

15-12-2020

## Displaced Youth have been Disproportionately Affected by COVID-19



HRH Crown Princess Mary, Patron of the Danish Refugee Council, and Charlotte Slente, Secretary General of DRC

Photo: Helle Moos/DRC

**Young people in displacement have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. On the occasion of the one-year anniversary of the Global Refugee Forum, which brought a broad array of stakeholders together to improve refugee protection, the Danish Refugee Council and the UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, emphasize the urgency for youth pledges to materialize. HRH Crown Princess Mary of Denmark and DRC Patron opened the event about youth in displacement.**

One year ago, the world came together during the Global Refugee Forum hosted by the UNHCR to renew the commitment made the year before when a majority of countries signed the Global

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The Danish Refugee Council is a leading, international humanitarian displacement organisation, supporting refugees and internally displaced persons during displacement, in exile, when settling and integrating in a new place, or upon return. We provide protection and life-saving humanitarian assistance. We support displaced persons in becoming self-reliant and included into hosting societies - and we work with communities, civil society and responsible authorities to promote protection of rights and peaceful coexistence. Founded in Denmark in 1956, 9,000 staff, 7,500 volunteers.

Compact for Refugees including ambitious commitments to strengthen refugee protection and identify solutions for people in displacement who are often among those most vulnerable. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has impacted young people across the globe, but youth in displacement has been disproportionately affected by the crisis which has severely aggravated their situation. On this backdrop, the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and the UNHCR hosted a high-level event to reinvigorate multi-stakeholder partnerships to mobilize collective action, take stock of the impact on youth and look at solutions and models to improve young people's access to sustainable livelihoods. If we don't take action, we risk losing an entire youth generation. The event took place on 15 December 2020.

### **The Largest Youth Generation in History and a Growing Number of Youth in Displacement**

Today, 1.8 of the 7.8 billion people of the world's population, are between the age of 10-24 years – history's largest youth generation. The majority of young people live in the Global South, and among the world's 79.5 million displaced people, youth also constitutes a considerable and growing share. As many as 40% of all displaced persons are children under the age of 18, and while numbers vary at regional levels, young people dominate the demography, both in host communities and among refugees. In Jordan, 63% of the population is under the age of 30 and 40% are unemployed. For Syrian refugees, the unemployment rate reaches a stark 84%. Young displaced persons are thus at heightened risk of marginalization in displacement situations in terms of access to jobs, education, and participation in decision-making.

### **The Potential of Youth and Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships**

The event on 15 December zoomed in on the added value of working through multi-stakeholder partnerships with relevant local, national and international stakeholders when responding to challenges specific to youth in displacement. It also recommended supporting both local and refugee youth participation to foster development, social cohesion and peace building in areas affected by displacement.

*"I have met many young, displaced persons as the Patron of DRC. I have listened to their aspirations and dreams. It is obvious to me that they have the potential to become contributors and resources in the societies in which they reside. We all have an obligation to help them unleash this potential,"* says Her Royal Highness, Crown Princess Mary of Denmark, Patron of the DRC.

For many young people, 2020 meant another year deprived of the ability to pursue their dreams - another year of waitness and few prospects for a self-reliant life. The focus on youth in displacement is paramount as the pandemic has left a slowing global economy, increased poverty and unemployment and particularly young girls opting out of schools. Altogether, youth have been left disproportionately affected. Therefore, DRC has also increased its focus on youth.

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*“For many young displaced people, this year has been particularly critical as they were already living in waithood. The pandemic therefore became a crisis-in-a-crisis for them. We need to better support young people’s potential in becoming a transformative force in regions marred by protracted conflicts, instability, and climate change. It is paramount to our collective commitment to “leaving no one behind”, says Charlotte Slente, DRC Secretary General.*

*“It is very positive to note that one year after the Global Refugee Forum many of the nearly 1,400 pledges are being implemented in refugee contexts around the world and many new partners, private sector as well as civil society, have contributed with innovative initiatives to secure more support, inclusion and better solutions for displaced people and their host communities. However, COVID-19 has resulted in another pandemic, of poverty, most outspoken among displaced people. COVID-19 has also massively impacted education and job opportunities of young people. It is more important than ever to stand by the pledges and deliver,” says UNHCR’s Representative to the Nordic and Baltic countries, Henrik M. Nordentoft.*

*“To hinder that young people are left behind, we must work together. We need to establish and nurture multi-stakeholder partnerships creating opportunities for youth in displacement, bringing together high-level representatives, youth, private sector and humanitarian and development practitioners to discuss ways forward. We also must ensure that host communities are adequately supported. Young people are essential in reaching the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We invite countries, foundations, organizations and companies to contribute,” finishes Charlotte Slente.*

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