



# Protecting Girls' Access to Education in Vulnerable Settings Act

Poverty and conflict are resulting in millions of families fleeing their homes - the U.S. should work to ensure children have the access to education to build peaceful, free, productive, and less vulnerable societies.

## Background

In 2016, the UN High Commission on Refugees reported that there are more than 65 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, the highest level since World War II. Recent and prolonged conflicts in Syria and South Sudan force families from their homes, resulting in a refugee crisis with no end in sight. Fifty percent of refugees are under the age of 18. In 2016, less than 2% of global emergency aid was allocated toward education, and less than 10% of worldwide official development aid for education was allocated toward children trapped in emergency situations.

Access to education is critical to raising the standard of living and providing children opportunities around the world. Girls with secondary school educations are up to six times less likely to marry as children compared to girls who have little or no education. As part of the Sustainable Development Goals, the global community is focused on ensuring that every child has the right to safe, free and quality primary and secondary education, which is critical to building productive societies.

For many young refugees, time away from home also means time out of school. Enrollment among refugee children is much lower than the global average. Refugee students often have no schools nearby to attend, and schools that accept refugees struggle with a lack of learning materials, overcrowded classes, and language barriers. Refugee girls are especially vulnerable to early marriage, human trafficking, and child labor.

## The Facts

- 50% of refugees are under the age of 18. As the average length of a prolonged refugee crisis is about 26 years, too many of these young people will spend their youth away from their homes.
- While the gross enrollment rate for primary school globally is 90%, the gross enrollment rate for refugees attending primary school in refugee camps is 50%. At the secondary schooling level the global enrollment rate is only 84%, and that figure drops to 22% among refugees attending secondary school.
- Each additional year of secondary education completed by a refugee results in a 10% increase in lifetime earnings.
- People of voting age with a primary education are 1.5 times more likely to support democracy than people with no education.
- Ninety-four percent of displaced households surveyed in Sierra Leone have reported incidents of sexual assault, including rape, torture and sexual slavery.



## What Congress Can Do

Please cosponsor H.R. 2408 or S. 1580, **Protecting Girls' Access to Education in Vulnerable Settings Act**, sponsored by Representative Steve Chabot & Representative Robin Kelly in the House and Senator Marco Rubio & Senator Bob Menendez in the Senate. Contact James Burchfield in Representative Chabot's office ([James.Burchfield@mail.house.gov](mailto:James.Burchfield@mail.house.gov)) or Bethany Poulos in Senator Rubio's office ([Bethany\\_Poulos@rubio.senate.gov](mailto:Bethany_Poulos@rubio.senate.gov)) for more information or to cosponsor the legislation.

## About the Protecting Girls' Access to Education in Vulnerable Settings Act

The Protecting Girls' Access to Education in Vulnerable Settings Act was first reintroduced by Congressman Steve Chabot (R-OH) and Congresswoman Robin Kelly (D-IL) in May 2017. It will authorize the Secretary of State and the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development to prioritize efforts to support access to primary and secondary education for displaced children, and for other purposes.

This bill focuses on the 65 million people who have been displaced from their homes, especially the 50% who are under the age of 18. It would make it the sense of Congress that it is critical to ensure displaced children have access to educational services, receive quality education, and that the educational needs of girls and women are considered in the design, implementation, and evaluation of our foreign assistance programs.

To ensure refugees get the education they need, the bill calls on the U.S. to:

- Encourage countries to support efforts to provide refugees with access to safe, quality primary and secondary education;
- Enhance training and capacity-building for national governments hosting refugees by providing coordination among, the UN, World Bank, local and international NGOs, and other parts of civil society;
- Promote the hosting of refugees within local educational systems especially with innovative solutions such as shift schools and extended hours; and
- Incorporate measures to evaluate the impact of education on the lives of girls with respect to reduction of child marriage, gender based violence, trafficking, and forced labor.

This Protecting Girls' Access to Education in Vulnerable Settings Act was first introduced in the House of Representatives in July 2016.