

#NOLOST
GENERATION

#لا_ضياع_جيل

CONTINUED LEARNING
FOR ALL SYRIAN CHILDREN
AND YOUTH

Context

The decade long war, aggravated by domestic economic decline and natural and other disasters in the region, continues to put tremendous stress on the overstretched education systems in both Syria and the host countries, impacting previous investments and progress made in the sector. Despite the continued efforts made by national governments and their partners, the number of out of school children in Syria and the five host countries remains high, estimated between 3.2 M and 3.6 M¹.

At least 1/3 (one third) of Syria's children are not in school, deprived of education and other support needed to enable learning and development. Inside Syria, an estimated one in three schools cannot be used because they are damaged, destroyed, sheltering displaced families or used for military purposes. In neighboring countries, nearly 800,000 Syrian refugee children are out of school. That is approximately one out of three Syrian refugee school-aged children.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated vulnerabilities and worsened inequalities among Syrian children. While online platforms and distance/home-based education interventions were launched across Syria and host countries, challenges including limited access to and high costs of internet connectivity and devices, restrictions in movement and access to basic services, has led to a digital divide posed and further excluded the most vulnerable children from accessing quality education opportunities. In addition, refugee families are more likely to be exposed to poverty jeopardizing their ability to prioritize education when trying to meet their basic needs. Moreover, the disruption of learning for children and prolonged school closures exposed children to increased protection risks, such as gender-based violence, domestic abuse, child marriage, child labour, and exploitation, including cyber bullying and online safety.

In host countries, due to financial pressures and impoverishment, refugee families are often not able to prioritize education which may lead to disengagement of refugee school age population from the fulfillment of their right to education.

However, despite all those challenges, and owing to the generosity of host countries, donors and partners, and the unwavering commitment from teachers, parents/care givers and students themselves, over 5 million Syrian children are still learning inside and outside Syria, remotely, face-to-face or through blended approaches.

What the data tells us

IN SYRIA

There is an estimated 6.9M children, teachers and school personnel in need of education assistance, 94 percent of all school age children are living in areas with severe, extreme or catastrophic education conditions, an increase from 86 percent in the previous year². As per the 2020 Syria HRP, 2.45M children in the country are out of school and 1.6 million students risk dropping out³. Hostilities, the use of schools for non-educational purposes and other safety concerns continue to impact the safe use and availability of education services—particularly in the north. In 2020 at least, 42 children were killed, and 38 children were injured by 61 verified attacks on education and 31 verified instances of military use of schools. 75 percent of the verified incidents took place in the first quarter of 2020 and 90 percent of the total verified incidents took place in northwest Syria. 75 percent of schools used for military purposes was in northeast Syria⁴.

Due to poverty and the need to contribute to family income, over two million children are out of school or do not learn because of lack of available learning spaces, multiple displacements, shortage of text books and education supplies, overcrowded schools providing low quality education services, safety risks on the way to or back from school, conflict-inflicted disabilities and psychological trauma and distress; and teacher's inability to effectively manage and deliver learning in a complex environment.

In 2020, distance education interventions, including the use of television channels were launched by the Ministry of Education and education actors due to schools and other learning facilities being intermittently closed between March and December. Partners supported the implementation of COVID-19

'safe school' protocols (sanitization, teacher training, information materials) in more than 10,000 schools. To support continued learning and wellbeing, learning games for COVID-19 awareness in camps and marginalized communities for over 400,000 children and textbooks for to benefit 1.6 million children were distributed. Despite challenges to face-to-face education 3,500 children from different parts of the country were supported to sit for national exams. Complementing the efforts of MoE, partners developed online learning portals to support students in continuing their studies at home. Children out of school benefitted from education services provided by civil society partners through temporary learning spaces. In addition, refugee children and youth in Syria, benefitted from remedial learning, catch-up classes and materials through a wide network of Community Centers and online modalities.

¹ UNICEF/UNHCR estimates (NLG data reporting, unpublished)

² Education Sector Syria HNO 2021 Analysis (unpublished)

³ Syria Response Plan 2020

⁴ MRM4 Syria, January-December 2020

Palestinian Refugees in Syria

A total of 50,609 UNRWA students were enrolled in Basic Education in the Agency's 102 schools in Syria at the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year with 49.21 percent of them girls. This level of enrollments is similar to that of the 2019/2020 school year, reflecting the continued upturn since 2013, when the number of students enrolled in UNRWA schools had decreased to less than 22,000 due to the conflict.

The conflict also impacted directly on the number of UNRWA school buildings in Syria that UNRWA students could use. Of a total of 118 schools managed by the Agency in 2011, 70 percent were deemed inoperative by 2016. Currently, the Agency manages a total of 102 schools across the country, of which 39 are running on a second-shift basis in school buildings kindly loaned by the Ministry of Education.

Following the COVID-19 pandemic mitigation measures, UNRWA provided timely Education in Emergencies (EiE) response to the COVID-19 crisis which allowed the swift transition to remote learning for the last month of the 2019-2020 school year in Syria. To mitigate potential learning loss, Catch-Up classes were organized for 9 grade students in May-June 2020, as well as for all other students in September 2020. For the 2020-2021 school year UNRWA students returned to full school-based, face to face learning with an emphasis on health and hygiene measures. The length of the school day was

reduced by 30 minutes to allow time to thoroughly clean the schools between the two shifts in the 62 schools that operated double shifts.

UNRWA will continue to focus its efforts in 2021 on ensuring continuity of access to quality, inclusive, equitable, and safe education and psychosocial support for all its students, either through school-based/face to face learning, remote learning in case of new school closures, or by using hybrid learning modalities if deemed necessary to guard the health and safety of students and staff. The Agency will also continue to advocate for additional resources necessary to ensure improved health and hygiene protocols and practices in schools and TVET Centers, availability of Self-Learning Material through an Agency wide Self Learning Platform, as well as improved connectivity and access to technology for students and staff in case of remote learning and remote provision of psychosocial support. Others needs due to the longstanding conflict include ensuring safe school infrastructure and trained and sufficient staffing, as well as adequate material support for its students.

Host Countries

LEBANON

The political, economic, and public health crises have revealed systemic challenges to children receiving quality education in Lebanon. Internal developments in the country have disrupted education in two ways firstly, through closure of schools and learning centers and indirectly by further deteriorating the economic situation of refugee families, with many families deprioritizing education and resorting to harmful coping mechanisms. The change in the context has increased the risks for over 600,000 refugee children⁵ of not returning to school or completely missing out on distance learning opportunities due to the challenges related to distance learning. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) is developing a Distance Learning strategy, as contingency planning for possible future rounds of schools closing in 2020-2021. The strategy document under development is reflective of planning and sustainable development, technological blueprint, teacher readiness and support to and from parents/caregivers as key pillars identified for remote learning.

To support education stakeholders with remote learning modalities, the Education sector took the initiative to provide guidance and created task teams to work on compiling resources and providing guidance to support online learning. Sector partners mobilized their community structures to disseminate widely Back to School messages to promote distance learning. Due to the deteriorating economic situation which may lead refugee community to de-prioritize education, families were sensitized about the importance of education. Educational content, such as lessons, worksheets and videos, as well as activities to improve

children's social emotional learning (SEL) were mainly shared via WhatsApp. Parents were also engaged in discussions around community-based solutions to address barriers to education. Children were also supported where possible with access to electronic devices, connectivity, power etc. and low-tech solutions for those who lack a conducive learning environment at home. Education partners conducted a Learning Readiness Rapid Assessment (LeaRA) reaching approximately 10,000 households to identify the needs and sources of support to continue to support children's right to education via distance learning modalities.



⁵ School-age refugee children population between 3 and 18 years old, UNHCR refugee registration data, September 2020.

IRAQ

The Ministry of Education (MoE) and Education Sector in Iraq took significant steps to roll out distance learning platforms and materials for both refugee and host community children beginning from February 2020. Despite overall improvements in education for Syrian refugee children with support from the Kurdistan Regional Government Ministry of Education (KRG-MoE) and education partners, access to formal education and retention of the nearly 69,000 school-age Syrian refugee children residing in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) has remained a serious challenge. Even prior to COVID-19, enrollment in camps and urban environments into a parallel refugee education system has been a predominant concern. Within camps, primary school enrollment reached only 51 percent, falling to 29 percent by upper secondary. In urban areas, these rates were 29 percent and 8 percent, respectively. Distance learning placed new pressures on families of school-aged children, including students' access to smart devices and internet, limited confidence and skills of parents to support children's distance learning, and competing socio-economic pressures due to the pandemic.

Distance learning platforms included the MoE's new online learning portal (E-wane) activated to benefit all children in Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) were supported by the MoE, UNICEF, UNHCR, UNESCO and other education partners. UNHCR and partners circulated guidance materials for parents and communities, piloted training for school administrators and Parent-Teacher Associations on use of the platform and remote engagement of parents, conducted remote capacity building for teachers and administrators, and distributed self-learning materials and related learning kits. Additionally, with an aim to support fiscally and administratively sustainable education system, the Sector and MoE drafted a formal policy for refugee integration into the existing KRI school

system in early 2020. As envisioned, integration would minimize the need for disruptive, costly, temporary measures needed to sustain parallel schooling; foster social cohesion between refugee and host communities; facilitate streamlined capacity building for teachers and their fair distribution among schools; and facilitate school rehabilitation to welcome new students and reduce overcrowding.

Data on Syrian refugee children is already integrated into the Education Management Information System (EMIS) of the KRI (E-Perwerde). This is a positive step towards refugee integration. Under the auspices of UNHCR-UNICEF Blueprint for Joint Action⁶ framework, a detailed joint plan has been developed to support integration of refugee children into national education policies, plans, and budgets, providing an additional platform to advocate for refugee integration.



JORDAN

In Jordan, the 2018-2022 Education Strategic Plan (ESP) aims to ensure that the education needs of all children are met regardless of their status or nationality, in the spirit of leaving no one behind, and ensuring the inclusion of the most vulnerable children. The MoE was quick to respond to COVID-19, through developing and activating the Education During Emergency Plan (EDEP) to support distance learning by creating an online learning portal. Whilst Jordan has almost achieved its target of universal access to education for children in grades 1-6, with 98 per cent of children enrolled⁷, progress has not benefitted all children equally. Over 153,759 school age children aged 6-15 years, including 92,399 Syrian refugee children are out of school. COVID-19 has exacerbated the challenges already faced by vulnerable groups of children and adolescents and has put many Syrian refugees at risk of being excluded or dropping out from education entirely.

The Accelerated Access Initiative (AAI), a key funding mechanism supporting vulnerable groups, including Syrian refugees, has transitioned into its second phase, as part of the ESP. Furthermore, the AAI, has supported the enrollment of 143,765 Syrian refugee children in formal public education, over the past years. Additionally, the Government of Jordan extended its waiver of documentation requirements for Syrian children wishing to enroll in public schools during the 2019/2020 school year.

Regarding higher education institutions, the development of a new Action Plan to Integrate E-Learning into the Higher Education System in Jordan, is also an opportunity to further advocate for access to quality education at the tertiary level for the most vulnerable youth, including Syrian refugee students.

The Education sector in 2020 provided technical assistance to the MoE, to strengthen

its service delivery systems for children and adolescents, and leveraged its community engagement expertise, to support schools to reopen safely and children and adolescents to continue learning. Non-formal education provided opportunities for children and adolescents to re-engage in learning; school readiness programs were implemented for kindergarten aged children in refugee camps during the summer, to support children's readiness to enter Grade 1 and national COVID-19 School Operational guidelines were developed with support from Education Sector partners.

Learning Bridges, a blended learning program, was developed and implemented online and offline, to enable all children enrolled in MOE schools from grades 4-9 to recover and accelerate their learning, given the impact of one year of COVID-19 school closures. In Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programs, blended/e-learning learning has provided more learning flexibility to Syrian youth, in particular those who combine study and work. This has also encouraged more girls and women to continue learning.



⁶ For more detail on framework, please refer to <https://www.unicef.org/emergencies/unhcr-unicef-blueprint>

⁷ "Jordan Country Report on Out-of-school Children", UNICEF/MOE, 2020.

EGYPT

In Egypt, an estimated 95 percent of Syrian refugee children have been registered either in formal or non-formal education institutions mostly in public sector as a result of the Presidential decree that was issued at the beginning of the crisis to facilitate Syrian refugees' inclusion in the public education system. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic has amplified the challenges of the education system and increased already existing vulnerabilities of Syrian refugees in Egypt. While the Ministry of Education (MoE) was well prepared to provide online education, Syrian refugee students faced barriers to access the learning content due to the lack of digital devices, cost of internet to attend online classes and/or poor internet connectivity. The Education sector partners continues to work with the Ministry of Education (MoE) and other government partners to ensure refugee boys and girls whose families have expired documents or residency permits are granted access to schools during the current pandemic and beyond.

In 2020, 3RP partners supported 4,406 Syrian refugee students with hygiene supplies and distance/home-based educational material. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and while schools remained closed, the vulnerabilities of many refugee families have increased. To mitigate the situation and support families meeting additional expenses related to online learning, partners provided 4,111 Syrian students with supplementary cash assistance. Furthermore, partners provided support to students with regards to conducting the required research project to pass the academic year.

At the beginning of the 2020/21 academic year, 3RP partners provided 4,365 education cash grants to pre-primary school-age Syrian children as well as 24,361 grants to Syrian

students enrolled in primary and secondary school levels. In addition, 143 Syrian unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) and 158 students with specific needs received education grants.

In tertiary education, 327 scholarships were provided to 165 female and 162 male Syrian students through the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI), in addition to scholarships granted to four Syrian male students enrolled in the Egypt Japan University of Science and Technology (E-JUST). Among the DAFI scholars, 106 Syrians (59 female and 47 male) received English language courses in 2020. To support the technological capacities of the MoE, 60 desktop computers were provided in addition to the renovation and refurbishment work that was initiated in nine Instant Network School (INS) classrooms in nine schools in Greater Cairo area. Additionally, 667 Health and Safety trainings were conducted benefiting 6,217 children (3,245 girls and 2,972 boys) and all participants received personal hygiene kits. A total of 19 schools received one-day simulation exercises/evacuation drills. Also, 55 workshops were held to train 704 teachers and social workers on health and safety and non-violent conflict resolution and psycho-social support. In addition, 19 workshops for training on health and safety were conducted for 285 parents and 16 public and community-based schools were supported with child safeguarding mechanisms to prevent and respond to violence and deal with bullying.



TURKEY

Turkey still hosts the world's largest refugee population, including over 3.6 million Syrian refugees and 320,000 asylum seekers and refugees from other countries. Around 45 percent are children. Over 3.6 million Syrians—including over 1.6 million children—are under temporary protection; 98.4 percent live in host communities. Of these 1.6 million children, nearly 75 percent or around 1.2 million children are of school-going age (between ages 5 and 17). As of the start of the 2020/21 school year, more than 768,000 Syrian children under temporary protection were enrolled in Turkish public schools⁸. The enrollment rate is 79.5 percent for children in primary school, 78.9 percent for children in middle school, and 39.7 percent for learners at secondary level. University enrollments of Syrians under temporary protection also continued to increase and has reached 37,236 in the 2019-2020 academic year⁹, bringing the enrollment rate for Syrian students to 6.67%¹⁰ of the overall enrollment in Turkey, which is quite high compared to the 3% world average for refugee enrollment in higher education. Despite the collective efforts of the Turkish MoNE and its strategic key partners to accommodate and/or integrate Syrian refugee children into formal and non-formal education, around 412,927 Syrian refugee children living in Turkey are still out-of-school. This constitutes an increase from the 2019 OOSC figures of 375,000.

As for many countries, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in Turkey significantly impacted national capacities to fulfill children's rights. Despite the Ministry of National Education's (MoNE) efforts to respond to this learning crisis, MoNE scaled up the Education Continuous Distance Learning Programme (EBA) broadcasting lessons on television and is utilizing an online platform (which existed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic) to deliver curriculum remotely to millions of learners

across Turkey. Based on available data (MoNE) for November 2020, a total of 11,408,215 students and 874,645 teachers actively benefited from the online EBA platform¹¹. To address challenges faced by university students, the Higher Education Council (YÖK) has also invested in establishing the Distance Learning Policies Commission to support the distance teaching and learning process with expert academics from different fields. In addition to each university's own distance learning system, YOK prepared a protocol to provide distance learning between universities and established the YOK Courses Platform. The 'COVID-19 Information' website was also launched to disseminate information on YOK's activities and its decisions.



School-age Syrian refugee children¹⁰

Country	Year	Total	Total	Total	Total	% of children, in formal and non-formal education	Total	% Total
Turkey	2020	1,197,124	770,924	13,273	784,197	66%	412,927	34%
	2019	1,082,172	684,728	20,033	704,761	65%	377,411	35%
	2018	1,047,536	645,140	17,727	662,867	63%	384,669	37%
	2017	976,200	610,515	20,000	630,515	65%	345,685	35%
Lebanon	2020	608,884	196,759	63,799	260,558	43%	348,326	57%
	2019	620,706	280,000	64,497	344,497	56%	276,209	44%
	2018	666,491	290,102	67,456	357,558	54%	308,933	46%
	2017	625,222	257,723	92,617	350,340	56%	274,882	44%
Jordan	2020	238,038	143,765	1,874	145,639	61%	92,399	39%
	2019	233,071	136,437	12,772	149,209	64%	83,862	36%
	2018	235,616	134,121	17,575	151,696	64%	83,920	36%
	2017	233,052	130,668	29,247	159,915	69%	73,137	31%
Iraq	2020	68,830	36,255	9,364	45,619	66%	23,211	34%
	2019	67,499	31,475	26,928	58,403	87%	9,096	13%
	2018	66,919	29,730	16,629	46,359	69%	20,560	31%
	2017	66,514	46,335	17,549	63,884	96%	2,630	4%
Egypt	2020	46,511	43,661	546	44,207	95%	2,303	5%
	2019	45,584	44,784	-	44,784	98%	800	2%
	2018	47,507	42,557	1,269	43,826	92%	3,681	8%
	2017	46,441	43,643	369	44,012	95%	2,429	5%
Total	2020	2,159,387	1,191,364	88,856	1,280,220	59%	879,166	41%
	2019	2,049,032	1,177,424	124,230	1,301,654	64%	747,378	36%
	2018	2,064,069	1,141,650	120,656	1,262,306	61%	801,763	39%
	2017	1,947,429	1,088,884	159,782	1,248,666	64%	698,763	36%
Syria Inside	2020	6,582,079	3,782,626	356,315	4,138,940	63%	2,443,139	37%
	2019	6,569,799	3,596,378	589,080	4,185,458	64%	2,384,341	36%
	2018	6,260,000	3,713,066	290,784	4,003,850	64%	2,256,150	36%
	2017	6,916,438	4,038,433	189,080	4,227,513	61%	2,688,925	39%

⁸ MoNE data (as of November 2020), Gross Enrollment Rate noting that the number of boys and girls enrolled is nearly equal.

⁹ YOK data, 2020, <https://istatistik.yok.gov.tr/>

¹⁰ If the accepted university enrollment age is 18-24; and 5% if the accepted university enrollment age is up to 26

¹¹ MoNE data on access to EBA, Innovation and Educational Technologies DG, November 2020.

¹² Efforts are ongoing to verify data, due to difficulties in 2020 to monitor participation. If required, adjustments to 2020 data will take place in next year's report.

Key Advocacy Asks

Without the continued engagement from the international community and support to countries, Syrian children and youth are at risk of not returning to or completely dropping out of school. We must remain committed to the education and learning of all Syrian children and youth.

We need to:

- **Ensure continuous support to education in Syria, taking it out of the realm of politics impacting humanitarian aid and building on its transformative agenda addressing the needs of children and youth:** with most Syrian children learning in public education system inside Syria, investments in schools and their teachers are imperative for continued learning both for children in and out of school.
- **Build inclusive, resilient and flexible education systems that promote sustainable approaches on access and quality and support certified and recognized learning at all levels for all,** ensuring that vulnerable children and youth are reached and develop foundation, life and technical skills for further learning, employment, active citizenship and personal empowerment. Support practices ensuring that refugee boys and girls whose families have expired documents or residency permits are granted access to schools and are supported to sit for national exams and earn recognized qualifications.
- **Prioritize support to Teachers:** Over this past year, teachers have emerged stronger than ever as frontline workers for the education sector, ensuring learning to continue, often at risk of their own health and wellbeing. Teachers require training to navigate online and blended learning that

contribute to ongoing professional development, psychosocial support to deal with their own stress and trauma and that of their students, and that they are adequately remunerated for their efforts.

- **Ensure safe and protective learning spaces by:**
 1. Continuing to engage with parties to the conflict and those who influence them to halt and prevent attacks on education and learning spaces and implement the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use During Armed Conflict. Engage with the Government of Syria to endorse the Safe Schools Declaration.
 2. Scaling up of WASH facilities and put in place protocols for safe operations within the current health context.
 3. Ensuring learning spaces are safe for children and violence in and around schools is eliminated including through 'zero tolerance' policies and the training of education personnel to promote positive pathways to discipline and learning.
- **Expand partnerships supporting education priorities,** improve links between the types of education to identify a combination of traditional and innovative funding sources that can better withstand economic or political upheavals and shocks. Predictable multi-year funding would greatly support the ongoing efforts on the part of partners engaged in education, however, investments need to be equitable and efficient.
- **Enhance and strengthen coordination-** across all sectors to address health, economic, well-being and protection barriers to education.



For more information:
NLG Education Pillar co-leads

Irina Isomova

isomova@unhcr.org | UNHCR

Jeannette Vogelaar

avogelaar@unicef.org | UNICEF

To find out more about No Lost Generation:

- www.nolostgeneration.org
- https://twitter.com/NLG_Syria