



## Three things we should do now

### to secure a better future for children and youth affected by the Syria crisis

#### 1. Fulfil the commitment to provide every child with the opportunity to access quality education.

Governments, donors and partners in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey should continue their commendable efforts to provide all children<sup>1</sup> and youth with access to accredited and certified, safe formal or non-formal quality learning opportunities

This requires continuing to open new places in public schools, placing more emphasis on retention and learning outcomes – including life skills learning outcomes - addressing barriers to accessing education at all levels and promoting social cohesion through both the content and access arrangements for education. Outcomes should be tracked and measured and results made public. Life skills and citizenship education should be considered a priority. It also requires official recognition of education certificates across the countries affected by the conflict.

Donors must fulfill the funding pledge of at least \$1.4bn a year to education and working with governments and civil society to develop accredited and certified non-formal education opportunities to complement formal education opportunities, with defined pathways to formal education. Funding needs to be committed in advance for multiple calendar years to cover school years in their entirety.

Humanitarian actors, donors, and national and local authorities must support and scale up the provision of quality education, including training teachers and school personnel in conflict-sensitive approaches to education, including how to keep children safe while in school.

Governments, donors and partners in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Syria, along with support from the private sector and donors, should provide tailored, relevant technical and vocational training opportunities to prepare youth to access decent work.

#### 2. Provide all children with access to protection.

Parties to the conflict in Syria and those with influence over them must respect the rights of all children affected by the conflict, in accordance with international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

The best interests of children is a paramount concern, which must be an integral part of any peace process.

This includes immediate cessation of attacks in civilian-populated areas; attacks against educational institutions or medical facilities and their personnel; and the use of siege tactics. It requires the immediate release of all children from armed forces and groups; the immediate application of international juvenile justice standards; and facilitating cross-line family reunifications.

Governments, donors and partners in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon Turkey and Syria must strengthen and better finance the child protection systems in these countries; scale up the provision of quality child protection services; and facilitate access to protection for all children without discrimination.

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<sup>1</sup> *Children* refers to all people under the age of 18.

This includes facilitating safe family reunifications including across borders, and providing refugees full protection, including from refoulement.

It also means facilitating full, affordable access to legal residency for refugee children and providing clear, appropriate, affordable access to all types of civil documentation for all those affected by the crisis. To ensure children enjoy their right to legal identity, a reform of Syrian nationality law is needed so that Syrian children can acquire nationality from their mothers in all circumstances.

**The international community, along with governments, donors and partners in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey must continue to facilitate access to decent livelihoods in an integrated manner for refugee families and youth.**

This includes reduction of fees and other barriers to refugee youth, men and women accessing the labour market in the immediate term, as well as the proactive pursuit of policies and tools to attract investment and generate a growth in employment opportunities. It also includes promoting the principle of equal pay for work of equal value.

Social protection programmes for particularly vulnerable families including refugees and families with children and youth, must be scaled up and extended, making maximum effort to link these interventions to existing and national social protection systems.

Progress on eliminating negative coping mechanisms such as child marriage and child labour must be measured against ambitious national goals, working in the case of child labour with the private sector as well as with national institutions and civil society.

### **3. Provide opportunities for adolescents and youth to meaningfully participate in decision-making.**

**Governments, donors and partners in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Syria should support inclusive civic and social engagement opportunities to allow adolescents and youth<sup>2</sup>, including refugees, to inform and influence matters affecting them in all phases of displacement as well as in the identification of durable solutions.**

This includes increasing opportunities for young people aligned to their needs, capacities and aspiration as well as promoting community-led initiatives that benefit children, youth and others in their communities. Pathways to employment must be provided to vulnerable youth.

This also means working with local and municipal-level governance processes to systematise positive engagement by adolescents and youth so that they are able to propose innovative solutions and influence planning and decision making processes. It means ensuring that any returns are genuinely voluntary in nature. It also includes the establishment of an adolescent and youth platform to engage as part of any post-conflict process or reconciliation efforts.

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<sup>2</sup> *Adolescents* refers to 10-19 year olds; *youth* refers to 15-24 year olds.