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**HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
(HRC)**

COMMITTEE STUDY GUIDE

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WELCOMING MESSAGE BY THE BOARD

President

Martyna Olchawa



Vice President

Valentina Koumoulou



Dear participants,

It is our uttermost pleasure to welcome you to FREDMUN 2017 and more specifically, to the Human Rights Council (HRC). FREDMUN is known for its unique characteristics, such as academic excellence, organizational perfection and cooperation ambience that is omnipresent. We strongly believe that your participation in this year's conference will be an unforgettable experience for each and every one of you, regardless your previous experience in such experience. The document that you are "holding" or "looking" at is the study guide of our committee. Through this document you will be capable of acquiring a more profound insight into the topics under discussion. During your preparation, this will be used as a compass for your research and it will allow you to present us your position papers (your country's policy on the topic) and will prepare you academically for the sessions of the simulation. Bear

in mind that this is merely for supplementary purposes and does not cover the full extent of knowledge that you should have surrounding the topic. Individual research is strongly recommended, if not required. However, apart from acquiring knowledge on the topic under discussion, do not neglect to read the rules of procedure, something that will facilitate our committee's work.

As the Board of Human Rights Council, we are here to assist you in your endeavor in dealing with issues, such as the rights of Internally Displaced People and quality education in areas of high illiteracy. We acknowledge that this year's topics are both intriguing and challenging, but we are here to answer to your inquiries and assist you in any way possible. We expect that our cooperation will be based on trust, communication, punctuality and respect, which all work both ways. It is our privilege to serve you as Board and we are looking forward to our interaction prior and during the debates of our committee.

We ardently look forward to meeting you all, this coming November.

Your chairpersons,
Martyna Olchawa
Valentina Koumoulou

INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMITTEE

The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)¹ is an inter-governmental body within the United Nations (UN) system, consistent of 47 Member States (MS), all responsible for cooperation, promotion and protection of human rights (HR). The HRC works under the Charter of the UN², the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)³ and Human Rights instruments, to which each state is a party and focuses on the interrelated nature of human rights law and international humanitarian law. The council was created by the General Assembly by the Resolution 60/251 in 2006, to replace the UN Commission on Human Rights.

The aim of the council is to promote universality, interdependence, indivisibility of human rights and inherent cooperation. Its goal is to accomplish all of the above by establishing a transparent intergovernmental process. Its focus is not only on Member States but also on Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and national institutions that promote human rights.

Topics dealt with mostly, are specific human rights situations involving certain countries. Through the ‘Universal Periodic Review’⁴ mechanism, they assess all HR issues in all UN MS. The ‘Advisory Committee’ is a panel of experts and advisors who offer advice on the most thematic issues, while the ‘Complaint Procedure’ allows for individuals and organizations to bring forward specific human rights issues.

Moreover, the council works with ‘UN Special Procedures’ in order to advise and publicly report on specific issues in certain countries. This is a team, which is made up of rapporteurs, special representatives and independent experts. It is essential to point out that they coordinate with different UN bodies for different human rights activities. The Council works with other UN bodies as well, but focuses mainly on the interaction of human rights in all Member States.

¹Ohchr.org. (2017). *OHCHR | United Nations Human Rights Council*. [online] Available at: <http://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/hrc/pages/hrcindex.aspx> [Accessed 1 Oct. 2017].

²Un.org. (2017). *Charter of the United Nations*. [online] Available at: <http://www.un.org/en/charter-united-nations/> [Accessed 1 Oct. 2017].

³Un.org. (2017). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. [online] Available at: <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/> [Accessed 1 Oct. 2017].

⁴*OHCHR | Universal Periodic Review*. [online] Available at: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/UPRMain.aspx/> [Accessed 1 Oct. 2017].

Topic A: Protecting the rights of Internally Displaced People (IDPs) in conflict regions



Children fetch water from a borehole point at an internally displaced persons (IDP) camp/The Japan Times (2017)

Available at <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/06/08/world/nigeria-sends-troops-suspected-boko-haram-fighters-attack-maiduguri/>

INTRODUCTION TO THE TOPIC

Internally displaced people (IDPs) have not crossed a border to find safety and unlike refugees they are in a constant run and search for home. While they may have fled for similar reasons IDPs stay within their own country under the government's protection, even if that government is the reason of their displacement. Consequently, these people are one of the most vulnerable people in the world.

Millions of people are forced to leave their homes or residences each year due to conflicts, violence, development projects, such as large infrastructure or urban renewal projects, disasters and climate change. Others live in situations of protracted displacement or face chronic displacement risk. In addition, other reasons, such as poverty, inequality, weak governance and rapid urbanization lead to their displacement. The world is largely unaware that by the end of 2016 40.3 million people were leaving in internal displacement because of conflicts and violence⁵.

Women and children consists a major part of internally displaced, but unfortunately their protection and reintegration are often overlooked. National authorities are also responsible for ensuring unaccompanied minors, persons with disabilities and the elderly. All the aforementioned groups along with minority ethnic groups, indigenous people, and the rural poor and informal settlers are often discriminated.

Internally displaced people are entitled to the same rights and freedoms under international and national law as all the other people in their country. Some of the typical needs and risks that arise from internal displacement include family separation, loss of documentation, and loss of property, freedom of movement and further exposure to the risk of secondary or onward displacement.

There are multiple examples of internally displaced people in their own country. One of them takes place in Cyprus. The Cypriot refugees are basically Cypriot nationals or residents who had their main residence in an area forcibly evacuated during the Cyprus Conflict. The Cyprus Conflict is the ongoing issue of military invasion and continuing Turkish occupation since 1974⁶.

In order to achieve a feasible solution for the IDPs we have to understand that this means that any specific protection or assistance will be needed after and that all these

⁵Jones, S. (2017). One in every 122 people is displaced by war, violence and persecution, says UN. [online] the Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/jun/18/59m-people-displaced-war-violence-persecution-says-un> [Accessed 3 Oct. 2017].

⁶*News.bbc.co.uk. (2017). BBC ON THIS DAY | 20 | 1974: Turkey invades Cyprus. [online] Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/july/20/newsid_3866000/3866521.stm [Accessed 3 Oct. 2017].*

people will have the opportunity to enjoy human rights without discrimination or further displacement.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

*Internal displacement*⁷

It refers to the forced movement of people within the country they live in.

*Internally displaced persons*⁸

They are persons or groups of people who have been forced or obliged to flee or leave their homes or residences in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or human-made disasters and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State Border.

*Protracted displacement*⁹

It refers to the people that have remained displaced for years or even decades. The term usually refers to long-lasting or prolonged situations in which progress towards a durable solution is very slow or stalled.

*Refugee*¹⁰

The definition of a refugee according to a United Nations Convention is "a person who is outside his/her country of nationality or habitual residence; has a well-founded fear of persecution because of his/her race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion; and is unable or unwilling to avail himself/herself of the protection of that country, or to return there, for fear of persecution." The UN established the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in 1950 to handle refugee matters worldwide.

⁷Council, I. (2017). *IDMC » The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre*. [online] Internal-displacement.org. Available at: <http://www.internal-displacement.org/> [Accessed 1 Oct. 2017]

⁸Ibid.

⁹Hein, P. (2015). Book Review: General Politics: The Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies. The Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies by Elena Fiddian-Qasbiyeh, Gil Loescher, Katy Long and Nando Sigona (eds). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. 747pp., £95.00, ISBN 978 0 1996 5243 3. *Political Studies Review*, 13(4), pp.597-597.

¹⁰Indexmundi.com. (2017). *Cyprus Refugees and internally displaced persons - Transnational Issues* [online] Available at: http://www.indexmundi.com/cyprus/transnational_issues_profile.html [Accessed 1 Oct. 2017].

*Cypriot refugees*¹¹

They are Cypriot nationals or Cyprus residents who had their main residence (as opposed to merely owning property) in an area forcibly evacuated during the Cyprus conflict. The government of Cyprus also recognizes as refugees the descendants of the original refugees in the male line regardless of place of birth.

*Environmental degradation*¹²

It is the deterioration of the environment through depletion of resources, such as air, water and soil; the destruction of ecosystems; habitat destruction; the extinction of wildlife; and pollution. It is defined as any change or disturbance to the environment perceived to be deleterious or undesirable.

*Forced migration or involuntary migration*¹³

It is another key concept in this discourse. Forced migration refers to the coerced movement of a person or persons away from their home or home region. It often connotes violent coercion, and is used interchangeably with the terms "displacement" or forced displacement.

HISTORY OF THE TOPIC

Internal population displacement has become an issue of serious concern to many scholars today because of the human tragedy and insecurity associated with it. Besides the global issued that has been discussed at a national and international level, the conflict displacements are caused mainly by ethno-religious, inter-ethnic, political and communal conflicts. All these are effects of poor governance in areas that are populated by ethnic minorities, chronic abuse of power resulting in various violations of human rights, gross inequities in the shaping and sharing of power and national wealth.

People have been forced to leave their countries since the very notion of a country was created. There have been many large human movements in the history. Starting from 740 BC when Assyrian rulers conquered the land of ancient Israel and 10 out of 12 of these tribes were expelled from their lands. Moving on to the "Edict of Fontainebleau" in France in 1685, when Louis XIV of France issued an edict that meant the Huguenots

¹¹Revolvy, L. (2017). "Cypriot refugees" on *Revolvy.com*. [online] Revolvy.com. Available at: <https://www.revolvy.com/main/index.php?s=Cypriot%20refugees> [Accessed 1 Oct. 2017].

¹²Johnson, D.L., S.H. Ambrose, T.J. Bassett, M.L. Bowen, D.E. Crummey, J.S. Isaacson, D.N. Johnson, P. Lamb, M. Saul, and A.E. Winter-Nelson. 1997. Meanings of environmental terms. *Journal of Environmental Quality* 26: 581–589

¹³*What is forced migration?* — *Forced Migration Online*. [online] Available at: <http://www.forcedmigration.org/about/whatisfm/> [Accessed 1 Oct. 2017].

risked state prosecution if they practiced their Protestant faith freely. He created one of the first recognized displacements of people across nation states.

One of the biggest examples known in human history is the case of the Ottoman Empire 1783. During a period of 150 years, 5 to 7 million Muslims arrived from other countries in the region where Turkey is nowadays located; from the 750,000 Bulgarians who left during the Russo-Turkish war to the 15,000 Turkish-Cypriots who left the island after it was leased to Great Britain. Turkey experienced a radical transformation as Muslims from Caucasus, Crimea, Crete, Greece, Romania and Yugoslavia arrived. Their descendants remain there, accounting for one in three people in Turkey today.

Continuing with World War I 1914 that have marked Europe's recent experience of refugees¹⁴. During the German invasion of Belgium, massacres of thousands of civilians and the destruction of buildings led to an exodus of more than a million people. Almost a quarter of them came to England, where the British government had offered "victims of war the hospitality of the British nation". Most Belgian refugees returned to Belgium at the end of World War I despite having been able to assimilate smoothly in the UK. Some of the largest atrocities committed during and after World War I were directed at the Armenians. The population of 2 million was decimated by what was later recognized as the first genocide of the 20th century. Systematic persecution under the Ottoman Empire meant that half of that population was dead by 1918 and hundreds of thousands were homeless and stateless refugees. Today, the Armenians are around 5 million in number, while there are just 3.3 million in what is today the republic of Armenia¹⁵.

As they say "history repeats itself" in 1945 World War II broke out. By the time it ended, there would be more than 40 million refugees in Europe alone. The scale of the disaster was such that international law and international organizations tasked to deal with refugees were urgently created and quickly evolved to become the foundation that is still relied upon today¹⁶.

The Bosnian war of 1992-1995 left 200,000 dead and forced 2.7 million more to flee - making it the largest displacement of people in Europe¹⁷. Half of Bosnia's entire population was displaced. Tens of thousands were taken in by western nations, chief among them the US and Germany. Hundreds of thousands of Serbs were also

¹⁴Encyclopedia Britannica.(2017). *World War I | Facts & History*. [online] Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/event/World-War-I>. [Accessed 1 Oct. 2017].

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶*World War II History - World War II - HISTORY.com*. [online] HISTORY.com. Available at: <http://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/world-war-ii-history/> [Accessed 1 Oct. 2017].

¹⁷Encyclopedia Britannica.(2017). *Bosnian conflict | European history [1992-1995]*. [online] Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/event/Bosnian-conflict/> [Accessed 1 Oct. 2017].

displaced by the Yugoslav wars - an estimated 700,000 sought refuge in Serbia¹⁸.

Last but not least, the genocide in Rwanda in 1994 where more than 500,000 Tutsis by Hutus in Rwanda, there was a mass exodus of more than 2 million people from the country to neighboring countries¹⁹. Many settled in massive camps containing tens of thousands of people, where mortality rates were exceptionally high. The camps became increasingly militarized and contributed to the escalation of further conflict in the region.

In the early 1990s, a number of authors began to write about the phenomenon of internal displacement, raising awareness and presenting the case for international efforts, in order to respond to the needs and the rights of this particular group of people. While people have always fled their communities because of war, violence, persecution, and disasters, until the early 1990s international attention largely focused on those who had crossed an international border as refugees rather than those who remained within the borders of their country. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) pressed the UN Commission on Human Rights to recognize the needs of this particular group of people, and in 1992 the Commission named a Representative of the Secretary-General on Internally Displaced Persons (RSG) and the following year asked him to review international norms relevant to internally displaced persons²⁰.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Internal displacement was placed on the international agenda and recognized as an important issue in 1990s²¹. By this time it was a subject with no clear definition or framework that could possibly guide the states and the international community. By 1995 a number of 20 to 25 million IDPs were estimated in 40 countries, a number almost twice than the number of refugees²². While there is more work yet to be done to get the issue of internal displacement fully recognized, there has been a progress made over the years. A number of important developments have allowed the issue some visibility in regional and international discussions.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹*The Rwandan Genocide - Facts & Summary - HISTORY.com*. [online] HISTORY.com. Available at: <http://www.history.com/topics/rwandan-genocide/> [Accessed 1 Oct. 2017].

²⁰*Internal Displacement - International Relations - Oxford Bibliographies - obo*. [online] Available at: <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199743292/obo-9780199743292-0110.xml/> [Accessed 1 Oct. 2017].

²¹*2017 Global Report on Internal Displacement*. [online] Available at: <http://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2017/> [Accessed 1 Oct. 2017].

²²Internal-displacement.org. (2017). *2017 Global Report on Internal Displacement*. [online] Available at: <http://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2017/> [Accessed 1 Oct. 2017].

Addressing Internal Displacement: A framework for national responsibility ²³

This document was developed in 2005 by the Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement as guide in designing an effective national response and developing the steps needed to address problems of internal displacement. It sets out benchmarks for government action, specifies that the national authorities' response should target all causes of internal displacement and all groups of IDPs without discriminating between them, and address all needs, during all phases of displacement and in all affected areas. All relevant sections and levels of government – central and local – should be involved. Governments should also make efforts to ensure that assistance and protection are provided to IDPs in areas under the control of non-state armed groups, and for cooperating with international actors where national capacity is insufficient.

The Great Lakes IDP Protocol ²⁴

The Protocol on the Protection and Assistance to Internally Displaced Persons, adopted by the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) in 2006 as one of ten protocols to its **Pact on Security, Stability and Development**²⁵, was the first legally binding instrument incorporating the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement into international law. The pact and protocols entered into force in 2008 as a commitment of the ICGLR's 11 member states. Other protocols also extend the quality of human rights protection available to IDPs in the region. The *Protocol on the Property Rights of Returning Persons* specifically relates to IDP protections, while the *Protocol on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity*²⁶ and the *Protocol on the Prevention and Suppression of Violence Against Women and Children*²⁷ have the potential to help address some of the root causes of flight, foster human security and create conditions for return.

²³Anon, (2017). *Addressing Internal Displacement*. [online] Available at: https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/04_national_responsibility_framework_Eng.pdf [Accessed 1 Oct. 2017].

²⁴ Refugees, U. (2017). *Refworld | Protocol on the Protection and Assistance to Internally Displaced Persons*.

²⁵ Peacemaker.un.org. (2017). *Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region | UN Peacemaker*.

²⁶Ohchr.org. (2017). *OHCHR | Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*. [online] Available at: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CrimeOfGenocide.aspx> [Accessed 1 Oct. 2017].

²⁷Kodjo, T. (2017). *Protocol on the Prevention and Suppression of Sexual Violence against Women and Children-African Union - Peace and Security Department*. [online] African Union,Peace and Security Department. Available at: <http://www.peaceau.org/en/article/protocol-on-the-prevention-and-suppression-of-sexual-violence-against-women-and-children> [Accessed 1 Oct. 2017].

*IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons*²⁸

The framework was published in 2010 on the basis of feedback on a draft version piloted from 2007. The Framework identifies three possible settlement options through which durable solutions to internal displacement may be achieved: the IDPs' sustainable return to their home or place of habitual residence, integration in the location they were displaced to, or settlement elsewhere in the country, and stresses that these must be voluntary and informed and must take place in safety and in dignity. It sets out eight criteria for determining the extent to which a durable solution is achieved, as well as principles that should guide the process and how it should be organized.

Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) was a member of the group that contributed to developing the 2010 Framework, and has since consistently used it to define what a durable solution is and how it can be achieved²⁹.

*African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention)*³⁰

Upon coming into force on 6 December 2012, the Kampala Convention was the world's first regional instrument that legally binds governments to provide protection for the rights and well-being of those forced to flee inside their home countries due to conflict, violence, natural disasters, and human rights abuses.

The Kampala Convention in brief:

- Reaffirms that national authorities have the primary responsibility to provide assistance to internally displaced people (IDPs) and create the conditions necessary to achieve durable solutions to displacement
- Comprehensively addresses different causes of internal displacement: armed conflict, generalized violence, human-caused or natural disasters, and development projects, such dams or land acquisition for large-scale agriculture
- Recognizes the critical role that civil society organizations and host communities play in assisting IDPs and obliges governments to assess the needs and vulnerabilities of IDPs and host communities in order to address the effects of internal displacement

²⁸Refugees, U. (2017). *Refworld* | *IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for IDPs*. [online] Refworld. Available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4c5149312.html> [Accessed 1 Oct. 2017].

²⁹Council, I. (2017). *IDMC » An institutional history of internal displacement*. [online] Internal-displacement.org. Available at: <http://www.internal-displacement.org/internal-displacement/what-is-internal-displacement/an-institutional-history-of-internal-displacement/> [Accessed 1 Oct. 2017].

³⁰Refugees, U. (2017). *African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention)*. Available at: <http://www.internal-displacement.org/sub-saharan-africa/kampala-convention/> [Accessed 1 Oct. 2017].

- Facilitates the adoption of national legislation on IDPs' protection and assistance, and policies that aim to address displacement issues
- As of May 2017, 40 of the African Union's 54 member states had signed the convention and 25 had ratified.

DISCUSSION OF THE TOPIC

The HRC has been using its expertise to protect and assist the internally displaced people for years. By the end of 2014 due to violence 38 million people had become displaced within their own country. Nearly 11 million of them were newly uprooted during this period according to the Norwegian Refugee Council's Geneva-based Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC)³¹. This report is based on data and analysis gathered between January and December 2014 in 60 countries.

At the end of 2016 there were 40.3 million people living in ongoing displacement in conflict areas³². Unfortunately as we can see, since 2000 the number of internally displaced people has doubled and increased. This is due to the conflicts and crises in many parts of the world and in areas where there is a low capacity of coping with crises, like in Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa, where people find it really difficult to return to their homes. As aforementioned, besides the conflicts, crises and violence, there is the issue of poverty, inequality, weak governance, rapid urbanization and environmental degradation.

Nevertheless, the majority of increase in the field of displacement is the result of protracted crises in Iraq, Sudan, Syria, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Nigeria. In total these countries accounted for 60% of new displacement worldwide. Iraq suffered the most with at least 2.2 million people running from areas that have fallen under Islamic State Control³³. Moreover Syria's displacement crisis is escalating. The civil war forced at least 1.1 million people to flee their homes.

The Republic of Cyprus however, shows how events long past can continue to influence the demographic of a smaller country. The 1974 coup and the Turkish invasion forced up to 265, 000 people to leave their homes. Since 2001 the number has remained at 212,400, as the Cypriot government counts those who are displaced in areas that are under its control³⁴.

³¹Council, I. (2017). *IDMC » The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre*. [online] Internal-displacement.org. Available at: <http://www.internal-displacement.org/> [Accessed at 1 Oct. 2017]

³²Council, I. (2017). *IDMC » Conflict and violence*. [online] Internal-displacement.org. Available at: <http://www.internal-displacement.org/internal-displacement/context-of-displacement/conflict-and-violence/> [Accessed 1 Oct. 2017].

³³BBC News. (2017). *UN documents 'staggering' Iraq violence*. [online] Available at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-3534986/> [Accessed 1 Oct. 2017].

³⁴*BBC ON THIS DAY | 20 | 1974: Turkey invades Cyprus*. [online] Available at:

New displacement also took place in Mexico, Guatemala and El Salvador, where people fled due to criminal violence associated with drug trafficking. At the same time, the number of IDPs in Europe and Central Asia has increased 31%³⁵.

By 2016 there were 6.9 million new internal displacements caused by conflicts and violence, an equivalent of approximately 15,000 people forced to flee their homes³⁶. Today we often assume that many refugees were somehow internally displaced and that IDPs are prime candidates to become refugees or migrants. The link between those two is poorly understood and often confused. The global number of conflict IDPs has been roughly twice that of refugees in recent years, and the gap between estimates for the two groups has been growing over the last 20 years. While the vast majority of people displaced by disasters remain within their country of origin, those who do cross borders may face gaps in protection and data collection on these situations is rarely systematic and knowledge is relatively scarce.

The return of displaced people to their country, place of origin might be the main goal but we have to bear in mind that they will probably be returning back to insecurity, instability and deprivation. That is why there has to be research made in order to understand cross- border movement and return. Quantification of cross- border movements (age, sex and other characteristics) is essential as it improves the accuracy and the development of appropriate policy. Secondly we have to determine the factors that lead IDPs to cross- border movements and which of them have the strongest impact on them leaving or returning. Lastly, we need a better understanding of people returning to their origin places and their progress during their re-installment. Therefore we need to search the safety of people concerned, the conditions that they return to and how women, children and other vulnerable groups are affected.

BLOC POSITIONS

In the first half of 2017 conflicts, wars and violence have caused more than 9 million new displacements worldwide. There are some countries that have been more affected by this issue and not only nowadays, but for years now they have been combating with the IDPs.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/july/20/newsid_3866000/3866521.stm/
[Accessed 1 Oct. 2017].

³⁵LaSusa, M. (2017). *Criminal Violence Has Displaced Millions in Latin America: Report*. [online] Insightcrime.org. Available at: <http://www.insightcrime.org/news-briefs/criminal-violence-has-displaced-millions-in-latin-america-report/> [Accessed 1 Oct. 2017].

³⁶Internal-displacement.org. (2017). *2017 Global Report on Internal Displacement*. [online] Available at: <http://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2017/> [Accessed 1 Oct. 2017].

Cyprus

Starting with the **Cyprus Conflict or Cyprus Dispute** in 1974 with the Turkish invasion. This conflict lasts until today and has made an impact in today's conflict between Greece and Turkey that also has a thousand year history behind. Both the Greek- Turkish war in 1920 and the Lausanne Treaty of 1923³⁷ ensured that both Greece and Turkey have fixed their population to a degree quite remarkable considering the multiethnic nature of each state. Today, Cyprus is the last territory where ethnic Cypriot Greeks and ethnic Cypriot Turks live together and where both Greece and Turkey have a major impact in the conflict between the two communities. The conflict in Cyprus is complex and clouded with issues of ethnic nationalism, discrimination, the use of enemy images to stereotype the "other" as barbaric and less than human, the over-involvement of the upper powers Greece and Turkey in their co-religionists affairs has cost the Cypriot's identity and has created an ongoing enforced separation³⁸. The European Union (EU) has taken the initiative in some of these areas but unfortunately in the EU, where the Republic of Cyprus is a full member and the north and Turkey are not, "Greek Cypriots, thus they have used all the levers available to them to pursue what they see as their national interest and need for justice. Talks began to fell apart in 2012, with Ban Ki-moon stating that "there is not enough progress on core issues of reunification talks for calling an international conference"³⁹. On 11 February 2014, Alexander Downer, UN Secretary-General's special adviser, stepped down. The Greek and Turkish Cypriot leaders declared a Joint Communiqué. In February 2014, renewed negotiations to settle the Cyprus dispute began after several years of warm relations between the north and the south. On 11 February 2014, the leaders of Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities, Nicos Anastasiades and Dervis Eroğlu, respectively, revealed a joint declaration⁴⁰.

Nigeria

An important issue today is the **conflict in Nigeria** provoked by Boko Haram has resulted in the displacement and violation of human rights⁴¹. It all started in 2009 when the jihadist rebel group started an armed attack against the government of

³⁷Encyclopedia Britannica.(2017). *Treaty of Lausanne | Allies-Turkey [1923]*. [online] Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/event/Treaty-of-Lausanne-1923> [Accessed 1 Oct. 2017].

³⁸BBC ON THIS DAY | 20 | 1974: Turkey invades Cyprus. [online] Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/july/20/newsid_3866000/3866521.stm/ [Accessed 1 Oct. 2017].

³⁹UN News Service Section. (2017). *UN News - International conference is 'watershed moment' for Cyprus negotiations – UN envoy*. [online] Available at: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=55969#.WdOljNOoPIU> [Accessed 1 Oct. 2017].

⁴⁰Cyprus Mail. (2017). *Joint Declaration: final version as agreed between the two leaders - Cyprus Mail*. [online] Available at: <http://cyprus-mail.com/2014/02/11/joint-declaration-final-version-as-agreed-between-the-two-leaders/> [Accessed 1 Oct. 2017].

⁴¹Human Rights Watch.(2017). *Nigeria*. [online] Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2017/country-chapters/nigeria/> [Accessed 1 Oct. 2017].

Nigeria. Coming into its eighth year now there is no sign of improvement; on the contrary there is a high rate of poverty, under- development, illiteracy and unemployment. Since the beginning of the conflict up to 2.1 million people fled their homes, 1.9 million of whom are currently internally displaced and 200, 000 were forced to leave to **Cameroon, Chad and Niger**⁴². IDPs are looking for shelter and safety in urban centers. Families are living in already overcrowded and highly inadequate living conditions, with resources and basic services. In Maiduguri the population has been doubled with all the people fleeing and we are speaking about an area economically deprived and where more than three in four IDPs are leaving among host communities⁴³. Their lack of access to livelihoods and resources is leading to risky livelihood. On 17 May 2017, the Nigerian Army reported that it had arrested about 126 suspected Boko Haram terrorists at the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camp in Damboa, Borno State⁴⁴. Government forces are recapturing territory from the insurgents, but the security situation in the north-east is expected to remain fragile.

Syria

Last but not least we have the **Syrian Civil War**⁴⁵. It is an ongoing multi-sided armed conflict in Syria fought primarily between the government of President Bashar al-Assad, along with its allies, and various forces opposing the government. There are 6.5 million people displaced within Syria, the biggest internally displaced population in the world until now. Over 1.2 million people have been displaced in 2016, many of whom for the second or third time. The UNHRC started supporting Syria in 2012 with the provision of protection and community services, distribution of core relief items, shelter assistance, healthcare services, and educational support. In 2016, Syria Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) has been developed in consultation with the Government of Syria and sets out the framework within which the humanitarian community will respond to large-scale humanitarian and protection needs in Syria⁴⁶.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴ Guardian.ng. (2017). *Army arrests 126 Boko Haram suspects in Borno IDPs camp*. [online] Available at: <https://guardian.ng/news/army-arrests-126-boko-haram-suspects-in-borno-idps-camp/> [Accessed 1 Oct. 2017].

⁴⁵Aljazeera.com. (2017). *Syria's civil war explained from the beginning*. [online] Available at: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/05/syria-civil-war-explained-160505084119966.html> [Accessed 1 Oct. 2017].

⁴⁶Ibid.

ACTIONS THAT HAVE ALREADY BEEN TAKEN

Finding durable solutions for displaced people is a challenge. Forced displacement is no longer a temporary phenomenon. Those who are internally displaced face challenges, such as protection, security, access to shelter food and other basic needs. As there is a lack of political solution, their survival depends on the assistance of local communities and international organizations.

Each year on 20 June, the world focuses on the plight of all people who are forced to flee their homes. *World Refugee Day* has been a significant event since 2001, when the UN General Assembly designated it on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees⁴⁷.

In April 2016, the European Commission adopted the *Communication 'Lives in Dignity: from Aid-dependence to Self-reliance'*⁴⁸. The EU's objective is to strengthen the resilience and self-reliance of both the displaced and their host communities through a multi-actor approach from the outset of displacement crises. Its focus is on working with host governments, at the national and local level, towards the gradual socio-economic inclusion of refugees and IDPs. The new approach, applied in practice through joint analysis and programming, aims to harness the productive capacities of refugees and IDPs by helping them to access education, housing, land, livelihoods and services⁴⁹.

In 2016, *EU Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid* gave more than €1972 million, or some 87% of its annual budget, to projects helping the forcibly displaced and their host communities in 56 countries (Turkey, Greece, Syria, Iraq and South Sudan being the top 5)⁵⁰. The Commission channels its financial support to forced displacement situations through organizations dealing with refugees, IDPs, vulnerable migrants and (in some cases) host communities. Its main partners include UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement and non-governmental organizations (NGOs)⁵¹.

Unlike the case of refugees, there is no international universal treaty which applies

⁴⁷European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations.(2017). *Refugees and internally displaced persons - European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations - European Commission*. [online] Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/echo/what-we-do/humanitarian-aid/refugees-and-internally-displaced-persons_en/ [Accessed 1 Oct. 2017].

⁴⁸European Economic and Social Committee. (2017). *Lives in Dignity: from Aid-dependence to Self-reliance*. [online] Available at: <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/lives-dignity-aid-dependence-self-reliance> [Accessed 1 Oct. 2017].

⁴⁹European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations.(2017). *Refugees and internally displaced persons - European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations - European Commission*. [online] Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/echo/what-we-do/humanitarian-aid/refugees-and-internally-displaced-persons_en/ [Accessed 1 Oct. 2017].

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Ifrc.org. (2017). *Working partners - IFRC*. [online] Available at: <http://www.ifrc.org/en/who-we-are/governance/working-partners/> [Accessed at 1 Oct. 2017].

specifically to IDPs. “*The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*⁵²” presented by the then Representative of the UN Secretary General on IDPs, M. Francis Deng, to the UN Commission on Human Rights in 1998, were therefore a milestone in the process of establishing a normative framework for the protection of IDPs. While they do not constitute an independent legal source, they reflect and are consistent with international human rights and humanitarian law and refugee law. Moreover, the United Nations General Assembly has recognized them “as an important international framework for the protection of internally displaced persons”. The principles are thus an “important tool” and authoritative framework for the identification of the rights, guarantees, and standards relevant to the protection of individuals in situations of internal displacement.

Turning to international humanitarian law, the principal instruments are the four *Geneva Conventions of 1949* and their two Additional Protocols of 1977. The *four Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocol I*⁵³ form a normative framework for the overall protection of civilians during international armed conflict. The Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (Fourth Geneva Convention) is of particular relevance to the protection of IDPs. Both treaty-based and customary international humanitarian law obliged States Parties to distinguish at all times, in a conflict, between the civilian population and combatants, and to direct operations only against military objectives.

Lastly, various Security Council resolutions have directed the international community to address IDP situations, and have explicitly placed expectations upon UNHCR in this regard. Security Council resolutions relating to women, children and the protection of civilians more generally are also of relevance to the protection of IDPs.

QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED

- Who are internally displaced persons and what is the difference between IDPs and a refugee?
- Which rights do internally displaced persons have?
- Whose responsibility is to protect and help internally displaced persons?

⁵²Council, I. (2017). *IDMC » The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre*. [online] Internal-displacement.org. Available at: <http://www.internal-displacement.org/> [Accessed 1 Oct. 2017].

⁵³*Icrc.org*. (2017). *The Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols - ICRC*. [online] Available at: <https://www.icrc.org/eng/war-and-law/treaties-customary-law/geneva-conventions/overview-geneva-conventions.htm> [Accessed 3 Oct. 2017].

- Which challenges do internally displaced person face?
- Which are the main factors that make IDPs leave or return back to their place of origin?
- How can we provide security and cover all basic needs, in order displaced people to return back to their homes/ places of origin?
- How can we develop and control cross-border movements?

CONCLUSION

The most serious problems of the IDPs result from the inability or even refusal of the parties. There is no concern or specific actions for their well being and most importantly their right to feel safe and secure at their own homes, neither by the governments nor by the community. The restoration of peace and the protection of human rights are the best way to provide effective protection to the internally displaced people. The forms of protection along with humanitarian assistance should be the first priority of all governments, societies and national or international organizations. All the aforementioned should serve primarily to promote or even reinforce national authorities that would support every person within their country.

Each year millions of people are forced to leave their homes due to conflicts, violence and human rights violations or even natural disasters. The number of forcibly displaced people continues to rise and people seek for humanitarian assistance. The majority of IDPs struggle with poverty in low and middle-income countries. There are currently twice as many IDPs as refugees in the world. Despite its global scale, the issue of internal displacement remains largely overshadowed, particularly with the current global focus and public attention on refugees and migrants.

Refugees returning to their countries of origin risk are becoming internally displaced again if their return is premature, involuntary or unprepared, and if they return to conditions of insecurity and inadequate livelihoods.

So you should question yourselves; what are the reasons that make people leave their country? What can we do, in order to help the internally displaced people reinstall back to their homes? Why some people cannot feel safe in their own home and cannot have the basic resources for their living? How we motivate the government and the community of each country to contribute more to the matter? How can we as humans individually can offer?

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Topic B: Promoting quality education in areas characterized of high illiteracy



*Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) No 4
Available at <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg4>*

INTRODUCTION TO THE TOPIC

It is astonishing that in this day and age, there are still millions of people from all over the world who are denied access to education. Roughly 12 percent of the world's population is functionally illiterate and have basic or below-basic literacy levels⁵⁴. To be more accurate, 781 million adults and 126 million children cannot read or write⁵⁵.

Today, we recognize education as a fundamental human right and organizations all over the world are pushing towards increasing the literacy rate worldwide. Being able to read and write not only empowers a person, but also opens a whole new world of opportunities that is required in order to abolish poverty, eliminate hunger, and see any progress overall⁵⁶.

Many of the countries that have been found to have high illiteracy rates are among the poorest in the world. In addition, areas of conflict play a major role in the illiteracy level, as education is overlooked when the need to survive appears. There is also an alarming illiteracy rate among women, something that is attributed to social inequality. In many countries, particularly in West and Central Africa and South Asia, illiterate women far outnumber their male counterparts⁵⁷. Over 75 percent of the world's illiterate adults are found in South and West Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, and women represent almost 2/3 of all illiterate adults globally⁵⁸. Women generally, receive less education in these countries, since it is believed that education is not a priority for them.

Another important issue regarding quality education constitutes the massive teacher shortages at the primary and secondary levels. In order for the illiteracy rate to fall, schools need to be supplied with more qualified teachers who will work along with their students and who will support their right to education. Teachers need to be trained particularly for conditions of high pressure in order to be ready to offer their knowledge to refugees, children in areas of conflict, or people with disabilities who have fallen victims of war and have lost their home.

⁵⁴Literacyworldwide.org. (2017). Why Literacy - Problems & Solutions | International Literacy Association. [online] Available at: <https://www.literacyworldwide.org/why-literacy> [Accessed 2 Oct. 2017].

⁵⁵Fountainmagazine.com. (2017). The Fountain Magazine - Issue - Literacy, Violence, and Reading Habits in the World. [online] Available at: <http://www.fountainmagazine.com/Issue/detail/literacy-violence-and-reading-habits-in-the-world-november-2015> [Accessed 2 Oct. 2017].

⁵⁶Cago, L. (2017). 25 Most Illiterate Countries. [online] WorldAtlas. Available at: <http://www.worldatlas.com/articles/the-lowest-literacy-rates-in-the-world.html> [Accessed 2 Oct. 2017].

⁵⁷UNICEF DATA. (2017). Literacy - UNICEF DATA. [online] Available at: <https://data.unicef.org/topic/education/literacy/#> [Accessed 2 Oct. 2017].

⁵⁸Cia.gov. (2017). The World Factbook — Central Intelligence Agency. [online] Available at: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2103.html#136> [Accessed 2 Oct. 2017].

So long as a sizeable portion of the world population remains without the rudimentary knowledge of reading and writing, the problem of illiteracy will continue to be of interest and concern to all who are engaged in activities designed to raise the standards of living and the levels of culture of the peoples of the world⁵⁹. Nevertheless, things seem to be gradually changing as people are beginning to accept the fact that education is vital for the wellbeing, for the future, for a better financial state and for their freedom. It is important now more than ever for everyone to recognize that education is one of the basic human rights and must be provided to all no matter what.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

*Education*⁶⁰

The process of teaching or learning, especially in a school or college, or the knowledge that you get from this.

*Literacy*⁶¹

The ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, compute, and communicate using visual, audible, and digital materials across disciplines and in any context. The ability to read, write, and communicate connects people to one another and empowers them to achieve things they never thought possible.

*Illiteracy*⁶²

The inability to read or write, or the actual or perceived state of being uneducated or insufficiently educated. Social judgement is so powerfully built into the term illiterate that scholars now generally use more neutral terms, such as non-literate (for societies and individuals for whom literacy is not a relevant issue) and pre-literate (for societies and conditions before literacy emerged or was encountered and adopted).

⁵⁹Progress of literacy in various countries. (1953). [ebook] Paris: UNESCO. Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0000/000028/002898EB.pdf> [Accessed 2 Oct. 2017].

⁶⁰Dictionary, e. (2017). Education Meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary. [online] Dictionary.cambridge.org. Available at: <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/education> [Accessed 2 Oct. 2017].

⁶¹Literacyworldwide.org. (2017). Why Literacy - Problems & Solutions | International Literacy Association. [online] Available at: <https://www.literacyworldwide.org/why-literacy> [Accessed 2 Oct. 2017].

⁶²Encyclopedia.com. (2017). Illiteracy facts, information, pictures | Encyclopedia.com articles about illiteracy. [online] Available at: <http://www.encyclopedia.com/social-sciences-and-law/education/education-terms-and-concepts/illiteracy> [Accessed 2 Oct. 2017].

Functional Illiteracy⁶³

The term has been used to describe the condition of people unable to cope with printed materials relevant to their needs.

Cultural Illiteracy⁶⁴

The condition of people unacquainted with the canon and conventions of an educated populace.

*Intergenerational transmission of illiteracy*⁶⁵

For someone born into an underprivileged milieu to parents with little formal schooling, the likelihood of being illiterate or experiencing serious learning difficulties will be higher. This is known as intergenerational transmission of illiteracy.

*Learning disabilities*⁶⁶

Learning disabilities is a generic term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning or mathematical abilities. These disorders are intrinsic to the individual and presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction.

*Gender equality in education*⁶⁷

Gender-based discrimination remains one of the most intractable constraints to realizing the right to education. Analysis of figures from the past 30 years reveals the persistent disparity between literacy rates for women and for men. Eliminating this disparity, which itself perpetuates sexual discrimination, is imperative for realizing education for all.

*Adult education*⁶⁸

According to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), as a field of practice, adult education denotes the entire body of organized

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Fondation pour l'alphabétisation. (2017). Causes of illiteracy | Literacy Foundation. [online] Available at: <https://www.fondationalphabetisation.org/en/causes-of-illiteracy/> [Accessed 2 Oct. 2017].

⁶⁶Journals.sagepub.com. (2017). A New Definition of Learning Disabilities Learning Disability Quarterly - Donald D. Hammill, James E. Leigh, Gaye McNutt, Stephen C. Larsen, 1981. [online] Available at: <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.2307/1510735> [Accessed 2 Oct. 2017].

⁶⁷The plurality of literacy and its implications for policies and programmes. (2004). [ebook] Paris: UNESCO. Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001362/136246e.pdf> [Accessed 2 Oct. 2017].

⁶⁸Draper, J. and English, L. (2013). Adult Education in Canada. [online] The Canadian Encyclopedia. Available at: <http://thecanadianencyclopedia.com/en/article/adult-education/> [Accessed 2 Oct. 2017].

educational processes, whatever the content, level or method, whether formal or informal, and whether the processes prolong or replace initial education in schools, colleges, universities or apprenticeship systems. The term “adult” usually means someone beyond the legal school-leaving age. Other than that, there is no upper age limit for learning. The term “lifelong learning” is also used to refer to adult education.

*Developed Country*⁶⁹

A country having an effective rate of industrialization and individual income is known as developed country.

*Developing Country*⁷⁰

A country which has a low rate of industrialization and low per capita income.

HISTORY OF THE TOPIC

It is undeniable that literacy highly contributes in improving the quality of life and in creating a more advanced society. Since 2000, there has been enormous progress in achieving the target of universal primary education⁷¹. The total enrolment rate in developing regions reached 91 per cent in 2015, and the worldwide number of children out of school has dropped by almost half. There has also been a dramatic increase in literacy rates, and the ratio of girls has escalated.

Progress has also been tough in some developing regions due to high levels of poverty, armed conflicts and other emergencies. In Western Asia and North Africa, on-going armed conflict has seen an increase in the number of children out of school⁷². While Sub-Saharan Africa made the greatest progress in primary school enrolment among all developing regions – from 52 percent in 1990, up to 78 percent in 2012 – large disparities still remain⁷³. Children from the poorest households are up to four times more likely to be out of school than those of the richest households. Disparities between rural and urban areas also remain high⁷⁴.

The illiteracy rate remains an important issue that has long occupied the international community. To begin with, the causes of illiteracy need to be identified, in order for

⁶⁹S, S. (2017). Difference Between Developed Countries and Developing Countries (with Comparison Chart) - Key Differences. [online] Key Differences. Available at: <http://keydifferences.com/difference-between-developed-countries-and-developing-countries.html> [Accessed 2 Oct. 2017].

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹UNDP. (2017). Goal 4: Quality education. [online] Available at: <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals/goal-4-quality-education.html> [Accessed 2 Oct. 2017].

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Ibid.

someone to be able to understand the roots of the issue. The most common causes of illiteracy⁷⁵ are the following ones:

1. Parents with little schooling;
2. Lack of books at home and lack of stimulation in regards to the importance of reading;
3. Doing badly at or dropping out of school;
4. Difficult living conditions, including poverty;
5. Learning disabilities (dyslexia, dysorthographia).

Since causes of illiteracy have been presented, the fact that the latter continues to exist at a high rate in some parts of the world is more understandable. In countries with a high percentage of poverty, as well as in areas of conflict, it is more common for children not to be able to enroll in school. To be more specific, in Western Asia, persistent armed conflicts in a number of countries, including the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq, are causing chaos. Large parts of entire education systems have been destroyed and millions of people, including teachers and children, have taken shelter in neighboring countries or in camps⁷⁶. A poor economy can also be the cause of having classrooms with unfavorable working conditions and teachers that have poor teaching skills. High dropout rates are also observed in countries where there is high mortality amongst adults⁷⁷. In addition, the issue of migration and the emergence of refugees during different periods of time have played a major role in the increased rate of illiteracy.

Furthermore, the inability to attend even primary education has undoubtedly consequences not only to the individual, but also to society as a whole. For individuals the consequences⁷⁸ are the following:

1. Limited ability to obtain and understand essential information;
2. Unemployment. The unemployment rate is 2–4 times higher among those with little schooling than among those with Bachelor's degrees;
3. Lower income;
4. Lower-quality jobs;

⁷⁵Fondation pour l'alphabétisation. (2017). Causes of illiteracy | Literacy Foundation. [online] Available at: <https://www.fondationalphabetisation.org/en/causes-of-illiteracy/> [Accessed 2 Oct. 2017].

⁷⁶THE WORLD NEEDS ALMOST 69 MILLION NEW TEACHERS TO REACH THE 2030 EDUCATION GOALS. (2016). [ebook] UNESCO Institute of Statistics. Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002461/246124e.pdf> [Accessed 2 Oct. 2017].

⁷⁷Unesco.org. (2012). The World Atlas of Gender Equality in Education | Education | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. [online] Available at: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/gender-and-education/resources/the-world-atlas-of-gender-equality-in-education/> [Accessed 2 Oct. 2017].

⁷⁸Fondation pour l'alphabétisation. (2017). Consequences of illiteracy | Literacy Foundation. [online] Available at: <https://www.fondationalphabetisation.org/en/causes-of-illiteracy/consequences-of-illiteracy/> [Accessed 2 Oct. 2017].

5. Reduced access to lifelong learning and professional development;
6. Precarious financial position;
7. Little value is given to education and reading within the family, and this often leads to intergenerational transmission of illiteracy;
8. Low self-esteem, which can lead to isolation;
9. Impact on health. Illiterate individuals have more workplace accidents, take longer to recover and more often misuse medication through ignorance of health care resources and because they have trouble reading and understanding the relevant information.

While for society the consequences⁷⁹ are:

1. Since literacy is an essential tool for individuals and states to be competitive in the new global knowledge economy, many positions remain vacant for lack of personnel adequately trained to hold them;
2. The higher the proportion of adults with low literacy proficiency is, the slower the overall long-term GDP growth rate is;
3. The difficulty understanding societal issues lowers the level of community involvement and civic participation.

The consequences of illiteracy regarding the individual, as well as the society are equally important and are linked to the progress of a state as a whole. The quality of life is a significant factor in having quality education.

Moreover, gender equality in education is highly important and goes beyond issues of women's access to literacy, encircling fundamental issues, such as empowering women and putting in place long-term strategies addressing their unequal status in the social context of gender relations⁸⁰. Girls and women remain deprived of equal opportunities in regards to education. Despite the fact that educating them can lead to a wide range of benefits, from improved maternal health, reduced infant mortality and fertility rates, to increased prevention against HIV and AIDS⁸¹, literacy rate among them is still relatively lower than the one of boys and men. In many countries girls take on domestic responsibilities, including the care of younger siblings, and, depending on the country and the culture, boys often receive preferences when choices have to be made regarding education. Additionally, since it is commonly expected that girls should be married off at an early age, parents consider educating their daughters a waste of time

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰The plurality of literacy and its implications for policies and programmes. (2004). [ebook] Paris: UNESCO. Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001362/136246e.pdf> [Accessed 2 Oct. 2017].

⁸¹Unesco.org. (2012). The World Atlas of Gender Equality in Education | Education | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. [online] Available at: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/gender-and-education/resources/the-world-atlas-of-gender-equality-in-education/> [Accessed 2 Oct. 2017].

and money⁸². Last but not least, emotional and physical dangers may increase as girls grow into young women and face sexual harassment and assault and social demands to conform to traditional gender roles. Lack of bathrooms and other sanitary facilities induces further problems, and the daily journey to school can be unsafe for girls and young women in communities around the world⁸³.

To conclude, in 1990 with the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand, representatives from 155 countries launched the Education for All (EFA) movement by agreeing to make primary education accessible to all children and to massively reduce illiteracy by the end of the decade. They adopted a Framework for Action that defined targets and strategies aimed at meeting the basic learning needs of all by the year 2000. Ten years later, in April 2000, 1,100 participants from 164 countries gathered at the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, to reaffirm their commitment to the notion of education as a fundamental human right and to the goals of EFA. The Forum reviewed progress up to that point and adopted a framework for action that sets updated targets. Another important development was the signing in September 2000 of United Nations Millennium Declaration by all 192 United Nations member states and at least 23 international organizations that laid out a set of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to be reached by 2015. Each of these documents acknowledged the vital role that access to quality education plays, not only as an end in itself, but as an essential means of reaching other important objectives, such as reducing poverty and achieving sustainable human development⁸⁴.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Education is a fundamental human right, one that all individuals are entitled to enjoy no matter the situation in which they find themselves. An educated citizen is also a key to social and political stability within and between nations⁸⁵. In order to extinguish remaining illiteracy rate and increase the level of literacy in the world, international organizations, such as the United Nations and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Bank, UNICEF and the UNDP, have adopted conventions that address the aforementioned matters. The most crucial in regards to education are the following ones:

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴Ibid.

⁸⁵Ibid.

*The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*⁸⁶

First and foremost, in 1948 the General Assembly of the United Nations proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights “*as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations*”. Moreover, paragraph 1 of the Article 26 of the Declaration refers specifically to the right to education and goes as follows:

“(1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.”

*The World Declaration on Education for All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs*⁸⁷

The World Declaration on Education for All, adopted by the World Conference on Education for All (Jomtien, Thailand, March 1990), constitutes a useful guide for governments, international organizations, educators and development professionals in designing and carrying out policies and strategies to improve basic education services. The Jomtien Conference was a major milestone in the international dialogue on the place of education in human development policy, and the consensus reached there has given renewed motivation worldwide to provide universal primary education and eliminate adult illiteracy. It has also inspired efforts to improve the quality of basic education and to find more cost effective ways to meet the basic learning needs of various disadvantaged population groups. The World Declaration on Education for All starts with the most important issue regarding education stating that:

“Every person - child, youth and adult - shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs.”

*Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs*⁸⁸

This Framework derives from the World Declaration on Education for All, adopted by the World Conference on Education for All, which brought together representatives of governments, international and bilateral development agencies, and nongovernmental organizations. It describes three levels of common action:

- i. direct action within individual countries;

⁸⁶Un.org. (2017). Universal Declaration of Human Rights. [online] Available at: <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/> [Accessed 2 Oct. 2017].

⁸⁷WORLD DECLARATION ON EDUCATION FOR ALL and FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION TO MEET BASIC LEARNING NEEDS. (1990). [ebook] UNESCO. Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001275/127583e.pdf> [Accessed 2 Oct. 2017].

⁸⁸Ibid.

- ii. co-operation among groups of countries sharing certain characteristics and concerns;
- iii. multilateral and bilateral co-operation in the world community.

*The Dakar Framework for Action*⁸⁹

It was adopted by the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, in April 2000. The Dakar Framework for Action is based on the most extensive evaluation of education ever undertaken, the Education for All (EFA) 2000 Assessment. Called for by the World Conference of Education for All, the Assessment produced a detailed analysis of the state of basic education around the world. Moreover, its most significant goals were the following ones:

- i. ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality;
- ii. achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults;
- iii. eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.

*The Incheon Declaration*⁹⁰

Last but not least, UNESCO together with UNICEF, the World Bank, UNFPA, UNDP, UN Women and UNHCR organized the World Education Forum 2015 in Incheon, Republic of Korea and the Incheon Declaration was signed in May, 2015. Its goal is to ensure that the progress made by the previous declarations in education will continue. By 2030, the objectives of the Incheon Declaration need to be realized and determination is a key factor for this achievement.

⁸⁹The Dakar Framework for Action Education for All: Meeting our Collective Commitments. (2000). [ebook] France: UNESCO. Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001211/121147e.pdf> [Accessed 2 Oct. 2017].

⁹⁰Education 2030 Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action Towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all. (2015). [ebook] UNESCO. Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001211/121147e.pdf> [Accessed 2 Oct. 2017].

DISCUSSION OF THE TOPIC

Access to quality education is vital for development. Not only does education provide children, youth and adults with the knowledge and skills to be active citizens and to fulfill themselves as individuals, but also literacy in fact contributes directly to poverty reduction. If all students in low income countries left school with basic reading skills, 171 million people could be lifted out of poverty⁹¹. Education also contributes to sustainable economic growth and to more stable societies and governments. Moreover, it is closely related to children's health, gender equality, human rights, peace, and employment opportunities.

Globally, youth literacy rate increased from 83 per cent to 91 per cent over two decades, while the number of illiterate youth declined from 170 million to 115 million⁹². Nevertheless, regional and gender disparities persist. Literacy is lower in developing countries and higher among males than females. In the most recent years, it is reported that young women make up for 59 per cent of the total illiterate youth population⁹³.

Even though progress is evident, many issues continue to exist and make the international community more and more concerned regarding the future of education. To be more specific, apart from the fact that there are many areas of conflict currently all over the world resulting in a huge wave of refugees, there is also the emergence of many terrorist groups that forcibly recruit children. Therefore, literacy rates in these areas remain low. Efforts are being made by governments and other organizations, in order to provide vulnerable groups with proper basic education.

As far as the issue of refugees is concerned, access to education is limited and uneven across regions and settings of displacement. Enrollment in primary school is only 76% globally and drops dramatically to 36% at secondary levels⁹⁴. The office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is mandated to lead and coordinate international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide⁹⁵. However, it is undeniable that in order for refugees to be able to attend primary education, governments of host countries should cooperate with the UNHCR.

Last but definitely not least, as far as terrorist groups are concerned, Boko Haram constitutes the most significant one, as it specifically targets western education.

⁹¹Globalpartnership.org. (2017). Early Grade Reading. [online] Available at: <http://www.globalpartnership.org/focus-areas/early-grade-reading> [Accessed 2 Oct. 2017].

⁹²UNICEF DATA. (2017). Literacy - UNICEF DATA. [online] Available at: <https://data.unicef.org/topic/education/literacy/#> [Accessed 2 Oct. 2017].

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴Educateachild.org. (2017). Refugees | Educate a Child. [online] Available at: <http://educateachild.org/explore/barriers-to-education/refugees> [Accessed 2 Oct. 2017].

⁹⁵Ibid.

Nigeria's militant Islamist group Boko Haram promotes a version of Islam which makes it “haram”, meaning forbidden, for Muslims to take part in any political or social activity associated with Western society⁹⁶. Boko originally meant fake but came to signify Western education. In 2013, the US designated it a terrorist organization, amid fears that it had developed links with other militant groups, such as al-Qaeda, to wage a global jihad⁹⁷. The group's fighters were responsible for mass attacks on villages and towns, killing, abducting women and children and conscripting men and boys into their army. Boko Haram has outlived other militant groups in northern Nigeria, and has built a presence in neighboring states, where it has carried out attacks and recruited fighters⁹⁸.

BLOC POSITIONS

Illiteracy rates are still high in some countries, while in others they have significantly decreased. In the last decades, education has gained the attention needed in order to be efficiently provided to everyone. Governments and international organizations have focused on creating environments that allow children and youth worldwide to be properly educated without any form of discrimination. However, there are still a few countries that were not able to keep up with progress.

India

India is one of those aforementioned countries, since it seems that even though the percentage of literacy has increased, the percentage of illiteracy has remained the same. To be more specific, the overall literacy rate in the country may have gone up to 74.4%, but the drop in the illiteracy rate has not matched the increase in population⁹⁹. Though India was among 10 countries that have made the fastest progress in reducing the number of children out of school in recent years, this expansion has also created a learning crisis, a phenomenon apparent in many parts of the world, resulting in 250 million children not learning the basics globally, one-third of whom are in South and West Asia¹⁰⁰.

⁹⁶BBC News. (2016). Who are Nigeria's Boko Haram Islamist group? - BBC News. [online] Available at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13809501> [Accessed 2 Oct. 2017].

⁹⁷Ibid.

⁹⁸Ibid.

⁹⁹Kumar, C. (2016). Literacy rate up, but so is illiteracy. [online] The Times of India. Available at: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Literacy-rate-up-but-so-is-illiteracy/articleshow/50749744.cms> [Accessed 2 Oct. 2017].

¹⁰⁰Gohain, M. (2014). In India, poor kids are illiterate despite 4 years of education: UNESCO report. [online] The Times of India. Available at: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/In-India-poor-kids-are-illiterate-despite-4-years-of-education-Unesco-report/articleshow/29524124.cms> [Accessed 2 Oct. 2017].

Nigeria

Despite improvements to the country's education system, 65 million Nigerians remain illiterate¹⁰¹. The presence of Boko Haram in the country, a militant Islamist group, has played a significant role in the illiteracy rate of the area. Its constant attacks in the government's buildings, as well as the kidnappings of many children and women, do not allow for proper education to be offered. Boko Haram's view of western education has made it truly difficult for schools in the region to be able to efficiently "function", since many attacks have taken place in such buildings.

Cuba and Venezuela

Nevertheless, there are also some countries that have made significant progress in the field of education. Such countries are Cuba and Venezuela with Cuba being among the countries that invest the most in education¹⁰². By the end of 1961, a year the Cuban government dubbed "the year of education", the nation's literacy rate had risen to 96 percent, one of the highest in the world. This was the result of thousands of "literacy brigades" travelling across the country to rural areas, laying the foundations of what would become the most democratic education system in the Americas. Venezuela implemented the program in 2003, and by 2005 UNESCO declared the country illiteracy-free¹⁰³.

Unites States of America

Last but not least, USA seems to have been left behind as far as literacy rates are concerned. According to a study conducted by the U.S. Department of Education and the National Institute of Literacy in 2014, 32 million adults in the U.S. can't read¹⁰⁴. This shows that even though the living conditions in the U.S. are better than those of developing countries, education system does not cover the needs of the people. If the government does not focus soon on ameliorating its education system, the illiteracy rate will keep increasing significantly.

Those were a few examples of countries, to which the concern of education is higher amongst others. However, it is not only countries that need to take action regarding the problem of illiteracy. International organizations are also responsible for fighting

¹⁰¹Bakare, M. (2015). 65 million Nigerians are illiterates - UNESCO. [online] Vanguard News. Available at: <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2015/12/65-million-nigerians-are-illiterates-unesco/> [Accessed 2 Oct. 2017].

¹⁰²Telesurtv.net. (2017). 10 Things to Know About Revolutionary Cuba's Literacy Program. [online] Available at: <https://www.telesurtv.net/english/analysis/10-Things-to-Know-About-Revolutionary-Cubas-Literacy-Program-20160908-0007.html> [Accessed 2 Oct. 2017].

¹⁰³Ibid.

¹⁰⁴HuffPost. (2014). 1 In 7 Americans Can't Read This Headline- And That Hasn't Changed In 10 Years. [online] Available at: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/09/06/illiteracy-rate_n_3880355.html [Accessed 2 Oct. 2017].

against this phenomenon. UNESCO is the first and foremost organization that has played a major role in measuring and reporting the illiteracy rate all over the world by creating the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS). This way UNESCO makes it possible to focus on the root of the problem and deal with it. Another important organization is the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)¹⁰⁵ which, has helped -since 1950- many refugees not only to find a home, but also to be able to enroll in primary and secondary education. Last but not least, the World Literacy Foundation¹⁰⁶, established in 2003, is dedicated to researching and finding information that will help in combatting illiteracy worldwide. The need for improvement is evident and all countries, as well as organizations are required to put more effort, in order further progress to be achieved.

ACTIONS THAT HAVE ALREADY BEEN TAKEN

The issue of quality education has alerted many governments and non-governmental organizations. To begin with, the European Parliament (EP) has regularly called for 20% of EU aid expenditure to be devoted to basic social services (primary health care and basic education). It has also insisted on devoting special attention to vulnerable groups and those at risk of social exclusion. In regularly calling for gender equality in education, the Parliament recognizes that girls' education yields some of the highest returns of all development investments¹⁰⁷.

Furthermore, the European Union (EU) institutions spent EUR 4.2 billion in education between 2007 and 2013 (EUR 2.9 billion for basic and vocational education). This helped to enrol 13.7 million new pupils in primary school and to train 1.2 million primary teachers. Higher education is also supported through programs such as Erasmus+ or the intra-Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) mobility scheme. The EU is an important contributor to the Global Partnership for Education, a multilateral partnership coordinating the efforts of developing countries, donor countries, civil society and the private sector to support quality education for boys and girls in the world's poorest countries. Because of the particular needs of children in conflict, the EU launched the 'EU Children of Peace' initiative in 2012. This has provided over 108.000 children in 12 conflict-affected countries access to schools to learn in a safe environment, as well as psychological support to surmount their

¹⁰⁵Refugees, U. (2017). History of UNHCR. [online] UNHCR. Available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/history-of-unhcr.html> [Accessed 2 Oct. 2017].

¹⁰⁶World Literacy Foundation. (2017). The World Literacy Foundation - Who We Are. [online] Available at: <https://worldliteracyfoundation.org/who-we-are/> [Accessed 2 Oct. 2017].

¹⁰⁷Gil, M. (2015). Briefing - The European year for development: Education. [ebook] pp.1-3. Available at: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2015/536436/EXPO_BRI\(2015\)536436_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2015/536436/EXPO_BRI(2015)536436_EN.pdf) [Accessed 2 Oct. 2017].

traumatic war experiences¹⁰⁸.

Moreover, the *UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)* included goals to “achieve universal primary education” and “eliminate gender disparity in education” in order to “promote gender equality and empower women”. Working towards these goals required the mobilization of financial resources -although no concrete commitments were made-. Global government spending on education increased from 4.6 % to 5.1 % of gross national product (GNP) between 1999 and 2011, but spending as a share of government budget has remained at 15 % since 1999. While the percentage of aid devoted to education has remained constant, overall volumes initially increased, from USD 6.8 billion in 2002 to USD 14.8 billion in 2010¹⁰⁹.

In addition, *the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, an inter-governmental commitment and “a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity”, was adopted. It comprises of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that are “integrated and indivisible and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: the economic, social and environmental”¹¹⁰. All Member States, the entire UN system, experts and a cross-section of civil society, business and, most importantly, millions of people from all over globe, have committed themselves to this comprehensive agenda seeking to address globally-shared concerns and to promote the public good¹¹¹. Education is a central factor to the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In fact, quality education constitutes SDG 4 which goes as follows:

“Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”.

Last but not least, in 2016 the Human Rights Council (HRC) drafted Resolution A/HRC/32/L.33 reaffirming its previous resolutions and recognizing the progress made by the creation of the UN Millennium Development Goals, as well as the Incheon Declaration¹¹². The HRC will continue promoting quality education with no discriminations worldwide through its resolutions. The international community has treated this matter with significant care and improvement is visible.

¹⁰⁸Ibid.

¹⁰⁹Ibid.

¹¹⁰Unpacking Sustainable Development Goal 4 Education 2030. (2016). [ebook] Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002463/246300E.pdf> [Accessed 2 Oct. 2017].

¹¹¹Ibid.

¹¹²Right to Education Project. (2016). Human Rights Council Resolution on the Right to Education. [online] Available at: <http://www.right-to-education.org/resource/human-rights-council-resolution-right-education> [Accessed 2 Oct. 2017].

QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED

Taking current situation of the issue at hand into account, it is indisputable that actions need to be taken in order for progress to be made. It is important to ensure that viable solutions will be found in regards to the following issues:

- How can we ensure gender equality in education in areas where religion does not consider women as equal to men?
- How can we ensure proper training in order for teachers to be able to work efficiently in areas of conflicts?
- How can we ensure that children and youth with learning disabilities will receive quality education?
- Which are the steps that should be taken in order for refugees to be able to attend at least primary education during their stay at the countries?

CONCLUSION

To conclude, quality education, as well as the current illiteracy rate in the world under has faced scrutiny for many years. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights places education in the centre of attention and since then, a great number of studies and research has been conducted. The fact that basic education is the first step for progress in society overall should be highlighted.

It is highly important that solutions be found combating the existing illiteracy percentage worldwide. Among possible solutions making pre-primary education mandatory in every country may be included, since it is the first school experience for children. Moreover, national governments could implement a curriculum based on the specific needs of their people. Furthermore, as far as gender equality in education is concerned, the number of female teachers should increase, since they are the minority in many countries, in order for girls to have female role models that will inspire them. Additionally, the issue of violence at school, being a very common phenomenon, should be tackled by introducing informative lectures at schools. Last but not least, the funding of activities towards the amelioration of education systems should be frequently controlled, as exploitation on the part of governments is very common.

What needs to be outlined is the need for quality in every aspect of our lives. In this day and age, it seems that everything is falling apart. Wars are more common than peace nowadays. Education is the first and foremost step towards solving many problems dealt. The question is what we are going to do about it. Should we create a

better world starting from education?

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