

#NOLOST
GENERATION

#لا نضياء خيل

WE
DON'T
GIVE
UP!

Continuous learning for
Syrian children and youth¹

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Report on school year 2019/2020

In 2020, more than 11.6M Syrian remained uprooted from their homes due to the ongoing conflict. Over 6 million have been internally displaced while 5.6 million have sought refuge in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt².

The decade-long war, aggravated by domestic economic decline in Syria and the host countries, undermines both the capacity of national Governments to continue integrating Syrian children and youth into their education systems, and of families to support the education of their children.

In addition, the COVID19 pandemic that emerged early 2020, and the measures adopted to contain the spread of the virus, while necessary from a public health perspective, have greatly exacerbated the vulnerabilities that Syrian children and young people face in terms of their access to quality education at all levels, health and protection services.

The impact is already evident in the short-term, with most education and protection facilities, including child friendly spaces, closed³, and it is likely to have far reaching effects in the medium term.

The present paper, prepared by NLG partners at regional and country level ahead of the fourth Brussels Conference that is taking place virtually end of June 2020, represents an update of the 2019 report "[Investing in the Future, protection and learning for Syrian Children](#)". This annual report provides:

- › An update on the situation of education for Syrian children in Syria and the five host countries;
- › Recommendations moving forward;
- › A review of progress made during school year 2019/2020;
- › A summary of the two Curriculum, Accreditation and Certification studies conducted in 2018/2019.

Please note that the data presented in this report concerns the initial data from school year 2019/2020. Currently, most schools inside Syria and the host countries are closed. While national governments were very quick to provide alternative solutions for continued learning through putting contents online and complementing with TV lessons or distribution of printed materials, it is generally recognized that many children and youth were not effectively reached, in particular the most vulnerable, including Syrian children.

¹ In this document, when referring to children, reference is made to the age group 0 to 17. School-age children are 5 to 17. Youth are those 15 to 24.

² Syria Out-of-School Children Study (2019) Concept Note

³ Schools in North West Syria reopened on the 6th of June. In Syria, exams will take place in July.

SITUATION IN SCHOOL YEAR 2019/2020

ACCESS TO LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

IN SYRIA

In Syria, two-thirds of the school-age population or an estimated 3.5 to 4 million school-age Syrian children⁴ are enrolled in formal and non-formal education⁵ against a pre-war context where almost all children went to school and finished secondary education.



An estimated 2.1 million children in Syria remain out of school.



and at least a further 1.3 million (one out of three children in school) are at risk of dropping out.⁶



At the same time, it is estimated that 1/3 of the schools are no longer safe spaces.



Since the beginning of the conflict in Syria up to 2019, there have been 1,025 reports of attacks on schools and personnel, of which 645 attacks were verified through primary sources (63 per cent) and



189 reported incidents of military use of schools, of which 144 were verified by primary sources (76 per cent).



Of these overall verified numbers covering 10 years, 24 per cent of the attacks and 22 per cent of the verified cases of military use of schools took place in 2019⁷.

These are significant numbers, when comparing to any country situation experiencing conflict.



PALESTINE REFUGEES IN SYRIA

A total of 51,143 students (49% female) were enrolled in Basic Education in UNRWA schools in Syria at the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year. This represents a 4% increase from the prior school year and continues the trend in enrolment growth which began in 2016-2017;

The conflict has also impacted the number of functional UNRWA school buildings with 70% of UNRWA schools in Syria deemed inoperative since 2013. In 2018-2019, over half (52) of UNRWA's 103 schools in Syria were in donated facilities and 62 of the UNRWA schools (60%) were operating in double-shifts.

Despite these challenges, UNRWA schools in Syria have demonstrated remarkably low dropout rates in recent years; in 2018-2019, the cumulative dropout rate at the elementary level was 0.17% while at the Preparatory level was 0.61%. This high level of student retention resulted in a student survival rate - to the end of basic education - of 99.12% in 2018-2019. The results of the Grade 9 examination have shown a positive trajectory in recent years: with the pass rate among UNRWA students increasing from 79.9% in 2017 to 81.7% in 2018 and 85.0% in 2019, significantly higher than the national average of 67.3% in 2019.

In addition to Basic Education, UNRWA in Syria offers TVET at its Damascus Training Centre (DTC). However, the Centre has been severely impacted by the war, as it served as residence for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) for around six years. As a response to this challenge, short- and long-term e-learning TVET courses were introduced and career guidance and business development services were provided in the shelters and communities which had a positive impact as in 2018-2019, the percentage of DTC graduates employed was 87.96%. The DTC was fully operational during the scholastic year of 2018-2019, and 1,044 students were enrolled at the centre in 2018-2019.

These positive outcomes highlight the value of ensuring a continuity of learning, even during conflict and crisis. The UNRWA Education in Emergencies (EiE) approach involves delivering education in alternative ways, through self-learning materials, interactive learning games, UNRWA TV and safe learning spaces and ensuring that students have access to more psychosocial support (PSS). Similarly, safety and security training has been an important element of the EiE approach with staff and students trained on safety and security issues and security risk assessments being carried out in the schools.

As the context in Syria evolves, UNRWA is focusing its efforts on the resumption of educational services in newly accessible areas.

⁴ 'School age' in this paper refers to ages 17-5 years, with the exception of Lebanon, where the age group 18-3 years is used. Inside Syria, school-age children not enrolled in formal education are considered as out of school. In the five host countries, children not enrolled in either formal or non-formal education are considered as out of school.

⁵ Non-formal education (NFE) in this paper refers to accredited and non-accredited non-formal education. For Turkey, it includes accredited non-formal education programmes and language classes; for Lebanon, it includes regulated NFE programs including basic literacy and numeracy for children and youth, accelerated learning programmes and early childhood programmes at both school and community levels; for Jordan, it includes certified catch-up and drop-out programmes, learning support services and non-formal kindergarten.

⁶ UN OCHA, March 2019. Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) 2019.

⁷ Attacks on Education: Syria Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism for Syria (MRM4Syria), March 2011 - December 2019.

HOST COUNTRIES

The school-age Syrian refugee population in the five host countries has been fluctuating over the past three years with an increase of 6 per cent from 1.95 million in December 2017 to 2.06 million⁸ in December 2018 and slight decrease of 0,7 percent in December 2019 to 2.05 million. In the five host countries, access to formal education has increased by 3 per cent from 1.14 million in December 2018 to 1.18 million in December 2019. In non-formal education, a similar trend has been recorded with 3 per cent increase from 120,656 in December 2018 to 124,230 in December 2019.

Overall, in the school year 2019/2020, almost seven out of ten children are enrolled in some form of learning either in formal or non-formal education, with the majority (90%) being in formal education. This demonstrates a continued commitment of national governments of host countries in supporting Syrian refugee children's education despite the challenges the host countries education systems face as part of their own internal economic and political challenges.

In 2019, national and international non-governmental organizations (I/NGOs) provided direct support to formal and non-formal learning opportunities for an estimated 124,000 Syrian children, which represents a 3 per cent increase⁹ of access to non-formal education opportunities compared to 2018 when around 121,000 children were reached, but remains below the 2017 numbers.

As a result, 2019 showed some improvement in numbers of Syrian children out of school with 747,000 children in 2019 compared to the 801,000 children in 2018. Still 36% percent (or approximately 1 out of 3) of Syrian refugee school-age children are out of school¹⁰.

PROGRESS PER COUNTRY

In 2019, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) and its partners in **Lebanon** supported almost 345,000 Syrian refugee children (aged 3-18 years) with access to formal education and non-formal education, a slight reduction of the relevant age group population in 2019, as compared to 2018. In light of the economic situation and civil unrest the country¹¹ is experiencing since 2019, refugees have reverted to negative coping mechanisms to alleviate additional financial burdens and education has been more and more deprioritized¹².

FIGURE 1: Children in and out of education (formal and non-formal)- total for the 5 host countries, 2017-2019

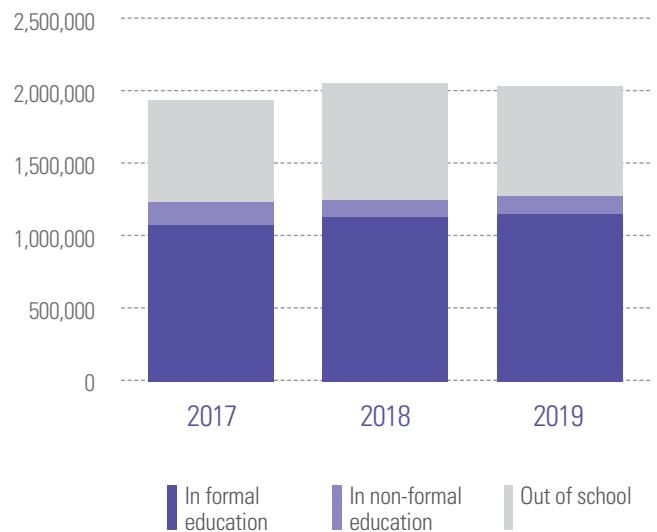
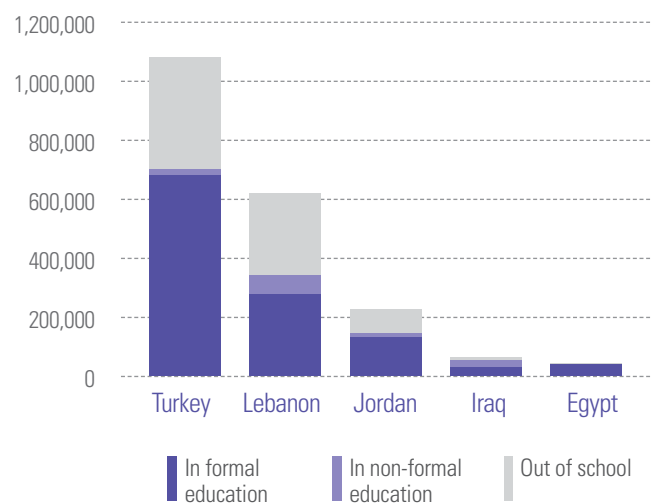


FIGURE 2: Children in and out of education (formal and non-formal)- 2019, per host countries



⁸ UNHCR school-age population estimates for Syrian refugees

⁹ Explained primarily by an increase in numbers in Iraq, where integration in the formal system is a concern.

¹⁰ This NLG Brussels report employs a special definition and calculation method for Syrian out-of-school children in countries in the region. In the report, out-of-school children are defined as those who are not in any forms of education, such as formal, non-formal and informal settings. The definition and calculation method may differ from those commonly used in each country.

¹¹ This situation resulted in weeks long of and delays in re-opening of formal schools and non-formal education programmes in the beginning of the 2019-2020 academic year. This had an even greater impact on Syrian refugee learners who are mainly enrolled in 2nd shift and NFE programmes

¹² In fact, the declining value of the lira, restricted employment opportunities for refugee adults, and competition for existing jobs with poorer Lebanese have reduced refugee household income. Trends show increasing refugee poverty rates as result; with more families going hungry and resorting to negative coping (VASR 2019). Consequently, more children are likely to be in the informal labour market or sent into 'protective unions' i.e. early marriages. The flatlining/decreasing trends in enrolment seem to indicate that despite persistent outreach and full subsidization of formal enrolment fees and related expenses – the potential value add of education to the wage-earning potential for a refugee child is far lower than the benefit a child can provide to her/his family through immediate employment/marriage.

TABLE 1: EDUCATION SNAPSHOT IN THE FIVE HOST COUNTRIES: DECEMBER 2019, DECEMBER 2018 AND DECEMBER 2017

Country	Year	# of children (population)	School-age Syrian refugee children in/out of education (formal and non-formal)					
			# of children in formal education	# of children in only non-formal education	Total children in education	% of children in education	Children out of education	
							Tot	%
Turkey	2019	1,082,172	684,728	20,033	704,761	65%	377,411 ¹³	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	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	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	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	2019	45,584 ¹⁴	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	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%

In **Jordan**, the reported enrolment of registered Syrian refugee children (aged 5-17 years) in formal education increased from 134,121 children in December 2018 to 136,437 children in December 2019. This is a notable achievement reached through collective efforts by sector partners. However, there has been a trend of high-level dropouts after the completion of Grade 6. Further, in non-formal education, the negative enrolment recorded last year continued for the limited resources and outreach to out-of-school children and adolescents, especially those over 13 years old. As a result, the percentage of children out of education remained stable at 36 per cent or, in other words, approximately, 1 out of 3 Syrian children, annually, are out of school.

In **Turkey**, donor-funded interventions helped to enroll and retain more than 680,000 Syrian children in school. Despite the efforts of the Turkish MoNE and its partners, to accommodate and/or integrate 65 per cent of Syrian refugee children into formal and non-formal education, around 375,000 Syrian refugee children living in Turkey are still out-of-school.

In **Iraq** and following an increase in the number of Syrian refugee children (due to escalation of conflict in North East Syria and subsequent arrivals in North Iraq), Iraq was able to record a decrease in the percentage of out of school children (OOSC) from 31% in Dec 2018 to 13% in Dec 2019, primarily through non-formal education. In 2017, the percentage of OOSC was only 4%.

In **Egypt**, an estimated 98% of Syrian refugee children are registered in public schools as a result of the presidential decree, issued at the beginning of the crisis and is renewed annually to allow Syrian refugees access to national schools. However, the perception exists that many of them do not regularly attend, due to system challenges such as overcapacity and availability of teachers in public schools as well as protection issues such as bullying.

¹³ In Turkey, as of February 2020, the number of out-of-school children is estimated at around 400,000. This number does not include children that are attending non-formal education opportunities

¹⁴ UNHCR Egypt Internal Statistics, December 2019



RETENTION THROUGHOUT THE SYSTEM

While enrolment of Syrian children in primary education is rather high (for example, almost 90% in Jordan and over 90% in Turkey) there are challenges with transition and completion at secondary education levels.

In Jordan, enrolment starts decreasing in lower secondary education (70%), while in upper secondary education, only 32.6% are enrolled. Furthermore, completion rates for grades 7-10 for Syrians is as low as 41.2 per cent, compared with 91.5 per cent for Jordanians¹⁵. In Turkey, enrollment of over 90% in lower secondary education reduces to 70% in upper secondary education level. In Lebanon, less than 5% of the Syrian refugees enroll in upper secondary education.

Despite these challenges, there are significant success stories.

In Egypt, for example, Syrian refugee children have been achieving outstanding results among the different grades which enables them to enroll in publicly funded universities on the conditions of tuition fees applied for nationals.

This confirms trends previously reported on increased levels of drop-out with age, due to a variety of factors linked to education quality, as well as concerns with protection and the need to earn a livelihood. As mentioned in earlier reports, these factors affect girls differently than boys. While girls may be more likely not to enter school at all, boys are more likely to drop out during adolescence.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Although data on learning outcomes is not reported systematically, and not comparable across countries, learning remains a concern. In Jordan, while not disaggregated, 52 per cent of ten-year-old children are not able to read an age-appropriate text¹⁶. In Egypt, while some Syrian refugee children have been achieving outstanding results among the different grades, which enables them to enroll in publicly funded universities with reduced fees, there is overall concern with the quality of education.

PISA data in Jordan shows that the average performance of students in the top 40 percent of schools with a positive climate that promote a sense of belonging are 2 years of schooling ahead of those in the bottom 40 percent. This evidence suggests that students – especially boys in all-male schools – may not feel safe, welcome, or at ease when in school. Furthermore, for Syrian refugee students, the same negative learning environment that prevents them in many instances from attending school leads to less learning even if they do not drop out of school.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Joint efforts of national governments and their partners continue to ensure that during the school year 2019/2020, 2/3 of Syrian school age children were enrolled. However, 1/3 of them have dropped out or never went to school. Dropout increases with age and retention and transition to the next level is a big concern.

Syrian children continued to face many challenges in terms of access, retention, completion of education as well as learning. Key barriers remain the socio-economic situation of refugee families, protection concerns, including documentation, implementation of restrictive policies at decentralised levels, and the impact of violence on children, in the home, in school or their surroundings, as well as quality of education. These factors are mutually reinforced.

In the host countries, national governments and their partners continue investing in their education, promoting the integration in national systems and supporting refugee children through inclusive education policies targeting all children. However, education systems are overstretched and face their own challenges to ensure equitable access and quality for improved learning outcomes. At the same time, options for graduates to continue their education at higher levels or transit into decent jobs are limited.

In Syria, addressing the learning needs of over 2 million children out of school, as well as equal numbers or more children at risk of dropping out, requires investment in Syrian's schools and their teachers, which, due to the political context, is not happening. While for some areas in Syria the need for humanitarian assistance is still required, stronger coordination among national stakeholders and international development partners is imperative to ensure that longer term approaches are also supported to ensure that children, adolescents and youth have multiple pathways for their learning and development.

Despite progress after 9 years of the crisis, there hasn't been a sustainable model to strengthen the current educational system to absorb the Syrian population who continue to reside in host countries.

While COVID19 may set back learning of many children, Syrian children may be hardest hit, and are at risk of not coming back to school once reopening or dropping out due to learning loss experienced the year before. Although governments responded quickly in setting up online platforms, logistical limitations at smart devices and internet connection levels, especially for vulnerable children including Syrian refugees, disabled them from easily adhering and actively engaging in remote learning. In addition, the economic impact of the COVID19 pandemic will force many families and students, particularly the youth, to stay out of school and find a way to support family income¹⁷.

15 Department of Statistics and ICF, 2019, Jordan Population and Family Health Survey 18-2017

16 UIS and World Bank, 2019, Learning Poverty Brief

17 This may result in increased child labour and child marriage.

To ensure we, collectively, remain committed to the education and learning of Syrian's children and youth, we will need to:

1. Ensure that, once schools reopen, Syrian children resume their education, by removing socio-economic barriers through expanding social protection schemes linked to national systems (including school-feeding programmes, transportation support) to ensure access to education, training and decent livelihoods opportunities and alleviate the direct, indirect and opportunity costs of education for children, youth and families. Targeting may be required to reach the most vulnerable amongst refugee and forcibly displaced population particularly adolescent boys and girls, children with disabilities, married girls and adolescent mothers.
2. Build on the experiences of COVID-19, where education systems, in a short time frame, had to become more flexible. Multiple pathways (both online and blended) were created and need to be consolidated and improved to support inclusive and flexible education systems that provide quality and relevance for all and yield better results for education. This will facilitate the integration of refugee populations within the formal systems and ensure all vulnerable children and youth are reached and develop foundation, life and technical skills for further learning, employment, active citizenship and personal empowerment.
3. Ensure safe and protective learning spaces by:
 - a. Continuing to engage with parties to the conflict and their influencers 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;
 - b. Ensuring learning spaces in formal and non-formal settings 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. Explore how lessons learnt from positive experiences in Lebanon and Jordan could be replicated in other countries;
 - c. Leveraging schools as platforms to provide education support and/or school feeding programmes to improve school attendance and retention;
 - d. Continuing to integrate mental health and psycho-social support programmes as part of the formal and non-formal education processes to benefit children and parents from the affected communities;
 - e. Ensuring teachers are prepared to address the diversified learning and socio-emotional needs of Syrian children, in particularly following the COVID19 pandemic.



MAKANI CENTRE IN JORDAN

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ANNEX 1: KEY ACHIEVEMENTS/ACTIONS IN 2019



JORDAN

The Ministry of Education (MOE) and sector partners have formulated the 2020-2022 Jordan Response Plan (JRP)'s education programme in line with 2030 Education Agenda–Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4), the MOE Education Strategic Plan (ESP) and the Global Compact for Refugees. The education sector aims to support systems strengthening to improve education access, equity and quality for all children, whilst responding to immediate needs of vulnerable groups, including registered Syrian refugee children. Towards this aim, UN agencies, NGOs and the education donor group supported the MOE in advancing national education reforms and implementation of both ESP and JRP for greater coherence and result delivery. ESP is a guiding strategy for the education sector as a whole that needs to be implemented in a crisis-sensitive manner, whilst JRP is an operational plan targeting Syrian refugees and vulnerable groups in the host communities.

To strengthen social cohesion, more than 173,000 Syrian and Jordanian school children participated in the MOE Nashatati programme supported by UN and NGOs in order to develop critical life skills. Similarly, universities and institutions have also integrated Syrian refugee students into the higher education system. Nearly 5,000 children aged 13-20 years old (majority of Syrian refugee children) attended accredited non-formal education. Inclusive education services were supported in over 100 schools with new inclusive policy and action plan being developed, enabling over 800 children with disabilities to enter and remain in school. Further, nearly 1,200 Syrian volunteers in Syrian refugee camps and the host community also supported improvements in the quality of education services.

In addition, the MOE announced a new policy for the universalisation of kindergartens (KG2), the education stakeholders supported the MOE to develop the strategy, and drafted new KG2 bylaws and regulations, and enabled a 15 per cent increase in KG2 enrolment in refugee camps. In the second semester of 2018/19, 5,600 children received remedial education in 40 schools. At the start of the 2019/20 academic year, almost 7,000 out-of-school children were reported to UNICEF on difficulties in school registration, 2,400 of whom were successfully enrolled in formal education and 814 in accredited NFE. The UN agencies and education partners played a key role in advocating for the exemption of Syrian children from documentation requirements when registering for formal education in 2019.

Innovation and technology were also introduced to increase learning and skills development opportunities for Jordanian and Syrian refugee learners at secondary and tertiary education levels. For instance, ten Connected Learning Hubs were established in targeted community centres, where more than 4,000 children and adolescents aged 13-17 years enjoy learning using technology and an offline open-source platform. In addition, the Ministry of Higher Education, together

with universities and the sector partner, conducted the Instructional Design for E-Learning training designed for university professors and faculties to set up a distance learning/e-learning bachelor's degree. Some vulnerable groups of refugee adolescents and youth, especially those suffering financial constraints, were also provided with cash assistance, regardless of their nationality. This support enabled them to continue university education.

The Civil Society Network for Displacement represented refugees in Jordan in the 2019 Global Refugee Forum. The Jordan network members, including protection and education stakeholders, participated as panelists, stressing the critical role of civil society in advocacy and protection/education service provision for refugees and vulnerable Jordanians.



TURKEY

The Education Sector Response in Turkey centers around three pillars: ensuring access to formal education, including for adolescents' girls and boys, improving quality inclusive education for all, and strengthen education systems. The Conditional Cash Transfers for Education (CCTE) Programme for Refugees reached 562,016 children in December 2019. About 80% of refugee children in school benefit from CCTE which supports retention and regular attendance. For the first time in 2019, non-formal learners in Turkey were given access to a national education cash transfer program.

As of December 2019, 12,245 (6,521 women) Syrian Volunteer Education personnel (SVEP) were receiving monthly incentives. The evaluation of the 5-year SVEP programme found that it both regularized a system of payments and stabilized the cadre of SVEPs thereby ensuring continuity of quality learning for Syrian learners.

Progress was also made in access to early childhood learning and education through provision of learning spaces and support for the development of ECE materials and community-based services, including bilingual summer ECE schools (Arabic-Turkish). Several efforts were made to enhance the capacity of the education system to provide quality inclusive education for all children including children affected by trauma and children with disabilities. The remedial education programme was revised and rolled out to 302,000 third graders nationwide.

Adolescents, including both Turkish and refugee adolescents, are more likely to be out of school than younger children, and many of the barriers to participation in education related to this age group are gender specific. In 2019, and as a result of outreach campaigns in 24 provinces, 54,274 (26,195 girls) out of school adolescents were identified and referred to relevant available education opportunities. The Ministry of National Education (MoNE), the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MoYS), Kilis Municipality and the Turkish Red Crescent (TRC) took part in this effort.

MoNE's Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP), a tailored NFE programme developed with the support of UNICEF to support the transition of out-of-school refugee children into formal education reached 17,492 (8,194 girls) children since its launch in 2018. Nearly 72% (6,047 girls and 6,521 boys) have consequently been referred to Turkish Public Schools. In addition, Turkish language classes has benefited 5,623 girls and 6,314 boys since 2018.



IRAQ

Education partners in Iraq collectively reached 64,484 refugee children out of an initial target of 78,539 school age children and education personnel. At cluster level, the decision was taken to stop paying teachers incentives in the refugee camps at the start of the new academic year which commenced in September 2019 for sustainability purposes and allowing for more durable solutions to be sought. Partners continued to support 1208 teachers with incentives from January to August 2019. Following strengthened advocacy efforts by the Education Sector, the MoE KRI, agreed to pay the salary for all refugee teachers from October to December 2019, marking a huge achievement for the sector and commitment from authorities to support education. Approximately 41,500 children received learning materials and 2,251 learners were assisted with cash for education throughout the year. About 700 teachers were trained with the support of partners to help improve the quality of teaching and learning in the refugee schools.

The Education Cluster in collaboration with UNHCR and UNICEF initiated the development of a Refugee Education Integration Policy. This policy, when completed and adopted, will assist the MoE to address the needs of refugees within a single education system, which will reduce the costs associated with running a parallel education system.

Though the education partners managed to assist children to access education with relative success in 2019, some challenges persisted. The fresh wave of fighting in NE Syria saw 17,000 new refugees crossing the border into KRI. The MoE KRI experienced challenges in catering for the educational needs of the new influx of Syrian refugees in the last quarter of the year. Advocacy to allow children with no documentation to register and enrol in schools and also to use placement tests was initiated in 2019. Concerns over the quality of teaching and learning persisted throughout the year and partners continue to seek innovations to help boost learning outcomes.



EGYPT

While considerable progress has been made towards improving school enrolment rates¹⁸, some barriers related to access to education remain. Poverty is the main reason for Syrian refugee children not being enrolled or attending school. The steady increase of commodity prices makes it more difficult for parents from refugee communities to cover the direct and indirect costs of education and consequently leads to an increased number of children not being enrolled in schools, at-risk of dropping out or being engaged in child labour. Overcrowded classrooms, lack of supplies, language barriers, elements of violence and discrimination in schools remain major constraints to education, particularly in refugee-dense areas.

In 2019, the Education sector in Egypt, led by UNHCR and UNICEF, continued to work towards ensuring inclusive access to learning and education through the provision of cash grants for pre-primary, Primary and Secondary Education school children and support to community-based kindergartens. To reduce the financial burden on parents that they faced because of the removal of fuel subsidies in July 2019. A total of 36,676 Syrians (3-17 years) received Education grants (10,000 children aged 3-5 years and 26,676 children aged 6-17 years). In addition to 176 Syrian children with disability being assisted with an enhanced education grant to access specialized schools that has the model of education and care suitable for their needs. 317 Unaccompanied & Separated children were also supported to enroll in education institutes. 375 Syrian youth (199 females & 176 males) benefiting from university scholarships in addition to approximately 6,200 Syrian youth enrolled in all Egyptian public universities. Furthermore, over 31,415 Syrian children (16,034 male and 15,381 female) were provided with education supplies in order to respond to the further reductions in education grants due to funding gaps.

In order to address system strengthening and ease the current burden in public schools hosting Syrian refugees, collectively, the sector was able to reach 712 education actors from school, district and governorate levels (320 male and 391 female) and provided them with training on public school admission rules for refugee and migrant children. Additionally, the country office supported the training of 360 MOETE personnel and 263 teachers and 240 social workers in 14 governorates, who were capacitated to address refugee and irregular migration and raise awareness about refugee issues from an educational perspective by engaging both refugee and host community children to explore these topics through different activities at the school level. The project reached over 7,500 children, Syrians and Egyptians, who were then engaged through workshops and national competitions to raise awareness about the training topics in addition to a Health, Safety and Preparedness training in 80 public schools for children and their school staff benefiting over 10,000 refugee and host community children

18 Reaching 89 per cent per latest UNHCR internal survey in 2018.

On creating an enabling environment for children at school, the education sector was able to install 720 smart classrooms for lower secondary grade in 58 public schools benefiting over 60,000 children. The sector partners also provided rehabilitation, minor improvements, and wash facilities to 30 public schools, approximately 549 classrooms. Moreover, a total of 1,421 teachers were trained in all six districts with high concentration of refugees (Greater Cairo, Alexandria, Damietta, and Sharkia).

As a sector response and in order to better synchronize educational interventions, in 2019 an online information sharing platform was developed, as well as a 3/4W monitoring tool for the sector, together with a two-day workshop to identify gaps in current service provision and coordination.



LEBANON

Nine years post-conflict, the Syrian crisis continues to impact Lebanon significantly – with a large number of school-aged refugee children residing within its borders. The MEHE- Sector partnership continues supporting the enrolment of refugee children in their public schools (see Table 1) through the waiver of school fees for child enrolment in public schools, the enhanced efforts of sector/NGO partners to conduct outreach to children, as well as the increase in the number of second shift schools (from 88 schools in 2013 to 346 schools in 2019). This is in addition to other interventions such as the provision of school supplies, transportation and heating, as well as cash grants and community support programmes provided to families and children to increase their engagement in education and ensure children's retention. Attention has also been paid to the "double-use" of school building, with significant investment into rehabilitation and/or repair. Expansion and rehabilitation of 15 schools is ongoing across Lebanon, and 13 were completed in 2019.

Aside from enrolment into public schools, a further 65,000 children, aged 03-18 years (51% girls) were enrolled in accredited non-formal education programmes through the joint efforts of sector partners in 2019, thereby gaining the opportunity to reconnect to the education system and possibly reintegrate into formal education. These programmes included the Preparatory Early Childhood Education (Prep ECE), Community Based Early Childhood Education (CB-ECE), Basic Literacy and Numeracy (BLN Basic) for children and youth, and Accelerated Learning Program (ALP). Also, the Adapted BLN (ABLN) was launched to reach the most vulnerable children with multiple deprivations. Demand for CB-ECE and ALP programmes increased, far surpassing supply and availability of funding.

Short-term, accelerated vocational courses were delivered through the Ministry of Labor's National Center for Vocational Training with the aim of addressing gaps in the labour market. Interventions also focus on increasing access to technical training opportunities for both Syrian refugees and vulnerable Lebanese youth,

in addition to supporting the capacity of the formal Technical and Vocational Education and Training system in collaboration with technical education and training partners. Support was provided for Palestine refugee youth through four Employment Service Centers (ESCs).

Around 8,000 of teachers and educators were trained on differentiated instruction and formative assessment, inclusive education, healthy eating, child protection, teaching with technology and literacy across content, to enhance the quality of education in public schools and in Non-Formal Education (NFE) spaces.

To further quality and inclusive education for all children in Lebanon, partners and MEHE supported child-centred education reform by deploying the MEHE's Child Protection Policy in 600 public schools as well as the MEHE's Inclusive Schools pilot project by mainstreaming children with special needs into 30 public schools, thereby commencing the evidence base for MEHE's Inclusive Education reform. Also, ongoing support to the system of in-service teachers' training continued with improvements in instructional methodology, enhanced the technical capacity of teachers and education personnel.

The partners continued to contribute to the development of evidence-informed policies and programmes that promote children's rights. This was done primarily through the publication of Lebanon's first Out-of-School Children study, which provided evidence on school exclusion and devised policy options for MEHE. Two studies on education for stateless children and driving factors behind school violence against children were launched.

In 2019, within ongoing Mid-Term Review of RACE II, a dialogue was started with the MEHE on the broader institutional sustainability of the interventions supported by the sector partners, including reviewing the funding modalities of the education sector.



ANNEX 2: CURRICULUM, ACCREDITATION AND CERTIFICATION STUDY - SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Education certification and recognition has been an issue throughout the Syrian crisis. It has become an increasingly salient and pressing topic in the later years of the crisis, as families, on a voluntary basis, explore returning to Syria and are uncertain about the possibilities for their children to continue their schooling.

As such, the Curriculum, Accreditation, and Certification (CAC) policies of both host countries and that of Syria needed to be clearly defined and understood in order to inform education policies, programmes and decisions affecting school-age Syrian (refugee) children inside and outside Syria.

Therefore, UNICEF and its partners embarked on two studies to gather, and concurrently triangulate, information collected from various data sources, in order to systematize existing information and have an overview of Syrian refugee host country CAC practices as well as those inside Syria.¹⁹ This effort was a light-touch update of a similar study conducted in 2015, and aimed to provide timely data to inform policy dialogue and (agency) programming.

Disclaimer: Both studies are intended for partners that support the Syria Education Response to help them have a better understanding of the situation to inform policy dialogue and (agency) programming. Information has not been verified by ministries of education staff or concerned parents/communities. Therefore, further interpretation of the analysis presented should be done with caution.

MAIN FINDINGS

The main findings are based on the studies referred to, inclusive of information from earlier NLG reports and additional verification by partners.

Formal pathway:

The guide for expatriate students 2014 posted on the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates website clearly suggests that the certificate of basic education (a Grade 9 certificate or its equivalent)²⁰ of the host country or the Syrian Government is a requirement to (re)enrol

in schools in Syria at upper secondary level. The 2019 studies reaffirmed that this requirement is still in place.

To (re)enrol in formal schooling (usually starting at the basic education level), all providers require a series of documents be submitted. This list generally includes a family booklet,²¹ evidence of identity such as a civil registry record or parent's identity card, photographs of the student, and evidence of previous school enrolment, such as a grade card that shows their level. If students do not have this documentation, or if the documentation was issued by an unrecognized authority, placement tests may be used to determine an appropriate level. Upon completing the placement test, learners are placed at the appropriate grade, taking into consideration age as well.

Implementation practices and challenges:

The following points summarise the main concerns to be addressed with regard to preparing Syrian children, out-of-school, for possible re-integration into the Syrian Education System:

Curriculum:

- The Government of Syria's (GoS) public school curriculum has been revised, and new textbooks have been issued, introduced in the academic year 2019-2020. The revision of the textbooks was informed by the new Syrian Curriculum Framework that was developed for K-12 and officially launched on 26 August 2019. The Syrian Curriculum Framework²² emphasizes six main key competencies and spells out how they can be developed in conjunction with subject-related competencies.
- In opposition-held areas of Syria, two alternative formal school curricula were created and are in use. The Syrian Interim Government curriculum is a modified version of the pre-conflict GoS curriculum, removing sections on the Assad family. The Self Administration of North and East Syria (SANES) has created a completely new curriculum and set of textbooks, including topics such as ethics and gender studies.
- In most host countries, the majority of children are attending public schools²³ where the national curriculum is used. These curricula are not necessarily tailored or adapted to meet refugees' learning and psychosocial needs, and may contribute to lower learning outcomes and even drop-outs.

19 Contracted by UNICEF MENARO to SREO Consultancy and undertaken in 2019.

20 The 9th grade certificate is a precondition to sitting for the 12th grade exam, and the 12th grade exam is required to access Syrian Universities.

21 A document usually generated by a local civil authority in Syria that provides data about nuclear family members.

22 Additional information not reflected in the report: Curriculum review in the light of the new Syrian Curriculum Framework called for capacity building of curriculum developers, textbook authors and teachers in application of integrative competency development for life and work, interactive and inclusive teaching and learning strategies, as well as of assessment for learning, with a focus on teacher role in classroom-based formative assessment. The Syria Educational Assessment and Measurement Centre with support of UNESCO developed a tool kit for training of teachers on assessment for learning. The tool kit consists of eight (8) modules to be used in an integrated assessment system at basic and secondary education stages.

23 Please note that there is a group of children that study in Syrian schools in host countries (e.g. Lebanon, Turkey), following national curricula and sit for exams in Syria.

Language of instruction:

- › While Arabic is the dominant language of instruction, there are exceptions: in Turkey, Turkish is used, in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) it is Kurdish, in Jordan English is the second language of instruction, and in Lebanon French and English are also used in addition to Arabic. For children who are only familiar with Arabic, these additional languages of instruction absent effective second language acquisition support create further barriers.
- › Once going back, children having been educated in the host country's language of instruction, they may face challenges when they have to reintegrate in the Syrian system, and will require Arabic language classes.

Integration in national systems:

- › While most refugee children (around 90%) attend public schools in host countries, double shifting is used to accommodate Syrian children, contributing to the separation of refugee from host country students. Furthermore, stigmatization of refugee students is not uncommon
- › Important to note Turkey's 2016 integration policy that led to Syrian children being integrated in schools with mixed classroom of Syrian and Turkish children;
- › Integration efforts have further contributed to increased pressure on national systems, which were already are facing their own challenges meeting the needs of their existing students.
- › In most countries, violence both on the way to and in schools is high, affecting both host community and refugee children.

Non-formal education (NFE):

- › Under the GoS, alternative pathways have been created for students who have missed years of schooling and whose academic level is low for their age group. They may enroll in such programs until they reach an appropriate academic level for their age and re-enroll in a regular formal school.
- › Many NGOs are currently operating in this region, and a variety of non-formal education (NFE) opportunities are available. However, mechanisms for student reintegration into formal schools remains unclear, both in host countries and inside Syria, although UNESCO and UNICEF have worked with MOE and education sector partners on NFE policy that include mechanisms for students' reintegration into formal schooling;
- › In host countries, some NFE opportunities are based on the Syrian curriculum, others are skills-based and/or focused on language acquisition to facilitate transition to formal education (i.e. Turkey where the Accelerated Learning Program is certified by MoNE with a direct pathway to formal education. ALP is not just Turkish language but also covers basic literacy and numeracy);
- › Over time, NFE programs that are implemented through third parties (not MoE) are being phased out given a series of challenges, including: a) the prolonged duration of displacement; b) a lack of opportunities for continued learning or accessing the formal labour market of host countries (due to lack of certification or recognition); and c) reduced funding. These trends are reflected in the data around participation in NFE, as demonstrated in earlier NLG reports.

Certification:

- › Issues concerning recognition of certificates present significant hurdles for students to move between different education systems:
- › The GoS does not recognize certificates obtained from schools in Syria not certified by the Ministry of Education; learning under these other systems is treated as NFE;
- › However, MOE conduct placement tests for student who come from the NFE programme to define his/her grade to reintegrate in formal school.
- › Neither SIG nor SANES certificates are widely recognized. SIG certificates are, so far, only recognized by Turkey and on a case-by-case basis by some European Universities.
- › While 9th and 12th grade certificates obtained in host countries are being recognised, they require authentication by Syrian embassies. This and related documentation processes involve various barriers, including fees, delays and communication issues.

Teachers:

- › There is a general lack of (qualified) teachers in Syria. The reform and acceleration of pre- and in-service teacher training is priority for the GoS now that the curriculum revision is complete.
- › In host countries, formal education teaching posts are only available to host country nationals (except for those in KRI).
- › Syrian refugees trained as teachers are allowed to teach/volunteer in NFE in most countries, with the exception of Turkey where they work in formal education, but incentives are still provided almost exclusively via donors and are thus unsustainable.
- › Little is documented on refugee teacher training in pedagogical skills, teaching for multi-grade classrooms and teaching learners with special needs, including learners who have missed a significant amount of schooling.

Recommendations

Certification:

- › Update the Syrian guide for expatriate students, reflecting the major certification requirements and discrepancies between host countries and education authorities administrated in Syria;
- › Explore possibilities for exempting Syrian students from paying fees related to certification authentication by the Syrian embassy when they are willing to return to Syria; and
- › Establish a coordination body to verify the status of current agreements on the recognition of education certificates between the GoS all host countries;
- › Improve the accessibility of grade 9 and 12 exams.

Multiple pathways:

- › Standardization is needed of available NFE opportunities and in the pathways from non-formal to formal education;
- › Better link technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and livelihood centre curriculum to the job market and appropriate legal frameworks, especially for those students volunteering to return to Syria;
- › Improve students' understanding of the content of placement tests to enable children to be better prepared and thus placed; and
- › Conduct thorough, in-depth research targeted at the 12-25 refugee age group to analyse and understand their living conditions, challenges and needs. UNESCO and UNHCR have conducted an assessment on the literacy of Syrian refugee youth in Lebanon, in order to have a better understanding of literacy (language, numeracy and life skills) proficiency levels of youth aged 15-24 and UNESCO is preparing to carry out a similar study inside Syria).

Teachers, teacher training and certification:

- › Map the current status of Syrian refugee teachers' qualifications;
- › Invest in continuous teacher professional development by providing Syrian educators with certified pre- service and in-service trainings; and
- › Map existing trainings available for teachers of refugees.

Integration

- › Develop a regional donor strategy to ensure that policies integrate rather than separate Syrians within public schools;
- › Continue to support the mainstreaming of crisis-sensitive planning and response in national education strategies.

Communication and dissemination of information:

- › Improve targeted communication to different stakeholders to help them better be a part of the solution on ensuring multiple pathways to education for refugee students. Use mass communication channels (such as newsletters, targeted SMS and WhatsApp messages) and community liaison volunteers to spread information widely.

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To find out more about No Lost Generation, please visit: www.nolostgeneration.org.



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