

**Forum:** Economic and Social Council

**Issue:** Addressing the socioeconomic impact of migration and displacement on host communities

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## Introduction

As we witness a rise in right-wing policies across the globe, anti-immigration policies have come alongside it. Looking at the situation superficially, these policies are often framed as simple cases of xenophobia. When looked into with more detail, however, it can be seen that immigration can have adverse effects on the host country if not managed correctly, giving rise to the anti-immigration views that create more tension in an already strained world order.

Armed conflict, political instability, and persecution have intensified in recent years, and as global geopolitics is lined with instability, those who face the horrors of war directly are forced to escape their countries and their pasts, hoping to find asylum in other countries. While it is of utmost importance to care for and provide the necessities for these people who have faced oppression, terrorism, and war, it is also important to consider what their presence can mean for the host communities that accept them. Although the provision of care and asylum for refugees has been strengthened through international frameworks, the situation of the host community is rarely considered, often resulting in adverse effects on the vulnerable populations of the host country.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 1 in 67 people globally have been displaced from their homes, either internally or internationally. With such a significant number of displaced people, the effects of their influx into host communities are no longer negligible and can amplify socioeconomic issues in the country. For example, although an influx of people can mean an increased number of workers and lower labor costs, benefiting corporations, it can also affect the job market, drive salaries down, and make it harder for members of the host community to find suitable jobs, especially when migrants work unregistered.

While this forms an example of potential adverse effects of immigration, the list extends much further. These effects, when not considered, result in immigration having an overall negative effect on the public, giving rise to anti-immigration views across the globe. Hence, the impacts of migration on host communities is an often overlooked, yet significant issue that affects global politics and countries' policies.

## Definition of Key Terms

**Host Community:** A host community, as defined by the UNHCR, is a community that hosts large populations of refugees or internally displaced persons, whether in camps, integrated into households, or independently (UNHCR). The countries that host communities reside in are called host countries (UNHCR).

**Forced Displacement:** Forced displacement is defined as the movement of people, internally or internationally, who have been forced to flee a region due to armed conflict, oppression, human rights abuses, or disasters. When displaced people are displaced in their home country, they are referred to as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) (UNHCR).

**Refugee:** Refugees are people who have escaped their home country over fears of armed conflict or persecution, and have sought asylum in other countries. Thus, refugee status can occur due to many reasons, ranging from homophobia to a civil war. The Refugee Convention further defines refugees as people having a well-founded fear, due to the abovementioned situations, and cannot or do not wish to return to their home country owing to that fear (Free Movement).

**Asylum:** Asylum is the granting of protection for an asylum seeker, giving them protection from refoulement — or being sent back to the persecuting country—, permission to remain on the host country's territory, and humane treatment (UNHCR).

**Labor Market Integration:** Labor market integration is defined as the extent to which migrants will achieve the same range of labor market participation as nationals of receiving countries by using their skills and realizing their economic potential. Refugees often have lower labor market integration compared to the host communities (European Union).

**Informal Employment:** Informal employment refers to working arrangements that are in practice or by law not subject to national labour legislation, income taxation, or entitlement to social protection or other employment guarantees; for example, advance notice of dismissal, severance pay, or paid annual or sick leave. Informal employment of refugees can affect the job market of the host country adversely and lower working standards overall (World Bank).

**Social Cohesion:** Social cohesion refers to the extent of connectedness and solidarity among groups in society. Lack of cohesion between host communities and refugees can result in social disconnect and increased tension (Oxford).

**Public Service Strain:** Public service strain is the overloading of public services such as healthcare and education. A sudden increase in the population of a region due to a refugee influx can cause public service strain, having adverse effects on both the refugees and the host community (World Bank).

**Xenophobia:** Xenophobia refers to the irrational fear or dislike of people from different countries or cultures, often resulting in discrimination and social exclusion (UNESCO).

## **General Overview**

As global geopolitics have become the stage for civil war and oppression, migration and displacement are becoming more common as we progress through the 21st century. With armed conflict, natural disasters, and oppressive regimes acting as the catalyst, the number of refugees has surged in recent years. According to the UNHCR, 123.2 million people were forcibly displaced at the end of 2024, which is 1 refugee for every 67 people on earth. There have been significant international efforts in offering protection to these refugees, and many obligations have been placed on host countries under international law. Such a large number of refugees can have significant effects on the host communities, which is why these effects should be considered alongside refugee rights when displaced people are given asylum to ensure the sustainability of migration policies.

Most displaced people are hosted in developing or less developed countries, which already face economic challenges. An influx of refugees to these countries can amplify existing problems, such as underdeveloped public infrastructure, by increasing the load that they face. Additionally, the large number of new people looking for employment can have negative effects on the job market. Refugees can also alter the social structure of host countries, and, when they are concentrated in one area, form ghettos.

### **The Labor Market**

An intake of refugees in a country can affect the labor market in a host of different ways. The increased workforce caused by the refugees often results in increases in the GDP's of countries, and helps corporations find people to employ. Although refugees can have positive effects on some statistics and can aid large corporations, they can also have detrimental effects on the job market for the host community. Increased competition for employment can result in a decrease in salaries, resulting in lower-paying job opportunities for members of the host community.

When displaced people do not have access to the labor market, they can be forced to seek informal employment. Informal workers often get paid less than the minimum wage. An increase in informal employment can push salaries down and harm the host country by reducing tax revenue, as the informal workers often do not pay taxes on their income. Furthermore, employers can specifically seek these employees who are paid less and do not receive adequate protection from unions, making formal employment more difficult.

### **Public Services**

Refugees often come into host countries with a lack of resources and often have to use public services like the healthcare system and public transportation. In developing countries, where existing infrastructure either barely meets the demand of the existing population or fails to do so, an increase in population caused by refugees can cause overcrowding of hospitals and transportation facilities. Countries with high refugee intakes often have lengthened hospital waiting times and a lack of

supplies. As refugees are people with needs beyond just healthcare, other infrastructures like the electricity grid and water supply systems can also be challenged.

Developing the public infrastructure needed to support refugees and helping those who need financial support also bears a burden on the governments of the host countries, stretching the budget of developing countries that already have budgeting problems. With governments having to allocate more funds to border protection, infrastructure, and financial support, they can resort to printing money or increasing national debt, resulting in higher inflation for the general population.

### **Social Structure**

Beyond economic and infrastructural challenges, displacement can influence social dynamics within host communities. Rapid demographic changes may alter the composition of neighborhoods and labor markets, contributing to uncertainty and perceptions of instability. Competition over employment, housing, and public services can heighten social tensions, particularly when assistance programs are perceived as unequal or when host populations believe their own needs are being deprioritized. Political actors may capitalize on these perceptions, linking socioeconomic strain to broader narratives about national identity, security, and sovereignty.

These pressures have contributed to the rise of restrictive migration policies and anti-immigration sentiment in various regions. Public concern over labor competition, welfare access, and cultural change has influenced electoral outcomes and policy debates. In some contexts, strained host-community relations have resulted in localized protests or unrest, underscoring the political sensitivity of displacement-related issues.

## **Major Parties Involved and Their Views**

**Türkiye:** Türkiye is one of the countries with the highest number of hosted refugees, hosting a total of 2.7 million refugees. Most of the refugees in Türkiye are of Syrian origin, having fled Syria after the start of the Syrian Civil War in 2011. Having exhausted the capacities of refugee camps in 2014, refugees started migrating into urban regions of Türkiye. As Türkiye offers Syrian refugees temporary protection, they are prevented from working in formal employment. Thus, many Syrian refugees have ended up informally employed, especially in the construction business. Coincidentally, in the 2020s, Türkiye's economy suffered from high inflation as government spending could not be covered with taxes.

**Lebanon:** Lebanon is the country with the highest number of refugees per capita, most of whom have fled Syria and Palestine amid the Syrian Civil War and the Gaza War. Lebanon has 4 million Lebanese citizens and 1.5 million Syrian refugees residing in the country. Lebanon also does not allow refugees to work in the country, forcing them to resort to informal, or illegal, methods of employment, such as child labor and prostitution. Despite this prohibition, the unemployment rate in

Lebanon doubled after the influx of refugees.

**Pakistan:** Unlike Lebanon and Türkiye, most of the refugees in Pakistan have fled Afghanistan, amid the Soviet-Afghan War and the following instability, including the rise of the Taliban. A majority of Afghan refugees have reported feeling welcome in Pakistan. With a large number of Afghans being uneducated, they have started working in low-skill jobs, often not paying taxes. The Pakistani government, aiming to reduce the tax losses, implemented measures to ensure the taxation of refugees. After a terrorist attack on a school, the government cracked down on illegal immigrants and deported them.

**Germany:** Germany, being one of the largest European countries, is also home to many refugees, with over one million being Ukrainian refugees. Upon the start of the Russo-Ukrainian War, Germany allowed Ukrainian residents to enter the country and reside in Germany temporarily, and offered free rail transportation. Legally, German law does not allow for the deportation of asylum seekers if doing so causes imminent danger for them.

### Timeline of Events

<b>10 December 1948</b>	The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was published
<b>28 July 1951</b>	The Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees is signed
<b>December 1979</b>	The Soviet-Afghan War began, sending a large number of refugees to neighboring countries
<b>6 April 1992</b>	The Bosnian War began
<b>March 2011</b>	The Syrian Civil War began, with millions seeking refuge in neighboring countries
<b>2015</b>	The European Migrant Crisis takes place
<b>24 February 2022</b>	The Russo-Ukrainian War begins

### UN Involvement

The UN has many commissions, sub-commissions, and organisations that focus on refugee protection and assistance in times of need. Some examples to these organisations are The United

Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees In The Near East (UNRWA), and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). These organisations have done extensive work in providing refugees with immediate access to necessities and with further assistance regarding bureaucratic processes. Additionally, and more importantly for the current agenda, both the UNHCR and the IOM have released reports on the effects of immigration on host communities. In addition to these organisations, other UN organisations, such as the World Bank, have also released similar reports. The UNHCR also collaborates with NGOs for information campaigns that promote social integration in host communities.

## **Relevant UN Documents**

The impact of forced migration on the labor market outcomes and welfare of host communities - Reference Paper for the 70th Anniversary of the 1951 Refugee Convention, July 2021

Refugees and displaced persons: Resolution of 3 October 1946 (E/RES/18 (III))

Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees, and displaced persons and humanitarian questions(A/RES/79/156)

## **Treaties and Events**

### **The 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees**

The 1951 Refugee Convention formed the first international definition of a refugee and set frameworks for how refugees can and cannot be treated. For example, the treaty bans the deportation of an asylum seeker if it would put them under an imminent threat. While some countries like the USA have only signed the 1967 Protocol, some like Türkiye have only signed the convention. Most countries, however, have signed both.

### **The Syrian Civil War**

The Syrian Civil War resulted in the Syrian Refugee Crisis, in which millions of Syrian civilians fled the horrors of war to seek asylum in neighboring countries. Most refugees in the neighboring region have sought asylum following this war, and the European Refugee Crisis is also related to the refugee flow caused by this war.

### **The Russo-Ukrainian War**

The Russo-Ukrainian War led millions of Ukrainians to flee the country and seek refuge in European countries. Most European countries welcomed Ukrainian refugees and provided significant assistance, leading some to criticise the preferential treatment given to Ukrainians compared to refugees from the Middle East.

## Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

Most of the efforts done to control the impacts of refugees on their host communities remain on the national level. Pakistan, for example, led initiatives to tax Afghan refugees who did not pay taxes. Similarly, some countries have tried prohibiting refugees from working in the host country, aiming to prevent the possible detrimental effects on the host's economy, which only seems to lead the refugees to illegal options, resulting in increased danger for them and tax losses for the government.

## Possible Solutions

The most significant measure that can be taken against the negative effects of refugees in host communities is planning. In Türkiye, for example, when labor camps were full, refugees were distributed into cities without much planning. Similarly, in Lebanon, due to political instabilities, refugees entered the country mostly unimpeded. The unplanned flow of refugees results in undocumented refugees whose integration into the host community cannot be planned. Excess refugee intake can also result in refugee camps filling, leading the refugees to urban settings without prior planning, like in Türkiye. If countries take refugees in a planned manner, in accordance with their refugee camp and infrastructure capabilities, the effects of refugees on host communities could be minimised.

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