



The Refugee Crisis

Causes, Effects and Solutions

The Problem

A number of conditions have caused violent conflicts to break out in North Africa and the Middle East, leading tens of millions of people to flee their home countries for fear of political and/or religious persecution. In Syria alone, approximately 5.6 million people have fled their homes in pursuit of safety and protection (UNHCR, “Syria Regional Refugee Response”). The war in Syria is one of countless conflicts causing the forced migration of millions throughout the world. In 2018, a record 68.5 million people were forcibly displaced globally (UNHCR, “Statistical Yearbooks”). Further intensifying the crisis is the recognition that 85 percent of refugees seek asylum in developing countries (UNHCR, “Statistical Yearbook”). Bearing in mind the lack of resources in the developing world, refugees routinely face increased hardships in their host countries.

Often, the countries offering asylum expect refugees to fully integrate, severing all ties to their homelands. However, this integration process is fraught with challenges, including the frequently negative reactions of local populations. Lack of sufficient integration efforts on the part of host countries is merely one of countless issues faced by refugees. Ongoing efforts by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, or UNHCR, and the international community have made limited progress towards providing sufficient humanitarian relief, and so it is inevitable that additional response will be required.

Background

Over the last decade, the rise of violent conflicts globally has resulted in increased rates of forced migration. For instance, in 2011, the total number of refugees was approximately 10.4 million. Steadily increasing over the subsequent years, 2015 saw a 55 percent increase (“Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2015,” 2015). Half of the increased refugee population stems from the Syrian civil war, leading approximately 8.8 million Syrians to relocate to Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa. 4.4 million refugees have settled in countries such as Somalia, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo, while another 4.3 million have sought temporary protection in Europe (“Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2015,” 2015). This trend has resulted in more refugees in the world today than during the height of WWII. Numbers have kept growing since 2015 to the point that the number of refugees in each country seems to be rising.

Europe is the second largest recipient of displaced people. As of 2017, Turkey alone has welcomed around 3.4 million people with protective status, dwarfing the 970,365 in Germany (“UNHCR Statistics”). The journey to safety is often dangerous and places refugees’ lives at risk

of exploitation and increased risk of harm. For instance, roughly 3,770 people died or disappeared traversing the Aegean Sea. 50 percent of arrivals come from Syria, 32 percent from Afghanistan, and 9 percent from Iraq. Due to their increased vulnerabilities, child refugees often face even greater risks. Among those fleeing Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq alone, approximately 25 percent were children (“Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2015,” 2015).

Given the large influx of refugees, countries with smaller economies, such as those in Sub-Saharan Africa and Turkey, were simply not equipped to sustain sudden population booms. Hosting large populations of refugees strained the social welfare system and economic stability. As resources become scarce, unemployment runs high, creating domestic tension and insecurity. Interestingly, countries with larger economies are not as willing to make adjustments in their policies, which prompt countries like Turkey to seek financial support from the United Nations, NGO’s or neighboring countries.

To manage the impact of the refugee crisis, the UNHCR launched various programs to support life-saving services and protection of refugees in transit. Aided by, organizations and governments, volunteers placed food along the most frequented routes. Despite the humanitarian assistance and resources, countries have experienced great difficulty when trying to develop a comprehensive response to address the crisis, the repercussions of which have been felt across Europe and left the international community divided on a solution.

Long Term Challenges

First, the majority of refugees cannot return to their homeland because of the ongoing wars. Thus, many are forced to find refuge elsewhere. Primarily concerned with their personal safety, refugees don’t consider how they will pay for essentials or how their presence will be received. Instead, they tend to carry small items with sentimental value, the clothes on their backs and whatever money they can find. In some cases, they borrow money from family members to finance their journeys. Currently, they have no incentive to return home, because their families and hometowns have been destroyed. Thus, many refugees are willing to start over and rebuild their lives in a foreign land. Upon their arrival in a host country, some refugees receive individual accommodations, and some are forced to reside in refugee camps (“Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2015,” 2015).

Secondly, refugees face discrimination and violence even after obtaining legal status from the host country. Refugees have been often denied their social and economic rights within their new society. Due to the lack of resources available to governments facilitating effective local integration, many refugees remain at a disadvantage when trying to learn a new language and understand the social and political structures of their host country.

The international community has launched numerous projects to provide refugees with their basic needs, but they still lack a strategy to integrate displaced people into society. Cooperation between the UNHCR, World Bank, United Nations and various nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) aims to reduce these barriers. Initiatives undertaken by NGOs include

implementing vocational training for displaced adults in order to expand access to labor markets and economically empower refugees. In addition, NGOs seek to increase access to education for refugee children who often fall behind during their migration to host countries. In fact, one-third of refugee children do not attend school in their host countries (Brandt et al., 2018). Other struggles include inaccessibility of public services - healthcare, for instance - and lack of employment opportunities, primarily stemming from the lack of access to local resources. In the face of inadequate resources for refugees, NGOs seek to provide assistance.

What Embrace Relief Has Done to Achieve Progress

According to the United Nations, around 60,000 refugees currently reside in Greece, awaiting the outcome of their asylum claims (“United Nations”). Greece has attracted many seeking asylum as the country is an entry point into Europe and they legally cannot move farther into Europe due to border restrictions imposed by the European Union. Since many of these refugees will likely remain in Greece, it is important that help is given to them in regards to settling and integrating into these new societies. Assistance due to issues such as health concerns prompted the International Rescue Committee to step in to provide necessities such as clean water. As the refugees are moving from the refugee camps to independent housing, they are given assistance to maintain their rights, health, and stability. Similar to Embrace Relief, the International Rescue Committee helps integrate refugees within their new places of residency as they help the refugees build a new life, career, and also ensure that they know their rights. Embrace Relief supports these families in Greece via monetary donations and psychological support as creating a whole new life in a new environment is very difficult. Embrace Relief focuses on motivating and assisting refugees so that they can be as happy as possible in their new setting. Embrace Relief works hands on with refugees to assist them in various ways. This methodology can be seen in Embrace Relief’s work with refugees in Greece. Beyond providing these refugees with food packs, Embrace Relief offers shelter, psychological support and guidance as tools to help these refugees start a new life.

While in the countries refugees currently reside, Embrace Relief helps with many aspects of resettling. One main aspect of helping those displaced is to help them integrate into their new societies through creating opportunities such as jobs and housing. Refugees often need assistance starting their new lives in a new place and Embrace Relief has created programs such as “Wheels for Refugees” that created a campaign focused on distributing donated vehicles to refugees within the United States. This gives the refugees a means of transportation to get to work which helps them provide for their families. Embrace Relief works with organizations within the United States to help refugees that seek asylum within this country. However, Embrace Relief helps refugees all over the world. For Syrian refugees alone, Embrace Relief has delivered 29 containers of goods, has funded an educational program, and has donated meals and

clothes to Syrian refugees. Overall, Embrace Relief acts to help refugees from all over the world integrate into their countries of asylum. (“Home - Refugee Relief”).

Lastly, Embrace Relief launched a program to address the integration of refugees within their host countries, by organizing campaigns offering both guidance and material support for those who chose to relocate to the United States. With the help of local and national organizations within the United States, refugees received instruction in language, culture, education and employment. Embrace Relief recognizes that successful integration leads to a surge of productive members of society and the long term sustainability of their communities.

Embrace Relief and the United Nations

Embrace Relief’s mission is to provide humanitarian aid to all those in need. The organization is closely aligned with the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which reaffirm the “faith in fundamental human rights in the dignity and worth of the human person” (“The Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” 2019). Since adopting the declaration, Embrace Relief has upheld the humanity and fundamental rights to freedom, equality and dignity. All campaigns implemented by Embrace Relief champion the articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

Art (2). No Discrimination and right to life, liberty and security.

Art (4). No Slavery.

Art (5). No torture or degrading treatment or punishment.

Art (9). No arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

Art (13). Right to freedom of movement.

Art (14). Right to seek and enjoy asylum.

Art (15). Right to nationality.

Art (18). Right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

Art (19). Right to freedom of opinion and expression.

Art (25). Right to food, clothing, housing, medical care, social services and employment.

Art (26). Right to education.

Embrace Relief’s Continuing Role

Embrace Relief remains committed to resolving social problems, especially tied to humanitarian challenges, such as the refugee crisis, which has impacted more than 65 million people worldwide, or nearly 1 in every 110 people. Obviously, just one country is not capable of tackling this monumental issue (Brandt, 2019). Embrace Relief will continue to coordinate with volunteers and other agencies in order to ease assimilation. Embrace Relief believes that together, a peaceful environment and productive future for refugee families is possible. The organization’s hard-earned experience enables its members to identify challenges and create

comprehensive solutions. Furthermore, members of Embrace Relief believe that improving the standard of living begins at a local level, with the direct involvement of local civil initiatives to foster integration and inclusion of the refugee population. The organization's wide range of services increases the likelihood of adaptation and participation of both host and refugee communities.

Embrace Relief's focus for the future consists of spreading awareness of refugee crises and demonstrating that the international community has legal and moral obligations to aid those in need. It is the organization's hope to expand a global support network to avert the worst of these humanitarian crises.

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