

Forum: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

Issue #1: Measures to address the inequalities of refugees in contrast to migrants, in regard to employment availability when entering a foreign country

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Introduction

Refugees encounter struggles when attempting to find employment in host countries. Oftentimes, they end up working low-wage jobs as there are a limited number of careers they are able to pursue due to their education level. There are several other barriers refugees face when attempting to find employment in foreign countries. Multiple migrants also encounter issues when moving but they usually have better credentials due to their education and being highly knowledgeable in specific departments. Many migrants are hired for jobs due to their past experiences and sometimes end up replacing locals as they have been given the opportunity and choice to move instead of being forcibly displaced.

It is important to mention that the right to work is stated in the 1951 Refugee Convention, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and various other agreements, yet host countries are often seen setting out restrictions for refugees in this department. The obstacles refugees face prevent them from securing a future in host countries and learning to rely solely on their own stable income. Refugees in multiple areas predominantly in the European region are given limited access to the employment market, preventing them from reaching

self-reliance at a quick rate. It is important to distinguish the motive of migration because refugees are those who flee for matters of safety and migrants are those who search for better economic opportunities, allowing refugees to apply for benefits when needed. On the other hand, there are countries that have not yet established programs to support/guide refugees and simply claim that these migrants are not allowed to work without a work permit which will only be granted after being in the county for a minimum period of time.

Integrating migrants and refugees into society could bring economic benefits and diversity to countries. In certain cases, it would limit poverty and improve living conditions as various refugees nowadays rely on low-paying jobs considered exploitation at times in countries unable to grant them work permits or decent jobs (especially in highly populated locations). This issue has shown to be handled differently by each country making it occasionally controversial to discuss and come to an agreement worldwide.

Definition of Key Terms

Migrant

Although there is no legal definition, a migrant is usually used to refer to an individual who temporarily moves to a country different from the one they usually reside in.

Refugee

An individual who has abandoned/fled their country of origin in fear of issues such as persecution, the violation of their basic human rights, violence, war, natural disasters, etc.

Immigrant

An individual who moves from their country of usual residence towards a foreign one with the intention of finding a permanent residence.

Employment

The state of having a paying job.

Foreign country

Any country in which you are not a citizen.

Aid

Helping or supporting an individual or group.

Work permit

An official document that allows foreigners to work in a country.

Asylum

A place of refuge, usually considered safe for refugees fleeing their native countries.

Aliens

Word used to refer to a foreigner.

General Overview

Poor working conditions

The flux of refugees into already populated countries continuously rises, leading to limited employment opportunities in the job market. This not only causes instability and the cost of living to increase but also tempts people with low or no income to rely on jobs that require long working hours to earn below minimum wage. The working conditions of these alternative jobs can be a safety hazard but also the only solution to escape civil wars or natural disasters. The International Labour Organization (ILO) has attempted to support refugees by

promoting decent job opportunities for refugees and improving the pre-existing structure for the employment market. Language proficiency is also a factor that doesn't allow refugees to attain high-paying jobs in host countries.

Temporary benefits

Various countries provide economic assistance to refugees unable to sustain themselves and find a place to reside. Such countries include the United States and its program called the Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA for short). This program allows refugees to receive benefits for up to 8 months. The quantity of money provided depends on the number of people you are responsible of providing for and your income. To be eligible for this program, refugees must have certain documents and resources of less than 6,000 USD. The application is available in several languages to facilitate the integration of refugees into society.

With Turkey being the largest host country for refugees, they also have programs available to support them. One of these assistance programs is called 'Conditional Cash Transfer for Education' (CCTE) and it is supported by multiple organizations including UNICEF, the Ministry of National Education (MoNE), and others. Although it does not assist refugees with finding employment, it allows eligible families to receive cash assistance in return for sending their children to school regularly. This system promotes education for people of all nationalities allowing people who were previously refugees to more easily acquire jobs.

Unemployment Rate

Although in some countries, including Canada, refugees are able to rapidly adapt in a matter of years, in others this is not the case. The unemployment rate of refugees in the United States was 65.1 %, whereas 39.9% for immigrants. This signifies that refugees were twice as likely to be found unemployed in the country if we compare people of similar traits including age, gender

identification, education level, etc. Refugees were also found to reside in the country for a shorter period of time and were less likely to secure a professional job after professionally working in similar countries as the immigrants. These refugee participants not only enjoyed the jobs less but also had a bigger language barrier which played a role when seeking employment. The United States, though not one of the largest host countries, still provides laws protecting refugees from discrimination in the work environment and especially when attempting to find a job.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

Egypt

Employers in Egypt are known to prioritize locals over foreigners including both migrants and refugees. There have also been limits established such as the total staff of a company cannot contain over 10% foreigners and over 20% of the total payroll. The permits are valid for only a year and a job can only be secured if an Egyptian national isn't qualified. All of this is mainly due to the economic and political conditions of the country causing low employment opportunities, high living costs, inflation, and overall instability. Refugees struggle to secure decent jobs and end up relying on low wages and long working hours, at times even with good credentials.

Portugal

Policies for the employment of refugees in Portugal allow them various rights including the right to be supplied with interpretation services, to public services, and to free legal assistance throughout the asylum application process. Asylum seekers also receive access to basic resources if not capable of providing for themselves. The right to work is granted immediately as you register for asylum, and free education is provided to all those between the ages of 6-18. In the case of migrants, it is necessary to have a residency permit to apply for jobs

within the Portuguese borders.

United Kingdom

After waiting a minimum of 12 months for a decision on their claim for asylum, asylum seekers are eligible to apply for a work permit in the UK. The law was created in 2005 by the EU but only a nine month waiting period is required. This work permit allows access to any job stated in the shortage occupation list made in 2010 which includes jobs that require highly skilled individuals with specific qualifications. The UK government is looking to clearly distinguish economic migrants from those searching for safety and asylum, and they do so by establishing policies that limit the pull of migrants.

Canada

The process of reviewing asylum claims and granting people work permits can happen almost immediately. The rate of unemployed refugees and Canadian nationals are fairly similar since refugees contribute to the economy. Refugees also earn a similar income to locals and integrate themselves into the middle class in just a few years. Temporary foreign workers (migrants) in Canada are protected by the same laws as locals (Canadians and permanent residents).

Turkey

Turkey is known as the largest host country, with most refugees coming from Syria due to the influx caused by the civil war. Job availability can be a struggle with the number of refugees continuously rising. The areas populated by the most refugees are also known to have higher unemployment rates than the national average, less job accessibility, and more informal businesses. It is also said that over half of the Syrian refugees that are of working age, work informally which leads to poor working conditions and various risks. Meanwhile, migrants, like in most other countries, simply have to be granted a work permit.

Timeline of Events

- December 14, 1950** The UNHCR was established to help relocate and protect Europeans who fled their homes in the aftermath of WWII. It was created by the United Nations General Assembly and now works internationally to ensure that refugees are given their human rights.
- 1956** First emergency for the UNHCR when around 200,000 people in Hungary fled the country, a majority by foot, to reach safety in Austria. This was around 2% of the country's population leaving due to repression by Soviet forces.
- March 2011** Marks the beginning of the largest refugee crisis in the world, the Syrian refugee crisis, which continues to be one of extreme concern.
- April 2013** The parliament declared the first law in Turkey referring to asylum, law on foreigners and international protection. These laws provide the main information relating to foreigners (including refugees) in Turkey. More information on the rights and obligations of these temporarily protected people was released in late 2014.
- April 2015** Large influx of asylum seekers attempting to enter Europe as several people fled conflicts such as civil war or persecution from countries including Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan.
- November 2019** Marks the outbreak of a pandemic led by a virus referred to as COVID-19. This affected people of all classes differently but left various people in need of asylum.

UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties, and Events

The 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 protocol are the key legal documents that establish the rights of refugees in all signatory countries. Not only do these documents provide a foundation of UNHCR's work but also define the term refugees for maximum clarity on anything related to the topic. Chapter III speaks of "gainful employment" with subtopics including wage-earning employment, self-reliance, and liberal professions. It addresses how legal refugees should be allowed rights including involvement in wage earning employment, attempts to overcome measures that restrict refugees from accessing the labor market, and declare that signatories have to attempt to utilize all laws and constitutions established to facilitate the integration of refugees into society. Though the most relevant part is the reference to "aliens", meaning migrants and immigrants who are not refugees. They ask countries to treat refugees in a favorable manner, no less than the way they treat aliens in similar circumstances, allowing refugees to manage businesses and fully independently engage in society.

Employment is also spoken of in the UNHCR integration handbook which is used to mainly promote self-reliance. It provides examples of initiatives countries can take as a method of supporting such independence of refugees. They recommend the creation of programmes which involve partnerships with educational systems and training institutions. Training will allow refugees to develop skills which will enable them to get higher level employment as special job placement tests were also a suggestion of the UN. All of this aims to prevent discrimination in the workplace and ensure refugees are provided enough qualification skills which will be accounted for as they will provide a broader range of opportunities in the future. Overall, the goal of this website was to inform countries of the important considerations when attempting to create a

programme for the adaptation of refugees in the employment market.

During late 2018, the United Nations General Assembly officially announced the Global Compact on Refugees which is a framework created for the world to internationally collaborate to find a sustainable solution to refugee crises. It provides guidance for governments and organizations in host countries to transform their communities into a place refugees can easily adapt to. One of the objectives consists of enhancing self-reliance to help relieve pressure from host countries, a skill that requires finding a decent employment. This framework is later on going to be supported by the Global Refugee Forum which is taking place in December of 2023. This forum will help make progress and establish implementations which were discussed previously in 2019.

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

The European Union which consists of a union of 27 countries within the European continent that share the goal of establishing a thriving economy whilst avoiding conflict with each other. Considering there has shown to be a substantial migration of refugees entering the European region coming from third world countries seeking stability in all aspects including politics and economics, the EU has decided to address the movement of refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers. With the emergence of the Ukrainian crisis it has become more important to reinforce the laws that state that such nations part of the union are responsible for allowing refugees easy access to sources such as the labor market and essential services. Refugees are to be given access to employment once they are granted such status and asylum seekers once their application has been waiting a maximum of nine months for legal entry/stay. Ukrainians on the other hand, due to the crisis reaching a peak, are to be granted employment immediately as they register for protection. Even with such laws being established, unemployment rates of migrants (including refugees

and asylum seekers) have continued to be significantly higher than those native to Europe. Refugees are often seen working low-skilled jobs that don't require much qualification which may lead to an increase of unemployment in the future as artificial intelligence begins replacing such workers.

Countries including the United States have addressed the issue in a very direct manner by implementing laws which forbid the discrimination of refugees within the work environment. They have created a clear process for refugees to apply for a permanent residence within the country of the United States, allowing them to receive equal rights as locals.

As the United States has restricted the entrance of migrants due to the establishment of certain policies, Canada, on the other hand, has experienced a labor shortage in areas that can require highly skilled workers. Canada's population is largely made up of immigrants who greatly support the economy which is why they aim to openly embrace multiculturalism. The federal immigration agency has dedicated around $\frac{3}{4}$ of their budget towards settlement programs that permit refugees to receive training and guidance. The Canadian process has helped the country be one of the most sought out host countries as all types of migrants get the opportunity to receive a notable position in society. The rates of illegal entrances within the country are shown to be low due to their strong screening process.

Possible Solutions

Countries have shown to handle this issue in various diverse ways, some of them include the creation of organizations dedicated to training refugees for specific work pathways so that they are able to be considered for equal opportunities as the majority of migrants. This will allow for a more smooth integration of foreigners into communities, and these organizations could receive support from more powerful groups including the UN. Countries that are economically

powerful could also fund such programs as it would require a large quantity of money to establish enough homes and find enough jobs.

The process of receiving a permit is also significantly more simple for migrants in certain countries, this could be revised and improved so that refugees can either receive the documents/supplies needed for a permit at a faster rate or allow them to be considered for permits more quickly (no specific waiting time required).

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)

The struggles refugees face when seeking employment has hindered sustainable development goal number eight, known as, decent work and economic growth. This goal refers to decreasing unemployment at a world scale so that economic growth can occur. The current labor market contains various challenges that prevent jobs from being easily accessible for all aliens but mostly refugees escaping prosecution with limited documentation available. Facilitating the integration of refugees within the society specifically in the work department would limit global unemployment, therefore, assisting the completion of the SDG number eight.

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Appendix

- I. <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/what-canadas-immigration-policy>
 - A. Provides data and information on Canada's Immigration policy for refugees. Speaks of why it is such a popular destination for Immigrants by showing different aspects of adaptation (how Canadians view foreigners, immigration process, policy on asylum seekers, etc).
- II. <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn01908>
 - A. Speaks in a more general sense of the process of receiving employment in the UK while giving reasoning for the establishment

of these policies. Also compares these more strict rules with those of other places such as all other countries in the EU.

III. <https://www.unhcr.org/media/28185>

A. This article displays the different sections of both the 1951 refugee convention and its 1967 protocol. These documents are the pillars on which UNHCR was built and various countries have chosen to follow.

IV. <https://www.unhcr.org/media/65040>

A. Offers data referring to various different important aspects to think about when refugees are integrating themselves into a country. Mentions specific relevant examples of things such as labor exploitation, the importance of education, amount of decent opportunities provided for refugees in certain underdeveloped nations, and information on UNHCR's actions.

V. <https://www.cgdev.org/blog/refugees-work-rights-around-world-introducing-our-new-report>

A. Includes de jure scores and de facto scores for different countries referring to the work rights of refugees. Helps have a general sense of the policies and execution of such policies in different countries

VI. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4347467/>

A. Study of unemployment of refugees in the United States. Provides data speaking of the unemployment of migrants compared to refugees in the US.

VII. <https://www.unhcr.ca/in-canada/refugees-in-canada/>

A. Information on the living conditions of refugees and asylum seekers residing in Canada. Has points on unemployment rate, sense of

belonging, and overall how refugees are able to easily adapt in Canada to live a similar life as locals. All of this is provided with data and percentages.

VIII. https://www.ilo.org/ankara/projects/WCMS_379375/lang--en/index.htm

A. Speaks of the challenges refugees face living in Turkey which is also known as the largest host country. Refugees struggle a lot to adapt and survive, all these issues are brought up on the website especially with the mention of Syrian refugees who tend to migrate to Turkey.