

STUDY GUIDE:  
UNITED NATIONS REFUGEE AGENCY  
(UNHCR)

AGENDA:  
Addressing the Plight of Refugees in War Torn Areas

**LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE BOARD**

Greetings, We welcome you to the UNHCR, in the capacity of the members of the executive board of the said conference. Since this conference shall be a learning experience for all of you, it shall be for us as well. Our only objective shall be to make you all speak and participate in the discussion, and we pledge to give every effort for the same.

How to research for the agenda and beyond? There are several things to consider. This background guide shall be different from the background guides you might have come across in other MUNs and we will emphasize more on providing you sources where you find matter for your research than providing you matter itself, because we do not believe in spoon-feeding you, nor do we believe in leaving you to swim in a pond all by yourself. Therefore, we shall, at various points in the background guide provide links to research articles that you are supposed to read. However, we promise that if you read the entire document you shall be able to cover 70% of your research for the conference. The remaining amount of research depends on how willing are you to put in your efforts and understand those articles and/or documents. So, in the purest of language we can say, it is important to read anything and everything whose links are provided in the background guide.

What to speak in the committee and in what manner? The basic emphasis of the committee shall not be on how many facts you read and present in the committee but how you explain them in simple and decent language to us and your fellow members of the committee.

The entire conference aims at analyzing your understanding of the agenda and not how much you have studied. So, kindly focus upon analysis and explanation, because we are interested in knowing how much you know, and remember that you will know only if you have read and worked.

We wish you all the very best and feel free to ask doubts if any.

Thank You and Regards.

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Commissioner)  
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## Important Points

Information contained in this research brief does not possess any evidentiary value, nor does it qualify as proof of the occurrence/non-occurrence or existence/ non- existence of any fact. The brief is meant only to provide the participants with a modicum of information upon which further research can be built and does not in any manner whatsoever reflect the views or political leanings of the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson or Rapporteur. They shall at all points in time maintain neutrality and do not have any political affiliations.

There would be a Zero Plagiarism policy followed by the Executive Board for all written communications (Chits, Documents, etc). Kindly note, however use of citations would not qualify as plagiarism and would thus be permissible.

3. The Executive Board shall be open to only 5 types of documents for marking purposes (none of them are compulsory to submit) -

- a. Working Papers
- b. Plan of Actions
- c. Press Release/Joint Statements
- d. Draft Resolutions

4. Link to official UNAUSA Rules of Procedures - <https://drive.google.com/file/d/158xnrNSNpRbGzLFhPmxw000xmqabRXl0/view?usp=sharing>

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## **About the Committee**

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is a global organization dedicated to saving lives, protecting rights and building a better future for people forced to flee their homes because of conflict and persecution. UNHCR lead international action to protect refugees, forcibly displaced communities and stateless people. Their vision is a world where every person forced to flee can build a better future. Formally known as the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, UNHCR was established by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1950 in the aftermath of the Second World War to help the millions of people who had lost their homes.

Today, UNHCR works in 137 countries. We provide life-saving assistance, including shelter, food, water and medical care for people forced to flee conflict and persecution, many of whom have nobody left to turn to. We defend their right to reach safety and help them find a place to call home so they can rebuild their lives. Long term, we work with countries to improve and monitor refugee and asylum laws and policies, ensuring human rights are upheld.

## **UNHCR mandate and governing charters**

UNHCR is mandated by the United Nations to protect and safeguard the rights of refugees. We also support former refugees who have returned to their home country, people displaced within their own country, and people who are stateless or whose nationality is disputed.

We are guided by and act as the guardian of the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol.

UNHCR Statute

<https://www.unhcr.org/media/28183>

The 1951 Refugee Convention

<https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/who-we-are/1951-refugee-convention>

UN Conventions on Statelessness

<https://www.unhcr.org/what-we-do/protect-human-rights/ending-statelessness/un-conventions-statelessness>

UNHCR Strategic Directions 2022-2026

[https://reporting.unhcr.org/strategic-directions-2022-2026#\\_ga=2.2866294.771321608.1682450049-1733211583.1682450049](https://reporting.unhcr.org/strategic-directions-2022-2026#_ga=2.2866294.771321608.1682450049-1733211583.1682450049)

## Research Methodology

Following is a recommended array for researching for delegates who need help as to know -

1. Researching and understanding the UN-Committee being simulated- its mandate, including understanding of historical work done on the agenda. Research on the allocated country including its past etc.
2. Comprehending the Foreign Policy of the allotted country. It includes understanding the dogma and moralities adopted by the country on the agenda. It further includes reviewing past actions taken by the country on the agenda and other associated issues specifically analysing their roots and consequences.
3. Reading the background guide meticulously and building upon it instead of completely relying on it.
4. Researching further upon the agenda using the annotations and links given in the guide and from other sources such as academic papers, institutional reports, national reports, news articles, blogs etc. and the Further Reading section. ( [amnesty.org.in](http://amnesty.org.in), [red cross organisation](http://redcross.org), etc.)
5. Understanding policies adopted by different countries especially major countries in the agenda including their position, ideology and adopted past actions.
6. Characterizing the agenda into sub-topics and preparing speeches and statements on them. It is the same as preparing topics for the moderated caucuses and their content.
7. Formulating a list of promising solutions and actions UN-Committee can adopt on the Issue as per your country's foreign policy.
8. Accumulate proof/evidence for any significant piece of information/accusation you are going to use in the committee by referring the "Proof/Evidences" Section. (Reuters, national reports, UN reports) .
9. Keeping your research updated using various news sources until the day of the conference.
10. Raise questions in your mind regarding the agenda and answer them with the help of the research.

## Introduction to Agenda

<https://www.unhcr.org/in/what-we-do/build-better-futures/livelihoods-and-economic-inclusion>

After fleeing war or persecution, one of the most effective ways people can rebuild their lives with dignity and in peace is through the opportunity to work and earn a living.

UNHCR works to promote livelihoods and economic inclusion for refugees. We advocate for their right to work and support them in becoming more resilient and achieve self-reliance. Rebuilding one's life implies more than having a roof over your head and a safe place to sleep. It means reclaiming control of your future.

A powerful way to do so is to work for a living. Through decent work, refugees and displaced people can provide for their families' needs, maintain their dignity, become more resilient and be empowered to shape their future. Being able to work and making use of their skills and talents also allows refugees to contribute to their host communities.

### POINTS TO BE DISCUSSED BRIEFLY ON

- Historical Development of Refugee Rights Legal
- Framework for Refugee Protection Global
- Disparities in Refugee Protection Obstacles to
- Asylum and Protection Integrating and
- Empowering Refugees Addressing Vulnerability
- and Inequality Combating Xenophobia and
- Fostering Inclusion Humanitarian Assistance and
- Durable Solutions

## Historical Development of Refugee Rights

The concept of protecting refugees has evolved significantly over time. Initially viewed as a burden, the atrocities of World War II sparked a global conscience, leading to the creation of the 1951 Refugee Convention. This landmark agreement established fundamental rights for refugees, including non-refoulement - the principle of not returning individuals to danger. While the focus initially centered on humanitarian aid, subsequent decades saw a shift towards promoting refugee rights and seeking durable solutions like resettlement and local integration.

<https://typeset.io/questions/how-has-the-concept-of-refugee-protection-evolved-over-time-2mm855cje5>

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-relating-status-refugees>

## Legal Framework for Refugee Protection

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-relating-status-refugees>

[https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/pact-migration-and-asylum\\_en](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/pact-migration-and-asylum_en)

The 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol form the cornerstone of international refugee law. These documents define a refugee, outline their rights, and prohibit their forcible return to dangerous situations. However, the effectiveness of this framework varies widely across countries.

**Robust screening:** Those not fulfilling the conditions to enter the EU will be registered and subject to identification, security, and health checks.

**Eurodac asylum and migration database:** The Eurodac Regulation turns the existing database into a fully-fledged asylum and migration database, ensuring clear identification of everyone who enters the EU as an asylum seeker or an irregular migrant.

**Border procedure and returns:** A mandatory border procedure will apply for asylum applicants who are unlikely to need protection, mislead the authorities or present a security risk. Efficient returns with reintegration support will apply for those not eligible for international protection.

**Crisis protocols and action against instrumentalisation:** The Crisis Regulation provides quick crisis protocols, with operational support and funding, in emergency situations.

### Integrating and Empowering Refugees

<https://ehab-badwi.medium.com/integration-and-participation-of-refugees-and-migrants-building-inclusive-societies-9b806ef772c0>

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Even when granted asylum, refugees face hurdles in integrating into their host societies. Language barriers, lack of education and skills, and discrimination can impede their socioeconomic inclusion. Successful integration requires comprehensive support, including language training, job skills development, and measures to combat prejudice.

### Global Disparities in Refugee Protection

The challenges faced by refugees differ significantly between regions. While some areas have well-established asylum systems, others struggle with limited access to protection, protracted refugee situations, and inadequate support. Factors like conflict, poverty, and natural disasters exacerbate these challenges.

### Obstacles to Asylum and Protection

Refugees often encounter numerous barriers to seeking and obtaining asylum. These include fear of detention, lack of information, limited legal aid, language difficulties, and discriminatory practices. These obstacles can hinder their access to safety and basic rights.

### Addressing Vulnerability and Inequality

<https://www.who.int/health-topics/refugee-and-migrant-health>

Refugees are a diverse group with varying needs based on factors like gender, age, and ethnicity. Women and children, for instance, face unique vulnerabilities. Effective protection requires tailored responses that address these disparities and ensure equal opportunities for all.

### Combating Xenophobia and Fostering Inclusion

Xenophobia and discrimination against refugees remain significant challenges. Building inclusive societies requires concerted efforts to challenge stereotypes, promote understanding, and engage both refugees and host communities in creating harmonious coexistence.



## Rebuilding futures: How UNHCR is empowering Syrian refugees through mental health support

<https://www.unrefugees.org/news/rebuilding-futures-how-unhcr-is-empowering-syrian-refugees-through-mental-health-support/>

Over the last 12 years, the Syrian people have endured war, displacement and heartbreak, leaving many with physical and emotional scars. According to the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#), individuals living in [protracted conflicts in countries like Afghanistan, Iraq, South Sudan and Syria](#) are more susceptible to experiencing mental health issues than those in non-conflict affected populations. In fact, the WHO reports that 22 percent of people who have experienced war or other conflicts in the previous 10 years will suffer from depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, bipolar disorder or schizophrenia. In [Syria](#), the prevalence of mental health conditions is high, with approximately [one in 10](#) people expected to be living with mild to moderate mental health conditions, and one in 30 suffering from more severe conditions due to prolonged exposure to conflict.

## How UNHCR is building brighter futures for displaced Syrians through mental health support.

<https://www.unrefugees.org/news/rebuilding-futures-how-unhcr-is-empowering-syrian-refugees-through-mental-health-support/>

In collaboration with its partners, UNHCR is committed to providing mental health services for refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced people (IDPs). In Syria, UNHCR has a long-standing practice of delivering mental health and psychosocial support through community-based networks. This approach was first implemented when the country first began hosting hundreds of thousands of Iraqi refugees, prior to the onset of the Syrian conflict. UNHCR's primary method of delivering mental health services is through community outreach volunteers. These volunteers are trained to identify individuals in need of mental health and psychosocial support services (MHPSS), safely refer them for appropriate services and provide necessary follow-ups.

This approach continues to be one of the cornerstones of UNHCR's work in Syria and has expanded to include IDPs and host communities throughout the region. As of 2021, UNHCR has supported 130 community and satellite centers throughout the country and has established a system of approximately 3,000 volunteers, 700 of whom are specialized in psychosocial support and have been trained in basic psychosocial skills and psychological first aid.

## Refugees need better mental health support amid rising displacement

<https://www.unhcr.org/in/news/news-releases/refugees-need-better-mental-health-support-amid-rising-displacement>

Refugees demonstrate great resilience in the face of life-altering circumstances but need increased support for mental health services, UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, said. Although strides are being made to improve access to psychosocial support, UNHCR is concerned that the worsening socio-economic outlook and rising food insecurity in many refugee hosting countries could compound existing pressures on refugees.

Refugees are exposed to stress at every stage of their displacement. Pressures include separation from families, xenophobia, lack of livelihood opportunities, perilous journeys and exposure to conflict and persecution. A recent survey conducted by UNHCR and the World Bank in Uganda found rates of depression among refugees were markedly higher than among people living in host communities.

## Problems and stressors facing migrants and refugees

<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-and-forced-displacement>

Migrants and refugees often face various problems and stressors which can take place at various stages of the migration process: Pre-migration: lack of livelihoods and opportunities for education and development, exposure to armed conflict, violence, poverty and/or persecution.

Migration travel and transit: exposure to challenging and life-threatening conditions including violence and detention and lack of access to services to cover their basic needs.

Post-migration: barriers to accessing health care and other services to meet their basic needs as well as poor living conditions, separation from family members and support networks, possible uncertainty regarding work permits and legal status (asylum application), and in some cases immigration detention. Integration and settlement: poor living or working conditions, unemployment, assimilation difficulties, challenges to cultural, religious, and gender identities, challenges with obtaining entitlements, changing policies in host countries, racism and exclusion, tension between host population and migrants and refugees, social isolation and possible deportation.

## Risk and protective factors for mental health conditions

<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-and-forced-displacement>

All of the above-mentioned stressors can increase the risk of developing mental health conditions. For example, unemployment, poor socioeconomic conditions, and lack of social integration among migrants and refugees are risk factors for mental health conditions such as depression. At the same time, these stressors can also exacerbate pre-existing social and mental health problems.

Factors that negatively impact the mental health and well-being of migrant and refugee children include socioeconomic deprivation, discrimination, racism, low family cohesion, and frequent school changes. Children who have been separated from migrating parents are at heightened risk of developing depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation, conduct disorder, and substance use problems.

On the other hand, the impact of stressors can be buffered by protective factors such as access to employment and services, social support, proficiency in the language of the host country, and family reunification. Among resettled refugee children, protective factors include better socioeconomic status, access to education, a perceived sense of safety, contacts with family, living and socialising alongside other people of the same ethnic origin, a stable and cohesive family structure and good parental mental health.

## Prevalence of mental health conditions

<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-and-forced-displacement>

Many migrants and refugees will experience distress (e.g. feelings of anxiety and sadness, hopelessness, difficulty sleeping, fatigue, irritability, anger and/or aches and pains). For most people, these reactions will improve over time.

Some studies show that the prevalence of common mental disorders (e.g. depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)) is higher among migrants and refugees than among host populations. Asylum seekers tend to be at elevated risk of suicide. There is also consistent evidence that the incidence of psychoses is higher among migrant populations in a number of countries, and this has been linked with the cumulative effect of social disadvantages before, during and after migration.

## Responding to the mental health needs of migrants and refugees

<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-and-forced-displacement>

A comprehensive, multi-disciplinary and inclusive approach is needed to address the mental health needs of migrants and refugees.

Addressing barriers to receiving mental health care should include:

- provision of clear information on mental health care entitlements and how to receive services (e.g. through reception centers, community outreach, schools, religious or cultural settings);
- outreach to at-risk groups (e.g. unaccompanied minors, persons with disabilities, persons who identify as LGBTIQ+);
- facilitation of affordable and non-discriminatory access to care regardless of legal status, ensuring financial coverage of mental health services and care provided;
- facilitation of communication (e.g. through engaging interpreters and cultural mediators);
- providing person-centred care that is respectful of cultural differences; and
- facilitating the engagement of multiple sectors and systems (e.g. law enforcement, protection, social services and education) to integrate mental health considerations and support and ensure referral and access to mental health services.

## Role of WHO

WHO is the lead International agency in providing technical advice on mental health.

WHO developed a [Global Action Plan \(2019-2023\)](#) to promote the health of migrants and refugees, approved by the World Health Assembly in May 2019. The Global Action Plan describes overarching priorities and guiding principles to promote the health of migrants and refugees and to contribute to achieving the aim of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – to leave no one behind. The Global Action Plan highlights how the many barriers that migrants and refugees experience in accessing health-care services can precipitate negative mental health outcomes. The plan recommends priorities and options for action by the Secretariat in coordination and collaboration with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other relevant partners.

In May 2021, the World Health Assembly endorsed an update of the Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan (2013-2030), *with the overall goal to promote mental well-being, prevent mental disorders, provide care, enhance recovery, promote human rights and reduce the mortality, morbidity and disability of persons with mental disorders.*

WHO is committed to supporting Member States in promoting the physical and mental health of migrants and refugees by strengthening health care services, as appropriate and acceptable to country contexts and financial situations, and in line with their national priorities and legal frameworks and competence. WHO is also committed to ensuring that essential components are addressed, including the provision of treatment and care for mental and behavioural disorders.

In line with the Global Action Plan, WHO is operational on mental health in a range of countries and territories that host large numbers of migrants and refugees. These include Bangladesh, Colombia, Pakistan, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Pakistan, South Sudan, Sudan, Turkey and Uganda. WHO has close working relationship with other UN partners, including IOM and UNHCR to meet the mental health needs of migrants and refugees.

WHO co-chairs the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Reference Group on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings that provides advice and support to organizations working in emergencies and helps ensure that the mental health response is coordinated and effective. Emergency situations often cause displacement and may lead to people becoming refugees or internally displaced.

WHO's advice and tools are used by most large international humanitarian organizations active in mental health. WHO and partners have published a range of practical tools and guidelines to meet the mental health needs of people affected by emergencies, including migrants and refugees.