CONCEPT NOTE

Background and Rationale:

The drivers of migration and root causes of displacement are often complex, resulting from social, economic, political and social factors\(^1\). The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs estimates that in 2017, 258 million people were residing out of their country of birth, which has tripled in the past 50 years. Of these international migrants, 106 million were from Asia. Migration occurs primarily between countries located within the same region, accounting for 60% of migrants from Asia, largely for labor. Further, the number of those displaced globally has increased to 68.5 million due to conflicts, climate change, and disasters induced by natural hazards, many of which have occurred in Asia and the Pacific.\(^2\)

Migrants\(^3\), refugees\(^4\) and internally displaced people are some of the most vulnerable people in the world. Leaving no one behind as a key principle of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, means prioritizing and addressing the needs of these vulnerable groups. Migration and displacement link with and affect education in many ways. These links affect those who move, those who stay, and those who host immigrants, refugees and other displaced persons. Schools and institutions will need to adjust curriculum and teaching pedagogies in order to address the needs of increasingly multicultural and socio-economically diverse classrooms. On the other hand, education also affects migration and displacement. It is a major driver in the decision to migrate and it affects not only migrants’ attitudes and beliefs but also those of their hosts. Education can be a bridge to promoting cohesive societies and fighting prejudice, stereotypes and discrimination.\(^5\)

Migration makes a positive contribution to economic and social development globally, UNDP estimates that migrants’ remittances to the region reached $256 billion in 2017. Despite their positive and significant contribution, the limited and inefficient channels to facilitate safe and regular labor migration remain and this creates significant vulnerabilities for migrants, in particular among already marginalized groups such as women, youth, minorities, etc.

Internal migration accounts for the majority of population movements, and rural to urban migration is a particularly salient phenomenon in low and middle-income countries leading to higher level of

---

\(^1\) UNDP 2018. A Policy Brief: Development Approaches to Migration and Displacement in Asia and the Pacific

\(^2\) Ibid.

\(^3\) IOM defines a migrant as any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a State away from his/her habitual place of residence, regardless of (1) the person's legal status; (2) whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary; (3) what the causes for the movement are; or (4) what the length of the stay is.

\(^4\) The 1951 Refugee Convention defines a refugee as someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country or origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.

urbanization. Whether population movement is temporary or permanent, between or within urban and rural areas, it poses a challenge for education systems. Education provisions should respond to the needs of these large flows and those migrant students who face various challenges in adjusting to their new environment.

In addition, movements of people across borders have become more diverse and complex in recent years, with an increasing impact on educational opportunities and education systems. International immigrants often lag behind their peers, although they may attain more education and skills than they would have at home. Their access to and benefit from education may be constrained due to legal or administrative reasons or compromised by linguistic barriers or discrimination.6

Further, displaced people tend to come from some of the world’s poorest and least served areas, and their vulnerability is further exacerbated when displacement deprives them of education. The number of displaced people consists of two broad categories: (1) those who crossed an international border seeking protection from conflict and persecutions (25.4 million refugees and 3.1 million asylum seekers) and (2) internally displaced people (IDPs: about 58.8 million people). It must be noted that the position of refugees who rely on host countries to extend them international rights to education is not the same as to those of people displaced within their home countries and whose governments bear specific responsibilities to fulfill their citizens’ rights7.

Despite countries’ efforts and bold steps to assume education responsibilities, major barrier to education for immigrants and refugees remain. Against this backdrop, UNESCO Bangkok and the Korean Educational Development Institute (KEDI) will bring together researchers, experts and government officials in the region to discuss the theme of the 2019 UNESCO-KEDI annual Seminar on “Migrant and Refugee Education” in Bangkok, Thailand on 17 – 18 June 2019.

Objectives:

The main objective of the Seminar is to provide a forum to enhance understanding of the emerging issues, challenges and barriers in providing education for migrants and refugees, so as to better inform policies and strategies for intervention in Asia-Pacific countries. Specifically, the Seminar will aim:

1. To share knowledge, researches and experiences on national policies on education that concerns migrant and refugee education.
2. To share perspectives, experiences and good practices in providing safe and inclusive quality education to migrants and refugees and discuss challenges, barriers and opportunities in country-specific contexts.
3. To identify and recommend priority issues for further research by Member States in the Asia-Pacific to support evidence-based policy-making

Background Paper

A brief background paper on migrant and refugee education in the Asia and the Pacific region can be found following the draft agenda. This document will facilitate and guide the discussions of the seminar.

6 Ibid.
7 Ibid
Working Methods and Documents

Preparation for the seminar will be undertaken by UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education (UNESCO Bangkok) and Korean Educational Development Institute (KEDI) who are co-organizers of this event.

The language of the seminar is English. Sessions will be organized based on proposed objectives, and the results will contribute to the finalization of the thematic background paper. Presentations and discussions are encouraged to be highly participatory, exchanging knowledge and perspectives among participants.

Funding and Organizational Arrangements

This Seminar is co-financed by KEDI and UNESCO Bangkok as part of its annual joint-event. Participants from some selected countries will be financed through these resources. Other interested persons representing international, regional and sub-regional organizations, UNESCO Field Offices, and development agencies and private sector should seek funding from their own sources.

Participants with special requests or requiring further clarification should contact the event organizers directly.

Contact Persons:

**UNESCO Bangkok**
Ms. Maki Hayashikawa  
Chief, IQE Section  
Email: m.hayashikawa@unesco.org

**KEDI**
Dr. Eun Young Kim  
Director, Office of International Cooperation  
Email: international@kedi.re.kr
## Tentative Programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time/Date</th>
<th>Topics/Sessions</th>
<th>Facilitator/Resource Person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Day 1 (17 June 2019)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9:00 – 9:15</strong></td>
<td>Welcome Remarks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Shigeru Aoyagi (Director, Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education, UNESCO Bangkok)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Dr. Sang-Jin Ban (President, KEDI) (*Read by Dr. Eun Young Kim at KEDI)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9:15 – 9:30</strong></td>
<td>Introduction of the Seminar and Participants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9:30 – 10:30</strong></td>
<td>Opening Session</td>
<td>UNESCO Bangkok</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Overview of the issues on refugees and migrants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10:30 – 11:00</strong></td>
<td>Group Photo and Break</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>11:00 – 12:30</strong></td>
<td>Session 1: Education for Refugee Children</td>
<td>UNHCR Proposed Bangladesh, Thailand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Presentation on regional context and relevant policy research on provision of education for refugee children (By regional researcher) (20 mins)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Ms. Emily Bojovic, UNHCR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Presentation #1 on country experiences (identifying and addressing the policy issues) (20 mins)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Bangladesh – Mr. Tapon Kumar Das, CAMPE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Presentation #2 on country experiences (identifying and addressing the policy issues) (20 mins)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Thailand - Ms. Kaewta Sangsuk, Save the Children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Plenary discussion on session 3 (30 mins)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>12:30 – 13:30</strong></td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>13:30 – 15:00</strong></td>
<td>Session 2: Education for Children of IDPs</td>
<td>UNESCO Beirut Proposed Beirut, Sri Lanka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Presentation on regional context and relevant policy research on provision of education for children of IDPs (By regional researcher) (20 mins)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Ms. Yayoi Segi-Vltchek, UNESCO Beirut</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Presentation #1 on country experiences (identifying and addressing the policy issues) (20 mins)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Myanmar – Ms. Mitsue Uemura, UNICEF Myanmar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Session</td>
<td>Details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:00 – 15:30</td>
<td>Break</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 15:30 – 17:00 (90 mins) | **Session 3: Education for Children of Internal Migrants**                                  | - Presentation on regional context and relevant policy research on provision of education to internal migrants (By regional researcher) (20 mins)  
  - Sri Lanka – Ms. Karthikeyini Sabaratnam, UNICEF Kilinochchi  
  - Plenary discussion on session 2 (30 mins)                                                                                       |
| 17:00-18:00        | Break                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 18:00 - 19:00      | Welcome Dinner and Reception                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| **Day 2 (18 June 2019)** |                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 9:00 – 10:30 (90 mins) | **Session 4: Education for Undocumented/Stateless Children and Children of Cross Border Migrants** | - Presentation on regional context and relevant policy research on provision of education to undocumented/stateless children and children of cross border migrants  
  - India - Ms. Farida Lambay and Mr. Kishor Bhamre, Pratham  
  - Presentation #2 on country experiences (identifying and addressing the policy issues) (20 mins)  
  - Plenary discussion on session 1 (30 mins)                                                                                       |
<p>| 10:30 – 11:00      | Morning Break                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 10:30 – 12:00 (90 mins) | <strong>Session 5: Group work and Report Back</strong>                                                    | - Group work on the formulation of regional recommendation and identifying the further research work (3 groups) (90 mins)                                                                                   |
| 12:00 – 13:00      | Lunch                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 13:00 – 14:30 (90 mins) | <strong>Session 5: Group work and Report Back (Continued...)</strong>                                   | - Groups feedback session (3 groups) (60 mins)                                                                                                                                                    |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14:30 – 15:00</td>
<td>Follow up action (30 mins)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:00 – 16:30</td>
<td>Afternoon break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wrap up and Closing (30 mins)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**KEDI & UNESCO**
BACKGROUND PAPER

“Leaving No One Behind:
Education of migrants and refugees in the Asia-Pacific Region”

Introduction

Education plays a critical role for individuals at every stage of their lives. From the development of young minds to the economic viability of adults, education is the difference between poverty and prosperity, integration and isolation, instability and sustainability (UNESCO, 2018). The barriers that prevent access to quality education continue to pose problems for vulnerable populations, especially migrants, refugees, displaced persons and undocumented individuals. While recognized as a human right, large gaps exist in the provision of quality education to these groups.

“People on the move...do not leave their right to education behind.” (UNESCO, 2018) The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs estimated 258 million people resided outside of their country of birth in 2017. Of those, 106 million were from Asia (UNESCO, 2018). Migration and displacement interact with education in a myriad of ways, impacting those who decide to move, those who decide to stay and the countries who host new arrivals (UNESCO, 2018). Education has the potential not only to improve the lives of individuals, but also to promote understanding and inclusion among communities. It is therefore of the utmost importance to include education in the migration agenda with the proper mechanisms in place to ensure success in implementation (UNESCO, 2018).

The 2019 Global Education Monitoring Report provides a framework to examine population movements and their relationship to education. Some of the largest population movements occur in the Asia Pacific region, the most frequent being internal migrants, cross border migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons (UNESCO, 2018). The extent to which these population movements have access to quality education varies by each country, along with the implications for individual migrants and refugees. In order to enhance the understanding of emerging issues, challenges and barriers in providing education for migrants and refugees, this paper will provide key concepts and principles around the specified population movements and identify major issues that arise in the Asia Pacific context. In addition, this paper will act as precursor to the 2019 UNESCO-KEDI Seminar on 17 – 18 June 2019 to spark ideas and discussions.

Literature Review

Understanding Migration and Displacement

The types of population movements that occur within and across countries are varied. When coupled with the motivations behind them, we foray into a complex web of interlinkages among the pushes and pulls of migration and displacement. While the majority of individuals migrate due to circumstances around work, family and education, many are forced to leave their homes because their safety is in danger due to conflict, persecution and disaster (IOM, 2017). Four key population movements will be further explored in the following pages: internal migrants; cross border migrants; refugees and internally displaced peoples.
Internal migrants

The majority of migrants move within the borders of their country with the intention or result of establishing a new residence for a short or long term (Perruchoud & Redpath-Cross, 2011). Among the different types of internal movements – rural to rural, rural to urban, urban to urban, permanent, temporary or seasonal – it is rural to urban and seasonal flows that pose the biggest challenges for education systems. Rural to urban migration has also played a major role in South Asian countries experiencing economic growth. Today, the largest internal population movements occur in China and India. In 2016, approximately 77 million Chinese migrant workers moved to find work in another province while 93 million moved within their province (UNESCO, 2018). Migration affects planning for education when addressing rural depopulation and unplanned urban growth.

In terms of motivations for migration, there is variance among countries. In Bangladesh, more than 2.6 million rural migrant workers were employed in the construction industry outside of the agricultural season in 2010. Conversely, in Thailand, 21% of youth said they migrated for education (UNESCO, 2018). While an increasing number of migrants are motivated to move for reasons related to education, the majority of migrants seek labour opportunities. The social costs associated with migration and access to education are high, including lack of quality education for children who accompany their parents and the psychological impacts on children left behind (UNESCO, 2018).

Seasonal migration can present a disruption to the education of children who accompany their parents. More often than not, these children are treated as additional labour and may have to end their studies. In some cases, these children do not have access to quality education at all. In India, about 80% of seasonal migrant children in seven cities lacked access to education near work sites, while 40% worked and did not attend school (UNESCO, 2018). A survey in Punjab state found that 77% of kiln workers lacked access to early childhood or primary education for their children.

More often than not, migrant worker parents leave behind children of primary school age. Seasonal boarding schools for children of migrant workers were established by Gujarat state (UNESCO, 2018). Although educational provisions are made for children left behind, the psychological effects of the absence of caregivers can negatively impact their schooling. A review of left-behind children in China found they had lower academic self-concept – perception of student’s own academic abilities - and more mental health issues in comparison to their peers whose parents were not migrant workers. Teachers of these children often lack the skills and resources to provide support and attention (UNESCO, 2018).

There is an urgent need to engage both the private sector and government to implement social policies that holistically support migrants and empower them to realize their human rights (IOM, 2017). On average, between 100 and 300 families in search of work arrive in Mumbai, India, and often end up in slums. A ‘slum household’ is defined as a dwelling that lacks one or more of the following: an improved water source, improved sanitation facilities, a sufficient living area, housing durability and tenure security (UNESCO, 2018). Securing these components is critical, but an explicit focus on education is also needed.

Countries can look to examples like Bangladesh’s mainstreaming of migration into national development planning as innovative ways to incorporate education into policy. South Asian nations also have opportunities to leverage their bilateral and multilateral partnerships, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), to efficiently mobilize resources dedicated to supporting migrants (IOM, 2017).
Lack of sufficient education policies and government schools in slums has led to provisions by NGOs and civil society organizations (CSOs) (UNESCO, 2018). In Thailand, Narai Property Co. Ltd partnered with the Foundation for the Better Life of Children to offer non-formal education in its camps. For over three years, this partnership has provided a mobile school that rotates among the seven camps (UNESCO, 2018).

While examples of coordinated responses that facilitate access to education exist, some states have responded with policies that dissuade the movement of populations. In a 2015 survey, 79% of the 190 countries who responded stated they had instituted population policies to curb rural to urban migration (UNESCO, 2018). Well known among these policies is China’s hukou8 registration system, established in the 1950s to limit population mobility. Residents are classified as rural or urban and have certain privileges associated with their status. In order to change residence permanently, citizens are required to obtain approval from the local authorities and only when “good reasons for the proposed move and if the move serves, or at least is not at odds with, the central or local state interests and policies, such as those aimed at controlling the growth of large cities” (Wing Chan, 2004). Many reforms since the 1950s have weakened barriers to access of quality education for migrants, but some still persist. More than half of migrant children attended unauthorized migrant schools in Beijing in 2000. Due to residence permit restrictions, these children did not enjoy the same rights as non-migrants or children left behind. As a result, they were left with no choice but to attend migrant schools that were considered of lower quality and lacked in qualified teachers (UNESCO, 2018). Recent changes to policies have allowed migrant children to attend public schools, but systems within schools still present barriers. For example, schools in Beijing require students to present five certificates to access schooling: a temporary resident permit; proof of Beijing residence; proof of Beijing employment; all household members’ hukou certificates and “attestation of the lack of a qualified guardian in the home town” (UNESCO, 2018).

Internal migration presents risks of negative impacts to the quality and accessibility of education for both children of internal migrants who accompany their parents and those who are left behind. Strict policies enforced by governments, poor living conditions and loss of potential income are barriers presented to children who migrate with their parents. Private sector actors and NGOs have worked to provide informal education but these efforts are not sustainable (UNESCO, 2018). They are often project based and do not ensure continuity in education for students. Integration into state schools along with provisions for associated travel costs and resources for teachers to support their students will provide children with the best education experience possible. Social supports are also required for children left behind. The absence of one or more caregivers can negatively impact their school experience and mental health. These children also run the risk of not attending school in order to fill the gap of household work left behind by caregivers.

**Cross border migrants**

According to the International Labour Migration Statistics Database for ASEAN, Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore are the destinations for 91 percent of intra-ASEAN migrant workers (ILO, 2015). Conversely,

---

8 “Throughout the 1950s China implemented a code of laws, regulations and programmes whose effect was formally to differentiate residential groups as a means to control population movement and mobility and to shape state developmental priorities. The hukou system, which emerged in the course of a decade, was integral to the collective transformation of the countryside, to a demographic strategy that restricted urbanization, and to the redefinition of city-countryside and state-society relations.” (Cheng & Selden, 1994)
6.5 million Indonesian workers are said to be officially working overseas in 142 countries (ILO, 2018). Many economies in the region have come to depend on regular supplies of migrant labour to support their operations while remittances from labourers account for a large percentage of the GDP of their home countries. Similar to internal migration, push and pull factors which drive cross border migration include searching for job opportunities not available in the home country, the need to support family and market growth in other ASEAN member states (IOM, 2017). Further parallels between internal and cross border migrants are found in terms of accessibility to state schools, the alternative learning options offered and the experiences of students in state schools compared to migrant schools.

Similar to internal migrants, children of cross border migrants who accompany their parents have limited or difficult access to formal education. Entry to schools is denied in many states in the Asia Pacific region because they are not legal migrants or there is a lack of legislation to support the integration of migrant students. A case study of cross border migrants from Myanmar living in Thailand found parents feared sending their children to formal schools as lack of identification would call into question their legal standing in the country (Nawarat, 2012). In addition to legal access, costs associated with education are a major consideration for families. Even if the child is allowed to attend, and nominal fees for education have been waived, the costs of transportation and textbooks are prohibitive. As a result, many children either attend non-formal schools or participate in the labour force (UNESCO, 2018).

Schools who host migrant students experience many social pressures. Parents of non-migrant students consider schools with migrant students to be of lower quality and often react by transferring their children to another school. Teachers are less than equipped with the resources or time to attend to the diverse needs of migrant students and fear the overall performance of their classrooms will go down because of the poor academic performance of migrant children (Miyajima, 2018).

In response to limited accessibility to education, many migrant communities have created Migrant Learning Centres (MLCs). Since 1995, the Thai-Myanmar community has formed multiple MLCs to serve the diverse needs of migrant children from Myanmar (Nawarat, 2012). These centres initially began as daycares to protect children from the high risks of being left alone including being arrested by authorities or abducted by traffickers. Service providers were also able to meet the basic needs of children by offering food and shelter. These daycares eventually expanded services to include primary education and transportation for students so they could safely arrive and leave from school. Children gained basic skills in literacy and were taught in their mother tongue. From 1998 to 2005, the number of schools and students increased from 3 MLCs with 186 schools between them to 23 schools and 2,100 between them (Nawarat, 2012).

MLCs have experienced tumultuous relationships with state governments. Many are shut down with students and teachers deported back to their home countries. Others have been strongly encouraged to transition their students into state schools (Miyajima, 2018). While it is recognized that non-formal education is not a sustainable pathway for students to obtain accredited, higher education, states must put into place mechanisms to facilitate feasible transitions from MLCs to state schools for migrant students. Some approaches in the Thai system include migrant students attending state school at least once per week and hiring a bilingual teacher so students are able to learn in both the state language and their mother tongue. These techniques have produced significant results. From 2004 to 2011 the number of migrant students in state schools increased from 1,661 to more than 10,000 (Nawarat, 2012).
Refugees

While cross-border migrants move for economic drivers, refugees are forced to leave their country of origin because of threats to their safety and security. The *1984 Cartagena Declaration* states that refugees are persons who flee their country “because their lives, security or freedom have been threatened by generalized violence, foreign aggression, internal conflicts, massive violations of human rights or other circumstances which have seriously disturbed public order.” (Perruchoud & Redpath-Cross, 2011). For the past century, every country in the Southern Asia region – with the exception of the Maldives – has been the source or host of displaced populations (UNESCO, 2018). These movements have been less associated with civil conflict and more with systemic persecution and marginalization. Malaysia was host to 92,000, the largest population in the region, and Myanmar was the source of the largest population at 490,000. The largest corridor for migration runs from Myanmar to Thailand (UNESCO, 2018).

At the end of 2017, 52% of the world’s 19.9 million refugees (excluding Palestinian refugees) were under the age of 18. (UNESCO, 2018). Refugee children are five times more likely to be out of school in comparison to their non-refugee peers (UNESCO, 2016). The UNHCR estimates that, in 2017, 61% of refugee children were enrolled in primary school and 23% of refugee children in secondary school (UNESCO, 2018). In coordinated crisis responses, governments often do not provide education for refugees. In the past, these efforts were left to NGOs in the international humanitarian sector. While many humanitarian agencies focus on the provision of basic needs for refugees, education must be included in relief efforts. Education is critical to building the capacity of marginalized and displaced migrants to lift themselves out of poverty and meaningfully participate in society. Despite this, only 3.6% of humanitarian funding in the world is dedicated towards education in times of crisis (UNICEF, 2017). Schools located in camps, separate from the national education system do not provide a viable, long-term solution for countries. In 2012, the UNHCR Global Education Strategy called upon governments to offer certified, accredited learning to children to enable continuity in education and as a means of creating stability in their lives (UNHCR, 2012).

Some governments have taken the lead to provide education for every child, like Iran (Presentation of Dr. Gholamreza Karimi, Vice-Minister of Education for International Affairs (Iran), 2018) and Bangladesh (IOM, 2017), but many have left this responsibility in the hands of humanitarian organizations. The result is a temporary informal education system whose credentials are not recognized by national education systems. This presents a significant barrier of continuity in education for migrants. When compounded with factors such as cost, quality of education, and limited capacity of teachers, access to education is almost impossible for refugees.

Due to lack of formal legislation or recognized documents, refugees may not have access to education outside of camps or within host communities. Malaysia hosts more than 13,000 refugee children of school age, yet they are not permitted to access the national education system because they are considered “undocumented migrants” (UNHCR, 2016). As a result, the UNHCR has partnered with NGOs in order to provide an informal system. Fugee School is one of these partnerships that provides 160 refugee students per year who have faced trauma and disruption in their education with access to a curriculum and social supports to ensure continuity in their academic and emotional growth (Fugee School, 2019).

Global human rights standards mandate free education for all children in the world (Tomasevski, 2006). While many countries have offered primary school free of charge, fees for tuition and school services and costs associated with supplies and transportation can make school inaccessible for
refugee children. Instead of attending school, children may participate in paid labour in order to mitigate the financial constraints their families experience (UNHCR, 2015). Even if children are able to attend primary school, transition into secondary and tertiary education is less likely as costs are exponentially higher.

The few refugee children who are able to attend school will have a very different education experience in comparison to their non-refugee peers. Data on learning outcomes for refugees is limited, but what is available shows very low levels of learning outcomes (Dryden-Peterson, 2011). While successful case studies like Fugee School exist, studies show that teachers in refugee settings do not have the capacity to support the needs of their students, especially when it comes to children who have gone through traumatizing experiences (UNHCR, 2016). Trained teachers are key to providing quality education; this is especially important in a complex learning environment that presents challenges such as a crowded classroom, with children of mixed age groups, who speak multiple languages (Richardson, MacEwen, & Naylor, 2018).

Refugees around the world will spend an average of 20 years in exile (UNHCR, 2016). For children of school age, this spans from primary to tertiary levels of education and beyond. In order to ensure an equitable, inclusive, quality and sustainable education experience, refugee children must be integrated into national education systems. This means that countries, not humanitarian organizations, must take the lead in providing funding and formulating policies which provide adequate infrastructure, offer resources and build the capacity of teachers.

Internal displaced persons (IDPs)

Finding safety quickly is of the utmost priority for people who are displaced by disasters and crisis such as civil conflict or rapid, hazardous weather events. Because of this, they are typically displaced to locations nearby, whether within a country or across a neighbouring border (The World Bank, 2017). 40 million people in the world have been internally displaced due to conflict while 19 million have been displaced due to natural disasters (UNESCO, 2018). In 2017, 39% of new displacements were triggered by conflict while 61% was triggered by disasters. Weather related hazards were associated with the majority of new displacements with floods accounting for 8.6 million and storms for 7.5 million (IDMC, 2018).

In many cases, the coordinated responses required of government to support the education of internally displaced persons are similar to those for refugees (UNESCO, 2018). Internally displaced persons (IDPs) are individuals or groups who have been forced to “flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border.” (Perruchoud & Redpath-Cross, 2011).

28 million of the world’s 61 million primary-school-aged children who are out of school live in poor countries affected by conflict (Talbot, 2013). Conflict and disaster have a detrimental impact on the provision of, if any, quality and accessible education by countries. The accessibility and completion rates of school-aged children in conflict-affected countries are disproportionately lower in comparison to their peers in conflict-free zones (Talbot, 2013). Provision of education in emergencies not only is a life-saving resource for students to learn survival skills, but also gives them a sense of normalcy and return to routine which mitigates the psychological impact of the trauma they have experienced. Education also plays an important role in post-emergency settings as it empowers a country to ease
itself of its dependence on the international community when the crisis is over in order to rebuild the nation (Thwe, 2018). Young people need to be equipped with the skills required for the jobs that will arise out of post-conflict economies. A loss of a generation of a skilled labour force will only work to slow the reconstruction and development of a country (Talbot, 2013).

Armed conflict in Myanmar has forced hundreds of thousands of people to flee their homes and find refuge in camps and host communities. Significant efforts have been made by local and international NGOs to meet the basic needs of IDPs, including basic education. In northern Myanmar, Children on the Edge and the local organizations Kachin Development Group and Kachin Women’s Association developed an early childhood development programme whose curriculum attends to the physical and psychosocial needs of more than 500 internally displaced children aged 3 to 6 in 15 learning centres in 8 camps. An impact evaluation suggests that the programme has helped to increase their confidence and positivity (Children on the Edge, 2019).

Organizations like Children on the Edge and UNICEF have taken the lead in the implementation of programs and services that range from early childhood care and education to primary education (Thwe, 2018), but gaps still exist for secondary and post-secondary education (United Nations in Myanmar, 2019). Just 16% (an estimated 5,000) of school-aged children affected by the conflict in Myanmar are attending post primary education (United Nations in Myanmar, 2019). Primary education is provided to children in camps, but they must travel to other towns in order to access middle and high school classes. Factors such as transportation costs and safety prevent many children from continuing their education.

The provision of informal basic education presents only a temporary solution to the lifelong learning of refugees and IDPs. Talbot (2013) posits informal education “is insufficient to meet the needs of children and young people affected by conflict.” Undersupported and unqualified teachers, lack of sustainable funding and shortage of certified exams are all reasons that IDPs and refugees should be integrated into national school systems (UNESCO, 2018). The efforts of national and international organizations to provide education are limited to the extent of their partnerships with national governments. UN agencies are only present in countries at the permission of their governments and the scope of their work is limited by the agreement (Thwe, 2018). Education remains a low priority in the funding of humanitarian assistance. Talbot (2013) posits this is a result of misguided assumptions that education does not have a long-term component in the reconstruction of a country, post-crisis.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

Approximately 30% of the world’s international migrants originate in Asia and the Pacific (IOM, 2017). As highlighted above, complex migration flows have occurred within the region, placing a great strain on the capacity of national authorities to respond. In 2016, the number of refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons and stateless people in the region totaled to more than 9.5 million (IOM, 2017). Responsibility for the provision of education to refugees, migrants and internally displaced persons has been largely left to the responsibility of local and international organizations but does not present a sustainable solution for the lifelong learning of children. The emerging trends and issues explored in this paper present eight guiding questions to be later discussed at the 2019 UNESCO-KEDI Regional Seminar on Migrant and Refugee Education. The discussions that arise out of these questions will guide future efforts in research and advocacy by the cohort.

- How can international frameworks and agendas work to ensure the right to education for migrants and refugees and facilitate integration into national education systems?
- How should governments approach the education aspects of migration and displacement?
- What data should be monitored in order to integrate planning and policies that consider migrant and refugee populations?
- What actions at the international and regional level should countries take to ensure the sustainable provision of education for migrants and refugees?
- In what ways does internal migration improve or impede education outcomes?
- How can the education sector collaborate with other sectors to mitigate barriers beyond education (e.g. health, legal, nutrition) through policies and programmatic provisions?
- How can governments to ensure sufficient financing and effective accountability systems are in place for transparent allocation and efficient use of resources to support migrant and refugee education?
- What are the obligations of sending states and receiving states in preserving the right to education for cross border migrants?
- How can governments ensure opportunities for diverse and relevant learning pathways beyond basic education (e.g. secondary, tertiary, TVET)?
- How can national governments and international organizations better coordinate and integrate emergency response programming with long-term development programming?
- How can national governments integrate conflict and disaster risk reduction into education sector planning?
References


