

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY MODEL UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE

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SECRETARIAT

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Esteemed Delegates,

Welcome to diplomacy camp, the 31st annual Brigham Young University Model United Nations Conference (BYUMUN), which will be our first-ever virtual event! My name is Liam Dalton, and I am delighted to direct the committee for Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). In reading this, you have already demonstrated a desire to propose and support solutions to the many humanitarian crises in the world.

I am currently studying International Relations and French and have worked with refugees from the Middle East and Asia in Salt Lake City. I hope to use MIN as a springboard for success in my college career and in my work with refugees abroad. Upon graduation, I intend to apply the skills I have developed in MIN toward a career in diplomacy.

Thus year, the UN Refugee Agency, or UNHCR, will deliberate on the following topic at BYUMUN: Ensuring Suitable Living Standards in Refugee Camps.

The UNHCR's mandate is to bring relief to refugees and enable host countries to effectively administer aid. I encourage you to invest time in understanding the role of the UNHCR as it will help you create solutions that the UNHCR has the ability to actually implement.

This Guide is organized by topic, starting with a background on the UNHCR and then addressing the discussion topic. You should study it, but do not use it as your only source of information. Take the time to also research your country's position and develop key points you would like to see addressed by your committee.

I look forward to meeting you virtually at BYUMUN this year. If you have questions concerning this Guide or the UNHCR in general, please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

Sincerely,

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Committee History

To be called a refugee is the opposite of an insult; it is a badge of strength, courage, and victory.”

—*Tennessee Office for Refugees*

Establishment and Membership

The United Nations was established on 24 October 1945. The first committee founded was the General Assembly, which established the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on 14 December 1950 stipulating that the High Commissioner :acting under the authority of the General Assembly, shall assume the function of providing international protection ... and of seeking permanent solutions for the problem of refugees.”¹ This mission was a direct response to the influx of refugees during after World War II, when Jews, Russians, Italians, Germans, and many others fled their home countries due to persecution. Israel, West Germany, and the United States were only some of the recipients of those refugees.

Today, two of the UNHCR’s main missions are finding permanent homes for refugees and helping stabilize refugees’ and internally displaced persons’ (IDPs) countries of origin. UNHCR has adapted to the needs of refugees through the creation and maintenance of refugee camps.² While not the ideal final solution for helping refugees, the camps allow UNHCR to respond to political and environmental crises around the world. Currently, 128 countries are represented in the Committee, and the General Assembly elects a new High Commissioner every five years.³

Terms and Definitions

UNHCR takes on the challenge of caring for the world refugees. The 1951 *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* defines a refugee as “someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war, or violence.”⁴ Sixty-seven percent of the world’s refugees come from five countries: Syria, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Myanmar, and Somalia. While the term “refugee” is generally used to describe anyone fleeing from their home country, there are situations that, due to complexity, require a more specific term to describe their condition. This includes internally displaced persons (IDPs), stateless persons, and asylum seekers.

IDPs are people who have been forced to flee their homes but never cross an international border—they remain displaced inside their home country.⁵ IDPS often include people displaced by internal strife and natural disasters, but they do not share the same protections that a refugee receives under international law. Because IDPs are within the borders of their home countries, they are legally

¹ Statute of the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees [hereafter the Statute], as revised by the General Assembly. Res. 58/153, para. 1.

² UNHCR, *Emergency Handbook*, (New York, United Nations, 2015).

³ UNHCR, *Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees: Membership Details*, (Washington, D.C., United Nations, 2018).

⁴ UNHCR, *What is a Refugee? Definition and Meaning: USA for UNHCR*. (Washington, D.C., United Nations, 2018).

⁵ *Id.*

under the protection of their own governments, not the UNHCR. There are governments that take advantage of this and deny basic human rights to citizens who do not align with their views or policies. Some of these basic human rights include the right to education, water, food, and shelter. The UNHCR also seeks to uphold the human rights listed in the *Refugee Convention* (1951), the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948), and the *Convention of the Rights of the Child* (1989).

A stateless person is an individual who is not a citizen of any country. A person may be stateless due to legal, administrative, or sovereign decisions or oversights.⁶ For instance, during the Cold War, the Soviet Union made a point of denying uncooperative Soviet nationals citizenship in the Soviet Union, which, among other things, made it impossible for them to travel outside of the Soviet Union because they could not obtain travel documents such as passports. The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* states that “everyone has the right to a nationality,” and UNHCR helps stateless persons find accommodations in Member States that agree to accept them.

An asylum seeker is a person who has fled their home country and is seeking sanctuary in another country. The application for asylum is the application to be recognized as a refugee. To become recognized, an asylum seeker will have to prove that they have a well-founded fear of persecution in their home country. Until a person proves that they qualify for refugee status, they cannot receive all of the refugee benefits made available by the UNHCR and Member States⁷ (for example, once a person has been granted refugee status, they are eligible to be placed in a new home country through that country’s agreement with the UNHCR regarding placement of refugees). The ultimate goal of the UNHCR is to “ensure that everybody has the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge in another state.”⁸

Implementation Tools

One way that UNHCR accomplishes this mission is through the work of the High Commissioner. The High Commissioner acts as the designated spokesperson for the Committee. They speak for the Committee at conferences and with world leaders to garner support. The High Commissioner also encourages other Member States to provide aid for refugees within their borders. Filippo Grandi, the current UN High Commissioner for Refugees, has been a long-standing advocate in support of resuming the rescue of refugees at sea. Because of the strain that refugees from the Middle East and Africa have put on European countries, countries such as Italy and Greece have stopped efforts to save refugee boats at sea, and, in 2018 alone, it is estimated that an average of 6 refugees were drowned at sea per day in the Mediterranean (approximately 2,275 people). Grandi has appealed to Member States, saying, “Saving lives at sea is not a choice, nor a matter of politics, but an age-old obligation. We can put an end to these tragedies by having the courage and vision to look beyond the next boat, and adopt a long-term approach based on regional cooperation, that places human life and dignity at its core.”⁹

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ *Fn. 3, supra.*

⁹ UNHCR, “Six people die each day attempting to cross Mediterranean in 2018. UNHCR report shows.” 30 January 2019.

UNHCT also passes resolutions allocating funding to support existing refugee camps, research project that focus on improving conditions in the camps, and events that raise both awareness and funds for supporting refugees in many of the most severe locations in the world. UNHCR funding comes from several sources. Approximately 87% comes through voluntary donations from Member State governments and the European Union, right percent is given by private donors, and five percent comes from the UN regular budget and the pooled funding from other intergovernmental organizations (IGOs).¹⁰

Because the UNHCR allocates its own budget, the Committee has greater freedom to raise funds to support refugees. UNHCR arranges transport and assistance packages for people who return to their native countries, and they also support income-generating projects for those who settle elsewhere. All of this is accomplished by both United Nations funding obtained from Member States and fundraising carried out by the UNHCR. This greatly aids developing countries, where 85% of the world's displaced people are located. For example, Bangladesh is currently housing the majority of the approximately 745,000 Rohingya driven out of the Rakhine State of Myanmar in 2017. Bangladesh, which is itself a developing nation, is in need of aid to support the basic needs of the Rohingya it is now hosting.¹¹

UNHCR carried out its mandate by providing emergency assistance in the form of clean water, sanitation, healthcare, shelter, education, and jobs to the refugees in Bangladesh.¹² Recent examples of UNHCR attempts to fund the Rohingya relief package includes the Joint Response Plan (JRP) for the Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis, which called for 951 million US dollars in funding from Member States as well as an online petition for funding from UNHCR subsidiaries and supporters.¹³ Alongside the mass media campaign launched by UNHCR to bring attention to this issues on its own website and social media feeds, JRP and NGOs alike are working together to raise the money needed to support the Bangladeshi government in assisting the refugees.

Further, UNHCR tracks how many refugees, IDPs, and asylum-seekers exist throughout the world. As of June 2020, there were more than 45 million IDPS, 26 million refugees, and 4 million asylum-seekers worldwide.¹⁴ UNHCR's statistical data informs the way host countries (i.e., countries that accept refugees and either host camps or allow refugees to live in regular communities) respond to new refugee crises. UNHCR works with 138 countries and employs 16,765 personnel worldwide to aid in the distribution of supplies to refugees and in planning for and reacting to refugee situations. In Europe, those efforts have included transforming private buildings and public property into camps and housing to meet the needs of refugees arriving from Syria, Afghanistan, and South Sudan.

UNHCR also uses data to motivate both Member States and individuals to act. UNHCR provides materials for teachers on the complexities of the refugee situation. The UNHCR curriculum explores the various types of refugees, refugee rights, and potential solutions to the refugee crisis.¹⁵ Education is a prerequisite to advocacy, and the UNHCR program helps turn community members

¹⁰ UNHCR. Funding Update 2020.

¹¹ UNHCR. "Supporting Rohingya refugees and their hosts in Bangladesh." November 2018.

¹² *Fn. 2, supra.*

¹³ OCHA, *Rohingya Refugee Crisis*, (New York, United Nations, 2019).

¹⁴ UNHCR. *Figures at a Glance*. June 2020.

¹⁵ UNHCR, *Teaching about Refugees*. (New York, United Nations, 2019).

into advocates.

Conclusion

UNHCR also engaged in family reunification programs, student scholarships, and obtaining humanitarian visas. Its regular work includes helping stabilize regions refugees come from (called “regions of origin” by providing a wide variety of resources such as food and manpower. UNHCR has also sought to integrate peacekeeping missions with UNHCR relief missions, providing even more stability and protection for refugees inside and outside of camps.¹⁶

UNHCR’s mandate enables Member States to secure better standards of living for refugees across the world and change lives forever UNHCR envisions an era of peaceful relations between nations in which refugee camps will become a relic of the past. UNHCR strives to improve the world by meeting people’s basic needs, promoting education, and supporting the human rights of refugees.

¹⁶ United Nations. *Report of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*, (New York, United Nations, 2018).

Annotated Bibliography

OCHA, *Rohingya Refugee Crisis*, (New York, United Nations, 2019). Accessed 2 October 2020. <<https://www.unocha.org/rohingya-refugee-crisis>>.

Provides a summary of the devastation occurring in both Myanmar and Bangladesh due to atrocities committed and the unsustainable number of refugees flooding into Bangladesh. This article also provides examples of how UNHCR has provided relief to the refugees and the different methods used to raise money and distribute the aid.

Reardon, C and Tanbeen, R. “*Supporting Rohingya refugees and their hosts in Bangladesh.*” November 2018. UNHCR. Accessed 2 October 2020. <<https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/latest/2019/2/5c668f4c4/supporting-rohingya-refugees-hosts-bangladesh.html>>.

UNHCR reporting from a refugee camp in Bangladesh on the conditions and the needs to make the camps supportive of life and basic human rights.

Statute of the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees [hereafter the Statute], as revised by the General Assembly. Res. 58/153, para. 1. 22 December 2003. Accessed 2 October 2020. <www.unhcr.org/4d944e589.pdf>.

The Statute is the General Assembly resolution that created UNHCR and gave it its power. This is the founding document for the Commission.

UNHCR, *Emergency Handbook*, (New York, United Nations, 2015). Accessed 2 October 2020. <<https://emergency.unhcr.org/>>.

General guidelines on how to set up and run an effective refugee camp. The handbook includes standards and topics ranging from health and safety rules to food distribution to camp economics.

UNHCR. *Figures at a Glance*. June 2020. Accessed 2 October 2020. <<https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/figures-at-a-glance.html>>.

UNHCR infographics and quick facts regarding the number of refugees and the funding for refugee relief efforts.

UNHCR. *Funding Update 2020*. Accessed 2 October 2020. <<https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/Global%20Funding%20Overview%2001%20October%202020.pdf>>.

This is a great resource for checking on whether your country contributes to the UNHCR because it has a country-by-country breakdown of contributions.

UNHCR, *Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees: Membership Detail*, (Washington, D.C., United Nations, 2018). Accessed 2 October 2020. <<http://www.unhcr.org>>.

[unevaluation.org/about/memberagencies/detail/15](https://www.unhcr.org/about/memberagencies/detail/15)>.

A general summary of statistical information concerning UNHCR internationally, reporting contributions made to the committee, the number of refugees, IPDs, a link to the Mandate of the High Commissioner, and forms of aid provided to refugees in Member States.

UNHCR, “Six people die each day attempting to cross Mediterranean in 2018. UNHCR report shows.” 30 January 2019. Accessed 20 October 2020. <<https://www.unhcr.org/neu/24018-six-people-died-each-day-attempting-to-cross-mediterranean-in-2018-unhcr-report-shows.html>>.

Highlights some of the sobering statistics reported by the UNHCR at the opening of 2019 and outlines some of the places in Europe that have continued to receive refugees.

UNHCR, *Teaching about Refugees*. (New York, United Nations, 2019). Accessed 2 October 2020. <<https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/teaching-about-refugees.html>>.

UNHCR’s Teachers’ Toolkit really helps provide some major insight into how UNHCR itself goes about talking about refugees. It is extremely helpful and provides media materials, reports, facts and figures about refugees, and even discusses how to include refugees in the classroom.

UNHCR, *What is a Refugee? Definition and Meaning: USA for UNHCR*. (Washington, D.C., United Nations, 2018). Accessed 2 October 2020. <<https://www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/what-is-a-refugee/>>.

UNHCR’s website defines a refugee and differentiates a refugee from an asylum seeker and an IDP.

United Nations. *Report of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*, (New York, United Nations, 2018). Accessed 2 October 2020. <<https://undocs.org/Pdf?symbol=en/A/73/12/add.1>>.

An official report of the proceedings of the October 2018 conference of the Executive Committee of UNHCR> References many modern resolutions concerning the allocation of funds to different regions and opens up new topics of debate. Also details ongoing efforts to work with Member States, peacekeeping forces, and NGOs.

I. Ensuring Suitable Living Standards in Refugee Camps

“Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing, and medical care and necessary social services.”
—*Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 25*

Introduction

The first modern definition of a refugee camp came following World War I with the establishment of the League of Nations, which formed the Commission for Refugees in 1921. The Commission was originally charged with helping the 1.5 million people who fled the Russian Revolution of 1917 and its subsequent Civil War. More than 800,000 of those refugees were deemed stateless after the new Russian government revoked their citizenship. From the time that the Commission was formed to the founding of the United Nations in 1945, the its mandate had expanded to include the one million Armenians who fled the Armenian genocide, alongside Assyrian, Turkish, Greek, and Jewish refugees fleeing the growing tensions that would fuel World War II. Due to the Commission’s lack of action, the Nansen International Office for Refugees, and it was that office that first proposed a Refugee Convention (1933), which was ratified by 14 countries.¹⁷ That Convention served as a general human rights charter and included refugees’ rights to identity and travel papers and to work. This led to the creation of travel documents (called “Nansen passports” for stateless refugees that were recognized by participating members of the League of Nations.¹⁸

The 1933 Refugee Convention was superseded by the *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*. This second Convention was adopted as Resolution 2198 (XXI) in 1951 by the General Assembly. The 1951 Refugee Convention reiterated and expanded on those rights established by the 1933 Refugee Convention. These rights include rights against discriminatory actions based on race, color, gender, or religious beliefs; right to identity papers; rights to transfer assets; right to access courts; and, among many other rights specified, the right of states to hold refugees accountable to follow the laws of the state that is hosting the,. These rights are built upon those granted in Article 14 of the *1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, which affirms the right of persons to seek asylum from persecution.¹⁹

Refugee Camps Today

Refugee camps were established in large, undocumented quantities following World War I, but standards for such camps were not established until the *1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. The 1948 Declaration provided a foundation for further procedure, protocol, and basic amenities and supplies to be provided to refugee camps. Other documents built on the 1948 Declaration, including General Assembly resolution 44/25, known as the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, the *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, and the *Convention on the International Status of Refugees*. While these are each distinct, each Convention built on and

¹⁷ League of Nations, *Convention on the International Status of Refugees*, (Geneva, League of Nations, 1933).

¹⁸ The Noel Prize, *Nansen International Office for Refugees*, (Norway, Nansen International Office for Refugees, 2017).

¹⁹ United Nations, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, (Paris, United nations, 1948).

referred to the ideas in the previous ones. With the increase in the rights afforded to refugees and the increase in funding and improved technologies, standards of living in refugee camps have continued to improve. UNHCR has set standards and goals for the establishment and maintenance of refugee camps, which are specific in its “Camp Planning Standard” section of the *Emergency Guidebook*.²⁰ This section sets out standard procedures for how a camp should be run and organized, with specifics ranging from the minimum amount of square meters to be given to each refugee to how to dispose of human waste. The guidance can be separated into nine main areas: Facilities, Arrival and Registration, Administration, Housing and Sanitation, Food, Economy, Security, Health Care, and the UNHCR Mandate.

The average recommended camp space is 45 square meters, or 480 square feet, per person.²¹ This space accounts for both the individual’s private quarters as well as the land needed for the care and administration of the camp overall. This means that, approximately 450 square meters are needed for a refugee camp of ten people, including a headquarters, a hospital, hygiene facilities, etc.

Facilities that should be provided by either the host country or UNHCR include: an administrative headquarters for the coordination of the nine different services: sleeping accommodations in the form of tents or local dwellings; gardens attached to family plots (UNHCR recommends 15 square meters per person); hygiene facilities such as latrines, washing areas, and toilets, with the amount provided dependent on how many refugees live in the area; water collection sites; clinics and immunization centers; food distribution centers; schools and training centers; security headquarters; and markets and shops.²² Each of these facilities are built and upgraded based on the population of any given refugee camp. Other additional facilities include cemeteries or crematoria. Waste disposal locations. Churches or other places of worship, and transit centers where refugees can enter and leave. The development and organization of camps today are closely monitored by the host countries and the UNHCR through surveys, recordkeeping, and even by satellite.

However, despite standards, the influx of refugees has pushed many camps beyond their limits. On the island of Lesbos in Greece, a fire destroyed the Moria camp that housed more than 12,000 refugees. The fire was started by asylum seekers who were protesting lockdown measures instituted to control for coronavirus in a camp that was overcrowded and squalid. In the aftermath, a new camp, Kara Tepe, was created. After the move to the new camp, more than 240 people tested positive for the virus, and many have insufficient food, water, and shelter.²³

Camp Administration

Arrival, registration, and administration fall under the same general guidance on management and organization. With many new arrivals suffering from malnutrition, dehydration, and trauma, reception centers are built to allow new arrivals the chance to register themselves at the camp and to receive food and water quickly. However, some of the centers become so overwhelmed that this process can take months to complete. Until refugees register at the camp they arrive at, they are forced to stay in the reception center, where conditions vary. Following registration, refugees can

²⁰ UNHCR, *Emergency Handbook*, (New York, United Nations, 2015).

²¹ *Id.*

²² Fajardo, S. *Refugee Health: An approach to emergency situations*, CRS 2019.

²³ BBC News, *Lesbos: Hundreds test positive for Covid-19 after migrant camp fire*, 21 September 2020.

leave the center and begin their life in the camp.

In Greece, reception centers in 2028 were overcrowded with wait times exceeding six months.²⁴ During this time, reception centers that were built to accommodate 2,000 people were holding 7,000, including children. Most enters reported an increase of sexual harassment and sexual assault alongside with other rapidly deteriorating conditions. Refugees in need of medical assistance were forced to wait hours before receiving treatment. Overcrowding in reception centers is typically an indicator that other needs are also going underserved.

Housing and sanitation, along with food, are allocated to individuals and families based on UNHCR standards.²⁵ When prefabricated housing is not available for distribution, refugees are expected to make their own shelters on residential plots allocated to them. Sanitation in camps is a priority, as it reduces the spread of disease among compact communities. However, increased numbers of latrines and water stations have proven expensive; sanitation can only be improved with minimal expense in small camps.²⁶ The distribution of food to refugees by UNHCR has historically been done in conjunction with the World Food Program (WFP).²⁷ Starting in 2006, UNHCR and WFO began implementing multi-story gardens *MSGs) in refugee camps as part of a food security strategy campaign. These MDGs are meant to “support dietary diversity and enhance refugee contributions to their own food consumption.”²⁸ They are also designed to provide arable farmland while refugees learn and practice key farming skills, particularly in dry and non-fertile areas where soil quality is poor and water quantity insufficient. UNHCR is seeking additional ideas for innovative solutions for both sanitation and food insecurity in camps.

Economic and Security Infrastructure

The economic structure in refugee camps can vary depending on the camps’ proximity to other cities, but in principle, UNHCR is committed to “assist[ing] refugees in becoming self-reliant. Cash/food/rental assistance delivered through humanitarian agencies should be short-term and conditional and gradually lead to self-reliance activities as part of a longer-term development.”²⁹ Despite UNHCR urging Member States to allow refugees to work in their host countries, many countries do not allow refugees to work legally. In such cases, the employment opportunities provided to refugees are either low-paying jobs inside of the camps or higher-paying, but illegal, jobs outside of the camps. Some refugees who choose to work in the camps set up their own businesses. This ensures that money circulates inside the camp, but it is not in line with the overall mandate of UNHCR, which is to refrain from creating a permanent refugee settlement. Some established refugee camps offer services ranging from repair shops to groceries. Most of these services are started by the refugees. In short, refugees can be both entrepreneurs and employees in the camp, and the ongoing nature of many refugee crises means that, despite UNHCR’s mandate, many camps have become, in essence, permanent.

²⁴ United Nations, *UNHCR Urges Greece to Address Overcrowded Reception Centers on Aegean Islands*, (Geneva, United Nations, 2018).

²⁵ *Fn. 20, supra.*

²⁶ *Fn. 22, supra.*

²⁷ United Nations, *World Food Programme*, (New York, United Nations, 2019).

²⁸ United Nations, *Nutrition and Food Security*, (New York, United Nations, 2019).

²⁹ UNHCR, *Promoting Livelihoods and Self-reliance*, (New York, United Nations, 2019).

Security and health care quality within camps can vary. UNHCR's 1993 resolution entitled "Personal Security of Refugees" states that "responsibility for ensuring safety of refugees is entrusted first of all to the Government of countries of asylum, in cooperation with UNHCR and other relevant organizations."³⁰ The resolution also recognized the many sources that refugees may be persecuted by. In addition to the situation they are fleeing, refugees may face bandits, military or irregular forces, unethical guards or officials, members of the local population or other refugees who are not welcoming for various reasons. Although it has been more than 25 years since the resolution was passed, criminal issues continue to undermine the security of the camps. Sexual abuse and harassment are particularly problematic. Women and children are the most vulnerable to these types of crimes. While UNHCR has delegated the security of the camps to the host countries, the persecution may sometimes come from the security personnel assigned by the local government. Increasing people's physical security against violence is a key goal for UNHCR in order to ensure suitable living standards in the camps.

Healthcare is another key ingredient to creating a sustainable refugee camp, and it is a right that UNHCR attempts to provide. UNHCR teaches disease prevention, sexual and reproductive health courses, general sanitation procedures, and provides access to medical personnel in the event of an emergency.³¹ The conditions, methods, and quality of care given varies from camp to camp, depending on the number of refugees arriving and the capacity of the camp. The World Health Organization has studied the healthcare provided to refugees and determined that providing timely access to quality healthcare is the best way to both save lives and cut costs. Typically, refugees are healthy before the event that causes them to flee their homes, but they are at risk of falling sick while travelling to the host country or due to the poor living conditions (inadequate shelter and sanitation) in the camps.

Earlier this year, UNHCR and WHO signed an agreement to work together to advance public health services for displaced people around the world. Noting that about 80 percent of refugees are sheltered in low and middle-income countries with weak health systems, the organizations committed to provide health services to refugees in all world region and to advocate for their inclusion in the national public health plans of their host countries. UNHCR has also joined the COVID-19 Solidarity Fund, which is raising money that will support UNHCR's work on urgent health needs.³² In September, reports of COVID-19 increase sharply amid concerns that, due to limited testing, the virus may be even more widespread in camps. Outbreaks have occurred at camps in Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Greece, Bangladesh, to name some.³³ Specific health issues that will impact the way COVID-19 (and other communicable diseases) affects refugee camps include overcrowding (reducing the ability for social distancing); lack of access to hand sanitizer, face masks, and other supplies; lack of testing and contact tracing; and lack of access to national health resources in host countries.³⁴

The mandate of each refugee camp is to provide refugees with a temporary place to stay and

³⁰ United Nations, *The Personal Security of Refugees*, (New York, United Nations, 2019).

³¹ *Fn. 2, supra*.

³² UNHCR, *WHO and UNHCR join forces to improve health services for refugees, displaced and stateless people*. 21 May 2020. Accessed 2 October 2020.

³³ TIME. *Covid-19 Outbreaks are now emerging in refugee camps: Why did it take so long for the virus to reach them?* 9 October 2020.

³⁴ *Id.*

recuperate, while eventually preparing refugees to move back to their home countries or find asylum in another. It is never the goal of a refugee camp to serve as a permanent settlement.³⁵ While food, water, shelter, and basic medical attention are important qualities of any refugee camp operation. They are costly and may encourage permanent residence in the camps. These refugee camps are, however, built with the infrastructure to be able to continue to expand and grow for years if innovative solutions to the unique challenges of temporary international housing are found.

Conclusion

Refugee camps take on many sizes and vary in administration styles based on the regions where they are located. Standard procedure for how to set up and run a camp has changed significantly over the years and will continue to improve as time goes on. The system currently in place is the product of 70+ years of research and implementation, but, as the current pandemic has proven, they are still below the suitable living standard required as UNHCR strives to deliver on its promise to protect the human rights of the refugees in its camps.

Questions to Consider

1. How can the rules set in UNHCR Emergency Handbook be better implemented and evaluated? Is there anything that can be added?
2. How can security be strengthened in refugee camps to better protect women and children?
3. How can UNHCR work with host countries or other partners to increase access to local health care for refugees?
4. Is there a better way to organize reception centers and other administrative parts of refugee camps to make them more suitable for their purposes and increase the living standards for refugees?

³⁵ UNHCR, *What is a Refugee Camp? Definitions and Statistics: USA for UNHCR*, (New York, United Nations, 2019).

Annotated Bibliography

BBC News, Lesbos: Hundreds test positive for Covid-19 after migrant campfire, 21 September 2020. Accessed 2 October 2020. <<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-54239446>>.

News report on the conditions in one of many overcrowded refugee camps. Because of the sheer numbers of refugees and asylum seekers, combined with limited resources, many refugee camps fail to meet the UNHCR's own requirements.

Fajardo, S. *Refugee Health: An approach to emergency situations*, CRS 2019. Accessed 2 October 2020. <<https://www.crs.org/stories/refugee-camp-priority-health-and-sanitation>>

Instead of pouring extra resources into medical care and an increased number of doctors, teaching refugees how to sanitize their living spaces and steer clear of disease is more cost effective and healthier.

League of Nations, *Convention on the International Status of Refugees*, (Geneva, League of Nations, 1933).

The original Convention functioned as the groundwork for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights The basic principles transferred from this Convention to the new one after World War II.

Nobel Prize, *Nansen International Office for Refugees*, (Norway, Nansen International Office for Refugees, 2017). Accessed 2 October 2020. <<https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/1938/nansen/lecture/>>.

The Nobel Prize website details how the Nansen passports in helping over a million stateless people.

TIME. *Covid-19 Outbreaks are now emerging in refugee camps: Why did it take so long for the virus to reach them?* 9 October 2020. Accessed 9 October 2020 <<https://time.com/5893135/covid-19-refugee-camps/>>.

A review of some of the coronavirus outbreaks impacting refugee populations as well as a look forward and back about what may have protected camps until now and what other vulnerabilities may still be exposed.

UNHCR, *Emergency Handbook*, (New York, United Nations, 2015). Accessed 2 October 2020. <<https://emergency.unhcr.org/>>.

General guidelines on how to set up and run an effective refugee camp. The handbook includes standards and topics ranging from health and safety rules to food distribution to camp economics.

UNHCR, *Promoting Livelihoods and Self-reliance*, (New York, United Nations, 2019). Accessed 2 October 2020. <<https://www.unhcr.org/4eeb19f49.pdf>>.

Allowing refugees to acquire life skills while in camps gives refugees a sense of purpose and promotes peaceful camp communities.

UNHCR, *What is a Refugee Camp? Definitions and Statistics: USA for UNHCR*, (New York, United Nations. 2019. Accessed 2 October 2020 <<https://www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/camps/>>.

UNHCR has defined what constitutes a refugee camp, and the basic principle that it stands for (the end goal of every refugee.)

UNHCR, *WHO and UNHCR join forces to improve health services for refugees, displaced and stateless people*. 21 May 2020. Accessed 2 October 2020.

Report on the joint effort of WHO and UNHCR to improve the health conditions of refugees, specifically as regards to the coronavirus but also more generally.

United Nations, *Nutrition and Food Security*, (New York. United Nations, 2019). UNHCR. Accessed 2 October 2020. <<https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/nutrition-and-food-security.html>>.

Making sure refugees are fed and can also take care of themselves on their own is one of the first steps in letting them continue with their own lives following traumatic experiences.

United Nations, *The Personal Security of Refugees*, (New York, United Nations, 2019). Accessed 2 October 2020. <<https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/excom/scip/3ae68cd10/personal-security-refugees>>.

Refugees have faced security problems and corruption since the beginning. Being able to reduce this corruption while increasing security is a longstanding UNHCR goal that requires innovative ideas.

United Nations, *UNHCR Urges Greece to Address Overcrowded Reception Centers on Aegean Islands*, (Geneva, United Nations, 2018). Accessed 2 October 2020. <<https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/briefing/2018/8/5b88f5c34/unhcr-urges-greece-address-overcrowded-reception-centres-aegean-islands.html>>.

This article is one of many examples of how refugee centers have been overwhelmed in recent years. The UNHCR needs to address how to better accommodate large numbers of refugees arriving close in time to one another.

United Nations, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, (Paris, United Nations, 1948). Accessed 2 October 2020. <<https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>>.

It's the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This is important!

United Nations, *World Food Programme*, (New York, United Nations, 2019). UNHCR. Accessed 2 October 2020. <<https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/world-food-programme-49eed2ba6.html>>.

UNHCR works in conjunction with the World Food Programme to provide food and relief to refugees across the world, but the WFP's funding and resources are becoming thinner as refugee numbers continue to grow.