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KEY TENSIONS IN REFUGEE EDUCATION

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Introduction

Globally, education is in crisis, with steep inequities, low learning outcomes, irrelevant content, and ineffective learning and teaching strategies in many settings. The global education crisis is also a global refugee education crisis, as far too many refugee students must contend with barriers to access, low quality, and limited relevance in their learning opportunities. Refugee education continues to be under-supported in policy dialogue and funding. As advocacy efforts push for global and national commitments to equitable, high-quality education for all, this paper is intended to help ensure refugee education is part of the education transformation agenda.

This paper is intended for refugee education donors, policymakers, and implementers and aims to inform policy dialogue by answering the following three questions:

- Why is refugee education more urgent than ever?
- What are the key tensions in refugee education and how might they be addressed?
- How does centering refugee voices and engagement in education policy and programming advance the sector?

Throughout the paper, policy questions for further discussion are presented. In some cases, these questions highlight areas where further evidence and experience is needed. In others, the questions shine a light on issues where there is clear evidence of what

KEY MESSAGES

- Despite global and national efforts highlighted in this paper, the current scale and architecture of financing, policy, and technical practices in refugee education will not be sufficient to respond to the rising need for refugee education.
- Donors, refugee host countries, and non-state actors must work together to address three persistent sets of tensions in transforming refugee education:
    - Tensions between inclusion in national systems and non-state programming
    - Tensions between emergency and long-term response
    - Tensions between global and national responsibility
- For the refugee education sector to address the above tensions effectively, refugees themselves must play a meaningful role in transforming the sector at every level.

works but the political will and financing needed to act on this evidence has not yet been mobilized. The paper concludes by presenting opportunities for future action.

Throughout the paper, the term *refugee* refers to both asylum-seekers and refugees. At times, this paper references data or trends within the broader education in emergencies (EiE) or education in crisis field, as the EiE field offers useful data and learning. That said, refugee education—rather than education for internally displaced peoples or others impacted by emergency—is the specific focus of this paper given the distinct needs, barriers, and challenges facing those displaced outside their country of origin.

Why is refugee education more urgent than ever?

Forced displacement is happening at an unprecedented scale. In the wake of the attack on Ukraine, the number of forcibly displaced people globally surpassed 100 million for the first time in 2022, according to the United Nations (UNHCR, 2022b). As both new and long-standing crises—from the recent war in Ukraine to protracted conflicts and humanitarian crises in Afghanistan, Syria, South Sudan, Myanmar, and beyond—force families to seek sanctuary and safety beyond their home countries, education of refugee students and engagement of refugee teachers has become an increasingly urgent issue for affected communities, national governments, and the global education sector.

Alongside conflict, natural disasters and crises driven by climate change are propelling rates of displacement, and in turn, having severe consequences on the lives of children. The Norwegian Refugee Council estimates that someone is displaced by disaster every second, or about 26 million people displaced annually (NRC, n.d.). Estimates suggest that climate change could force anywhere from tens of millions to a billion people from their homes by 2050 (Kamal, 2017). As of 2021, more than 40 percent of the world's refugees were children (UNICEF, 2022). If this remains the case as climate-induced displacement rapidly expands, current refugee education strategies will be even further from meeting the needs of all displaced children, especially as length of displacement is currently estimated to range from 10 to 26 years (Ferris, 2018). The potential scale of child displacement underscores the urgency of education policy, planning, and practice that supports refugees' (and host communities') cognitive, social, emotional, and physical well-being and development.

The past two decades have seen major milestones in advancing refugee education at the policy, practice, and funding levels. The development of the INEE Minimum Standards in 2010, the establishment of Education Cannot Wait (ECW) in 2016, and the renewed commitment to refugee education under the Global Compact for Refugees in 2018 were among those key to advancing policy and practice.

These policy commitments have generated substantial additional funding, but it remains well below the level required. ECW, with its bilateral and private funding, has raised over a billion dollars since 2016 for EiE. As of 2021, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) was providing funding to almost 20 countries where refugee students can access the national education system. Although no data exists to quantify private philanthropy to refugee education, the largest single donations on record were made by the two large foundations to refugee early childhood education (ECE). Yet, despite these funding milestones, only about 3 percent of humanitarian funding is allocated to education (European Commission, 2022), and many countries hosting large numbers of school-aged refugee children are not receiving consistent long-term funding.

In short, for refugee children, progress has been insufficient, especially in the context of rising displacement. Primary school enrollment for refugee students is far below the global averages at 68 percent, drops sharply during secondary school at 37 percent, and falls to only 6 percent at tertiary levels. Pre-primary enrollment is also very low, with only 42 percent of refugee children enrolled in the 2021-2022 school year (UNHCR, 2022a). Alongside low enrollment, poor quality of education and accompanying low learning rates remain a major concern.

Recognizing that the current status quo is insufficient to keep pace with the needs of refugee students and teachers, this paper aims to illuminate persistent tensions in refugee education. It is not intended to evaluate refugee education globally, but rather to inform global policy and invite dialogue on opportunities to scale up solutions to meet the rising need.

What are the key tensions facing refugee education?

Three interrelated sets of tensions—between inclusion in national systems and non-state programming, between emergency and long-term response, and between global and national responsibility—emerged as persistent themes through review of relevant literature and interviews with implementers, academics, bilateral and multilateral funders, policy experts, and other stakeholders in the refugee education field. These three sets of tensions are presented, along with illustrative examples of how these tensions manifest. The intention is not to present the factors in each set (for instance, inclusion and non-state programming) as a tradeoff between the two. Rather, in each set of tensions, the two factors presented can work together, complementing and supporting one another, but literature review and consultations underscored that oftentimes the two factors operate disjointedly or even in conflict with one another,

fostering the tensions discussed below. These tensions have long persisted in the refugee education field, even as policy priorities have shifted and global attention to refugee education has grown. Reconciling these tensions and the accompanying policy questions will be essential for providing sustainable, high-quality education to all refugees, particularly as forced displacement continues to grow. This paper aims to catalyze dialogue and action among donors, policymakers, and other stakeholders in resolving these tensions while recognizing that strategies for responding must be attentive to local and national needs and driven by local organizations and governments. Localization is central to the themes reinforced throughout the paper.

The sidelining and exclusion of refugee voices in program and policy development, both in state and non-state programming, contributes to the tensions discussed below. Elevating refugee voices will be discussed in more detail later in the paper.

1. Tensions between inclusion in national systems and non-state programming

What does inclusion of refugees mean?

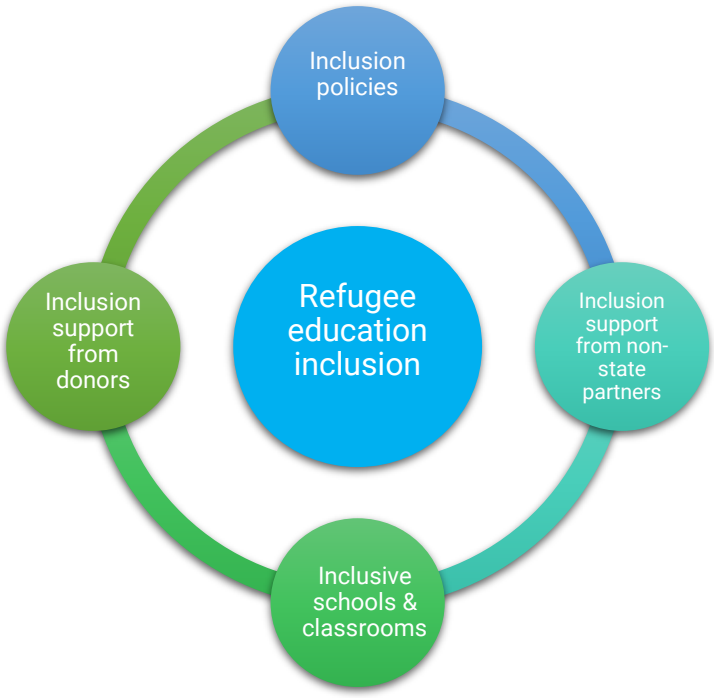
For education to fulfill its tremendous potential for refugee students, learning opportunities—either provided by the state or non-state providers—need to respond to refugee students' needs, among them, developing language proficiency in host country and mother tongue, recovering from interrupted learning, adjusting to a new education system, developing a sense of safety, processing loss and trauma, and building a sense of community, identity, and belonging. While exact responses will vary substantially by context, a variety of strategies may be required to respond to these needs, including language support (both host country and mother tongue), transition classes, safe learning environments, and support from teachers, other personnel, and the broader community (see Cerna (2019) for a discussion of these factors in national systems in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries).

Inclusion is the primary global policy strategy for refugee access to education. **Inclusion of refugee students in national systems refers not only to policy about whether students can attend national schools, but also the ways in which this happens,** and the classroom content, pedagogies, and interactions that make refugees feel supported, included, and connected to their identity, communities, and school culture, as well as the more comprehensive support structures that respond to the particular needs of refugee students. To this end, teachers have particularly meaningful roles to play in fostering students' sense of belonging and helping them think hopefully and constructively about their futures alongside helping students develop the knowledge and skills for their present and future (see Salem & Dryden-Peterson (2022) for examples of how teachers can fill these roles in Jordan). Preparing and supporting teachers to do so and ensuring

that school climate and content create opportunities for supporting teachers in this way requires policy and practice that keep learners' and teachers' holistic needs in mind. A comparative analysis of historical mapping studies in three major refugee-hosting countries found that professional development for teachers who will be working with refugee students *before* they begin teaching these students can help facilitate inclusion (Brugha, et al., 2021a). Alongside shifts in teaching practice and classroom interactions, curriculum reform may be needed to more intentionally foster social cohesion, mutual respect, and solidarity, particularly in settings where political and social narratives around refugees may be ill-informed or discriminatory. Effective school leadership and management is also needed to ensure that refugee students are safe, that their academic and psychosocial needs are being met, and that their teachers receive the support they need.

At the same time, inclusive state-led refugee education does not diminish the value that non-state actors can add in both preparing students to make the transition to formal schooling and in providing services that improve their chances at integrating and succeeding. It is important to recognize that in countries where national policies started off as non-inclusive, non-state actors often bore the primary responsibility for providing education to refugee children and played a significant role in applying pressure on local authorities to uphold their responsibilities (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Refugee education inclusion in national systems



Source: Authors' analysis.

Notably, **different perceptions of what is meant by inclusion can complicate policy and practice**. A more limited conception of inclusion involves some degree of refugee access to the curriculum or learning in the same learning spaces, while a more comprehensive vision of inclusion involves full alignment of refugee and host community children's learning opportunities (Brugha, et al., 2021a). As will be discussed later in this section, refugee teachers' ability to teach in national education systems is also a dimension of inclusion.

Critically, it is worth highlighting that inclusion does not discount the importance of targeted attention to refugees and their specific needs and circumstances within broader programs. Promising policies and programs sometimes do not reach refugees, and when they do, they may not be designed in a way that reflects or responds to refugee needs. For instance, Tusome, the pioneering foundational skills program in Kenya, did not reach schools in refugee camps for the first several years of its operation, and when it eventually did, it was not designed to meet the needs of refugee students (Piper in conversation with Dryden-Peterson, 2022). Inclusive strategies are essential for ensuring that relevant education innovations and reforms at all levels reach refugees.

The status of inclusive approaches

While inclusion is the default global strategy for refugee education, the reality of inclusive approaches varies widely. Understanding the current status of inclusion and the barriers and constraints that limit inclusion is critical to inform global and national policy, advocacy, financing, and practice.

***Global policy**:* Though the principle of inclusion is now widely held up as best practice in refugee education, this only became standard policy in the last decade, with the launch of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR) 2012-2016 Education Strategy in 2012.[1] Prior to this policy, refugees typically studied in refugee-only schools that used the language of instruction and curriculum of their countries of origin. Under this arrangement, non-state actors—not host country governments—were primarily

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[1] UNHCR describes the "general approach" of the strategy as "integration of refugee learners within national systems where possible and appropriate and as guided by on-going consultation with refugees." This approach provides a protective environment for refugee children and young people within the community and supports a focus on quality within existing systems of teacher training, learning assessments, and certification. Where this is not possible, UNHCR will support refugees to access quality, certified education. This decision will be contextual and depends on refugees' location, language of instruction, estimated duration of exile, reception arrangements, and on refugees' desires (UNHCR, 2012). UNHCR's commitment to inclusion was reiterated and deepened with its updated strategy Refuge Education 2030 (UNHCR, 2019a).

responsible for the provision of learning opportunities for refugee students. Inclusive approaches were motivated by the increasingly protracted nature of displacement, unsustainability of funding refugee-only schools, and growing rates of refugees living in urban rather than camp settings. This move toward inclusion has fundamentally changed the way global, national, and community actors approach refugee education, with the establishment of relationships between UNHCR and government authorities working on education and with shifts in national policy and practice. For example, between 2010 and 2014, among 14 of the largest refugee-hosting nation-states, the number using the national curriculum and languages of instruction for refugee education rose from five to 11 (Piper, et al, 2020).

***Barriers to inclusion**:* While there has been progress to integrate refugees into national education systems, substantial barriers remain—from the policy level to the classroom level. Inclusion efforts remain underfunded, as will be discussed later. Funding inclusion is often politically contentious, particularly because of xenophobia, migration policies intended to deter or prevent entry of refugees, and limited resources for services for the host community. Even where on paper inclusion is allowed, logistical hurdles can be enormous—among them: language of instruction, proximity to school, cost, policy restrictions about what types of schools or curriculum refugees can access, lack of documentation, and a range of other factors (Abu-Ghaida, et al, 2021; UNHCR, 2019b). Teacher- and teaching-related investments may also be barriers, as inclusion may require further training for teachers in responding to refugee students' needs, hiring additional teachers and other roles to provide pedagogical support, and other workforce- and teaching-related investments that countries may find financially or politically difficult. Barriers to inclusion tend to be more pronounced at levels other than primary, most funding and support is channeled, where enrollment tends to be free, which is not always the case at other levels. Barriers to inclusion extend to teachers, too: policy restrictions on refugee employment mean that in many situations, refugee teachers are unable to continue working.

Given these hurdles, inclusion in national systems is not an option for all refugee children and varies widely from one host country to another and sometimes within a given country. While there is little data on the scope of refugee education by provider type (a persistent issue for planning, policy, and practice), non-state actors continue to play a significant role in education programming at all levels, supplementing the education provided by formal systems or offering learning opportunities in settings where access to national systems is challenging or essentially non-existent. While the global move toward inclusion will likely continue and accelerate, particularly given the protracted nature of crises, tensions persist between inclusion in national systems and provision of refugee education through non-state approaches. Across these tensions and barriers, localized approaches are critical for appropriately responding to the educational needs of refugees.

The examples below demonstrate different approaches to refugee education provision, from highly inclusive to largely non-state strategies. **These examples were chosen to illustrate—individually and in tandem—how the tensions between inclusive and non-state approaches play out in practice given the current status of refugee education.** These examples aim to respond to system-level gaps in refugee education, have a relatively strong degree of donor engagement, and involve at least some degree of partnership.

Policy to include refugee students

Rwanda presents an example of a relatively holistic inclusion policy. In 2012, the government settled on a strategy of inclusion to respond to the influx of Congolese refugees entering the country. Prior to this decision, some refugees attended national schools, but there was not a systematic strategy. Under the government's inclusive approach, the Rwandan national education system is intended to serve host community and refugee children, with both learning from the same teachers using the same curriculum in the same schools. In some cases, children attend schools near camps using the Rwandan curriculum; this is the case, for instance, in Kiziba, where there are no national schools close to the camp. Given the absence of national schools, host community children are also able to attend this school for refugee students. At the outset of the Rwandan response, national schools were expanded with the intention of better serving both refugee *and* host community students. UNHCR designed an orientation program with language courses to help students transition to an English language system. The inclusive policy remains in place and has guided later refugee responses, such as the response to Burundian refugees that began in 2015, though some logistical barriers have persisted—including lack of infrastructure, national schools, and teachers near the Kiziba camp, as well as pay imbalances between refugees and national teachers, and the absence of refugees from the education sector plan that followed (Brugha, et al, 2021b). Even as these barriers highlight the challenges and tensions around inclusion, Rwanda's approach and its commitment to national systems serving all students remains highly inclusive.

Non-state programming in response to education policies excluding refugee students

On the opposite end of the spectrum are countries where refugees have little or no ability to access formal learning, leaving programming delivered by non-state actors the only avenue for refugee learning. This is particularly true in situations with severe policy restrictions on refugee access to formal systems and at certain levels of education, such as pre-primary, where formal national systems in many low- or lower-middle income countries do not have the capacity to serve the whole early childhood population (Jalbout & Bullard, 2021). In Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, for instance, refugee access to

formal education has long been prohibited, including the use of the Bangladeshi curriculum or Bangla language as the language of instruction (Human Rights Watch, 2019), meaning that all education provision has been informal or non-formal. The nonprofit BRAC developed the Humanitarian Play Labs (HPL) program to meet the needs of refugee and host community students. Adapted from BRAC's Play Lab Model in non-emergency settings, HPL utilizes culturally-relevant play approaches as a key strategy for learning and healing in its center-based programming for children ages 2 to 6 (Mariam, et al, 2021; Jalbout & Bullard, 2021). Non-state programming like HPL can be thoughtfully tailored to respond to the psychosocial and developmental needs of students. It does, however, raise critical questions for policymakers and donors about future opportunities for students compared to those made possible by inclusive approaches, as well as concerns about sustainability and responsibility.

TENSION: Non-state programming can be well tailored to refugee students' needs, arguably often providing more targeted support than national system programming. **How can donors and policymakers leverage this value of non-state programming even as they move toward greater inclusion?**

Non-state programming addressing education gaps for refugee students

In some systems where refugees are officially permitted to participate in the formal education system, access remains low due to proximity, language issues, poor quality, costs, discriminatory practices, and other reasons. In many settings, there remain large gaps in refugee access to secondary and tertiary education and other pathways to skill development and livelihoods. In some countries, non-state providers have responded with alternative strategies to help refugees access learning opportunities outside state education systems, in some cases in degree-granting programs.

TENSION: While inclusion remains the global policy goal, non-state programming plays an important role as a gap filler or supplement to formal systems and is heavily supported by donors in many settings. **How should donors balance support for non-formal education while also supporting the shift toward greater inclusion?**

One example is Amala Education, an NGO that offers an international high school diploma program for refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced youth ages 16 to 25 who are out of school. Amala works in urban and camp settings in several countries across multiple continents. The program, delivered in English, is completed flexibly, usually over a 15-month period through online and in-person learning. It includes coursework (comprised largely of leadership and social justice-oriented classes), advising on educational and career paths, and a "personal interest project." The Amala model is intended to respond to the gap in access

to quality education and to equip students with the competencies and agency to succeed and promote change in their communities. The curriculum was developed in partnership with United World College South East Asia and, critically, the program is accredited by the Council of International Studies in Kenya and Jordan and the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (Amala Education; HundrEd, 2021).

Amala provides meaningful opportunities for refugee students to learn, pursue projects of interest, and build skills for social and civic engagement and leadership. For some students, learning is nationally accredited, potentially opening further doors. While more rigorous evaluation is needed to assess the specific impact of Amala and similar initiatives, there is both major value and limitations to students of such programming.

Similar tensions persist at the tertiary level, where refugee access to higher education remains a major challenge, with only 6 percent of refugees enrolled, based on data from 33 countries (UNHCR, 2022a). Limited refugee access to secondary education and low quality of secondary education also limit the number of refugee students who enter tertiary education. Several non-state initiatives work to help refugees access tertiary education—often with some element of connected learning—and support their transition to work.

Southern New Hampshire University's (SNHU) Global Education Movement is one of the most prominent higher education initiatives working to support refugees. It works with partners in several countries to offer competency-based associate's and bachelor's degree programs to refugees through online learning programs. The program currently serves over 1,000 students across Africa and the Middle East. Program costs are estimated at $5,682 per student per year. And drawing on its growing revenue from its income-generating social enterprise, it aims to reach 25,000 by 2030. In Rwanda, SNHU partners with the non-governmental higher education organization Kepler to deliver blended education, with in-person seminars and internship opportunities supplementing SNHU's online model. The competency-based curriculum fosters strong student skills, and evaluations demonstrate strong results in students' transition into the workforce (Southern New Hampshire University, 2022, n.d.).

TENSION: Non-state programming can provide meaningful learning experiences, build a sense of community and agency, and foster refugee well-being, but this learning may not be formally recognized, and programs may not be accredited in ways that support further education and employment. **How should donors and policymakers balance investing in these programs that are personally meaningful but may not lead to recognized credentials, participation in national systems, and future employment?**

Despite the notable success of SNHU's refugee programming and its transformative

impact at the student level, its reach remains limited relative to the scale of higher education needs. Experts consulted underscored that systems-level action and collaboration with national ministries of higher education are currently the only plausible strategy for scaling higher education to meet refugee demand. As such, UNHCR is still advocating for greater support to host country institutions and has set out a goal of 15 percent of refugee enrollment in higher education in its for 15by30 strategy (UNHCR, n.d.). In addition to scale, accreditation is a persistent dilemma; while SNHU's programs award U.S.-accredited degrees, many others may not be recognized or locally accredited and thus may not carry as much value for students' futures.

TENSION: Non-state programming reaches students that the formal system does not but often struggles to reach large numbers. **How should policymakers and donors approach the scaling dilemma, recognizing that national systems are the best pathway to scale but currently leave many students behind? How can formal and non-formal systems support and learn from one another in scaling?**

Like Amala at the secondary level and similar non-state interventions at all levels, these higher education initiatives shine a light on the tensions between focusing on inclusion of refugees in national systems and providing learning opportunities outside the state education system.

Teachers and inclusion

The question of inclusion in national systems also extends to refugee teachers. Refugee teacher access to teaching opportunities and ongoing employment has implications for teachers' own well-being and sense of purpose and for their students' learning and identity. This access is closely linked to teachers' inclusion in formal systems, as well as their ability to participate in non-formal systems. Brugha, et al. (2021a) identified two particular issues as important factors for facilitating inclusion in national systems: fair remuneration for refugee teachers (in parity with host community teachers) and accreditation of refugee teachers. Experts consulted in developing this paper underscored the critical importance of paying refugee teachers as a means of supporting teacher well-being; teachers surveyed for development of INEE's (2022) Guidance Note on Teacher Well-being raised low pay as one of the greatest stressors, and one expert noted that adequate and consistent pay that allows teachers to meet their basic needs is a necessary foundation for refugee teacher well-being.

As with inclusion of students, inclusion of teachers is more comprehensive in some settings than others. In Turkey, where work restrictions prohibit Syrian teachers from legally working, UNICEF and the European Union developed a program in which Syrian teachers were given incentive payments to work as volunteer teachers in temporary education centers (TECs) that serve recent arrivals (UNICEF, 2014; Landell Mills, 2021).

Though this workaround did not solve the fundamental issues limiting refugee teachers' ability to formally and fully access the national education system (or tackle broader restrictions on refugee employment), it provided opportunity for teachers to use their skills and be compensated somewhat for their work and for refugee students to engage with teachers with similar backgrounds as them. As the government phased out TECs in favor of integration in national schools, 12,000 Syrian teachers were dismissed in 2020, as they were not considered qualified to teach in Turkish schools. Following negotiations, teachers were allowed to teach in Turkish schools if they met educational and language requirements (JHR, 2021), highlighting the tensions and possibilities around greater inclusion.

A smoother, more comprehensive policy of integrating refugee teachers can be seen in Ireland, where Ukrainian teachers were fast-tracked through the registration process to be allowed to teach in Irish schools. Under Irish law, teachers must be registered with the Teaching Council to be paid by the state. Ukrainian teachers who can demonstrate their qualifications from Ukraine are able to join Ireland's teacher register. As Ireland prepares for tens of thousands of Ukrainians to move to the country, Ukrainian teachers will play a critical role in helping Ukrainian children integrate into Irish schools. Such programs are particularly important given that Ireland has a relatively weak infrastructure for supporting students who do not speak English, so this integration of Ukrainian teachers—coupled with improved English language learning support (O'Brien, 2022; The Teaching Council, 2022)—is a promising development not only for teacher wellness in continuing to work and use their skills, but also for Ukrainian students who can see their language and experiences reflected in their teachers. Such an approach demonstrates that policy to allow teacher employment in national systems can be feasible—and in the best interests of refugee students and teachers—where governments summon the political will to make these adaptations.

Promising steps to help refugee teachers access working opportunities in national systems have been made in policy frameworks, setting a promising roadmap for action. Among the most encouraging is the Djibouti Declaration on Regional Refugee Education's explicit attention to refugee teacher inclusion in national systems, including supporting teacher certification and accreditation, fast-tracking of training, progressive alignment of pay and service conditions across refugee and host community teachers, pre- and in-service professional development, and career progression opportunities (IGAD Member States, 2017). While such strategies have yet to be actualized, political commitment to these strategies is a promising development that can propel action around teacher inclusion, and policymakers and donors alike can play a critical role in ensuring that refugee teachers are at the center of policy, planning, and practice.

Teachers' unions have long been a valuable resource and support system for refugee teachers, holding unique potential to bridge civil society and national systems. In countries where social dialogue is strong, unions can offer "wraparound services" by

providing critical information—including about job positions in the sector—and access to training and psychosocial support services to refugee teachers. Such services and support provide critical community and resources to help teachers find an income and maintain their identities as teachers, with major implications for their well-being. These strategies not only support individual teachers but also bolster the resilience of national teaching forces where many in the profession have been forced to flee. Providing ongoing access to professional opportunities ensures that teachers continue teaching, to the benefit of both refugee and host communities.

For instance, in Germany and Sweden during the height of the Syrian crisis, teachers' unions advocated for the rights of refugee teachers and assisted Syrian teachers in building community connections and continuing their teaching careers. More recently, teachers' unions across Europe have played a meaningful role in responding to the Ukrainian crisis. Teachers' unions from Ukraine and host countries have connected, creating key networks for sharing information and resources. Unions have also provided important fundraising resources, with organizations like Education International fundraising from member organizations and distributing stipends to support Ukrainian teachers through local unions. According to Education International, they have raised and distributed nearly EUR 500,000 since the crisis in Ukraine began.

In neighboring European countries receiving large numbers of refugees, education unions have mobilized to support displaced Ukrainian teachers. In Poland, the union ZNP hired a Ukrainian staff dedicated to communicating with refugees, and information has been made available to Ukrainian educators about access to the labor market. In Moldova, the Education Trade Union Chisinau Branch has closely collaborated with the municipality on a joint mechanism to identify refugee teachers' qualifications and available Russian-speaking teaching and non-teaching vacancies, which has facilitated the employment of Ukrainian educators.

Beyond direct support to Ukrainian teachers, unions have also supported the broader education response. In Poland, for instance, teachers' unions have funded and organized trainings to prepare local teachers to teach Polish as a second language. Across countries, education unions have been collaborating with all stakeholders to respond to refugees' most urgent needs and ensure that students displaced by the war in Ukraine have access to quality education in their host communities. The compelling work of unions demonstrates how social partners can play meaningful roles in supporting refugee teachers both in and outside formal education systems.

For policymakers, donors, and other stakeholders, major questions persist about how to support non-state solutions financially, technically, and through enabling policy alongside global commitment to inclusion. Non-state solutions can have meaningful benefits at a personal level—supporting refugee student learning, sense of identity, and

well-being—particularly in the absence of other options. Non-state approaches, however, can be limited by lack of accreditation or formal recognition of learning, challenges scaling, and concerns about long-term sustainability. Inclusion in national education systems can and should facilitate student and teacher learning, well-being, and sense of belonging, though realizing this potential in practice can often be challenging due to weak policy, logistical hurdles, and funding issues.

SET OF POLICY QUESTIONS 1. TENSIONS BETWEEN INCLUSION IN NATIONAL SYSTEMS AND NON-STATE PROGRAMMING

To resolve the ongoing tension between refugee education inclusion in national systems and non-state programming, a concerted effort must be made to reflect and act on the following questions:

1. **Conditions for investing in non-state solutions**: When and how should donors invest in non-state solutions? What value should donors place on the benefits of non-state programs that can quickly and effectively respond to the needs of refugee students?
2. **Role of non-state solutions in informing and supporting national inclusion**: Where inclusive strategies are in place, how should non-state programming be supported as a supplement and a support to the formal system? And critically, how can formal systems learn from and build on the ways in which non-state programming is focused on responding to the needs of refugee students?
3. **Opportunities for non-state solutions to address refugee education gaps**: In the absence of donor funding for certain levels of refugee education (early childhood, secondary, and tertiary education), does global policy support of national inclusion need to evolve and adopt more non-state programming?
4. **Cross-country and regional lessons on inclusion policies and practices**: How might countries and regions more actively learn about inclusive approaches and adapt their approaches accordingly, building on existing experience and new opportunities for greater openness?
5. **Social dialogue for inclusion:** Building on the important role that teachers' unions can play in supporting refugee teachers, how might teachers' unions be better engaged in policy dialogue around inclusion of teachers?

2. Tensions between emergency and long-term response

The tension between inclusion in national systems and non-state responses is closely connected to the tension between emergency and long-term strategies for refugee education. The impact of this tension plays out at every level from the classroom to donor financing strategies. Without reconciling this tension in policy, planning, and implementation, it will remain an obstacle to ensuring sustainable and high-quality education for refugees. Notably, there was strong consensus among experts consulted for this paper that **the emergency term can and should lay the groundwork for an effective long-term response** (usually through inclusion in national systems), even while responding to immediate needs. **Far too often, though, initial response planning fails to set refugee education up for long-term success and sustainability**, with major (and long-standing) divides between the humanitarian and development stages of refugee education. In the early stages of a refugee crisis, for instance, initial planning and practice often includes temporary or informal learning opportunities as interim measures, but these measures may not always channel students into formal systems nor prepare them to tackle the many barriers—both in policy and in logistics such as documentation, language of instruction, and physical proximity—that must be overcome to include refugees in national systems.

Personal and policy factors contributing to tensions between the short and long term

While inclusion in national systems is considered best practice, many factors influence decisions made about emergency responses at the family and policy levels. Across different countries, refugee preferences for the curriculum they study, the language of instruction they use, and the exams they take to certify their learning vary widely and are informed by their hopes and expectations for their future. At the same time, host governments' ability or willingness to tailor policy according to those preferences informs the emergency education response and the extent to which it builds longer-term strategies. For both refugees and policymakers, expectations about length of displacement factor heavily into decisionmaking around how to approach refugee education in the short and long term. Despite many refugees facing protracted periods of displacement, refugee populations and policymakers often hope for a return to their country of origin much sooner, making the transition to studying in the host country's schools, national curriculum, and language of instruction less desirable. At times,

TENSION: Families' hopes for their return to their home countries and perspectives on inclusion in the host-country education system may not align with the feasibility of safe return. **How can policymakers account for and balance family preferences with realistic policy strategies?**

refugees may be hesitant to study with the host country curriculum for fear of losing ties to their home country and acknowledging the possibility of protracted displacement, particularly without information on possible benefits of inclusion (UNHCR, 2016). This scenario has played out in the early days of displacement of some refugee populations.

TENSION: Governments with hostile policies toward refugees create barriers for refugee education inclusion even where displacement promises to be protracted. **How can governments be incentivized to support refugee inclusion amid broader policies to deter refugee migration?**

Today, it is a key dilemma for Ukrainian refugee families and their host European countries. Ukrainian families have, in some cases, chosen to continue studying with the Ukrainian curriculum online, or delayed decisions about whether to enroll in host country schools in the 2022-23 school year for as long as possible with the hope of returning to Ukraine. Notably, the digital learning infrastructure built up during the pandemic has helped maintain the possibility of learning in the Ukrainian curriculum in ways that are often not feasible in countries with weaker digital infrastructure. To date, host countries and donors have generally been supportive of Ukrainian refugees who choose to continue studying online, and they have provided access to technology that enables refugee students and the Ukrainian Ministry of Education to maintain teaching and learning online. The longer the crisis in Ukraine continues, however, the less likely the families will be to choose online learning for their children and the more likely it will be that refugees integrate into local schools, raising potential challenges from learning loss, accreditation for learning online, language barriers, and so on. It is therefore essential to ensure that the Ministry of Education in Ukraine and European countries hosting Ukrainian refugee school-aged children align on the goals of the short-term policy approach and coordinate efforts across all countries to work toward a unified long-term plan.

Historically, issues of curriculum and credentialing have raised substantial challenges for refugee students' educational futures. One expert consulted noted that over the past several decades, Pakistan has hosted large numbers of Afghan refugees. In some cases, Afghan students in Pakistan continued to study the Afghan curriculum in unlicensed schools. Without licensing, it was difficult for Pakistan's Ministry of Education to validate the grade 12 certificates that were awarded by these schools, with implications for students' future prospects. In short, the lack of transparency around these schools and the government response to them has created longer-term challenges for both students and government. UNHCR (2018) announced in 2018 that refugee village schools would begin using the Pakistani curriculum, allowing refugee students to qualify for higher education or employment opportunities in both countries. These curricular decisions for Afghan refugees in Pakistan underscore how an absence of long-term planning in the early response to crisis can raise challenges for both students and government down the line.

Expectations about length of displacement and resistance to hosting refugees for long periods have heavily informed Bangladesh's response to the Rohingya crisis, with none of the flexibility or inclusiveness that has characterized the European response to Ukrainian refugees. Rohingya refugees have long been prohibited from accessing national schools, studying with the Bangladeshi curriculum, or even learning in Bangla. Until 2020, they were also prohibited from using Myanmar's curriculum. This strategy restricted learning opportunities for refugee children to non-formal and informal programming, which have few long-term prospects for students. Finally, in 2020, Bangladesh's government approved use of Myanmar's curriculum for Rohingya refugees, though due to COVID-related delays, a UNICEF-launched pilot of the curriculum with 10,000 students only began in 2022 among grades six to nine. While this pilot does not indicate inclusion in Bangladesh's system, as the pilot uses a different curriculum and language, it is a move toward formal education and more long-term thinking about Rohingya students' futures (Seigfried, 2022). The use of Myanmar's curriculum is premised on an expectation of Rohingya return to Myanmar (UNICEF, 2022b), and whether or not this new approach meaningfully supports the long-term futures of Rohingya students will depend on whether this expectation of return is realized.

In Greece, another context where the emergency response was based on a policy to deter refugees from remaining in the country, research conducted in 2019 found that only a very small portion of asylum seekers had access to any form of education while in camps on the Aegean islands, their point of arrival. For those who did, the majority were in non-formal programming for a limited amount of time each week. In addition to the extremely small scope of programming in the emergency term, decisions about language and other factors with long-term implications often went unanswered; as many asylum seekers expected to leave Greece for other EU countries (and Greek policymakers, likewise, pushed for other European countries to accept refugees who entered Europe through Greece), refugees and policymakers alike were unsure of how best to prepare for the future in terms of language of study and other curricular decisions (Jalbout, 2020). As numbers of new arrivals have declined in Greece, there has been progress to include asylum seekers in formal schools and to facilitate better access to the transitional programming needed to help refugees enter formal schooling. Even so, the challenges of the response in 2019 point to how weak planning and competing political agendas can result in short-term planning that does little to prepare refugee students for their futures (or effectively serve their present needs).

At the policy level, several factors at the earliest stages of the refugee education response appear to support inclusive processes in the long term. Comparative analysis of historical mapping studies in three major refugee hosting countries—Bangladesh, Rwanda, and Turkey—found that inclusion in national systems was facilitated by sufficiently functioning (and funded) education systems, inclusive national policy on refugee education (particularly the presence of refugees in education sector plans), and

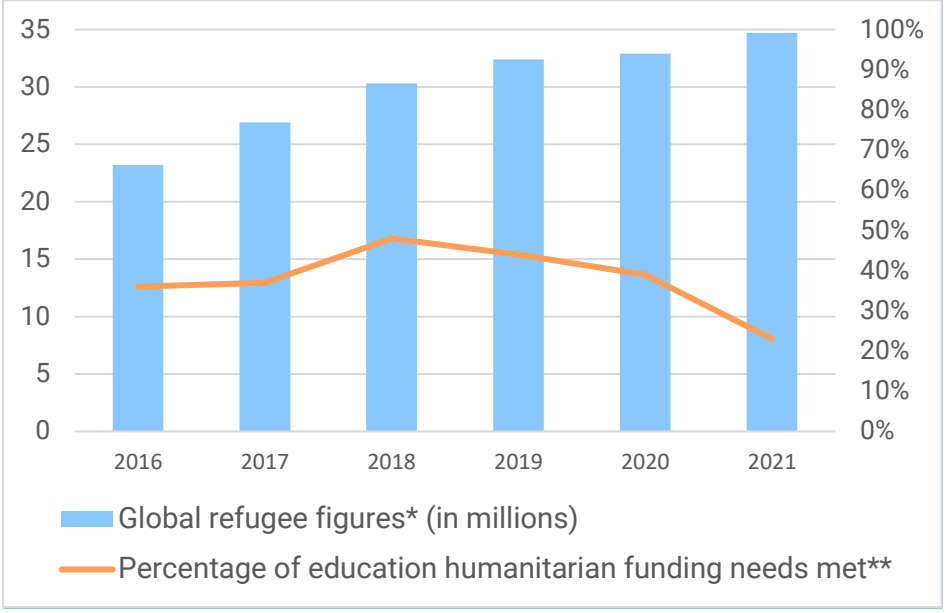
government relationships with development and humanitarian partners before the influx began. Additionally, from the onset of the response, early preparedness plans were in place, inclusion was built into the response from the beginning, and governments had ownership of the response (Brugha, 2021a). These factors are all closely linked to political will, technical capacity, and financing. Interestingly, the analysis also found that in at least one country (Rwanda), the government had looked at evidence of how inclusive and separate systems for refugees would work and used this evidence to help inform policy decisions, in advance of the refugee influx (Brugha, 2021a). This latter point highlights the value of generating rigorous evidence on the outcomes of different response strategies and disseminating the evidence to governments and partners.

Funding issues that fuel tensions between emergency and long-term response

TENSION: Multilateral donors acknowledge the need for long-term thinking but funding windows approach only the emergency to medium term. **How can global funders—individually and in partnership—plan for the long term?**

The tension between emergency and long-term responses and the failure of the former to sufficiently plan for and support the latter are tied to the current refugee education funding levels, financing architecture, and the implications of both for policy design. The EiE sector is "chronically underfunded," particularly as need continues to grow dramatically. In 2021, U.N.-led humanitarian appeals for education received less than a quarter of the funds requested—a massive shortfall relative to the sector's needs (Figure 2; Geneva Global Hub for Education in Emergencies, 2022). Refugee education is no exception. In 2016, humanitarian and development funders spent $800 million on refugee education, one-third of the amount needed for refugee students (UNESCO, 2018).

Figure 2. As the number of refugees rises, the funding gap also rises



*The refugee figures in this come from UNHCR's Refugee Data Finder and include refugees under UNHCR's mandate, asylum seekers, Venezuelans displaced abroad, and stateless persons.
**The funding data comes from the Humanitarian Funding forecast and faces some methodological limitations. As this data refers to humanitarian education, it is not only specific to refugees.

Beyond this underfunding, ***how* the sector is funded fuels persistent tensions between short- and long-term strategies**. Part of the funding dilemma stems from the financing architecture and the silos of humanitarian and development funding, which is a challenge across the EiE sector (Geneva Global Hub for Education in Emergencies, 2022), including refugee education. While some bilateral donors fund refugee education, intragovernmental silos between humanitarian and development funding often means that refugee education is sometimes caught between different departmental mandates, leading to incoherence and inefficiencies in how donors support this area.

Global pooled funds have aimed, at least to some degree, to fill and bridge some of the gaps within and between humanitarian and development funding, but challenges persist. ECW, the United Nations global fund for education in emergencies, has helped to bring greater policy attention to refugee education and inject more funding into the sector. Its multiple investment windows allow for funding to be invested at various stages of crises. ECW's First Emergency Response Window, which can be activated relatively quickly in the onset of emergencies, supports projects up to a year in duration, while the Multi-Year Resilience Program is intended to facilitate coordinated humanitarian and

TENSION: Students, policymakers, and donors alike agree on the importance of long-term strategies for refugee education, but most of the support goes to primary education. ***How can policymakers and donors be incentivized to support all levels of education, given resource limitations?***

development programs over three to four years, with the aiming of bridging the short and medium term.[2] Even so, many experts consulted argued that grant periods of a few years are not sufficient to design and implement long-term responses, and pointed to GPE as a possible source of funding systems-level strategies for supporting refugee education. GPE does not specifically target refugee populations but rather funds education system change in low- and middle-income countries, with particular interest in equity and leaving no one behind (including refugees). Its model is system-oriented, meaning that it holds potential to build supportive long-term models for refugee education into the national plans. GPE's approach prioritizes country ownership. For refugee education, this means that countries ultimately decide if and how to use GPE funds to integrate refugee students or support refugee education. While some countries leverage GPE funds to support refugee education as part of their broader sector strengthening work, GPE's funding does not require nor incentivize refugee education. The fund's contribution to advancing refugee education—and helping to reconcile the tension between short- and long-term strategies—varies substantially depending on country interest in refugee integration.

Given these dynamics, experts consulted for this brief acknowledged that more increased funding for refugee education and more coherent financing strategies are needed. Critically, both ECW and GPE have recognized the need for better coordination between them, given ECW's emergency and medium-term windows and GPE's more comprehensive sector view. The two, along with the World Bank, signed a joint action plan for more efficient, effective, and aligned education assistance in refugee hosting countries in 2020 (GPE, World Bank & ECW, 2020). This positive step will need to include deliberate strategies carried out by bilateral donors and pooled funds to work toward more effective long-term planning from the earliest stages of response.

Students' educational futures: Short-term views

Tensions between short- and long-term strategies also play out in the level of education supported by donors and other stakeholders. Primary education has historically been donors' main focus area, resulting in a massive gap in access at other levels, with refugee enrollment at only 34 percent at the secondary level and 5 percent at the tertiary level (UNHCR, 2021). GPE focuses on basic education and thus does not fund upper-secondary and tertiary education. Only 11 percent of children reached by ECW funding were at the secondary level according to ECW's online results dashboard, and experts consulted noted that only a select few philanthropic funders prioritize secondary and

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[2] ECW also funds global public goods through its Acceleration Facility.

tertiary education.[3] With far less global investment in this area as well as fees for secondary education in some countries and tertiary education in most countries, refugee access is markedly lower at these levels. The focus on primary education among donors across the humanitarian and development sphere also raises many questions beyond the short term: What happens to refugee students after they finish primary school? For refugee students to realize their hopes and expectations for future education and employment, learning opportunities beyond primary school are essential. For host countries, too, education for refugee students beyond primary is necessary to boost refugees' ability to contribute economically and civically. While investment in higher levels of education may detract from other investment areas in the short term, **attention to higher levels of refugee education among donors and other stakeholders will be critical for helping refugee students realize their long-term potential, both for their own benefit and for the social and economic benefit of their host communities**.

Early childhood development (ECD), including ECE, similarly remains undersupported. While a few large philanthropic investments have brought much-needed attention to this area, funding and other forms of support are far from sufficient to meet the need. Major bilateral and multilateral donors spend far less on ECE and ECD more broadly than primary; less than a tenth of the students reached by ECW were in ECE, the lowest of the three levels (ECE, primary, and secondary) that ECW supports, according to the ECW dashboard. Moreover, some experts express concern that large, targeted philanthropic investments may have suppressed much-needed systemic investments in ECE and ECD. Without sufficient support, attendance is low. Data on ECE attendance among young refugee children is difficult to nail down (Jalbout & Bullard, 2021), and even as UNHCR (2022a) reports a 42 percent rate of pre-primary attendance among refugee children, the rate is far lower in some contexts. Even without exact figures, it is clear that ECE attendance is low and far more investment is needed in this area. There is a large body of evidence demonstrating the value of early learning opportunities for children's health, emotional well-being, cognitive development, and academic success. ECE is linked to greater school readiness, stronger learning outcomes, and education system efficiency, with fewer repetitions and drop-outs. It has economic and social benefits throughout students' lives, alongside benefits to families and communities (see UNICEF (2019) and Jalbout & Bullard (2021) for more discussion of the benefits of ECE). Given the well-documented benefits of early learning and development—for students, families, and communities, in the immediate and the long-term—ECD, including ECE, is a smart investment from an emergency-term perspective and a long-term perspective. **Pointing to the rigorous evidence in favor of investment in early childhood may help to mitigate some of the tensions between short- and long-term strategies**.

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[3] Please note that this includes refugee students impacted by ECW's funding, as well as internally displaced persons and other affected populations.

Mental health support for refugee students (and teachers) is another area that is undersupported but creates an opportunity to bridge the short and long term. Psychosocial support (PSS) is widely recognized as a critical avenue for helping to mitigate and protect against the impacts of the trauma that refugees endure in conflict and displacement. Mental health support can encompass a variety of strategies, including programming and counseling outside of school settings, programming inside of schools, and pedagogical strategies that attend to students' psychosocial needs. Despite widespread recognition that PSS is an essential consideration for refugees' immediate and long-term well-being, funding and technical support are not always available, both in the classroom and more widely. While mental health is a growing area of interest, too often teachers and community organizations supporting refugee students do not have the necessary training and tools to provide these students with appropriate support. Teachers, especially refugee teachers, supporting refugee students, may also need mental health support to cope with stress and, in the case of refugee teachers, their own trauma. The insufficiency of mental health support in the early stages of an education response can have both immediate and long-term implications for student and teacher well-being. Likewise, building effective PSS structures into education from the start of the response—and ensuring that these remain active throughout students' school lives and teachers' careers—can help refugees from the earliest days of their displacement, throughout their education, and beyond. Policymaking and programming that reflect the critical value of mental health support will help to bridge the major divides between short- and long-term views on refugee students' and teachers' well-being.

For policymakers, donors, and other stakeholders, challenging questions persist about the tension between emergency and long-term response. As the number of refugees is expected to increase rapidly over the next two decades, it is critical to not only strengthen emergency education response but to also ensure that response strategies consider refugee students' futures. This will require stronger, more strategic links between short-term and long-term programming.

SET OF POLICY QUESTIONS 2. TENSIONS BETWEEN EMERGENCY AND LONG-TERM RESPONSE

To resolve the ongoing tension between refugee education emergency- and long-term response, a concerted effort must be made to reflect and act on the following questions:

1. **Further developing global refugee education tools and resources**: What policy and practice global resources would be most useful to support current and future refugee-hosting countries in developing emergency and long-term refugee education responses?
2. **Better preparing host countries before the influx of refugees**: How could lessons learned be better shared, particularly for planning and coordination strategies that could be deployed before and from the earliest stages of refugee influx?
3. **Equipping refugee families with critical education information**: What information could be shared with refugee communities and families about making informed education choices while at the same time gathering refugee perspectives to inform strategies? What are the best ways to share this information?
4. **Bilateral and multilateral donor financing**: How could donors create greater cohesion within their own financing architecture and across global financing mechanisms, with the goal of strengthening the connection between emergency and long-term response?
5. **Expanding donor support beyond primary education**: How could current and new donors be incentivized to expand their support beyond primary education?

3. Tensions between global and national responsibility

Closely linked to the issues of inclusion and short- and long-term strategies is the tension between global and national responsibility for supporting refugee education. First and foremost is the question of who delivers refugee education. Given global commitment to inclusive strategies and the centrality of inclusion to long-term responses, ongoing provision by non-state actors (and ongoing funding of these efforts, often by international donors) also raises questions about who funds such strategies and what plans exist for the sustainability of such programming.

Financing is at the heart of tensions between global and national responsibility

Long-term financing strategies for refugee education will need to consider who pays for inclusion in national systems, and what this means for how early stages of emergencies are handled. As one expert explained, inclusion in national systems is "a burden and a responsibility that host countries carry" and that the global community has committed to. At all stages of refugee education, but particularly in thinking about long-term strategies, the question of who bears responsibility for refugee education—and tension between national and global input—remains a persistent dilemma.

TENSION: Refugee inclusion in national education systems raises questions about who is ultimately responsible for long-term funding. **How can policymakers and donors bridge the gap between short-term external funding and long-term national inclusion?**

The World Bank estimated (pre-pandemic) the annual cost of inclusion of refugees in low-, lower-middle, and upper-middle income education systems to be $4.85 billion annually (World Bank & UNHCR, 2021). The question of who should bear these costs is an ongoing conversation, with recognition that responsibility-sharing is essential (as outlined in the Global Compact on Refugees), as well as realistic acknowledgement that many low- and middle-income countries cannot alone finance the scale up of capacity, infrastructure, and recurrent costs (like teacher salaries) needed in response to increased enrollment. That said, unlike costly operation of camps where refugees are excluded from education systems and have extremely limited opportunities to work and contribute to national economies, inclusive policies—in education and beyond—can prepare refugees to contribute more socially and financially to their host countries, including to the tax base. In line with this, comparative analysis of three refugee-hosting countries found that refugee-hosting strategies that see refugees as self-reliant, in line with broader national models and goals for economic growth, facilitate inclusion (Brugha, et al, 2021a). While more financial modeling is needed, some experts consulted see inclusive education as a solution that could ultimately be more financially beneficial to host countries. Supporting (and incentivizing) host communities in the short term—including planning for inclusion from the early stages of a crisis—while building long-term domestic financing strategies is essential for taking this vision into the long term. With this in mind, data on the long-term financial implications of inclusive education policies and segregated policies would be tremendously beneficial for making the argument for inclusion.

TENSION: Funders are sharply divided on whether aid should incentivize and support inclusion of refugees or be conditional on refugee integration into national systems. ***How can donors with divergent opinions most effectively collaborate for refugee inclusion?***

ECW and GPE's models fill different roles with different approaches, highlighting a point of contention in the field: **whether to make education funding conditional on inclusion of refugees in national systems or whether to defer to national policy preference and incentivize systems to include refugees**. Opinions on these points vary widely across the sector, and coalescence around a single strategy—conditionality or incentives—is unlikely. Even so, it is critical that donors come together around a more cohesive long-term financing strategy in view of these competing perspectives. This leads to a related question of how to better coordinate between funders given their different roles, as mentioned in the previous section. Many experts consulted highlighted the need for a more effective strategy for major funders to work together, not just in immediate response to crisis and in the duration of grants that last a few years, but in planning for and supporting long-term strategies for refugee education. Such a strategy cannot be effectively supported through grants that last only a few years.

In addition to GPE and ECW, some experts consulted for this brief recommended greater engagement of development banks and accelerator strategies to help bridge short- and long-term solutions.

Role of policy in tackling tensions around responsibility

Perhaps not surprisingly, it appears that **well-coordinated and planned strategies for inclusion may help mitigate some of the tensions in responsibility**. The previously mentioned comparative analysis of historical mapping studies in Bangladesh, Rwanda, and Turkey found that using the humanitarian response to improve education systems for all students, refugees, and host community students—and, critically, governments' ability to see the response in this way—can foster inclusion in national systems. Similarly, working to align planning and funding among development and humanitarian partners with national and regional priorities can facilitate inclusion (Brugha, et al, 2021a).

These findings underscore a key point about responsibility, particularly in the context of inclusion and long-term planning: the education delivered by national education systems to both host community and refugee students is often low quality. Most refugees live in neighboring countries to their country of origin; oftentimes these are low- and middle-

income countries. More than a quarter of refugees live in countries considered 'least developed' (Piper, et al, 2020). Learning rates in low- and middle-income countries are extremely low; as of 2019, the rate of learning poverty[4] in low- and middle-income countries was 53 percent. In the wake of the pandemic, it is expected that this rate will increase to about 70 percent, meaning that more than two-thirds of ten-year-olds in these countries will lack basic literacy skills (World Bank, et al, 2022). Moreover, refugees often live in more marginalized areas of these countries where education outcomes are lower than average (Piper, et al., 2020). These devastatingly low rates underscore the pressing needs to strengthen education systems for all students, both from host and refugee communities. Therefore, for host country governments, donors, and other stakeholders, **strengthening national systems can and should be a promising strategy for improving the quality of education that both host community students and refugees receive**. In settings where access remains low among community children and refugee children (particularly at the ECE level), strengthening of national systems could help to expand educational coverage for all students. Of course, the financial costs of inclusion must still be accounted for and efforts to improve education system quality must be accompanied by concerted strategies to respond to specific needs of refugee students in these systems. However, this mindset of raising education quality for *all*, including refugee students, may help to bridge divides in considering who is responsible for financing education improvement for refugees. This mentality that everyone can benefit from policies that benefit refugees may be critical for fostering buy-in and support for effective approaches to refugee education.

The tension between global and national responsibility is one that can only be resolved with a paradigm shift. Shared responsibility that sees international donors supporting host countries with strong refugee education inclusion policies is the best possible outcome, but in the current architecture, often remains far out of reach. This paper has highlighted some of the barriers and opportunities for both global actors and national governments to consider addressing.

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[4] Learning poverty refers to children being unable to read and understand a simple story by age 10, indicating a lack of minimal proficiency in literacy at the end of primary school. The learning poverty indicator is calculated using both learning deprivation and school deprivation data. See World Bank (2021) for more details.

SET OF POLICY QUESTIONS 3. TENSIONS BETWEEN GLOBAL AND NATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

To resolve the ongoing tension between refugee education global and national responsibility, a concerted effort must reflect and act on the following questions:

1. **Promoting inclusion versus conditional funding by global funders**: When and to what extent should global funding for refugee education be conditional on refugee inclusion in national systems? Should all donors be aligned on this point, or can a cohesive global funding strategy effectively promote inclusion (where that is the effective policy response) without universal conditionality of funding?
2. **Clarifying and incentivizing inclusion at the national level**: How can stakeholders—refugees themselves, civil society, global partners, and funders—encourage host country governments to see inclusion as possibly financially beneficial to host countries (in expanding the tax base, etc.)? What other factors (in policy, in the labor market, etc.) are needed to ensure that refugees can gainfully contribute? What evidence is most compelling in making this case to governments? How can donors get the ball rolling in encouraging this mentality?
3. **Global and national partners co-planning and supporting conditions for sustaining inclusion**: How should national and global stakeholders together plan for a transition toward domestic financing of refugee inclusion in national systems? What evidence needs to be provided and/or what economic conditions need to be met for this process to become self-sustaining?
4. **Elaborating the policies of developed countries hosting refugees**: As the refugee crisis expands, how should global policy dialogue expand to include national responsibilities of developed countries toward refugee children, youth, and teachers? What incentives for developed countries with—for example, low youth populations and high skills shortages—could be explored in policy dialogue?

How does centering refugee voices and engagement help advance refugee education?

Too often, public and social dialogue around refugees—including refugee education—presents refugees as a deficit. In education and beyond, moving from a deficit perspective to an asset perspective in thinking about refugees is critical for harnessing refugee communities' unique viewpoints, knowledge, skills, and hopes (Mariam, 2022). Therefore, engaging closely with refugees to understand their cultures, hopes, and ideas and co-constructing programming and policy *with* refugees is essential to ensure that refugee students and teachers can access opportunities not only to learn and teach, but also to heal, see themselves reflected in the systems around them, feel included in their communities, and imagine a future for themselves. There is widespread buy-in from implementers and other experts on the importance of this, but acknowledgement that in practice, this aim is far from realized, especially in policy. A guidance note on teacher well-being produced by the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies, for instance, highlighted the importance of engaging teachers and promoting teacher agency, leadership, and voice in ways that are authentic and equitable rather than tokenistic (INEE, 2022). Across all aspects of refugee education, **the move toward co-construction and meaningful engagement of refugees is far from realized**, with few mechanisms for intentionally building refugee voices, including refugee teacher voices, into national policy dialogue.

There are, however, a few examples of meaningful engagement of refugee voices and perspectives, particularly in the design of non-state programming. These examples highlight promising strategies that policymakers, donors, and implementers should explore to better engage, listen to, and elevate refugee voices.

Refugee voice in program development

Some non-governmental service providers have been intentional in ensuring that program design is informed by refugee perspectives. For example, BRAC's HPL utilizes play as a key strategy for learning and healing in its early learning model for refugees. With host community students in Cox's Bazar, the model and curriculum were developed through close engagement with the Rohingya community to ensure relevance. The

curriculum development staff conducts community discussion and field visits to gather stories, games, and rhymes that reflect Rohingya culture (Mariam, et al, 2021; Jalbout & Bullard, 2021). The Play Labs model, developed in non-emergency settings and later adapted to HPL's humanitarian context, has been shown to raise children's developmental outcomes, and an evaluation of HPL is underway (BRAC, 2021). HPL's approach provides a model of how to engage refugee communities in designing relevant, high-quality education initiatives.

Amna (formerly called Refugee Trauma Initiative) similarly prioritizes refugee voice in its program development. Amna is an NGO that takes an identity-informed, trauma-sensitive approach to supporting young refugee children's healing and development through its early childhood program, Baytna. Through close relationships and co-construction with refugees, Amna has created a play-based model that can be adapted to different circumstance to help young children feel safe, heal, and develop positive relationships and strong self-identity. This centering of relationships with and learning from refugees in Amna's theory of change is an example of a shift toward actualizing attention to refugee agency and voice. Through mindfulness, art, dance, and other culturally relevant strategies, Amna's approach helps mitigate the impacts of toxic stress and trauma that many young refugee children have experienced. While Amna provides some direct delivery of early childhood services, its approach largely centers around capacity building of local organizations, preparing and supporting these organizations' long-term ability to deliver psychosocial care to young refugee children in contextually appropriate ways. Amna has also been intentional in revising its model based on lessons from its operations, continuously honing and strengthening its approach to better respond to the needs of young refugee children.

Amna's work began in Greece and has expanded to support refugees in 11 countries, including emergency response efforts working with partners in Afghanistan and Ukraine. In addition to this focus on psychosocial support, Amna's advocacy efforts aim to change the public perception of refugees through advocacy efforts that humanize the refugee experience by centering refugee voices and stories. Amna recently launched a collaborative story-telling platform, the Sada Project, for refugee storytellers to collaboratively share their experiences of displacement.

Networks to amplify refugee voices

From a policy perspective, refugee-led networks are a key platform to reframe dialogue and policy from the perspective of refugees. Such networks create opportunities for refugee students to connect, build relationships, share information, and be actively engaged not only in their own learning but in the narratives and programming around refugee education. One such network is the Tertiary Refugee Student Network (TRSN),

which is run by refugee tertiary-grade students and alumni with support from UNHCR. Four global leaders run the network, with two regional leaders in each of the regions where the network is active (East Africa, Northern Africa, Southern Africa, West Africa, Latin America, North America, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, and the Middle East).

The network works to expand refugee access to tertiary education and support their success by advising secondary students on entry to university or vocational education, offering peer-to-peer leadership programs like college guidance counseling (currently in the early stages and being built at country level), and providing support to graduates on searching for employment. Part of the network's strategy involves filling the major information gaps that exist for many refugee students (particularly those with limited connectivity) in exploring potential opportunities for tertiary education access. Recognizing the barriers for refugees in attending tertiary education and then entering the workforce, the network is also involved in advocacy around issues like improved secondary education opportunities for refugees, tertiary scholarships, access to visas for higher education, labor market access, and women's leadership. Through the network, as one member explained, refugee students help and support each other, innovate on solutions, and encourage other refugees to get engaged. In her words, networks like these show that refugees are "not just passive beneficiaries of agendas but active partners" that are "determined to take their fate in their own hands." One of the network leaders similarly described the network's efforts to challenge the status quo and change the narrative around refugees. Beyond the network's critical work connecting individual refugee students with information and support strengthens pathways for refugee inclusion in tertiary education, TRSN puts refugee leadership and perspectives at the center of advocacy agendas.

Networks to reflect the needs of the youngest refugee students should also be integrated into policy dialogue. For children too young to organize and advocate for their own needs, an expert consulted recommended that parent and caregiver networks be leveraged as an avenue for elevating refugee voices in ECE and primary education development. Inclusion of refugee voices at the early childhood level may be particularly important because support for young children's healthy development is inherently multi-sectoral—including health, nutrition, water, sanitation, hygiene, child protection, and other sectors along with education—and refugee voices are often not meaningfully reflected in policy dialogue or program development for any of these.

Amplifying refugee *teachers'* voices is similarly critical. Teachers' unions hold tremendous potential not only for connecting refugee teachers to resources and opportunities, as previously discussed, but also for facilitating refugee teachers' engagement in policy dialogue. One expert consulted for this paper noted that refugee civil society organizations may be more hesitant to speak out or more limited in their ability to do so than other forms of civil society organizations. Given this, platforms for refugees to participate within established, outspoken civil society groups may be a

valuable strategy for uplifting refugee voices in policy dialogue. With this in mind, teachers' unions could be considered as a valuable platform for elevating and centering refugee voices in policy dialogue.

Institutional participation and leadership by refugees

Involving refugee communities in program design and consulting refugee networks in policy development is not sufficient for ensuring that refugee perspectives and needs are reflected. Refugee participation and leadership in the organizations involved in education provision and policy, including NGOs of all sizes, is critical. Far too often, there are few refugees involved in decisionmaking in these organizations. Where refugees are employed for such organizations, they are more likely to be working at the lowest levels of an organization. Within education systems, for instance, refugee participation tends to decline at higher levels, teachers' aides (where refugee representation tends to be higher) to teachers (where it typically declines) to principals, district leaders, and national leaders (where it is typically much smaller). In NGOs, particularly large international NGOs, refugees are rarely represented in leadership roles or in the head offices, which are often in other locations. Meaningful engagement of refugee voices is difficult in the context of these power imbalances and with refugee participation seen as an external add-in and not a feature of internal operations. Education institutions, large NGOs, funders, and others need to develop intentional recruitment and staffing strategies to attract and support refugees into their teams and leadership, with an eye toward the power dynamics that typically disadvantage refugees.

Funders can also play a role in this process by prioritizing local NGOs that are refugee-led or have larger refugee representation on staff. Such local organizations not only have more refugee staff but are better positioned to engage directly with refugee communities to tailor programming or advocacy to their needs.

POLICY QUESTIONS: CENTERING REFUGEE VOICES IN REFUGEE EDUCATION

To strengthen refugee engagement in global and national refugee education response and in turn contribute to more effective policy and programming, the following questions would contribute to necessary and meaningful reflection:

1. **Lessons learned on engaging refugees in refugee education policy**: What are the best strategies for engaging refugees co-developing policy and programming? How can policymakers learn from the ways that non-state programs have engaged refugees in program design?
2. **Requiring refugee engagement in refugee education locally**: What role can local education groups or other local policy mechanisms play in engaging refugees, and how can and should co-construction with refugees be incentivized or required in these settings?
3. **More research on engaging refugees in refugee education**: How could research and advocacy strengthen the evidence in support of engaging refugees in education policy and program design?
4. **Decolonizing aid practices informing refugee education engagement practices**: How could effective aid strategies and ongoing efforts to decolonize the aid sector inform and support refugee engagement in policies and programming that shape their futures?

Conclusion

As displacement continues to rise, support for refugee education is more urgent than ever. As policymakers, donors, and other stakeholders work to respond to growing refugee education crises, three ongoing sets of tensions persist across the field. The first—the tensions between inclusion and non-state programming for refugees—lies at the foundation of many other debates in refugee education. While inclusion is considered best practice, implementation varies widely in policy and practice. And where gaps or barriers exist, non-state programming often fills in the gaps. Critically, inclusion has tremendous implications not only for refugee students but also for refugee teachers, who must be central to any dialogue about education policy. Linked to the issue of inclusion is the second set of tensions between the emergency and long-term responses: while these should work together, they are often disconnected in planning and in funding mechanisms and fail to support one another. The third set of tensions between global and national responsibility of refugee education touches on questions not only of who provides education, but who pays for it, an ongoing point of contention

when inclusion in national systems is the long-term strategy. Global donors continue to wrestle with the extent to which incentivization or requirements for inclusion should be a condition of funding. Furthermore, donors must also contend with the question of how domestic and global financing should interact in the long run. Addressing the questions that underlie these tensions will be essential for advancing policy and program design and implementation, global and national coordination and planning, and financing of refugee education.

Across all these tensions, there is a clear need to center refugee voices and better engage refugees in policy and program development. While this need is widely acknowledged across stakeholders, it is rarely meaningfully executed, and policymakers can learn a great deal from non-state actors who have more intentionally worked to engage refugees.

Opportunities for future research, policy, and advocacy

This paper has largely focused on how to make good on the commitments that the global community and national governments have already made to refugee education. While a comprehensive guide of next steps is outside the scope of this paper—and would vary substantially across contexts—a few points have emerged through consultations and discussions as (often underemphasized) opportunities to further policy and advocacy. Across the tensions, there is a clear need for more data on the scope and scale of refugee education and on what works well (and what does not) and, critically, a need to better use data and evidence for advocacy and policy development. Beyond this, lessons learned, tools, and resources need to be more accessible and more actively shared.

More data and evidence on refugee education inclusion

Data on the number of refugee students in formal education and in non-formal education, the number of refugee teachers working in formal and non-formal settings, and aid and national investment in both is lacking. A global dashboard of refugee education inclusion data may help guide policymaking, funder decisionmaking, and implementer practice. Such a resource would require substantial collaboration between national governments and bi- and multilateral funders, research institutes, and other stakeholders.

Additionally, further data to generate greater support for economic investment in refugee education would be valuable. This would include how the costs of inclusion measure up to non-inclusive strategies, the economic and social costs of *excluding* refugees, and the benefits of inclusion to national populations and economies.

At the same time, more evidence is needed to bolster global support for refugee education in a competitive and potentially shrinking global aid budget. Evidence needs to translate into increased momentum and strong collaboration among donors to increase investment and resolve long-standing tensions addressed in this paper.

Globally and nationally, more and stronger evidence on how best to include refugee students could help mitigate persistent tensions in the field. For instance, at the classroom level, evidence could include specific structures needed to support language acquisition in both mother tongue and host country language of instruction. At the school level, better understanding the school leadership and management strategies that facilitate inclusion could fill an important gap. At the administrative level, evidence could include exploring how technology could help resolve certification and accreditation for millions of refugees. Across all levels, evidence considering how teachers can better foster inclusion and how refugee teachers can meaningfully be included can help build up guidance in this critical area.

To support a stronger refugee voice (students, parents, teachers) in the policies and practices that impact their inclusion in refugee education, better evidence of the benefits to outcomes is needed in addition to an understanding of the mechanisms of engagement that would be most effective at the global, national, and local levels.

Translating research into practical guidelines and tools

While useful evidence and guidance on many key refugee education topics *does* exist, it is often not accessed when it is needed most. Condensing existing research and lessons learned into actionable, accessible tools may also be a useful process, creating centrally housed global public goods that could provide realistic guidance at various stages of planning and response. An example could include guides on early mobilization and preparedness at the national level.

Furthering policy and advocacy agendas

Better leveraging the research discussed above—alongside existing research on the tremendous benefits of investments such as ECE, mental health, and other under-supported areas—to make the case to governments, funders, and others for effective and inclusive strategies will be critical to ensure quality education for all.

The promises of education for refugee and host community students cannot be met without a well-supported education workforce. As such, it is critical to ensure that the needs of teachers—both refugee teachers and host community teachers working with refugee students—and school leaders are considered in program and policy design and that they are effectively guided and supported to implement inclusive education.

Amplifying refugee networks and engaging them in program development and policy dialogue could be a powerful strategy for building refugee voices. Local, national, and international decisionmakers—state and non-state, policymaker, funder, and implementer—must be intentional in seeking out these networks and building their perspectives into decisionmaking. However, engaging with external refugee networks and organizations is not enough; organizations working on refugee education must do more to bring refugees into their organizational structures in staff and leadership roles.

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