

Forum:	Human Rights Committee
Issue:	Facilitating the social integration of refugees in their host countries
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Introduction

Today, the situation of refugees is not a localized condition but rather a global crisis that demands the attention of all Member States. Among the populations, refugees are the most vulnerable group to be exposed to poverty and social exclusion. For many, they are considered second-class individuals whom are not fit to be provided the rights normal citizens of a country have. For others they are potential threats to national security or extensively cheap work force that doesn't demand the provision of social security or the standardized minimum wage. Despite these varying perceptions of them, every refugee is a victim of a socio-political, economic or military conflict in his/her homeland that s/he had no control over. The theme of this year's conference "*Water: The Fundamental Source of Life, Wealth and Conflict*" not only displays the urgency for coming up with long-term solutions to provide refugees and asylum-seekers primary care and livestock but also emphasizes the importance of fighting against this multi-dimensional victimization of the refugees through effective dialogue between Member States and multilateral cooperation.

Alongside the provision of refugees immediate needs (such as sheltering, food, sanitation, etc.), the integration of these people into their socio-economic environments remains as one of the most challenging aspects of the ongoing refugee crisis. According to an EU-based research, the effective participation of refugees in their host community's labor markets plays a key role in their integration process while also reducing the fatality of the long-term economic impact of the crisis on the host countries. Additionally, the issue of social neutralization without the precondition of cultural elimination is another topic of heated debates ("Economic Challenges and Prospects of the Refugee Influx").

It is important to note that all the action to be taken should be supplemented by the establishment of quicker administrative process, as well as the "facilitated recognition of their foreign qualifications" (such as education and training.) Through these steps and your efforts in our committee, all of you delegates are expected to detach the term "refugee" from the term "outsider".

Definition of Key Terms

Refugee: In Article 1 of the UN 1951 Refugee Convention, as amended by the 1967 Protocol, a refugee is defined as the following: "*A person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the*

country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it..” (1951 Refugee Convention)

Integration: In their June 2011 report, with the title “*The Socio-Economic Integration of Migrants*”, Dustmann and Frattini defines integration as a “multi-facet concept, where the extent to which minority and immigrant groups are integrated into a country, and perform in its economy, can be measured along different dimensions (economic and non-economic) and according to different metrics (distance from the native population or the majority group conditional/unconditional on education and other observable characteristics).” (“*The Socio-Economic Integration of Migrants*”) Despite this definition however, there still remains an ambiguity over the cultural facet of this concept: Whether it is possible to achieve successful adaptation through complete cultural preservation or not remains a dilemma where the theoretical ideal and the practice of integration contradict.

Asylum-seeker: According to UNHCR’s report, there were approximately 1.8 million people who were waiting for the final decisions to their asylum claims worldwide at the end of 2014. Despite the term’s common confusion with the “refugee”, an asylum-seeker is an individual “whose request for sanctuary has yet to be processed.” (“*Asylum seekers – UNHCR*”) Different from a refugee, whose status has been recognized under the 1951 Convention, an asylum-seeker’s claim for gaining a refugee status has not been concluded and is still in the process of consideration.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs): Unlike refugees, these individuals are obligated to leave their homes yet instead of crossing the borders for safety, remain in their country of residence. Therefore, they still remain under the protection and authority of their government, despite the fact that government itself is responsible from their displacement. For a long time, IDPs were not diplomatically or socially recognized by the global community. Following their recognition, major steps in providing these individuals’ their primary rights and protection have been adopted yet despite the record breaking number of 38 million IDPs detected by the end of 2014, reported by UNHCR, these individuals are still not included in the UN organ’s original mandate.

Exclusion: World Health Organization (WHO) defines exclusion as the following: “*Exclusion consists of dynamic, multi-dimensional processes driven by unequal power relationships interacting across four main dimensions- economic, political, social and cultural- and at different levels including individual, household, group, community, country and global levels. It results in a continuum of inclusion/exclusion characterized by unequal access to resources, capabilities and rights which leads to inequalities in areas such as but not limited to health, education and other humanitarian services.*” (“*Social exclusion*”)

General Overview

In today's world, refugees and asylum-seekers establish a socio-demographical group that is highly vulnerable to social exclusion, poverty and basic human rights violations. Alongside the provision of these individuals' basic needs, such as livestock and sheltering, the socio-economic and cultural integration of these individuals to the communities of their host countries is a major issue, dominating today's both national and international diplomacy. Following the outbreak of socio-political and military problems in various Middle-Eastern, Asian and North African States (with Afghanistan, Syria and Somalia constituting the top three nationalities of all refugees worldwide), the United Nations (UN) has estimated that everyday around 320,000 men, women and children are being forced to leave their countries and look for refugee in foreign countries nearby. (*"The Socio-Economic Integration of Migrants"*, Dustmann & Frattini)

Integration: Single-sided or Dynamic?

Facilitating the process of social integration for refugees, through the development of successful legislative processes, holds vital significance since, for the majority of the refugees, when they will go back to their homelands remains an ambiguity. Their homeland might be engulfed in socio-political conflict or they might fear the possibility of social exclusion (in their home communities) or even prosecution. Consequently, the integration of these individuals into their host communities, sustained in a multi-dimensional manner (social, cultural and economic) is a must for establishing a durable solution for the ongoing refugee crisis without intervening with other Member States' internal affairs. Despite the successful attempts and practices of this integration process (such as in Switzerland or Sweden for Somalian/Afghan refugees), the provision and facilitation of this integration without setting the prerequisite of the host country's citizenship remains a major issue. Member States like Austria and Hungary stated their concern in providing these individuals (refugees) with the exact opportunities normal citizens of the host country are provided might induce the loss of significance and privilege of citizenship.

In her research report for United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) upon the issue of refugee's integration to their host communities, Alexandra Fielden describes the "local integration process" in three dimensions: Initially, it a legal process, by which through legislations, refugees are attributed a wide spectrum of rights by the host countries. Secondly, it is an economic process, necessitating the establishment of "sustainable livelihoods and a standard of living comparable to the host community" (Fielden, 7). Finally, she argues that it is a social and cultural process of "adaptation and acceptance that enables the refugees to contribute to the social life of the host country and live without the fear of discrimination" (Fielden, 7).

Despite her clear definition for the socio-cultural aspect of the integration process, the nature of this dimension remains a major dilemma in today's politics. As mentioned by the governmental research reports upon the nature of socio-cultural integration by Member States such as Portugal, this process is

believed not to be a single-sided but rather a dynamic step where the cultural “neutralization” of the refugees for the sake of socio-cultural naturalization in their host countries is a must.

Duration of Stay/Refuge:

Alongside the issue of whether cultural differences decreases the success of social compatibility between refugees and their host communities, the duration of refuge and asylum, demanded by the refugee is another issue of global Member State disagreement. As mentioned previously, due to the overall lack of efficient and action-oriented social integration policies, acquiring the citizenship of the host country is the only possible way of surviving in that country as a refugee rather than “the culmination of these people’s integration to their host communities”. However, since for the majority of these refugees when they will return back to their home is ambiguous, their application for citizenship is not even considered by the host country officials due to this ambiguity in the duration of their stay.

As an attempt to firmly establish the principle of local integration in international refugee law and to standardize the method to be adopted by host Member States in this process, the importance of acquiring citizenship for maintaining durable local integration has been acknowledged by the 1951 UN Refugee Convention. In Article 34, this acknowledgement is depicted as the following: “The contracting states shall as far as possible facilitate the assimilation and naturalization of refugees. They shall in particular make every effort to expedite naturalization proceedings.”

Alongside the efforts to be made by the Member States alone, it is also important to note that the host country’s socio-economic and geo-conjectural profile is a major determinant of the host country’s capability of facilitating the local integration both financially and socio-culturally. A more economically-developed State, due to its access to a wider range of sources and its higher demand in active labor force will be able to facilitate the integration much more rapidly than a less economically developed nation, suffering from high rates of unemployment, poverty or even border-line terrorism. This contrast not only illustrates the need for establishing a common set of economic, social and geo-conjectural criteria for being considered a host country (and thus accepting refugees) but also arranging the overall distribution of refugees among all Member States (based upon this criteria) through systematic border security and effective global communication.

Economic Integration:

The local integration of refugees is a process that is mutually beneficial for both the refugees and the host populations. Despite the consideration of huge refugee influxes to host countries as a “financial burden” by many Member States, successful integration of these individuals can also enhance economic development. In European Parliament (EU)’s policy report upon the integration of refugees in the labor market, it is stated that “through their introduction to the host community as a new labor force with a new

set of skills, different from the stereotype, refugees can be utilized in the development and urbanization of under-populated areas” (*Labor Market Integration of Refugees: Strategies and good practices*, 9). To support this claim, the report presents the Tanzanian government’s financial inclusion efforts following the influx of Burundian refugees in 1972, which ultimately resulted in the development of land available for farming in Tanzania’s remote areas. According to experts, participation in the labor market is the most vitally significant step for long-term social integration, since alongside enabling refugees to have fiscal contributions to their host communities, it also creates a network of social encounters between refugees and hosts (*Labor Market Integration of Refugees: Strategies and good practices*).

As mentioned previously, the level of readiness of each Member State for facilitating the integration process through the provision of housing, security, education, training, access to labor’s market and social/health services is not the same. In EU’s report “*Labor Market Integration of the Refugees: Strategies and Good Practices*”, these differences in terms of readiness among Member States is stated to be result of “uneven experience, infrastructure for service provision and financial resources for programs” (“*Labor Market Integration of the Refugees: Strategies and Good Practices*”, 8).

Throughout years, there have been a great number of attempts to improve the current policies for the sound integration of refugees into the labor market. These improvements have led to an international consensus upon a set of policies recommended to be adopted by every host Member State’s government. In EU’s aforementioned report, these policies are summarized as the following: “Recommended policies include an early offer of language tuition and skills assessment to asylum seekers with good prospects for being allowed to stay, quality counselling to develop and individualized integration plan, recognition of foreign credentials including alternative methods of assessing informal learning and work experiences, job search assistance making use of targeted entry subsidies and quality mentoring.” (“*Labor Market Integration of the Refugees: Strategies and Good Practices*”, 9)

Alongside these recommended policies, many politicians have also brought up the controversial issue of introducing a reduced minimum wage for refugee workers, compared to the original minimum wage valid for citizens.

Socio-cultural and Civic Integration:

In her research report, Fielden argues that the movement of people across border is not solely an expression of globalization where the profiles of nations become less dependent upon the geographical boundaries that mark them. It is also a brutal display of people’s social/economic/cultural victimization by the acts of other people in their homelands, where global involvement attempting to eliminate the conflict is inadequate and insufficient. Yet regardless of which perspective you embrace on this phenomenon, it is accurate to acknowledge this phenomenon’s influence and implications on national economic and political stabilities of Member States, as well as the cultural identities of both the host and refugee communities.

The rapid increase in refugees and asylum seekers worldwide necessitated the adoption of better civic integration and social cohesion policies but also revitalized the degraded significance of borders in global affairs. In their host countries, major groups of refugees are seen as the representative of their homelands and especially its conflicts rather than the victims of those very conflicts. Many are defined by where they geographically come from and are labeled as potential threats to national security and peace. Alongside these prejudices, the language barriers and cultural differences also pose additional challenges that decrease the speed of integration.

In a governmental report upon the civic integration of refugees, by New Zealand, the method upon which this process can be established is mentioned as the following: “The refugees may be from different parts of the world, but cultural issues, mental health, grief and trauma, family reunification, education and communication skills, as well as material needs relating to employment and housing are still high on the agenda. Through the efficient adoption of these policies, civic integration and democratic values can be enhanced in the refugee community. In her report, Fielden states that “through integration courses, as part of language classes and through participation in sport and other civil society activities”, refugees can be civically naturalized in their host communities.

Other Benefits of Local Integration:

In UNHCR’s report upon the issue of socio-economic integration of refugees, it is argued that this process has long-term benefits of access to new infrastructure. “The building of roads, schools and hospitals financed by international refugee aid are permanent and usually open to refugees and locals alike. The hosting of refugees can also be a show of good will, solidarity and burden sharing” (Fielden, 13).

Additionally, the integration also appeals to those who believe that keeping refugees in socially and geographically isolated concentration camps violates their basic human rights. “Freedom of movement and the right to work” are two fundamental human rights often denied to refugees confined to camp situations”, yet through integration, refugees are provided opportunities to implement these rights (at least in theory) (Fielden, 14).

Of course, alongside the pro-integration group, there also is an established social network of resistance against the local integration of refugee populations. According to Fielden, this opposition is based on a number of key elements. “Refugee camps have experienced direct attacks and militarization has sometimes become acute. Petty and organized crime has indeed flourished in some refugee hosting areas. These real and perceived security threats can cause resentment and clashed between locals and refugees, diminishing the chances for successful integration.”(Fielden, 15)

The final point to consider is how the assimilated refugee population is much more vulnerable in getting involved with theft, murder, drug dealing and other crimes as well as ideological radicalization under various terrorist extremists, such as ISIS or Al-Qaeda.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

European Union:

Only in 2015, more than 1 million refugees have made their way to Europe, both through legal and illegal means, seeking better living conditions and financial opportunities. Despite European Parliament's overall consensus upon the adoption of policies that will not only quicken the administrative process of local integration but also facilitate inclusion, European countries remain to be divided when it comes to their governmental attitude towards refugees. While some have announced to accept refugees in very small numbers, such as France and Italy, some have decided to double and triple those numbers like Germany and Poland. A minor group of countries like Hungary and Greece remain to hold on to their legislations that restrict and limit the chance of integration to an extremely minor group of refugee

United States of American (USA):

Having one of the highest foreign resident to population rate in the world, United States is not only an experienced host country with an abundance of financial, social and humanitarian resources. Through its diplomatic authority in global politics as well as its indirect/direct military/diplomatic involvement in the solution processes of various crisis, such as the Syrian War or the Ukrainian Conflict, that have resulted in major refugee movements, the US plays a major role in pioneering the legislative as well as socio-economic action to be taken for local integration.

Turkey:

With the total number of refugees reaching over 3 million, Turkey stands as the host country containing the largest population of Syrian refugees escaping the armed conflict in Syria. Alongside being considered a host country on its own due to its proximity to the ongoing crisis in Syria, Turkey is also being considered a direct path towards Europe, due to its shores in the Aegean Sea (towards Greece) and the Mediterranean (towards Italy) , as well as its continental link to Bulgaria. Within the last 7 months, over 350,000 refugees have attempted to illegally cross the Aegean Sea by boat and more than 70,000 of them drowned due to the lack of security procedures of their trip. Alongside the concentration camps in the Eastern and Southeastern Turkey for refugee, which are in bad condition due to over-population, the Turkish government has also adopted various social cohesion policies to engage in the integration process of these refugees. Among these policies existed a legislation that enabled refugees to directly get accepted into top Turkish universities without sitting the regular university exams nationals take. This policy and many others have been found radical and heavily criticized.

Russia:

Through its coalition with the Syrian government, Russia, despite its minor attempts in accepting Syrian refugees, holds vital significance since through its diplomatic communication with the Assad regime. Its direct diplomatic ties with both the Syrian government and the coalition countries, mainly Turkey and the US, enables it to come up with an action plan to reduce the Syrian refugee outflow from the Syrian territory to neighboring States.

Jordan:

Despite its direct involvement in the Syrian conflict through its acceptance of a significant influx of refugees to its borders, the official position of Jordanian diplomacy resumes to be characterized with hesitation, ambiguity and controversy. Since 2014, the total number of accepted refugees has surpassed 9% of the Kingdom's entire population. Contrary to other major host countries such as Turkey, the Jordanian delegation has presented a financial report in 2014 to display the overall cost for hosting predominantly Syrian refugees as 780 million US Dollars (a number which was expect to increase following the influx) without proposing any external financial aid for the hosting process.

Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC):

With its primary goal as “supporting economic growth and sustainability in the Asian-Pacific region”, APEC remains to be a key organization for the global refugee crisis. (“Mission Statement – APEC”) Despite the less attention attributed by today’s media to it than the ongoing Syrian Crisis, a major refugee crisis occurring within the Asian-Pacific region remains as an unsolved conflict. Alongside refugees, whose primary countries of origin are predominantly Afghanistan and Myanmar- as reported by UNHCR- the conflicted region also comprises of millions of IDPs as well as stateless people. In UNHCR report it is stated that the Afghan refugee population constitutes the largest protracted situation in the world, with over 96% of the Afghan refugees living in the neighboring Islamic Republics of Iran and Pakistan, where they have been generously hosted for decades.” (“UNHCR Final Report 2014”)

Timeline of Events

10 December 1948	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
December 1951	The Refugee Convention is accepted by the United Nations
1954 -1961	United Nation accepts 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of the Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness

April 2011	One of the most dramatic humanitarian crisis and refugee movement, originating in Syria breaks out.
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UN Involvement

Despite the influence of a localized refugee crisis (as in the example of the Syrian Conflict) is on a global scale, the core reasons and factors that lead into such crisis are generally related to the national socio-economic conditions of Member States. Therefore, the complete termination of these crises not only require the provision of humanitarian aid to refugees alongside their successful integration to their communities, but also the stimulation of effective dialogue between the parties in these conflicts to maintain an enduring solution. Throughout its establishment, one of the main goals of the UN was to stimulate this aforementioned diplomatic dialogue between parties without violating the national sovereignty of any country.

In order to achieve this aim, the UN follows to different yet interconnected paths. In order to contribute to the establishment of a diplomatic solution, the UN acts as a vector for many international conventions and agreements upon the status of refugees and how they are handled in their host countries. Through these conventions, the UN aims to firmly establish the definition of a refugee and also standardize their integration process globally.

Secondly, the UN is also greatly involved in the humanitarian aspect of the solution process. Concordant with the accepted conventions, UN has many organs and sub-organs, such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) or the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) that not only provides the necessary livestock to refugees but also work to improve their living conditions in many ways. Through the institutions they establish, these UN organs serve as the models for refugee integration in many aspects, from education and language to public health and right advocacy.

Relevant UN Documents

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 18 December 2018 (A/RES/63/148)

Assistance to Palestine refugees, 5 December 2008 (A/RES/63/91)

Assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa, 18 December 2014 (A/RES/69/154)

** This resolution suggest a method upon which delegates can integrate into their own actions plans for assisting the refugees not only in terms of their communal integration in their host countries but also their overall distribution among host countries.

Treaties and Events

The UN 1951 Refugee Convention

** This convention holds great significance due to its attempt to standardize who a refugee is globally for the first time. With its acceptance by over 140 Member States, the rights and privileges a refugee had due to his/her state as a refugee became a major issue in world diplomacy.

The UN 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of the Stateless Persons

** For the first time, the responsibilities a host country had in front of the refugees it accepted were discussed and stated explicitly.

The UN 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness

** For the first time, the socio-economic integration of refugees in their communities was acknowledged to be one of the most durable solutions to fight against refugee crisis and was attempted to be methodized.

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

Although through the aforementioned documents and conventions, a globally-acknowledged definition of who a refugee is and what rights s/he has due to his/her position as a refugee were attempted to be established, the practice of such diplomatic action was insufficient. Such insufficiency has many reasons behind it.

Firstly, the refugee crisis is being considered primarily as a humanitarian crisis rather than a socio-economic and diplomatic one. As a result, Member States are becoming more willing towards providing these refugees low-standard living conditions (in concentration camps or temporary shelters) rather than facilitating their socio-economic integration to their host communities as active contributors.

Secondly, the globally acknowledged conventions are majorly composed of non-obligatory proposals for short-term solutions such as the creation of a security zone where the refugees will be hosted till the conflict is resolved. Due to this short-term and non-obligatory nature of these conventions, under the general title of socio-economic integration, Member States are provided too much of a legislative free space which enables some to refuse the intake of any refugees with the excuse of their concerns with national security or socio-economic welfare of their citizens.

Possible Solutions

Firstly, a global set of criterion for being considered a host country should be established. Through the establishment of such a set, the provision of the host country's financial resources, community services and the territorial safety to the refugees could be ensured. Consequently, the violations of refugees' basic human rights could be minimized and hopefully eliminated.

Within the governments of the host countries, an organ should be established for the sake of taking the necessary legal/financial and demographic action to facilitate the integration of refugees into their host communities. Alongside building basic facilities such as shelter houses, schools, etc. these organs should

be connected to a UN committee that will be responsible from the negotiations between these national refugee institutions of Member States. Through arranging biannual global conferences, main issues such as the language barrier, the minimum wage for a refugee worker and many others related to the integration can be discussed in an effective way that will lead into global action.

Notes from the Chair

While proposing action-oriented solutions, delegates should also consider the varying socio-economic profiles of the Member States which also lead into variations in their capability of sharing their national financial sources with refugees or providing them with high-quality social services. Also, please bear in mind that alongside the economic profiles, the cultural tendencies and the geo-conjectural condition of a Member State are two major determinants for this capability as well.

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