

Forum:	Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee (GA3)
Issue:	Exploring Alternatives to Refugee Camps
Student Officer:	Marilia Giannakaki
Position:	Co-Chair

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear Delegates,

My name is Marilia Giannakaki, and it is my utmost honor to serve as a Co-Chair in the Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee of this year's Platon School Model United Nations Conference. I currently am an IB1 student at Pierce-The American College of Greece. I am proud to say that by the time of the conference, I will have chaired 5 times, whilst being a Head of my school's MUN morning club and an active member of the 6th ACGMUN's Organizing Team.

MUN has shifted my view on the world radically and has helped me develop an interest in political affairs as well. It is a wonderful experience for students to expand their knowledge on issues that affect modern society, improve their public speaking and, at the same time, have fun and make unforgettable memories. Moreover, the friendships that are made during conferences are an inevitable part of this extraordinary experience. I hope I can pass on to all of you the love and fondness I have for this "hobby" of mine and make memories together that we cherish for the rest of our lives.

In this year's agenda for the GA3 Committee, we are faced with very important issues, "Exploring Alternatives to Refugee Camps" being one of them. This will be the topic of my expertise. This guide aims to provide you with all the information you will need for the conference, including past attempts to resolve the issue, important Treaties and Conventions, as well as possible solutions, which will be very helpful regarding the construction of clauses. Of course, I would recommend that you conduct your own personal research on the topic and regarding the policy of your country on it, and to not rely solely on this guide. If you have any questions regarding the Rules of Procedure or the topic itself, please do not hesitate to contact me via email at mariliageannakakes@outlook.com; I will reply as soon as I read your mail! Looking forward to meeting you all in March!

Yours truly,

Marilia Giannakaki

INTRODUCTION

Refugees are groups of people who have been forced to flee their homeland or current place of residence due to war, conflict or persecution, and find refuge in other nations. The difference between refugees and immigrants is crucial, since the former had no choice but to seek shelter, whereas the latter made the choice to move away to other parts of the world. Moreover, refugees look for asylum in regions outside of their country's territory, because fleeing to another region within their homeland would make them internally displaced.

Refugee camps are facilities in which refugees are allowed to stay temporarily until they find a more stable residential facility or obtain citizenship in the country that they had fled to. According to the United Nations Refugee Agency, approximately 6.6 million refugees, making up 22% of the world's refugee population, live in such camps, with 4.5 million residing in "planned and managed" camps and an estimated 2 million in "self-settled" camps.¹ Refugees residing in such camps have to face overcrowding, due to the lack of sufficient infrastructure, which leads to a lack of privacy. Moreover, they are forced to live surrounded by trash, posing a threat to their health and well-being due to the lack of hygienic conditions.

Conditions in Refugee Camps have raised public concern. Apart from the fact that 36% of refugees live under the set poverty line², a pattern of negligence from governments can be seen, which is evident from the lack of hygiene, access to basic humanitarian needs, as well as education in such facilities. Thus, it is especially important that in order to improve the standard living conditions for refugees, a solution is found which poses the need to find alternatives to refugee camps.



Figure 1:
Conditions in a
refugee camp in
Greece during
the Europe
Refugee Crisis

¹ "Refugee Camps: Definition, Facts and Statistics." *How to Help Refugees - Aid, Relief and Donations*, www.unrefugees.org/news/refugee-camps-explained/.

² "How Refugees 'Decision to Live in or Outside a.'" *World Bank Blogs*, blogs.worldbank.org/dev4peace/how-refugees-decision-live-or-outside-camp-affects-their-quality-life.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Refugees

“People who have fled war, violence, conflict of persecution and have crossed an international border to find safety in another country.”³ It is crucial that the difference between refugees, immigrants, and internally displaced people is defined.

Immigrant

“A person who has arrived in a foreign country, usually for permanent residence.”⁴

Internally Displaced People (IDPs)

“Internally displaced people are people, or perhaps groups of people, who look for safety, but, unlike refugees, do so within their country of residence. Thus, they have not crossed a border, staying under the protection of the same government, even if it is responsible for their displacement.”⁵

Refugee Camps

“Temporary facilities built to provide immediate protection and assistance to people who have been forced to flee their homes due to war, persecution or violence.”⁶

Integration

“Incorporation as equals into society or an organization of individuals of different groups.”⁷

Xenophobia

“An aversion or hostility to, disdain for, or fear of foreigners, people from different cultures or strangers.”⁸

³ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. “What Is a Refugee?” *UNHCR*, UNHCR, The UN Refugee Agency, www.unhcr.org/what-is-a-refugee.html.

⁴ “Immigrant Definition & Meaning.” *Dictionary.com*, Dictionary.com, www.dictionary.com/browse/immigrant.

⁵ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. “Internally Displaced People.” *UNHCR*, UNHCR, The UN Refugee Agency, www.unhcr.org/internally-displaced-people.html.

⁶ “What Is a Refugee Camp? Definition and Statistics: USA for UNHCR.” *What Is a Refugee Camp? Definition and Statistics | USA for UNHCR*, www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/camps/.

⁷ “Integration Definition & Meaning.” *Merriam-Webster*, Merriam-Webster, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/integration.

⁸ “Xenophobia Definition & Meaning.” *Dictionary.com*, Dictionary.com, www.dictionary.com/browse/xenophobia.

Asylum

“Protection given by a government to someone who has left another country, usually as a political refugee”.⁹

Humanitarian Needs

The basic needs that people affected by disaster have, usually fall under the following categories; food, shelter, non-food items (comfort items), water, sanitation and hygiene promotion.¹⁰

Social Marginalization

The denial of access to basic services or opportunities offered within society.¹¹

Economic Segregation

“Residential segregation according to either the social class or economic status of a person or groups of people.”¹²

Repatriation

“The act or process of returning someone to their country of origin, allegiance, or citizenship.”¹³

Urban Planning

“The process of developing and designing urban areas to meet the needs of a community.”¹⁴

Persecution

This term refers to hostility and ill-treatment towards a person or group of people, regarding a personal characteristic, such as nationality, religion or political beliefs.

⁹ “Asylum Definition.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., www.britannica.com/dictionary/asylum.

¹⁰ “Humanitarian Needs.” *Humanitarian Coalition*, www.humanitariancoalition.ca/humanitarian-needs.

¹¹ Platform, European Liberties. “What Is Marginalization? What to Do If You Are Marginalized?” *Liberties.eu*, www.liberties.eu/en/stories/marginalization-and-being-marginalized/43767.

¹² “Economic Segregation.” *Economic Segregation - an Overview | ScienceDirect Topics*, www.sciencedirect.com/topics/social-sciences/economic-segregation.

¹³ “Repatriation Definition & Meaning.” *Merriam-Webster*, Merriam-Webster, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/repatriation.

¹⁴ Sailus, Marisa. “7 Types of Urban Planning Concepts Explained.” *ClearPoint Strategy*, 29 June 2022, www.clearpointstrategy.com/types-of-urban-planning/.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Refugee camps serve as temporary facilities for refugees to reside in. Such facilities are mostly made up from arrays of tents, as seen in the figure below.



Figure 2: Maidan Tents

Sometimes, though, refugee camps become more permanent facilities, due to the inability of refugees to find more stable housing. More specifically, if a refugee is displaced for more than 5 years, they are considered to be in a protracted refugee situation, according to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The average time that is spent in such camps well exceeds the 5-year time period, being approximately 20 years.¹⁵ This goes to show that, in such cases, refugee camps operate as a permanent place of residence for most refugees, for a significant period of their lives.

Causes as to why one becomes a refugee

There are numerous reasons why one becomes a refugee. Firstly, war forces people to flee their homeland, as this situation poses a threat to their safety and well-being. Moreover, ethnic and political violence drives numerous people to become refugees. This refers to the “deliberate use of power and force to achieve political goals, either by physical or psychological acts, or both, whose goal is to injure or intimidate a

¹⁵ “News & Insights.” *Archive Global*, archiveglobal.org/refugee-camps-temporary-approach-harmful-health/.

population”.¹⁶ Another reason why one becomes a refugee is due to persecution. This usually happens in terms of political beliefs, religion, race or nationality of a particular group of people, through violent means, forcing them to seek asylum in another nation.

Concerns over refugee camps

Health Risks

Prolonged residence in inadequate housing, such as simple tents, abandoned buildings and badly constructed infrastructure along with exposure to the climate, can pose significant health risks to the refugees. To elaborate, conditions such as rain and humidity create dampness within camps, and, in combination with overcrowding, are associated with respiratory issues. Moreover, lack of ventilation, flooding, humidity and structural issues, such as cracks in walls and seepages in ceilings lead to environmental risks, which are also linked with the disease tuberculosis, a sometimes fatal bacterium which primarily harms the lungs.

Moreover, chronic illnesses are profound in refugee camps due to water leakages that affect vulnerable age groups, especially children; diarrhea was detected in 10% of children and intestinal parasites in 24% of children at a camp¹⁷ in Gaza. The above diseases are relatively easy to treat in most cases, but given the condition that the individuals in question live in, it is highly likely that they will be fatal. Another disease that contributes significantly to child mortality rates is pneumonia, which is profound in 5 in 90 UNHCR camps in African and Asian regions.¹⁸

Refugee camps, posing such a threat to refugees’ overall health and well-being, prevents their re-integration in society for the following reasons. Firstly, the lack of sufficient infrastructure and the isolation of such camps, usually in abandoned areas, makes it hard, or sometimes impossible, for refugees to be able to access civil services. Even if they could, however, there is a very high chance that they will either not be able-bodied, in other words able to work, or may pose a health risk to the people around them. Nevertheless, living in inhumane conditions is the main concern of the refugee population; the first step for their re-integration in society is to find more permanent, stable and safe housing.

¹⁶ Sousa, Cindy A. “Political Violence, Collective Functioning and Health: A Review of the Literature.” *Medicine, Conflict, and Survival*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, 2013, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3801099/>.

¹⁷ “News & Insights.” *Archive Global*, archiveglobal.org/refugee-camps-temporary-approach-harmful-health/.

¹⁸ “News & Insights.” *Archive Global*, archiveglobal.org/refugee-camps-temporary-approach-harmful-health/.

Poverty

Poverty is also prominent in refugee camps. 25% of families living in refugee camps claimed that they receive income from work, compared to 52% of refugees living outside of camps¹⁹. Thus, another problem occurs; inequality and economic segregation. By such statistics, it is inferred that not as many employment opportunities are offered to refugees residing in camps, in contrast to those who acquired a more permanent housing facility. In addition, food shortages are a usual phenomenon in refugee camps, which leads to exploitation of one another, in order to be able to provide food to support their families. This is evident by the fact that 90% of refugee families reduce their daily food intake or the purchase of essential goods, due to the debt they are in.²⁰

Similarly, high numbers of poverty within refugee camps lead the inhabitants to try to find an easier, more direct and feasible solution, that being finding food and other essential products within the camp itself. This explains the low percentage of refugees living in such camps to receive income from work, which is a form of social involvement for them. As seen from the paragraph above, as well, more work opportunities are taken up by refugees living outside the traditional camp system, as they have the ability to do so due to the incentive of trying to find stable income independently, and due to the fact that they can effectively avoid all the aforementioned drawbacks of camps that might keep them from finding work. Unfortunately, this is not the case with refugees in camps, as extreme poverty leads them to find quicker ways to cover their needs that include crime and exploitation.

Education

Education is another key issue that children and teenagers living in refugee camps face. 63% of refugee children are enrolled in primary school, with the universal rate being 91%²¹. This means that refugees as a segment of this generation have a statistically lower chance of successfully finding work, let alone work that would be able to support themselves and their families in the future. The outlook is made worse when you consider statistics in secondary education, with a 24% enrolment rate among refugees versus an 84% universal rate²². This, in turn, means that highly skilled laborers are even less common.

¹⁹ Organization, Bonyan. "What Are Refugees Challenges in Camps." *Bonyan Organization*, 7 Nov. 2022, bonyan.ngo/refugees-challenges-in-camps/.

²⁰ Organization, Bonyan. "What Are Refugees Challenges in Camps." *Bonyan Organization*, 7 Nov. 2022, bonyan.ngo/refugees-challenges-in-camps/.

²¹ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. "Education." *UNHCR*, UNHCR, The UN Refugee Agency, www.unhcr.org/education.html.

²² United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. "Education." *UNHCR*, UNHCR, The UN Refugee Agency, www.unhcr.org/education.html.

Role of Government

While governments around the world have made numerous attempts to improve the situation, the conditions of the average refugee camp largely remain the same. In numerous cases, refugees are forced to reside in abandoned public buildings, without any government assistance. As was stated above, this leaves the now vulnerable refugees in deplorable living conditions, and while there was technically some action made by the government, the action itself was nothing of great importance. Taking into consideration that the biggest refugee camps are situated in regions like Gaza and Jordan, the government might simply be unable to provide any help due to the sheer logistical scale of the operation that would have to be undertaken in those cases. This means that any hope the refugees would have of external aid would have to come from Non-Governmental Organizations, or organizations such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

The urgent need for alternatives to refugee camps

Taking into consideration the reasons for people to seek refuge, proper asylum and assistance needs to be given to them, ensuring that their humanitarian needs are met. Furthermore, phenomena such as social marginalization, meaning the isolation of refugees living in such camps from society, as well as economic segregation, can be seen in the aforementioned statistics on income. Hence, even if conditions were to improve radically, eradicating the phenomena of poverty, health risks and lack of education, social isolation would not follow the same pattern. This is the reason why it is of crucial importance to find alternatives to such camps, which would promote the refugees' inclusion and involvement in societal matters of their host nation. Moreover, through establishing such alternatives, refugees would be able to gradually transit from this form of semi-permanent residence to permanent housing.

Are there alternatives to refugee camps?

To address the issue, there are popular alternatives to refugee camps that focus on creating permanent residential facilities for refugees. The goal for such facilities is to semi-permanently host families and individuals who need it most, while also providing them with basic provisions, such as food and water.

By far the biggest and most obvious limitation of alternatives to refugee camps is funding, or lack thereof, especially in Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDCs). Without adequate funding, informal settlements in the form of refugee camps will have to prevail, which is not the ideal solution.

Another major problem is the lack of residential space that can be converted into refugee housing, especially in densely populated urban environments. One solution to this issue could be to convert the space taken up by refugee camps into permanent residential areas. However, the responsibility for such construction rests primarily

within the government, which has shown a consistent neglect of refugee camps in the past. Thus, promotion and some form of economic incentive must be provided to said governments, either by the United Nations, or by another organism, such as the World Bank.

By creating such alternatives, the gap between refugees living in camps and those living elsewhere can be bridged, particularly with regards to poverty and income, and ensure equality among refugees and other members of society. However, it is important to take into account the aforementioned considerations to ensure that the provision of alternatives to refugee camps does not impose a burden on the host nation.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

Greece

Greece, being a nation strongly affected by the refugee crisis, has taken action in order to provide a more organized response on the matter, by activating European Union (EU) mechanisms, which were created to aid in possible crises. With over 50,000 people having arrived in a span of one month (November-December) in 2015, EU Civil Protection Mechanism entered into force, requesting tents, beds, generators, first-aid kits and other sanitary equipment, while cooperating with the Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC), so as to provide a well-prepared response to possible crises. Moreover, this mechanism can provide modules, which are teams and equipment, and expertise, if requested or deemed necessary. In addition, since, during this time period the European Migrant Crisis was taking place, funding increased from 55% to 85%, in case of a refugee crisis.²³

Greece has not only acted by enforcing a crisis-response mechanism created by the EU but has created a refugee residential facility that is thought to function as an alternative to the traditional camps. City Plaza, a hotel business that shut down years ago, is now being used by refugees on the one hand, and anarcho-communist activists according to staff from Yale University who visited in 2017. In this hotel, refugees have the luxury of having their own bedrooms, balconies and bathrooms, but are also allowed to socialize, by getting together in the former cafeteria of the hotel. The hotel now consists of “cheap furniture, political posters, sign-up sheets for an open-mic

²³ “Press Corner.” *European Commission - European Commission*, ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/it/IP_15_6249.

night and shifts in the kitchen or nursery”.²⁴ Therefore, it is evident that refugees have created their own community, dividing up their duties, instead of exploiting one another, as it happened in the traditional refugee camp model, whilst being home to 400 people. The residents of the former hotel are either waiting for their asylum approval and their formal resettlement, or refugees who were successful in escaping refugee camps.

Greece is also the nation that has provided the most expensive humanitarian response in history, funding approximately \$803 million in humanitarian aid since June 2015.²⁵

Bangladesh

Bangladesh is home to the largest refugee camp in the world, namely the Kutupalong. Its population exceeds 860,000 people, with 600,000 inhabitants and 190,000 families. This informal camp was created by a stateless Muslim Ethnic Minority. The Rohingya people, living in Burma, were not recognized as a region and, after the rise of power of the dictator Shwe, who intended to proceed with genocide against them (“Operation Clean and Beautiful Nation” [1991-1992]), many of them had to flee to Bangladesh. In 2012, after the rise of the 969 movement, which was anti-Muslim, a total of 150,000 people had to flee the country. 2017 was Kutupalong’s peak, with 800,000 people arriving in the camp.²⁶

The issue with this camp is that since it is an informal camp, there is a lack of standards regarding infrastructure and a proper sewage system, which leads the refugees in the state discussed above. Houses are made of wood and cane and are being destroyed repeatedly due to floods, making living conditions horrible for the community. Fires also destroy homes; in March 2022, 66% of the camp was destroyed.²⁷ The authorities of Bangladesh are not helping either; informal schools are shut down, and access to services such as emergency services, healthcare and education are not provided. On the other hand, UNICEF was forced to step in, by running official schools and healthcare spots.

²⁴ Hosts, Written by Refugee. “A Successful Alternative to Refugee Camps: A Greek Squat Shames the EU and Ngos.” *Refugee Hosts*, 31 May 2019, refugeehosts.org/2018/01/26/a-successful-alternative-to-refugee-camps-a-greek-squat-shames-the-eu-and-ngos/.

²⁵ Hosts, Written by Refugee. “A Successful Alternative to Refugee Camps: A Greek Squat Shames the EU and Ngos.” *Refugee Hosts*, 31 May 2019, refugeehosts.org/2018/01/26/a-successful-alternative-to-refugee-camps-a-greek-squat-shames-the-eu-and-ngos/.

²⁶ “Kutupalong, the World's Largest Refugee Camp.” *Tomorrow.City - The Biggest Platform about Urban Innovation*, tomorrow.city/a/kutupalong-largest-refugee-camp-world.

²⁷ “Kutupalong, the World's Largest Refugee Camp.” *Tomorrow.City - The Biggest Platform about Urban Innovation*, tomorrow.city/a/kutupalong-largest-refugee-camp-world.

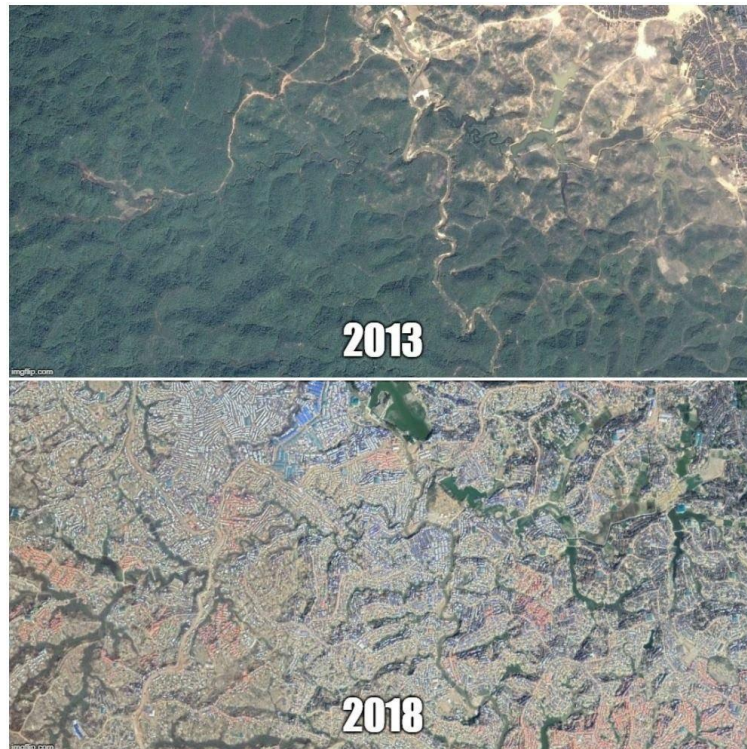


Figure 4: Transformation of the camp between 2013 and 2018

In 2020, one of the camp's sections started constructing the first houses, from steel and bamboo, creating a potential future city. These houses are of various heights, so as to be safer in cases of flooding and allow densification, since they do not take up as much space, ameliorating overcrowding. Moreover, petroleum gas was distributed for the first time in 2018. The mud pathways have also been paved, which indicates an improvement of the living conditions.

Jordan

Jordan is a nation that intakes a large number of refugees, with more than one million having fled there in the last decade. It takes the second place for their intake in refugees, that being 10.4% of refugees worldwide. Most refugees are from Syria, as a result of the outbreak of war there. Some have returned to Syria or have settled in other nations, making up the Syrian population in Jordan to be an estimated 675,000 registered refugees with the UNHCR. Jordan is also home to 2.3 million Palestinian refugees, mostly families and their descendants who had fled in the 1947-1949 Palestinian War and the Six Day War in 1967. As seen by the fact that 80% of Syrian refugees live in urban areas, one can say that the system of reintegration is successful. However, there are limited opportunities for employment, which leads to tension between Syrians and the local population, who are competing for a position in the workforce as well. An estimated 20% of Syrians lives in one of the two established refugee camps, which are run by the Jordanian authorities and managed by the

UNHCR²⁸. One of the two camps is called Zaatari, which opened in 2012. According to the UNHCR, “The first refugees to arrive in Zaatari camp were given tents by UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, to provide shelter from the harsh summer weather. In 2013, tents were replaced by static caravans. Their life span is six to eight years, meaning that most of them are now in need of urgent repair. According to a recent assessment, over 70 per cent of shelters now have walls, floors and ceilings that are considered substandard.”²⁹ Even if such facilities are not permanent, they provide more adequate conditions for refugees living in such camps. Water is also a problem in the camp, as an estimated 30% of households reported that the supply given to each shelter by the water network is not enough to cover all their needs. Even if a market, with most essential shops that are needed in the camp, is located 3 kilometers from its center, refugees are still isolated from the Jordanian society. More specifically, only 4% of refugees of working age have work permits. This leads to most families in the camp falling in debt, with 2/3 of the refugee families in Zaatari reporting such.³⁰

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

The UNDP is an UN-based agency, which focuses on international development. It operates in 170 nations, in an attempt to combat poverty and eradicate inequality. It works within 3 main areas; “sustainable development, democratic governance and peacebuilding, as well as climate and disaster resilience”.³¹ This Organization conducted a Research Paper in 2009, evaluating the living conditions of refugees in camps in the countries Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda (Africa), and Nepal, Thailand and Bangladesh (Asia). This research covered aspects such as gender-related issues, legal protection, education, health, refugee livelihood, food security and nutrition, as well as coping strategies. This study concluded the following: “the living conditions of refugees vary across thematic areas and are strongly contextualized, depending on a complex of social, economic, political and attitudinal factors. There is also evidence that despite often grim conditions, at times the targeted efforts of humanitarian assistance and own coping strategies produce situations for refugees that are

²⁸ Eirik Christophersen Published 01. Nov 2020 Edited 29. Jun 2022. “These 10 Countries Receive the Most Refugees.” *NRC*, <https://www.nrc.no/perspectives/2020/the-10-countries-that-receive-the-most-refugees/>.

²⁹ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. “Jordan's Za'atari Refugee Camp: 10 Facts at 10 Years.” *UNHCR*, UNHCR, The UN Refugee Agency, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/2022/7/62e2a95d4/jordans-zaatari-refugee-camp-10-facts-10-years.html>.

³⁰ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. “Jordan's Za'atari Refugee Camp: 10 Facts at 10 Years.” *UNHCR*, UNHCR, The UN Refugee Agency, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/2022/7/62e2a95d4/jordans-zaatari-refugee-camp-10-facts-10-years.html>.

³¹ “About Us: United Nations Development Programme.” *UNDP*, www.undp.org/about-us.

relatively better than that of the local hosting communities or the population in the region of origin.”³²

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

DATE	DESCRIPTION OF EVENT
10 December 1948	The General Assembly adopts the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
8 December 1949	The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is created.
1 December 1950	The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is created.
28 July 1951	The Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees is adopted.
22 November 1965	The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is created .
September 2015	The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs) are adopted.
19 September 2016	The United Nations Summit for Refugees and Migrants takes place.
19 September 2016	The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants is adopted.
10-11 December 2018	Modalities for the Intergovernmental Conference to Adopt the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration is adopted.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)

The UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development comprises 17 Goals, namely the Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs), that the UN hopes to achieve by the year 2030. A plethora of these goals are connected to the issue of refugees, as well as the complications they face in camps. More specifically, Goal 1 calls for the complete eradication of poverty throughout the world, for which refugee camps are, to an extent, responsible, which is also interconnected to Goal 2, which hopes to achieve zero hunger by 2030. Moreover, Goal 3 aims at good health and well-being, which is

³² Nations, United. “The Living Conditions and Well-Being of Refugees.” *Human Development Reports*, hdr.undp.org/content/living-conditions-and-well-being-refugees.

threatened by refugee camps, as diseases are widely spread and clean water and sanitation is not usually accessible (Goal 6). Goal 4 is also of significant importance; it aims at quality education, which is another complication that refugee children face, as many times they do not have access to education. Lastly, Goal 10 aims at reducing inequalities, which, once again, applies to the situation of refugees, which face serious social marginalization and inequalities within their host country.

[New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants \(A/RES/71/1\)](#)

The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants was adopted in 2016, during the UN Summit for Refugees and Migrants, which was called in order to find a more responsible and organized system for responding to the mass influx of refugees and migrants. This Declaration attacks issues such as the rights of refugees, xenophobia, violence, refugee education and aims towards more safe, orderly and regular migration.³³

[Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees \(1951\)](#)

The Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees was adopted in 1951 and includes a protocol (1967). A total of 149 states have ratified it and discuss the rights that refugees have, as well as the legal obligations of the member states to protect them. The principle of not letting refugees return to their homeland if there are serious threats to their freedom or life in general was made customary international law through this convention.

[United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees \(UNHCR\)](#)

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is a UN Agency that was created in 1950. The reason for its formation was the refugee crisis after the Second World War (WWII), and aimed at helping and protecting forcibly displaced individuals or communities, through means such as voluntary repatriation, integration in their former country of residence, settlement in another nation, or through monetary intervention.

The UNHCR has created a “Master Plan Approach”. It entails assessing the state that official refugee camps are in, if there are any, and then acting accordingly by building new ones or improving the already existing ones. Improvements come mainly in the form of services, such as provision of clean water, sanitation and sewage. This Plan aims to protect the environment, prevent fires, as well as virus outbreaks.

Moreover, the UNHCR assists through the provision of tents, as well as materials like plastic sheeting and matting, in order to build simple shelters. Furthermore, in situations where refugees are forced to live in shelters for a longer period of time, it

³³ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. “New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants.” *UNHCR*, UNHCR, The UN Refugee Agency, <https://www.unhcr.org/new-york-declaration-for-refugees-and-migrants.html>.

provides assistance through repairing communal shelters or through creating new homes.

This attempt to solve the issue of refugee camps might be partially successful, as it provides some with more permanent housing and others with more direct access to food and water, but it still does not tackle the lack of hygiene and privacy that most refugees in shelters or camps face. In addition, it is not an express alternative to refugee camps, meaning that all the solutions proposed by this “Master Plan Approach” are subject to unbelievable strain, making them mostly unsustainable.

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)

The UNRWA is an UN-run organization, which was created after the 1948 Arab-Israeli Conflict. This Agency has aided four generations of Palestinian refugees and has responded to over 750,000 refugees’ needs. Its assistance is given specifically to refugees whose place of residence was Palestine or those who are Palestinian descendants. In total, an estimated 5.8 million refugees are eligible for their services.³⁴ It aims at providing education to refugees, primary healthcare, relief services, improvement of camps or infrastructure, as well as emergency response in cases of armed conflict. A total of 58 refugee camps existing in Palestine, which were transformed into proper buildings, were still unsuccessful in tackling poverty and overcrowding of refugees. Since, under International Law, all people are entitled to adequate housing, the Infrastructure Camp Programme (ICIP) was launched, which managed to rebuild 72% of buildings in Nahr el Bared and 2,778 Houses in Gaza, having an impact on 1.63 million human lives.³⁵

On the one hand, this UN Agency has had a significant impact on Palestinian refugees’ lives, as it has been successful in providing them with the essential goods and services, as well as with humanitarian assistance. Many houses, which are more permanent facilities for refugees, were modernized and rebuilt, education, infrastructure and emergency services, which are all of crucial importance for them, were also given. Another positive aspect of the establishment and activity of the UNRWA is that it is focused on a specific population, that being Palestinian refugees, and in a specific region, as well. This makes taking action on the matter more focused and organized, hence being more effective. However, this confinement in one area can be perceived as a limitation, as well. Other refugees, in the same area of activity with the UNRWA might not receive the assistance they need, as they are not of Palestinian descent.

³⁴ “Who We Are - UNRWA.” *UNRWA*, www.unrwa.org/who-we-are.

³⁵ “Infrastructure & Camp Improvement.” *UNRWA*, www.unrwa.org/what-we-do/infrastructure-camp-improvement.

Hence, the creation of other similar organizations for more refugees could pose a solution to this problem.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Creation of more permanent and monitored housing facilities

As aforementioned, the current refugee facilities have posed many concerns over their success, undermining the aid they provide to refugees but, on the contrary, are posing a threat to their well-being. Thus, it is imperative that housing facilities are created, which will provide a more permanent residence to refugees. These facilities will meet all their necessary needs, such as heating, electricity, access to clean water, and privacy. In addition, such facilities, which will host families individually, will theoretically help prevent overcrowding as it is one of the main factors that contribute to the unhygienic nature of refugee camps. Regarding the necessary funding for such infrastructure, the UN World Bank can provide financial assistance to Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDCs) that have received an influx of refugees or any other country that is unable to provide the necessary funding allotments for such a project.

Integration of refugees into the host country's society

As mentioned throughout the study guide, refugees usually face problems when entering their host country's society; these can span from xenophobia encounters to many other types of issues, such as segregation, all of which prevent them from having opportunities in occupation, for example. It is, therefore, important for the host country to offer opportunities such as granting refugees citizenship, so as to make them feel more included in society. Moreover, as many refugees live under strained situations, and sometimes in poverty, another solution is to offer them employment, so as for them to be able to support themselves and their families financially, as well as help them in settling into their new life, in a completely foreign area for them.

Creation of a UN Monitoring Mechanism in Host Countries

An alternative to refugee camps was mentioned before, namely the creation of more permanent residential facilities for refugees in host nations. But, in order to prevent potential problems occurring within these facilities, such as negligence, meaning the lack of access to basic humanitarian needs, a UN Monitoring Mechanism can be created, in order to ensure that these facilities operate as set. This can happen through UN specialized personnel, sent to major host countries, whose duty is to conduct monthly inspections. Another key issue that they need to monitor is education; as

education is limited for them, as evident from the fact that 42% of children³⁶ were enrolled in school in the academic year 2020-21, according to the UNHCR, such personnel need to ensure that refugee children are able and have access to educational institutes. Monitoring, in addition, would entail authorized personnel to live in close quarters with the refugees in question, which would provide further insight into smaller problems that are not immediately apparent from a macro lens.

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³⁶ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. “Education.” *UNHCR*, UNHCR, The UN Refugee Agency, www.unhcr.org/education.html.

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