

Inclusive Education for Migrants and Refugees

47th Session of the Human Rights Council

Side Event

24 June 2021, 13:00 – 14:30

Background

Increasing conflicts, political and financial crisis have led to insecurity and hardship in many people's lives, resulting in increasing numbers of migrants and refugees and intensifying challenges in many societies. The COVID-19 has exacerbated tensions between migrant, refugee and host communities. Hate speech, stigmatization, incitement to discrimination and xenophobia have increased during the pandemic, building on an existing and generalized culture of mistrust in societies.

The pandemic has largely disrupted access to quality education, particularly for children who are displaced, migrants and refugees. An urgent response is needed to provide these children with the right to education and make sure that they are not left behind. A continuous effort to promote inclusive education in emergencies context where there is a limited access to basic services is critical to ensure access and quality education for all.

Article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child underlines the obligations of the States to promote quality education for all by stating that, among others, *'education of the child shall be directed to: (c) The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own; and (d) The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin.'*

Inclusive education must be based on a child rights approach and ensure that it provides opportunities for migrants, refugees and members of host communities to learn from one another, challenge their stereotypes and prejudices, learn to think critically, and foster values that are conducive for learning to live together.

Nevertheless, various challenges remain in the efforts to promote inclusive education. Although governments have made commitments through the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and through national policies to provide quality education to all, many are not always prepared to receive and develop inclusive education systems. Teachers and schools lack capacity and support to provide an inclusive environment for migrant and refugee children. Many schools lack funding and infrastructure, and teachers often have limited knowledge and competencies to deliver education that helps promote inclusion for migrant and refugee children.

It is important that national educational policies and programs are implemented effectively to address xenophobia and discrimination among migrants and refugees as a central response to the COVID-19 pandemic. They should contribute to building forward better to prevent further discrimination and rupture of the social fabric as well as helping to create new narratives of solidarity.

Objectives:

- Reflect on the challenges and opportunities to support the implementation of educational policies and programs that foster inclusive education as a central response to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic

- Identify good practices of how education can foster learning to live together in societies, in particular amidst increasing distrust, xenophobia and discrimination affecting migrants and refugees
- Share successful policies and programs to support quality and inclusive education for migrants and refugees.

Sponsors: International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID) and the Geneva Global Hub for EiE

Moderator: Prof. Mohammed Abu-Nimer, KAICIID Dialogue Center (confirmed)

Opening remarks: (TBC)

Speakers:

- Dr. Angeliki Aroni, Head of the Unit for Integration and Support in the Special Secretariat for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors, Ministry of Migration and Asylum, Greece (confirmed)
- Mrs. Asha Khan, UNICEF Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia and the Special Coordinator for the Refugee and Migrant Response in Europe (UNICEF confirmed)
- World Vison, Kenya (TBC)
- Maria Lucia Uribe, Executive Director, Arigatou International Geneva (confirmed)

Closing remarks: UNHCR for the Geneva Global Hub for Education in Emergencies (confirmed)