

CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND THE REFUGEE CRISIS

QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL

The continuing impact of the global refugee crisis on the world's children and young people is of profound concern to the NASUWT.

There are over 60 million refugees and displaced people worldwide. Half of the world's refugees are aged under 18, many travelling unaccompanied. More than half of the refugees from the Middle East and North Africa – some of whom are seeking safety and security in the UK – are below 18 years of age.

Refugees are protected in international law under the 1951 United Nations (UN) Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol. The 1951 Convention establishes the principle that refugees should not be expelled or returned to situations where their life and freedom would be under threat. This includes the right to safety, access to asylum procedures that are fair and efficient, and basic human rights to allow them to live in dignity and safety.

Worldwide over 60 million children, mainly girls, are denied the right to education. The failure to secure the right to education represents one of the greatest threats to global peace and security today.

The 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child confirms the rights of all children and young people to shelter, protection from abuse, access to healthcare, freedom from violence, and to high-quality education.

The NASUWT believes that education transforms lives and life chances. Schools develop and realise human potential, they keep children safe from abuse and they represent a vital investment in children's futures and in the future of our communities and of our planet. The NASUWT advocates for quality education as an essential part of the global response to the challenge of securing a sustainable future for all.

In September 2015, the international community committed to the Global Goals for Sustainable Development. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aim to end extreme poverty, fight inequality and injustice and tackle climate change. The NASUWT supports the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The global goal for education (or SDG4) aims to 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030.' SDG4 requires governments around the world to invest in quality education and ensure that all children and young people, including the world's refugee children and young people, have access to such education.

The SDGs apply to everyone, including refugees and migrants. All governments have a critical role to play in delivering the 2030 agenda, working together with civil society organisations, including trade unions. The UK is a signatory to the SDGs.

NO ROOM FOR COMPLACENCY

The NASUWT welcomes the commitment by the UK Parliament to invest 0.7% of GDP in international development. But we should not be complacent. A key priority for the UK Government should be to ensure that all refugee children and young people living in the UK are provided with access to education, care and other forms of support.

- a. 25% of the world's children are now living in crisis situations, according to Unicef;
- b. many child refugees are denied fundamental rights in practice;
- c. one in six – or 75 million – children from pre-primary to upper-secondary age (3-18) living in nations affected by crises are classed as being in desperate need of educational support;¹
- d. only two per cent of global humanitarian appeals are spent on education;
- e. many refugee and displaced children have been exposed to violence as a consequence of schools in their countries of origin being occupied and used for military purposes;
- f. many child refugees continue to live with the trauma of rape, sexual violence and armed conflict, without access to appropriate and timely mental and emotional support.

The NASUWT looks to the UK Government and government administrations throughout the UK to play their full part in securing the right to quality education for refugee children and young people.

¹ Overseas Development Institute (2016), *Education Cannot Wait*.

SECURING TANGIBLE PROGRESS TOWARDS 2030

The NASUWT believes that specific action is needed to secure the rights of refugee children and young people, including:

1. continuing to support the needs of the world's refugee children and young people both at home and abroad. This includes ensuring that the UK welcomes refugees and those fleeing violence and persecution;
2. actively complying with international conventions and treaties on refugees and human rights, and on sustainable development (including the UN commitment to secure quality education for all children and young people by 2030);
3. ensuring investment in infrastructure and support programmes to assist refugee children, young people and families living in the UK;
4. ensuring that refugee children and young people in the UK have access to the full range of educational support, mental health services and resources they need to help them achieve and succeed;
5. ensuring that schools and colleges in the UK are provided with appropriate information, guidance and support to meet the needs of refugee children and young people. This should include information about the rights of refugee children, and guidance to dispel myths and to help protect refugee children and young people from abuse;
6. supporting UK schools and colleges in challenging anti-refugee prejudice, racism and religious intolerance and to advance equality and human rights in the classroom;
7. ensuring that the public narrative about refugees and migrants demonstrates dignity and respect, and taking action explicitly to confront anti-refugee sentiments and negative and sensationalist reporting about refugees and migrants. Given trends in the level of recorded hate crimes, this should take the form of a positive 'refugees welcome' commitment to which all political parties should be invited to be signatories;
8. ensuring systems for recording and reporting the number of hate-related incidents in schools and colleges, including monitoring of incidents targeting refugees;
9. promoting awareness in schools, colleges and communities of modern-day slavery, human trafficking and sexual violence, including the particular risks faced by refugees;
10. ensuring that all refugee children and young people have access to free, high-quality education and examining, specifically, the progress of refugee pupils in relation to their education participation, attainment and outcomes/destinations;
11. reviewing and expanding the provision of specialist support services for refugee children and young people, including those with special/additional educational needs. Government/administrations should consider the need for additional investment, given the range of demands on existing services for children and families;
12. recruiting additional specialist staff in schools to assist the inclusion and integration of refugee pupils and to help overcome barriers to participation;
13. recognising refugee teachers in the UK as a valuable resource in the education of all children, including refugee children, and in the context of promoting knowledge and understanding on global issues. It is vital that the skills, experience and rights of refugee teachers in the UK are recognised and respected. This should include recognising and respecting the skills and qualifications of refugee teachers who are undocumented;
14. continuing to support international education and assistance programmes for children and young people living in refugee transit camps overseas;
15. committing to work with international bodies to ensure that all schools are safe sanctuaries, free from militarisation, military occupation and targeted violence. This should include active consideration of endorsing the Unicef Safe Schools Declaration.

FURTHER INFORMATION

If you would like to discuss any of the issues contained in this briefing, please contact us at:

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