

## **Displaced Children**

### **Debate on 22 November 2018**

#### **Summary**

This House of Lords Library Briefing has been prepared in advance of the debate due to take place on 22 November 2018 in the House of Lords on the motion moved by Lord McConnell of Glenscorrodale (Labour) “that this House takes note of the numbers of children displaced from their homes internationally, and the actions undertaken by the Government, the European Union and the United Nations to support them”.

This briefing provides statistics on displaced children, focusing on those displaced as a result of conflicts and persecution. It then summarises the types of support provided to displaced people in general, and displaced children in particular, by the United Nations, the UK Government and the European Union. It also provides a selection of further reading.

#### **Displaced Children: Statistics**

In 2017 the cumulative total number of displaced people internationally reached 68.5 million, following a net increase of 2.9 million on the previous year.<sup>1</sup> This total figure has increased by over 50% in the last ten years.<sup>2</sup> Of these forcibly displaced people, 37.1% (25.4 million) were classified as refugees and 4.5% (3.1 million) were asylum-seekers whose refugee status had yet to be determined.<sup>3</sup> The remaining 58% (40 million), were classified as internally displaced people, ie people displaced within the borders of their own country as a result of conflict.<sup>4</sup>

Some demographic information exists for these respective groups. However, the extent to which this information is available depends on whether data has been collected locally.<sup>5</sup> The following estimates of the age profile of refugees and asylum-seekers have been made.

- The UNHCR has estimated that 52 percent of refugees in 2017 were under 18 years old.<sup>6</sup>
- The UNHCR’s “conservative estimate” was that 173,800 asylum seekers and refugees were unaccompanied and separated children.<sup>7</sup>
- The UNHCR notes separately that 45,500 children were recorded as seeking asylum in their own right. However, this figure does not include all countries and is considered by the UNHCR to be an underestimate of the total.<sup>8</sup>
- Demographic information is available for some countries. For example, the country receiving the largest number of refugees is Turkey. At the end of September 2018, Turkey was home to nearly 4 million refugees and asylum seekers, including over 1.7 million children.<sup>9</sup>

Even less information exists regarding the proportion of internally displaced people under the age of 18.<sup>10</sup> Of those countries that collect data on conflict-related internally displaced persons, only

20 percent provided this information broken down by age.<sup>11</sup> The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) estimated that, in 2015, 17 million children were displaced within their own countries by violence and conflict.<sup>12</sup>

UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), UNICEF, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Eurostat and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) have all criticised the incomplete collection of data by countries on the age of refugee, migrant and internally displaced children.<sup>13</sup> These organisations have argued the lack of data has had a negative effect on their ability to provide protection for vulnerable children and provide them with the services they need. For example, the UNHCR states that it only has recorded information on age for 56 percent of the refugee population it is mandated by the UN to provide support for.

### **Issues Affecting Displaced Children**

Displaced children face a number of problems which have a potentially negative effect on their development, including not being able to access education. Under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, children who are refugees have the right to special protections including the provision of education.<sup>14</sup> However, Save the Children has argued displaced children face barriers to accessing education as well as other basic services, citing examples from refugee camps in Kenya and Syria where only a minority of children had enrolled in education.<sup>15</sup> In 2018, the UNHCR reported only 61% of refugee children attended primary school compared to 92% of non-displaced children.<sup>16</sup> The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) has argued internally displaced children also have problems accessing education, being without a school place for a period of months or years.<sup>17</sup> Those who do gain access to a school in their host community may also suffer from a lower quality of education as a result of overcrowding in the classroom, the IDMC has argued.

The international response to the growth in the number of forcibly displaced people has been criticised on grounds that it is inadequate in dealing with the specific issues facing children. For example, Save the Children has estimated the average length of displacements resulting from conflict or persecution was close to two decades, meaning that young people who became displaced were likely to spend the rest of their childhood in this state.<sup>18</sup> Save the Children has argued that, because most of the humanitarian relief was short-term in nature, it did not adequately meet the long-term developmental needs of displaced children. The House of Lords International Relations Committee has also criticised the lack of an international agreement on the resettlement of refugees and has argued the burden of supporting refugees has been borne disproportionately by the poorest countries with the least robust infrastructure.<sup>19</sup>

### **UN Support for Displaced Children**

There are different facets to support provided by the UN for the needs of displaced children. The UN Secretary General and the General Assembly have attempted to coordinate the approach taken by UN members, as detailed below. In addition, multiple UN entities, such as UNICEF and the UNHCR, provide direct support to displaced children.<sup>20</sup> The UNHCR was created with a specific mandate in 1950 to protect the rights and well-being of refugees, as well as supporting refugee return. In 2017, the global refugee population under the UNHCR's mandate was 19.9 million.<sup>21</sup> The UN also has peacekeeping operations around the world, including areas identified as home to a large number of displaced people, such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Middle East.<sup>22</sup>

## New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants

In September 2016, the UN General Assembly passed the New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants.<sup>23</sup> The intention of the declaration was to achieve better international coordination of humanitarian assistance and development cooperation. It was also intended to ensure the response to the increase in the number of refugees and migrants could be sustained over the long term. The New York declaration included specific commitments targeted at refugee and migrant children. This included that member states should ensure that all refugee and migrant children receive education within a few months of arrival.<sup>24</sup> It also said member states should work towards ending detaining children for the purposes of determining their migration status. The declaration also stated that guidelines would be developed on the treatment of migrants in vulnerable situations, including unaccompanied children.

The New York declaration called on the UNHCR to include a proposed global compact on refugees in its annual report to the General Assembly in 2018.<sup>25</sup> The resultant compact proposed changing the way in which the burden and responsibility for refugees and migrants was shared between countries.<sup>26</sup> On the publication of this compact, the UNHCR stated that there “was an urgent need for more equitable burden- and responsibility sharing”, noting 85 percent of refugees globally were hosted by low and middle-income countries in 2018.<sup>27</sup> At the time of publication of this briefing, the global compact on refugees had yet to be ratified by the UN General Assembly.

Members of the UN General Assembly unanimously supported the declaration by. However, following agreement of the New York declaration, the United States Government withdrew its support, stating that elements of the declaration were “inconsistent with US immigration and refugee policies”.<sup>28</sup>

## UK Government Policy

The UK spent over £13 billion—0.7% of gross national income—on overseas development aid (ODA) in 2016.<sup>29</sup> The majority of UK ODA (63.8%) was delivered through bilateral channels, while the remainder (36.2%) was delivered through multilateral organisations such as the International Development Association (part of the World Bank), the European Commission and the United Nations.<sup>30</sup> The UK is the fourth largest humanitarian assistance donor by volume, after Turkey, the United States and Germany.<sup>31</sup> The UK has also hosted refugees following applications for asylum. In the period from June 2017 to June 2018, 14,308 people were granted asylum in the UK, of whom 6,068 (42 %) were under 18 years old.<sup>32</sup> UK-hosted refugees initially receive financial support in the form of ODA.<sup>33</sup>

The UK Government contributes to a number of multilateral programmes targeted at children in conflict zones, including those either internally displaced or who are refugees in other countries.<sup>34</sup> In 2016, the Government committed to provide £30 million to the multilateral Education Cannot Wait aid fund, hosted by UNICEF.<sup>35</sup> The aim of the fund is to support education in areas suffering humanitarian emergencies and protracted crises. To date, 78 percent of this contribution has been spent and recipient countries include Syria, Chad and Ethiopia. The Government also committed in 2016 to contribute £60 million to UNICEF’s multilateral No Lost Generation initiative.<sup>36</sup> This fund is intended to support young people affected by the crises in Syria and Iraq, primarily through education and protection. The UK also provided £352 million in bilateral aid to Syria in 2016.<sup>37</sup> This amount had increased by 37 percent on the previous year and has increased year on year since the beginning of the conflict in 2011. Syria was the second greatest recipient of UK bilateral aid in 2016, after Pakistan which received £463 million in bilateral aid.<sup>38</sup>

The House of Commons International Development Committee has argued the Government should maintain support for education as part of its international development strategy.<sup>39</sup> It concluded the UK compared favourably to the approach taken by other donor countries, where there had not been adequate focus on educational needs. The committee also recommended that the Government should ensure DFID education advisors were maintained in each country where there were bilateral programmes, to ensure the programmes were delivered effectively and informed by local knowledge.<sup>40</sup> The Government stated in its response to the committee's report it agreed with its recommendations and said education advisors were in place to monitor these programmes.

## EU Humanitarian Aid

EU institutions are the fifth largest donor of humanitarian assistance.<sup>41</sup> For example, the EU and EU member states contributed €3 billion to the EU facility for refugees in Turkey and the EU regional trust fund in response to the civil war in Syria.<sup>42</sup> The EU has also established two EU compacts with Jordan and Lebanon intended to support the education and employment of displaced people.<sup>43</sup> A separate EU emergency trust fund, established in 2015, intended to address the causes of irregular migration and displacement in Africa. The European Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management, Christos Stylianides, has said 8 percent of annual European Commission humanitarian funding was dedicated to supporting the provision of education in areas undergoing emergencies (€86 million in 2018).<sup>44</sup>

The UK share of the EU Commission budget for overseas development aid in 2016 was £1,031 million.<sup>45</sup> The EU has stated it intends to expand its overall foreign policy related spending, with the external action budget increasing from €94.5 billion in the period 2014–20 to €123 billion in 2021–27.<sup>46</sup> This, the EU has stated, would be irrespective of whether the UK continued to contribute to the EU budget following its withdrawal from the EU. Alongside this expansion in overall foreign policy spending, the EU has proposed increasing its funding for humanitarian aid with the creation of a new humanitarian aid instrument of up to €11 billion.<sup>47</sup> However, the new budget has been criticised by organisations including Oxfam and Save the Children on the grounds there would also be a reduction in funding for developmental aid.<sup>48</sup> They argued this would prioritise the EU's short term response to migration at the expense of longer-term support and protection for migrants and refugees.

## Further Information

- Department for International Development, [Saving Lives, Building Resilience, Reforming the System: The UK Government's Humanitarian Reform Policy](#), September 2017
- Department for International Development, [Raising the Standard: The Multilateral Development Review 2016](#), 11 December 2016
- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, [Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2017](#), 25 June 2018
- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, [Turn the Tide: Refugee Education in Crisis](#), 29 August 2018
- Save the Children, [The War on Children](#), February 2018
- UNICEF, [Education Cannot Wait: A Fund for Education in Emergencies](#), May 2016
- UNICEF, [Refugee and Migrant Children in Europe](#), accessed 7 November 2018
- Brookings Institution, ['Fragile States and the Search for What Works'](#), 8 November 2018
- Brookings Institution, ['Who Actually Funds the UN and Other Multilaterals?'](#), 9 January 2018

- [Debate on 'International Development: Education'](#), HC Hansard, 29 March 2018, cols 449–72WH
- [Debate on 'Internally Displaced People'](#), HC Hansard, 25 April 2018, cols 420–38WH

<sup>1</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, [Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2017](#), 25 June 2018, p 4.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*, pp 2 and 4. The figure stood at 42.7 million in 2007.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*, pp 13 and 39.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*, p 4; Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, [Global Report on Internal Displacement: 2018](#), 2018, p 1.

<sup>5</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, [Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2017](#), 25 June 2018, p 58.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid*, p 59.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid*, p 3.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid*, p 48. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees notes that these figures do not include claims from the Russian Federation, South Africa, or the United States, countries which are considered to receive a large number of claims.

<sup>9</sup> United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, [Turkey 2018 Humanitarian Situation Report #25: September 2018](#), November 2018.

<sup>10</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, [Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2017](#), 25 June 2018, p 58.

<sup>11</sup> United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, [Massive Data Gaps Leave Refugee, Migrant and Displaced Children in Danger and Without Access to Basic Services](#), 15 February 2018.

<sup>12</sup> United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, [Displacement](#), September 2015.

<sup>13</sup> United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, [Massive Data Gaps Leave Refugee, Migrant and Displaced Children in Danger and Without Access to Basic Services](#), 15 February 2018.

<sup>14</sup> United Nations, [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#), November 1989. The United States is not a signatory to this convention.

<sup>15</sup> Save the Children, [A New Deal for Every Forcibly Displaced Child](#), 2016, p 4.

<sup>16</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, [Millions of Refugee Children Going Without Schooling. UNHCR Report Shows](#), 29 August 2018.

<sup>17</sup> Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, [Global Report on Internal Displacement: 2018](#), 2018, p 67.

<sup>18</sup> Save the Children, [A New Deal for Every Forcibly Displaced Child](#), 2016, p 9.

<sup>19</sup> House of Lords International Relations Committee, [The UK and the UN: Priorities for the New Secretary-General](#), 3 November 2016, HL Paper 60 of session 2016–17, pp 35–6.

<sup>20</sup> An overview of the structure of the UN system is provided in Congressional Research Service, [US Funding to the United Nations System: Overview and Selected Policy Issues](#), 25 April 2018, pp 23–9.

<sup>21</sup> United Nations, [Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees: Part One: Covering the Period 1 July 2017–30 June 2018](#), 2018, p 3.

<sup>22</sup> United Nations Peacekeeping, [Where We Operate](#), accessed 13 November 2018.

<sup>23</sup> United Nations, [New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants](#), 29 July 2016.

<sup>24</sup> United Nations, [New York Declaration](#), accessed 13 November 2018.

<sup>25</sup> United Nations, [Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees: Part Two: Global Compact on Refugees](#), 2018.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid*, p 2.

<sup>27</sup> United Nations, [Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees: Part One: Covering the Period 1 July 2017–30 June 2018](#), 2018, p 1.

<sup>28</sup> Patrick Wintour, [Donald Trump Pulls US Out of UN Global Compact on Migration](#), *Guardian*, 3 December 2017.

<sup>29</sup> Department for International Development, [Statistics on International Development](#), November 2017, p 7. The 0.7 percent spending target is a requirement of the International Development (Official Development Assistance Target) Act 2015.

<sup>30</sup> Department for International Development, [Statistics on International Development](#), November 2017, pp 9 and 37, Table 9. The Government states that it is not able to publish a breakdown for how it contributes to these multilateral organisations by country or sector. Department for International Development, [Statistics on International Development 2017: Annex 1: Understanding Aid Expenditure Statistics](#), 16 November 2017, p 3.

<sup>31</sup> Development Initiatives, [Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2018: Executive Summary](#), 19 June 2018, p 4. The report notes that this inclusion of Turkey is not strictly comparable because its spending is largely comprised of expenditure on hosting Syrian refugees.

<sup>32</sup> Home Office, [How Many People Do We Grant Asylum or Protection To?](#), 23 August 2018.

<sup>33</sup> Department for International Development, [Statistics on International Development](#), November 2017, p 32.

<sup>34</sup> House of Commons, [Written Question: Armed Conflict: Children](#), 26 February 2018, 128937.

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- <sup>35</sup> Department for International Development, '[Development Tracker: Education Cannot Wait](#)', accessed 13 November 2018.
- <sup>36</sup> Department for International Development, '[Development Tracker: Lebanon No Lost Generation Initiative](#)', accessed 13 November 2018.
- <sup>37</sup> Department for International Development, [Statistics on International Development](#), November 2017, p 29.
- <sup>38</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>39</sup> House of Commons International Development Committee, [DFID's Work on Education: Leaving No-One Behind?](#), 29 March 2018, HC 367 of session 2017–19, p 3.
- <sup>40</sup> *ibid.*, p 4.
- <sup>41</sup> Development Initiatives, [Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2018: Executive Summary](#), 19 June 2018, p 4.
- <sup>42</sup> European Commission, [2017 Annual Report on the Implementation of the European Union's Instruments For Financing External Actions](#), 2018, p 12.
- <sup>43</sup> *ibid.*, p 22.
- <sup>44</sup> Christos Stylianides, '[The EU's Commitment to Securing Access to Education in Times of Emergencies and Protracted Crises for All Children, Especially Girls and Children with Disabilities](#)', Plan International Blog, 27 September 2018.
- <sup>45</sup> Department for International Development, [Statistics on International Development](#), November 2017, p 36.
- <sup>46</sup> European Commission, '[Questions and Answers: The EU Budget for External Action](#)', 14 June 2018.
- <sup>47</sup> The EU's current budget for external action includes a number of 'instruments' which set a maximum amount for EU spending in different areas. European Commission, '[External Action Financing Instruments](#)', accessed 13 November 2018.
- <sup>48</sup> Euractiv, '[2018 Budget Agreed with Cuts in Development Aid](#)', 20 November 2017.

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