

**Statement by Joan Rosenhauer  
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FY21 State & Foreign Operations Appropriations**

**House Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs**

**March 12, 2020**

Thank you, Chairwoman Lowey, Ranking Member Rogers, and members of the Subcommittee. On behalf of Jesuit Refugee Service/USA (JRS/USA), I appreciate the opportunity to present our views on the importance of investing in refugee assistance programs - including refugee education – in the FY21 State & Foreign Operations Appropriations bill. Specifically, we urge the Subcommittee to include \$3.6 billion for Migration & Refugee Assistance and \$975 million for basic education programs, including \$50 million in funding for Education Cannot Wait (ECW).

U.S. engagement and support for refugee assistance programs has a direct impact on the well-being – even the survival – of millions of the world’s refugees. From the Venezuelan crisis in our own hemisphere to the Syrian conflict entering its tenth year, this is the time for the U.S. to be a leader in helping those who are at their most vulnerable.

In 2018 alone, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated that 70.8 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide. This figure has significantly increased from the previous year of 2017, which accounted for 68 million refugees. It is estimated that 37,000 people per day are forced to flee their homes due to conflict and persecution.<sup>1</sup>

As an organization working with refugees and other forcibly displaced persons in over 50 countries, we at JRS/USA understand the needs of those we serve. With support from the State Department’s Bureau for Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM), we’re able to provide life-saving assistance and help improve their quality of life. In places like Chad, Ecuador, and South Africa, the U.S. is helping to provide access to education, livelihoods, and healthcare for refugees who otherwise would have no place to turn.

***Critical Funding for Refugees***

The Migration & Refugee Assistance account funds lifesaving programs and plays a vital role in asserting U.S. leadership and national interests around the world. U.S. funding helps meet the basic needs of displaced persons, including access to food, water, shelter, healthcare, and education. These programs assist countries hosting more than 80 percent of refugees – developing countries of first asylum that offer a safe haven to individuals and families fleeing violence and persecution.

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<sup>1</sup> UNHCR (2019). Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2018. <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/statistics/unhcrstats/5d08d7ee7/unhcr-global-trends-2018.html>

Maintaining stable and humane conditions for refugees and host communities during early onset emergencies and protracted crises is critical for ensuring stability and security. Given that we are currently facing the worst displacement crisis on record, involving multiple complex humanitarian emergencies, it is critical that support for the Migration & Refugee Assistance account remain strong.

More than 70 percent of all refugees find themselves in a protracted crisis situation, defined by UNHCR as one in which 25,000 or more refugees from the same nationality have been in exile for five consecutive years or more in a given host country.<sup>2</sup> Protracted refugee situations often receive very little public attention and ever-decreasing financial support. As a result, refugees find themselves in hopeless situations lacking opportunities for advancement and prosperity.

Refugees in protracted refugee situations often face protection and human rights challenges, such as restricted movement or confinement in camps, sexual and physical violence, and lack of access to legal employment, police protection, and systems of justice. Due to these restrictions, refugees may be unable to earn a livelihood and achieve self-reliance. Consequently, this may make them dependent on international assistance to fulfill basic needs such as food, water, shelter, education, and health care. Tensions between refugees and their host communities over scarce resources can become a source of insecurity.

South Africa hosts over 260,000 refugees and asylum seekers primarily from Somalia, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. In the cities of Johannesburg and Pretoria, JRS is providing community-based health services to chronically and terminally ill refugees and asylum seekers who otherwise lack access to any kind of assistance as they navigate severe health challenges. Lack of documentation, language barriers, fees, and institutional discrimination often exclude asylum seekers and refugees from access to national health care facilities.

Many of JRS's beneficiaries have been waiting as asylum seekers to be granted refugee or residential status in South Africa for over a decade. As they are not fully recognized citizens, they therefore are not eligible for certain types of medication or medical interventions within the public health system. Asylum seekers and refugees are also subjected to higher health fees and not all can afford them.

With eight Community Healthcare Workers and three volunteers, JRS provides assistance to over 1,000 refugees and asylum seekers in South Africa. Through home care-based services, counseling, training for caregivers, and community awareness initiatives, refugees served through this program experience physical and mental healing allowing them to live in dignity and focus on improving their livelihoods.

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<sup>2</sup> UNHCR (2019). Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2018. <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/statistics/unhcrstats/5d08d7ee7/unhcr-global-trends-2018.html>

Not only does U.S. leadership on refugee issues send a signal for other governments to follow our example, but U.S. support for refugee assistance programs has a clear, tangible impact on people's lives – as evidenced by the impact of this kind of program.

### ***Prioritizing Refugee Education***

Providing access to education for refugees and others who are forcibly displaced provides another vivid example of the impact of U.S. investment and engagement. Not only does education offer an important form of protection for children, education also engenders hope as it prepares refugees to meet future challenges. Education provides stability and a sense of normalcy, and acts as a form of vital psychosocial support to children whose lives have been disrupted by crisis.

Yet, 3.7 million refugee children are currently out of school with only 63 percent enrolled in primary school, 24 percent in secondary school, and only three percent in higher education.<sup>3</sup> An even greater number - 75 million - conflict-affected children lack educational services, denying them their right to an education and making them more vulnerable to violence, trafficking, child labor, child marriage, and recruitment by armed groups.<sup>4</sup>

The global response to this tremendous need has not kept pace. In 2018, only 2.6 percent of humanitarian funding was allocated to education.<sup>5</sup> Continued support from the U.S. Government, as well as new and existing multilateral partnerships like Education Cannot Wait and the Global Partnership for Education, can play a critical role in helping forcibly displaced people build a future for themselves and the communities in which they live.

Through robust funding of global education programs, and by ensuring that education is a core part of humanitarian assistance, we can ensure that more displaced children are gaining access to a quality education. This includes encouraging bilateral donors, multilateral entities and corporate donors to take part in these efforts.

Last summer, the first report on implementation of the U.S. Government Strategy on International Basic Education was released, highlighting progress made towards the goals of improving measurable learning outcomes and expanding access to high-quality basic education for all, particularly marginalized and vulnerable populations. Notably, the report highlighted that in FY18, U.S. Government programs provided access to safe learning environments for more than 13 million children and youth in 25 countries affected by crisis and conflict, at least 420,000 of whom were previously out of school.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> UNHCR (2019). "Stepping Up: Refugee Education in Crisis." <https://www.unhcr.org/steppingup/>

<sup>4</sup> Overseas Development Institute (2016). "Education Cannot Wait: A Fund for Education in Emergencies." <https://www.odi.org/publications/10405-education-cannot-wait-fund-education-emergencies>

<sup>5</sup> Save the Children Norway (2019). "Walk the Talk: Review of Financing for Education in Emergencies, 2015-2018." <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/16803/pdf/wtt-web.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Government Strategy on International Basic Education. Report to Congress. September 18, 2018-March 31, 2019. <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1865/USGBasicEducationStrategy-2019ReportCongress.pdf>

Yet, U.S. bilateral assistance cannot tackle this global challenge alone. Multilateral partnerships play an important role in building the political will necessary to create sustainable change and help bring a diverse group of actors to the table to achieve these critical goals.

### ***Education Cannot Wait***

Launched in 2016, Education Cannot Wait is the first global movement and fund dedicated to education in emergencies and protracted crises. ECW gathers international humanitarian and development aid actors, along with public and private donors, to help reposition education as a priority on the humanitarian agenda, usher in a more collaborative approach among actors on the ground, and foster additional funding to ensure that every crisis-affected child and young person is in school and learning.

The U.S. Government has played a critical role in ECW's transformative efforts, contributing a total of \$33 million in financial assistance, providing technical support, and playing a leadership role in ECW's governance structure. This has been a collaborative effort, with USAID and PRM working together to contribute resources and share leadership responsibilities.

To date, ECW has raised over \$613 million from 17 donors, including the private sector. With both rapid response and multi-year funding platforms, ECW has already invested \$255 million to support education in 34 crisis-affected countries, reaching 2.3 million children and youth and training over 41,000 teachers.<sup>7</sup> ECW-supported programs span a wide spectrum of context-specific activities designed to meet education needs for crisis-affected children and youth aged 3-18 years old, including girls (48 percent), refugees, and internally displaced children. Programs are implemented through various grantees, including UN agencies, and international and national NGOs.

Most recently, ECW launched two new multi-year resilience programs in Chad and Ethiopia with \$48 million in seed funding over three years to roll out crucial program activities and catalyze additional resources from other donors. The programs will support quality education for approximately 1 million children and youth affected by conflict, forced displacement, protracted crises and impacts of climate change, including droughts and floods.

We want to extend our sincere thanks to Chairwoman Lowey, Ranking Member Rogers, and members of the Subcommittee for championing access to education for the most vulnerable, and for including \$25 million for ECW in the FY20 State & Foreign Operations Appropriations bill. By demonstrating bipartisan Congressional support for ECW and education in conflict and crisis settings, the U.S. can continue to be a leader in ensuring that youth have the opportunity to learn and thrive.

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<sup>7</sup> Education Cannot Wait (February 13, 2020). "ECW Results Dashboard." [https://s30755.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/ECW\\_Dashboard-Map-13-Feb-2020-1.pdf](https://s30755.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/ECW_Dashboard-Map-13-Feb-2020-1.pdf)

## ***Conclusion***

In an interconnected world, how we respond to the millions of families and children who have been forced to flee their homes impacts not only their future but the future for all of us. Now is not to time to turn our backs on helping to meet their most basic needs. We thank Congress for their past support for these critical programs and urge the Subcommittee to include \$3.6 billion for Migration & Refugee Assistance and \$975 million for basic education programs, including \$50 million in funding for Education Cannot Wait.

Thank you again for your time and consideration.