

Using Resettlement to Protect Vulnerable Refugee Minors

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Children are the most vulnerable of the vulnerable. If you continue putting stumbling blocks in the way, they become more vulnerable.¹

1 Introduction

By mid-2013, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated that there were approximately 11.1 million 'Convention' refugees within its care across the world and a further 987,500 asylum-seekers (UNHCR, 2013c, 6). The number of refugees grew steadily throughout 2013, not least as the result of the conflict in Syria from which the number of refugees had exceeded 2.5 million by early 2014 (UNHCR, 2014b).

UNHCR's figures for 2012 reveal that, on average, 46 per cent of the refugees and people in refugee-like situations were under the age of 18 in that year (UNHCR, 2012b, 3). Naturally, the percentage of minors within any given refugee population varies. In some cases it is much lower; for example, children made up only 20 per cent of the refugee population in Yemen. In many countries with large refugee populations, however, the percentage of refugees under the age of 18 is significant. In both South Sudan and Ethiopia in 2012 the figure was 59 per cent, in Kenya it was 56 per cent and in Jordan, 50 per cent. Of the refugees under the age of 18 globally, just under half (49 per cent) were female. The statistics for 2012 were not unusual. The unfortunate reality is that at any given time a very large proportion of the world's refugees are children and young people.

1 NGO worker, interviewed by the authors in Kenya (May 2013).

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