

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

WEBINAR

UKRAINE AND BEYOND: LESSONS IN REFUGEE EDUCATION

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## P R O C E E D I N G S

MS. WINTHROP: Good morning. Good afternoon. Good evening, everybody. Thank you so much for joining us. This is the Brookings Ukraine and beyond: Lessons in refugee education event. We apologize for being a couple of minutes late. We had the bad timing of having a Zoom-wide outage at Brookings right before the event. So a big thank you to our tech folks who did a big scramble to have us on. So thank you for your patience. We're thrilled for you all to join us.

We have a stellar, stellar cast of characters and experts who are joining us. And this is the first of an event series that we're doing in partnership with the Yidan Prize Foundation. And the series explores emerging and timely topics in education that are likely to have deep implication for decades to come.

We've decided to do this because of such tumultuousness in the world with the pandemic recovery, sociopolitical challenges on the horizon. It's very timely to discuss, analyze and when appropriate, perhaps like this one, seize up emerging opportunities in education. This series brings together members of the Yidan Council. It's luminaries and the Yidan Prize laureates, experts from the Center for Universal Education and other key leading thought leaders around the world.

Our second event is a week from now, next Tuesday. There's still time to register for that. And that one is really going to explore the metaverse. How to bring the learning sciences to the metaverse while the metaverse is still in construction. So it can hopefully be used as a helpful tool for educational purposes. And then our third event will be September. Stay tune for more information. We don't have an exact date yet.

That topic we're going to be looking at what really and truly believe is a false dichotomy between foundational learning, which is incredibly important particularly focusing on literacy and numeracy in the early grades. And the tension between development of social, emotional and breath of other sets of skills post-COVID recovery. So be on the lookout for that.

I want to give a big thanks to the Yidan Prize Foundation for being great partners in developing this. I also want to thank them for respecting our independence because as everybody knows

Brookings is committed to quality and independence in the impact of all its work.

So today. Today's event. I'm the director of the Center for Universal Education and I have the pleasure of introducing our moderator who is a fellow with us here. And before I do that I just wanted to underscore how important this event is, and the topic of the event is.

The refugee crisis is one globally that has been with us for decades and decades and decades, but it is growing. According to UNHCR, the world now has 100 million refugees and that is an alarming number and it's only projected to grow particularly with the climate crisis.

And we are very focused on not only thinking about the refugee education crisis, the urgency of the response, but how can we as a global education community really develop a strategy to address this in a long-term sustainable way? We truly believe that this is a topic that's not only important to us in global education who care about the human rights of every young child and youth to get a good quality education, but it also should be really at the heart of the global peace and prosperity agenda for other actors outside of education.

So that is why we are really committed to this topic and I think without further delay, I would like to invite Maysa Jalbout who is a long-time CUE nonresident scholar, has been deeply committed to refugee education herself having been a refugee as a young girl and who prior to CUE has been the director and CEO of two foundations and also the head of education policy at Global Affairs, Canada. So, Maysa, over to you. Thank you for leading this great event.

MS. JALBOUT: Thank you so much, Rebecca. And thank you to everyone who has joined us for this wonderful event. I have the pleasure of moderating the discussion here today. And before introducing our stellar panel, I just want to set the scene for the discussion that we're having.

As Rebecca just mentioned in her opening remarks for the first time UNHCR has recorded that 100 million people have been forced to flee. This figure has more than doubled in the past 10 years and pushed significantly, of course, in the last few months alone by the Ukraine crisis.

I interviewed the high commissioner of refugees on my podcast impact room only a couple of days ago and I can't help but mention how struck I was by how alarmed he is at those rising

numbers and what the implications are for those of us working on refugee education.

He said, and I'm paraphrasing, the world has become very bad at managing crisis. Inefficient in working together in causing more and more people to be affected by protracted crisis. He also said that UNCHR is increasingly having to manage in very complex situations caused by climate change and inequality on top of conflict. And he expected those numbers to continue to rise.

Indeed, the international organization for migration estimates that anywhere up to one billion people could be displaced by 2050. Just this morning, Education Cannot Wait released a new study putting the number of school aged children requiring education support at an estimated 222 million up from 75 million in 2016.

This figure of course includes the need to support the 5.7 million school aged children who have been affected by the crisis in Ukraine, but it also includes an additional 120 million children who are in school in crisis affected situations, but not achieving minimum proficiency in math or reading. It is with this backdrop that we are having today's event. What are the implications of this surge in refugees for education? How do we reach millions more children and what can we be doing better?

So to shed light on all these questions and much more, I have the pleasure of introducing our panel. And I'm going to ask them to turn on their camera as I introduce them. First, I'd like to introduce Dr. Erum Mariam who is the executive director of BRAC Institute of Educational Development at BRCA University in Bangladesh. She has extensive experience in scaling up education interventions and since 2018 she's promoted BRCA's Institution for Education and Development's vision, of education system quality and equity in partnership with the public sector. The globally recognized play labs and humanitarian play labs has been developed under her leadership. Welcome.

I'd like to also invite Zarlisht Halaimzai who is the founder of Amna. Forcibly displaced from Kabul, Afghanistan when she was only 11 years old, she arrived in the U.K. at the age of 15. Zarlisht founded Amna in 2016 after returning from the Syrian border where she had advised INGOs on education and child wellbeing to help refugees dealing with the emotional fall out of violence and displacement. She has previously worked for several aid and education organizations and was a Fellow

of the inaugural class of Obama Fellows. Welcome.

Next, I'd like to invite Viktoriia Gnap who is the president of Unbreakable Ukraine Foundation. In Ukraine, she was responsible for adult training and development in the international and Ukrainian companies. Previously, she had lived in Poland and Portugal. With the start of the war in Ukraine, she returned Poland to help Ukrainian children to have uninterrupted access to education through Unbreakable Ukraine, a foundation that aims to create learning possibilities for Ukrainian children who have been displaced.

Last but not least, I'd like to invite Dr. David Edwards who is the general secretary of Education International. The voice of teachers and other education employees around the world. Through its 386-member organizations, Education International represents over 32 million teachers and education support personnel in 178 countries. Among Dr. Edwards many important posts, it is the fact that he was also once a public high school teacher.

Welcome everybody. Thank you so much for joining us today. I'd like to start the discussion with Viktoriia. Viktoriia, you represent the Ukrainian voice here today very importantly on this discussion. Of course, Ukraine has been top of mind for many of us around the world in the last few months. You know, and we'll like you to help us shine the light of issues of refugee education that are facing Ukrainian children and their families who have been forced to flee.

Can you tell us a little bit about how the unbreakable Ukraine foundation has been responding to the needs of refugee children in Poland where you're working? And what are the early stages of that response so far?

MS. GNAP: Thank you, Maysa. Hello, everyone. I am really happy to be a part of the discussion today. Well, actually the problem of education of the Ukrainian refugees in Poland is very acute and according to UNICEF over half a million children came to Poland.

And as of May 30, only 190,000 children were enrolled in the Polish schools. So it means that there is a great, a huge gap of those who are not enrolled into the Ukrainian schools. They are either studying online with the Ukrainian schools or they just do nothing and don't have any access to

the youth studies.

It was obvious that it's impossible to provide quality access to education to this amount of children. And the Polish educational system was not ready for that. At the beginning of the academic year '22, there were 15,000 vacancies for the Polish teachers in Polish schools. It means that there was a lack of teachers in the Polish schools and more children came and there appeared to be a huge problem of enrolling them into the Polish system.

We decided to support, to provide support somehow to the Ukrainian children and develop a chatbot through which we decided to collect the information on how many children would like to join these or that type of the curriculum maybe Polish or Ukrainian one. And we also wanted to understand how many refugee teachers were planning to actually continue their work as teachers on the territory of Poland.

And within a few weeks, we have had over 3,000 children registered and over 600 teachers registered. And actually, the foundation was founded in March '17 and on 20s of March schools started operating online with over 750 children and 65 teachers. So it means that we were quite quick for the European conditions actually and within a few weeks, our children studied online.

We were trying to find the options of going online because of the COVID situation, Ukrainian children had to study online within three years already, like over two years. And it means that they needed additional socializing, communicating and overcoming all the psychological problems they have had.

So we also negotiated with the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine and took advantage of their program. And actually, the schedule and the curriculum of the schools was organized by the Ukrainian teachers in accordance with the Ukrainian standard of education. I see a few problems which Ukrainian children have so far in Poland.

First of all, parents wanted their children to finish the school in accordance with the academic year. It was the Ukrainian curriculum because they thought that the war finishes very quickly. And in a month or two, they will come back to Ukraine. Definitely, they were frozen, and they didn't want

to actually somehow change their life. They thought it was a temporary decision.

And other problem is a language barrier. It means that children, despite that the languages are similar, there was a problem for the children to just stay in a Polish school and study in Polish. This is a completely different system and completely different curriculum and definitely parents are uncertain on how long they will stay in Poland. Whether they will go further to some other Western country or come back to Ukraine.

I am convinced that we have fully met the needs of the education of those children who were enrolled with us. And thanks to the financial support of UNICEF, we also provided children not only with the formal education but also with nonformal education. And we have already started summer activities for over 3,000 children for the whole summer.

MS. JALBOUT: Viktoriia, it sounds like many of the challenges that you're facing have similarities to the challenges that organizations serving refugee children in other parts of the world have faced. So I'm really glad we're having this discussion with a group that has served refugee education or has served refugee children in many parts of the world. And I think one of the valuable things about this is the exchange.

Zarlasht, I want to move to you now and ask you about the work that you do and how it fits into the context of refugee education. Of course, a key dimension of education and refugee context is the necessary attention not only to children's academic skills but also to their social and emotional skills. This focus lies at the center of your work.

What is the biggest consideration to keep in mind for policymakers, program implementers and educators as they think about supporting children's social and emotional wellbeing?

MS. HALAIMZAI: Hi, Maysa. Hello, everyone. We're really glad to be joining on the World Refugee Week this year which is all about healing. So I'm really glad that it's being highlighted this year through the World Refugee Day.

So for us at Amna, we really focus on addressing the interruptions that children experience in their sense of safety and their routine and what happens to children and families when they

go through an incredibly potentially traumatic experience. And so, our work is all focused on helping children return to that sense of safety in their body and their relationships and the way that they interact with other children.

And for us that's the foundation for everything else. You know, before children can learn, before they can develop the skills that are necessary to go through school, their relational skills that we will all need. Children need to feel safe and return to that place of childhood where they can play freely with their peers. Where they feel themselves again.

So that to me and I think the reason it is the focus of our work is because we feel very strongly. And I think there is an enormous amount of evidence to support this that is the foundation for learning anything.

So when thinking about how to support refugee children and their education, I think there's a number of different considerations that we need to make. First of all, meeting families and children where they are. And I keep mentioning families because I think supporting refugee children, particularly the young ones, really the success of that depends on how well we can engage parents and make sure that they're involved in the care and education of their children.

And really support them because they are also going through a really difficult traumatic, you know, circumstances, and they are the best shield for their children. So we focus a lot of our efforts a lot of our effort on supporting parents as well.

And that mean that, you know, children, parents arrive, for example, to our session which are informal early childhood development sessions with all kinds of feelings and carrying all kinds of things that they've been through. And in our sessions, everything is welcomed. And we train our facilitators and we train our partner organizations around the world to be able to welcome all feelings, all adversity and be able to deal with that.

So that means that when we're thinking about teachers is, you know, one thing that I always advocate for is resourcing teachers so that they can work with refugee children in the classroom recognizing that most of the time teachers are under an enormous amount of pressure before even



having to contend with an influx of refugee children. So that resourcing of schools and children and teachers is really, really important.

I think making sure that there is a robust connection with civil society and the state education. So Amna works, for example, in different countries. And most of those countries haven't been able to address education for children in the way that it should be. So most of the time, refugee children access informal education rather than state run education. And making sure that there's a pathway for civil society to be able to refer children to schools and working with the teachers and the school system to make sure that children can make the transition as seamlessly as possible I think is also really, really important.

And, you know, kind of recognizing that refugee children and families will continue to go through all kinds of adversities. So even when you're resettled in a third country, you know, they will experience isolation probably poverty because most of the time people lose their livelihood. And so, that long-term vision of how to support refugee children and family I think is really important for policymakers.

So my experience of different education programs, it's not everything, but a lot is basically it focuses on a tiny part of the problem. And I think we need to have a much more expansive long-term plan and view of how to support refugee children from early childhood all the way to when they leave school because the adversity that they're experiencing doesn't stop when they resettle in another country. It continues, it just changes its nature. So we need to be able to respond to that.

MS. JALBOUT: Thanks so much, Zarlisht. She said so many things, I'd love to comment on but we're short on time. And I want to get to our next two esteemed speakers.

And I want to just assure everyone because we started a little late due to technical difficulties that we will, in fact, add that time at the end. So please stay with us if you can. I also want to invite you because I can imagine that there are a lot of questions and comments. To send those to use through [events@brookings.edu](mailto:events@brookings.edu) or on Twitter using the #BrookingsYidanPrize.

I want to now invite Erum to get into the discussion because I know she has a lot to say particularly about what Zarlisht just said talked about. Social and emotional learning has been a big

focus of BRAC's work with children. And much of that has involved play-based learning. What is your advice for practitioners and policymakers as they work to develop or strengthen play-based learning in their programs?

MS. MARIAM: Thank you so much, Maysa. And I also want to thank Brookings and Yiden foundation for arranging this seminar on the World Refugee Day so thank you. Yeah, absolutely. So interesting to hear Zarlisht and also Viktoriia.

So one of the things I mean, you know, I have a few points. But one of the things I think, you know, Maysa, this whole notion of looking at refugees as deficit. I think this has to change. I mean this is absolutely not acceptable anymore because, you know, when we go to communities and, you know, we go and work with refugees. The refugees are the biggest resource.

So, you know, if we go to communities and we want to design interventions and we think that, you know, we will design interventions with some other people that's not going to work anymore. So this is the first point is, you know, to the policymakers and practitioners is focus on the community as the resource. They have all the richness and wisdom to act so that has to be done.

The second thing is, you know, you spoke about the ECD and, you know, what does that advice we would like to give around ACD and play. I think that, you know, really have to take the stand to discover that culture. And, you know, the communities are the best place to start. And so, you know, once we discover the culture, we have so much to learn from that culture.

And so, in the Lunar (phonetic) community, you know, we identify their movements with (inaudible). You know, their physical being. They have about 50 different kind of indigenous physical play. They knew their stories. Their art. I mean children at age two starts, you know, making all these beautiful roses and other motive which they have learned from their moms and, you know, siblings and parents.

And, you know, that also all the craft that goes on. And so, the mothers and siblings, they make beautiful crafts. So all of that we discovered from the Rohingya culture and this was a process. This discovery has to be done in order to understand play. And so, you know, when we looked at that

and when we identified that and when all of that was put into the (inaudible) and play lab children felt a sense of belonging. That belonging, the culture identity that here this is mine. This is how I used to live in Burma. So that sense of belonging is so very important for the social emotional development.

But we didn't stop there. We just, you know, we extended it to identifying what were also the issues with the caregivers. So what is it that the caregivers wanted to speak to us about? What is the language for mental health expressions? What is that language? You know, what is the culture? How do people, how do mothers, how do women who are pregnant, how do they want to interact, you know, about their issues?

So that led us to understanding that, you know, in the Rohingya culture, they would like to speak one on one. And, you know, in areas in spaces where they are comfortable speaking. So these are very different to other kind of models that we see. You know, the Rohingya are not comfortable with going to a place which is for seek mental health.

Instead, we have to have designs that where, you know, people who are treating, they can go to the houses of the children in order to speak to the women, to the moms, to the children. And so, these are the ways. These are, you know, the ways and practices that we had to discover in order to really understand how to provide psychosocial development. How to provide psychosocial support, but also how to develop that curriculum on social, emotional development.

So what I've really told you, Maysa, today is that, one, is that the community is extremely important. We cannot do anything without engaging this community. And the culture of the community is very important. Second, I've told you is that with ECD and play, we have to start with the community. Discovery has to be there. The third point is when we look at psychosocial support, mental health, socioemotional development again we have to engage with the community to understand what is their expression? What are their practices?

And finally, when we do any program, when we do ECD we have to integrate with the mental health part. We cannot start with ECD and after a year think, oh, well, it's good to integrate mental health. No, we have to do it on the beginning. So for us, community engagement is absolutely key

because at the end of the day, the intervention has to be meaningful. Thank you.

MS. JALBOUT: Erum, I couldn't agree with you more. And it's such a good segue to move onto David.

David, building on what Erum just said. Education International has advocated extensively for teacher's rights and wellbeing. What are the best ways that we can support the wellbeing of teachers working with refugee students? And perhaps what are the top priorities? And of course, I can't forget the teachers who are themselves also refugees.

MR. EDWARDS: Hi, Maysa. Thanks. This is a fantastic and very important discussion.

I was just thinking about sort of six ways or six issues. And I wanted to start off by saying that first, I think as you just mentioned teacher wellbeing and student wellbeing are closely linked regardless of the context. But obviously even more in refugee situations where displaced students, educators and their families experience trauma in a variety of challenges as they adapt to a new reality. And I think for this reason teachers working with refugee students need extra support. And this needs to be acknowledged and factored in as we design refugee education responses.

And I also think that if we're going to really meet the challenges of refugee education, we need to be proactive. And we need to see the challenges as opportunities as has already been said. The best and most inclusive schools in any community consider the whole child with full-service schools that provide for extra needs such as mental health healthcare, counseling, study support, language learning and childcare. And teacher training and professional development is key for that.

Teachers need to be equipped to recognize and support traumatized students. They need training and pedagogical resources to develop adequate teaching strategies for students who are requiring a new language. And qualified education support professionals are also essential to support the work of teachers in refugee settings. And unfortunately, this is something that is often quite overlooked.

Another point I want to make is that teacher unions need to be viewed as partners who also have resources, experience and a track record in handling these problems. I really agree with the other speakers that we need collaboration and partnership to replace the sort of top/down approach

because it has really proven to be so inflexible.

Families and geo-civil society. We all must work together with the government. And we need to recognize that schools are part of systems that require financing. A supply chain of resources and policies to reduce class size and increase resources for schools with certain numbers of students whose first language is not the language of instruction.

And to your question about other top priorities for teachers in refugee settings. Well, in general teachers need to be a priority in refugee education responses. There's a real lack of qualified teachers in refugee settings and this is a huge challenge. In fact, at the last global refugee forum in 2019, states and stakeholders made numerous pledges in relation to education, but very few of them had a specific one on teachers. So I think we must step up our efforts to support teachers and invest in the recruitment, retention, training, deployment, terms of employment, working conditions of these teachers in crisis and refugee hosting context.

MS. JALBOUT: David, I'm so glad you've raised all these points. And I'm so glad you were a part of this conversation. Too many times when I have worked on refugee education in the field or around policy tables, teachers were not represented.

I want to just look at the current crisis in Ukraine and ask you about that. We've seen some Ukrainian teachers able to work in other parts of Europe as they have moved to settle there, and this is something we don't see very often. In fact, we see very little of that in other refugee settings.

What can we learn from the Ukraine responses about how to better support refugee teachers in other conflict settings?

MR. EDWARDS: Well, Maysa, I agree with you that the solidarity shown to those fleeing the war in Ukraine has been to this point absolutely outstanding. And I think what we have to do is everything in our power to sustain it for as long as it takes because there will be additional tensions and pressures on that.

Education unions are working with all stakeholders to ensure that every student displaced by the war in Ukraine has access to quality education while abroad. And also, that every refugee teacher

receives the support they need to navigate this crisis. You mentioned we're a federation with nearly 400-member organization, 170 countries, and we've made several commitments.

And our member organizations will continue to coordinate and work across borders to ensure all refugee students have access to quality education. And all refugee teachers are supported throughout this crisis. In all refugee settings displaced educator's qualifications though, they must be recognized. And they should be given an opportunity to pursue their career in education without discrimination and this is rarely the case.

So we must step up our efforts in this regard because we are wasting an incredible opportunity for both refugee and hosting communities. It's not a deficit, an asset. And it's absolutely essential to bring education authorities and unions together to work in unison on refugee education.

I was thinking about in Uganda where our affiliate Unito (phonetic) has been working with teachers, learners and other education stakeholders in refugee camps in the north. And they have been advocating for a one-stop center which handles all matters concerning teacher recruitment, deployment, confirmation and discipline. And they've also engaged with refugee teachers working in refugee camps to familiarize and comply with what's very important, which is a teacher's professional code of conduct. And they're working with civil society organizations who have been employing teachers in refugee settlement areas.

I think that this sort of cohesion between different stakeholders, it needs to extend deeply into the community between families and specific school systems. Schools are the heart of our cities and towns and villages. And it should be the focus of an inclusive approach to refugee situations.

MS. JALBOUT: So many themes are reoccurring, you know, as we move around our panel. And I think, you know, we're going to have to try to put this all together in a format that everybody could kind of refer to time and time again because I'm hearing so many gems.

But I want to also mention to our audience today that this panel is being recorded and will be available online so please share it widely. Help us get the message out.

Erum, I want to come back to you and talk about the BRAC experience. You're active

around the world but of course you began in Bangladesh and you remain very active there supporting both the needs of Bangladeshi children and their families as well as Rohingya children which you have referred to in your earlier remarks.

Education for Rohingya children in Bangladesh has long been a challenge and you have been innovative in your responses. What are some of the most important lessons you can share on developing educational innovations for refugee children especially in protracted or politically challenging context?

MS. MARIAM: Thank you. Thank you very much, Maysa. And so, I start with, you know, again engaging with the community because we do that every time. You know, for the – obviously, we've done that in Bangladesh. We've done that in the humanitarian setting for the Rohingya. We also work in the Rohingya camp in Uganda.

And, you know, we've done that for every community that we work with. Community engagement is absolutely key. In this case, actually it's very important to understand what are the aspirations of parents? And, you know, I know that colleague (inaudible), I found that in this kind of communities where people have lost so much, all the hope lies with children. And so, it is extremely important that we understand what are the aspirations of the parents?

Again, with the community engagement, the other thing is also very important that when we design interventions, we must always think that the teacher, the facilitators should be from the community. You know, because with the teachers and the facilitators from the community, there is so much of ownership. And so, that is absolutely key.

So my first point was about the community again. Coming back to the community. That, you know, about understanding parent's aspirations. About really having to have the community involved in designing these interventions in the structures. So whether in the role of a teacher, in the role of a facilitator, in other roles, it should be the community. It should be the people of the community.

And another point is upscaling. I know you have also done a lot of research on this, but the upscaling part is extremely important. We start with people of the community, women of the

community as teachers, you know, as parent counselors, as facilitators, but let's have this process. Let's have these systems where, you know, the skills can be developed just like we heard from David also.

So this approach of continuous upscaling has to be there. You know, we cannot be kind of complacent at any point because the upscaling also is so important for the sustainability when, you know, perhaps projects end, but the people, the community will have the skills, so the upscaling is also very important for the sustainability.

The third, we will be designing interventions we must think of systems of care. Systems of care is very important. So it's not only about the care of the children. It's care about teachers about supervisors because, you know, if people feel hurt, you know, if people feel that, yes, there is healing then that is also something that, you know, they will respect about the other. So it has to be done throughout the system that, you know, we have these systems of care, of support, of listening, of empathy.

Another point I want to say, which David also mentioned about working with the host. You know, there has to be some partnership with the host. And, you know, this partnership, it is really about the dynamics where we learn together. It's not about, you know, the host learns and then host transfers to the refugees. It's not about that. It's about respecting each other and it's about really learning together, learning from each other. And so, this is important for also the social cohesion.

And finally, I would like to really say about this process of adaption and flexibility. Because every time we do the projects, every time we have the interventions, there's so much of uncertainties. I mean look what happened during COVID. That we must have this process of being adaptable and being flexible because through these adaptations, through these iterations, these we find what is so important that, you know, it's as important as the program itself.

And one thing I just want to mention before I close is that having our eye on the ball, the implementation. Let's not forget implementation. Implementation always teaches us so much. And so many times we have so many findings from implementation that, you know, we think sometimes, you know, the sort of the knowledge, you know, the experience, the insight from the people on the ground.



Let's not forget that, you know, that wisdom, that insight of the people on the ground that shapes everything.

And so, you know, I'd just like to highlight this that about the community engagement, about upscaling, working with the host, about this importance of adaptability and flexibility, systems of care and having this focus on implementation. I think these are very, very important. Thank you.

MS. JALBOUT: Thank you. Zarlisht, I want to ask you about the work of Amna specifically in the Ukraine crisis. You've worked in other settings, of course. We met when we were both working in Greece in support of refugees there. And of course, you've worked in supporting refugees from Afghanistan.

You have been a strong voice for also refugee rights around the world. In the Ukraine crisis, we're seeing a level of support for refugees, as I just mentioned to David, we haven't seen in past crisis. Is this sad or is this actually a very positive thing? Is there momentum that we can build on? How can us as practitioners and other advocates and perhaps, you know, hold policymakers and national and international leaders accountable for ensuring that other refugee populations are not left on the margins?

And I want to emphasize here that I don't necessarily think, as David just mentioned, that we can take for granted the support that Ukrainian refugees have received. I think we need to make sure that we continue to hold our policymakers accountable and that we carry that momentum forward. So, Zarlisht, what do you think? What can we build on here?

MS. HALAIMZAI: Thank you, Maysa. Before I answer your question, I just wanted to reflect on some of the things that has been said and the themes that has been pushed out.

And I think it is quite complicated all of it, but to me, you can actually organize it in a way – you know, in a quite simple way that if governments, and I emphasize governments, they've led interventions because civil society cannot deal with the influx of 100 million refugee children. So the interventions have to be led by policymakers at a state level.

So the first thing is a recognition of the needs of the refugee children, the host community and the educators. If you have that recognition, you are able to then resource. So David mentioned

money. Always very important. You know, financial resourcing schools is really important. I will forever remain in debt of my English as a second language teacher who not only taught me English at the age of 15 so I could access the curriculum, but was also a translator of British culture, my counselor. You know, teachers perform all kinds of roles that we don't necessarily recognize in the way that we pay them or recognize them.

And then, you know, collaboration I think there's spaces to make sure that all these different efforts are connected. And then finally, Erum mentioned this. We need to continue to learn. So just because you have a great idea that works, for example, in Greece.

It might not work in another context. So just the recognition that there needs to be a continuous learning of everything that's being implemented and not, you know, investing in one intervention, you know, every available part of money in the world because it's worked in one context. I think that's really important.

So on my family spent four years traveling before we arrived in the U.K. And one of the places we ended up in was Ukraine. We were in Kiev for about, I think it was about a year. And so, I have a personal connection to Ukraine. You know, we were the only refugee family on the street that we were in. And we were treated with enormous amount of care, actually, in that context. So when the Ukrainian crisis happened, I was heartbroken. And we at Amna, we really wanted to do something that supported Ukrainian children.

So we are emergency response is focused on supporting civil society organizations in Ukraine and in the surrounding countries that were already supporting refugee children. So we see our value as investing financially and building upscaling. The educators that were already working with refugee children who may not have the necessary training to deal with the trauma that children are bring to their sessions.

So that's what we're doing. And so, I traveled to Poland and to do an assessment, to meet with the civil society institutions and I was blown away by the level of support that was there to welcome Ukrainians. You know, there were banners, state sponsored welcoming banners all over

Warsaw to say, welcome Ukraine.

And I really felt that that's the way that we should be treating refugees. You know, that's the way that we should be meeting communities that through no fault of their own have ended up in a situation where they have to leave everything they know behind and move into another country. But I couldn't help but feel a deep sense of sadness and anger as well. What was happening just on the other side of the Polish border to Syria and Afghan and Iraqi refugees who are trapped between Belarus and Poland.

And, you know, not only are they not getting the kind of care that is available that we now know we can provide. You know, even my government and the U.K., which is extremely radical and is deporting torture victims to Rwanda at the moment. They have an esteem for Ukrainian refugees. So we know that we can do this all over Europe.

And so, I feel that because we know that states can do this, we can now a civil society as policymakers put pressure to extend this to everybody. To make sure that all refugees from, you know, even if they look like me or look like Viktoriia. You know, we have the same needs and the same experiences and we're all human beings. If we can put pressure on governments to stop playing politics and treat all refugees as equal. I think that's what we need to be doing.

So it does give me hope because next time there's a refugee crisis and, you know, different politicians stand up and say, we can't do this. We know that that's not true. We can, and we have, and we just need to extend it to everybody.

MS. JALBOUT: So, so true. Now, I want to come back to Viktoriia whose heard a lot of these comments about, you know, the differences and the response to Ukrainian refugees versus other refugees.

But you're really in the thick of it. You're still seeing that despite the welcome, despite the support, there's still so many challenges to deal with on the ground.

Do you think organizations like yours who have just started, you know, a few months ago schools are connecting to schools in other places, you know, with policymakers? Are you connecting to

national, international organizations with experience and benefiting from other crisis and evidenced based expertise? Do you foresee that you're able to even contribute to shaping the kind of future policy dialogue that we're all hoping will result out of all of this?

MS. GNAP: Well, you know, I would say that all of us were not ready for what has happened, actually. We didn't believe it would happen. No one believed despite all the information which we received from the American organizations. No one believed that.

And actually, when the war – the active war, I mean the full-scale war started on February 24<sup>th</sup>, people were shocked, you know. And actually, Poland was also not ready for welcoming so many people to their country. And actually, you know, every day I say thank you to every Polish person who supported Ukrainians really. I am so much grateful for them.

And you really feel their support, but on the level of the government, you feel this gap between saying and doing. You know, when the government says that all Ukrainian children need to be enrolled into the Polish system, this sounds really good. And parents would allow too, but they refused because there are no places. And there are no vacant places for the children to be enrolled.

You know, moreover the government does not let Ukrainian initiatives or schools to be open on the territory of Poland because there shouldn't be two parallel curriculums in one country, Polish and Ukrainian. And it means that we can have a scalable model of providing children with an interrupted access to learning. Or Poland there, for example, Ukrainian curriculum with extra Polish language classes for smooth adaptation of the children into the Polish system later on. But we are not able to do that because there shouldn't be any parallel curriculums, you know.

And the Polish system cannot support these huge amounts of children. So we definitely need more changes on the government level. And we need more dialogue between the Ukrainian Ministry of Education and Science and Polish Ministry of Education and Science to come to the common understanding on how to respond to this crisis actually.

First of all, and secondly actually, no one was aware of what to do and how to respond to this crisis and where to go because actually there were no offices of a huge international organizations in

Poland who could quickly react to the crisis. And they were quickly created, and the temporary staff was participating or involved into reactions. Now, they finally have this stable staff and we can continue our cooperation. And as I already mentioned, we were really happy to have a partnership with UNICEF upfront which really supports financially and in terms of other activities.

Because every response to the crisis requires money. This is what we have already mentioned. And actually, that's why, first of all, you need to call to these organizations, but you need to know where to call. And we actually need to go to the government and try to be – I don't know – maybe more flexible in terms of their decisions with their response to the refugee crisis.

MS. JALBOUT: Thanks, Viktoriia. I realize that, you know, despite the better reception the challenges are not easier. And, you know, this idea of the fact that there's a gap between what we're led to believe or, you know, the overall political aspects of it don't necessarily translate into action on the ground and there's much room for improvement.

I want to allow our participants to ask their questions. We received some questions on Twitter, on email. I want to go to those, but before I do that can I just ask each of you in 30 seconds, if you can to, you know, tell us what is the one thing you would like the audience to take away as they think about refugee education? Whether it's in Ukraine or beyond. And I realize that's tough, but, you know, there have been so many incredible, important points and we try to reflect that in as much as possible going forward.

But what is your key message for each of you? Can I start with Erum because you're always ready?

MS. MARIAM: I think (inaudible) was so important. And whatever we think we want to do with the refugee, you know, children for their future, they have to be involved in this. You cannot have a future about refugees without speaking to the refugees themselves.

MS. JALBOUT: Thank you very much. David?

MR. EDWARDS: Well, for me, the focus needs to be on the system not on the market. We've talked about the fact that Filippo you said in the podcast said how unprepared we were, and I keep

thinking that thing that we learn from history is how very little we actually learn from history.

And the fact that to build strong systems with the participation, with the involvement, with the resourcing so that they have the conditions to meet the circumstances in the moment is really what we're going to need to not keep trying to reinvent the wheel each time these crises which will continue in all sorts of different ways going forward. So it's the system.

MS. JALBOUT: Yes. Very poignant. Zarlisht?

MS. HALAIMZAI: For me, it always comes down to politics because the way that we treat refugees as a whole, the way that we support refugee children is all down to the political climate and what the states and politicians are willing to do for refugees.

So if, you know, the one thing that I would ask everybody who is listening to this panel is, you know, how can we maintain a sense of solidarity for refugees? And pressure to make sure that there is human treatment of people who, you know, like Viktoriia said, from one day to the next, your life is turned upside down and you really have no choice in what has happened to you.

So how can we continuously pressure our politicians to support refugees in a way that, you know, we can and that they deserve? If there is political will for that human treatment, you will necessarily translate into better educational policy.

MS. JALBOUT: And Viktoriia.

MS. GNAP: What I can say is that refugees, the first thing they do is they lose ground under their feet. And the only thing we need to do, and organizations like ours is to create a new normality for the refugees, for the parents, for the teachers, for the children. And this is our task to create a new normality for everyone who is experiencing the crisis at the moment.

MS. JALBOUT: So incredibly powerful. Thank you, to all of you.

Now, I'm going to turn to some of the questions that we've received. I'm going to start with Andy from State International School. His question is what are ways that schools like his can support refugee education? You know, that's so important. Schools often ask that and we as, you know, policymakers, researchers, we don't necessarily address schools and help them even though they are so

key. Who would like to take that question? Okay. David, please, yeah.

MR. EDWARDS: Well, I think you have people from schools that can talk to that too. But one of the things that we found very powerful is creating refugee welcoming communities. And schools have a lot of assets and ability to actually create those conditions within communities by bringing people into talk, by doing trainings, professional development, hearing the voices of refugees, thinking about that authorization process that is happening. We talked about the politics and other things and empty promises that are out there.

But, you know, really trying to build that from the school out and building that refugee welcoming community and those values within the community and the teachers and the students and the parents. I think that's absolutely essential.

MS. JALBOUT: Absolutely. Anyone else would like to comment on that?

MS. HALAIMZAI: I can say something --

MS. JALBOUT: Yes, please.

MS. HALAIMZAI: -- just from personal experience. So when we arrived in the U.K., the school was absolutely the gateway to everything for us. You know, like I said, we had English as a second language teacher. It was -- if my mother had a question, she would ask my form teacher.

So they really, you know, function as a kind of a way for integrating refugee families. And I think, you know, just what David describes in terms of making sure that all kinds of services can be referred to from schools. I think that could be like a really good way of making sure refugee families have access to other things because that's often what happened in my personal experience.

And once they have the mike, I'm just going to express my solidarity with Viktoriia because we both come from communities that are under attack. And I just want to say working in a sector where you're constantly coming into contact with the things that made you homeless and displaced and, you know, putting you in that kind of terminal takes a different type of strength. And I just want to recognize that Viktoriia and say solidarity.

MS. JALBOUT: Okay. I'm not going to try and comment on that. Thank you so much.

MS. MARIAM: Can I add something?

MS. JALBOUT: Yes.

MS. MARIAM: I think what Zarlisht just said now about, you know, the solidarity and really support, you know, for Viktoriia. And of course, was our – I think that, you know, for those of us, you know, I've not been a refugee, but my country was under attack.

And when my country was under attack then, you know, at that time I remember that, you know, my mom she would show me the way to hide when the country was under attack. Where I would have to go and hide. And so – and, you know, we went through experiences where our culture was under attack and we couldn't sing our song or speak our language.

And so, when we again saw the Rohingya, the first thing we connected. It resonated. Their being resonated with us. So I think that, you know, this when we do – even the question about the refugee education. I think it's very, very important about refugee education in school.

It's very, very important for all of us, for this solidarity that, you know, there are people who come under such, such painful circumstances that we might be living miles away, thousands of miles away, but it is still that, you know, we are with them. We feel for them because this is something that should not really happen to children.

But when it does, then it requires all the support from all of us including the schools and systems and societies and governments. But it's really, we have to step up the support for the advocacy of refugees.

MS. JALBOUT: Well said. I'm afraid I have to stop this incredible discussion because, you know, we're nearing the end, but I just want to get in one other question because I think it's so important and I'm going to give David the floor to comment on that and then I'm going to try to do justice to closing this conversation and leaving us sort of perhaps with some next steps.

David, there was a question from Julie from Childhood Education International. And she asks, what are the ways we might recognize credentials or recredential displaced and refugee educators globally? It's a question that a lot of people ask, and they don't know the answer. And you touched on it



so could you –

MR. EDWARDS: Yeah, sure. So working with UNESCO, we have a project with the teacher taskforce about recognition of qualifications for teachers. We have some experience particularly with Syrian refugees in Germany, Italy, Spain and other places where we've been able to connect refugee teachers with the member organizations, with the locals that can help them get through all those sort of hoops you have to jump through.

There's an app that's being developed around a passport of teacher's qualifications and credentials that can be recognized. And that work is still very much underway. It's not nearly as funded as it should be and there's not nearly enough countries that are part of it. So it's starting in Europe and kind of branching outward, but I think that's a really smart place to start.

MS. JALBOUT: Thank you very much. And I imagine that anybody that wants to follow up on that can get in touch with Education International.

I want to thank all of the panelists. And like I said, I probably won't do justice to summarizing the conversation, but let me highlight five points that were raised.

First, we heard that we must approach refugee education and refugees themselves as an asset mentality, not a deficit mentality. This applies to refugee students, to families, to the communities and, of course, to teachers.

Along this community engagement is essential and here, you know, we have to look widely across the community and particularly to parents and families who often do not get the support that they need. And we heard from Zarlisht and others that support to families is so essential to supporting children and specifically students.

Of course, no conversation around refugee education should exclude teachers. They need to be supported. They need to be recognized. They need to be engaged. And they need to receive the support that they require at the policy level and as we just heard from David. There are qualifications to be recognized and their rights to be preserved.

Fourth, we must prioritize refugee safety and wellbeing at all levels, in all stages. It's a

key part of the refugee education response. And we have to take a long-term review about supporting them. Trauma and of course the crisis that they are living do not end once education support starts.

And fifth, and last point that I'll mention is the focus on the system. Civil society is important to the response as we just heard from everyone here. But government is still the main responder and without them, the support that is needed to integrate children, refugee children into schools would not be possible.

With that all that is left to say is thank you very much to our esteemed panel, to all the participants, to Brookings and, of course, to Yidan Prize for their partnership on this. Please do share the recording that's going to be available on the website. And send us your comments, your feedback. We'd love to know what else you would like us at the Brookings Institution, that the Center for Universal Education to discuss in terms of refugee education. Be well.

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