

**Outline of Remarks by
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“Education and Refugees & Displaced Persons”

Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First off, let me say how very honoured I am to have been invited to address, as the Fridjof Nansen speaker on behalf of UNHCR, this XXth Interdisciplinary Human Rights Course by the Institute. The three themes of the work strategy of the Inter-American Institute of access to justice, political participation and human rights education all have, to varying degrees, important resonance for refugees and displaced persons. It is thus particularly apt that UNHCR should address the topic of this morning's discussion regarding education and displaced persons. I must note at the outset that my talk will focus particularly on refugees and internally displaced persons and not on migrants more generally, as this is, of course, UNHCR's area of expertise.

Setting the Scene:

Before addressing in any detail the topic of education – and I want particularly in this address to focus on human rights education and education for peace, which is particularly relevant both for and about refugees and internally displaced persons – I would like to “set the scene” by first providing a little bit of background about UNHCR and its mandate and activities, and to look briefly at the root causes of refugee flows which UNHCR is mandated to address. This will allow me to explore in its various facets, later, the important relationship which is the topic of this address, that between education and refugees/displaced persons.

Refugees, who have crossed an international border, and internally displaced persons, who have not, but who otherwise often have the same reasons for fleeing their homes, routinely experience challenges to and breaches of their fundamental human rights. This occurs throughout the “cycle” of refugee displacement, which includes the stages of flight, exile or displacement, return and reintegration or assimilation in a new environment.

In fact, it is the defining element of the existence of a “well-founded fear of being persecuted” as the reason for a refugee’s departure from her country or her desire to remain abroad that sets refugees apart from other migrants, who choose to leave. Refugees and internally displaced persons do not freely elect to leave home; they are forced to do so. And the very characteristic that distinguishes them from others, who decide to try their luck elsewhere solely for reasons of personal convenience or to better themselves economically, is the risk of, or the fact of, violation of their fundamental human rights. That is the commonly understood meaning of “a well-founded fear of being persecuted” in the criteria for refugee status – a breach or anticipated breach of human rights which is not justified.

This prompts us, of course, to ask why these breaches of human rights take place. Traditionally these risks, or facts, of human rights abuses or violations have stemmed from a lack of tolerance or understanding, or a lack of respect for what is different in

the other. It is no coincidence that the criteria for refugee status names race, religion, nationality, and political opinion among the grounds for recognition of refugee status. These have traditionally been the reasons why people have oppressed others, perceived, on account of one of these characteristics, as different from the majority. Thus the root causes of refugee flows are linked to the factors that people have long recognised as making them different from one another and which too often leads them to distrust, or lack respect and tolerance for, one another. It is, sadly, only a short step from distrust and lack of respect to discrimination, oppression and, finally, persecution.

Moreover, refugees and internally displaced persons not only BECOME refugees or internally displaced persons as a result of violations or risks of violations of their human rights prompted by a lack of tolerance and mutual respect; they are, by virtue of their displacement, extremely vulnerable to on-going violations of their human rights throughout their displacement. Robbed of their supporting cast of familiar communities, infrastructures and family members, refugees and displaced persons struggle in ways that those of us who have not been forced to abandon our homes, communities, possessions and even our family members can barely imagine. Coping mechanisms are often sorely tested, or non-existent, and obtaining the basics needed to keep body and soul together becomes a major challenge. Therefore, in addition to the root causes of displacement being related to human rights abuses based on the way people perceive each other, the very EXPERIENCE of displacement also sets refugees apart as the “other” – often leading to them being feared and reviled.

In the attempt to minimise those effects on the rights of refugees to the extent possible, the international community has adopted, over the course of the past century, a number of instruments that set out in international legal terms the rights to which refugees are in principle entitled. This culminated most recently in the 1951 Convention relating to the status of refugees, and its 1967 Protocol, one or both of which are now ratified by 144 states worldwide, including most of the states in the Western Hemisphere. Only five states in the Americas have not yet ratified one or both of these international instruments. The 1951 Convention is the most comprehensive of these series of instruments, and in addition to defining, in its Article 1, the criteria which should be used to determine who should be recognised as a refugee, sets out in its body, Articles 2 through 34, the minimum standards of treatment to which states have agreed refugees as defined by the instrument are entitled. The Protocol incorporates these important provisions.

The human rights-related purpose of ensuring these basic minimum standards are adhered to is evident from the preamble to the 1951 Convention, which starts out as follows:

“Considering that the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights approved on 10 December 1948 by the General Assembly have affirmed the principle that human beings shall enjoy fundamental rights and freedoms without discrimination, Considering that the United Nations has, on various occasions, manifested its profound concern for refugees and endeavoured to assure refugees the widest possible exercise of these fundamental rights and freedoms...”

In addition to promulgating this instrument in 1951, the international community, through the General Assembly of the United Nations, recognised the need for a responsible international agency to monitor and co-ordinate the treatment of refugees under the Convention and to assist states which did not have the resources to do so on their own, or who had not acceded to the international instruments, to deal with refugees, ensuring their rights were respected. It is clear that states are the primary ensurers of rights of persons in their territories, and in fact, as we know from human rights law, are the only entities with the legal obligation to respect human rights and the inherent authority to enforce respect for human rights. Nevertheless, it was recognised that sometimes states needed help, and the international community had created in 1950 the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, initially with a limited 3 year mandate. It will be recalled that, at the time, the most pressing refugee situation consisted of the millions displaced in Europe by World War II and it was, it is obvious in retrospect somewhat naively, foreseen that the agency would deal with the return and resettlement of these persons and then close its doors. More than fifty years and many, many refugee crises later, the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees is still going.

What exactly was the agency to do? The mandate of UNHCR is set out in its Statute, in various articles but most importantly in article 1, which says that UNHCR

“shall assume the function of providing international protection, under the auspices of the United Nations, to refugees who fall within the scope of the present Statute and of seeking permanent solutions for the problem of refugees by assisting Governments and, subject to the approval of the Governments concerned, private organisations to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of such refugees, or their assimilation within new national communities.”

In short, UNHCR was supposed to ensure that the fundamental human rights of refugees were protected in displacement, and to help them to find a lasting and sustainable solution to their plight, either through return to their homes on a voluntary basis or by finding a new home in their country of asylum or elsewhere.

Elsewhere in the statute the General Assembly set out the criteria for recognition of refugee status (Articles 6 and 7), the types of activities the High Commissioner would undertake to fulfil this mandate (Article 8), and importantly for internally displaced persons, gave a residual authority for UNHCR to engage in “such additional activities...as the General Assembly may determine, within the limits of the resources placed at his disposal” (Article 9). This final provision has been used over the years to give to UNHCR competence for other groups, including, in some instances, internally displaced persons.

It is obvious from the formulation above that one of the key roles of UNHCR was envisioned by the drafters of the Statute to be the finding of DURABLE SOLUTIONS for refugees. That is, the cycle of human rights violation and displacement must be severed. To successfully break the cycle of human rights violations leading to flight, leading in turn to displacement, it is key to stop it at some point where the rights and dignity of the individual will be adequately respected and honoured. It is only in that situation that the breaking of the cycle will be durable.

The three durable solutions, which UNHCR is still struggling to ensure for refugees, are, as mentioned in the Statute, voluntary repatriation, or going home and re-establishing there; local integration in the country of asylum, with full recognition of one's human rights; or resettlement in a third country where the former refugee can integrate into a new society. Any one of these solutions breaks the cycle and provides the chance for the refugee to again enjoy a normal, "non-refugee" life.

The Relationship between Education and Refugees and Displaced Persons

As is well-known in the human rights world, and has no doubt been mentioned already in this course, the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which we recognised earlier was one of the inspirations for the 1951 Refugee Convention, says that everyone has the right to education, underlining particularly the importance of primary education for children by specifying that education at that level should be **FREE** and **COMPULSORY** (Article 26). The same instrument is the only universal human rights instrument that explicitly, in its Article 14, recognises the right to seek and enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution. As everyone is entitled to the right to education, so too must refugees be. We see here in clear terms the mutually reinforcing complementarity of international refugee law with international human rights law – they are evidently closely related, both as inspirations to one another and, perhaps more fundamentally, as different manifestations of the same values.

We are all aware, though, as scholars of human rights law, that the Universal Declaration, despite its stirring wording and its value as a baseline inspiration for further human rights work, remains a declaration and is not a binding legal instrument. Most of its provisions, however, have found their way into binding treaties which are either international or regional in scope and transform the aspirational declarations of the Universal Declaration into binding legal obligations on states which are party to these instruments. The Universal Declaration has also been used, as well, to inspire provisions in national legislation, including of course constitutions of states.

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, in its Article 13, is instructive in helping us to see how, and why, the right to education is a key right for refugees, recognising as it does that education should be directed to the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity. Education would thus strengthen respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations and all racial, ethnic or religious groups and the maintenance of peace. Here is the connection between refugees and displaced persons and education which we noticed above stated more eloquently: the very purpose of education and knowledge is to contribute to promoting respect for human rights and to fostering the maintenance of peace. What better way to start eradicating the causes of refugee flight?

The Charter of the Organisation of American States hails the importance of education in the same vein: it recognises in its Article 3 (n), in reaffirming the basic principles of the OAS, that "The education of peoples shall be directed toward justice, freedom and peace." Later, in Article 49 specifically addressing the implementation of that principle, the Charter prescribes that member states shall exert the greatest efforts to ensure the effective exercise of the right to education. The following Article, Article 50, recognises the need to give special attention to the eradication of illiteracy. Again, it is not much of a leap to get the message: a strong connection between the root causes of displacement and education, and the knowledge and tolerance it brings, is recognised by the drafters. Their thinking goes as follows: without

education aimed at supporting justice, freedom and peace, the risk of breaches of these fundamental values are heightened.

The most ratified universal human rights treaty in existence, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, also devotes considerable attention to the right to education, in its Articles 28 and 29. In addition to prescribing how education is to be made available, for example in a way that is gender-equal, the Convention on the Rights of the Child again makes this same all-important link between the right to education and its effective implementation on the one hand, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, peace, tolerance, equality and friendship amongst all peoples, (even going so far as to mention ethnic, national and religious groups) on the other.

Turning now more specifically to the situation of refugees, the 1951 Refugee Convention recognises the importance of the right to education by setting the standard for refugees at the same level as states must provide to their nationals, at least as regards elementary education. This is of course in accordance with the admonition in the Universal Declaration that primary education is crucial. This standard is, generally, accepted by States, but, sadly, cannot always be effectively implemented, often for financial reasons. Article 22 of the 1951 Convention says:

1. The Contracting States shall accord to refugees the same treatment as is accorded to nationals with respect to elementary education.
2. The Contracting States shall accord to refugees treatment as favourable as possible, and, in any event, not less favourable than that accorded to aliens generally in the same circumstances, with respect to education other than elementary education and, in particular, as regards access to studies, the recognition of foreign school certificates, diplomas and degrees, the remission of fees and charges and the award of scholarships.

It is interesting to note that, in the scheme of the Convention and comparing this provision to others, it is a strong one, in the sense that it applies to "refugees" generally, and does not limit the right to education to "refugees lawfully staying" in the asylum country. Such a limitation appears in many of the Convention's provisions - for example, with those to do with wage-earning employment, housing and public relief. As noted above, this is also one of the rights, like access to courts and freedom of religion, that is afforded at the same level as citizens of a country, that is, the highest level. Other rights, such as those to property and self-employment, are afforded, like the right to higher education, only on the same level as the right is afforded to other aliens in the host country. Thus public elementary education is afforded a higher place than those other rights - and rightly so, if we agree with the prominence given primary education in the human rights instruments. While limitations are clearly possible for higher than elementary education, there is nonetheless an attempt to ensure access for refugees and the recognition of their foreign diplomas and certificates, as well as an effort to ensure they can benefit from scholarships. Two points about this provision are of interest: firstly, it underscores the importance of education to an eventual durable solution, and secondly, this provision does not, as we have seen in some of the other instruments, speak to the content or type of education.

The relationship between the theme of education, and particularly education about human rights and peace education, which is at least hinted at in the seminal instruments we have just looked at together, and the experience of refugees and displaced persons operates on a number of different levels and at each stage of the refugee "life cycle." It is an issue not only at the beginning of this cycle - where its lack contributes to the causes of displacement, and at the end, where it clearly contributes to sustainable long-term solutions, but also at all the stages in between.

Put another way, it is evident that thinking about education - and not only education of refugees and displaced persons, but also education of the populations of the countries of origin and of asylum, has long been seen as having a key role to play in **prevention** of a never-ending cycle of refugee situations, and in finding **durable solutions** to refugees' problems. The equation seems to be that such education increases tolerance and acceptance. Whether or not this is true is, of course, a matter of debate. However, at least on the theoretical level, it seems a logical relationship.

It is equally axiomatic that the experience of refugees while in exile and displacement can be improved by access to education – their understanding of their own plight and their ability to support themselves in particular may be influenced directly by access to education or vocational training. Certainly refugees' ability to successfully make informed decisions about their future must be enhanced by greater knowledge and exposure achieved through access to education.

Taking each of these segments of the refugee life cycle in turn, let us test this theory about the degree to which education, with particular attention to human rights and/or peace education, has a role to play, and how that might, or might not, assist in breaking the cycle of displacement and achieving durable solutions.

The Flight Stage - Education as an Emergency Response

By virtue of its mandate, which specifies that its competence is limited to those persons who are OUTSIDE their country of nationality or habitual residence, UNHCR's ability to affect the treatment of refugees in flight is limited. Even if UNHCR is able to act once refugees have crossed an international border, logistical and practical considerations often mean that little can be done while persons remain in motion. Things may be moving very fast and there is often little control or access possible. While UNHCR has recognised the importance of ensuring the stability and continuity for displaced children that school attendance provides, early access may prove difficult just as a matter of logistics.

Nonetheless, UNHCR and other UN and NGO partners, like UNICEF, UNESCO, the Norwegian Refugee Council and the International Rescue Committee, who work together to provide education to refugee children and youth, believe strongly in the positive value of a rapid educational response in refugee and displacement emergencies. What is rapid in such circumstances? While UNHCR has tried to ensure an educational response in proportion to the needs of a refugee community within two months of displacement, UNICEF has recently committed to ensuring a response within a month.

The content of such a response might not resemble what most of us would think of as a regular classroom for primary students - classes often start out as just organised outdoor activities accomplished under the shade of a tree or a makeshift canopy of UNHCR plastic sheeting, without benefit of teaching materials, pencils, paper and other "essentials" of education. The initial response may be more in the way of

social, recreational and cultural activities than it is stereotypically educational. Examples of such early responses include loosely organised group discussions, impromptu theatre, music and singing, games and sports and drawing. More often than not, these early structured activities are initiated by refugees themselves, as soon as the basic problems of shelter, food and water have been resolved. The involvement of the refugee community in identifying their own needs, and responding to them, is key to encouraging self-sufficiency and developing the refugee community into a positive, rather than a negative, element in the lives of its members.

The experience of UNHCR and its partners suggests that early educational response is crucial to stabilising a refugee emergency. Education for children not only promotes a sense of order and normalcy - for both students and their parents - so lacking in situations of displacement, it also provides the medium for certain key messages to be transmitted to the refugee population. These messages can range from important lessons about HIV/AIDS prevention, the need to protect the environment, and landmine awareness to the opportunity for countering the understandable, but destructive, messages of revenge and hatred that may have been engendered by the conflict or situation leading to the refugee displacement.

Another important reason for quickly initiating some sort of organised educational element for the children and youth in a refugee emergency is to avoid the depression, disintegration and risk of recruitment into military or irregular forces, or into child labour or sexual exploitation, that can occur when young refugees are left at loose ends, particularly in the sometimes chaotic environment of a refugee camp just being settled. Security may be lacking, and recruiters for one or the other side in the conflict that spurred the refugee flight can prey on refugee youngsters who may be confused and angry and for those reasons, particularly susceptible to messages of hate and revenge. This is particularly a problem for children and youth who have become separated from their family during the flight.

Organised educational and other activities are also a means of integrating disabled and otherwise marginalised children, such as ex-combatants, and in some cases, girls. These marginalised individuals may stand a better chance of becoming accepted as part of the community if their participation is guaranteed from the outset.

Finally, early educational response provides a non-controversial way of developing the capacity of refugee communities. Programmes to train teachers and leaders, build schools and set up sporting activities all offer opportunities for capacity building with the members of the refugee community.

Despite all these good reasons for doing it, a host of difficulties faces educators and organisers trying to put in place education in emergencies, ranging from the lack of materials, resources and trained teachers to reluctance on the part of host governments to allow refugee education at all, for fear of "settling" a population they would like to see go home quickly, to a refusal to allow education in a language the refugees understand. Luckily, though, the international recognition of the importance of education as a fundamental human right, codified in the human rights instruments we looked at earlier, not least the 1951 Refugee Convention, exists to bolster the work of UNHCR and partner agencies in setting up refugee education.

The Specific Problems of Internal Displacement

Where the flight is to a situation of internal displacement, the reasons arguing for a rapid intervention to establish refugee education remain as strong, but the problems facing those who try to implement are oftentimes even greater. This is because the

still-strong doctrine of state sovereignty decrees that other states, individually or collectively, should generally not interfere with the internal workings of a recognised state. UNHCR has been authorised by the Secretary-General and/or the General Assembly to protect and assist internally displaced persons in discrete situations where it has the resources, and the consent of the affected government, to do so. But this is a most challenging task, hampered most importantly by the lack of an agreed international legal framework on the rights of the internally displaced, who are citizens and in theory entitled to exercise their human rights, but who in practice have been deprived of this ability by the very fact of their displacement.

Attempts to remedy this “missing link” have been made by the United Nations, notably by the appointment some years ago of the Representative of the Secretary-General on Internally Displaced Persons, Dr. Francis Deng. His ensuing work on the existing and developing legal norms associated with internal displacement has been critical and useful. This work, which continues to this day with the assistance of a number of leading human rights scholars and practitioners, together with the Brookings Institution in Washington and, first the City University of New York, and now with Johns Hopkins University, has so far resulted in the publication of a number of studies, and, most usefully, of the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*. This set of principles was presented to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights at its session in 1998, and work to disseminate them through agencies and governments, to have states accept them as the normative legal framework and to put them into practice and have them respected, has been going on ever since.

While based on existing international human rights law, the *Guiding Principles* bring together for the first time the standards relevant to internal displacement, and they, like the international instruments quoted above, also address the right to education, in Principle 23:

1. Every human being has the right to education.
2. To give effect to this right for internally displaced persons, the authorities concerned shall ensure that such persons, in particular displaced children, receive education that is free and compulsory at the primary level. Education should respect the recipients' cultural identity, language and religion.
3. Special efforts should be made to ensure the full and equal participation of women and girls in educational programmes.
4. Education and training facilities shall be made available to internally displaced persons, in particular adolescents and women, whether or not living in camps, as soon as conditions permit.

As we know from our previous analysis of the international instruments setting out the right to education, this is, as promised by the drafters of the *Guiding Principles*, a restatement of general human rights law, with some "twists" specific to applicability to the internally displaced. It also makes the important point that special efforts need to be made to ensure that girls and women can benefit equally from educational programmes. This is a recognition that has been noticed by UNHCR in many refugee situations, where cultural and social traditions may mitigate against girls and women having equal access to educational opportunities.

Living in Displacement – whether Exile or Internal

Once a refugee camp or community becomes a little more settled, UNHCR and its implementing partners try to stabilise educational activities in a more organised way. While this generally would include ensuring the setting up of classes for elementary level learning, that is not what I would like to focus on. There are two innovative UNHCR projects that I would like to outline briefly, as illustrative of attempts to build greater human rights knowledge and problem-solving capacity in refugee communities.

Peace Education

UNHCR has developed, and successfully piloted in Kenya and Uganda, a "peace education programme." This programme, first conceived in 1997, has a number of elements, including training for primary school children and members of the community. It is both an attempt to provide life skills and understanding to refugee children and adults in substantive areas such as conflict resolution and a capacity building effort in the refugee community. This is done by involving considerable numbers of refugees in the programme itself, including trained refugee primary level teachers who have been trained to teach peace education to their students once or twice a week; community facilitators, who lead peace education workshops for members of the community, and translators/assistants who help the facilitators. There are other peace education programmes developed by other institutions - UNESCO and UNICEF both have ambitious projects, and the Norwegian Refugee Council, in its work in the Caucasus and the All Africa Conference of Churches in Nairobi Kenya have also developed projects with human rights and peace education elements. But UNHCR's is the only one that focuses specifically on refugees and has had, since its inception, a particular emphasis on refugee involvement and "ownership" of the process.

What exactly is "peace education?" It is clearly a developing area which currently means different things to different people. It usually, though, is an ambitious amalgam of elements such as teaching of human rights values and awareness, analytical thinking and impartiality, and techniques of negotiation and conflict resolution. Understanding the position of the "other" and encouraging co-operation and appropriate assertiveness are also usually elements.

When UNHCR was first developing its ideas about doing some sort of human rights training in refugee camps and settlements, there was a healthy degree of scepticism amongst UNHCR staff about the wisdom of such a course, and in particular a consistent worry that teaching refugees, and particularly young male refugees, about their rights would encourage them to exercise rights without regard to the corresponding responsibilities they, as human beings, also have towards others. Luckily this did not scuttle the project, but it did make the developers keenly aware of the need for balance and structure in the materials and lesson plans. The materials developed, which includes a teacher activity book with lesson plans for all eight primary grades, a training manual and resource notes for community facilitators and supplementary materials to help start discussions, such as role plays, songs and poems. In keeping with the commitment to keep some refugee ownership to the content, these were developed in collaboration with the teachers and facilitators who were conducting the peace education. Given the generally limited amount of training that facilitators have received prior to becoming peace education teachers or facilitators, the materials are quite prescriptive, even down to admonishing teachers

not to use pointers, sticks or canes while teaching peace education - these are weapons which send the wrong message.

The project evaluations by participants in UNHCR's peace education programmes have been overwhelming positive: those who have participated have found the peace education experience to be interesting and useful. But these evaluations have focused on the course and materials (which have improved as a result of taking into account the feedback of participants) and not on whether the objectives of peace education more generally are being met. Thus, UNHCR's Policy and Evaluation Unit commissioned an evaluative study of the two pilot projects, which was discussed, along with other studies of other education themes, at an expert workshop in Washington in 2001 and was later revised and published in *Learning for a Future: Refugee Education in Developing Countries* by UNHCR in December of 2001. It is available on our website for reference or can be purchased in hard copy.

So, what did the evaluation find? The answer is a mixed bag, really: the programme was successful in some important areas. Let me quote the author on its strengths:

"It promotes refugee empowerment and self-sufficiency. It appears to have been reasonably successful in bridging cultural gaps in Kakuma and Dadaab [refugee camps in Northern Kenya] by means of carrying out its initial research and development phase. Its practical orientation and objectives naturally and appropriately connect to the objectives and value inherent in refugee protection and education. ... The problem-solving skills it teaches have the potential to support both peaceful refugee repatriation and stable resettlement. It is also popular with refugees: a measure of its success lies in the fact that refugees in the programme not only continued but sometimes even expanded the programme during periods when UNHCR peace education personnel were not present. Finally, it is cost-effective."

This all sounds pretty impressive. But there must also be weaknesses. Indeed the most serious problem the study found was that, to a large extent, the programme was an exercise in "preaching to the converted." That is, the refugees who were able to take part most heavily as participants and facilitators were the already educated, knowledgeable and yes, peaceful refugees. They were also leaders of the refugee community, whose access to and sympathy with those who could most benefit, marginalised refugee youth and women victims of rape, was weak or non-existent. These disaffected groups rarely received the training, for a variety of reasons. One is language. The materials were developed in English and the educated English speaking refugees thus had an advantage that others didn't. The study recommends, therefore, that all the materials be translated into languages understood by the refugee groups who are now disenfranchised, and targeting a much larger number of refugees instead of focusing on "leaders" who may have no connection to those most in need of such support.

The study also found that the peace education programme became associated with religious organisations, particularly in Uganda, which again tended to marginalise others outside the religion. There needed to be more and better co-ordination with other education and training efforts within UNHCR as well as with other peace education efforts by other institutions, to avoid duplication of efforts. The study urges

UNHCR , and others doing peace education, to better evaluate whether these activities actually contribute to reaching their idealistic goals.

For these same reasons - language, education, leadership and religion - not many women were able to benefit from the peace education initiative. This is a serious shortcoming that undermined one of the original purposes of the project, which was greater integration of the refugee community and less conflict.

In the end, however, the evaluation was very supportive of continuing, improving and expanding the peace education initiatives, and called for greater investments of time, money and patience to develop better programmes and better ways of measuring the impact of peace education. We can only hope that in the current climate of financial restraint, when funding for even highly sought after returnee education in Afghanistan is being cut, the resources will be found to continue such a valuable project.

The peace education initiative was conceived of and led by the Community Services Unit, with the support of colleagues in the Protection - or legal - side. While some attempt was made early on to "locate" peace education in the Protection Unit, on account of its strongly-related human rights content, peace education has remained a community services project. The evaluation suggested that the connection to the Protection Unit needed to be stronger. If what we argued earlier, that there is a connection between this type of education and awareness and prevention of displacement, we could even argue it is essential. For the moment, though, the jury is still out on this issue.

Human Rights Awareness Training

There was another initiative developed during the 1990s by the Protection Division, however, that aimed specifically at creating greater awareness of the rights of children and women, which are, as you may know, along with the environment, the policy priorities of UNHCR. Prompted by a resolution of the UNHCR Executive Committee in 1994, and as a means of implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action from 1995, a series of pilot workshops, using various techniques and materials, was held in the mid to late 1990's. The lessons learned in this process culminated in the production of a draft manual on how to organise training on children's and women's rights for adult refugees, called *The Rights of Women and Children: Awareness Training for Adult Refugees*.

Meant to be used by both UNHCR staff and staff of non-governmental partners helping UNHCR with its protection work, the manual contains a wealth of material focusing on both the basic rights of women and children according to the international instruments and in domestic legislation, and on information about how to improve the situation of women and children. One important realisation that UNHCR came to during the development of this manual was that the training could not focus on women and children alone. It needed to be all inclusive, involving also the men refugees, in order to have a chance of successfully changing attitudes and behaviours that disadvantaged women. A participatory model, to be mainly refugee-driven and to train refugees, both men and women, in enhancing community protection for women and children, was developed. Many elements of the manual are similar to the peace education materials - it emphasises the use of participatory role plays, songs and music, poetry and discussion groups to get its points across.

Though the manual has been exhaustively, and successfully, field-tested and revised, it is yet to be finalised and published. Once published it will be available not only to UNHCR staff but also to others interested in such training materials.

The Role of Education for the Host Community

So far this analysis has focused on the plight of the refugee or displaced person who is forced out of her home and/or country, and how educational opportunities and chances to improve one's abilities and knowledge are important to self-sufficiency and to dealing with the conflict inherent in the refugee, and indeed every, community.

But there is another side to the story: how the host community in a country of asylum or area into which persons have been internally displaced can be educated to accept the refugees or displaced people, and view them in a positive and respectful way. Not only is the general treatment of the displaced at stake, but the reaction of the host community is paramount to ensuring access to education of refugees and displaced – without the willingness of the host society, little or nothing can be achieved in the education and learning of refugees and displaced persons.

That is why UNHCR engages in learning programmes and educational activities for host populations in human rights of refugees too. These activities are usually styled as public information activities and they are really consciousness-raising activities and "public relations" in a broad sense. But they are also education programmes, developed together with education and human rights specialists, specifically with inclusion in host country school lessons in mind.

One particular package, which includes a video and lesson plans for children in grades 6 to 9, was developed specifically for use to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Called *Refugee Rights are Human Rights*, the package aims to teach the non-refugees about the human rights of refugees. It has also been used even in non-host countries to raise awareness about the complementary nature of human rights law and refugee law and has proven very popular.

Another package, for young primary school age children, follows a young girl, *Carly*, as she is displaced from her home, and develops empathy for her plight in those who read her story and see the videotape. UNHCR has also developed a refugee role play game for adolescents and adults, called *Passages* - which is also available in a *Junior Passages* version for younger children which simulates the refugee experience and thus tries to develop empathy and understanding of the refugee plight. While it is difficult to measure the impact of such materials, UNHCR has had quite some success in the United States in particular in disseminating these materials through conferences and associations of social studies teachers. We know that they are being used, and it is our hope that they are having their desired effect.

Return and Reintegration

Turning now to the final - or at least if we are successful in breaking the cycle of violation and displacement it should be the final - stage of the refugee "life cycle." This stage of the cycle consists, for the vast majority of refugees worldwide, of return and reintegration in the home society. It also may consist, in some scenarios, of integration in a new society, either in the country of first asylum or in a new country, through resettlement.

In this regard I want to focus on some of the activities of UNHCR in a particular situation in another part of the world, closer to home for all of us. I am referring to the work that UNHCR did in Mexico and Guatemala through the 1990s in promoting women's community participation with Guatemalan refugees (in Mexico) and returnees (in Guatemala). While this work cannot be viewed as entirely successful - indeed it seems to have more shortcomings than the peace education initiative - perhaps precisely because of this, it provides an excellent 'lessons learned' analytical tool.

In working with Guatemalan women refugees in Mexico, UNHCR and its NGO partners set out with a defined agenda of empowering women as the necessary first step in ensuring women's participation in creating durable solutions for the refugee community. The gender-based approach used in Mexico by UNHCR and its non-governmental partners included a number of aspects that went beyond training and education. There was a literacy campaign, which helped women to communicate and raised their self-esteem. Time and labour-saving devices such as mechanical corn grinders and fuel-saving stoves were introduced, ensuring that women had time to organise and attend training. Women were provided with reproductive health services and training in communication skills, including radio programming and in human rights, land rights and sexual and domestic violence awareness.

By all accounts these efforts on the part of UNHCR, and complementary efforts by other institutions and organisations, which were co-ordinated by a joint commission including the women's organisations, were very successful in Mexico. Women refugees gained confidence and spoke their minds regarding community affairs, exerting influence on community decisions. They began to send their daughters as well as their sons to school, they had young women designated and trained as health, education and human rights promoters. Through their own organisations, women generally became a strong force in the struggle to return to Guatemala in dignity and solidarity.

Once home in Guatemala, however, this success was not sustained. Women did not often succeed in attaining leadership positions in community structures in Guatemala. They were discouraged and sometimes outright prohibited from joining community co-operatives, which meant they were excluded from land ownership. No special provisions were made for widows or women-headed households with respect to their community obligations (such as contributing manual labour to community tasks.) Women's visibility in the community structures and their contacts with the outside world were greatly reduced on return home.

But these are the same women who in Mexico were empowered and contributed positively to the success of the return. What happened?

In retrospect, a number of factors can be identified that contributed to the "back-sliding." One of the most important factors was wholly situational: educational opportunities, safe drinking water, fuel and health services were generally readily available close by in Mexico. In Guatemala, returns were for the most part to isolated areas without any of these benefits, meaning that the women had to spend much of their time again on ensuring the basic needs of the family were met. In Mexico homes were close together, facilitating communication and information sharing as well as a strong dynamic between the leaders and the women. Women who had supported each other and become close in Mexico did not always return to the same communities, and their isolation, coupled with the lack of a strong and pressing common objective (which they had had in Mexico in the form of the dream to return home) worked against them.

Aside from these purely practical considerations, there is some evidence that the men in the returnee communities suppressed women's participation after return. Before return, the political organisation and strength of the women's groups and activities was a support to the objective of the men: return. But once that was accomplished, the men apparently saw little reason to share power. There also seemed to be a psychological perception, not only in men but in women also, that the time in exile was "abnormal" and once home, life should go back to "normal" - which meant women taking responsibility for child care and domestic work in the home and not "meddling" in community decision-making, which had always been the purview of the men.

Another important factor was a less strong organisational support system in Guatemala than had been in place in Mexico. Essentially, UNHCR and its partners underestimated the degree of extra support women would need to maintain their strengthened role, and failed to provide it. There were few special opportunities for women to continue their training and consciousness-raising activities. No special provisions were made for incorporating women in decision-making structures, and women were unsure how to assert their rights.

What are the lessons learned from this experience with refugee training in women's rights? One of the most important lessons from an institutional perspective for UNHCR has been that a consistency of approach, and a consistently high degree of priority to the issue must be maintained. From the point of view of the educational element, it is clear that strengthening women's organisations without at the same time changing the attitudes of the men is counter-productive. All training for the better recognition of women's rights must fully involve and engage the men in the community as well, so that the changes that occur are fully "owned" by the whole community, and not just by one group in the community. (This echoes, by the way, the evaluation of the peace education initiative referred to above.) Finally, where, as here, grassroots institutional change is necessary, public affirmation and commitment to these values can have a multiplier effect when written agreements are made and implemented by governments and agencies. To do this better next time, UNHCR must improve on all fronts, by expanding its training and empowerment activities to include men, and by ensuring consistent follow-up for long enough to consolidate successes. The worrying element here is whether funding will be available to make these efforts truly sustainable.

Conclusion

This has been a somewhat far-reaching overview and sometimes an overly-broad one. But I hope it has been useful for providing both information about what it is that UNHCR does in the way of refugee education and in analysing what the organisation and its partners must do better to break the cycle of displacement and truly instil durable solutions.

In closing, I would like to look at this issue from another point of view: that of the refugee or displaced person. Most of our discussion has been from a legal, or an academic, or a purely practical point of view. But what do refugees, and particularly refugee girls and women, about whom we have talked today, think about education? The importance of education cannot be put more eloquently than it is in an article in the most recent issue of UNHCR's *Refugees Magazine* about education for Afghan refugees in which Mahmooda, an 18 year old Afghan woman, describes her feelings about education.

When forced to give up school attendance when the Taliban took control of the capital, Kabul, she says "I was forced to stay home and do nothing. Day by day, my life became worse."

After fleeing to Pakistan, she has been able to go to school only because she weaves carpets and embroiders shawls until two o'clock in the morning each day. This is how she earns enough to pay her school fees. She can sleep for only four hours until she must be up to go to school again.

Why does she do it? "Uneducated people are like blind people," she says. "When they travel to a new place, they can't even read signs and they don't know where they are. I hope that people won't feel like they are blind for much longer."

Thank you.