

CENMUN 2023



UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

AGENDA: DEBATING UPON THE DISCRIMINATION
AGAINST REFUGEES AND PROTECTION OF THEIR
RIGHTS WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON
RIGHT TO ASYLUM

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Message from the Chairperson

Esteemed Delegates,

I extend my warmest greetings to each of you as we convene under the banner of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). With unwavering resolve, we embark on a journey to address the pressing issue of discrimination against refugees and to safeguard their fundamental rights, with a special emphasis on the Right to Asylum.

In this forum, we are not just representatives; we are advocates for those whose lives have been disrupted by conflict, persecution, and displacement. It is our collective duty to confront the harsh realities faced by refugees and to champion their cause with determination and empathy. Our collective intelligence, innovative ideas, and unwavering commitment will shape the trajectory of our discussions. Let us embrace the challenge before us with an entrepreneurial spirit, seeking not just to debate, but to effect real change in the lives of millions.

As we begin this momentous undertaking, I encourage you all to remember that we are not merely delegates; we are architects of a more compassionate and equitable world. Let our solutions be bold, our actions impactful, and our dedication resolute. Together, we will write a new chapter of hope for refugees worldwide.

Your diligent research and thoughtful analysis will lay the groundwork for fruitful discussions during our sessions. Remember, we are united in our commitment to making a difference in the lives of refugees around the world. Let our discussions be guided by empathy, innovation, and a shared aspiration for a more inclusive and just global community.

Best Regards,

Srishti Sahni

Chairperson – UNHCR

Research Guidelines

The following are some research guidelines that you may find helpful:

- Start by doing a general overview of the topic. This will help you to get a better understanding of the scope of the issue and the different perspectives that are involved.
- Once you have a good understanding of the general topic, you can start to focus on specific subtopics.
- For each subtopic, you will need to gather information from a variety of sources, such as academic journals, news articles, government reports, and research publications.
- It is important to be critical of the information that you find. Not all sources are created equal, and it is important to be able to identify reliable and credible sources.
- Once you have gathered your information, you will need to synthesize it and draw your own conclusions. This is where your critical thinking skills will come in handy.
- Finally, you will need to communicate your findings in a clear and concise way. This may involve conveying your points in your GSL and moderated caucuses.

Some Sub-topics to guide your research are –

1. The Historical Evolution of Refugee Rights

The concept of refugee protection has evolved over time, from a focus on providing humanitarian assistance to a more comprehensive approach that also includes the promotion of refugee rights and durable solutions.

- In the early days, refugees were often seen as a burden and were not given much assistance. However, the horrors of World War II led to a growing recognition of the need to protect refugees. In 1951, the United Nations adopted the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, which established the basic rights of refugees. The Convention has been ratified by over 140 countries.

- The Convention defines a refugee as a person who is outside their country of nationality or habitual residence and who is unable or unwilling to return due to a well-founded fear of persecution. The Convention also establishes the principle of non-refoulement, which means that refugees cannot be returned to a country where they face persecution.
- In the 1960s and 1970s, there was a growing focus on the promotion of refugee rights. This led to the adoption of a number of international instruments, such as the 1967 Protocol to the Refugee Convention and the 1984 Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.
- In the 1980s and 1990s, there was a dramatic increase in the number of refugees worldwide. This led to a renewed focus on finding durable solutions for refugees, such as resettlement, local integration, and voluntary repatriation.
- In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the need to address the root causes of refugee displacement. This has led to a focus on peacebuilding, conflict prevention, and development assistance.

2. The Legal Framework for Refugee Protection

The legal framework for refugee protection is based on the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol. These instruments define a refugee as a person who is outside their country of nationality or habitual residence and who is unable or unwilling to return due to a well-founded fear of persecution. The Convention also establishes the principle of non-refoulement, which means that refugees cannot be returned to a country where they face persecution.

- The 1951 Convention is the most important legal instrument for refugee protection. It has been ratified by over 140 countries, and it sets out the basic rights of refugees, such as the right to seek asylum, the right to non-refoulement, and the right to equal treatment with nationals of the host country in certain areas, such as employment, education, and housing.
- The 1967 Protocol to the Refugee Convention clarifies and expands the definition of a refugee in the 1951 Convention. It also removes the geographical and temporal limitations of the 1951 Convention, which means that it applies to refugees from all countries and all time periods.

3. Regional Disparities and Challenges in Refugee Protection

- The challenges faced by refugees vary from region to region. In some regions, such as Europe, there is a relatively well-developed system of refugee protection. However, in other regions, such as Africa and Asia, there are significant gaps in protection.
- One of the biggest challenges is the lack of access to asylum procedures. In many countries, refugees are denied the right to seek asylum, or they are forced to wait years for their cases to be processed. This can make it difficult for refugees to find safety and security.
- Another challenge is the lack of durable solutions for refugees. In many cases, refugees are unable to return to their home countries due to ongoing conflict or persecution. They may also be unable to integrate into their host countries due to language barriers, lack of education and skills, and discrimination.
- The challenges faced by refugees are also exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has made it more difficult for refugees to access basic services, such as healthcare and education. It has also made it more difficult for refugees to find employment and to integrate into their host communities.

4. Access to Asylum and Protection

One of the most important challenges facing refugees is access to asylum and protection. In many countries, refugees are denied the right to seek asylum, or they are forced to wait years for their cases to be processed. This can make it difficult for refugees to find safety and security.

- There are a number of factors that can prevent refugees from accessing asylum procedures. These factors can include:
 - Lack of information about asylum procedures
 - Fear of being detained or deported
 - Lack of access to legal representation
 - Language barriers
 - Discrimination

5. Socioeconomic Integration and Empowerment of Refugees

- Even if refugees are granted asylum, they often face significant challenges in integrating into their host countries. These challenges can include:

- **Language barriers:** Refugees may not speak the language of their host country, which can make it difficult to communicate, find employment, and access services.
- **Lack of education and skills:** Refugees may have had their education interrupted or may not have had the opportunity to learn the skills they need to succeed in their host country.
- **Discrimination:** Refugees may face discrimination in the workplace, in housing, and in other areas of life.

Here are some real-world examples of countries and communities that have successfully supported the socioeconomic integration and empowerment of refugees:

- In Jordan, the government has created a number of programs to help refugees learn the Jordanian language and find employment. The government has also provided financial assistance to refugees and has helped to combat discrimination.
- In Lebanon, a number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have worked to provide refugees with language training, education, and job training. These NGOs have also helped to combat discrimination and to promote the integration of refugees into Lebanese society.
- In Uganda, the government has created a number of refugee settlements where refugees can live and work. The government has also provided refugees with access to education, healthcare, and other services.

6. Gender, Vulnerabilities, and Intersectionality

Refugees are a diverse group of people, and they face different challenges depending on their gender, age, race, ethnicity, religion, and other factors. It is important to consider the specific needs of different groups of refugees when designing protection and assistance programs.

For example, women and girls refugees are often more vulnerable to violence and exploitation than men and boys. They may also face challenges in accessing education and employment. It is important to design programs that address the specific needs of women and girls refugees.

Here are some real-world examples of how gender, vulnerabilities, and intersectionality have been addressed in refugee protection:

- The UNHCR has developed a number of programs to address the specific needs of women and girls refugees. These programs focus on providing women and girls with access to education, healthcare, and protection from violence.
- The International Rescue Committee (IRC) has developed a program to help refugee children who have been affected by war and violence. The program provides children with counseling, education, and other support services.
- The Danish Refugee Council (DRC) has developed a program to help refugee families who have been separated. The program helps families to reunite and to rebuild their lives.

7. Xenophobia, Discrimination, and Community Engagement

One of the biggest challenges facing refugees is xenophobia and discrimination. Refugees are often seen as outsiders and are subjected to violence and abuse. It is important to combat xenophobia and discrimination and to create a more welcoming environment for refugees.

Here are some real-world examples of how xenophobia, discrimination, and community engagement have been addressed in refugee protection:

- The UNHCR has launched a number of campaigns to raise awareness about the challenges facing refugees. These campaigns have helped to change attitudes towards refugees and to promote tolerance and understanding.
- The IRC has worked to promote tolerance and understanding in refugee communities. The IRC has also worked to hold those who commit acts of violence or discrimination accountable.
- The DRC has worked to engage refugees in community activities. The DRC has helped refugees to participate in sports, arts, and other activities that help them to build relationships with their host communities.

8. Humanitarian Aid and Sustainable Solutions

The international community has a responsibility to provide humanitarian aid to refugees. This aid can help to meet the basic needs of refugees, such as food, shelter, and healthcare. It is also important to find sustainable solutions for refugees, such as resettlement, local integration, and voluntary repatriation.

I hope this research guide serves as a foundation for your research. I wish you all the best in your work to address the discrimination against refugees and to safeguard their fundamental rights.

All the best!

