

Asylum Seeker's Access to Education- A Humanitarian Crisis in Israel

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Abstract

This article seeks to examine African refugees and asylum-seekers access to education in urban areas in Israel. It is based upon nine months of research in Tel Aviv between July 2011-March 2012 and is unique in its attempt to understand education access in an urban, developed humanitarian context. Mass Migration to Israel via the Sinai desert has posed a challenge to Israel's jus sanguinis immigration policy and the government's insensitive approach to the delivery of protection to those who are supposed to receive it has created a humanitarian crisis in a developed OECD nation. This paper offers a cross-cutting critical analyses on the provision of education on the basis that it is a basis right and core component of social protection and development. Children, Youth, and adult asylum seeking and refugee learners' access to education in Israel will be discussed. Lastly the paper endeavors to offer academia, international agencies, national policy makers and NGOs a clearer picture of the challenges that asylum-seekers face in accessing education in addition to a series of tools and strategies that partners, and relevant government agencies can use in order to improve, monitor and evaluate existing services.

Key Words: Refugee, Education, Forced Migration, Urban Refugees, Education in Emergencies, Asylum Seekers.

Resumen

Este artículo pretende examinar los refugiados africanos y solicitantes de asilo y el acceso a la educación en las zonas urbanas de Israel. Se basa en nueve meses de investigación en Tel Aviv entre julio 2011-marzo 2012 y es único en su intento de entender acceso a la educación en un contexto urbano, dentro un país desarrollado a través de una crisis humanitaria. La migración masiva a Israel a través del desierto Sinai ha planteado un desafío a la política de inmigración de Israel y el enfoque insensible del gobierno para la prestación de protección a los que se supone que deben recibirlo ha creado una crisis humanitaria en un país desarrollado de la OCDE. Este documento ofrece un análisis crítico transversal en la provisión de educación sobre la base de que es un derecho de base y el componente básico de la protección social y el desarrollo. Niños, jóvenes y adultos que buscan asilo y los estudiantes refugiados acceso a la educación en Israel serán discutidos. Por último, los esfuerzos del papel para ofrecer la academia, organismos internacionales, responsables de las políticas nacionales y organizaciones no gubernamentales una idea más clara de los retos que enfrentan los solicitantes de asilo en el acceso a la educación, además de una serie de herramientas y estrategias que los socios y las agencias gubernamentales pertinentes pueden utilizar con el fin para mejorar, supervisar y evaluar los servicios existentes.

Palabras clave: Refugiado, Educación, Migración forzada, Refugiados urbanos educación en emergencias, solicitantes de asilo.

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Introduction

At the time of writing (March 2012), an estimated 60,000 asylum seekers (the majority from Eritrea, Sudan and South Sudan) are residing in Israel¹. A reflection of the times, globally there are people on the move everywhere, with the world's displaced population mark reaching an unprecedented 43 million people in 2012². An estimated 15-16 million people are refugees and a further 1 million asylum-seekers³. 44 % of refugees and asylum seekers are children below the age of 18⁴.

1. Seeking Asylum in Israel: A State built by Refugees

Israel is a self-proclaimed Jewish and democratic state with *jus sanguinis* citizenship norms and essentially, as Kritzman highlights, Israel's immigration policy almost exclusively provides for the immigration of Jews and their relatives to Israel⁵. The fundamental component of Israel's immigration laws is the Law of Return, the general premise of which is that "[every Jew has the right to come to this country as an *oleh* [one who ascends, a Jewish newcomer to the land of Israel]."⁶ These legislative instruments define Israel as an *Aliyah* state—a state of Jewish return—rather than an immigration state and the political ideology and Zionist determination to maintain a Jewish majority state has had ramifications on all aspects of migration to Israel, including asylum⁷.

One of the components of the 1951 convention is to allow asylum seekers the right to 'seek asylum' yet Israel's domestic law contradicts this fundamental principle. The Infiltration Law, first enacted in 1954 as an emergency measure providing harsh penalties against a person who is either a national of an enemy country⁸ (enumerated in the law or who has been a resident in one of these countries) before entering Israel⁹.

In January 2012, the "Prevention of Infiltration Law" was ratified to apply to all asylum seekers in Israel. This law determines that all non-citizens who do not enter through an official border crossing into Israel, will be deemed to be "infiltrators" and can be detained for three years without any charge or trial. Furthermore, if the asylum seekers are identified as coming from an 'enemy' country, such as Sudan, they might face indefinite detention¹⁰ (EMHRN, 2012). The government has also invested £58 million in constructing a wall along the Sinai alongside the construction of a detention centre with a capacity for 10,000 that is scheduled to open in November 2012.

In 2002 that the Israeli authorities established the National Status Granting Body, an inter-ministerial board tasked with reviewing and deciding on asylum applications lodged with UNHCR Israel¹¹. The vast majority of asylum-seekers in Israel are from Eritrea, South Sudan and Sudan who undertake a perilous journey across the Sinai desert at the mercy of human traffickers^{12,13}. Yet despite the mechanisms in place and large number of asylum seekers entering the country, only 6 people have been granted

¹ Data from UNHCR, Tel Aviv. The Ministry of Interior (MOI) and the media offer varying figures on the number of asylum seekers in Israel, ranging from 35,000-60,000.

² 26 million people are those forced to flee their homes and are displaced within their own countries, commonly referred to as internally displaced people, or IDPs. UNHCR(2012a) *State of the World's Refugees 2012*, UNHCR, Geneva.

³ UNHCR (2012a) *Ibid*.

⁴ UNHCR (2009) *Global Trends: Refugees, Asylum Seekers, Returnees, IDPs and Stateless Persons*. UNHCR, Geneva.

⁵ Kritzman- Amir, Tali (2009) "Otherness' as the underlying principle in Israel's Asylum Regime" *Israel Law Review*, p. 604

⁶ Kritzman- Amir, Tali (2009) *Ibid*. p. 605. Law of Return, 5710-1950, Passed by the Knesset on the 20th of Tammuz, 5710 (July 5, 1950).

⁷ Kritzman- Amir, Tali (2009) *Ibid*. p. 608.

⁸ Enemy countries included: national or citizen of Lebanon, Egypt, Syria, Saudi-Arabia, Trans-Jordan, Iraq or Yemen, or is a resident or visi-

tor in one of those countries was defined as an "infiltrator" (Ben-Dor, 2003).

⁹ Buchanan, Holly (2009) "Escape from Darfur: Why Israel Needs to Adopt a Comprehensive Domestic", *Chapman Law Review*.

¹⁰ EMHRN (2012, January 13) "Israel: Knesset's repressive "anti-infiltration bill" to give another blow to migrants' rights" Retrieved 05 05, 2012, from The Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network: <http://www.euromedrights.org/en/news-en/emhrn-releases/statements-2012/10896.html>

¹¹ Afeef, Karin Fathimath (2009) *A promised land for refugees? Asylum and migration in Israel*. UNHCR Policy Development and Evaluation Service, Geneva, p. 5.

¹² For an overview of the history of asylum in Israel see (Ben-Dor, 2003).

¹³ Human trafficking across the Sinai has become a lucrative yet perilous journey as traffickers inflict torture, rape, starvation and forced labour internment on a growing number of people in order to extract further funds from their families in the diaspora. For further reference, see (Ramita, 2011), (Human Rights Watch, 2008).

refugee status since 2009. This has numerous ramifications as it is only after the refugee status is assigned, can the now recognized 'refugee' make use of the rights and obligations the aforementioned carries with it under the 1951 Refugee Convention. Asylum Seekers in Israel are not entitled to access social services, welfare or housing and so, parts of downtown Tel Aviv resembled scenes from refugee camps as destitute asylum seekers make the parks, dilapidated buildings and shop doorways their shelter.

It is important to underline that many of asylum seekers do not see Israel as a settlement country. Israel is often asylum seekers second or third movement destination, as having being denied adequate social protection, have sought it elsewhere and therefore it is paramount to understand the inter-connectedness of migration flows and how access to social protection and basic services can play a pivotal role.

A Humanitarian Emergency in the centre of Tel Aviv

The presence of the 'invisible' living, sleeping, congregating in the centre of a developed nation has put the previously invisible very much in plain view¹⁴. Asylum Seekers, upon reaching the border to Israel are detained in Saharonim detention centre, whereby once their nationality as Eritrean or (until September 2012) Sudanese has been confirmed, are then bussed to Tel Aviv to find their way in their new environment. Urban refugees are a growing phenomenon and an affront to widespread beliefs that 'real' refugees are people properly encamped in rural locations and those who have chosen not to enter the camp regime, or who have escaped it, are inauthentic, economic migrants (Marfleet)¹⁵. It is this discourse that increasingly prevails in the public and political sphere in Israel as asylum seekers move to metro-

politan areas where unskilled labour opportunities arise. The limited access to basic services, detention, temporary protection and pertinent label 'infiltrator' can only be interpreted as the Government perceiving asylum seekers to be 'human waste, with no useful function to play in the land of their arrival and temporary stay and not intention or realistic prospect of being assimilated and incorporated into the new social body.¹⁶ The prevailing mood of intolerance picked up momentum in towards the end of May 2012. Minister of Parliament (MP) Aryeh Eldain stated, (whilst touring the construction of the wall being built in the Sinai) "Anyone that penetrates Israel's border should be shot – a Swedish tourist, Sudanese from Eritrea, Eritreans from Sudan, Asians from Sinai. Whoever touches Israel's border – shot".

Towards the end of May 2012, Tel Aviv witnessed its first major race riots against the refugee community¹⁷. This event soon led to violence, with shops being vandalised, Africans attacked and racist chants filling the streets. Four MPs were at the helm of the march, fuelling the crowds with statements such as "The Sudanese are a cancer in our body" (MK Miri Regev) (Sherwood, 2012). The Interior Minister Eli Yishai, stated that most of the "Muslims that arrive here do not even believe that this country belongs to us, to the white man"¹⁸.

Through despondent government policies, a humanitarian crisis has evolved in a developed nation, whereby persons of concern struggle to access basic services, including education.

2. Refugees Access to Education

Children have a fundamental right to education and to the protection that schools often uniquely provide in the chaos that characterizes life for refugees and IDPs¹⁹. It has been widely rec-

¹⁴ ActiveStills showcases a photo gallery collection of urban refugee experience in Israel (Cohen O.)

¹⁵ More than half the refugees UNHCR serves globally now live in urban areas, a third in refugee camps with the remainder outside camps living in rural areas (UNHCR, 2012).

¹⁶ Bauman, Zygmud (2004) *Wasted Lives Modernity and Outcasts*, Polity Press, Cambridge, p. 77. In the words of the current president Netanyahu 'The problem started seven years ago, and with the formation of the current government three years ago we decided to take care of the problem immediately. If we don't stop the problem, 60,000 infiltrators can turn into 600,000, and bring about the undoing of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state.' (Kubovich, 2012).

¹⁷ The rampage through the area could be seen as an accumulation of weeks of media attention after 3 Eritrean youths were convicted of raping a 15 year old Israeli girl. Eli Yishai, the interior minister fuelled matters by stated in the news HIV-infected migrants were raping Israeli women and dozens of women in Tel Aviv had probably been raped but were too afraid to come forward due to stigma (Sherwood, 2012).

¹⁸ Weiler-Polak, Dana (2012) "Israel enacts law allowing authorities to detain illegal migrants for up to 3 years," Retrieved May 05, 2012 from *Haaretz*: <<http://www.haaretz.com/news/national/israel-enacts-law-allowing-authorities-to-detain-illegal-migrants-for-up-to-3-years-1.434127>>

¹⁹ Cahill, Kevin (2010) *Even in Chaos: Education in Emergencies*, Fordham University Press, New York.

ognized that access to education is one of the highest priorities of displaced communities as the multitude of benefits can facilitate: local integration, the development of human and social capital, self-reliance, skills, knowledge and a sense of stability and normalcy. Moreover, it is argued that education is a durable solution for both the present and future, as refugees who are educated are more likely than those who do not to have opportunities to be 'economically, politically, socially, cognitively, and psychologically resilient in all stages of their refugee hood – in exile, upon repatriation, upon resettlement, and in intervening times'²⁰.

Despite the right to education being enshrined in a number of international and national frameworks, it is the most underfunded sector in humanitarian responses, receiving only 4% of funding.

Furthermore, only 3% of UNHCR's education budget funds activities in Europe and the Americas. At the time of writing, UNCHR Israel did not fund any implementing partners' educational projects. Perhaps it is implicit that in these 'developed' regions, legal frameworks are in place that should provide access to compulsory primary and secondary education for every child under a certain age, regardless of the child's national background and legal status, and therefore refugee children and young people are therefore going to school²¹. This is certainly reflected in the Israeli education system, under the supervision of Ministry of Education (MoE), is guided by the 'Compulsory Education Law' which sets out a comprehensive and inclusive legislative framework offering community participation and placing value on cultural and linguistic traditions to children aged 3-17²².

In November 2011, a *Knesset* (parliamentary) report on asylum seekers rights stated that "*Minors in this population are entitled to health, education and welfare services, since these are considered universal rights under the CRC; however each ministry has discretion in interpreting the Convention. Thus, whereas the Education and Health Ministries grant every minor the full range of services arising from these rights, the Welfare Minis-*

try applies a narrow interpretation, granting services only in extreme cases"²³.

Whilst the government report states that asylum seeker children should be able to access education, there are some worrying undercurrents of the State's interpretation of its obligation to provide access to education for all children as not all schools where asylum seekers are placed are under the jurisdiction of the MoE. The hostile and prevalent anti- asylum seeker atmosphere has penetrated the classrooms and children are not exempt from xenophobic wide sweeping statements by coalition *Knesset* members. MP Michael Ben-Ari flippant statement that "*A fourth grader (Israeli) girl is studying in the same class with infiltrators' kids, that you don't know what diseases they are carrying. These are the worst viral diseases*" highlight the unsavoury current climax (Guarniera, 2012).

Furthermore, whilst national legislation stipulates that the state is obligated to ensure that education is of the highest quality and meets the needs of all learners, the following part of the paper underlines that there are noted discrepancies and challenges in the quality and equal access to education that asylum-seekers are able to access in Israel. This in turn brings into question whether all developed nations are in fact meeting the MDG of universal primary education? Furthermore, whilst national legislation stipulates that the state is obligated to ensure that education is of the highest quality and meets the needs of all learners, the following part of the paper underlines that there are noted discrepancies and challenges in the quality and equal access to education that asylum-seekers are able to access in Israel.

3. Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)

ECCE commonly refers to holistic approaches which support children's survival, growth, development and learning from birth to entry into primary school in formal, informal and non-

ties, textbooks and supplies (Ministry of Absorption, 2005). Higher education remains affordable, with most universities charging up to 10,000 NIS (£2000) per year for tuition costs and a variety of scholarships and grants are available for economically disadvantaged students and gifted and talented young people (Kunda, 2011). Suffice to say, Israel has a well-funded and developed state education system.

²³ *Knesset* (2011) "Infiltrators in Israel" *Knesset report*, Jerusalem.

²⁰ UNHCR (2011) *UNHCR concerned as sub-Saharan Africans targeted in Libya*. Retrieved May 05, 2012, from UNHCR: <http://www.unhcr.org/4e57d1cb9.html>, p. 83

²¹ UNCHR (2011), *Ibid*.

²² As in the majority of OECD countries, tuition in state education system is free until the completion of 12th Grade however there are hidden costs and parents are expected to contribute towards extra-curricular activi-

formal settings. ECCE are common in Israel and provide essential support for working parents, particularly mothers. Yet they are heavily over-subscribed despite several different frameworks for children of pre- school age in Israel. Asylum seekers access to municipal day care centres has been varied in different cities in Israel and many asylum seekers send their children to unregistered nurseries, set up by members of the refugee communities. Press reports on 'pirate' nurseries in Tel Aviv state that, since 2010, 3 children have died in these centers due to inadequate facilities and poorly equipped staff²⁴. Yet parents are left with little choice as to where to leave their children, as they are ostracized from main stream options. Only in Eliat, a city in the south, have 30-40 children managed to be enrolled in a municipal kindergarten *Ganm Yotam*. However whilst this kindergarten is monitored by the municipality, it serves a segregator function, as only asylum seekers attend. The extent of hostility toward asylum seeker populations in South Tel Aviv was demonstrated April 2012, when a nursery was attacked by a Molotov bomb²⁵. Luckily, no infants were hurt but the event highlighted rising intolerance and even the most vulnerable were attacked.

Pre- Primary Education

Pre- primary' is an umbrella term covering a wide range of provider and programs for children aged 3 and above. Pre-primary education for children from socio-economically marginalized families is particularly important as poverty, low levels of parental education and speaking a minority language are among the most prevailing transmitters of disadvantage across generations²⁶.

In Israel, *Gan trom Chova* or *Gan Kedam Chova* is for children aged 3-5. This is usually operated by municipalities and

Compulsory Education Law requires that every child in Israel who reaches the age of 5 attends a kindergarten.

In Arad, a total of 31 asylum seeker children are currently enrolled in municipality kindergartens and in Eliat, 20 South Sudanese children attend a municipality kindergarten²⁷. Both centers are fully equipped, with day care worker employed by the MoE and the municipality. In Tel Aviv, the number of infants enrolled in municipality kindergartens is unknown and asylum seeker families face considerable difficulty in accessing municipality kindergartens. This could be due to multiple factors, including high demand from Israeli families for limited spaces coupled with discriminatory practices. It is due to migrants' experiences of discrimination and segregation that NGOs such as Mesila take a prominent role in assisting asylum seekers enroll in schools in Tel Aviv²⁸.

4. Primary School education

In state schools in Israel at primary level approximately 75% percent of the curriculum is obligatory and 25% percent supplementary. There are an estimated 1150 asylum seeking children currently enrolled in primary and secondary schools in Tel Aviv²⁹. As the MoE does not account for asylum seekers on its Education Information Management System (EIMS), it was not possible to get a disaggregated figure. The majority of primary school children from Shapira area in South Tel Aviv attend Bialik-Rogozin School, a democratic institution that caters for pupils Grade 1-12³⁰.

Paradoxically, primary education in Eliat can only be likened to a system of apartheid as all asylum seeker children are obligated to attend a separate school, Niolot Eliat.

²⁴ Cheslow, D (2011) "Illegal toddlers pack Tel Aviv's pirate nurseries" *Haaretz*, Tel Aviv.

²⁵ Hartman, Ben (2012) "Tel Aviv arsonists target migrants" *Jerusalem Post*, Jerusalem.

²⁶ EFA (2010). *EFA Monitoring Report 2010: Reaching the Marginalised*. UNESCO, Paris.

²⁷ CIMI (2011) "Navigating Migration Flows", Jerusalem, unpublished.

²⁸ Mesila (2012). Mesila make available and promote information/materials on education (and welfare) systems with respect to rights, opportunities and responsibilities in migrant languages and in accordance with migrant, refugee and asylum-seeker population needs.

²⁹ Mesila (2012).

³⁰ The school has attracted international attention for its inclusive educational program and commitment to integrating asylum-seekers and foreign children into the school system (Goodman, 2010). Flags from across the world, multi-linguistic welcome signs and a multi-cultural student body of Jewish Israeli, Arab- Israeli, and African asylum seekers make the institution unique in Israel. The school, recognizing the barriers that children from disadvantaged households face, also offers a range of free evening adult language and IT classes for parents.

NGOs have raised concerns that the facility in which the students study is not fit for purpose, citing that approximately 50 Sudanese and Eritrean children have been sent to a premise with poor infrastructure, where the staff 'have no teaching qualifications or experience and the children's studies and activities are not guided by an orderly curriculum and no one is monitoring the children's attendance rate or progress'. It is apparent that asylum seeker children in Eliat are prevented from accessing the national standard of education as their Israeli counterparts and the negative consequences are multiple. By not accessing good quality primary education is not only a hindrance to their process of integration but has severe implications for future academic achievement. Poor quality education is a disincentive to learn and promotes dropping-out of school. By not offering the children a standardized curriculum at primary level disadvantages their transition to secondary school juxtaposed with an almost guaranteed sentencing to unskilled employment option and social and economic marginalization. It is claimed that these authorities are discriminating against the refugee children on a racial basis yet at the time of writing, a legal case is still pending and the situation persists³¹. The dangers of allowing individual ministries and municipalities to interpret educational provision for asylum seekers has resulted in discriminatory measures against some of the most vulnerable at the margins of society.

Secondary Education

Secondary school expands on foundational primary education and aims to equip learners with the skills and knowledge to become responsible adults with the skill set to pursue tertiary education or to go directly into a vocation³². Asylum-Seekers youth have access to varying forms of secondary school education in Israel. Unanswered questions remain such as the percentage of asylum-seekers taking the Bagrut (High school certificate) examination and passing and the percentage of students leaving school with a certificate of completion of 12th Grade. The

Bagrut is challenging, with only 42% of Israeli students passing first time³³. It was reported that many asylum-seeker children are not prepared for the exam by teaching staff and therefore leave high school without any qualifications.

In Eliat, education at secondary school level remains the same as that at primary level, with students attending the Nofei Eliot school with no prospective of taking the *Meizav or Bagrut* examinations or gaining any recognized form of accreditation from their studies.

Education in Detention Centers

In Israel, Matan detention centre for unaccompanied and separated minors in the development town of Hadera currently holds 60 adolescent boys between 12- 16 years of age and unfortunately is the status quo and not a 'last measure'. Students are held at the facility until spaces at boarding schools become available or until a relative comes forward to assume guardianship. Whilst there is a time-table with educational and recreational activities, detainees and NGOs have voiced concerns on the lack of educational content and the quality of what is being taught. During a visit to the prison, of the three education personnel in the facility, only one was qualified and the resources and equipment were poor. A disused shipping container was being used as a classroom. The general conditions and inadequate education provision for detainees is problematic as some minors can end up spending prolonged periods of time in the facility. In an 11 month period, it was reported that 19 minors attempted to commit suicide³⁴.

Female unaccompanied minors are held in Givon prison, an adult prison for undocumented foreign migrant workers and asylum seekers. Female minors are not offered any sort of educational program whilst being detained. There is an education officer at Givon, however there is no set learning program for detainees, who are given Hebrew books on an ad-hoc basis. According to the UNHCR guidelines ' During

³¹ In July 2011, in response to this discriminatory treatment and the municipality's refusal to enroll the children in state-run schools, a petition was filed in the Be'er Sheva District Court against the Municipality of Eilat and the Ministry of Education with the assistance of Tel Aviv University's Refugee Rights Clinic and the Hotline for Migrant Workers.

³² Zeus, Barbara (2011) *Education for Crisis-Affected Youth: A literature review*. Retrieved January 15, 2012, from INEE: <<http://www.ineesite.org>>

³³ Gal, John (2010) "Israeli Child Policy and Outcomes", *OECD Social, Employment and Migration working papers (104)*. OECD.

³⁴ Neshet (2011), *Op. Cit.*

detention, children have a right to education which should optimally take place outside the detention premises in order to facilitate the continuation of their education upon release. Provision should be made for their recreation and play which is essential to a child's mental development and will alleviate stress and trauma³⁵. This notion is completely disregarded in Israel.

Education in Boarding Schools

An increasing number of young, unaccompanied male minors, predominantly from Eritrea have been making the perilous journey across the Sinai. Like their elder compatriots, many cite draft evasion as a push factor for leaving Eritrea, made all the more urgent as the final year in High School is now spent in Sawa military compound. If a young person completes high school, they are now automatically drafted into the national military service whereby they face an indefinite period of military service³⁶. Paradoxically, completing high school in Eritrea correlates with less livelihood options as all graduates are absorbed into unlimited national service.

Upon arrival in Israel, if identified as under 18 by the MoI, unaccompanied minors and separated minors (due to their parents being unable to adequately care for them) may be placed in a national boarding school. There are 11 boarding schools that receive asylum seekers within Israel. The conditions and educational programs for asylum seekers vary considerably between the different schools. Some boarding schools such as Kadoorie fully integrate students into mainstream classes and asylum seekers have the opportunity to study general, vocational and agricultural tracks in preparation for the Bagrut or Te'udat Gmar certificates³⁷. Another boarding school that was created to accommodate unaccompanied minors is Nitzana, operated by the MoE and the Jewish Agency. It is unique as it forms part of a youth village and has a capacity to accommodate up to 50 students (at the time of writing there are 45 stu-

dents). Minors follow a learning program that includes vocational training.

On the other hand, some schools do not integrate students into mainstream classes due to reluctance on the part of some schools to prepare asylum seekers students for the Bagrut or even a Grade 12 matriculation certificate. As a result of the poor standards of education and care found in many of the schools, a phenomenon of unaccompanied minors running away from boarding schools to Tel Aviv has developed³⁸. Minors cited as to why they left the schools, which included:

- The poor quality of education in the boarding schools and low expectations from the teachers led to a feeling of being 'babysat' until they are 19.
- Bullying and feeling of ostracism by the other Israeli youths in the school
- Being put in inappropriate classes for their age
- Lack of support and help with studies
- Students did not go to systematic schooling before and struggle to adjust.
- Desire to be in Tel Aviv, working, financially secure and ready in case they are forced to leave.
- Desire to be working full time in order to send remittances home and pay off debts to human traffickers.

Non-Formal Education for adolescents

Assaf, an NGO in Tel Aviv is one of very few organizations consolidating activities for this disenfranchised group. A youth club meets three times per week and is attended by 200 youths between 13-20 years old. It is run by an educational coordinator from the asylum seeking community and activities are diverse, seeking to promote both formal and soft skill development. Yet notably the vast majority of attendees to these youth clubs across Israel were male. Zeus argues that programs cannot rely solely on beneficiary demand but must make concerted efforts to reach girls³⁹.

³⁵ UNHCR (1999) *UNHCR's Revised Guidelines on Applicable Criteria and Standards relating to the Detention of Asylum-Seekers*, UNHCR, Geneva.

³⁶ UK border Control (2011) "Country of Origin information: Eritrea" Retrieved 12 12, 2011, from Refworld: <http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/documents/policyandlaw/coi/china/eritrea/>

³⁷ Kadoorie (2012)

³⁸ Abukar (2011)

³⁹ Zeus (2011) *Op. Cit.*

Higher Education

On the whole, higher education institutions in Israel are receptive and accommodating towards asylum seeker students and mainly raise concerns about the legality of an asylum seekers status. The number of asylum-seekers accessing higher education in Israel remains low, with students studying to date in Tel Aviv-Jaffa academic college, IDC Herzilya, Ben Gurion University of the Negev, Tel Aviv University, Seminar Kibbitzm and Ha Hatahana art college There are also a number of asylum seekers who have enrolled in Bible colleges. In reflecting the profiles of current asylum seekers in higher education and those interested, the majority had lived in Israel for over two years and had some form of stable income⁴⁰. The majority of students were between 25-40 years old, and three already held B.A degrees from their country of origin⁴¹.

Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET)

TVET is a high priority amongst asylum seekers in Israel. The transnational value of being a skilled laborer was cited as a critical factor, with one interviewee from South Sudan responding that he wanted to take a Mechanics course as he did not want to return (to South Sudan) 'as unskilled as I arrived'. Despite this high demand from both youth and adults, few NGOs were able to provide vocational and professional training. One of the main providers of TVET was CEC offering courses in Business Management, Photography, Graphic design, Computer skills and Play-back theatre Another successful vocational course run through the CEC and Assaf was a Translation and 'How to be a spokesperson' course run in early 2011. Several of the graduates have gone on to find paid employment as translators for the UNHCR Tel Aviv and local NGOs.

Hebrew and English Language Courses

There is an unequivocal consensus amongst asylum seekers about the need to learn Hebrew and English. Interestingly, many asylum seekers met during the research began to learn

Hebrew only after a year in Israel and placed a higher importance on learning English. This can be linked to their initial perceived temporariness of their stay in Israel and their aspirations to migrate elsewhere. Furthermore, many stated that employees preferred to speak to them in English and that often they would try to speak in Hebrew, only to be replied to in English. A number of NGOs across Israel offer courses, taught by volunteers.

Cultural Orientation Training

There is no government led initiative to provide asylum-seekers with any form of cultural orientation upon arrival in Israel. There is no government agency that explains to the migrants their rights and duties or offers them guidance on arranging medical insurance for themselves and their children, on their employment rights, on their obligation to send their children to school, and so forth. However Amnesty International's (AI) 'Refugees as Agents of Social Change' course offers the most comprehensive example of a project attempting to overcome this shortfall and accentuates the more progressive notions in humanitarian action. In 2011, AI ran a total of 9 courses in Tel Aviv, Eliat, Ashdod and Arad⁴². These courses lasted for a total of 8/9 weeks and were co-taught between an Israeli volunteer and a paid asylum seeker. The group profiles were divided amongst country of origin and a separate group was created for Eritrean women (The rest of the groups were mixed). The courses included lectures on health care, contraception, the asylum system and history and current societal issues in Israel and experts from other organizations such as PHR, Kav loved and Assaf guest lectured on specific thematic issues. Once the sessions had finished, community members continued to hold sessions, disseminating information to newcomers (Robinson, 2012).

Conclusion

This paper has sought to examine how asylum seekers have been able to access one type of social service in Israel – Education. Education as a key site for social and cultural learning also

⁴⁰ Berman (2012).

⁴¹ Lempsin (2011).

⁴² Robinson (2012).

has an aim of reproducing culture and thus reinforcing hegemonic structures. As highlighted in this research, Israel's unwillingness to host non-Jewish immigrants has permeated into the classroom. Undeniably on one hand, asylum seeker youths have been able to enroll in primary and secondary education in Israel. Paradigms of good practice can be seen in a number of secondary schools, whereby students have been supported and integrated into mainstream classes. In addition, a handful of adults are currently studying at tertiary level. Higher education institutions and some *Ulpans* show commitment to facilitating refugees and asylum seekers access to their programs, recognizing the richness and contribution that these students can make and offering full or partial scholarships and flexibility with regard to documentation of school certificates. Notwithstanding, it is apparent that asylum seekers can face many difficulties with regard to accessing education in Israel. Access to municipality day care centers varies between the different locations and the policy of segregated, under-funded and low caliber of education in Eliat highlights worrying discriminatory practices. Nationally, there is a lack of information on quality, adaptability, attendance and supervision of education for asylum seeker children, information that is essential in order to design responsive, effective and relevant policies. The absence of this data underscores the government's disinterest in engaging in any type of holistic approach to addressing the needs of the asylum seeker population.

This disregard toward the needs of asylum seeking youths is portrayed most brutally in the detention center facilities, whereby the majority of unaccompanied minors will be detained. Denial of education in these facilities permeates and impacts upon child protection and mental well-being and further expounds upon their vulnerabilities in the present and future.

Evidently there is an absence of political will on the part of the government to facilitate refugee determination and the integration of asylum seekers into the population however this paper posits some optimistic recommendations that if heeded, could improve livelihood opportunities and well-being for the most vulnerable members of society.

This includes: the MoE ceasing to operate discriminatory and segregator practices in Eliat and boarding schools across the country, improving (national) monitoring systems regarding access to and learning outcomes of asylum seekers and refugees, including data on gender parity and disability, expanding non

formal education programs that address interruptions in education and help youth balance learning and earning as well as more advocacy from NGO, community groups and UN agencies.

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