

# FUTURES UNDER **THREAT**

The impact of the  
education crisis on  
Syria's children



**Save the Children**

Save the Children works in more than 120 countries.  
We save children's lives. We fight for their rights.  
We help them fulfil their potential.

All names of teachers, children and parents have been  
changed to protect identities.

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Save the Children  
1 St John's Lane  
London EC1M 4AR  
UK  
+44 (0)20 7012 6400  
savethechildren.org.uk

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Cover photo: **Farah at a Save the Children supported school for Syrian  
refugees near the Syrian border, Lebanon**

PHOTO: JONATHAN HYAMS/SAVE THE CHILDREN

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# CONTENTS

<b>Executive summary</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1 Education inside northern Syria</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>2 The refugee education crisis</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>3 Funding education for Syrian children</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>4 Recommendations</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Endnotes</b>	<b>37</b>

Noor lives in Za'atari refugee camp, Jordan, with her family.

PHOTO: CJ CLARKE/SAVE THE CHILDREN



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**“Right now you can ask any child about the different types of weapons and they would be able to name all of them for you; they remember weapons more than lessons”**

Hanan\*, 44, teacher, Syria

Before the war almost all of Syria's children were enrolled in school.<sup>1</sup> Literacy rates were over 90% and Syria was spending almost 5% of its annual gross domestic product (GDP) on national learning.<sup>2</sup> Four years into the conflict, some estimate that Syria now has the second worst enrolment rate in the world<sup>3</sup> with almost 3 million school-aged Syrian children no longer in school.<sup>4</sup>

The crisis in Syria has had a profound impact on children's lives. Escalating violence and indiscriminate attacks place children in extreme danger on a daily basis, with many witnessing or experiencing acts of extreme brutality. Huge numbers have fled their homes and lost family, friends and loved ones. Some children have been forced to pick up arms. The number of children now in need of humanitarian protection has doubled in just one year to 5.5 million, with 1.5 million Syrian children now living outside Syria as refugees.<sup>5</sup> Inside Syria, millions are living in hard-to-reach areas and many thousands are trapped in besieged locations.<sup>6</sup> Syrian children, whatever their current location, are paying a terrible price for the region's politics, exposing them to exploitation, trauma and abuse. Their potential for living happy and fulfilled futures, and their future ability to contribute to their communities, will be placed indefinitely on pause unless the international community, national governments and civil society does more to invest in them.

Education has a catalytic effect on children's well-being, development and future prospects as well as on peace, stability and economic development. A slow and silent assault on a child is committed each time their right to

education is denied. Continued neglect of education has serious, far-reaching consequences for security, societies and economies across the region, but the window of opportunity for getting back on track is closing fast.

The No Lost Generation Initiative<sup>7</sup> (NLGI) emerged from recognition of the need for targeted international action to tackle the growing threat to the futures of an entire generation of Syrian children and to provide for their continued education and physical and psychological protection. The NLGI has been instrumental in shining a light on the education issue and galvanising international support for this important cause.

One year since its launch, the NLGI has achieved some key milestones in relation to education, with 440,000 more children inside Syria enrolled in school in 2013/2014 than in 2012/2013 and the proportion of out of school children in neighbouring countries decreasing from 70% in August 2013 to 49% in July 2014.<sup>8</sup>

In spite of these achievements, almost 3 million Syrian children are still out of school, with many facing the same obstacles to education that they did when the NLGI was launched. In the intervening period, new obstacles have arisen and, as families' financial situations continue to worsen, there is now even greater pressure on children not to go to school.

Schools, and the journeys to them (both inside and outside Syria), are on the frontline of the crisis, putting the lives of children and teachers in constant danger. More than 18% of Syrian schools have been damaged, destroyed, used for military purposes or occupied by displaced people.<sup>9</sup> Many of these schools have been damaged or destroyed by the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. The rise in attacks on schools in 2014<sup>10</sup> has created such fear in children that they are understandably paralysed by it, refusing

\* Throughout this report, all names have been changed to protect identities

to walk to school or sit in classrooms for extended periods.<sup>11</sup> Even where schools are safe spaces inside Syria, they are so overcrowded that displaced children are not able to enrol. Accreditation has also become a major issue for children who cannot obtain certification to progress to secondary or tertiary education because the journey to sit the necessary exams is either too dangerous or too costly. The acute psychological distress experienced by Syrian children means that even when they are in class they are struggling to concentrate and learn. Such distress can be minimised when teachers and communities are empowered to build children's resilience to trauma but this needs investment in the kind of integrated education and child protection programming, which is currently lacking.

These same challenges are faced by refugee children. While host governments are going to great lengths to meet the need, public schools are buckling under the pressure of numbers, which is keeping many out of school. Paperwork to prove legal status has often been left behind in the rush to flee conflict and is now a barrier to enrolment. Those already traumatised children who are able to get a place in school are often bullied and harassed and are simply dropping out. Those who stay are likely to be faced with unfamiliar programmes of study and an absence of support that

would help them to catch up. Teachers are facing huge pressures due to large numbers of traumatised children and limited resources, which mean that learning can be chaotic and inconsistent for all.

The rising costs of basic services, food and rents together with high rates of unemployment present families inside and outside Syria with unprecedented financial constraints. In these circumstances parents are making decisions that would have been unthinkable before war broke out, pulling their children out of school so that they can work to boost the family income or arranging marriages to alleviate their economic burden. Local populations, hosting large numbers of refugees, are also under pressure as the demand on livelihood opportunities and resources grow.

In spite of the acute need for education and the catastrophic consequences for Syria's children, the education component of the NLGI for 2014, at this late stage of the year, is significantly underfunded at just 29%.<sup>12</sup> Even if fully funded, it would not reach all the children in need of education in Syria and across the region. In order to truly prevent a lost generation, there needs to be a step change in both funding and approach to ensure that more children are reached.

Jamila with her brother, Adib, at a tented refugee settlement in Lebanon, near the Syrian border.



PHOTO: JONATHAN HYAMSS/SAVE THE CHILDREN



A boy at Za'atari refugee camp, Jordan.

PHOTO: SAVE THE CHILDREN

This report aims to shine a light on the scale and extent of the education crisis for children inside Syria and for those living as refugees in neighbouring countries. It calls for urgent action to address the barriers that still need to be overcome to get the futures of Syria's children back on track.

Although the efforts of the NLGI are constrained by the lack of humanitarian access inside Syria and by the effects of ongoing conflict, there must be a greater effort to reach more children in need within the limited opportunities available. There is no justification for the lack of decisive action on refugee education, in spite of the huge and unexpected numbers of children needing support. Now is the time to come together with the different host governments to decide how to deliver and fund a comprehensive, sustainable and resilience-based<sup>13</sup> education response in their respective contexts. Within Syria, NLGI champions must also continue to call for an end to the conflict and attacks on schools, and do all they can to promote this aim.

#### **WE CALL ON NLGI CHAMPIONS, DONORS, HOST COUNTRIES AND THE WIDER INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO:**

- **Ramp up action to secure education for children inside Syria and protect schools**
- **Push for and support a dramatic increase in the numbers of refugee children able to access quality education**
- **Focus on the removal of policy restrictions in refugee-hosting countries**
- **Address wider vulnerabilities that keep children out of school**
- **Invest in measures that build greater social cohesion among refugee and host communities by supporting both groups' needs**
- **Deliver long-term, predictable funding for a comprehensive plan for education both inside Syria and across the region**

# I EDUCATION INSIDE NORTHERN SYRIA

**“One day armed men came into the school and started shooting, and after that my mother said I could not go to school anymore.”**

Nagham, 9, Syria

Schools are under attack in Syria. Bombed, damaged, looted and destroyed on a regular basis, many places of learning are now deserted as children and teachers flee to safety. The Ministry of Education has reportedly lost more than 52,500 teaching staff from its ranks since the beginning of the crisis – 22% of the pre-conflict workforce – although the true number, including those from opposition-held areas, is thought to be much higher.<sup>14</sup> Even where classrooms still stand, the boys and girls who occupy them are so terrified that they cannot concentrate on their learning, while the fear of being injured, killed, kidnapped or detained<sup>15</sup> means many decide that the journey to school is simply too dangerous to take.<sup>16</sup>

Four years into this devastating conflict, renewed attention must be paid to the needs of children inside Syria to ensure that a generation of girls and boys

is not lost. These children are the most vulnerable, risking death, injury, abuse and exploitation every single day. Investment in quality education programming and learning opportunities in Syria can save and sustain lives, but it must not be short-lived. Donors must commit to providing children and communities with long-term support to ensure their protection and well-being and safeguard their future.

In spite of severe constraints, schooling in Syria does continue. Save the Children and its partners are working towards supporting 53 schools in three governorates in northern Syria, providing 23,400 girls and boys with access to Early Childhood Development, primary education and activities for youth.

This section provides a snapshot of the current education situation, particularly in northern Syria. In this area, an in-depth education sector assessment is yet to be done, resulting in a gap in information and reliable data. With this in mind, we look at what Save the Children is doing to address the complex education challenges inside Syria and what needs to be done under the NLGI and by the international community to scale-up a targeted education response.



View from inside of a classroom at a Save the Children supported school in northern Syria that was severely damaged in an attack.

PHOTO: SAVE THE CHILDREN





Another classroom at a northern Syria school Save the Children supports that was also severely damaged in an attack.

## EDUCATION UNDER ATTACK

**“One day armed men came to our village and took control, and then after two weeks our village started to be bombed day and night. My school was hit by one of these bombs, which destroyed the walls, and afterwards people stole all of the equipment and computers, anything that could be sold.”**

Salam, 12, Syria

Schools are some of the most dangerous places to be in Syria, along with markets and hospitals.<sup>17</sup> More than 18% of schools have been destroyed, militarised or put to use as shelters since the conflict started; at least 3,465 schools have been destroyed or damaged, while a further 1,000 are being used as shelters for displaced people.<sup>18</sup> Many more are occupied by armed forces, putting the lives of children, teachers and other education staff at risk, and preventing children's access to education.

In addition to killing and injuring children, the use of explosive weapons, particularly in populated areas, results in children being denied access to healthcare and the opportunity to go to school. It can also prevent life-saving humanitarian aid from reaching children, causing them to be displaced from their homes, exposing them to the risk of separation from their families and communities, and increasing their vulnerability to exploitation and abuse. Not only is children's ability to attend school directly affected because of explosive weapons damaging or ruining their schools, they also may not be able to travel to

school or may have to stay at home because loved ones have been injured.

Attacks on education facilities have increased in 2014, according to the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria.<sup>19</sup> Within an eight week period between the start of April and June, there were ten attacks on schools and education facilities across Syria, killing 66 people and injuring at least 180.<sup>20</sup> In eastern Aleppo, an airstrike on a gathering of mostly women and children for a children's art exhibition resulted in 36 dead, 33 of whom were children. The building in which the school complex was situated was also being used as barracks for approximately 50 fighters, demonstrating the deadly consequences that can come from the military use of school facilities and the need to deter the practice.<sup>21</sup>

**“There are barrel bombs and shelling in the city every day. The helicopter usually shells after 12 noon so we have adapted the school hours to finish before then. We have prepared a safe basement in the schools in case of sudden attack, as well as a plan to safely evacuate the school. It can be very hard for students to get to school though because the roads are closed or blocked by the rubble of destroyed buildings.”**

Save the Children education partner, Syria

Attacks affecting Save the Children's own schools have been steadily increasing. In the 12 months between August 2013 and July 2014, there were 12 incidents of airstrikes, shelling or explosions on or near the nine



PHOTO: SAVE THE CHILDREN

schools that Save the Children directly supports;<sup>22</sup> three of those schools were so severely damaged that they had to be rebuilt. In one incident, a missile landed in the school playground following an airstrike, almost completely destroying the school. Thankfully, no children or staff were present at the time due in part to Save the Children's operating protocol, which limits the risks facing its staff, teachers and students.

Our education partners<sup>23</sup> and national and diaspora NGOs we work with to deliver education services have also reported attacks on their schools. In August 2014, a partner school was decimated by an airstrike. Direct attacks, shelling, shootings within school grounds, armed clashes in the vicinity: all such incidents are becoming commonplace in our partners' schools, forcing closures and suspending children's right to an education.

Even when schools remain open, in the context of such violence many children are too terrified to attend. They are paralysed by the very thought of walking to school, let alone sitting in their classrooms for extended periods of time. The fear of being hurt, killed or kidnapped is a very real one. On 19 June 2014, for example, a vehicle-borne explosive device went off near Maysaloun school in Homs, killing 11 and injuring many more.<sup>24</sup> Ten days later, when returning home from school four girls were killed and four others were injured when a shell landed in front of Al-Sabaat secondary school in rural Homs.<sup>25</sup>

When explosive weapons are used in populated areas, there is a predictable pattern of civilian harm as reflected in these examples of bombing and shelling of schools in Syria. Save the Children is a founding member of the International Network on Explosive Weapons (INEW), a civil society network working with states, the UN and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) towards a political commitment to prevent civilian harm from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.<sup>26</sup>

**“I am in the third grade of preparatory school but have to do my exams in a city which is far away from my village. There is only one route to get there and that is very risky because it is targeted by all sides. I am not afraid about my exams as much as I’m afraid from dying on the way there.”**

Samar, 15, Syria

Getting the certification needed to enter secondary school has become a life-threatening task for boys and girls in Syria. In contested and other hard-to-reach areas it is increasingly difficult to administer and certify exams at the end of 9th and 12th grades. At present pupils are only able to sit exams and obtain the paperwork they need to continue their education in government schools. For those that live in opposition-held areas, this may involve travelling long distances or crossing multiple conflict lines, placing their lives at serious risk. On 29 May 2014, 153 students were kidnapped in Ain al-Arab as they returned from taking their end-of-year exams in Aleppo. Around 1,000 children had been forced to make this perilous journey to take the official school exams because they were not being administered in their town.<sup>27</sup> As of August 2014, approximately 130 of the 153 students continue to be held.<sup>28</sup>

If children choose not to take the risky journey to get their learning certified, their education simply comes to an end. The certification problem has led to an increase in school dropout and lower enrolment rates, a trend likely to continue until this issue is resolved. This is being made more complicated by the fact that various versions of curricula are being used by different education actors. Finding alternative solutions to certification must therefore be a vital component of any education response that claims to support children's learning and development as well as their protection.

**“Many times, children, even those in the higher grades, will come to the gates of the school with their parents but then refuse to leave them and enter the classroom. Sometimes when students hear particular noises in the area they start running and flee the class. Children don’t feel safe inside their homes, so how can they feel safe in other places?”**

Mulham, 26, teacher, Syria

Active conflict in areas where Save the Children and our partners provide education support not only



PHOTO: SYRIA RELIEF

A young boy pushes home boxes of aid items in northern Syria.

represents a direct threat to children's safety while in school, it also prevents our education officers from working with communities to deliver education services and supplies and support teachers. It also limits our ability to ensure quality education is provided.

Under these circumstances, it is no surprise that Syrian children are dropping out of school by the day, halving the near-100% pre-crisis school enrolment rate. In areas where conflict has been heaviest, such as Homs and Idlib, attendance has fallen below 50%. In Aleppo, just 6% of children continue to attend school.<sup>29</sup>

### CHILDREN ON THE MOVE

**“We left our home very suddenly when my father was detained; first we went to the countryside and stayed there for one year and 11 days until my father came home. When we were living there I wasn't going to school. Instead I was studying alone and my mother was helping to test me.”**

Mona, 9, Syria

As the conflict has continued unabated the number of displaced families has also continued to rise. There are now more than 6.4 million internally displaced people in Syria.<sup>30</sup> For the millions of displaced children, access to education is becoming increasingly erratic and in some cases is non-existent. The ongoing conflict and consequent increased competition for resources is

forcing families to relocate to avoid the worst of the fighting or in search of more affordable housing and better employment opportunities. Most of those forced from their homes by violence live with host families in local communities, but as these communities' ability to support displaced families erodes over time, more and more are being pushed out to informal camps near the borders, where access to services, including education, is even more limited.

It is not uncommon for displaced children to repeatedly drop out of school as their families move around, interrupting their education and each time eroding the likelihood that they will re-enrol. Save the Children's own education programme data shows that the drop-out rate from camp schools and in areas with high numbers of displaced people who are transient is twice as high as in other schools. The more times these children drop out of school and the longer they are out of school, the greater the risk that they will never complete their education.

Displaced children who do try to enter school in their new location are routinely turned away because the classes are full or because they do not have the official paperwork necessary to enrol in the correct grade. For many, the worsening financial circumstances of their families means that going back to school is no longer an option and they have to work or marry early instead.

For the increasing number of displaced children who are living in informal camps, access to education is

## SCHOOLS USED AS SHELTERS BY DISPLACED FAMILIES

**“Save the Children supported us to rehabilitate the old school that was being used as a shelter for displaced families from other villages. With the support of Save the Children we moved the families to better and more appropriate places to live, and started working on repairing the school. After two months the school was ready and we started a ‘back to school’ campaign and then started lessons.”**

Anas, 42, teacher, Syria

Before beginning education activities in any new location Save the Children works with the area's local council on a security assessment to identify a safe, protected location for the school. These are very often damaged former school buildings that are now occupied by displaced families.

As the crisis has deepened the ability of host families to support displaced people has been stretched to breaking point. Increasing numbers are moving to camps or into vacant buildings, including damaged schools, with 1,000 schools currently being used as collective shelters for displaced people.

The involvement of the community has been vital in ensuring that treatment of displaced people is



protective while allowing for education services to resume. We work with local councils to identify appropriate alternative spaces such as vacant houses, mosques or empty government buildings that the families can use. If necessary we also speak with any other families who are living in these spaces to ensure they agree with hosting more families. A Memorandum of Understanding is agreed between the local council and Save the Children stipulating the new location to which the displaced families can move.

Save the Children then regularly follows up with the families to assess whether they require further assistance through our other teams, and to ensure that children are enrolled and attending the newly opened school.

particularly limited and on average, only 17% of these children are in school.<sup>31</sup> In the Syrian camp schools that Save the Children supports, average attendance rates are lower than in non-camp locations. While our data show that lower attendance rates at schools on a week-by-week basis are in direct correlation to security issues such as airstrikes, car bombs, clashes and flyovers in the vicinity of the school, attendance rates overall at schools in the camps is consistently around half that of local schools.

**“We went to another safer village... but there was no school there so I couldn't do anything and I had to stop my education for a whole year. After one year we moved to another place because I had to go to school, but this next village was so crowded with displaced families from the surrounding villages.... This was when I started going back to school again but the teachers were bad and they hit me with hoses because I was from another village.”**

Salam, 12, Syria

## IN NO STATE TO LEARN

**“I used to be a very good student but after the conflict started I don't know what happened. I found I could not concentrate on my lessons because my family had lost our home and had become displaced people.”**

Mona, 9, Syria

While the physical destruction of school buildings and equipment clearly restricts children's access to education, the psychological impact of conflict on boys and girls significantly affects their ability to learn and develop academically, and is much harder to overcome.

**“Najem used to be one of the brightest students in his class but then his father was detained and he had to change schools so many times, and now he is not doing so well because it is all so hard for him.”**

Nadeen, mother, Syria

Enabling children to continue their education means ensuring that schools are safe spaces where children are protected physically, emotionally and

psychologically. It requires the integration of education and child protection interventions to ensure children receive appropriate support for their well-being.

Displacement, conflict and poor living conditions create high levels of anxiety and stress. In a survey undertaken by Save the Children, large proportions of children were identified as displaying signs of psychosocial distress.<sup>32</sup> Nearly one in three children identified feelings of helplessness, 39% regularly had bad dreams and 42% said they regularly felt sad. In another survey, 38% of children at schools supported by Save the Children were identified as displaying emotional and behavioural traits suggesting they were unable to cope with the stresses of their environment; slightly more boys than girls were affected and teachers noted more than half of the children as being easily scared and 40% were frequently unhappy.

Studies of children exhibiting signs of acute psychological distress have shown that the part of the brain where learning takes place is inhibited when under conditions of stress and trauma.<sup>33</sup> A Save the Children survey of children in Syria highlighted that up to half of the pupils spoke of how they were 'rarely' or 'never' able to concentrate in class. This finding was reiterated by teachers in schools that Save the Children supports, who said that one third of children were unable to obey instructions given by adults and almost half were unable to focus on their work while in class.

**“I have noticed that in class any loud noises very easily distract the children. Sometimes they start screaming even if the door is just closed strongly.”**

Hanan, 44, teacher, Syria

Measures to address Syrian children's psychological wellbeing as part of an integrated education programme are an essential component of any response. They must be included alongside education measures in order to improve children's ability to learn. Children's well-being is at risk if they are not learning and not in school. A lack of sustained access to education potentially creates a negative cycle of isolation and psychosocial distress. At the same time, children who are distressed are less likely to be able to be able to learn while in class.

**“Right now we have six hundred children in our school. Most of them had forgotten about school and weren't attending because of the insecurity. We work with them to get them out of this psychosocial situation, make them forget about what is going on around us and let them focus on their education.”**

Anas, 42, Syria

Longer-term psychosocial distress can be minimised when teachers and communities are empowered to address issues around children's well-being in a way that also builds resilience to traumatic experiences.



Children in a school supported by Save the Children in northern Syria.

PHOTO: SAVE THE CHILDREN



Children play football outside their school in northern Syria which is supported by Save the Children.

PHOTO: SAVE THE CHILDREN

This avoids time-intensive and resource-heavy health programming at a later date. However, a prerequisite for this approach is sufficient numbers of well-trained and supported teachers inside Syria, a country where the teaching force has been depleted by at least 22% since the conflict began. Some 233 teachers have been killed<sup>34</sup> and thousands more have been displaced within Syria or are now living as refugees in neighbouring countries. Many of those teachers who are still able to work may be suffering from psychosocial trauma themselves, rendering them unable to work effectively, if at all. Those who are still teaching may find that their capacity to execute their duties and deal with their pupils' psychological distress and its associated behaviour is impaired. It is imperative that these teachers are equipped personally as well as professionally to continue their vital work both within Syria. This includes the provision of appropriate remuneration.

As well as high levels of violence and displacement, the protracted nature of the Syrian crisis is also leaving children increasingly vulnerable to harmful practices such as child labour. As the NLGI has highlighted, the ongoing conflict places vulnerable children at risk of harm from various threats including early marriage, child labour and recruitment into armed groups. These pressures on children are increasing as the crisis becomes entrenched and families' vulnerabilities increase. The situation is most acute for displaced families who may have lost all their belongings and means of making a living, and who may now be faced

with rising costs of housing and other basic services. Families are turning to practices they would not previously have contemplated, such as sending their children to work or arranging marriages for their daughters as a means of securing financial support for the wider family.

In spite of these cruel realities, the protection gap in Syria continues to be left to grow without appropriate levels of funding to meet the vast needs. Child protection and education have remained in their own silos, largely funded and programmed independently of each other, with only piecemeal attempts at integration to date.<sup>35</sup> If there are not increased efforts to integrate education and children protection programming then opportunities to address the reasons why children are not in school and to help ensure that they are able to learn effectively when they are in class will continue to be missed. There is also an efficiency rationale to this approach as both sectors are almost equally poorly funded.<sup>36</sup> To maximise the impact of the funding that is available there must be further consideration of how the two can be better integrated, along with other sectors such as health and nutrition. To improve this situation, a revised NLGI strategy must ensure that cross-sectoral collaboration and programming between UN agencies and multilateral and bilateral donors is improved and works proactively to stop the ongoing psychosocial trauma and exploitation of Syrian children.

Efforts must be made as a matter of urgency to ensure that children are removed from harmful environments

## CHILDREN WHO ARE WORKING AND NOT IN SCHOOL

**“I am in the sixth grade right now but... I was working in the diesel market for the first half of this year. My father is deaf and can't work so I had to work and support my family. After six months of working in the market, there was a big explosion near to where I was working. After that happened my father stopped me from going to work and told me to go back to the school again.”**

Hani, 13, Syria

In June 2014, in one location in northern Syria Save the Children staff identified more than 100 children – mainly boys between the ages of eight and 15 – working in the local diesel market. None of these children were going to school. They were spending up to eight hours a day using sponges to soak up diesel that large tankers had spilled on the ground and then squeeze the diesel into jerry cans, which could then be sold. Many of the children were suffering from skin conditions and burns. They were earning less than US\$1 a day but even this small amount of money was enough to encourage them to give up their education to help support their families.

Working together, staff from Save the Children's education, child protection and food security teams visited the children's families to find out the

circumstances that had forced the children to drop out of school. It was then agreed that the families would receive food parcels as part of Save the Children's regular food distributions in the area and that the children would re-enrol in school, with Save the Children's child protection team visiting families regularly to check on progress. As a result, the number of children currently working in this market has dramatically reduced, and Save the Children continues to work with the local council and parents to ensure that no children are working and out of school.

The reasons for children dropping out of school are complex and require an integrated child protection and education response by humanitarian actors. Drop-out data from Save the Children's schools reveal that, overall, equal numbers of boys and girls are dropping out of school. However, in some locations where child labour is more common noticeably higher numbers of boys are dropping out. For girls, insecurity is often a key reason for leaving education, while the prospect of early marriage looms as a solution to their families' economic and security concerns, and as a way of 'protecting' them from the risk of abuse.



A young boy squeezes diesel into a jerry can to sell in northern Syria.



PHOTO: JONATHAN HYAMS/SAVE THE CHILDREN

Roha at a Save the Children supported school for refugees in Tripoli, Lebanon.

and are able to re-enter protected education spaces. Given the interconnectedness of child protection and education, attention should also be paid to placing education at the heart of a holistic approach to improving children's protection. This could include practical initiatives such as using schools as community centres where protection issues can be addressed, and health and nutrition programming can be rolled out. There must also be increased investment in long-term well-being interventions to build resilience and protect children to mitigate the need for more intensive and costly psychological interventions down the line. It is vital that children's access to quality education is addressed simultaneously alongside their protection and psychosocial needs and that the revised NLGI strategy accounts adequately for this necessity.

### COMMUNITY-LED EDUCATION

**“Any work without cooperation is going to fail, and because of the cooperation with Save the Children we have done great things and hope to continue. We both have the same belief that whatever the situation, education is critical for children. The community, local council, teachers and Save the Children all wanted this school to be a success, which is why we are where we are right now.”**

Anas, 42, teacher, Syria

Save the Children has collaborated with communities to identify four priorities to improve the quality and availability of education for children in northern Syria. These are the provision of:

- safe and protective learning spaces;
- sufficient and appropriate teaching and learning materials;
- psychosocial support for children and teachers; and
- well-trained and supported teachers.

Underpinning these priorities is the need for increased investment in building and strengthening community-led education systems, in line with Save the Children's global approach towards education programming in emergencies and the International Network for Education in Emergencies' (INEE) Minimum Standards. Community involvement and ownership enhances accountability, facilitates the identification of education issues particular to the local context and ways to address them, mobilises local resources and supports the maintenance of education services in the long-term.<sup>37</sup>

Ensuring robust community engagement is vital in northern Syria where most areas are currently controlled by armed opposition groups, the Ministry of Education is no longer functioning, and there has been



## A COMMUNITY-LED EMERGENCY EDUCATION RESPONSE

**“The school that I teach at was attacked and damaged very badly.... When I heard what had happened I went back to check on the school and I was so shocked.... I just could not understand why this had happened. This school is the most important thing there is to support children who are living in this crisis. Many of the students also went to the school after the attack to check on it; some of them started crying and some of them started searching for their work and their drawings in the rubble. It was a very painful moment.”**

Mulham, 26, teacher, Syria

In June 2014, a Save the Children-supported school in northern Syria was almost completely destroyed when a missile landed in the playground. This was the third time this school had been affected by an attack. Thankfully, no children or teachers were in the school at the time but the damage to the building was so extensive that it was not safe to use anymore. However, the community places a very high value on education and were keen to ensure that their children were able to return to their schooling as soon as possible.

In such situations, Save the Children’s Education and Child Protection Service Delivery Contingency Plan kicks in. This is part of our Conflict-Sensitive Education Operating Protocols, which include guidance on community-driven education and child protection, safety, security and well-being. The Contingency Plan sets out the steps that should be taken to ensure the continuation of education and child protection under various insecure circumstances, while the Safety, Security and Wellbeing Protocol provides a series of steps that should be taken to prepare, manage and respond to incidents.



Children work together on a drawing at their school in northern Syria which is supported by Save the Children



Children play inside a school supported by Save the Children in northern Syria.

Save the Children’s approach is to provide an advisory role to the community we work with, who are empowered to make decisions about their children’s education and who ultimately decide on what action should be taken. In this situation, given the high risk to children by continuing to use the school, Save the Children and the community together took the decision to suspend activities at the school.

Although it was no longer possible to use the school, the community was still very keen to ensure that children could continue to learn and was looking for alternative options. One option envisaged in the Contingency Plan was to set up group schooling at locations that had already been identified as suitable safe spaces by the community and Save the Children. However, the risk of repeated attacks on this community meant that gathering groups of children together would still have been too dangerous. Instead, the decision was taken to implement home-based learning activities until the situation in the area stabilised and a safer school location could be rehabilitated. Save the Children and the community have continuously monitored the security situation to decide when to re-start formal education.

Teachers support parents with home-based learning activities to continue their children’s learning. Each teacher is responsible for around 30 children in their neighbourhood who they visit at least once a week. As children have their own textbooks, teachers help parents to set targets for what units should be covered by the child each week. They also ensure children have sufficient materials, check on the children’s wellbeing and safety, and give parents advice and information to ensure they can effectively support their children’s learning, thus ensuring a continuation of children’s education and safeguarding their protection.



PHOTO: JONATHAN HYAMS/SAVE THE CHILDREN

an erosion of traditional governance bodies with which Save the Children would normally engage. In the absence of governorate-level support, we work with local or village councils to identify education needs and priorities, ensure ground-level support for education activities and respond to incidents that threaten education.

While local councils presently provide some of the most effective governance structures for education provision in northern Syria, they very often lack the necessary skills to fulfil their role. In the longer term, recognised governance structures in northern Syria are needed to scale-up the provision of quality education to all children. In the short to medium term, capacity-building is needed to strengthen local councils and other community-based governance structures.

## CONCLUSION

Our experience clearly shows that despite the ongoing conflict, it is possible to support the continuation of education for Syria's children. However, it also tells us that, to date, there has been insufficient attention, political support and resources to minimise the disruptions this devastating conflict is causing to children's opportunities and ability to learn. Greater action needs to be taken to ensure education for children within Syria now if we are to avert a lost generation within the country and offer hope and a positive future to those children who remain.

Education has never been deadlier for Syria's children. Consequently, political efforts must be stepped up to protect educational institutions, students and teachers from attack, alongside a wider push for an immediate end to hostilities. More must also be done to ensure children have the learning materials and teachers they need to continue to learn, as well as the opportunity to take exams without unnecessary risk to their lives.

Moreover, it is not just children's physical wellbeing that is at risk. Ongoing conflict and insecurity is also taking a high toll on children's emotional and

psychological wellbeing. The NLGI must strengthen and scale up its integration of education and child-protection programming if it is to be effective. Central to this is continued investment in well-trained and supported teachers who are able to support children's psychological needs, as well as their learning needs.

The NLGI must galvanise greater support to expand the educational opportunities for children who are currently missing out within Syria, particularly those who have been displaced, whether in government or opposition-held areas of the country. Communities provide an under-utilised resource in this regard and represent another important partner in defining and achieving the aims of the NLGI. Given the mobility of families, active conflict and limited humanitarian access, emphasis must be placed on training more people to be teachers and engaging communities to identify needs, shape the response and be part of its delivery.

Specific recommendations for action in these areas are included in the final section of this report.

# 2 THE REFUGEE EDUCATION CRISIS

**There are now over 1.5 million Syrian children living as refugees in surrounding countries.<sup>38</sup> Almost 1 million are school-aged<sup>39</sup> yet almost half of those are not receiving any form of education.<sup>40</sup> Without access to an education, out of school refugee children are highly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. The capacity for education to protect them and foster their potential is out of their reach due to the large number of obstacles that block their path to school. As a result, their futures, as well as that of Syria's and the region, look precarious.**

In every refugee-hosting country across the region, overcrowded classrooms, unfamiliar curricula, differences in language of instruction,<sup>41</sup> insufficient catch-up programmes, high transport costs, harassment and discrimination work against Syrian refugee children's access to education and make their learning chaotic and inconsistent. Like families inside Syria, refugee families also face acute financial pressures that force children into work and early marriage and deny them their right to education. Something as simple as missing paperwork to prove their legal status or education level can prevent children's enrolment. As a result of these difficult challenges, the proportions of refugee children out of school are now alarmingly high: 90% in urban areas of the Kurdistan region of Iraq,<sup>42</sup> 84% of those living outside camps in Turkey and 80% in Lebanon.<sup>43</sup>

A more comprehensive response to the complexity of factors forcing and keeping children out of school is now needed to truly address the regional education crisis. This section briefly highlights each of these main factors and, in doing so, looks at implications for the future shape and framing of the NLGI. Though we focus here on Syrian refugee children, it should be noted that many of the issues raised are also pertinent

for children trying to pursue their education within Syria. Indeed there may be some overlap with the issues outlined in the preceding section.

## PUSHED TO BREAKING POINT

The scale of the Syrian refugee exodus has put host countries under immense strain and the development gains of the last few decades in jeopardy. Tensions are rising between refugees and host populations as demand for basic services skyrockets, rents and food costs rise and refugees enter informal labour markets, undercutting the working poor.

The vast majority of Syrian refugees – 84% on average regionally<sup>44</sup> – live in local communities rather than camps, overloading local resources and services, including public education systems. Host countries like Egypt and Lebanon have chosen to respond to the refugee crisis by not establishing refugee camps, leaving Syrians to integrate with local communities or establish informal settlements with limited access to humanitarian services. In Lebanon, *all* refugees live in host communities, with one person in every five now a Syrian refugee. To give a sense of the scale and impact this kind of influx has had on local services, Lebanon's population is now close to the levels previously projected for 2050.<sup>45</sup>

For various reasons, some refugees register with United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

A Syrian refugee family who live in a host community in Jordan.



PHOTO: EVAN SCHURMAN/SAVE THE CHILDREN

## SUPPORTING THE IMPROVED LIVELIHOODS OF BOTH REFUGEES AND HOST COMMUNITIES

Save the Children has implemented a number of social cohesion and community support initiatives in Lebanon to address the root causes of tensions between refugee and host communities and forge improved relations. In recognition that the creation of casual labour opportunities for both Syrian refugees and host-community members could assist in reducing hostilities, we employed 8,000 Lebanese and Syrian workers over a ten day period to work side by side to carry out improvements on community infrastructure and the environment in 41 sites in refugee settlements and surrounding host communities, including building safe spaces for children to play. When participants were surveyed afterwards, 76% expressed satisfaction with the experience. Furthermore, compared to non-beneficiaries, Lebanese workers demonstrated more positive attitudes toward Syrians after participating in the programme.

Through our home-based skills development programme in the Akkar and Bekaa governorates, two of Lebanon's poorest and most underserved regions, we have supported 800 vulnerable women from refugee and host communities, to learn a trade and establish small enterprises. Through the project, Syrian and Lebanese women learned new skills and became more financially independent, with many building lasting friendships and successful business partnerships. All the women who provided feedback on their participation in the project said the opportunity to engage with other women, make friends and reduce the sense of fear and isolation they had previously felt was one of the most unexpected and rewarding aspects of the programme.

**“It was a great opportunity to work hand in hand with Lebanese women. We were living in the same neighbourhood but we didn't know anything about each other. They were cautious of us and we were cautious too, but now we enter their houses and work together. We became friends.”**

Reyaq, 20, Lebanon



Adeel dreamed of becoming a mechanic, but instead of going to school he now works in a shop to support his family.

(UNHCR) but choose not to live in camps (if they are available) or leave them shortly after arriving; others are unable or unwilling to register with UNHCR due to the cost of travelling to registration centres or concerns about security and freedom of movement.<sup>46</sup> These refugees tend to live in host communities, off the radar and with limited access to humanitarian aid and key services, including education.

Large numbers of refugees living in host communities are inevitably coming into direct competition with local populations (with already marginalised groups bearing a disproportionate burden – 85% of refugees are living in the same areas as 68% of poor Lebanese<sup>47</sup>). Given the bureaucratic obstacles and expenses involved in obtaining work permits across the region, many are seeking work in the informal labour market.<sup>48</sup> This is driving down wages in the informal sector, and increasing rent and food costs in areas where refugees settle. It is placing significant pressure on local communities and is a key source of tension between refugees and host populations. The Government of Jordan now requires aid agencies to increase the proportion of Jordanians they target in refugee assistance programmes from 30% to 50%, which indicates the growing scale of this particular challenge.<sup>49</sup>

Demand for accommodation and a shortage of supply across the region has pushed up rents in areas where refugees have settled. Refugee household expenditure on rent has increased by 28% in Jordan<sup>50</sup> and 40% in some areas of Egypt over a period of just eight months.<sup>51</sup> UNHCR estimates that 860,000 refugees outside camps are living in substandard shelter regionally.<sup>52</sup>

It is not hard to see how Syrian refugee households are spending more than they can earn. For example, in Egypt a Syrian refugee household's average monthly income is US\$115-215 whereas their average monthly spending is US\$360.<sup>53</sup> In Jordan, the income-expenditure gap in refugee families can range from US\$211 to US\$410<sup>54</sup> with refugee families in Lebanon covering an average monthly shortage of US\$274.<sup>55</sup> Crucially, this situation is likely to get worse as agencies cut back on programming due to underfunding of this year's Syria regional response, which is only 46% funded as of early September 2014.<sup>56</sup> Many refugees are highly dependent on cash and food assistance (at least 70% of registered Syrian households in Egypt rely on this to bridge their income-expenditure gap<sup>57</sup>) and so any changes in aid provision will have a huge impact.

In the face of these mounting costs and lack of income-generating opportunities, refugee families are reaching breaking point and it is directly affecting their children's access to education. According to a recent assessment of Syrian refugee households in Lebanon, over 80% had to borrow money or access credit to meet their basic needs and their primary causes of debt were living, healthcare and education costs (such as transport, uniform and materials).<sup>58</sup> In Egypt, only 20% of households surveyed in a recent UNHCR assessment reported funding school fees through employment. The rest financed their children's education from their savings, with the support of family or friends or grants.<sup>59</sup> It is no surprise then that 46% of the Syrian refugee households we interviewed in Egypt reported that they were coping with mounting financial pressures by not enrolling their children in school to avoid paying fees and other expenses.<sup>60</sup>

While education is seen to be important by many refugee families, some are forced to push it down their list of priorities due to the extreme financial circumstances they are facing. Instead, children are thrust into work as finances diminish with no prospect of replenishment. Now, it is estimated that one in ten Syrian refugee children across the region is working<sup>61</sup> (although this figure is likely to be much higher) with 47% of refugee families interviewed in Jordan reporting

they rely partly or entirely on their child's income.<sup>62</sup> Children from under-skilled and overburdened female-headed households (which account for one in four families regionally<sup>63</sup>) are at particular risk of child labour.<sup>64</sup> Disturbingly, financial pressures are also pushing some refugee boys to return to Syria to join armed groups, which offer the promise of sustenance, shelter and a salary of US\$47-135 a month.<sup>65</sup> In a cruel irony, some boys are signing up with one armed group on the promise that they can continue their education, only to find out that their lessons primarily involve military and weapons training.<sup>66</sup>

For many girls, marriage offers a means of reducing financial pressure.<sup>67</sup> Girls who are not in school are at greater risk of early marriage, and, conversely, girls who get married are more likely to drop out of education. This increase in child marriage is often against parents' own best judgement. As one mother said, "I would feed [my daughter] my eyes before I [married her off]".<sup>68</sup> And yet, many children themselves see early marriage as a way for them to help their families and improve their situations, putting their protection and future prospects at great risk.

**“My mother is doing her best to get us money, but our financial situation is very bad. I wish I could get married now to a rich man and take money from him and give it to my mother. I know it's not right and I am only 17. There are a lot of girls who do the same, willingly, and the parents want this too. I am not studying now. I should go back to school, but my priority is to get married. I believe getting married to someone rich is the most practical and fastest solution, and we already get many suitors in Egypt. It would be nice if he lets me finish my education. I know it's a mistake, but it is a mistake that I would make.”**

Sita, 17, Egypt



PHOTO: SYRIA RELIEF

## REACHING THE MOST VULNERABLE OUT OF SCHOOL CHILDREN

Many Syrian refugee children are living outside camps, some in makeshift, informal settlements with little access to basic services, including education. In Jordan, most of the children living in these situations cannot enrol in local schools because they have problems with their paperwork or move regularly. Many children have to work because of their families' scarce financial resources and school is no longer an option for them.

Save the Children is working to address the out of school problem in informal settlements by providing children with tailored learning opportunities. We have designed an education programme in line with the Ministry of Education's formal programme to increase children's readiness to enrol in the public system. We have also established learning spaces in informal settlements and we are training members of the refugee community to be education facilitators. To cater for the realities of children living in informal settlements and to encourage their school attendance, we are implementing flexible class times to accommodate working children's schedules.

## THERE IS SIMPLY NO SPACE

As the vast majority of Syrian refugees live outside camps, the only way most refugee children can continue their education is to enrol in already over-stretched public schools or participate in informal (and often unrecognised) locally-run community classes. Local schools are incapable of absorbing large numbers of refugee children or meeting their complex and various learning needs, such as mother-tongue instruction, catch-up programmes or relevant curricula.

Many refugee children are simply turned away by public schools that just do not have the space to accommodate them.<sup>69</sup> In Lebanon, 18% of households surveyed gave 'no space' as one of the reasons their child was not enrolled in school.<sup>70</sup> In Jordan, 120 schools are overcrowded as the country struggles to absorb more than 85,000 refugee children in host communities.<sup>71</sup> Double shifting has gone some way to addressing the challenges in the short term, but in Egypt there are reports of five to seven children sharing one desk.<sup>72</sup> In contrast, being in a camp increases a refugee child's chances of going to school: in Turkey, 83% of refugee children living in camps attend school compared to 14% living outside of camps.<sup>73</sup> While the education needs of children living in camps must also be addressed, there must be a focus on improving access to education for refugee children living in host communities.



Amin at a refugee settlement near the Syrian border.

PHOTO: JONATHAN HYAMS/SAVE THE CHILDREN



PHOTO: JONATHAN HYAMISAVE/THE CHILDREN

Syrian children attend a Save the Children supported school for refugees in Tripoli, Lebanon.

Lebanon's education system is under extreme pressure working to accommodate an additional 394,000 Syrian refugee children<sup>74</sup> in a system only equipped to cater for 300,000 Lebanese children.<sup>75</sup> The Government of Lebanon has been working hard to meet the need and has accommodated 90,000 refugee children in the public system so far. However, with 500,000 Syrian children estimated to be in need of an education outside the formal system by the end of the year,<sup>76</sup> the international community must do much more to assist host countries to meet this overwhelming challenge.

This pressure on local education systems is emerging as a major source of tension in host communities. In a recent assessment canvassing the opinions of both Jordanian and Syrian refugees,<sup>77</sup> 55% reported that education challenges were 'very' or 'extremely' urgent with a greater number of Jordanians (61%) reporting that access to education caused tension in communities. Interestingly, more Jordanians than Syrians said there was inadequate access to education, noting that Syrians were displacing Jordanian students in schools and causing overcrowding. This demonstrates the clear need for refugee education response plans and programming to cater for the needs of host communities and their children as well, not only as a means of relieving mounting tensions but also to ensure that all children affected by the crisis receive a quality education.

### USING INNOVATION FOR EFFECTIVE CASE MANAGEMENT

With the huge numbers of children requiring access to education with varied situations and complex needs, it is becoming increasingly difficult to manage, track, monitor and refer their cases for effective response. To address this issue, Save the Children is piloting a new online platform in Jordan called the Education and Beneficiaries Support Information System (EBSIS) to streamline processes and bring greater efficiency and effectiveness in responding to children's education needs. The EBSIS platform can be accessed through any smart device and allows real-time data entry, avoiding duplication and facilitating referrals internally and to other organisations. We are able to track the status of cases and generate information on why children are out of school and what is hindering their enrolment. This helps decision-makers identify what the critical issues are in certain areas and prioritise our response. We hope to scale up the programme with other partners in the education sector in the near future and build a shared information portal and referral and monitoring system.

## BUILDING AWARENESS OF WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO RETURN TO SCHOOL AND HOW TO RE-ENROL

Many refugee children have been out of school for a long period of time, and all refugee children have had their education interrupted to some extent. Refugee children often delay their re-entry into education: some think they have missed out on too much school and fail to re-enrol; others are apprehensive about going to a new school; sometimes their parents do not know what education services exist in their new host country or the process to enrol their children. To help address this problem, Save the Children, through a peer-to-peer participatory approach, recruited refugee children who are attending school to encourage their out of school peers to return to education. To help raise awareness, peer educators created a play, which they perform when they visit out of school children in camps and host communities. They have also developed their own 'back to school' messages, including "Today we learn letters, tomorrow we write books!" and "My school is clean and beautiful and we enjoy our time there. Register in school with us!". We have found that the peer-



PHOTO: JONATHAN HYAMS/SAVE THE CHILDREN

to-peer approach has been particularly effective in raising awareness about education and encouraging children to return to school. Refugee children who acted as peer educators were also empowered, with one commenting, "Participating in peer groups empowered me to influence parents and children and also enhanced my self-esteem as currently I have a positive role in my community."

## PREVENTED BY PAPERWORK

Host-country enrolment and documentation policies are also keeping children out of school. For example, in Jordan, any child who has been out of school for three years or more cannot re-enrol in the formal public education system. This policy affects 65,000 out of school Syrian refugees who can now only enrol for limited non-formal education opportunities.<sup>78</sup> In other host countries, such as Egypt, refugees have reported that extensive red tape also prevents enrolment or prolongs the time it takes for children to re-enter school. Certified papers must be ratified by the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs before they leave Syria (which is often an impossible task) and then by the local education administration in Egypt (which can involve travel to another city) and by the Syrian Embassy before a refugee child can be enrolled in school.<sup>79</sup> Parents must also have valid residency permits before children can enrol in school. If the permits expire during the school year and are not renewed, children are not allowed to continue their studies or take end-of-year exams.<sup>80</sup> Paperwork is unsurprisingly now reported as one of the biggest barriers to accessing an education by Syrian refugee

families living in Egypt,<sup>81</sup> with children we work with recently making an animation to highlight the subject.

**"It was very difficult for my father to register us in school. He suffered a lot to get us in. I don't know the details, but he had to go to many government associations for stamps and other things for registration. They didn't recognise my sixth grade certificate from Syria, so I had to retake my exams using the Egyptian curriculum so that I could register in the seventh grade here. The Ministry in Syria has to authorise the certificate, but we didn't have time to do this before we left."**

Maysa, 14, Egypt

Increasing entry restrictions, plus the tightening of refugee registration and visa policies in host countries are also likely to be barriers to education. Some refugee children's parents are in legal limbo, having crossed a border unofficially because it offered the safest and quickest exit from Syria or because they left their documentation behind when they fled. Some may be unable to register or apply for residency without official papers and so are unable to access key services or enrol their children in school.



For refugees who have entered legally, documentation must be renewed regularly, often at a high cost. In Lebanon, for example, while refugees are granted a six-month short-stay visa on arrival (with the option of a further six-month renewal), they must apply for a residency permit after that, which costs US\$200, equivalent to a refugee's average monthly wage in Lebanon.<sup>82</sup> Many cannot afford it and therefore fail to regularise their stay. The cost of travelling to UNHCR offices to renew paperwork can also be prohibitive. In Egypt, parents with overdue visas are often caught out when they take their children to school as they have to regularly present valid documentation. The resulting fines mean that some parents withdraw their children from school to avoid the penalties (and the risk of detention or deportation).<sup>83</sup>

More restrictive refugee policies in host countries are having a major impact on children's education. From July 2014, refugees who unofficially leave camps in Jordan will be unable to obtain the necessary documentation to access free services, like health and education, and will not receive food vouchers, becoming more likely to resort to risky coping mechanisms in order to survive.<sup>84</sup>

The implications of non-legal status also impacts on parent's ability to access other services and to register the birth of their children. This could create a further protection crisis in the future for children who have no birth certificate or other form of identification to gain access to education services.<sup>85</sup>

## FALLING BEHIND AND LEARNING UNRECOGNISED

Even when refugee children manage to overcome these obstacles and enrol in schools, they face further challenges inside the classroom. Unfamiliar language of

instruction (such as Turkish, Kurdish and French) and curricula thwart their access to a quality education, as do overcrowded classrooms, shortened lessons and teachers who are overworked by double shifting or overwhelmed by the needs of traumatised boys and girls. These challenges are further exacerbated by a lack of appropriate teaching resources and learning materials across the region.

Furthermore, many Syrian refugee children have been out of school for a long period of time – some for three years or more – and require specialised assistance either to catch up so they can enter the formal education system or to learn outside the system in line with their own needs and capacities. Most host-country schools have neither the capacity nor expertise to provide these children with the support they need. Alternative models of education outside of formal schooling are necessary – whether they are accelerated learning or catch-up classes – yet this is rarely offered or supported in host country contexts.

Lebanon's Ministry of Education and Higher Learning is leading the way in this respect and is close to finalising a national education plan that will see non-formal education programmes provided to Syrian refugee children and the public school system strengthened to enable more refugee children to attend formal education.<sup>86</sup> National education plans that incorporate both formal, non-formal and informal education opportunities for refugee children (as well as host-country children) are the most comprehensive means of addressing the refugee education issue and catering for children's varied needs. It must be a matter of priority that similar plans are developed across the region and are fully funded and supported.

In the meantime, in response to these issues, and to other barriers within the public school system, Syrians are establishing their own informal schools in Egypt and Turkey.<sup>87</sup> However, these are currently not formally recognised or regulated and provide no formal certification. They can also be uneven in quality, depending how they are evaluated, monitored and supported. Encouragingly, the Ministry of Education in Turkey is mapping these schools and may formally recognise those that are meeting minimum standards. UNICEF has also established new schools in key areas across Turkey, which will teach a revised Syrian curriculum by accredited Syrian teachers under Turkey's Ministry of National Education's supervision.<sup>88</sup>

Fadi and Ahmed proudly show their school certificates.



PHOTO: EVAN SCHURMAN/SAVE THE CHILDREN



PHOTO: JONATHAN HYANS/SAVE THE CHILDREN

### SUPPORTING SYRIAN COMMUNITY SCHOOLS IN EGYPT

Save the Children is working to improve Syrian children's access to quality education in Egypt by supporting community schools in the 6th October City and Eastern part of Cairo. Through promoting a safe learning environment, building the capacities of teachers and equipping community schools with furniture, educational kits and books, we are assisting children who have been out of school to return to learning, regain a sense of normality and re-establish their psychosocial balance. We are supporting students' transportation costs, often a key barrier to continued education, and also contributing to school running costs. Moreover, we are working to build the capacities of Syrian teachers on topics such as how to better engage students in the educational process and inclusive classroom management to help them deal with cultural difference and diversity in the classroom. We are also supporting the schools' leadership teams with student assessment, educational and financial management as well as best-practice mentoring and coaching techniques.

Building on our partnership and Memorandum of Understanding with Egypt's Ministry of Education, we are working with them to formalise the practice of community schools and secure their official recognition to improve monitoring and quality control. We are also working with Ministry of Education staff at district level to help refugee families who are facing difficulties in enrolling their children in school.

**“The situation for refugees would be better here if they recognised and gave licences to the Syrian schools. They need to make the paperwork easier for Syrians, as it is very difficult to register here. I know one family who went to Italy and another to Germany, because they didn't want to stay here. They were looking for a better life. They travelled by the illegal boats which go to Europe. When they arrived, they felt better as they have got residence there now. However they said that the journey was a ‘death trip’ – some people on the boat died on the way.”**

Maysa, 14, Egypt

Enabling more Syrian refugee teachers to work in host community schools to help refugee children learn and support local teachers could also go a long way towards alleviating some of the key difficulties across the region. The practice of engaging Syrian teachers (usually as volunteers) is supported in some host countries (e.g. Turkey and Egypt) but there needs to be more targeted effort to identify the number of Syrian teachers living as refugees in the region and their capacities, and to mobilise them to play a key role in the refugee education response. To make this happen, host countries will also need to recognise the value of refugee teachers and allow them to work and donors must provide funding for their training and compensate them for their efforts (whether that be through a wage or some form of other assistance or incentive).

**“I think it is very important that Syrian teachers are allowed to teach Syrian children. The communication is easier, the language and curriculum is the same. And we also know what they have gone through and what they are feeling.”**

Ibrahim, 40, Syrian teacher working in Iraq with Syrian refugee children



PHOTO: TUE JAKOBSEN/SAVE THE CHILDREN



PHOTO: JONATHAN HYAMS/SAVE THE CHILDREN

Jamilah at a Save the Children supported school for Syrian refugees in Tripoli, Lebanon.

How children receive formal accreditation for their learning while they are outside Syria is another major concern for refugee children and their families. In many host countries, the formal certification of refugee children's learning either does not exist or is complicated and unclear. In Egypt, 2,000 Syrian refugee children are enrolled in public schools but are allowed to study day-to-day in Syrian-run community schools (where Syrian teachers teach them the Egyptian curriculum) and then return to sit national exams.<sup>89</sup> In the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, schools serving Syrian refugees are moving to use an Arabic version of the Kurdish curriculum and the Ministry of Education will provide certification.

For most Syrians, however, the issue of certification remains unresolved. Some parents are choosing high-risk strategies to ensure their children's learning to date is certified. Save the Children staff have received reports that uncertainty around access to quality education and certification in host countries has led some children to delay their exit from Syria so that they can take end-of-year exams. Both Syrian and Palestinian refugees from Syria living in Lebanon have also reported arranging for children to return briefly to Syria to sit official exams. They do so either because the children had no residency permits in Lebanon and so could not take the exams or because children found the curriculum in Lebanon difficult.<sup>90</sup> This incredibly

dangerous behaviour puts the lives of children and parents at risk. Those returning to Syria to gain accreditation could become separated or be denied re-entry, especially as host countries tighten their policies in this respect. Knowing that education offers empowerment and enrichment, as well as the promise of a better life, people are quite literally prepared to put their lives on the line for school.

**“I arrived with two of my children three days ago.<sup>91</sup> My other two daughters stayed in Damascus with their father to finish their end-of-year exams.... I am worried about my husband and two girls but they were so keen on going back to school that I couldn't stop them. I hope they make it to Lebanon safely.”**

Hanane, 33, Syrian refugee mother

### FAR FROM SAFETY

Refugee children who are able to attend local schools often report being bullied and harassed. Some of the Syrian children that participate in Save the Children programmes report being targeted on the way to school, ridiculed in the classroom by pupils and teachers and intimidated outside the school gate. Some have left school because of it, with one child commenting, “We can't get educated at the cost of our self-respect.”<sup>92</sup>

**BUILDING SOCIAL COHESION AND GREATER TOLERANCE AMONG YOUTH IN REFUGEE AND HOST COMMUNITIES**

Save the Children is working with refugee and vulnerable Lebanese youth who are facing similar challenges in terms of education and lack of opportunity to work together to play a proactive role in their societies. Through our Youth Facilitator Programme, Syrian and Lebanese youth receive life skills training, and training in community research skills, project planning and budgeting, before designing and implementing their own project to meet an identified need in the community.

**“Honestly, I hadn’t had the chance to talk to Syrian refugees before and I had my own pre-judgements, but after this workshop everything has changed. Having friends from different communities is great; I am learning lots of things from them and they are doing the same too. I have learnt how to see things from different perspective. Now I can understand their point of view and I am sure that we can work together on so many levels.”**

Lamis, 16, Lebanese

Community projects have focused on awareness-raising campaigns, rehabilitation of community spaces and the provision of recreational and educational activities for younger children. Through one project, refugee youth planted more than 250 trees in their new town to say thank you to the Lebanese municipality and host community for their generosity in welcoming the refugee population into Lebanon.

**“We want to have a positive influence on the community around us and here we start. These trees we are planting are a fine example of what I am talking about; everyone is happy and the people of this town had started talking about our group and how good we are. We have started feeling alive again.”**

Lama, 19, Syrian refugee in Lebanon



Children playing at a Save the Children’s Child Friendly Space in Iraq.

PHOTO: TUE JAKOBSEN/SAVE THE CHILDREN



Nora is at Save the Children's Child Friendly Space near the Syrian border.

PHOTO: JONATHAN HYAMS/SAVE THE CHILDREN

School-based discrimination and violence are pushing some families into home-schooling. Sexual harassment is an issue for girls across the region, particularly in Egypt, and as a consequence many are kept at home and miss out on school entirely.<sup>93</sup> Combined classes have been cited as a cause of tension, so second school shifts separating Syrian children from host community children are sometimes used as a strategy to reduce animosity in the classroom.<sup>94</sup>

**“Sometimes the Iraqi children get very angry at the Syrian children. They say that we are the bad guys. That makes me very angry, so I tell them that I didn’t come here to make problems but because the situation in Syria is very bad. There is no electricity and water [in Syria], so I just came here to go to school and to live. I am a child and I have nothing to do with the war, it is not my fault. I just have to continue to go to school.”**

Haval, 11, Iraq

Other children also face corporal punishment when they go to school. In Egypt, 30% of the children we spoke to as part of a recent community needs assessment reported being hit by their teachers, with 70% exposed to verbal abuse.<sup>95</sup> Corporal punishment is also an issue for Syrian refugee children attending

schools in camps and host communities in Jordan, where Save the Children managed almost 4,000 child protection cases during the last school semester. Jordan’s Ministry of Education is committed to addressing the problem and we have been working with them to raise awareness of the issue among parents, children and teachers and provide pathways to report harassment, including the establishment of a hotline for this purpose. We have also supported Jordan’s Ministry of Education to develop a code of conduct for teachers on how to work with refugee children and respect their rights, which teachers sign onto after completing a course of training.

**“The first day at school in Jordan was good. I was excited on the first day. But after one month [the teachers] started changing. They started hitting us.... All the teachers hit us, even the director. If someone whistled, he was hit. If a small kid just shouted, the teacher would hit us in the face; they would hit every kid until they found out who made the sound. When they start to hit me I feel I want to leave the school and not go back. I want to go to another school but not this school. I don’t hate studying, I hate the school.”**

Ahmed, 11, Jordan



An informal tented settlement occupied by Syrian refugees.

In addition to these challenges, many refugee children, like their counterparts inside Syria, are dealing with trauma and high levels of emotional distress. Many will have seen suffering, some will have seen death or been victims of violence themselves.<sup>96</sup> Others may have made the journey out of Syria alone, with their parents dead, detained or whereabouts unknown.<sup>97</sup> We know from talking to teachers and caregivers in

the different host countries we work in that these children are showing high levels of distress, changes in behaviour, fear and greater learning difficulties, and having trouble sleeping. There is an urgent need for general psychosocial support for most refugee children and more targeted psychological support for severely traumatised children.

## CONCLUSION

This section clearly illustrates that, though nearly 1 million school-aged children have managed to flee the conflict in Syria, for many their education remains far from assured and issues of access, protection and accreditation persist. Efforts need to be stepped up to find and fund additional quality learning opportunities for children, with a view to strengthening public education systems in host countries in the longer term.

The majority of out of school Syrian children in host countries are living in communities, rather than camps, which is putting added financial and social pressure on refugee families and host communities. As such, the NLGI will not deliver on its aim of getting a generation of Syrian children back to school unless it identifies ways to address the wider vulnerabilities that keep children

out of school, such as refugee families' economic situations and the financial pressures on host countries and communities, alongside measures to mitigate tensions between refugee and host communities.

Moreover, it is evident that across host countries there are a series of common policy restrictions that are seriously hindering Syrian children's opportunities to learn. If the NLGI is to be effective, collective agreement and action must be garnered on these with different host countries and NLGI partners. The key issues that must be addressed are: curriculum and certification, 'paperwork' and teachers.

Specific recommendations for action in these areas are included in the final section of this report.

# 3 FUNDING EDUCATION FOR SYRIAN CHILDREN

**Globally, education in emergencies is consistently underfunded and the Syria response is no exception.<sup>98</sup> While the NLGI has clearly directed global attention to the Syrian education crisis and the acute need to fund it, it is competing with an ever-increasing number of humanitarian appeals that are placing a high demand on donors and their finite financial resources. The Syria response is also the largest funding appeal in history and providing education both inside Syria and across the region is a complicated and expensive task.**

In this context, the NLGI plays a crucial role in galvanising donors around a common cause to stimulate action and funding in the education and protection sectors. It calls for almost US\$1 billion (\$114 million in 2013, \$885 million in 2014), which

goes towards funding education and protection programming under the Syrian Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan 5 (SHARP5) and the Regional Response Plan 6 (RRP6) with a portion allocated to host countries' national education plans.<sup>99</sup>

The lack of a centralised NLGI funding 'tracker' to capture and monitor all funding contributed to the NLGI makes it difficult to gauge the extent to which it has galvanised increased funding for education and protection in Syria and across the region or gain a clear view of the current funding gap. Currently, the only centralised records available are through OCHA's Financial Tracking Service (FTS); however, though these provide a record of education sector funding for the SHARP5, appeal information for the RRP6 simply records funding towards 'multi-sectoral projects' across the region. Establishing a clear picture of education funding under the NLGI therefore relies largely on individual agency reporting against education sector spend, as well as on nationally-held data in the case of Lebanon and Jordan.

Ghofran has missed out on education since she and her family had to flee from Syria. "I really want to go to school again," she says.



PHOTO: HEDINN HALDORSSON / SAVE THE CHILDREN



PHOTO: JONATHAN HYAMS/SAVE THE CHILDREN

Majed at a Save the Children supported school for Syrian refugees in Lebanon.

## FAILURE TO MEET EDUCATION FUNDING TARGETS

According to UNICEF, however, the NLGI was 60% funded in 2013 and is 33% funded as of August 2014.<sup>100</sup> In real terms, this means that, at this late stage in the year, there is currently a US\$600 million funding shortfall, putting the NLGI's aim of preventing a lost generation of Syrian children at great risk. In relation to education, UNICEF estimates that the education component of the NLGI is currently 29% funded.<sup>101</sup>

The lack of disaggregation of RRP funding by sector makes it difficult to analyse the impact the NLGI has had on catalysing greater education funding for the regional response. However, an analysis of SHARP funding<sup>102</sup> over time does give some insight into the role the NLGI has played in galvanising donor support for education within Syria itself. While conclusions can only be drawn tentatively, as the SHARP does not cover programming implemented directly in non-government held areas of Syria, it would appear that the NLGI has not played a particularly strong catalytic role in increasing education funding within the country.

In 2013, education received 82% of the funding it requested through the SHARP. However, as the NLGI only launched in October of that year, its role in

achieving this relatively high percentage of education funding for Syria in 2013 is likely to have been minimal. Moreover, although the NLGI has been in place throughout 2014, funding for education inside Syria this year remains remarkably low. Indeed, the percentage of the 2014 education funding requirement met by the end of August (14.6%) was only five percentage points higher than that met in 2012 (9.3%), the year before the initiative was launched.<sup>103</sup> Though there are admittedly three months left for 2014 funding levels to pick up, this figure is still remarkably low considering the school year in Syria began in September.

While the significant underfunding of the education response under the NLGI is concerning, the story is depressingly familiar. Despite the fact that half of the world's out of school children live in conflict-affected contexts, the international community has regularly failed to recognise through its funding commitments the importance of supporting education in humanitarian crises and the impact it can have on children's development and future prospects as well as on peace, stability and economic development. As a result, education in emergencies is systematically underfunded, with the share of humanitarian funding committed to education programming in decline since 2010.<sup>104</sup>



The impact of underfunded education in humanitarian contexts is significant. In 2013, due to the lack of funding, humanitarian actors were only able to reach 3.44 million of the 8.97 million beneficiaries they intended to target with education programming worldwide.<sup>105</sup> Even if education had been fully funded under humanitarian appeals in 2013 and all 8.97 million target beneficiaries had been reached, this would have only equated to one third of the 28.5 million out of school children living in conflict and emergency-affected areas.

### UNDERESTIMATING NEED

In addition to the chronic underfunding of education in emergencies, a recent review by Save the Children of funding requirements submitted to appeals processes for a number of chronic emergencies clearly shows that the education need represented in appeals often falls far short of actual need.<sup>106</sup> The education funding requested under the 2013 SHARP and RRP seems to bear testament to this. While 1.2 million beneficiaries were targeted through education programmes submitted for funding (with a total of 984,910 reached through the funding received),<sup>107</sup> there are almost 3 million out of school Syrian children in need of education support.

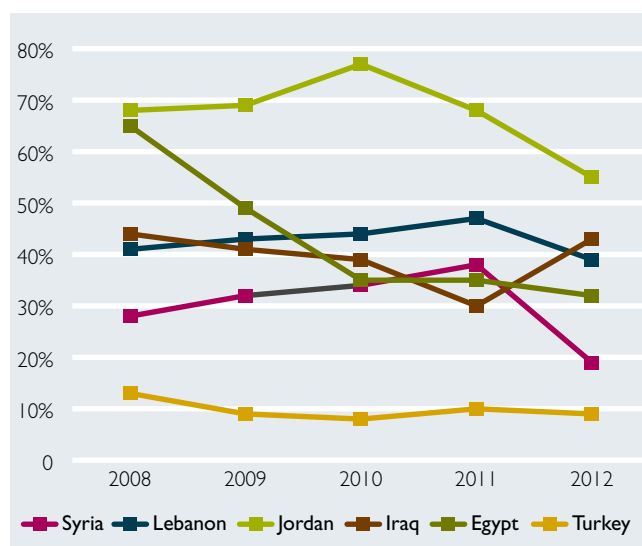
Furthermore, there is a lack of consensus on the cost of sending Syrian children to school in refugee-hosting countries, which is causing confusion and potentially contributing to an underestimation of the actual funding need. There is also a concern that a drive to achieve greater cost-effectiveness will come at the expense of quality. Clarity and agreement on the true costs of providing quality education for children across the region is needed in any revised NLGI strategy, with agreement to place a quality imperative at the heart of education programming.

### DE-PRIORITISATION OF EDUCATION IN DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE AND DOMESTIC SPENDING

It is clear that across the region current humanitarian funding is not sufficient to meet education needs in a protracted crisis. Moreover, as the crisis continues short-term humanitarian assistance must be complemented, and gradually replaced by, longer-term funding modalities, including development funding and domestic financing of education. To date, however, little attention has been given to longer-term financing modalities.

Globally, development aid to education has fallen since 2010, leaving an annual global funding gap for basic education of \$26 billion.<sup>108</sup> Despite the obvious need for increased international assistance to meet education needs in Syria and surrounding refugee-hosting countries since 2011, for all these countries – with the exception of Iraq – the *share* of total aid going to the education sector has actually declined. In the case of Syria, the share of aid earmarked for education decreased from 35% in 2010 to 15% in 2012.<sup>109</sup> More worryingly, as figure 1 shows, in the case of Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, the share of total education aid going to *basic* education has declined, indicating that basic education is being deprioritised for development funding in these countries.<sup>110</sup>

**Figure 1: Share of total education aid earmarked for basic education**



SOURCE: Using figures from the OECD-DAC CRS database, 2014<sup>111</sup>

This de-prioritisation of aid for basic education will have had an impact on host countries' education systems prior to the crisis and their current capacity to absorb large numbers of refugee children into a quality education system. Moreover, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria show the largest declines in shares of education aid to basic education since the start of the Syria crisis, despite having the largest numbers of out of school children in the region. This suggests that humanitarian funding is simply displacing, rather than supplementing, development funding. This is understandable for Syria, where it is much harder to implement long-term education sector plans but less so for Lebanon and Jordan where system-strengthening remains paramount.

Moreover, according to available information, host countries have also fallen short of their responsibilities to put domestic resources behind education to date. Prior to the Syria crisis, refugee-hosting countries in the region were spending well below globally accepted benchmarks on education, often leaving public systems under-resourced and forcing families to rely on private education.<sup>112</sup> For example, in 2011, Lebanon spent 7.1% of total government expenditure on education. In 2008 (latest data available), Egypt spent 11.9%. In contrast, in 2011, Syria spent 18.9 % of all public expenditure on education, reflected in high enrolment rates in public schools.

If the funding challenge is to be met, in addition to providing more humanitarian funding to education, donors must reverse declines in their development funding to basic education in Syria and the surrounding countries in order to support long-term solutions to the education crisis. At the same time, host countries must continue to invest in their domestic education systems, even in these times of increased economic burden.

### **MOBILISING ACROSS FUNDING SOURCES FOR A LONGER-TERM RESPONSE**

It is clear that across the region, current humanitarian funding is no longer sufficient or appropriate to meet education needs in a protracted crisis and longer-term development financing is needed. As the crisis continues, short-term humanitarian assistance must be complemented, and gradually replaced, by longer-term funding modalities, including development funding and domestic financing of education. At the same time there are some structural barriers in the international humanitarian financing system that are preventing the better allocation of longer term funds to the crisis. Efforts must be made to overcome these obstacles and 'free up' available funding in order to comprehensively respond to the crisis. Donors must also make multi-year funding commitments to allow for longer-term programme planning, capacity building and crucial systems-strengthening work. With this funding must also come a greater level of flexibility to ensure that education and protection actors can still meet short-term humanitarian needs, adapt to changing contexts and tailor programmes to best meet situations as they evolve.

### **CONCLUSION**

It is clear that the funding gap to support the continued education of Syrian children and ensure continued quality education for refugee children in host countries remains large and, to date, under-costed. The NLGI must commit to an assessment of the actual financial need to support education in the region, based on a commitment to ensure quality provision for every child. At the same time, in order to increase transparency and improve monitoring of the initiative's achievements, a dedicated mechanism for capturing all funding contributed to the NLGI should be developed.

Alongside this, in the face of a protracted crisis, the NLGI partners must look at how different funding modalities can better be used to support a longer term education response as well as meet the immediate needs of out of school children in Syria and refugee host countries. Moreover, as contexts continue to evolve, NLGI partners must take efforts to ensure a more timely financial response through more flexible funding modalities.

Specific recommendations for action in these areas are included in the final section of this report.

# 4 RECOMMENDATIONS

**The findings in this report clearly illustrate that Syria's children are facing an education crisis. More can and must be done to reverse this crisis and support the futures of those affected by the ongoing conflict. We call on No Lost Generation partners, host governments and the wider international community to redouble efforts to support education for Syria's children by making the following an immediate priority:**

## **RAMP UP ACTION TO SECURE EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN INSIDE SYRIA AND PROTECT SCHOOLS**

**We call on donors to:**

**Fully fund** education and protection programming that targets children in both government and opposition-held areas based on a 'whole of Syria' needs and gaps analysis.

**Prioritise integrated child protection and education programming.** Because of the psychosocial impact of the conflict on Syrian children and the many risk factors they face as a result of the situation they are living in, the integration of child protection and education programming inside Syria must be given priority and scaled up wherever possible.

**Support teacher training and local-level systems building.** Given the mobility of families, active conflict and limited humanitarian access, emphasis must be placed on training more people to be teachers and engaging communities to identify needs, shape the response and be part of its delivery. Communities can support children's continued learning and their wellbeing when classrooms are not available and conventional modes of learning are not possible.

## **Support innovative, high-impact solutions.**

The time is now to be innovative about how we help children access quality learning opportunities. We need to think beyond bricks and mortar and investigate other ways to reach children and nurture their minds, whether through new technologies or other creative delivery methods.

**We call on the UN and the international community to:**

**Continue to push for an immediate end to the hostilities** to ensure all children inside Syria are protected and refugee children and their families can return home. The sooner this happens, the sooner education can resume and Syrian children's futures will no longer be under threat.

**Demand that all parties to the conflict immediately implement the provisions of UN Security Council Resolutions 2139 and 2165** and promptly allow rapid, safe and unhindered access for impartial humanitarian actors across conflict lines and across borders to provide assistance to those people most in need and demilitarise schools and other civilian facilities. States with influence over the parties must exert maximum diplomatic pressure to ensure compliance with UN Security Council Resolutions.

**Demand that attacks on education cease and schools become zones of peace.** All parties to the conflict must abide by International Humanitarian Law and immediately cease attacks on and military use of schools and any other denial of children's right to education. Schools must be seen as off-limits by all parties and declared as zones of peace so that children feel safe and therefore more likely to attend. We call on states to take concrete measures to deter the military use of schools and support the finalisation and endorsement of the *Lucens Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use During Armed Conflict*.

**Demand that all parties to the conflict refrain from the use of explosive weapons with wide area effects in populated areas** to ensure that civilians and vital infrastructure, such as schools, are protected. States should continue to speak out against the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, acknowledging that civilians, in particular children, must be protected against death, injury and psychological harm.

**Ensure education is prioritised in the UN cross-border response.** UN Security Council Resolution 2165 must be utilised as a means of effectively scaling-up the education and child-protection response in northern Syria by ensuring that operational education and protection actors are provided with appropriate technical and material support from relevant UN agencies to halt and prevent any further grave violations and abuses against children. At the same time quality education cannot be delivered off the back of a truck or within the 180-day lifespan of UNSCR 2165: there needs to be a concerted effort to continue to push for increased humanitarian access so that a comprehensive education response can be provided on the ground.

## **PUSH FOR AND SUPPORT A DRAMATIC INCREASE IN THE NUMBERS OF REFUGEE CHILDREN ABLE TO ACCESS QUALITY EDUCATION**

**We call on host countries, donors and the international community to:**

**Recognise that reaching refugee children living in host communities must be a priority.**

The majority of out of school refugee children live outside camps and in host communities. Their access to education is thwarted by the limited capacity of public education systems and the more acute financial pressures their families are facing. Any education response must target the particular barriers faced by refugee children if substantial progress is to be made on preventing a lost generation.

**Ensure greater numbers of refugee children in host communities have access to relevant education opportunities.** Greater effort must be made to ensure that more Syrian refugee children can access an education that meets their needs. The capacity of host countries' public education systems must be strengthened to accommodate much greater

numbers. At the same time, public education systems are unlikely to be able to accommodate the large number of children who need to return to school or to cater for their different educational needs. Host countries must recognise, support and rapidly scale-up informal, accelerated and non-formal education opportunities to help absorb the overflow of refugees and progressively meet their learning needs. Donors must fully fund these efforts.

**Ensure refugee children are also accessing a quality learning environment.** As recent evidence from the global education community has shown, access to education is only effective if education programmes offer good quality teachers and learning opportunities. This means an education that children understand and which is relevant to their learning needs. The quality of education provision in host countries, in whichever form it may be, must also be regulated and monitored to ensure consistency, and teachers must be adequately and regularly trained in order to convey learning content effectively to students.

**Ensure education is safe and inclusive.** It is essential that Syrian refugee children see school as a safe space that promotes their protection and wellbeing. Greater efforts must be made to reduce school bullying and harassment, to promote inclusivity and tolerance, and to foster productive relationships among Syrian and non-Syrian children. The effort has to come from both sides and must be reflected in the wider community, particularly among adults. At the same time, key sources of tensions must also be addressed and approaches developed that recognise and address the frustrations and needs of both refugee and host communities.

## **FOCUS ON THE REMOVAL OF POLICY RESTRICTIONS IN REFUGEE-HOSTING COUNTRIES**

**We call on host countries and donors to:**

**Agree on and implement a roadmap** within the next NILG strategy period to lift key policy restrictions that continue to keep refugee children out of school or limit their progression. These are:

- **Curricula and certification.** Every effort must be made to ensure that Syrian refugee children are being taught in a language and curriculum they

understand and that their learning will count. Host countries must support the implementation of a curriculum that meets the immediate and future needs of Syrian refugee children and provides pathways to formal certification. It is essential for refugee children's future prospects that their learning is evaluated and formally recognised, not only in the host country in which they live (and may remain) but also in Syria. The curriculum must enable them to pursue continued and higher learning in both contexts. Alternative solutions to certification must also be a vital component of the education response inside Syria to ensure that children do not put their lives at risk by travelling through combat zones to gain certification at government schools.

- **Paperwork.** Bring an end to restrictive, costly and bureaucratic policies on enrolment documentation and, in line with the INEE Minimum Standards for Education, agree on minimal documentation procedures on a region-wide basis so that all refugee children – including those with irregular status – have access to an education.
- **Teachers.** Train and support national teachers to better meet the task at hand. This means training more teachers to scale-up capacity both inside both Syria and across the region. Teachers must also be trained to better support children's wellbeing and, where applicable, promote inclusivity and tolerance in the classroom. Where necessary, the emphasis must be placed on recruiting teachers who can maximise Syrian children's continued learning – this may require host countries to recognise the status of Syrian teachers and actively involve them in the refugee education response.

## ADDRESS WIDER VULNERABILITIES THAT KEEP CHILDREN OUT OF SCHOOL

**We call on host countries, donors and the international community to:**

**Increase efforts to address refugee families' economic situations as well as their financial pressures on host countries and communities.**

Building more schools, supporting more teachers, creating more inclusive and quality learning environments and ensuring certification will not solve

the out of school problem. A significant proportion of children will not enter school even if capacity is increased and services are improved if their re-entry to education is thwarted by other barriers, in particular the multiple pressures that their families are facing. In order for NLGI to deliver on its aim of getting a generation of Syrian children back to school, there must be greater effort to also address refugee families' economic situations as well as the financial pressures on host countries and communities:

- **Donors and host countries must increase refugee livelihoods assistance and support** by funding 'early recovery and livelihoods' requirements for inside Syria and 'basic needs, livelihoods and shelter' requirements under the regional response. Host countries also need to be willing to changing their stance on working refugees in order to reduce the pressure on children to leave school and become family breadwinners.
- **Support host communities.** At the same time, improved refugee livelihoods programming should not negatively affect host communities and, if possible, root causes of tensions between refugee and host communities should be addressed through the creation of opportunities and improved conditions for host communities as well through initiatives such as cash-for-work programming and other income-generating activities.

## DELIVER LONG-TERM, PREDICTABLE FUNDING FOR A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR EDUCATION BOTH INSIDE SYRIA AND ACROSS THE REGION

**We call on donors to:**

**Take a long-term, full-spectrum approach to funding the Syrian education crisis.** It is clear that a different approach is required to better meet the level of education need across the region and inside Syria. Simply seeing this crisis as one that requires a humanitarian response is neither a sufficient nor cost-effective approach to meeting the education needs of Syrian children in a protracted conflict situation. As the crisis continues short-term humanitarian assistance is still required but must be complemented and gradually replaced by longer-term

funding modalities, including development funding and domestic financing of education. From now and through to the medium-term a two-track approach is needed to push forward the longer-term funding of much-needed activities such as teacher training, well-being and psychosocial support, and infrastructure and systems strengthening. At the same time, the work of humanitarian agencies to meet immediate needs and changing contexts on the ground must continue to be supported.

**Support greater flexibility in funding at every level.** In light of scarce funding and the need to be as responsive and supportive as possible to address the scale of need, donors must call for and support the ‘freeing up’ of education funding by pushing for greater flexibility in how existing education aid can be used to supplement humanitarian funding in the Syria response. At the same time, when it comes bilateral education funding, donors must give partners greater scope to change programming and reallocate funding to alternative interventions in order to meet the greatest education needs and make the biggest impact.

**Target those in greatest need first with cost-effective and high-impact solutions.** In order to make any progress on refugee education, funding and programming must target areas with the highest concentration of refugees who are under the greatest economic pressure and who have limited access to education services. With respect to Syria, there must be a Syria-wide plan to ensure that the needs of Syrian children in *all* areas are met.

**Ensure a more accurate assessment of cost and tracking of education funding.** The funding needed to meet the educational needs of Syrian children in Syria and in refugee host countries remains large and, to date, under-costed. As part of the development of the next NLGI strategy a rigorous assessment of education need and a realistic costing of providing a quality education inside Syria and in each host country must be undertaken. At the same time, a dedicated mechanism for capturing and monitoring all funding contributed to the NLGI must be developed to gain a clear view of the education funding gap as well as to better judge the NLGI’s role in galvanising increased funding.

**The time is now to invest in Syria’s children and get their futures back on track. Donors, host countries and the international community must act, and do so decisively, to avert a lost generation.**

**“We are sad because this happened for our children. Their future is the problem of all the world.”**

Bahirah and Khalil, Syrian refugee parents, Jordan

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30. Report of the UN Secretary-General on the Implementation of Security Council Resolutions 2139 and 2165, 21 August 2014, S/2014/611, p.5, [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/611](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/611)
31. Assessment Working Group for Syria, 'Syria Integrated Needs Assessment (SINA)', December 2013, p.36 <http://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/syria-integrated-needs-assessment-december-2013-enartr>
32. Between December 2013 and March 2014 Save the Children conducted a baseline survey assessing the wellbeing of 347 children attending eight of our Child Friendly Spaces. In June 2014 Save the Children conducted a baseline survey with teachers at eight schools who were asked to reflect on the behaviour and wellbeing of 320 randomly selected children in their class, answering questions from the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire.
33. See <http://www.wvi.org/experts/article/syria%E2%80%99s-children%E2%80%93how-conflict-can-harm-brain-development>
34. See <http://www.ineesite.org/en/crisis-spotlights/syria>
35. UNICEF, 'No Lost Generation: Protecting the Futures of Children Affected by the Crisis in Syria, Annual Update, September 2014', September 2014 (pending publication).
36. See [http://fts.unocha.org/reports/daily/ocha\\_R3\\_A1044\\_\\_\\_12\\_September\\_2014\\_\(03\\_02\).pdf](http://fts.unocha.org/reports/daily/ocha_R3_A1044___12_September_2014_(03_02).pdf)
37. <http://toolkit.ineesite.org/toolkit/Toolkit.php?PostID=1002>
38. As 20 August 2014. See <http://childrenofsyria.info/> We note that this report speaks for both registered and non-registered Syrian refugee children and non-Syrian refugee children (including Palestinian refugee children) living in host countries.
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40. See <http://www.unhcr.org/syriarrp6/midyear/docs/syria-rrp6-my-strategic-overview.pdf>, p.24.
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109. UNESCO EFA Global Monitoring Report methodology has been used to calculate all education aid figures in this section. This uses the aid levels reported in the OECD-CRS database. Aid disbursement figures are used in order to reflect the actual international transfer of financial resources or of goods and services. Aid data is represented in constant 2012 US dollars. 'Total aid to education' is calculated as direct aid to education plus 20% of general budget support to represent the estimated 15% to 25% of budget support that typically benefits the education sector. 'Total aid to basic education' is calculated as direct aid to basic education, plus 10% of general budget support, plus 50% of education, 'level unspecified'.
110. The OECD-DAC definition of basic education is used here, which covers DAC definition which covers primary education, basic life skills for youth and adults, and early childhood education.
111. See footnote 109 for details of methodology used.
112. There is strong consensus around an international benchmark for governments to spend a minimum of 20% of their public budgets on education, focusing at least half of that on basic education.





# FUTURES UNDER **THREAT**

## The impact of the education crisis on Syria's children

Futures Under Threat shines a light on the scale and extent of the education crisis for children inside Syria and for those living as refugees in neighbouring countries.

Before the war almost all of Syria's children were enrolled in school. Literacy rates were over 90%. Now, four years into the conflict, some sources estimate that Syria has the second worst enrolment rate in the world, with almost 3 million school-aged Syrian children no longer in school.

In spite of the acute need for education and the catastrophic consequences for Syria's children if it is not met, donor funding is desperately short: the education component of the No Lost Generation Initiative education is acutely underfunded. The window of opportunity to tackle the education crisis – and to prevent a lost generation – is closing fast.

This report calls for urgent action to address the barriers that need to be overcome to get the futures of Syria's children back on track.