Challenges of Refugees due to Aadhaar

What is the issue?

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Refugees in India are being denied access to essential services due to ambiguity in their eligibility for obtaining Aadhaar cards.

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What is the present condition of refugees in India?

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- The refugees in India are unable to gain access to essential services owing to lack of Aadhaar, as all services are now linked to the Aadhaar number.
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- Even though they meet the UIDAI requirements of having both residence and identification documents, they are unable to apply for Aadhaar.
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What are the provisions related to inclusiveness in UIDAI?

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- Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) formulated Aadhaar primarily as a tool for socio-economic inclusion and not as a proof of citizenship.
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- In lines with this objective, a simple enrolment system was designed to accept wide range of documents as proof of identity and residence to easily procure an Aadhaar number.
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- To enable people without any documents to get access to Aadhaar, UIDAI accepts a ‘Letter of Introduction’ from a wide set of people who are pre-designated as Introducers.
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- The Aadhaar Act states that any individual who has resided in India for at

least 182 days in the year immediately preceding the date of application is eligible for Aadhaar.
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- The UIDAI has also clarified that foreigners fulfilling the above requirement can obtain an Aadhaar, subject to the submission of the prescribed documents.
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What are the challenges for refugees in India?

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- Refugees are unable to gain access to Aadhaar cards due the lack of clarity & knowledge of the provisions by the local centres where Aadhaar applications are processed.
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- While the local centres sometimes recognise Sri Lankan and Tibetan proof of identity and residence, they fail to recognise the refugees holding refugee status documents authorised by UNHCR.
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- Many eligible refugees are afraid to apply for Aadhaar due to fear of being wrongly prosecuted as local authorities often incorrectly equate them with illegal immigrants.
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- With the increasing enforcement of Aadhaar as precondition to access any service, refugees are not even able to avail services once they had.
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- If a solution is not derived sooner, then the refugees will face day to day difficulties like getting sim card, opening bank account, attending schools, renting accommodation, health services, etc.
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Source: The Indian Express

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