

[‘It’s her turn,’ says UN agency, issuing global call to close critical gap in refugee girls’ education](#)

By secondary-level education, refugee girls are only half as likely as their male peers to enrol in school – even though they make up half of the school-age refugee population, according to a new study released Wednesday by the United Nations refugee agency.

“It is time for the international community to recognize the injustice of denying refugee girls and women an education,” said Filippo Grandi, UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)).

“These findings are a [global wake-up call](#), and I urge all to join us in demanding: ‘It’s her turn,’” he added.

Access to education is a fundamental human right. Yet, for millions of women and girls among the world’s growing refugee population, it remains an aspiration – not a reality.

While all refugee children have more difficulty attending school than their non-refugee peers, refugee girls face even tougher challenges to find – and keep – a place in the classroom.

Moreover, as they get older, refugee girls face more marginalization and the gender gap in secondary schools grows wider.

UNHCR’s [report](#) reveals that social and cultural conventions often result in the prioritization of boys over girls to attend school. Poor facilities, such as a lack of appropriate toilets and menstrual supplies, can also block their access. Adding to the challenge, book costs, uniforms and distance can be prohibitive for refugee families.

“Finding solutions to the challenges refugee girls face as they strive to go to school requires action right across the board – from national education ministries to teacher training institutions, in communities and classrooms,” stressed Mr. Grandi.

“There are formidable barriers to overcome,” he continued. “We are calling for an international effort to turn the tide.”

UNHCR’s report highlights effective, deliverable actions and policies to help more refugee girls get a quality education.

If refugee adults are able to work and support their families, they are more likely to let their children stay in school.

No girl should miss school because the journey there is too far or too

dangerous – refugee girls need protection from harassment, sexual assault and kidnapping.

More female teachers from within host and refugee communities must be recruited to promote best practice.

The report notes that for refugee girls, a quality education reduces vulnerability to exploitation, sexual and gender-based violence, teenage pregnancy and child marriage.

Additionally, if all women received a primary level education, child deaths from diarrhoea, malaria and pneumonia would fall.

Moreover, the further girls progress in school, the more they develop leadership skills, entrepreneurship, self-reliance and resilience.

“If we continue to neglect refugee girls’ education, it is evident that the consequences will be felt for generations,” said Mr. Grandi.

“It is time to make refugee girls’ education a priority,” he concluded.