 400,000 refugees from Burundi. To date, however, only around 28% of that has been raised.¹⁰⁵

The situation for refugees is worsened by the stigma that surrounds them. They are often seen as “economic leeches” who take away jobs and government funding from citizens. In Turkey, for example, cities are actively blocking Syrian entrepreneurs from accessing the markets and refugees are often forced into taking illegal jobs, which in turn worsens the stigma. As the consul general for the Netherlands in Istanbul puts it, “The right to work is a human right, but many countries do not recognize this right.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ <https://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/2019/12/5defd92d4/refugees-traction-germanys-auto-industry.html>

¹⁰⁵ <https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2018/10/5bbc57d94/refugees-bear-cost-massive-underfunding.html>

¹⁰⁶ <https://www.al-fanarmedia.org/2019/09/turkey-becomes-a-test-case-for-including-refugees-in-its-economy/>

However, foreign aid into these nations has helped the economic integration of refugees. For instance, the EU's pledge of EUR 6 billion into Turkey has resulted in increased economic opportunities for Syrian refugees. It also reduces the overall stigma by decreasing their perceived drag on the economy.¹⁰⁷ Countries within this bloc are generally willing to help refugees and provide work permits in order to supply a decent quality of life. They would likely support agreements that increase foreign aid to countries that are home to many refugees, as well as community-based and NGO-founded programs. Some examples of these programs include "Refugee Rights Turkey" in Turkey and "Refugee and Hope" in Uganda.

Western Isolationist Countries

Countries within this bloc, which includes Poland, the United Kingdom, and the United States, are usually far from the epicentres of refugees, but voluntarily choose not to accept many refugees into their countries. Refugees who do enter often face a series of seemingly insurmountable challenges toward their economic inclusion. Countries within this bloc have relatively isolationist tendencies, which have only been worsened by the rise of populism in the region. Leaders such as UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson and US President Donald Trump have normalized these views and made them acceptable, fuelling stigma and xenophobia.¹⁰⁸ Refugees are not only seen as drags on the economy but also as a safety risk, mainly due to the frequency of terrorist attacks and the subsequent correlation of the attacks with refugees. The forms of backlash within these countries vary greatly, from nationalist marches to acts of violence against innocent refugees. As a result, refugee camps are underfunded, not due to a lack of resources, but rather, the lack of political will to support refugees.¹⁰⁹

Notably, rising trends in the United States of America have seen an increase in stigma against refugees, migrants, and asylum-seekers. More recently, the US opposed the Global Compact on Refugees, citing the Compact as "inconsistent with U.S. immigration policy and not compatible with U.S. sovereignty."¹¹⁰ This follows the United States' exit out of the Migration Compact in 2017, reflecting widespread American attitudes towards migrants. As refugee support from the Trump administration dwindles, non-governmental organizations and private-sectors have initiated numerous training programmes that aim to enhance the self-reliance of refugees. In most cases, however, these are offered as state-level programmes, thereby not interfering with national policy.

Countries within this bloc are generally willing to provide documentation such as work permits, but not provide comprehensive retraining and language services. They would also likely be willing to try to combat implicit barriers such as stigma and promote community-based programs and NGOs.

Asia

This bloc, which includes Japan, South Korea, and China, tend to have extremely restrictive refugee policies. Despite being the third-largest economy in the world, in 2017, Japan only accepted 20

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ <http://eucenter.scrippscollege.edu/wp-content/uploads/files//2018/03/Bobadilla-Isabella.pdf>

¹⁰⁹ <https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2018/03/09/589973165/europe-does-not-see-us-as-human-stranded-refugees-struggle-in-greece>

¹¹⁰

<https://www.heritage.org/global-politics/report/the-united-states-should-not-sign-the-global-compact-refugees>

refugees out of 19,000 that applied.¹¹¹ This is due to strict laws requiring a plethora of documentation such as visas, which refugees often do not have. Further, a culture of isolationism and a historical preference for cultural homogeneity has resulted in very little political will to accept refugees.¹¹²

While applicants for refugee status are legally allowed to work while they wait for a decision, they can only seek employment after eight months of their arrival. Further, if they are rejected and appeal the decision, they lose further access to employment, governmental services, and travel within the country. Even so, when refugees are accepted, they still have to overcome high barriers. For instance, it is difficult to gain written clearance to enroll in a university or attain formal employment.¹¹³

Interestingly, however, these countries tend to have decreasing populations, and can likely benefit from the inclusion of more refugees in their workforce, as their ageing populations may put more pressure on the younger generation to support large families.¹¹⁴ While NGOs tend to have relatively little power within this region, the bloc would likely support improved community-based support for refugees and a decrease in governmental restrictions towards accessing work and retraining services. However, they would likely be unwilling to provide much comprehensive governmental assistance.

Pro-refugee Countries

Countries within this bloc see refugees in a positive light and offer highly progressive immigration policies. These countries, which include Canada, Australia, and Sweden, recognize the perils of the refugees and the merits that they bring to their countries. The culture surrounding refugees tends to be positive as well. In Canada, for example, refugees have access to the “Private-Sponsorship” programme, first introduced to the global stage in 1979. Private sponsors can be churches, families, or a group of individuals that take in refugee applicants of their choice or approved refugees by visa officers. These sponsors are responsible for providing “financial, material, and personal support to refugees during their first year in Canada or until they become self-sufficient.”¹¹⁵

Similarly, some European countries, including Sweden and the Netherlands, have embarked upon two-year projects in hopes of building the “entrepreneurial capacity-building for young migrants.”¹¹⁶ In 2018, Germany spent EUR 20.8 billion, or just over 6% of the federal budget, on programs to help asylum seekers.¹¹⁷ The German government provides services, such as higher education, through programs like the German Academic Exchange Service and Studienkollegs, which are year-long courses that combine traditional university education with language courses.¹¹⁸ Now, Germany is already beginning to see the economic benefits of using refugees to supplement its shortage in labour, with more than 50% of employed refugees working in skilled labour.¹¹⁹

¹¹¹ <https://www.businessinsider.com/why-japan-accepts-so-few-refugees-2018-4>

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2019/12/immigration-japan-national-identity/603568/>

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11f0019m/11f0019m2019021-eng.htm>

¹¹⁶ https://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/diae2018d2_en.pdf

¹¹⁷ <https://wenr.wes.org/2019/08/the-state-of-refugee-integration-in-germany-in-2019>

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ <https://www.aljazeera.com/ajimpact/germany-welcomed-refugees-reaping-economic-benefits-190617194147334.html>

Countries within this bloc support both community-based and governmental services that provide economic integration opportunities for refugees. Further, they are generally willing to provide foreign aid to other countries that are home to refugees in hopes of giving them a better life.

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