

**“Education and Displaced People”
The Case of the Japanese Government Project to Assist Refugees**

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Introduction

1. Education is a fundamental human right that everyone is entitled to enjoy. It is explicitly provided for in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights as well as the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
 - Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Art. 26, para. 1: “Everyone has the right to education.”
 - International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Art. 13, para. 1: “The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to education.”
 - Convention on the Rights of the Child, Art. 28, para. 1: “States Parties recognize the right of the child to education.”
2. The reason that education is considered as a fundamental human right is obvious. People can enjoy life physically, mentally and spiritually as well as politically, economically and socially only when they are given adequate education at appropriate stages of life. To put it differently, people can enjoy all fundamental human rights only when proper education is guaranteed.
3. Displaced people are forced to leave their original place of living against their will by reasons of an armed conflict, racial, religious or other discrimination and persecution, political, economic and social disorder or a large-scale natural disaster. They include refugees as defined by the Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, internally displaced persons, victims of an armed conflict or war and those who suffer serious damages from natural disasters.
4. Because such displacements occur against the will of the people, many of their human rights are forgotten, ignored or violated in the course of displacement.
5. Amongst various categories of human rights, the right to education is most likely to be forgotten and lightly-treated at the time of emergency such as displacement because other needs, more directly connected to life, health and safety, are considered more urgent and require immediate attention. For this reason, emergency relief operations usually focus on life-saving activities involving the right to life, health and safety, and the right to education is easily put aside. However, the right to education is important and essential from a long-term viewpoint from relief stage to recovery and development stages and should be included from the early period of relief operations.

I. Purposes and Different Types of Education

6. Education is a broad notion. It can be categorized from the viewpoint of purposes and providers:
 - 1 Education for personal development and fulfillment (language, arithmetic, hobbies): providers include individuals, families, friends, communities, and schools.
 - 2 Education for social life (customs, rules, law): providers include families, communities, schools and workplaces.
 - 3 Education for living (vocational and professional training): providers include schools, universities, workplaces (on the job training).
7. The mass media, such as newspapers, TV and internet, if properly used, also play an important role as providers of education for all three purposes listed above. However, displaced people usually do not benefit from obtaining education and training through the mass media because of the language difference or lack of access to them.

II. Difficulty in Obtaining Adequate Education by Displaced People

8. Displaced people are uprooted, not out of their own choice, from their native land and traditional community, in some cases even from their families, and consequently lose opportunity to obtain adequate education.
9. Displaced people are mostly cut off from existing providers of education such as schools, friends, communities and in many cases even families. When they come to new places, the language difference prevents them from getting adequate education and training due to unavailability or inaccessibility of effective providers of education.

III. Importance of Education for Displaced People – An Analysis of the Japanese Government Project to Assist the Resettlement of Refugees

10. In view of the importance of education in personal and social development and fulfillment, more focus should be on the provision of educational opportunity to displaced people. In order to understand different aspects of the issue, let us take as an example the Japanese Government project to assist the resettlement in Japan of Myanmar refugees.
11. In response to a request from the UNHCR, Japan has started to accept about 30 Myanmar refugees from refugee camps in Thailand, and later in Malaysia, to resettle in Japan as refugees. In order to assist those resettled refugees, the Government provides budget for ① language education, ② training for adaptation into a new community life, and ③ vocational education and job-identifying consultation. The program is implemented by a non-profit, civil society organization. The project continues for 180 days and covers necessary costs for food, accommodations and medical services.
12. This project is highly regarded because it focuses on the importance of education and training for displaced people called “resettled refugees” in order to adapt to a new community life in Japan where language, customs and traditions, religious practices and a way of life are different from their homeland.
13. My brief involvement in this operation proves that the project seems to be well organized and managed. The satisfactory level of the recipients of this service is quite high. Nevertheless, I have identified the following points for future consideration and improvement.
 - 1 The length (180 days) of education and training may not be enough for all the refugees whose needs are varied. Some room for flexibility should be allowed.
 - 2 More personalized care for different needs of refugees should be provided. For instance, children at different ages should be given appropriate levels of education and training.
 - 3 The project should include education for cultural and religious activities.
 - 4 Additional assistance should be provided for those who are competent and willing to pursue higher education at professional schools and universities.
 - 5 Efforts should be made to integrate such refugees into ordinary educational and learning environments after this project.
 - 6 Efforts should be made to encourage them to use their native language and to practice traditional customs and religion.

Conclusion

14. Displaced people face many challenges in new places. The right to education provides opportunities for adapting to new community life, job seeking and means to earn one’s living. Adequate education provides displaced people with an ability to live in new places with respect and dignity. We should understand that they are largely cut off from all the existing opportunities for obtaining adequate education for enjoying all the fundamental human rights, which include the right: to live freely and equally in dignity; to life, liberty and security of person; to work; to rest and leisure; and to participate in the cultural life of the community.