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Considering measures to help refugees be able to contribute to society in host countries

UNHCR

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Issue: Considering measures to help refugees be able to contribute to society in host countries

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Introduction

When addressing the contribution refugees and asylum seekers can have to the societies in their host countries, there are several factors that must be taken into consideration for their contribution to not only be possible but also beneficial to the country. Therefore, it is important to consider these factors, which can include language barriers, lack of skills and education, and the initial disregard for the potential role refugees can play in a host country, and also examine how different countries address these factors. Additionally, as there is a significant amount of movement across borders, countries must be able to maintain relations or simply help and welcome refugees across safer territories.

Definition of Keywords

Asylum

A form of protection is provided by a state to a foreign individual to that state in order to avoid deportation to the country they initially were fleeing.

Asylum seekers

An individual seeking international protection from their home country.

Displacement

The forced removal of an individual from their home in order to escape the effects of war, natural disasters, or violation of human rights.

Immigrant

An individual who seeks to permanently live in a foreign country.

Internally displaced person (IDP)

An individual who has been forced to flee their home due to persecution, war, or natural disasters; however, they remain within their country.

Migrant

An individual who travels from one place to another.

Non-refoulement

A customary law that states that no individual (refugee or asylum seeker) can be forced to return to a territory where they are likely to face persecution.

Persecution

The cruel and unjust treatment of individuals solely because of their political or religious views, sexuality, or race.

Refugee

An individual who has been forced to flee their country due to persecution, war, or natural disasters.

Reception

The process in which individuals are admitted to the registration process.

Stateless person

An individual who is not considered a citizen of any State.

Xenophobia

The dislike of or prejudice against foreigners

General Overview

The topic of immigration and refugees is one that dates back thousands of years, approximately 20,000 years, to the Mesolithic period, when the Native American ancestors crossed land that connected Asia to North America. This took place long before the cross of Europeans across the vast Atlantic. Since

then, human migration has greatly spread across the world.

In 1945, the United Nations was established, and shortly after, in 1950, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was mandated in light of the aftermath of World War II in order to help the millions of people who had been forced out of their homes. They provide life support and protect the rights of refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced persons. In 1951, the UNHCR published the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, to which 149 states are parties, some of which are also signatories, along with its 1967 protocol, which simply removes the geographical restrictions mentioned in the one from 1951. As a part of these regulated conventions means that states are compelled to protect the refugees on their territory and treat them in accordance with the terms of the 1951 convention and the 1967 protocol (if signed). The convention helps provide refugees with rights that give them the opportunity to live an independent life. The office has diligently worked to ensure refugees' rights are abided by countries.

For many years, the issue of refugees has been continuously addressed. The number of refugees and IDPs over the centuries has increased significantly due to factors such as climate change, violation of human rights, and hunger and famine. Over the years, there have been a number of events that have led to critical refugee crises, such as the ones in Syria, Afghanistan, Ukraine, Palestine, and Myanmar. As of 2024, there are approximately 122.6 million forcibly displaced persons and 37.9 million refugees. There are several reasons as to why people become refugees, such as war, natural disasters, persecution, violation of human rights, and oppression, and these events often create a significant effect on an individual's life.

These refugees flee to countries with a better quality of life than their home countries; these countries can be considered 'safe countries.' Safe countries are countries where refugees can seek asylum, be protected from harm, and have an opportunity to rebuild their lives. Some examples include Germany, Norway, France, and Canada. Despite the struggle of simply fleeing their country, there are a range of obstacles refugees might face when arriving in a new country. For instance, being unable to speak the language of the host country, mental health challenges, finding employment and housing, and discrimination. All these factors are essential to consider in order to provide refugees a fair opportunity to attempt a new life in a foreign country. Refugees are more likely to have a more effective contribution to society if given sufficient resources and services, such as education possibilities and basic needs: shelter,

water, and food. This would not only benefit the individual but also the host country. Taking a more economical approach, with higher employment rates, the economic markets of a country would not only be more efficient but also more productive and potentially lead to an increase in the country's GDP (Gross Domestic Product).

Timeline of Key Events

Date Event

1914-1918 World war I

- 10 million refugees
- Lasted 4 years

1917- 1923 Russian Revolution

- 5.5 million refugees
- Lasted 6 years

1939-1945 World War II

- 65 million refugees
- Lasted 6 years

1954-1975 Vietnam War

- 2 million refugees
- Lasted 19 years

April 1994-July 1994 Rwandan Genocide

- 2 million refugees
- 100 days

2020-2022 Tigray-Ethiopia conflict

- 60,000 refugees
- Lasted 2 years

1947-present Palestine-Israel conflict

- 5.9 million refugees
- 77 years - ongoing

2011- present Syrian Civil War

- 5.5 million refugees

- 13 years - ongoing

2017-present Rohingya Genocide

- 1 million refugees

- 7 years - ongoing

2022-present Russia-Ukraine conflict

- 6 million refugees

- 3 years - ongoing

Major Parties Involved

CARITAS

The non-governmental organization Caritas was founded in 1897 by Lorenzo Werthman, who named the organization after the Latin word meaning love and compassion. Caritas has developed to become one of the more significant and largest aid agencies in the world, with multiple offices and headquarters on all continents. The organization shares the same goal as the Catholic church, which is to “serve the poor and to promote charity and justice through the world.” It provides humanitarian aid in crisis situations such as conflict and natural disasters. The NGO, operating in over 200 countries, has implemented programs with the goal of eliminating the causes of migration. For over 70 years, they provided migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers aid in the form of food and water, shelter, mental health support, and details about their rights during their journeys to new countries.

France

France has been constantly providing assistance to refugees in urgent humanitarian crises such as those in the Middle East and Africa. It is one of the top 10 contributors to the UNHCR, donating approximately 130.5 million euros. The nation has an extensive tradition of offering asylum to refugees, having drafted a Constitution in 1793, during the time of the French Revolution, stating that the country should grant “asylum to foreigners who have been banished from their homeland for the cause of liberty.” As a resettlement country, every year, around 3,000 refugees arrive in France, providing them with

education and, essentially, asylum. In France, asylum protection is categorized into two categories: refugee protection and subsidiary protection. The subsidiary protection gives refugees and beneficiaries the right to live and work in France, along with this, they are able to bring their spouses and children.

Additionally, they have the right to receive travel documents from the French government. One of the national policies states that once an individual has remained in the country for 10 years, they are entitled to permanent residence. During this time, refugees are able to begin to develop a new life away from their home country. However, in order to have this opportunity, they must abide by French law.

Germany

Germany has become the largest refugee-t refugee hosting country in the world and the largest in the EU. It has taken in around 2.5 million refugees worldwide. A significant part of this number consists of the refugees who fled to Germany from the Syrian Civil War in 2015. This is because during this period, the nation's former Chancellor, Angela Merkel, made the decision to keep Germany's borders open for the refugees fleeing from Syria. Later, in 2018, the government approved 72% of these refugee protections for the right to work without any limitations. Moreover, Germany has been involved in numerous protection activities, such as the prevention of sexual violence and exploitation. In 2024, Germany spent a total of 141.8 million euros contributing to the refugee crisis in Syria, Ukraine, and Afghanistan. Additionally, due to the recent downfall of the Syrian dictator Bashar Assad in December of 2024, the German government has been working toward allowing a secure and voluntary return for refugees back to their homeland. However, with this, after the post-election polls of 2024, the federal government looks to constrict migration laws due to a knife attack in the west of the city, Solingen, in which the suspect was a Syrian man who previously had been ruled to vacate the country.

International Rescue Committee

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) is a humanitarian organization established in 1933 by Albert Einstein and other humanitarians. They aim to help individuals affected by humanitarian crises survive and recover to build better lives. The IRC works in over 40 countries, helping give people the help they need to live safer and fuller lives through means such as providing asylum, resettlement, and integration services. Their extensive work has enabled them to help more than 34.5 million people across all nations in the world. They offer several programs for refugees and asylum seekers in order for them to be able to integrate and live in a foreign country, such as job training classes, language courses, and helping children obtain education.

Norway

Over the years, Norway has established and developed several policies regarding the protection of refugees. The nation has played a crucial role in helping those in need of international protection. They have maintained secure reception and asylum systems, participated in extensive efforts for refugees to integrate themselves into a host country, and presented considerable financial support to the various UNHCR global resettlement programs. Norway has shown continuous global engagement during times of crisis, increasing their support to refugees in Ukraine and Moldova since 2020, providing aid to UNHCR in response to the Syrian Crisis, and recognizing Palestine as a state and aid to developing countries, which has significantly increased since 2019. Their foreign aid programs have proven to be crucial in promoting access to quality education for all and global health. Along with these programs, Norway has been a donor and significant partner with UNHCR, allowing them to address the serious need for humanitarian aid for vulnerable refugee populations.

Syrian Arab Republic

Despite there being several refugee crises across the globe and refugees being displaced to a wide range of countries. Syrian refugees make up the largest majority of them, with over 6.3 million refugees fleeing Syria. The country has been experiencing harsh living conditions due to the civil war, the violation of human rights, and natural disasters. Millions of people have had their homes destroyed, their families torn away, and their lives completely changed. Many had fled, seeking safer countries and a place to move their families to. According to the Mercy Corps, there are around 6.7 million internally displaced people in Syria. Their entire population is not only in need of humanitarian aid but also protection; there are still many people who remain in the country and face terrible treatment. However, those who have fled have gone to countries such as Germany, Turkey, and Jordan. Despite this, many of them face unemployment and poverty. In addition, due to the fact that a significant number of Syrian refugees also fled to Europe, it provoked a large political crisis regarding which countries would host them and how or if they should help them. Only around one in three asylum seekers have their application approved when applying for asylum in the EU.

Save the Children

Save the Children is a non-governmental organization founded in 1919 in the United Kingdom that aims to improve the lives of children all over the world. They work towards fighting for children's rights and providing vulnerable children the opportunity to be educated and have access to healthcare and basic needs as young individuals. The organization not only provides humanitarian aid and advocates

for children's rights but also works towards confronting the origin of the crises around the world. Moreover, as a response to crises of conflict and natural disasters, they provide protection and support services at the borders of different countries, create Child-Friendly Spaces in refugee camps where they offer learning opportunities where children can find play centers and emotional support services, and determine children who have been split from their families in order to reunite them.

Turkey

Turkey, along with four other countries, makes up nearly one-third of the refugee population in the world. There are 3.2 million refugees that have fled to Turkey due to conflict and natural disasters, the majority of these refugees have come from Syria. The geographical location of the country places it near Asia and Europe, which is what makes it a crucial transit and host country for migrants and refugees. During the 2015-2016 European refugee and migration crisis, Turkey became committed to aiding the EU in their efforts to avoid unusual migration to the bloc. Since then, Turkey has become a key party as a buffer to the EU's migration management efforts. Additionally, the Turkish government has recognized the importance of the creation of long-term management in order to strengthen the resilience of refugees and has therefore planned secure protection frameworks. These frameworks allow refugees to have access to education, healthcare, social services, and employment. Nevertheless, refugees still face some challenges, such as language barriers, which make it more difficult for them to access things such as social services and the labor market.

United States

According to UNHCR, the US has had one of the largest resettlement programs for refugees in the world. These programs are usually offered to refugees in vulnerable situations, such as women, children surviving torture, and those with acute medical needs. Dating back to the 1970s, the US has welcomed over 3 million refugees from all over the world. However, in 1953, the nation established the Refugee Relief Act, which granted around 200,000 immigrant visas for refugees. The Act also states that in order for a refugee to be admitted under its provisions, a US citizen must provide an administrator assurance that the refugee is not only "suitably employed without displacing some other person from employment" but also that they and their family have housing "without displacing some other person from such housing." Furthermore, each year, the President of the country decides on a certain number of refugees that are allowed to enter the country. This number was decreased by approximately 85% during the first Trump administration, with roughly 15,000 refugees in 2021. Nonetheless, things improved when the Biden administration came in, raising the number to around 95,000 refugees. Even though this is a

significant increase, the new Trump administration must recognize the importance and severity of helping more refugees escape persecution and have the opportunity to build a new, safe life.

Possible Solutions

Integration

The concept of integration is what leads to refugees being able to start a new life in a new country. Integration in a foreign country in which one does not know people or know the language can be extremely difficult. With the purpose of becoming a member of a new community, refugees must be given the possibility to develop their skills so that they can ultimately simply apply for a job or enroll their children in education systems. Additionally, refugees can often be considered an asset to their host countries, as they become active members not only in their community but also in the economic market as consumers.

Resettlement

Resettlement allows refugees to voluntarily settle in a new country. It is a process that allows people to start from the beginning and also escape what they were fleeing from. Currently, there have been several humanitarian crises that have been occurring for long periods of time, meaning the idea of resettlement is something many refugees aim to achieve. However, there are many things that often stand in their way, such as language barriers, lack of travel documents, and essentially the lack of knowledge about their host country, which limits them from properly settling and becoming a part of the new community.

Treatment of Refugees

When refugees arrive in foreign countries, reactions often vary between positive and negative attitudes. These attitudes can play a very key role in the process of a refugee feeling and becoming part of a new community. There are many stakeholders in a country that can influence the way their citizens view the arrival of refugees and asylum seekers. For refugees and asylum seekers to initially be able to begin finding a new routine, they have to feel safe not only physically but also emotionally. People must be able to recognize that refugees can be valuable to the community.

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