

The logo of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) is centered in the background. It features a white dove with its wings spread, perched on a globe. The globe is surrounded by a laurel wreath. The globe itself is decorated with various national flags, including the Danish flag at the top and the Swedish flag on the right.

United Nations High Commission For
Refugees: Executive Committee
Zenith Model United Nations 2014

BACKGROUND GUIDE

**Agenda: The Role of Host Countries - The
Cost and Impact of Hosting Refugees**

ZENITH MUN'14
MIRANDA HOUSE

Letter from the Executive Board

Dear Delegates,

It is our pleasure to be serving as the Executive Board for the Executive Committee(ExCom) of the Office of UN High Commission for Refugees at the third edition of Zenith Model United Nations Conference (Miranda House).

At the outset, we would like to state the importance of analyzing this agenda and taking it up, not from the scratch but its deep roots and gaining the insight of the specifics.

The ExCom has the primary responsibility to review the fund allocation underlining the problems persistent and only then, are the funds authorized for the commissioner to make an appeal for the refugee problem.

Understanding this aspect of this council makes it an imperative directive to the debate, not only in terms of allocation or approval of budgets but also a practical and feasible solution to reduce the negative impact on host countries and thereby reducing the fund demand for the problem as a whole.

Consider the questions at the end of this guide as a mere start to the thought process behind this agenda.

This guide, as the name suggests is merely a guide that may form the basis of the direction for the flow of debate and hence research, keeping this background as a start, is important.

We hope to see a great level of effort and enthusiasm from you all, so that we all can take back a great experience.

Do research the updated information on various news agencies but be careful of quoting the credible sources only while presenting arguments/points.

Regards,

Angad S Madan
Chairperson
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Harshvardhan Yadav
Vice Chairperson

Credible and Debatable Sources of Proof

1. Reuters: Appropriate documents and articles from the Reuters News agency will be used to corroborate or refute controversial statements made in the committee.
2. UN Document : Documents by all UN agencies will be considered as sufficient proof. Reports from all UN bodies including treaty bodies will be accepted.
3. Government reports: Government reports of a given country used to corroborate an allegation on the same aforementioned country will be accepted as proof.
4. Reports from other news agencies and relevant organizations such as the Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International (etc.) can be put to debate but wouldn't be accepted as credible proof.

The Executive Committee (ExCom) : Origins and Mandate

The UN's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) established the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme (ExCom) in 1958 [Resolution 672 (XXV)] and the governing body formally came into existence on January 1, 1959.

A UN General Assembly resolution [1166 (XII)] had requested ECOSOC to establish an Executive Committee consisting of representatives of UN member states or members of any of the specialized agencies. It specified that these representatives should "be elected by the Council on the widest possible geographical basis from those states with a demonstrated interest in, and devotion to, the solution of the refugee problem."

Although established by ECOSOC, ExCom functions as a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly and its documentation is issued in a General Assembly series. ExCom's report is submitted directly to the General Assembly for consideration in the Third Committee.

UNHCR's Statute [Article 3] directs that the High Commissioner "shall follow policy directives given him by the General Assembly or the Economic and Social Council." ExCom does not substitute for the policy making functions of the General Assembly or ECOSOC but has its own executive and advisory functions. These include:

- to advise the High Commissioner in the exercise of his/her functions
- to review funds and programmes
- to authorize the High Commissioner to make appeals for funds
- to approve proposed biennial budget targets

The Executive Committee holds one annual session. This usually takes place in Geneva during the first half of October and lasts one week. ExCom's Rules of Procedure are contained in document A/AC/96/187/Rev.6.

Key Definitions

¹**Refugee** : [A]ny person who: “owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.”

²**Asylum Seekers**- International refugee law defines a refugee as someone who seeks refuge in a foreign country because of war and violence, or out of fear of persecution. Until a request for refuge has been accepted, the person is referred to as an asylum seeker . Only after the recognition of the asylum seekers’ protection and needs, he or she is officially referred to as a refugee and enjoys refugee status, which carries certain rights and obligations according to the legislation of the receiving country.

³**Migrant**: Migrants choose to move for example to improve their future economic prospects. Since they are not forced to move to save their rights or protect their freedom, international law treats them differently.

IDP (Internally Displaced People): IDPs have not crossed international borders, but have moved to find sanctuary within their own country. Even though they flee for similar reasons as refugees, such as armed conflict and human rights violations, they legally remain under the protection of their own government.

¹ 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees

² <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c137.html>

³ <http://www.unric.org/en/world-refugee-day/26978-new-report-developing-countries-host-80-of-refugees->

Introduction

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 14, Clause 1 states, "Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution". While the international community has generally responded swiftly and generously to refugee crises over the past half century, in recent years, some worrying trends have begun to emerge. Countries that once generously opened their doors to refugees have been tempted to shut those doors for fear of assuming open-ended responsibilities, of abetting uncontrolled migration and people-smuggling, or of jeopardizing national security. Real and perceived abuses of asylum systems as well as irregular movements, have also made some countries more wary of refugee claimants, and concerned that resources are not being sufficiently focused on those in greatest need. Refugees have been refused admission to safety or have been expelled from asylum countries. Those who have reached a potential country of asylum have sometimes been turned away or sent back without being able to apply for asylum.

United Nations has seen worst scenario in the Middle East as the Syrian Refugees numbers have gone beyond Two Million. A near tenfold increase over the past 12 months in the rate of refugees crossing Syria's borders into Turkey, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon - to a daily average of nearly 5,000 men, women and children - had pushed the total living abroad above two million.

This has raised a significant number of questions regarding the accountability, ensuring basic rights, conflict prevention among the refugees and sexual exploitation of women refugees. At the same time, the countries such as Jordan are met with Economic and water crisis because of inflow of refugees as recent reports suggest.

The situation in South Sudan points out to the violence generated refugees where over 19000 have fled to Uganda, Kenya and Ethiopia. South Sudan's President Salva Kiir has renewed an offer of amnesty to help end the fighting, but also accused his own security forces of looting the town of Pibor, a remote settlement at the heart of the conflict.

Refugee Camps



World's 50 most populous Refugee camps as on Jun 20, 2013 (World Refugee Day)

Today, about 45.2 million refugees are scattered around the world, a record high in nearly two decades. Of those, 80 percent are women and children. For 34 million of them, the United Nations High Commission on Refugees offers protection and life-saving supplies at refugee camps in more than 125 countries. The 50 largest camps, featured on the above map, house more than 1.9 million displaced individuals.

More than 1.6 million people have fled Syria during the country's ongoing civil war, seeking safety in neighboring countries. The overwhelming majority of the 140,000 refugees residing in Urfa (No. 7) and Gaziantep (No. 31) in Turkey and Zaatri (No. 11) in Jordan came from Syria.

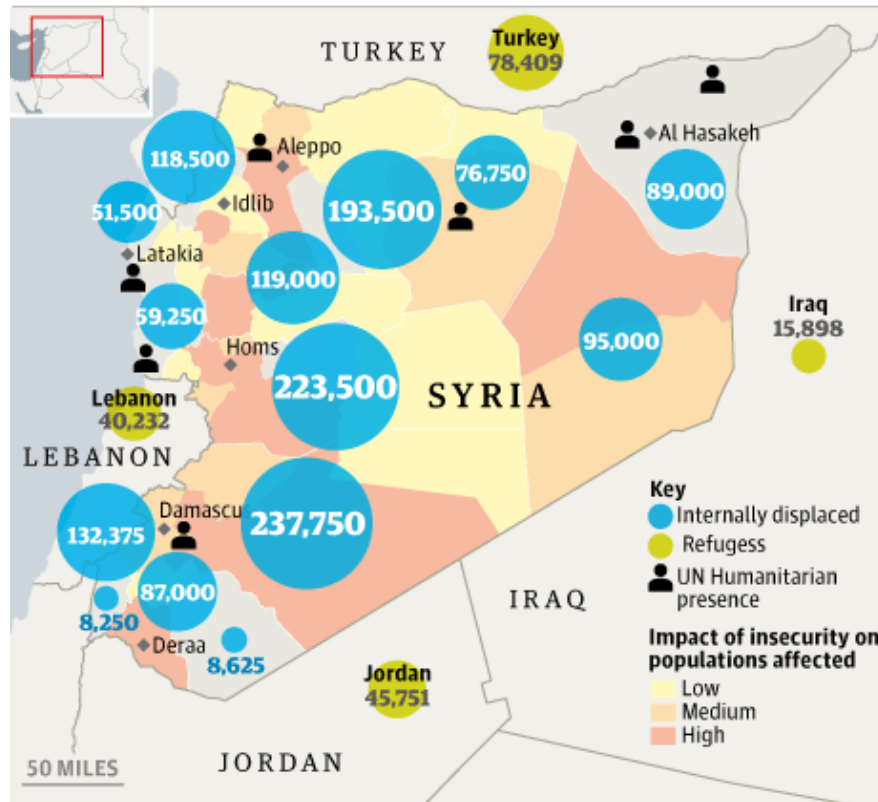
UNHCR provides them with food, safe drinking water, tents, bedding and medical care. The organization also helps refugees seek asylum in another countries and, when possible, reunites families forced to split up when they escaped.

Despite the terminology used—"camps" or "settlements"—many are not temporary; some have existed for years, and for many young refugees, these camps are the only homes they know. The Dadaab complex in Kenya, which includes the three biggest camps in the world, was constructed in the early 1990s. The largest of the three, Hagadera, houses 138,102 refugees, which is equivalent to the population of Pasadena, California. For each camp on the map, a comparable American city is listed to convey size.

Case Studies-

Syria

Syria Numbers of refugees and internally displaced people



Zataari refugee camp, opened by the Jordanian government at the end of July to house 500 people, has swollen to a population of more than 26,000. Two-thirds of them are children, of whom around 5,000 are under the age of four. Five hundred are "unaccompanied minors" – youngsters who made the perilous journey without their parents, and who are now dealing with the pain of separation along with new privations and the traumas they left behind.

Official expectations are that Jordan's refugee population will grow by up to 10,000 a week. The Jordanian government says there are a further 140,000 Syrian refugees crammed into towns and villages close to the border. Turkey, Lebanon and Iraq have also seen huge influxes of refugees, with thousands more still trying to leave Syria.

At Zataari, conditions are wretched despite sterling efforts by humanitarian organizations. Sand and dust whipped up by the wind sweeping across the nine-square-kilometre site cause respiratory problems. Newly erected tents are swiftly coated in a layer of sand, turning their

color from white to brown within a day or two. Sand is in children's hair, eyebrows, eyelashes, under fingernails; eyes are rimmed red; voices hoarse.

Only 40% of the camp has electricity. There is one bathroom/washroom per 50 refugees. For now, the desert sun beats down on the exposed ground for 12 hours a day, but within weeks night temperatures will plummet and winter will bring driving rain and freezing winds.

The Jordanian army maintains a heavy presence inside and outside the camp. Refugees are not allowed to leave without special permits. Less than two weeks ago, a protest by camp inmates over conditions and frustration at the tight security was quelled by teargas fired by soldiers.

Bulldozers, earth movers, water tankers, delivery and garbage trucks rumble continuously through the camp's entrance, a serious hazard to hundreds of people milling around aimlessly. The United Nations agency for refugees, UNHCR, acknowledges the camp's problems but insists the priority is to get infrastructure in place for the existing population and the refugees expected in the coming days and weeks.

The high proportion of children in the camp presents particular challenges. "Many children coming across [the border] are traumatised and some are injured," says Pip Leighton of the UN children's agency, UNICEF. "There is huge psychological stress. Many of them have seen things that no adult should see, let alone a child."

Agencies such as UNICEF and Save the Children are offering specialist counseling and therapeutic activities. "These kids are telling stories that are pretty frightening," says Hedinn Halldorsson of Save the Children. "Some have been in hiding for months. Many are waking in the night, crying. Some children are panicking when they hear the planes [from a nearby Jordanian military base] overhead."

In many cases, fathers have stayed behind in Syria in the hope of protecting property and caring for livestock. "Separation is traumatic," says Halldorsson.

Humanitarian agencies have set up designated play areas, and are working on establishing schools within the camp. "But some days we do nothing but help parents search for lost children," says Rae McGrath of Save the Children.

Horn of Africa and Yemen

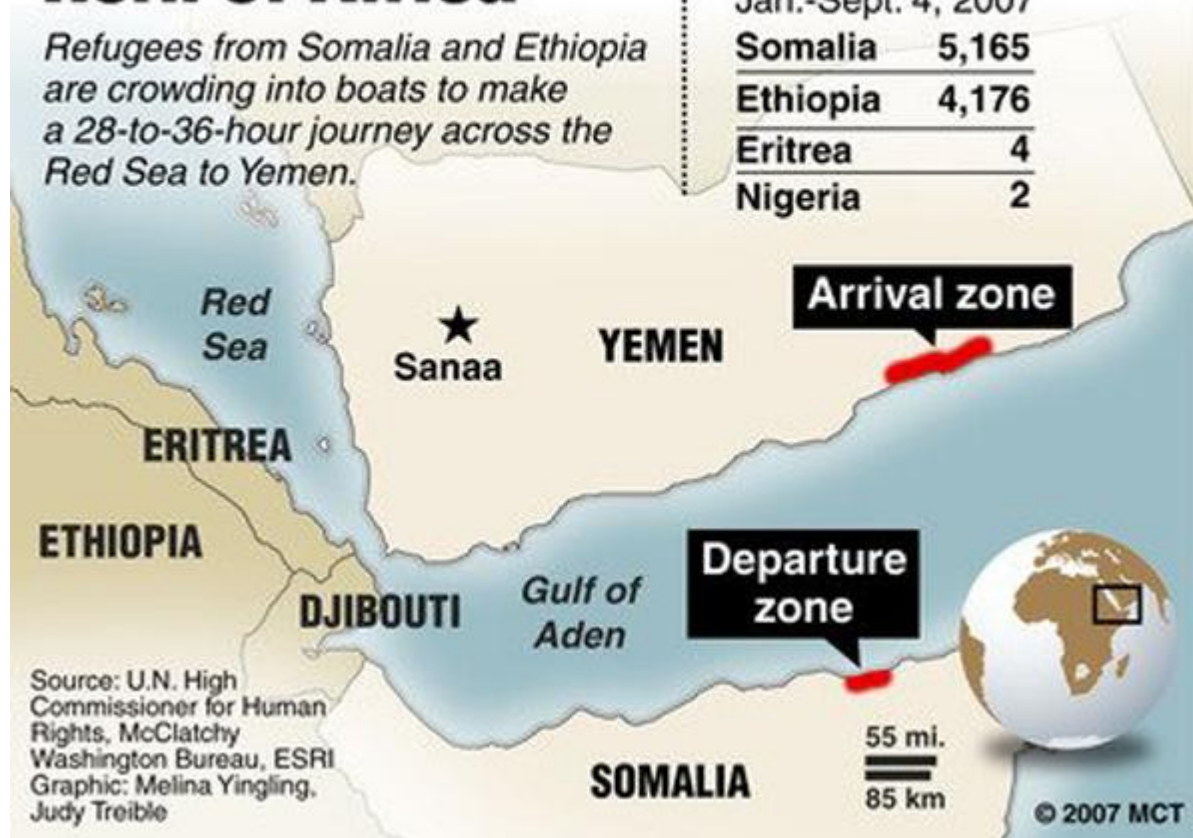
Fleeing the Horn of Africa

Refugees from Somalia and Ethiopia are crowding into boats to make a 28-to-36-hour journey across the Red Sea to Yemen.

Where they come from

Nationality of the refugees arriving in Yemen
Jan.-Sept. 4, 2007

Somalia	5,165
Ethiopia	4,176
Eritrea	4
Nigeria	2



Yemen hosts some 223,000 Somali refugees who have fled drought, conflict, political instability and human rights violations in their homeland. New refugees from the Horn of Africa continue to arrive in Yemen and many have settled in Kharaz camp.

Lack of sufficient shelter has been a problem in Kharaz camp, compounded by limited space and a substantial increase in the camp population. Since the beginning of 2011 the camp population has increased by 28 percent and now has nearly 20,000 residents, 96 percent of them Somali. Many urban refugees have also moved there over the past year because of difficult economic and security conditions.

UNHCR, with the support of ECHO, has also constructed two communal blocks of latrines and a drainage system for the health centre. In addition, it has improved the camp water supply system with three electrical submersible pumps. The UN refugee agency has also been working

closely with the government on an expansion plan for the camp. Considerable challenges remain, not least for 3,000 refugees still living in tents and makeshift shelters.

The delegates are expected to be researched on more case studies based on Africa and Middle East. Again, this is simply to get you started on the agenda.

The number, statistics etc. are dynamically changing; delegates are expected to research and be updated with the news with regards to various instances, such as the Papua New Guinea incident with regards to the asylum seekers.

UNHCR budgets for the Middle East (USD)

Operation	2013 Revised budget (as of 30 June 2013)	2014					2015
		Refugee programme PILLAR 1	Stateless programme PILLAR 2	Reintegration projects PILLAR 3	IDP projects PILLAR 4	Total	
Iraq	293,729,337	129,591,438	2,000,001	39,598,855	44,811,415	216,001,709	195,720,087
Israel	3,222,760	2,896,171	0	0	0	2,896,171	2,494,451
Jordan	367,567,319	430,351,224	0	0	0	430,351,224	427,841,224
Kuwait	0	5,000	0	0	0	5,000	5,000
Lebanon	362,024,061	370,282,030	639,282	0	0	370,921,312	369,501,879
Saudi Arabia Regional Office	4,453,371	3,205,486	390,000	0	0	3,595,486	3,858,188
Syria Regional Refugee Coordination Office	2,803,738	3,684,171	0	0	0	3,684,171	4,481,186
Syrian Arab Republic	316,996,216	64,334,792	578,338	0	192,951,405	257,864,535	245,367,453
United Arab Emirates	3,217,460	2,506,493	125,000	0	0	2,631,493	2,641,493
Yemen	72,865,369	37,266,642	0	0	18,134,561	55,401,204	59,538,167
Regional activities	21,814,394	30,403,128	0	0	0	30,403,128	28,500,004
Total	1,448,694,024	1,074,526,576	3,732,621	39,598,855	255,897,381	1,373,755,433	1,339,949,133

Source: UNHCR Global Appeal 2014-2105

Impact on Host Countries

While refugee status and its effects on an individual are horrific, the brunt of the damage in a refugee situation is borne by the nations expected to provide for these displaced persons. Geographically misfortunate countries are vulnerable to thousands of refugees fleeing from nearby conflicts. This is a more prevalent issue in Africa than in most regions. Africa's refugee problem stems from its decolonization, followed by the arbitrary re-sectioning of its interior, which both separated and mixed ethnic and religious groups. The result is today's frequent and brutal civil and intercontinental wars, which create hundreds of thousands of refugees. Because of the developing state of the African nations, conflicts unimagined in regions such as Europe arise; such as competition between natives and refugees for scarce resources. Because of the tense political situations, refugees make a statement to other countries in regards to where the innocent host's loyalties lie, creating added conflict to the war. Because of the alien terrain, refugees put strain on the African environment that would never occur to the average privileged European or American. In addition, local violence erupts due to differences in beliefs, but also because refugees must be cared for but do not work and are a notorious source of the unfortunate economic state of the natives.

Refugees impact their host countries in many different ways. Generally, the economic and political aspects are highlighted in the news and in scholarly articles. However, refugees also have significant social and environmental impacts on their host countries and communities. In this section, we will examine the positive and negative economical, political, social and environmental impact of refugees on their host countries.

Refugees as Assets

More often than not, the positive aspects that refugees bring to a host country or community are not emphasized or known (Loescher, 2009). Typically, the focus is on the great need for food, safety and security. Images of children with bloated tummies squatting over dirty water or thin, forlorn people standing in line as UNHCR staff hand out food are typically imprinted in people's minds. The image of a refugee working or contributing to society is not well known to most people. Perhaps this is because the lives of refugees are less than ideal, horrible even. Yet in any dire situation it is imperative to focus on positive assets that can be used to lift up everyone involved. In the case of refugees, this is especially important since not only the world, but also the countries that are hosting them see them as a burden, often overlooking any positive contributions they bring.

Economical

Refugees often become assets to host communities upon entry into their host country. This typically takes the form of material goods they bring from their country of origin and, in

some cases, gold they may be carrying (Jacobsen, 2002, p. 585). They also help to bring financial funds through international organizations that assist refugee populations. These organizations help to stimulate the economy by “injecting much needed revenue via the tax and customs payments made for the aid and supplies brought into the country” (Ongpin, 2009, p. 7). It is also believed that the infrastructure created by organizations to allow the aid to reach refugees benefits local populations as well (Ongpin, 2009, p. 37). In instances where host communities are resistant to the presence of refugees, UNHCR will give money to build infrastructure in hosts communities in an effort to assist with their needs and increase their willingness to accept refugees (Jacobsen, 2002, p. 583). Some of the infrastructure building may include expansion of hospitals, clinics, road networks, and water supply, as well as reforestation to alleviate the environmental degradation of fuel wood reserves. A prime example of this infrastructure support is at the Daadbad refugee complex in Kenya where the local community receives money from the camp’s operating budget to support local infrastructure. Additionally, the trading opportunities that are generated between refugees and host communities help to reduce the price of food and commodity and stimulate the market economy for certain goods (World Bank, 2010, p. 8).

Another positive contribution refugees can bring to their host countries is through their labor, skills and expertise. The World Bank (2010) cites the Iraq refugees in Amman, Jordan as offering their “well-educated” skills to local universities and hospitals that help the local businesses (p. 8). This same report also points to the transnational cash flows that refugees receive from their more well to do relatives in other countries such as Canada or the United States. These cash flows help improve housing and water production in refugee communities (World Bank, 2010).

The presence of aid agencies can also be a source of employment for some host communities. In some cases, organizations will hire locals to assist with the refugee populations. These same organizations also provide transportation and housing for locals, though this is not always apparent because it is usually phased out over the course of several years (Jacobsen, 2002, p. 584).

Political

Political instability and security is rampant in research on refugees. This is because a primary reason refugees are forced to flee their country is due to armed wars of liberation between the government of their country of origin and rebel groups (Loescher and Milner, 2005, p. 155). Amongst this conflict however, there can be positive political implications that the presence of refugees bring about. Western countries are willing to offer their support in creating plans of action with host governments on how to care for the refugees. Part of this support involves security packages such as increased equipment and training for police in addressing security concerns (Jacobsen, 2002, p. 591). Host governments also receive support from outside agencies in helping to repatriate mass numbers of refugees back to their country

of origin. In 2002, the countries of Somalia and Burundi worked with the UNHCR to help bring home 190,000 refugees over a two-year time span (Loescher and Milner, 2005, p. 167). Such large numbers of repatriated refugees can help decrease tension between host communities and host governments as well as restore stable conditions in which the host government can effectively function. In the same way, UNHCR also helped to create a comprehensive plan of action in 2004 to help the newly returned refugees of Somalia resettle in their homeland. This plan included both the newly created government of Somalia as well as host countries where refugees resided (Loescher and Milner, 2005, p. 168). Without such support, the governments may not have been able to handle the large numbers of refugees crossing their borders.

Refugees also help to bring peacekeeping efforts to the forefront of regional and international agendas (Nyong'o, 1998, p. 137). The presence of refugees, particularly those in protracted situations, exasperates security concerns in host countries and will eventually lead to outright conflict between refugees countries of origin and host countries (Pont, 2006, p. 42). This security threat prompts international governments and outside agencies to encourage, and in some case assist with, peace negotiations in conflict-ridden countries (Nyong'o, 1998, p. 129). When these peace negotiations work, the conflict from countries of origin decreases within host countries. By extension, this means that the governments of host countries will experience increased security and stability. Likewise, when peace and stability is achieved in countries of origin and large numbers of refugees that pose security threats to host countries are able to return home, host governments experience decreased political strain between them and the host communities where the refugees resided.

Jacobsen (2002) points out that governments in host countries are given a unique opportunity to build their capacity and strengthen their grip on their country's territory (p. 588). This can be done in collaboration with donor governments and their respective aid agencies. These agencies offer money and services that help to strengthen state bureaucracies. Because of this, it is in the best interest of host country governments to maintain and strengthen political relations with donor countries. Relations with aid agencies and their donor governments can be used to the advantage of host governments. Because aid agencies wish for host governments to be cooperative, host countries are able to "increase the price of their patience with refugees and (call) upon donors to finance refugee programs," thereby benefiting from the presence of refugees (Jacobsen, 1996, p. 664).

It is interesting to note that while most organizations and research find refugees to be a threat to political stability and security, the World Development Report found that in most cases this is not true. In a study of 10 countries, only two, Pakistan and Chad, were linked to serious political and security threats (World Bank, 2010, p. 13).

Social

The presence of large numbers of refugees in host communities can no doubt have serious social implications on a host community and how they receive refugees. In instances

where refugees are of the same cultural and linguistic group as their host community, there is a greater likelihood of peaceful co-existence. A prime example of this is the Somalian refugees in the Dadaab refugee complex in Kenya who share links with refugees through similar tribal or clan ties (World Bank, 2010, p. 11). In the same way, religion can also play a key factor in how a host community receives refugees. Jacobson (1996) attributes the Islamic religion, which honors the protection of persons from persecution, to the continuing peace and reception of refugees in Arab-Islamic countries (p. 668).

Countries that have had positive historical experiences are more likely to receive refugees peacefully. These same countries are also more likely to maintain good relations with refugees even when security becomes a threat and resources are stretched thin. Similarly, communities that have had personal experience as refugees are more likely to peacefully receive and live in harmony with refugees. This is especially true of communities that were themselves received well by host communities when they fled violence or persecution (Jacobsen, 1996, p. 669).

Host countries governmental policies towards refugees are likely to be beneficial towards refugees if the community in which they reside looks favorable and lives peacefully with them (Jacobsen, 1996, p. 670). When stability and peace are achieved in host communities, the host government has little reason to look with dissatisfaction on refugees. Host governments in these types of situations are therefore more likely to foster social support instead of dissention.

In America, the influence of refugees can be seen in the increasing multicultural influence on businesses, education, religion and language. Orum (2005) uses the term "circle of influence" to explain this occurrence (p. 926). According to him, refugees who are integrated into a society in large numbers are able to execute a considerable amount of cultural influence over a community or society in which they live. This can be seen in the number of ethnic restaurants or shops in a community, the presence of different religious organizations and even policy aimed at protecting and assisting refugees. Additionally, he believes that certain refugees in America are able to use the "chain of command" to influence institutions. This is the process by which refugees advocate to top officials for the integration of certain multicultural relevant policies that will assist them in their day-to-day lives and well-being. A prime example of this can be seen in the presence of bilingual education in public school systems and the increasing integration of religious tolerance in the education system (p. 927). Further, the influence refugees have on the labor market can be seen when certain ethnic groups dominate certain occupational positions such as the garment district (p. 929). While this dominance can also be attributed to immigrants and not merely refugees, the impact is still the same and must therefore not be overlooked. It is also important to remember that the positive influence of refugees on their host society is seen and felt over long periods of time (p. 934).

Host communities often benefit from the social services provided by outside agencies to refugees. When refugees reside in camps, healthcare is likely to be provided within the confines of the encampment (Dick, 1985, p. 264). In situations such as these, it is not uncommon for members of the local host community to become registered as refugees in order to receive healthcare. This is particularly true in host communities where healthcare is non-existent or has little or no healthcare options (J. Garange, personal communication, November 22, 2011). In some instances, local communities are given funding and support towards local health clinics to offer services for refugees in the area. In these types of situations, refugees that are integrated with assistance from the host country are likely to have a more positive impact on the health and healthcare of the local community (Dick, 1985, p. 265). Yet this can also cause healthcare systems that are already stretched thin to become more inadequate in its services to the locals. Doctors who are in short supply in some countries and recruited to serve refugee populations are thus detracted from administering healthcare to locals, causing both the healthcare system and the health of locals to suffer (Damme, De Brouwere, Boelaert, & Lerberghe, 1998 as cited in Refugee Influx Can Improve Services for Locals, 1998).

Education can affect host communities in much the same way. UNHCR has a mandate to provide “education to all persons of concern to UNHCR” (UNHCR Education Strategy, 2009, p. 1). This means that host communities are often left with education substandard to that of their refugee counterparts. Recognizing this as a potential for yet another source of tension between host communities and refugees, UNHCR has collaborated with some host governments to provide education in host communities for both locals and refugees. It has also worked to have refugees integrated into host communities so that refugees themselves may receive better education (UNHCR, Benefits of Belonging, 2010, p. 6)

Environmental

In areas where large numbers of refugees reside, their impact on the environment can be substantial. The positive implications of this impact are not well documented and can depend on the situation in which refugees reside. However, information on this subject can still be gleaned. For example, the productive capacities of refugees increases significantly when they have adequate access to land and natural resources (World Bank, 2010, p. 15). This leads to increased crop production and access to water and firewood, which in turn leads to a reduced burden on host communities and aid agencies that support refugees (World Bank, 2010, p. 15). Unfortunately, this increase in access to natural resources means the negative implications still exist, one of the largest of which is a depletion of trees in areas heavily populated with refugees. In Sudan, along the border of Eritrea, the presence of 66,000 refugees have stripped the area bare of trees. To combat this, the UNHCR has planted 19 million trees in the Kassala region as part of its efforts to assist and protect refugees in that area. UNHCR also trains and recruits refugees and locals alike to plant donated seeds with materials given to them for this purpose. Additionally, UNHCR helps to provide cultivated farmland to achieve

environmental and economical sustainability. The forestation and farmland cultivation helps to provide for 15,000 locals and refugees alike. It also helps to protect the environment in which the refugees reside (UNHCR, 2011). Initiatives such as these help transform disastrous environmental consequences that often result from the presence of refugees into positive assets that everyone can benefit from.

Refugees as Burden

The burden of refugees is well known around the world. Aid agencies and governments alike work to help relieve their burden. Celebrity ambassadors such as Angelina Jolie with UNHCR and Scarlett Johansson with Oxfam bring awareness to the plight of refugees by advocating for improved conditions among refugees. A central component of this improvement lies in understanding the burden that refugees pose on their host countries. Knowing how refugees are a burden helps to pave the way for policies, programs and initiatives that help to alleviate the suffering of refugees and improve their quality of life.

Economical

80 percent of refugees in the world reside in countries that are underdeveloped. Of this number, 49 least developed countries (LDC) provided asylum to 2 million of the world's refugees (UNHCR Global Trends Report, 2010, p. 2). In developing countries, resources for citizens are already scarce. The presence of refugees only serves to further exasperate the scarcity of resources (Ongpin, 2009, p. 37). African refugees in particular stretch the economic resources of their host country. This is because host countries in Africa are more likely to be less developed than those on other continents. Consequently, African refugees have a higher chance of receiving less aid and endure more suffering (Pont, 2006, p. 42). This is especially true of protracted refugees situations, which makes up over 60 percent of the world's refugee population (Loescher and Milner, 2005, p. 154).

Host countries often have to "provide uncompensated public expenditures related to the care and maintenance of the refugee population" (World Bank, 2011, p. 6). A prime example of this is in Malawi, where government funds directed towards refugees were found to be correlated with the decrease of expenditures in social and infrastructure investment. At the local level, the presence of refugees has been found to drive up prices of local goods (World Bank, 2010, p. 7). Food prices, in particular, have also been found to skyrocket due to the increased demand for food by refugees. In Tanzania for example, the price of corn increased as much as 500 percent after Rwandan refugees arrived in the country (Landau, 2004, p. 43). Refugees are also likely to beat out locals for scarce jobs by driving down wages and putting locals out of a source of income (Chambers, 1986, p. 251). In countries where refugees are

integrated, they have been found to drive up the price of shelter due to an increased demand for housing. Consequently, some locals in communities where refugees reside are forced to leave their communities in search of more financially suitable living arrangements (Landau, 2004, p. 40).

The presence of refugees is also likely to affect the use of land. In instances where land is scarce and refugees are allowed to use local land, competition is created between locals and the refugees. Like labor, if refugees take the land, locals are left without a source of livelihood or a way to feed themselves and their family (Chambers, 1986, p. 252). When land is poor and food is unable to be produced as a result, aid agencies will supplement refugees with food. While locals also get food distribution, there have been claims that the preference aid agencies give to refugees leaves locals worse off than their refugee counterparts (Chambers, 1986, p. 250).

Currently, the Horn of Africa is experiencing one of the worst droughts in its history. The result is a severe famine that the UNHCR has dubbed a “crisis” (UNHCR, 2011). The presence of refugees in countries of asylum compounds the problem of hunger by stretching virtually non-existent food in the horn beyond its capability thereby increasing the likelihood of starvation and death among citizens and refugees alike. Many aid organizations, including UNHCR, are providing food for people in this region. However, the scope of the problem has caused countries in the horn of Africa to be stretched beyond their economic abilities, leading to tension, instability and in some cases, increased violence (UNHCR, 2011).

Political

Countries that host refugees face increasing challenges to political stability, policy, governance and security. Chief among these challenges is the threat refugees pose to state security. When refugees cross national borders, particularly in large numbers, militant forces have been known to keep fleeing citizens in the country by force. This means that the border patrols of host countries can be drawn into conflict with neighboring militant forces. Militant groups have also been known to cross borders and attempt to forcefully bring refugees back to their country of origin (Loescher and Milner, 2005, p. 160). In other instances, refugees are also used to smuggle weapons and drugs across borders into host countries (Jacobsen, 2002, p. 586). Another common occurrence is for militant groups to reside in refugee camps near state borders, carrying out militant operations and recruiting members from among the refugees. Camps are also a breeding ground for the illegal distribution of weapons, use of drugs and the prostitution of women and children (Loescher and Milner, 2005, p. 153).

Many of the problems within the camps spill out into the surrounding areas, causing more conflict and security problems for host countries (Jacobsen, 2002, p. 587). When this happens, security threats for host countries increase internally as well as bilaterally with neighboring countries (World Bank, 2010, p. 12). This threat causes tension between host and

neighboring countries that further increases already fragile conditions for host countries as a result of refugees. In extreme cases, when refugees pose security threats that undermine the stability of a host country, governments have refused to host refugees and in rare cases have been known to forcefully remove them back to their countries of origin (Aka, 2009).

Barutciski and Deroun (2007) found a link between civil wars and protracted refugee situations in African host countries (p. 217). According to them, enduring internal rivalries are “driving many of the protracted refugee situations in Africa” (Barutciski and Deroun, 2007, p. 217). They believe that long term civil wars often lead to unstable protracted refugee situations because of the lack of peace in the countries of conflict and the political insecurity and complexity repatriating protracted refugees poses to host countries (Barutciski and Deroun, 2007, p. 222). As a result, protracted refugees often remain as burdens for their host countries.

Governments in host countries are frequently called upon by UNHCR and outside governments to create policies that address the needs of refugees (Jacobson, 2002, p. 588). In most cases, host governments rely on outside aid agencies to provide for the basic needs of refugees. Yet the safety of refugees lies within the power of the host country in collaboration with UNHCR and other refugee support services (UNHCR, 2011). This means host governments have a responsibility to help create situations of asylum and safety for the refugees in their country. The weight of such responsibility has the potential to over stretch the capacity of many host governments, particularly LDC or developing countries. Despite this, host governments are increasingly called upon to assist refugees. Jacobson (2002) list three challenges host governments face in regards to managing refugees. They are: 1) Managing dense populations of refugees and aid agencies assisting them. 2) Controlling and managing contested use of resources by refugees. 3) Controlling security within refugees countries of origin as well as border crossing to help maintain security (p. 588).

While many host governments attempt to rise to these challenges, many more do not. In Asia, where many states have yet to sign international refugee laws (1951 Convention Regulating the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees,) the response is not an inability to do so, but an unwillingness to partake in laws that they believe do not address their refugees needs or concerns. In Africa, the lack of response has less to do with unwillingness and more to do with an inability respond to the challenges posed by refugees. While it is true that some governments are hesitant to get involved in situations that pose significant security threats, it is also true that the presence of militant forces in host territories is a complicated matter that is beyond the capabilities of some countries to address (Jacobsen, 2002, p. 592).

Social

Host countries are affected most when refugees move into communities where they are of a different ethnic, tribal or religious background (World Bank, 2010, p. 10). In these

instances, resentment towards refugees is exasperated because of pre-existing prejudices and conflict between differing groups. When this occurs, local conflicts may arise in the form of violence or increased competition for resources. Among certain refugees, there exist stratifications of the refugees themselves. In Sudan among the Eritrean refugees for instance, this stratification serves to aggravate not only the livelihood of the refugees, but tensions between refugees and Sudanese locals (Bascom, 1993, p. 333). Even in instances where refugees are of the same ethnic, tribal or religious background, locals may look upon refugees with suspicion and distrust. This is due partly to the resources and opportunities that are afforded refugees through outside aid agencies that locals do not benefit from (World Bank, 2010, p. 10). However, it is also due to an increase in xenophobia within host countries. As violence and security becomes unstable and is not addressed by host governments, locals look on refugees as a threat to their way of life. Xenophobia is particularly evident in South Africa, where refugees are increasingly blamed for the rising crime rate, rising unemployment and spread of diseases among the local community. As a result, refugees are often the victims of abuse by local civilians, police and governmental departments dealing with refugees (Riley, 2007, p. 21). This serves to create a “culture of suspicion” towards refugees that adds to the already existing oppression and hostility in South Africa (Belvedere, 2007, p. 67)

When natural resources such as firewood and water are stretched thin, tensions emerge between refugees and their host communities. This is especially true in protracted refugee situations where refugees may initially be welcomed, but eventually become a source of conflict as they deplete natural resources, making the survival of host communities increasingly difficult (Jacobson, 1996, p. 668). As a result, locals come to resent refugees and their patience and tolerance is often diminished to the point of public outcry. This outcry has the potential to force host governments to withdraw their support of refugees, creating clashes and violence among refugees and their local host communities (Riley, 2007, p. 23).

An increasing concern among governments and aid organizations is the affect refugees’ health has on host communities. Dick (1985) believes that refugees impact the health of host communities through agents, persons or the environment. As agents, refugees can introduce to the host community to diseases that occur only in their country of origin. As persons, refugees may introduce new forms of nutrition or economic status that facilitate diseases. How host governments, communities and aid agencies respond to the needs of refugees will affect this factor. For instance, if refugees are clumped together in a camp and frequently travel into host communities, refugees are more likely to catch a disease from among the camp and then spread it to the outside community. Within the environment, the availability of resources and how they utilize these resources can facilitate the spread of disease among the host community. If, for example, refugees use resources that are already in short supply, they may inadvertently cause health concerns such as malnutrition among their host community (p. 233).

The status of host communities before refugees arrive will also impact the health of host communities. For instance, LDC or countries with low incomes are less likely to have adequate health services intact for local populations, let alone those that will be able to address the health needs of refugees (Dick, 1985, p. 264). Even in countries that have adequate healthcare services, lack of policies that directly affect the local host community will adversely affect how they are able to handle healthcare for refugees and by extension, the local host community. This includes whether or not healthcare for refugees is included in the national healthcare system (if there is one) and if standardization and control are ensured so as to not create problems among refugees and host communities (Dick, 1985, p. 265).

Environment

The presence of large numbers of refugees in host countries has been linked to negative environmental impacts on land, water and natural resources. This is particularly true in areas where protracted refugees reside in camps (World Bank, 2010, p. 13). A prime example of this is the situation in Sudan where protracted refugees in camps along the Eritrea border caused the depletion of trees and soil erosion, prompting the UNHCR to replant millions of trees to revitalize the natural area (UNHCR, 2011). The major environmental areas that refugees have been found to negatively impact are deforestation, land degradation, unsustainable groundwater extraction and water pollution (World Bank 2010, p. 14). They are also known to cause soil erosion and over grazing. Deforestation results when refugees leave their camps in search of trees to cut down and use as firewood or turn into charcoal. Overtime, the cutting down of trees causes lands that were once rich with greenery to become barren and depleted. Among the refugees in northwestern Uganda for instance, it was found that within six years of cutting down trees for the use of charcoal, the land had been cleared of almost all its trees (Mulumba, 2011, p. 40). Water pollution often results when large numbers of refugees use nearby water sources, transmitting feces and urine into the water, which is then used for cooking, drinking and bathing. This results in the spread of diseases and sickness that could potentially be spread to local host communities.

One of the major environmental concerns relating to refugees themselves is the safety of women while collecting firewood. As land becomes more denuded of trees around settlements and camps, females are forced to walk further out from their homes, where they are increasingly exposed to bandits who rape or beat them (Mulumba, 2011, p. 41). This problem is a trend in many refugee settlements. To combat this issue, the UNHCR initiated the firewood project in the refugee settlement of Daabab, Kenya. This project provides Kenyan refugees with 30 percent of their firewood needs in order to help reduce the amount of time women spend in unprotected areas (Loescher and Milner, 2005, p.164). Additionally, it has also been found that limited use of land leads to over crowding and poverty among refugees

(Martin, 2005, p. 333). Like water pollution, overcrowding also contributes to the spread of disease and sickness that could potentially be spread to host communities.

The negative impact refugees have on their host community depends in large part to the how the host government chooses to handle refugees. If for example, host governments decide to concentrate large numbers of refugees in one area they are inevitably creating a situation in which the refugees will have a negative affect on the environment. Likewise, if refugees are placed in remote areas away from local host communities, it makes it difficult for refugees and locals to establish sustainable methods of dealing with environmental resources (Whitaker, 1999, p. 6).

Role of Host Countries

International law recognizes the right to seek asylum, but does not oblige states to provide it. Nations at times offer 'temporary protection' when they face a sudden mass influx of people and their regular asylum systems would be overwhelmed. In such circumstances people can be speedily admitted to safe countries, but without any guarantee of permanent asylum. Thus 'temporary protection' is helpful to both governments and asylum seekers in specific circumstances. Yet it only complements and does not substitute for the wider protection measures offered by the Refugee Convention.

Refugee protection and assistance organizations generally promote three "durable solutions" to the fate of refugees:

- *Voluntary repatriation* : refugees are able to return to their home country because their lives and liberty are no longer threatened;
- *Local integration*: host governments allow refugees to integrate into the country of first asylum; and
- *Resettlement in a third country* : repatriation is unsafe and the first-asylum country refuses local integration.

Most of the world's refugees wait for durable solutions for their predicament. While most have been granted provisional or temporary asylum in neighboring countries, they are not able to regularize their status or integrate. Their rights to move and work are often highly restricted, and educational and recreational opportunities are often nonexistent or severely lacking. These refugees may also be subject to attack, either by local security forces or by cross-border incursions from the country of origin.

Prohibition on the forced return of a refugee is called *non refoulement* and is one of the most

fundamental principles in international refugee law. This principle is laid out in Article 33 of the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, which says that no state "shall expel or return ('refouler' in French) a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion."

Some countries detain asylum seekers upon arrival, during the asylum process or while waiting for deportation (*refoulement*). Asylum seekers may have already suffered imprisonment and Torture in the country from which they have fled. Therefore, The consequences of detention may be particularly serious, causing severe emotional and psychological stress. Article 31 of the Refugee Convention says that refugees should not be penalized for having entered a country illegally if they have come directly from a place where they were in danger and have made themselves known to the authorities. Therefore, asylum seekers should not be detained for being in possession of forged identity papers or for destroying identity or travel documents. Articles 12 - 30 of the Refugee Convention set out the rights which individuals are entitled to once they have been recognized as Convention refugees:

- All refugees must be granted identity papers and travel documents that allow them to travel outside the country
- Refugees must receive *the same treatment as nationals of the receiving country* with regard to the following rights:
 - Free exercise of religion and religious education
 - Free access to the courts, including legal assistance
 - Access to elementary education
 - Access to public relief and assistance
 - Protection provided by social security
 - Protection of intellectual property, such as inventions and trade names
 - Protection of literary, artistic and scientific work
 - Equal treatment by taxing authorities
- Refugees must receive *the most favorable treatment provided to nationals of a foreign country* with regard to the following rights:
 - The right to belong to trade unions
 - The right to belong to other non-political nonprofit organizations
 - The right to engage in wage-earning employment
- Refugees must receive *the most favorable treatment possible, which must be at least as favorable to that accorded aliens generally in the same circumstances*, with regard to the following rights:
 - The right to own property
 - The right to practice a profession
 - The right to self-employment

- Access to housing
- Access to higher education
- Refugees must receive *the same treatment as that accorded to aliens generally* with regard to the following rights:
 - The right to choose their place of residence
 - The right to move freely within the country
 - Free exercise of religion and religious education
 - Free access to the courts, including legal assistance
 - Access to elementary education
 - Access to public relief and assistance
 - Protection provided by social security
 - Protection of intellectual property, such as inventions and trade names
 - Protection of literary, artistic and scientific work
 - Equal treatment by taxing authorities

Resources And Other Conventions

I. United Nations

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) (article 14)

The first international document that recognizes the right to seek and enjoy asylum from persecution.

Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (1949) (article 44, 70)

This treaty protects refugees during war. Refugees cannot be treated as “enemy aliens”.

Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol 1) (1977) (article 73)

"Persons who, before the beginning of hostilities, were considered as stateless persons or refugees ... shall be protected persons..., in all circumstances and without any adverse distinction."

Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951)

This was the first international agreement covering the most fundamental aspects of a refugee's life. It spelled out a set of human rights that should be at least equivalent to freedoms enjoyed by foreign nationals living legally in a given country and in many cases those of citizens of that state. It recognized the international scope of refugee crises and necessity of international cooperation -- including burden-sharing among states -- in tackling the problem. As of 1 October 2002, 141 countries had ratified the Refugee Convention.

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) (article 2, 12, 13)

The main international treaty on civil and political rights stipulates that states should ensure the civil and political rights of all individuals within its territory and subject to its jurisdiction (article 2). The Covenant also guarantees freedom of movement and prohibits forced expulsion.

Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees (1967)

Removes the geographical and time limitations written into the original Refugee Convention under which mainly Europeans involved in events occurring before 1 January 1951 could apply for refugee status.

Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1984) (article 3)

Article 3 (2) states that a consistent pattern of gross and massive violations of human rights are circumstances which a state should take into account when deciding on expulsion. The monitoring body of this convention, the Committee Against Torture, has established some fundamental principles relating to the expulsion of refused asylum seekers. It offers important protection to refugees and their right not to be returned to a place where they fear persecution.

Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) (article 22)

Article 22 of this convention stipulates that "States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure that a child who is seeking refugee status or who is considered a refugee ... shall ... receive appropriate protection and humanitarian assistance in the enjoyment of ... rights.... States Parties shall provide ... cooperation in ... efforts ... to

protect and assist such a child and to trace the parents or other members of the family of any refugee child ... for reunification with his or her family. In cases where no parents or other members of the family can be found, the child shall be accorded the same protection as any other child ... deprived of his or her family environment....”

Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1994)

Recognizes the particular vulnerability of refugee women.

Handbook on Procedures and Criteria for Determining Refugee Status under the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the status of refugees

This handbook is widely accepted by practitioners and most governments as an authoritative interpretation of the Refugee Convention.

Guiding principles on Internal Displacement

A set of 30 recommendations for the protection of internally displaced persons. The Guiding Principles define who the internally displaced are, reiterates the large body of international law already in existence protecting a person’s basic rights and outlines the responsibilities of states. It is made clear that internally displaced persons have the right to leave their country, seek asylum and be protected against forcible return to their homeland.

II. African Union

Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa (1969)

Accepted the definition of the 1951 Refugee Convention and expanded it to include people who were compelled to leave their country not only as a result of persecution but also owing to: external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order. This definition is a wider definition than the one found in the UN Refugee Convention and adapts the definition to the reality of the developing world. The African Union’s definition also recognizes non-state groups as perpetrators of persecution and it does not demand that a refugee shows a direct link between herself or himself and the future danger. It is sufficient that the refugee considers the harm sufficient to force her/him to abandon their home.

African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990) (article 13)

This treaty stipulates special provisions of refugee children that are unaccompanied by parents or guardians.

III. Council Of Europe

Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1949) (article 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 16)

The European Convention on Human Rights does not contain any right to asylum and it makes no direct reference to asylum seekers or refugees. A very important case by the European Court of Human Rights (*Soering v. the United Kingdom*, 1989), however, established that states were indeed responsible, in certain instances, for the well being of individuals in other countries. The case concerned article 3 of the European Convention that "No one shall be subjected to torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment". In recent years the European Court has again stressed the unconditional nature of the prohibition against ill-treatment and established the principle that a state wishing to deport even an individual found guilty of a serious criminal offence or constituting a threat to national security must first make an independent evaluation of the circumstances the individual would face in the country of return. Although article 3 is most often called upon to protect asylum seekers and refugees, other articles may also be invoked to ensure that their human rights are respected. In particular article 4 (prohibition of forced or compulsory labour), article 5 (deprivation of liberty), article 6 (right to a fair and impartial hearing "within a reasonable time"), article 8 (respect for private and family life), article 9 (right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion), article 10 (right to freedom of expression), article 13 (right to the grant of an effective remedy before a national authority) and article 16 (no restrictions on political activity of aliens) can offer substantial protection.

IV. Organization Of American States (OAS)

Cartagena Declaration on Refugees (1984)

The refugee definition of the Cartagena Declaration builds upon the OAU adding to it the threat of generalized violence; internal aggression; and massive violation of human rights. Unlike the definition in the refugee convention by the African Union, however, a refugee must show a link between herself or himself and the real risk of harm; all applicants must demonstrate that "their lives, safety or freedom have been threatened". This demand is similar to the UN Refugee Convention, which requires individuals to show that they risk persecution as a particular individual rather than in general. Although not formally binding, the Cartagena Declaration has become the basis of refugee policy in the region and has been incorporated in to the national legislation of a number of States.

Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women “Convention of Belem do Para” (1994) (article 9)

Takes into account of the vulnerability of women and girls to violence by reason of, among others, their race or ethnic background or their status as: migrants, refugees or displaced persons.

Brilliant Research Paper (must read)

Questions to Consider-

(These are some questions, however the scope of the agenda discussion, extends beyond the answers to mere 7 questions)

1. Does your country host refugees or is affected by conflict and has IDPs?
2. How are the resources managed to cater to the rights of refugees?
3. Is your country a donor to the cause of Refugees? If yes, what aid to refugees receive and in which region of the world?
4. How can you help resolve and minimize the negative impact of refugees on host countries?
5. Is recognizing a refugee a grave concern? If yes, What measures can be taken up to ensure the identification between refugees and asylum seekers?
6. How can the role and responsibility of the host nation be ensured towards the rights of refugees?
7. What can the United Nations as a whole do to help the Host Countries as well as the IDPs to cater to the problem?

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