



# A Worthy Investment:

## Access to Education for Sudanese Refugees in Chad



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## Introduction

Investing in long-term solutions is critical for refugees who linger in camps or informal settlements for years, and sometimes decades. The U.N. refugee agency, UNHCR, estimates that some 6.7 million refugees are living in a protracted situation, spending five years or longer in exile.<sup>1</sup> In camps and villages that have shed characteristics of short-term settlements, children are being born, families are finding ways to survive, and communities hosting refugees are struggling with how to live, work and go to school together.

Education plays a particularly critical role for refugees as they will be tasked not only with rebuilding their lives, but rebuilding their communities as well. Yet, education is most at risk during emergencies as humanitarian crises disrupt education, delay access and contribute to higher drop-out and lower completion rates. Globally, refugee children are five times more likely to be out of school than non-refugee children and more than half of the primary and secondary school-age children under UNHCR's mandate have no school to go to.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> UNHCR (2016). "Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2015." <http://www.unhcr.org/576408cd7.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> UNHCR (2016). "Missing Out: Refugee Education in Crisis." <http://www.unhcr.org/57d9d01d0>



## Sudanese Refugees in Chad

Eastern Chad is home to more than 300,000 refugees from the Darfur region of Sudan who fled their homes beginning in 2003, due to genocide at the hands of Arab militias known as the Janjaweed. At that time, the global community, including celebrities and activists, mobilized to decry the violence.

Now, few hear about the ongoing instability in Darfur and to an even lesser extent, the plight of thousands of refugees who have been living disbursed among twelve camps in eastern Chad for over a decade. As refugees in one of the poorest countries in the world – Chad ranks 185 out of 188 on the UN Human Development Index – children and young people continue to struggle to gain access to a quality education.

Regional instability, including in the Lake Chad Region, has also meant that the Government of Chad is even more stretched in terms of resources and capacity to respond to the needs of refugees. In a protracted situation like Chad, where refugees have little hope of returning home or being resettled to a third country, opportunities to integrate and contribute to the local community are essential.

### As JRS staff can attest, chronic budget cuts and donor fatigue have resulted in several challenges including:

- Families that rely on their children for additional income must choose between sending them to school or paying for the family's basic needs.
- Some students return late to school, or decide to leave entirely, after working during the harvest season.
- Inadequate infrastructure and dilapidated school structures, which were built as temporary classrooms, force schools to operate in shifts for lack of space.
- A lack of teachers as well as insufficient textbooks and other materials for primary and secondary school students.
- Minimal professional development opportunities for teachers and lower salaries for refugee teachers than their Chadian counterparts, which force many teachers to find supplementary employment or leave their positions entirely.
- High youth drop-out rates due to a dearth in employment opportunities for those who complete secondary school.



Primary school students study under simple, thatched roofs in Goz Amir camp

## Jesuit Refugee Service in Chad

UNHCR in Chad reports that of the 182,000 school-age refugee children, almost 78,000 are enrolled in school, about 43 percent – while the remaining 57 percent are out of school. There is also a significant and progressive drop in enrollment from an average of 71 percent enrollment for primary school, to 20 percent in middle school and 13 percent in secondary school.

Rooted in the Jesuit commitment to education, Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) offers quality educational programs and a variety of opportunities for refugees and displaced persons to acquire an education both in refugee camps and in non-camp settings.

JRS began operating in Chad in 2006 and, as of early 2017, oversees most education programs in eastern Chad, including preschool, primary, secondary and tertiary education. JRS Chad also offers language instruction, manages libraries and coordinates child-friendly spaces for extracurricular, after-school programs.

### JRS is working to develop new approaches to address some of these challenges, including:

- Outreach and communication campaigns to reach out-of-school children and retain enrolled students.
- Catch-up, informal education programs for students who have gaps in their education.
- Emphasis on recruiting refugees to serve as teachers and school administrators.
- Training and professional development for teachers and school administrators to look beyond enrollment numbers and focus on the quality of education offered.
- Parent Associations to involve the refugee community in decision-making processes and build self-sufficiency.
- Business skills training for Parent Associations to develop income-generating activities, which will help contribute to school costs and foster sustainability.
- New partnerships and opportunities for higher education, including access to local universities and teacher colleges, or vocational training.
- Language training for students and teachers to help foster integration.



The first cohort of JRS-sponsored students attending Teacher Training College

# Access to Secondary Education

Globally, only one in four refugee adolescents is in secondary school.<sup>3</sup> Yet, secondary education provides a critical link from primary education to higher education and professional or vocational training. Insufficient textbooks, inadequate classrooms and bleak prospects for further education or work opportunities are just some of the reasons why refugee students fail to reach secondary school.

Compounding the challenges in Chad is an ongoing transition from the Sudanese curriculum to the Chadian curriculum, a process that began in 2014. Not all parents were supportive of the transition and initially pulled their children out of school. Teachers did not receive sufficient training in the new curriculum and adequate materials – including textbooks – were not available at the start of the transition. Much progress has been made and, in 2016, JRS instituted a “team teaching” approach to facilitate the ongoing transition to the Chadian curriculum. This approach, which allows Sudanese teachers to pair with Chadian teachers as they work together to implement the new curriculum, has been highly successful.

JRS Chad partners with the U.S. State Department’s Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration to manage secondary schools in six of the 12 camps in eastern Chad and is implementing new techniques to increase enrollment and retain students. These include developing Parent Associations to involve parents in decision-making processes and hear their concerns. Involving parents and families fosters a greater sense of ownership and shared responsibility for the success of the school and its students. Students contribute as well by

making a small financial donation to the school during the registration period. Students who cannot contribute are not turned away.

According to UNHCR in Chad, the majority of Sudanese secondary school students – 62 percent - are girls. Yet, while enrollment starts high, some girls leave school if they marry or are unable to balance their studies with their responsibilities at home. For young mothers who want to study, JRS has created nurseries near some secondary school classrooms so that their children are cared for while their mothers are in class.

Students become more motivated when they see opportunities to further their education or embark on a career. At the completion of secondary school, JRS helps students prepare for comprehensive exams called the BAC (short for baccalaureate degree). The BAC is a requirement for admission to local universities and some students with the highest scores have earned the DAFI Scholarship, a special program for refugees funded by the Government of Germany and coordinated by UNHCR, which places students in local, host-country universities.

In 2017, JRS also launched a scholarship program to allow refugees to enroll in a local teacher training college after completing secondary school. Forty students are currently taking part in the three-year program and, when finished, will be certified to teach secondary school in Chadian public or private schools, as well as in the camps.

<sup>3</sup> UNHCR (2016). “Missing Out: Refugee Education in Crisis.” <http://www.unhcr.org/57d9d01d0>

# Education Cannot Wait

Despite significant needs, funding for refugees in Chad has decreased over the years due to grave shortfalls and competing global priorities as the world is faced with the highest levels of displacement since World War II. These funding cuts have the potential to significantly impact refugee health, well-being, education and protection.

To counter this trend, new financing mechanisms are being explored including Education Cannot Wait (ECW), a fund launched at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016. ECW looks to transform the delivery of education in emergencies by bringing together governments with humanitarian and development actors to deliver a more collaborative and rapid response to the educational needs of children and youth affected by crises.

Education Cannot Wait aims to raise \$3.725 billion over five years to improve learning opportunities for more than 10 million crisis-affected youth. To date, ECW has secured \$113.4 million of its first-year goal of \$153 million from a diverse group of donors, including the U.S. Government which contributed an initial \$20 million.

In 2017, ECW is providing multi-year funding to four countries, including Chad, which will receive an investment of \$10 million over two years.<sup>4</sup> Education Cannot Wait-supported programs in Chad are being developed jointly with humanitarian and development groups and are designed to benefit both refugee and host populations with less focus on direct assistance and greater emphasis on capacity building.

These programs will pilot new approaches to build the capacity and accountability of local actors by providing formal and non-formal basic education, professional and community development training for teachers and education officials, along with learning kits and the creation of new schools.

By taking both a humanitarian and development approach, these programs will focus not only on improvements in infrastructure and basic needs such as classroom materials and food in schools, but also on non-formal education programs and income-generating activities.



## Student Profile: Noha, 17 years old

Noha was five or six years old when she left Sudan. She remembers the long walk, during which her mother gave birth to one of her nine siblings and warplanes circled, shooting indiscriminately at civilians as they fled for their lives. Noha's story is not unique.

If you speak to anyone her age in the camps they will recount a similar journey from Sudan. But Noha's future may hold promises that those before her could only dream of. She is currently enrolled in a Jesuit Refugee Service-supported secondary school in Iridimi camp, where she's in her second year.

Her favorite subject is English and she wants to be a doctor. She perseveres amidst daily challenges including household chores before and after school, attending school in shifts and limited access to critical materials like textbooks.

<sup>4</sup> Education Cannot Wait (2017). "Education Cannot Wait Roadmap for 2017-2018."  
[http://www.educationcannotwait.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Master\\_document\\_web.pdf](http://www.educationcannotwait.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Master_document_web.pdf)

# Efforts Toward Integration

In some instances, refugees and Chadians already intermingle, whether in the marketplace, through marriage or in schools. The Chadian Government, UN agencies, donor governments and non-governmental organizations are coming together to create viable, long-term options for refugee and host communities alike.

During the September 2016 Leaders' Summit on Refugees, hosted by the U.S. Government, the Chadian Government pledged to take several steps towards an integrated approach to education. A key component of this pledge includes assuming responsibility for, and improving access to, secondary education for approximately 75,000 refugees over the course of the next five years.

To achieve this, the Chadian Government has committed to incorporating refugee schools into their national development plans; accrediting qualified refugee teachers; allowing refugees to teach in camp, public and private schools; making the BAC more accessible to refugee students; and encouraging Chadians to attend secondary schools within the camps. Chad also pledged to facilitate refugees' access to tertiary education by encouraging universities to charge refugees the same amount of tuition that Chadian students pay.

Efforts are also being made to build the capacity of refugees to contribute to this process of transition and integration. This includes mobilizing refugee communities for the construction and maintenance of classrooms and gradually involving refugees in the payment of school and exam registration fees.

While more work needs to be done, these initial steps are critical in ensuring that refugees have any hope of moving beyond their refugee status and creating a safe, secure and prosperous place for themselves and their families.

# Policy Recommendations

**To foster educational opportunities for refugees in protracted crises, JRS recommends the following:**

- Access to education must be prioritized in all stages of humanitarian response, including protracted crises.
- An effort must be made to offer all levels of education, from pre-primary through tertiary, and opportunities for vocational and livelihoods-focused training.
- The quality of education offered to refugees must be improved, looking beyond enrollment figures with a focus on outcomes.
- Integration of data collection into all educational programs to better track progress and improve program delivery.
- Humanitarian and development actors must work together in planning, financing and creating innovative mechanisms for educational support to those in protracted crisis settings.
- Host governments must allow for integration of refugees into their communities including integration of children into local school systems, certification of teachers, access to employment opportunities and equitable compensation.
- Focus on marginalized groups, including girls and those with special needs, to increase access to education and reduce drop-out rates.
- Support for innovative funding mechanisms, including Education Cannot Wait, and the inclusion of new and diverse financing partners.

# Conclusion

There is no single solution to protracted crises like the one in eastern Chad. But, efforts to engage new donors, collaborate among sectors and focus on opportunities to integrate refugees into host communities are some of the ways that we are able to increase access to a quality education for refugees facing long periods of exile.

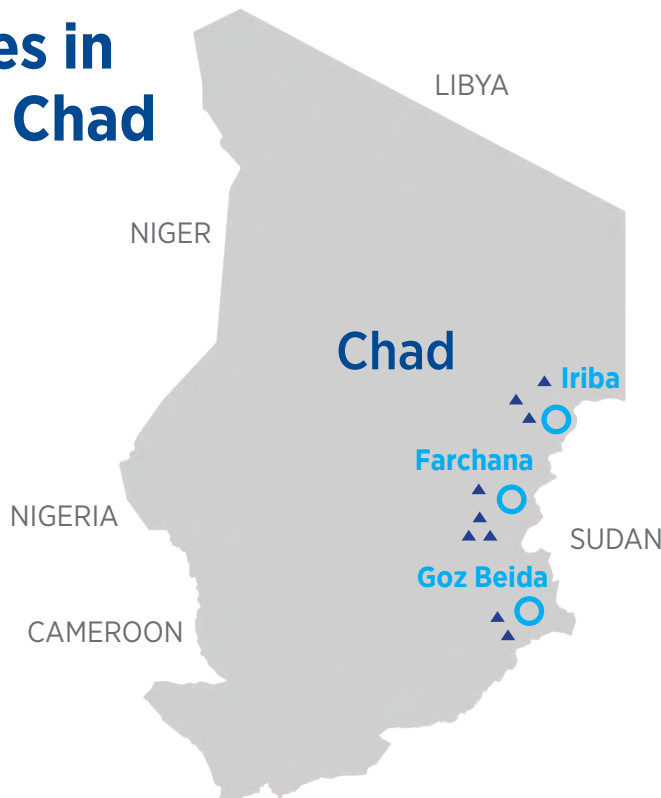


## Partner Profile: Little Ripples

JRS Chad partners with Little Ripples, an early childhood education program that trains and employs refugee women to provide play-based, peacebuilding and culturally inspired preschool education, which is often overlooked in emergency and protracted crisis settings. A key aspect of the Little Ripples curriculum is the introduction of mindfulness, which assists with trauma recovery and nurtures internal peace as children grow and cope with the instability of camp life. To learn more, visit [littleripples.org](http://littleripples.org).

## Refugees in Eastern Chad

- Town
- ▲ Camp





Jesuit Refugee Service/USA is an international Catholic organization and a work of the Society of Jesus (“the Jesuits”) with a mission to accompany, serve, and advocate for refugees and other forcibly displaced persons. JRS assists people on the basis of need, without regard to race, religion, or national origin. Founded in 1980, JRS today works in 47 countries worldwide to meet the educational, health, social and emergency needs of more than 750,000 people.

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