



CROSS-SECTORAL SUPPORT for SCHOOL INTEGRATION of REFUGEE CHILDREN from UKRAINE in HUNGARY

Introduction.

The Regional Refugee Plan highlights the importance of education in improving the well-being and future prospects of refugees from Ukraine in Hungary. It prioritizes access to education and the enrollment of refugee children in national schools. Education is not only a fundamental right but also a crucial pathway to social inclusion and future opportunities for refugees. Therefore, all partners in the Refugee Coordination Forum (RCF) must actively support the educational journey of refugee children.

This note aims to foster cross-sectoral partnerships, collaboration, and inclusive approaches that ensure quality education for refugees, enabling them to learn, thrive, develop their potential, and build resilience. It acknowledges the valuable inputs from the Department of Education / Ministry of Interior, RCF members, the Education Sub-Working Group, UNHCR and UNICEF Regional Office, MHPSS specialists, and the Basic Needs Working Group who contributed to the guidance provided in this note.

Aligned with key advocacy messages and policy documents, such as those released by the [Education Sub-Working Group \(ESWG\)](#), [UNHCR](#), [UNICEF](#), and the [European Commission](#), the RCF supports efforts to increase school enrollment, future-proof education, provide accreditation and certification, maintain a connection with the Ukrainian education system, guide parents, and inform them about the best education options available. Comprehensive interventions in accommodation, mental health, social support, community engagement, basic needs, and livelihoods enable the successful integration of refugee children into formal education.

Cross-sectoral synergies are essential to addressing the interconnected needs of refugee children and ensuring a comprehensive approach to their education and well-being. Collaborating with the ESWG and aligning with national policies, non-educational actors can create safe and inclusive learning environments, leading to successful school enrollment and participation of refugee children.

Situation Analysis.

Current data on the enrollment of refugee children from Ukraine in European host country education systems reveals persistently low rates, with some countries even experiencing stagnation or decline. The Department of Education reported that as of June 2023, Hungary had a total of 4,856 Ukrainian students enrolled in schools. Among them, 1,164 were in kindergarten, while 3,692 were in primary and secondary schools.

Multiple sources, including regional ones by UNHCR ([Intention Survey](#) and [Protection Analysis](#)), [UNICEF \(survey on education and parenting\)](#), and official data from administrations have documented several significant challenges that impact the enrollment of refugee children in the region.

Demand-driven challenges include hesitancy to enroll due to expectations of returning to their home countries, bullying, language, and financial barriers, as well as the request for online alternatives to formal schooling in host countries.

The creation of online parallel education systems targeting Ukrainian refugees has dissuaded parents from enrolling their children in Hungarian schools, raising concerns about the efficacy and support of long-term virtual learning. When parents choose to pursue the Ukrainian curriculum alongside the Hungarian one, there is the risk of refugee students becoming overloaded. This could negatively affect their educational accomplishments and incentivize dropouts.



Supply-driven challenges encompass school capacity issues, particularly in urban areas, such as infrastructure limitations, teacher availability, and the need for mental health and psychosocial support.

Compounding these challenges is the decreasing availability of budgets and resources for local schools, further impeding adequate support for the education of refugee children.

Also, placing refugee children in the correct grade level becomes challenging due to disparities in curricula and language barriers. In addition, the recognition of foreign studies upon returning to Ukraine also concerns parents. However, the Ukrainian government has assured that foreign education will be acknowledged upon repatriation.

With the third school year since the escalation of the conflict approaching, addressing these issues becomes crucial.

Cross-sectoral Recommendations.

The Refugee Coordination Forum (RCF) recognizes the chance to strengthen cross-sectoral collaboration and improve access to education for refugee students in Hungary. The RCF emphasizes the opportunity to enhance support services on a larger scale, leveraging the expertise and resources of RRP partners and humanitarian funding.

HEALTH and MHPSS

To ensure the well-being and successful integration of refugee children into the school environment, it is important to address their psychosocial needs. Partnering with mental health organizations is recommended to provide professional and community-based responses, counseling services, and trauma-informed training for teachers. Creating safe school spaces and actively countering bullying, cyberbullying, racism, and social exclusion of refugee children are essential.

Engaging families and the community, establishing peer support services, organizing after-school activities, and listening to children's voices are valuable strategies to promote their mental health. For examples of interventions, see the [practices collected by the European Commission \(EC\)](#) - in consultation with UNHCR, UNICEF, and representatives of ministries of education and other stakeholder organizations for the school year 2022-2023 (pages 15-18). It is crucial to coordinate efforts between humanitarian actors and government health and education service providers, including prenatal and postnatal healthcare services, social and health services, refugee support services, educational authorities, community centers, and NGOs, around comprehensive support and development of early childhood education.

It is crucial to provide safe and suitable housing options for refugees as it ensures stability, security, and an environment conducive to learning, minimizing disruptions and avoiding changes in schools, teachers, and classmates. Suitable housing should meet safety, security, and functional standards, considering the family's specific needs. This includes considering the size, and amenities, and creating a conducive learning environment. Housing close to schools makes it easier for refugee families to access education, reducing transportation challenges and costs. It is recommended to have designated spaces within housing, like study rooms or quiet areas, equipped with Wi-Fi and computers, to support studying and online learning.

ACCOMMODATION and HOUSING



**BASIC NEEDS
and CASH-
BASED
INTERVENTION**

Financial constraints often prevent refugee families from sending their children to school due to the inability to afford school-related expenses like books, transportation, and other educational supplies. This economic strain can discourage families from enrolling their children or lead to higher dropout rates. Additionally, refugee youth who are no longer obligated to attend school may be compelled to work to sustain themselves and their families, which hinders their ability to continue their education. Also, unmet basic needs such as regular access to food, clothing, and hygiene supplies significantly impact the comfort and well-being of children, hindering their access to education and consistent school attendance. By addressing these basic needs, children and their families can focus on their studies without distractions or discomfort, fostering a sense of dignity and inclusion.

In addition to distributing food and non-food items, cash assistance is also a valuable educational approach, as it can enhance access and retention in government-led education systems. Financial assistance through cash can cover expenses such as transportation costs, and school supplies for enrolled children. It can also support targeted education programs like scholarships or sponsorships to cover school fees. Exploring the possibility of linking cash interventions to school enrollment and participation of children and youth in households is worth considering, as it can further support educational opportunities for refugee families. For more information and positive practices see [UNHCR Global Review on Cash for Education](#) and [UNHCR Key Considerations on Cash for Education](#).

Unemployment and job insecurity pose challenges for refugee parents in prioritizing their children's education and focusing on their schooling. These circumstances often lead to unstable living situations, such as frequent moving, and financial instability. Consequently, young refugees may not attend school despite the legal requirement to do so.

To increase the employability of refugees, partners can offer job readiness training, vocational skills development, and job placement services; they can collaborate with local businesses and organizations to create job networks and establish partnerships that facilitate employment opportunities for refugee parents. Additionally, guidance and support in navigating the local job market can be offered, including resume building, interview preparation, and access to job fairs or recruitment events. By empowering refugee parents with the necessary skills and resources, partners contribute to their economic stability and empower them to prioritize their children's education while securing their livelihoods. Furthermore, for higher education, it is crucial to provide scholarships for adults and young individuals in care systems. These scholarships would alleviate their need to work simultaneously, enabling them to focus on their education and improve their prospects without compromising their financial stability.

**LIVELIHOOD
and
EMPLOYMENT**

**COMMUNITY
OUTREACH
around
SCHOOL
ENROLLMENT**

Protection actors are crucial in advocating for education rights and raising awareness among refugee parents about the duties linked to the temporary protection status and available educational options. Workshops, information sessions, and awareness campaigns can help parents understand the benefits of education and navigate the school system. It is essential to provide accurate information to address uncertainties arising from social media. This can be achieved by disseminating guidance materials and utilizing existing help centers and hotlines. Informing parents about the benefits of enrolling their children in the host country's education system and reassuring them about the possibility of returning to the Ukrainian education system when the situation permits is crucial. The outreach can target also host communities, to address discrimination and educate the local community about the importance of education for refugee children. Promoting collaborative relationships between schools, parents, authorities, and Ukrainian



embassies, encouraging parental involvement in school activities, and developing inclusive activities for parents and families are suggested approaches to improve communication, create a supportive environment, and bridge cultural and language gaps. For more information, see [the practices collected by the European Commission \(EC\) - in consultation with UNHCR, UNICEF, and representatives of ministries of education and other stakeholder organizations for the school year 2022-2023 \(page 22\)](#).

To promote social cohesion and integration, it is important to organize cultural exchange programs, extracurricular activities, and mentorship initiatives that facilitate connections between refugee children and their local peers. Non-educational actors can provide training and professional development opportunities to enhance the cultural sensitivity, trauma-informed teaching, and language support skills of teachers, school administrators, and community leaders. The following recommendations are proposed:

- Organize community events and fairs celebrating diversity, promoting understanding and acceptance among the host community and refugees.
- Encourage early childhood education and care, as well as school and community sports events and competitions that involve joint participation of host and refugee teams.
- Establish mentorship programs in schools where host community students provide guidance and support to refugee students, assisting in their academic and social integration. Organize activities focused on human rights, non-discrimination, diversity, and inclusion.
- Develop teacher training programs that emphasize intercultural communication, trauma-informed teaching practices, and strategies for supporting the academic and emotional well-being of refugee students.
- Adopt a 'whole school approach' to inclusion and non-violence, involving refugee students in school decision-making processes, and fostering their sense of belonging.

SOCIAL COHESION

Conclusion

The cross-sectoral recommendations in this note provide a framework for RCF partners to actively support the enrollment of refugee children in schools in Hungary and their participation in education activities. By aligning with the Education Sub-Working Group (ESWG) and collaborating closely with the government, RCF partners can play a crucial role in addressing the educational needs and challenges refugee children face, creating an inclusive and supportive environment for the successful educational journey of refugee children in Hungary through coordinated actions, complementarity, and cooperation.

Education plays a vital role in empowering refugees and ensuring equitable access for all refugee children, regardless of their background or circumstances, is a joint priority of RCF partners. By prioritizing the education of refugee children, RCF partners uphold their fundamental right to education and contribute to a more inclusive response to the refugee crisis.

The collaboration among RCF partners, education actors, and government counterparts will enable the dissemination of information and raise awareness among refugee communities about the importance of education for refugee children. Efforts should also be made to promote social integration and foster understanding and acceptance within the host community.



Resources and Contacts.

Developing cross-sectoral synergies is beneficial in addressing the interconnected needs of refugee children and ensuring a comprehensive and holistic approach to their education and well-being. Both [UNCHR Global Compact on Refugees](#) and [UNHCR Education Strategy](#), as well as [UNICEF Education Strategy](#) and [UNICEF Humanitarian Action for Children](#) – as well as the [INEE Minimum standards](#) – underline how critical inter-sectoral collaboration is in education programming.

This note is aligned with the key objectives of the [Advocacy Messages on Access to Education for Refugees from Ukraine in Hungary](#) released by the Education Sub-Working Group (ESWG) in June 2023, the Policy Brief on Education by UNHCR (link available on [RefWorld](#)), the [European Commission Staff Working Document Supporting the inclusion of displaced children from Ukraine in education](#), and [UNICEF's Building Bright Future document](#). The Government Decree No 117/2022 of 22 June on the financing access to public education for TP holders in Hungary is accessible [here](#).

Several papers have been developed in Hungary, outlining the challenges that refugees children are facing in accessing education and proposing solutions, with a focus on minority groups such as Romani refugee children and children with disabilities: [Romaversitas, Romani Refugees' Specific Vulnerabilities In Hungary Policy Brief](#), April 2023; [EDUA note](#).

Other relevant material has been uploaded under the [Education SubWG](#) page of the Data Portal. The RRP document of 2023 is accessible [here](#). A [mapping of all RRP partners](#) and one of the [service providers](#) active in the response in Hungary are also available.

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