

ExCom Conclusion: Education and Disability
NGO Collective Statement – Written Statement

This statement was drafted through consultation with a wide range of NGOs, including organisations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons. NGOs are pleased to provide our collective perspectives on the theme of refugee education.

Education is a fundamental human right, anchored in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Yet, for millions of displaced children and youth, this right is still denied.¹ The ExCom Conclusion on Education presents an opportunity for Member States to reaffirm their commitment to ensuring inclusive, equitable, and continuous education for refugee and other displaced children.

The basis must be the 4As framework²—Availability, Accessibility, Acceptability, and Adaptability—is not just a guideline: it is a moral and legal imperative. Education must be Available in every context, Accessible without discrimination and positive steps taken to include the most marginalized, Acceptable in quality and safety, and Adaptable to the unique needs of displaced learners and different contexts.

Education is not only a right—it is a key protection tool and the foundation of access to durable solutions. In line with the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies' Minimum Standards, safe learning environments provide structured, routine, and psychosocial support, helping protect children from violence and exploitation. Schools must become healing spaces, where children can rebuild resilience. Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) must be integrated into education to address the trauma of conflict, displacement, and discrimination carried by displaced children and often times, their teachers.

Barriers must be removed to enable sustainable solutions. Lack of documentation or legal status should never deny a child their right to learn. States must implement flexible, protection-sensitive enrolment mechanisms, put in place mechanisms to recognize non-formal and cross-border learning including planning for transitions into formal learning, to ensure continuity and reintegration. Cross-sector collaboration to create meaningful future opportunities aligned with durable solutions can strengthen incentives for refugee children to remain in school. When education connects to credible future pathways, including further learning, livelihoods, and integration, it increases the perceived value of staying in school. When refugee and other displaced children have the foundation of a quality, recognised education, their access to durable solutions is enhanced. Girls face unique challenges such as early marriage, pregnancy, housework, and menstrual stigma. We are already seeing how the funding cuts have led to girls falling out of education.

Finally, all education responses must meaningfully include children and youth with disabilities, who are among the most excluded in displacement settings. Inclusive education requires early identification of disabilities, reasonable accommodation, accessible infrastructure, assistive technologies, removing communication barriers including by providing sign language that deaf refugee children speak, accessible learning materials, and trained teachers using inclusive and differentiated approaches. Mental Health and Psychosocial Support must be disability-inclusive and address the compounded trauma faced

¹ <https://www.unrefugees.org/news/five-takeaways-from-unhcrs-2025-education-report/>

² <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000186604.locale=en>

by children with physical, sensory, intellectual, and psychosocial disabilities. Data must be disaggregated by disability, age, and gender to ensure accountability and targeted action.

Our Call to Action

To turn these principles into reality, we urge Member States, donors, and humanitarian actors to:

- **Ensure inclusive, responsive, and flexible national education systems:** Embed the inclusion of refugee and other displaced children and youth in education policies, planning, data systems and financing; invest in essential school infrastructure, including WASH; well-supported, well-prepared teaching workforces, and establish flexible entry and bridging pathways, such as language support and accelerated programmes, to uphold their right to education and ensure equitable access for all learners.
- **Ensure multiyear, predictable financing for education in emergencies.** Recent aid cuts have underscored the fragility of current financing models, with heavy consequences already being felt in disrupting refugee and other displaced children's education. A funding mechanism for the transition of refugee education into national systems is essential to ensure refugee and displaced children are not falling out of education.
- **Identify and remove systemic barriers to education:** Simplify documentation requirements, recognise cross-border learning certification, and establish bridges between non-formal, informal, and formal education pathways that lead to recognised qualifications, to support continuity and sustainable inclusion. Barriers to education affect individuals differently based on age, gender, diversity, disability, and origin.
- **Prioritize safe and protective learning environments:** Integrate MHPSS services into schools to address trauma and foster resilience, implement child protection safeguards to prevent peer-to-peer violence and gender-based violence and discrimination, and ensure physically safe schools, e.g. through policy checklists to assess how education is protected.
- **Empower teachers and refugee educators:** Provide teachers with training in Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), trauma-informed, inclusive, and gender-responsive pedagogy, and support refugee educators with their basic and wellbeing needs and to obtain certification and recognition within national education systems.
- **Strengthen cross-sectoral collaboration:** Refugee and other displaced children and their communities consistently prioritise education in emergencies. Prioritise listening to them, engaging schools, parents, communities, Refugee-Lead Organizations, and local authorities and civil society to ensure acceptance and social cohesion and promote coordination beyond the education sector to support the long-term inclusion and quality education for refugee and other displaced children and youth.

We welcome the decision to update the Executive Committee's Conclusion on international protection for refugees with disabilities. There are a number of key challenges hindering access to international protection for refugees with disabilities:

- **Failing to identify persons with disabilities arriving at the borders** leading to lack of disability-based disaggregated refugee data.
- **Failure to ensure accessibility and reasonable accommodation** including providing information in accessible formats, sign language interpretation, and procedural accommodations for refugees with psychosocial or intellectual disabilities navigating the Refugee Status Determination, and Asylum Application processes.
- **Inaccessible migration detention centres**, creating inhumane and degrading conditions for refugees and asylum seekers with disabilities.

- Inadequate and discretionary consideration of disability in analysing persecution allegations, and in implementing the non-refoulement principle.
- Extensive barriers for refugees and other forcibly displaced persons with disabilities to access basic needs such as health care, social protection, assistive devices, and community-based care and support ensuring their dignity and autonomy.

We call on all Member States, UN agencies, humanitarian actors, and other stakeholders to take immediate concrete measures to address these challenges with meaningful participation of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons with disabilities and their representative organizations.

The time for action is now. Education is not only a right—it is a tool for protection, empowerment, and sustainable development. Let us commit to ensuring that every displaced child has access to safe, inclusive, and quality education—wherever they are on their journey. Together, we can and must ensure that no child is left behind.