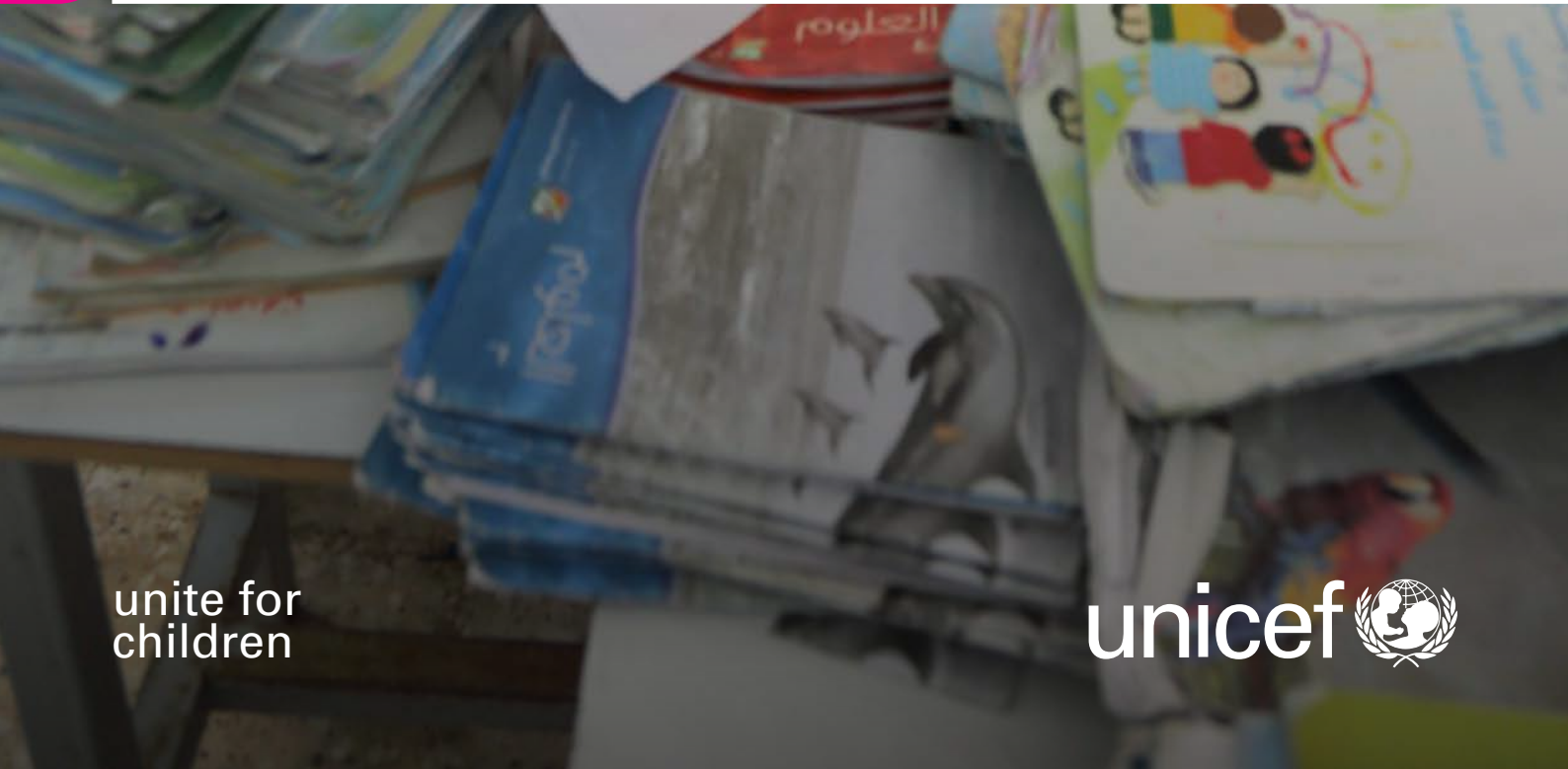




Curriculum, Accreditation and Certification for Syrian Children

in Syria, Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt

REGIONAL STUDY



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MARCH 2015

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Preface

March 2015 marked the fourth year of crisis and conflict in Syria. These four years have caused enormous suffering and destruction in the country and triggered one of the largest displacements of people in recent Middle East history. More than 3.9 million Syrian people have sought refuge in neighbouring countries: half of them are children, a third of whom are of school age (5–17 years). Children inside Syria and in neighbouring countries are exceedingly bearing the brunt of the conflict; many of them have been deprived of their childhood along with their right to an education. The numbers are staggering – 2 million children out of school in Syria and more than half a million children out of school in neighbouring countries.

This study describes the multi-layered barriers that Syrian children and families encounter in accessing education in Syria or neighbouring countries. Differences in the medium of instruction, lack of learning space, financial constraints, opportunity costs, the need for psychosocial support and teacher training for responding to the needs of displaced and vulnerable children and discouraging policies and practices at the central and school levels represent only some of the challenges that deter refugee children from accessing school.

Factors that determine access to school are also related to quality and relevance of content. What curriculum should Syrian refugee children follow? What curriculum would make relevant and meaningful learning for them? Should refugee children follow the curriculum of their host country, possibly promoting integration but not inclusion and where their identity would largely be ignored? Or should they be provided their home country curriculum, which would encourage return? Should the curriculum provide hope for future reconstruction and promote peace-building, identity and social cohesion?

Compounding these questions is the debate on certification and accreditation. The report documents different practices in Syria and neighbouring countries in the provision of certificates that validate (or not) the learning of Syrian children and policies related to the recognition of their prior learning; it also highlights the emergence of politically affiliated actors and individuals providing education and certification with no clear accreditation frameworks.

Significant efforts in educational programmes and policies initiated by host governments, national and international organizations and United Nations agencies respond to the needs of Syrian children, which this report also highlights.

As the crisis enters its fifth year, we can rest assured that much will have been done to widen access to education for Syrian children in Syria and in neighbouring countries. However, too many children still remain out of school in the region. In missing their opportunity to access education, a generation of Syrian children risks being lost amid the crisis. This study is a call to action. We must reach out to those Syrian children whose right to quality education is not being fulfilled.

Let us have the courage to choose innovative and complex pathways to realize our special commitment to these children.

Maria Calivis
UNICEF MENA Regional Director

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The Queen Rania Teacher Academy prepared the report's first version, with particular input from Mona Taji, Assistant Director for Academic Programs; Sami Khasawneh, Jordan University; and field consultants: Nihal Mohamed Hefny (in Egypt), Mohammed Maktoof Hamed (in Iraq), Samah Halwany (in Lebanon) and Şakir Çinkir (in Turkey). Farida Aboudan (UNICEF MENA Regional Office) undertook further research and drafted subsequent versions. Yusuf Sayed, Cape Peninsula University of Technology and the University of Sussex, provided a critical review of the report and contributed with valuable analysis and recommendations.

Several others invested their expertise, dedication and insights into this report:

- Syrian children, parents and teachers who participated in interviews and focus group discussions in Syria, Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt offered their time and provided valuable information.
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The genuine engagement in this work has been remarkable and underlines the staunch commitment to engage for the education rights of Syrian children.

Dina Craissati

UNICEF MENA Regional Education Adviser

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Abbreviations and acronyms

ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency
AFAD	Turkey's Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency
CERD	Center for Educational Research and Development (Lebanon)
EDC	Education Development Centres
EMIS	Education Management Information System
IAB	International Arab Baccalaureate
IFE	Informal education (Jordan)
IRC	International Rescue Committee
KCPE	Kenya Certificate of Primary Education
KCSE	Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education
KED	Karen Education Department
KnED	Karenni Education Department
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government
MEHE	Ministry of Education and Higher Education (Lebanon)
MOE	Ministry of Education (Syria, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt)
MONE	Ministry of National Education (Turkey)
MYR	Mid-Year Review
NFE	Non-formal education
NGO	Non-government organization
NHEC	National Health and Education Committee
PTA	Parent–Teacher Associations
TP	Temporary protection
TVET	Technical and vocational education and training
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNPD	United Nations Population Division
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
WAEC	West African Examinations Council

Introduction

The rationale for this study derives from the challenging political and humanitarian crisis that has built up over the past four years in Syria and has resulted in the displacement of 7.6 million Syrians inside their country¹ and the movement of millions more into neighbouring countries,² mainly Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt.³ The escalating level of violence inside Syria rendered the situation critical, causing an unabated influx of Syrians seeking refuge in the host countries.

Providing reliable figures on the magnitude of the displacement is challenging. The number of Syrians registered with United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in the five host countries totalled more than 3.9 million in 2014, distributed among Turkey (more than 1.7 million refugees), Lebanon (more than 1.1 million refugees), Jordan (more than 600,000 refugees), Iraq (more than 200,000 refugees) and Egypt (more than 140,000 refugees).⁴ These numbers may well be below the actual numbers because not all Syrians register with UNHCR in host countries. In certain areas in Lebanon, for example, as little as 37 per cent of the Syrian population is registered with UNHCR.⁵

The host governments estimate larger numbers of Syrians present in their countries. In March 2013, for instance, the Government of Lebanon estimated there were more than one million Syrians in the country, compared with the 250,000 who had registered with UNHCR.⁶ Similarly, the Government of Jordan estimated 1.6 million Syrians in the country, compared with the 600,000 who had registered with UNHCR (as of October 2014); and the Government of Egypt estimated 300,000 Syrians in the country as of July 2013, when the number of Syrians registered with the UNHCR was 80,000.⁷

A demographic analysis of the Syrian population that is registered with UNHCR indicates that half of the Syrian refugee population consists of

children, with approximately 35 per cent⁸ of school age (5–17 years). In December 2014, more than half of all school-aged children (or more than 642,000) were estimated to be out of school. Inside Syria, the situation was even more dire, where between 1.6 million and 2.4 million children were estimated to be out of school during academic year 2013/2014 (see Table 1).

The scale of the crisis and the involuntary displacement of Syrian children have, as this study reveals, adversely impacted on their education progress.

There are four sets of curriculum, certification and accreditation challenges that confront host governments and other partners in delivering quality education for Syrian refugees. First is the challenge of access. A huge influx of refugees in any context, particularly in a resource-constrained context, places enormous pressure on the public education system to accommodate and integrate children. This situation is compounded by differences in the language of instruction, the need for psychosocial support for refugee children and teacher support for responding to the needs of displaced and vulnerable children.

Second, what curriculum should Syrian refugee children follow? Should it be that of the host country or from their home country? Thus, another challenge is whether to provide a curriculum that facilitates integration and/or one that enables children to return to Syria.

Third, whatever curriculum is followed, a critical question is whether there are opportunities provided for enriching the curriculum. What provision, for example, is made for Syrian children who are studying the curriculum of a host country in a language other than their home language? Or what provision is made for supporting and providing children with psychosocial support?

¹ United Nations estimates, <syria.unocha.org>.

² UNHCR website <data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>, accessed March 2015.

³ The order of the countries follows the magnitude of the refugees received by each country.

⁴ UNHCR website, registration data as of early November 2014, <data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>.

⁵ INEE, 2014.

⁶ UNHCR website <data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ School age is considered 5–17 years in this report.

Table 1 Syrian children in and out of school in Syria and neighbouring countries, as of December 2014

Country	Number of registered school-age children (5–17 years)			Number of projected school-age children ¹² (5–17 years) at end 2014	Number of school-age children in formal education December 2014 ¹³	Number of school-age children in non-formal education December 2014 ¹⁴	Number of school-age children out of school		
	August 2013 ⁹	June 2014 ¹⁰	December 2014 ¹¹				August 2013	June 2014	December 2014
Inside Syria				5.7 million¹⁵ (2013/2014) 6.4 million (2012/2013)	3.7 million¹⁶ (3.5 million – 2012/2013) (5.6 million – 2011/2012) (5.5 million – 2010/2011)		2 million, or 35% (2013/2014) ¹⁷ 2.9 million, or 45% (2012/2013)		
Outside Syria (refugees)									
Turkey	110,000	274,722	531,071	350,000	187,000 (107,714 – June 2014) (33,400 – August 2013)	26,140 (7,285 – June 2014) (no data – August 2013)	76,600 (70%)	159,723 (58%)	317,931 (60%)
Lebanon	194,014	352,094	383,898	510,000	8,043 (80,771 – June 2014) (34,547 – August 2013)	109,503 (71,634 – June 2014) (24,833 – August 13)	134,654 (69%)	199,689 (57%)	266,352 (69%)
Jordan	181,000	206,079	213,432	238,000	127,857 (120,555 – June 2014) (44,098 – August 2013)	54,301 (18,759 – June 2014) (3,625 – August 2013)	133,277 (74%)	66,765 (32%)	31,274 (15%)
Iraq	38,350	58,831	67,234	65,000	35,146 (20,916 – June 2014) (10,415 – August 2013)	6,166 (no data – June 2014) (no data – August 2013)	27,935 (73%)	37,915 (64%)	25,922 (39%)
Egypt	33,700	41,458	42,033	42,000	41,240 (28,943 – June 2014) (18,700 – August 2013)	No NFE programming	15,000 (45%)	12,515 (30%)	793 (2%)
Total refugees	557,064	933,184	1,237,668	1,205,000	399,286 (358,899 – June 2014) (141,140 – August 2013)	196,110 (97,678 – June 2014) (28,458 – August 2013)	387,466 (70%)	476,607 (51%)	642,272 (52%)

⁹ School-age population calculated using UNHCR registration as of August 2013.

¹⁰ School-age population calculated using UNHCR registration as of June 2014.

¹¹ School-age population calculated using UNHCR registration as of December 2014.

¹² Projection of school-age children is calculated using UNHCR registration of children aged 5-11 years and 12-17 years and total projected refugee population from Regional Response Plan (RRP6) Mid-Year Review. The projection for Turkey became an underestimate because of the siege of Kobani, which led to a huge influx of Syrian refugees during the end of 2014. The projection for Lebanon was greater than the December figure because the Lebanese Government has restricted the refugee registration.

¹³ August 2013 data: Data from UNICEF SitRep, 8 August 2013; June 2014 data and December 2014 data: Data from Regional Education RRP6 Monthly Update for Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt. The finalized school registration figure from the MOE in Lebanon is not yet available. The figure for Lebanon covers children aged 6-15. Figures for other countries cover children aged 5-17.

¹⁴ August 2013 data: Data from UNICEF SitRep, 8 August 2013; June 2014 data and December 2014 data: Data from Regional Education RRP6 Monthly Update for Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt. Figure for Lebanon covers children aged 3-18. Figures for other countries cover children aged 5-17.

¹⁵ Average of population estimations using data from UNPD, Syria 2011 Statistical Year Book, Syria 2004 Census and Population projection of the United States Census Bureau. This estimate is for the beginning of 2014. Registered refugee children population in October 2013 is subtracted from the total population.

¹⁶ 2013/2014 data: Data refers to students in pre-school, basic, general secondary and vocational secondary in 12 governorates. Data from Raqqa and Deir ez-Zour (the two other governorates of the 14 in Syria) was not available. Earlier data (2010-2012): Data refers to students in pre-school, basic, general secondary and vocational secondary in 13 governorates. Data from Raqqa was not available. All data is from education ministries' EMIS.

¹⁷ The figure is calculated using data from education ministries' EMIS, UNHCR, UNPD, Syria 2011 Statistical Year Book, Syria 2004 Census and Population projection of the U.S. Census Bureau.

Fourth, a further challenge for governments and organizations providing quality education is certification and accreditation. As noted in the glossary, certification refers to the issuing of a certificate to validate a process of learning. Certification requires some form of assessment that is:

- usually external;
- usually an examination;
- usually associated with learning cycles or phases; and
- can include school-based learning – a particular challenge in difficult situations.

As this study found, certification is challenging for programmes outside any formal system. This includes non-formal education (NFE) provision and accelerated learning, or catch-up, programmes. Additionally in terms of policy, who should be the authorized agent or institution for accrediting learning programmes and issuing certificates to Syrian refugee children educated in different host countries and experiencing different types of education provision and curricula?

Accreditation is challenging in conflict contexts. Accreditation usually refers to the authorization and validation of learning programmes and sometimes recognition of providers. In conflict-affected contexts, this is particularly perplexing. Accreditation of learning programmes outside the formal schooling system is an additional challenge.

Within that context, this study sought to provide a better understanding of the learning programmes available for Syrian children through a broad situation analysis of the education of Syrian children in Syria, Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt. Although the situation is rapidly changing, the report of the study findings draws attention to the challenges for children, families and education providers, with a particular focus on the curricula provided across the region and related issues of accreditation and certification.

Structure of the report. The methodology, data collection methods and analysis are presented in the introduction. Chapter 1 presents the regional summary of the host country case studies, together with a review of similar case studies in other contexts that focus on the same themes

emerging at the regional level and policy conclusions and recommendations addressed to all parties and agencies involved in providing education for Syrian refugee children. The case studies in chapters 2–7 describe education for Syrian children in Syria and within the five host countries of Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt. Chapter 8 describes the provision of education for Palestine refugees by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Chapter 9 considers the education of other refugee children in diverse contexts, including Pakistan, Kenya and along the Thailand–Myanmar border.

Methodology. This study presents selected education programmes available for Syrian children in Syria, Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt, including the curricula used and the certification and accreditation of education programmes in public schools and in non-formal programmes. The report also communicates current views and debates on the learning programmes available for Syrian children.

In addition to a review of published and unpublished literature in English, Arabic and Turkish, the research teams conducted field investigation in the six countries using semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with a range of stakeholders, including policy-makers, education practitioners,¹⁸ government officials, senior staff in United Nations agencies and other international organizations, staff of local and international non-government organizations (NGOs), teachers, school principals, children and parents. More than 400 interviews and focus group discussions were undertaken across the six countries in mid-2013. Once the data analysis was completed, an initial report was prepared, based on the preliminary findings. In March and April 2014, a rapid follow-up field research phase was initiated to update some of the emerging issues.

Challenges and limitations. This study was conducted in the face of many challenges and limitations. All possible precautions were observed during the data collection to protect the interests of the study participants, particularly the vulnerable, the less articulate and the children, including enforcement of the confidentiality of information.¹⁹ Primary data collection was conducted in June and July 2013, when schools

¹⁸ Interviews and focus group discussions were conducted according to an agreed questions and areas checklist (see Annex I).

¹⁹ Names of interviewees are not disclosed in this report and no list of interviewees is presented to ensure confidentiality.

were officially closed or offering ad hoc summer programmes. This report largely draws upon insights from the interviews and documentary analysis.

Collecting data in volatile and insecure environments proved challenging. Security in refugee camps and in certain areas disrupted the research teams' schedules and field visits. Some field visits were potentially life threatening, particularly in Iraq, Lebanon and Egypt, where the possibility of violence was always present. In Egypt, some Syrians who were initially involved in the study left subsequently to move to other countries and could not be part of the verification process that took place at the end of the field research. Hence, the research teams took care to reflect different perspectives and highlight

particular areas of contention, triangulating information where possible by cross-checking with other interviews and the available literature.

To keep pace with a constantly changing environment, the research was updated several times before release of the findings. Although the findings cannot be generalized, they do shed light on the perceptions and priorities of different actors.

Despite the challenges, this study provides the first comprehensive review of the learning programmes available for Syrian children in the region, focusing on the curriculum, certification and accreditation challenges to inform policy and practice.

1 Regional summary

The regional summary presents the main themes that emerged from the analysis of the specific country contexts. In particular: access to education for Syrian children in formal education programmes (primarily in the form of public schools) and in non-formal education programmes (primarily in the form of

non-government provision). In addition, it considers curriculum aspects, including the provision of education according to the different versions of the revised Syrian curriculum and the use of Syrian teachers. Further issues around assessments, certification and accreditation are presented.

1.1 Access to formal education

Now in its fifth year, the crisis in Syria has pushed the capacity of basic social services – including education – to almost a breaking point. Formal education in Syria has traditionally been the responsibility of the Government, with little or no involvement of NGOs or the private sector, especially for the provision of primary and secondary education.²⁰ Despite the ongoing nationwide conflict, the Ministry of Education (MOE) has remained committed to providing education for all children in Syria and remains the major actor in the provision of education.

Dramatically, an estimated 1.3 million to 1.6 million children of basic-school age (5–14 years) are out of school or attend irregularly due to the ongoing conflict and massive internal displacement. When adolescents of secondary-school age are added to this group, the estimated number of young people (aged 5–17 years) not in school jumps to a range of 2.1 million to 2.4 million.²¹

While the national average attendance rate stands at 73 per cent, the percentage varies dramatically across the country. Low attendance rates are confirmed in the hard-to-reach areas.²² The situation varies from governorate to governorate because different actors control different areas. Although the situation in communities is fairly complex and fluid, it can be broken down into three types of areas: (i) relatively safe areas under government control, (ii) contested areas and (iii) areas under the control of non-state actors.

In areas that remain under the control of the Government, the MOE continues to deliver public education services. In these areas, most of the schools remain open, the official Syrian curriculum is followed and official exams take place. The relatively safe areas can be further subdivided: those where public services function as they did before the crisis and those that have experienced a large influx of internally displaced persons. In the areas that have experienced an influx of displaced persons, many of the school-age children do not attend school.

There are several reasons for their low attendance, including the lack of available learning spaces. In addition, anecdotal evidence suggests that not all local MOE staff abide by decisions taken by the central MOE to facilitate enrolment. In some schools, displaced children are not allowed to register because they do not have official documents or because the school is already overcrowded. In some areas, students must pay a deposit for learning materials, which must be returned.

In these relatively safer areas, several changes have taken place at the school level. Teaching hours have been reduced and certain subjects (such as history) have been removed to accommodate double shifts schooling. Consequently, teaching hours are reduced by about half a day for children in both shifts.

²⁰ Partnerships between the Government and national and international NGOs and charities existed for the provision of adult education, for example, which is beyond the scope of this report.

²¹ Syria Response Plan, 2015.

²² The 2013 Syria Integrated Needs Assessment reported the attendance rate in camp settings inside Syria as low as 17 per cent for academic year 2013/2014.

In contested areas, security is the main reason why children and teachers do not go to school or do so irregularly. In some cases, the school is not considered safe, while in other cases, it is the route to and from school that is too dangerous to travel. In addition, many schools have been damaged or destroyed.²³ In areas that are not under the control of the Government, it is more difficult for the MOE to operate and deliver public education services because the movement of staff is limited.

Many schools have been destroyed or damaged in areas that are under the control of non-state actors. In areas controlled by moderate groups, education services often continue, using the official Syrian curriculum, but with such subjects as national education and history removed because they are considered to reflect the views of the Government. In some of these areas, the Syrian curriculum that was revised by the Syrian Education Commission²⁴ and endorsed by the Syrian Opposition Coalition based in Turkey is in use.

Some schools started teaching Kurdish as a subject in the Kurdish areas in Hassakeh Governorate. In other schools, Kurdish is now the language of instruction, which prevents non-Kurdish-speaking internally displaced children from enrolling.

In response to the many children who are unable to access and attend school due to insecurity and internal displacement, the MOE, UNICEF, UNRWA jointly reviewed the self-learning materials that were originally developed by UNRWA for Palestine refugee children. They then revised the materials, in line with the official Syrian curriculum and with technical input from the MOE. The MOE thus recognizes the self-learning materials and their use in home-based or community learning centres as an integral part of

education provision in an emergency response to the Syrian crisis.

In the **five host countries** and even though most of the governments have not signed the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees,²⁵ Syrian children generally have been allowed to access public schools. This may link to other legal frameworks that guarantee the right to education to refugee children, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which has been signed by all countries in the region. Governments and education ministries in the region are specifically expending efforts to cater for the education needs of Syrian children. Such efforts come with challenges for each government, for children and for families.

In **Turkey**, enrolment in public schools has been possible from the onset of the crisis, but the appropriate documents required (residence permit),²⁶ language barrier (Turkish as the medium of instruction in public schools), lack of information on enrolment procedures and economic factors have deterred the majority of children from enrolling. Reportedly, only some 7,446 Syrian children were attending Turkish schools as of May 2014,²⁷ while the public school system could absorb up to at least 20,000 Syrian children.²⁸ To help overcome some of the administrative barriers to education, the Turkish Ministry of National Education (MONE) lifted the requirement for residence permit in September 2014²⁹ when it issued circular 2014/21, which comprehensively governs foreigners' access to education in the country. The circular policy includes the establishment of Provincial Education Commissions in provinces with large numbers of Syrian children and delegates them the authority to determine educational needs, recommend the establishment of schools (or temporary education centres, as they are officially called) and facilitate the enrolment of Syrian children.

²³ As of July 2014, 347 schools were not functioning in Homs. And 347 schools in Aleppo and 489 schools in Rural Damascus had been destroyed, damaged or used for shelter for internally displaced persons.

²⁴ The Syrian Education Commission is the translation of the Arabic Elm: Al-Hay'a Al-Surya Lil Tarbya wa Al-Taalim. It was founded in Turkey in early 2013 to provide education opportunities for Syrian students, <www.syreducom.org/description>.

²⁵ Only Egypt and Turkey have signed the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.

²⁶ Prior to the issuance of circular 2014/21 in September 2014, the main document requested for enrolling in Turkish school was the residence permit. The residence permit gives every citizen or foreigner a unique identifier number, which is used to include students in the Education Monitoring Information System (EMIS). Once included in the database, students are officially recorded and can receive their education certificates. It was reported that Syrian children without a residence permit were allowed to enrol in Turkish schools. In this case, they attended as 'guests' and did not receive any formal recognition of their learning (interview with UNHCR in Ankara on 3 April 2014 and interview with UNICEF in Ankara on 2 April 2014).

²⁷ Data refers to May 2014.

²⁸ Interview with MONE official in Ankara on 3 April 2014.

²⁹ Circular 2014/21 issued in September 2014 by the Ministry of National Education.

To register students in the Turkish education system, monitor their educational attainment and grant them certificates, the MONE developed several years ago an electronic Education Management Information System (EMIS), referred to as 'e-okul'.³⁰ With UNICEF assistance, a new EMIS has been developed for the registration and monitoring of Syrian children (and referred to as YÖBIS).³¹ The personal and academic data of Syrian students will be entered into the YÖBIS, which will guarantee that Syrian children receive the same services as Turkish children and are granted with certificates of their learning. In the long term, the YÖBIS will be used to manage the education data of all foreigner children in the country.

In the refugee camps (referred to as 'accommodation centres') in Turkey, schools were set up for Syrian children. In host communities, some schools (or temporary education centres) were established specifically for Syrian children only, while others accommodate Turkish students in the morning hours and Syrian children in the afternoon. Schools established in refugee camps and at the provincial level (such as by municipalities) are under the oversight of the MONE and are supported by the Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD), but they have not been fully accredited as a regular Turkish school (although notable progress on this has been made).³² The 2014/21 circular policy makes provision for the operation of these schools and extends authority to the MONE to not recognize schools that operate outside its provisions.

The curriculum content and the language of instruction for Syrian children have been much debated in Turkey. In school year 2011/2012,³³ the Turkish curriculum was used in the schools that opened in the accommodation centres (refugee camps) with Arabic interpretation. That situation changed in academic year 2012/2013 when the Turkish Government tacitly agreed to the use of a revised Syrian curriculum in the schools for Syrian children. The Government's policy

traditionally has sought to integrate refugees and children from minorities into the national school system, including through the teaching of Turkish to them. The unprecedented influx of Syrian refugees led to the emergence of an education system for Syrian children that adopted a revised Syrian curriculum.

Monitoring and evaluating the revised Syrian curriculum, whose content and objectives are not integral to the Turkish education system and societal values, have proved challenging for the MONE. In interviews for the study, the inadequate political influence of the Syrian Opposition Coalition and the Syrian Interim Government, which endorsed the revised Syrian curriculum, or the absence of official recognition were cited as challenging issues for the MONE towards providing certification of learning based on one of the versions.³⁴

In **Lebanon** and prior to the crisis in Syria, the public education system accommodated 30 per cent of the Lebanese child population, with the private sector dominating the provision of education. Syrian children regularly compete with vulnerable Lebanese children in accessing the often poorly resourced public schools. If accepted in a public school, Syrian children learn mathematics and science in either French or English (as the medium of instruction), which is a learning barrier for those who are used to Arabic as the medium of instruction. Schools that have established double shifts to accommodate Syrian children provide a condensed and shortened Arabic–Lebanese curriculum, with a focus on core subjects, while arts, physical education and other extracurricular activities – much needed subjects by refugee children – have been removed for reasons related to the delay in starting the academic year.

In **Jordan**, schools attended by Syrian children are generally overcrowded. The capacity of the public education system in those areas (mainly Mafraq, Irbid, Zarqa and Amman) where there is a large concentration of Syrian refugees is

³⁰ 'E-okul' means 'e-school' and refers to an EMIS designed for teachers and administrators as well as students and their parents. The data entered into the system by teachers and administrators are accessible to students and parents.

³¹ See <www.aa.com.tr/ar/news/421489>.

³² There is a variety of schools established for Syrian children in Turkey that are formally under the mandate of the Ministry of National Education (MONE). For example, the temporary education centres that UNICEF supports will be issued with certificates from the MONE. Some education programmes that have been supported by NGOs can be accredited based on a protocol signed between each organization and the MONE. However, some other programmes have an uncertain status and are not fully accredited.

³³ The chronological order described here is only for ease of reference; different versions of the revised Syrian curriculum and are used simultaneously.

³⁴ Interview with MONE official in Ankara on 3 April 2014.

overstretched.³⁵ In addition to large numbers of Syrian children, these schools have also received additional numbers of Jordanian children who have moved from private schools to the public system in the past few years due to the economic crisis in the country.³⁶ In the public schools, Syrian children are taught the Jordanian curriculum. Adapting to this new curriculum seems to be less problematic for Syrian children than in other countries because it uses the same language of instruction as in Syria. Jordan's Ministry of Education established schools in the refugee camps with fully accredited status, and students receive formal certificates at the end of the year.

In the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), the region in **Iraq** that has received the largest number of refugees, the national Kurdish curriculum is taught in Kurdish, English and Arabic. Syrian children have been learning through the Arabic version. Since early 2014, the public system in the KRG has not received budget allocations from the central Government in Baghdad to cover teachers' salaries. This has disrupted classes, affected the quality of education and resulted in a high level of teacher absenteeism and a large number of Syrian teachers looking for better job opportunities outside the refugee camps. Lack of classrooms (all the schools in the camps operate in two shifts) and the insufficient number of schools using Arabic as the medium of instruction in host communities are two of the primary issues confronting Syrian children in the KRG.

1.2 Access to non-formal education

National and international NGOs are striving to expand education access to Syrian children and work alongside the public sector to respond to the education needs of displaced and refugee populations. **Non-formal education programmes** take different forms in each host country, with different actors involved and with varying space granted to non-state actors to provide education. In Lebanon, for example, civil society and NGOs have historically taken a strong role – as a consequence of the prolonged civil war and the lack of an executive government for long periods

The number of schools in urban areas using Arabic as the medium of instruction is not sufficient to accommodate all the out-of-school Syrian children.

Since December 2013, some schools in some refugee camps have also been using a revised Syrian curriculum (developed by the Syrian Education Commission and endorsed by the Syrian Opposition Coalition based in Turkey). A shortage of textbooks in Arabic was officially reported as the main reason for allowing use of the revised curriculum. How to provide certification for children in schools using the revised Syrian curriculum has created debate within the KRG Ministry of Education. Eventually (in March 2014), the MOE agreed to certify the learning of Syrian children using this curriculum but also decided to dismiss its use as of academic year 2014/2015, when only the Kurdish curriculum would be allowed.

In **Egypt**, Syrian children have been exceptionally granted the right to access public schools, where they follow the national Egyptian curriculum. There are no modifications or enrichment to the national curriculum to help Syrian children integrate. Some children reported experiencing differences between the Syrian and Egyptian curricula, especially in history, geography, philosophy, physics and chemistry. Although Arabic is the main language of instruction, the delivery of lessons in the Egyptian dialect was cited as a challenge because the Syrian children are not able to understand the dialect.³⁷

of time. In Turkey and the KRG (Iraq), there are only a few NGOs, and the State is the predominant education provider. In some countries, there is a close monitoring of NGO and civil society education efforts. NFE programmes across the region include the accelerated learning programme in Lebanon developed by UNICEF and the Center for Educational Research and Development,³⁸ an accelerated learning programme in Jordan and the community centre model developed in Egypt, which aims to bridge formal and non-formal education.

³⁵ Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, 2014.

³⁶ Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, 2014; Zyck and Armstrong, 2014.

³⁷ Textbooks are written in classical Arabic, which is common across Arabic countries. Classes are delivered in the so-called colloquial Arabic, which has different dialects that are not all easily understood.

³⁸ The Centre for Educational Research (CERD) is the research branch of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) in Lebanon.

In **Lebanon**, there are various accelerated learning programmes that use different curricula. To harmonize them, UNICEF, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) and the Center for Educational Research and Development³⁹ have been developing an accelerated learning programme curriculum for all three cycles, with the aim of enabling children to complete each grade in four months and thus to complete each cycle (three grades) in 12 months' time.⁴⁰ The accelerated learning curriculum is a condensed basic education curriculum from Grades 1–9 and intended for out-of-school children who have missed schooling for more than two years. It has been developed and the testing period was expected to roll out at the beginning of 2015 (between January and March). Given the difficulties Syrian students experienced in finding space in the public sector in 2013, the accelerated programmes often function as second-chance formal education for Syrian children who can then transition to a public school when space is available.

In **Jordan**, non-formal education has long referred to a programme aiming at the reintegration into formal schooling of children who have been out of school for more than three years and no longer considered eligible for direct access to formal education. In recent developments, children who have lost one school year or have never enrolled are now considered no longer eligible for direct access to formal education; they must attend a NFE programme as a pathway to reintegration into formal education. There are several NFE programmes, ranging from the drop-out educating programme to home-schooling, evening and summer studies programmes to adult education and literacy.⁴¹

The drop-out educating programme is under the umbrella of the MOE, which has a specific department in charge of it. It is fully accredited and taught by MOE-recruited teachers. NGO providers⁴² train the MOE teachers on how to deliver the condensed and accelerated curriculum and provide venues for the programme. The main objective is to include children who

have lost school years and/or may come from a disadvantaged background. The programme is considered under the non-formal category because it aims to be flexible, accommodate the needs of children and has a meaningful and relevant curriculum for excluded children. The programme, however, caters only for a small portion of Syrian out-of-school children in Jordan; currently, it only accepts children aged 13 and older, thus leaving younger children who may need alternative or catch-up education unreached.

In **Egypt**, innovative approaches have been initiated wherein education provided in non-formal settings complements formal schooling. To overcome issues related to overcrowded and under-resourced schools, children enrol in a public school but attend classes in schools run by NGOs or in community centres. They are thus included in the formal system and have the opportunity to sit for end-of-year and school-leaving exams and have their learning certified and recognized; but they learn the Egyptian curriculum in an NGO or community setting, in a culturally familiar environment with Syrian teachers who have a familiar dialect.

Although a range of non-formal learning programmes are available in Jordan and in Lebanon, this is not the case in Turkey and the KRG, where there is little or non-existing NFE provision meeting the needs of Syrian children.

Vocational training programmes for Syrian children have not been particularly developed in the region. Providing vocational training in Jordan has created some concerns to the MOE, which seems reluctant to offer vocational training to Syrian refugees out of fear that it may lead to higher unemployment rates for Jordanian youth and adults. The Government has agreed to a technical skills and post-basic education programme for Syrian youth (16–24 years) in the Za'atari camp, managed by the Norwegian Refugee Council. It includes courses in various technical areas but they are not certifiable by the MOE.⁴³

³⁹ CERD is a technical institute under the umbrella of the MEHE, responsible for curriculum development and teacher training.

⁴⁰ The memorandum of understanding (MOU) between UNICEF, the MEHE and CERD to develop the curriculum was signed in May 2014.

⁴¹ Education Sector Working Group Jordan, Glossary, 24 July 2014, <data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/working_group.php?Page=Country&LocationId=107&Id=14>.

⁴² NGO partners are Questscope, JOHUD and the Islamic Center Charity Society.

⁴³ Education Sector Working Group Jordan, Glossary, 24 July 2014, <data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/working_group.php?Page=Country&LocationId=107&Id=14>.

1.3 Adaptations of the Syrian curriculum

Several NGOs – especially Syrian⁴⁴ – reach out to Syrian children who are not able to access formal education in their host country. These organizations provide modified versions of the Syrian curriculum (referred to in this report as the revised Syrian curriculum, although there are several revised versions). In Lebanon and Jordan, for example, the Syrian curriculum used is nearly the same as the official Syrian curriculum, with content modified to remove references relating to the Ba’ath Party⁴⁵ and the Assad family. Organizations offering this curriculum seem to have removed the subject of national education, which is considered to be closely associated with the present Government.⁴⁶ In Lebanon, the Syrian Education Board introduced a subject on civics instead of national education.⁴⁷ In both Lebanon and Jordan, the revision of the Syrian curriculum was not carried out in a systematic or coordinated manner. In contrast, in Turkey there were several systematic revisions to the official Syrian curriculum.

The Islamic Sham Organization,⁴⁸ a Syrian NGO registered in Turkey, made the first revision of the official Syrian textbooks. They reviewed textbooks for Grades 1–12, removing references and photos relating to the celebration of the current Syrian Government and edited several geographical maps. The revised textbooks were then distributed in Turkey.

A second revision took place in 2013 by the Syrian Education Commission,⁴⁹ which printed and distributed 1.4 million textbooks in mid-2013. The Education Commission revised the Syrian curriculum with the support of Syrian education specialists and teachers and the Syrian Opposition Council endorsed it. UNICEF conducted a content

analysis on this revised version⁵⁰ and found that most of the modifications occurred in the Arabic language, math and science textbooks. Revisions made to the textbooks were primarily of a pedagogical nature, followed by political and then religious changes. In total, there were more than 400 pedagogical changes in the textbooks. Conversely, 119 political and 22 religious changes were detected. However, there was a lack of consistency and coherence in the pedagogical changes made to each subject across the different grades. While the changes in the science textbook promote inquiry and critical thinking, this approach was not maintained consistently throughout the text, nor was it integrated in other textbooks, including history and social studies.⁵¹ This inconsistency was perhaps due to the lack of a clear vision when revising the textbooks, also manifested in the absence of a mission or an overall statement that underpinned the revision.⁵²

Additionally, the subject of national education was removed from the textbooks, with civic education⁵³ reportedly taught instead. The second revised Syrian curriculum was not adapted to the situation of displacement – it did not integrate any life skills, mine risk education or psychosocial support programmes.

The Syrian Education Commission printed the revised textbooks and distributed them in Turkey, the KRG (Iraq) and areas in Syria under control of the opposition.⁵⁴ The textbooks were used in some public schools in Syrian refugee camps in the KRG during academic year 2013/2014; in refugee camps, in schools under AFAD and MONE and schools set up by private initiatives in host communities in Turkey; and in schools in Syria in areas controlled by the opposition.

⁴⁴ It is beyond the scope of this study to provide a detailed overview of the Syrian NGOs that became active soon before or during the conflict. More research is required on the categories under which Syrian NGOs seem to be grouped. During the field research in Turkey, Syrian NGOs were classified as: charities (typically faith based), opposition-affiliated NGOs and diaspora NGOs.

⁴⁵ The Ba’ath Party seized power in Syria in 1963. When Hafez al-Assad took power through a coup d’état in 1970, he transformed the country into a one-party State (the Ba’ath Party) and maintained his position as its Secretary. The Ba’ath Party continues to strive for the ideal of a secular Arab socialist State.

⁴⁶ Interview with Syrian Education Board officials in Beirut on 19 March 2014.

⁴⁷ A close analysis of what is taught in this subject would be useful in the perspective of strengthening the peace-building programming for Syrian children.

⁴⁸ Hayet Cham Al Islamyah, <islamicsham.org>.

⁴⁹ The Syrian Education Commission is the translation of the Arabic Elm: Al-Hay’a Al-Surya Lil Tarbya wa Al-Taalim. The organization was founded in Turkey in early 2013 to provide education opportunities for Syrian students. See <www.syreducom.org/description>.

⁵⁰ UNICEF, unpublished, 2014.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Interview with Syrian Education Board staff in Beirut on 19 March 2014. How the subject of civic education is taught and on what resources it draws upon is an issue that needs further research and action.

⁵⁴ Although not in the areas controlled by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

In late 2013 to early 2014, the Syrian Education Commission circulated a second version of the revised textbooks and made them widely available by publishing them online on its website.⁵⁵ The Education Commission reportedly had distributed one million textbooks to Syrian students in Syria, Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan, with a plan to reach 2 million textbooks by the end of 2014.⁵⁶ This version of the textbook, however, no longer carries the endorsement of the Syrian Opposition Council.

A third revision covering textbooks for Grades 1–12 was then made at the end of 2013 by the Higher Commission for Education,⁵⁷ an educational entity that functioned as a Syrian education ministry abroad prior to the formation of the Syrian Interim Government in Turkey. This third revision included the removal of negative references to hosting countries and governments

and was endorsed by the Interim Government.

In addition to the revised Syrian curriculum, Syrian children in Turkey and Lebanon have had access to the Libyan curriculum, which is mainly taught in Grade 12 to facilitate the school-leaving examination.

In Syria in the areas under control of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), another revised version of the Syrian curriculum is also in use. Physics and chemistry have been removed; the teaching hours for math have been reduced, and geography presents the Arab region from an Islamic perspective. References to the Syrian Arab Republic have been banned, and patriotic anthems and lyrics have been declared as “polytheism and blasphemy”. All pictures deemed inappropriate by ISIS have been stripped from textbooks.⁵⁸

1.4 Syrian teachers

Since the beginning of the crisis, the MOE in Syria has lost more than 52,500 (22 per cent) teachers and 523 (18 per cent) school counsellors.⁵⁹ The movement of Syrian teachers within and outside the country has led to an acute shortage of staff in some areas and a surplus in others. Hassakeh Governorate, for example, has lost more than 1,600 teachers, while areas hosting a large number of internally displaced persons have an excess of school staff. Latakia Governorate has an additional 4,800 displaced teachers and administrative staff.⁶⁰

In the host countries, there has not been a comprehensive review of the profile of Syrian teachers nor is there an agreed figure on the

number of displaced Syrian teachers, although there are different estimates. In refugee camps in Turkey, for example, it is estimated there are at least 3,650 Syrian teachers. In the Za’atari refugee camp in Jordan, the Syrian Cultural Committee⁶¹ estimates the presence of 1,000 teachers, although data from a recent REACH survey⁶² points to a number that is almost double that (approximately 1,900 teachers).

Governments and international organizations in the five host countries have adopted different practices and strategies in relation to the recruitment, payment and training of Syrian teachers, with no clear, consistent and agreed vision on how to use this resource.

⁵⁵ See <www.syreducom.org/description>.

⁵⁶ See <www.syreducom.org/description/43>.

⁵⁷ Hay’a Al-Wataneyya Lel-Tarbeyya Wal-Ta’lim, <www.etilaf.org/أجهزة-الائتلاف-مكاتب-الائتلاف/مكتب-الهيئة-الوطنية-العلمية-للتنسيق-والتعليم-العالي>

⁵⁸ Robinson, Julian, ‘Isis cancels all classes except religious studies in Syrian schools because ‘even the two-times table shouldn’t be taught as all knowledge belongs to the creator, in *Daily Mail Online*, 7 November 2014, <www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2825451/Islamic-State-shuts-schools-eastern-Syria.html>; Lane, Oliver, ‘Syrian Schools Close as ISIS Develops New Islam Only Curriculum’, 8 November 2014, <www.breitbart.com/Breitbart-London/2014/11/08/Syria-School-Closures-ISIS-Koran-Teaching-Only>; Ellass, Rasha, ‘Islamic State Shuts Down Schools in Eastern Syria’, *Independent*, 7 November 2014, <www.independent.ie/world-news/middle-east/islamic-state-shuts-down-schools-in-eastern-syria-30726961.html>.

⁵⁹ School counsellors in Syria provide psychosocial support to students and manage administrative tasks, such as monitoring the presence of students. Figures are from SHARP, 2014.

⁶⁰ SHARP, 2014.

⁶¹ The Syrian Cultural Committee was established in July 2012 in the Za’atari camp in Jordan with the name of Syrian Education Committee. The Committee was established through a community mobilization campaign led by the international organization Intersos to deal with education issues. The committee is intensely involved in managing the relationship between the community and the schools established by the MOE in the camp.

⁶² REACH Initiative, 2014.

In **Turkey**, when the MONE agreed to use the Syrian curriculum during academic year 2012/2013, it also agreed to the mobilization of Syrian teachers as volunteers, both in the camps and host communities. Under a temporary protection regulation, Syrian teachers currently do not receive work permits⁶³ and thus cannot be formally part of the MONE payroll, although they work in schools operated by AFAD and MONE. They are thus mobilized as volunteers and cannot receive a regular salary, although they report to local MONE officials. To compensate their voluntary teaching work, the MONE and UNICEF jointly developed YÖBIS, the complementary EMIS for Syrians and foreign students in Turkey.

Additionally, the MONE and UNICEF are working to develop a legal framework for the formal inclusion of Syrian teachers in the education system and thus find a sustainable solution to their payment.⁶⁴ In November 2014, UNICEF, the MONE and PTT (postal bank) signed an agreement protocol that governs the provision of standardized incentive, or compensation, to Syrian teachers in camps and host communities. The protocol establishes the first national mechanism for the payment of Syrian teachers through the MONE, with initial financial support from UNICEF.⁶⁵

In **Lebanon**, Syrian teachers are not employed in the public system, although in theory they could teach after their teaching certificate is approved as equivalent to a Lebanese teaching certificate. Private schools can employ Syrian teachers upon receiving clearance from the MEHE. National and international NGOs recruit Syrian teachers mainly to support the provision of accelerated learning and NFE programmes; they are recruited as NGO volunteers and receive an incentive payment.⁶⁶

The Syrian Education Board reported that in June 2014, between 1,150 and 1,200 Syrian teachers were working in Lebanon to provide education for Syrian children.⁶⁷ The Board reported that it has difficulty in paying salaries on a regular basis because it is dependent on funds from donors. Syrian teachers are also employed in teaching the Libyan curriculum for Grade 12 in both Lebanon and Turkey.

In **Jordan**, an agreement between the MOE and the UNICEF Country Office in Amman resulted in 260 Syrian teachers being appointed as assistants to support Jordanian teachers in the schools set up in the refugee camps. Public schools in host communities generally do not employ Syrian teachers, but a significant number of them are employed by NGOs for education programmes.

In **Iraq's** KRG and in response to the increased number of students in the country and the need for Arabic-speaking teaching staff, Syrian teachers are hired on a temporary contract basis. The recruitment of Syrian teachers and the payment of their salary has been a contentious issue. In December 2013, the central Government in Bagdad suspended salary payments to the KRG due to an ongoing disagreement over oil exportation. Given the financial difficulties and the already uncertain situation of Kurdish and Iraqi teachers in the KRG, the MOE decided not to recruit any new Syrian teachers; there is no indication what will become of the Syrian teachers already contracted on a temporary basis. Neglecting to recruit Syrian teachers raises questions of how the education of Syrian children will be handled in the future, particularly around issues of Arabic as the language of instruction, because there are few Kurdish teachers who can teach in Arabic.

⁶³ The Ministry of Labour is in charge of pronouncement on the sectors and geographic areas in which work permits are issued to Syrians under the temporary protection scheme.

⁶⁴ UNICEF drafted an Education Personnel Management Strategy Paper to guide the development of the inclusion framework for Syrian teachers in the education system.

⁶⁵ Camp and non-camp teachers will receive monthly incentives distributed through PTT pre-paid cards that can be used to withdraw money from ATM machines or as debit cards in stores.

⁶⁶ The Education Working Group and the MEHE agreed to provide a standard rate for the incentive pay for Syrian and Lebanese teachers employed by national and international NGOs, at the equivalent of US\$10 per hour.

⁶⁷ Interview with the Syrian Education Board in Beirut on 19 March 2014. The number is disaggregated per geographical area: 400 in Akkar, 250 in Tripoli and 500 in Bekaa, Mount Lebanon and Aarsal.

In **Egypt**, Syrian teachers have not been recruited to teach Syrian children in public schools for several reasons. First of all, Egypt ratified the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees with a reservation regarding the access of refugees to public services and employment. Second, there is a surplus of Egyptian teachers waiting to be hired.

Third, there is a general lack of financial resources in the Ministry of Finance.⁶⁸ Syrian teachers are, however, employed in Syrian education centres and community centres managed by NGOs and private initiatives. Their salary thus is covered either by the NGO or host community that hired them.

1.5 Assessment, certification and accreditation

Students in **Syria** receive national diplomas or certificates as long as they study the national curriculum and pass the formal examinations. There are two formal exit points in the Syrian education system: Grade 9 when students sit for the Brevet examination and Grade 12 when they sit for the baccalaureate examination. Although Grade 12 is a school-leaving exam in all the education systems of the region, there is no corresponding Grade 9 school-leaving examination in the education systems of Jordan and Turkey.

Syrian students who have missed official exams in May and June 2013 have been given an opportunity to attend remedial education classes. This is especially the case for students in Grades 9 and 12 who have had the opportunity to sit for an extra exam round before the new academic year in September 2013. During academic year 2013/2014, Palestine refugees in the besieged area of Yarmouk camp were allowed to leave the camp to sit for the Grade 9 exam in Damascus, where education services were still available.⁶⁹

Children enrolling late due to conflict and displacement might have to repeat a school year. They must apply for a placement test to determine their education level. Remedial and accelerated courses do not lead to an official certificate unless the students take the national exam. In general, the MOE does not recognize education courses conducted in an IDP shelter centre or in a non-state centre. Students who complete those courses are thus not able to secure an officially recognized certificate from the Syrian Government unless they pass the placement test and formal exam.

In some contested areas in Syria, national and international NGOs provide their own report cards at the end of an academic year, which the MOE does not recognize. There is no government

endorsement or recognition of any certificate issued by the opposition on the revised Syrian curriculum in areas controlled by non-state actors (opposition groups). Instead, for example, local teachers unions have administered Grades 9 and 12 examinations and students who passed received certificates from the Syrian Opposition Coalition based in Turkey.

The Syrian national education database includes the certification record of all Syrian students and teachers inside Syria. It is possible for the Syrian MOE to re-issue and redistribute official education certificates to those who lost their certificates, especially for Grades 9 and 12. Other education certificates that are necessary for children's return to school include a registration document to identify a child's education level. Issuing these documents is not possible, however, for children who live in areas controlled by non-state actors.

In the host countries, the certification of assessments is regulated in different ways. In **Lebanon**, Syrian students are allowed to sit for end-of-year and official school-leaving examinations as long as they provide proof of their identity. In 2012, however, the MEHE required students in Grades 9–12 to submit their official transcript, which prevented those without it from registering. During academic year 2012/2013, the vast majority of schools did not register Syrian students in the third cycle and in secondary education for several reasons. First, there was confusion on what documents were required and who was going to refund to the schools the fees that Syrian children were exempted from paying. Second, school principals were unsure that the equivalence of education document was permitted. Third, school principals wanted to avoid unexpected disruptions to the examination. Some school principals imposed a difficult placement test because they were wary that accepting Syrian children might adversely

⁶⁸ Interview with MOE officers in Cairo on 8 April 2014.

⁶⁹ See <www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=47829#.U3-qEHZrjOg>.

impact the academic standard of their school and consequently its reputation. When the MEHE requirement to provide a transcript was dropped in 2013, students were able to register; but this took place only a few days ahead of the official Brevet Grade 9 and baccalaureate Grade 12 exams, thus preventing many students to sit for the examinations.

In **Jordan**, students who successfully pass the Grade 12 examination (Tawjihi) are entitled to a diploma that is recognized and accredited regardless of a child's nationality. Whether Syrian or Jordanian, all students who receive this diploma are thus eligible to apply for university admission. No Grade 12 was opened for Syrian children in the Za'atari camp during academic year 2012/2013, and no Syrian child was allowed to enrol in that grade in schools in host communities. Sitting for the Tawjihi exam requires that students have completed at least Grades 11 and 12 in the Jordanian curriculum; therefore, no Syrian student in Grade 12 was allowed to sit for the Tawjihi in 2013. Syrian students sat the Tawjihi examination for the first time in academic year 2013/2014.

In **Iraq**, Syrian students who reach their graduation year and who submitted the required school records are allowed to sit for the final national examination. They receive the same certificates as Iraqi students.

In the Anbar Governorate in Iraq, where Syrian students were mostly concentrated in 2013, the few who managed to take the baccalaureate exam had a low success rate. Of the 35 male students who registered for the exam in the Al-Qaim camp, only 24 sat for it, and none passed. Of the 42 females registered in the second camp, only 13 sat for the examination and 4 passed.

In the KRG in **Iraq**, no Grade 9 or 12 examinations were organized during academic year 2012/2013 for Syrian children. One of the major issues in the KRG is the certification of the revised Syrian curriculum. Even though using a foreign curriculum and conducting examinations adopting this curriculum created debate in the MOE and among international organizations, MOE officers noted (in March 2014) that the KRG was going to provide all Syrian children with official

certificates, regardless of curriculum used.

In **Turkey**, Syrian students enrolled in Turkish public schools follow the country's learning assessment system, which includes four exams each school year, including a mid-term and an end-of-term exam. At the end of Grade 8, students sit for an examination and receive a primary education diploma, which allows progression to secondary school. The only school-leaving examination is at the end of secondary school, at Grade 12, when students receive a high school certificate that allows them to either leave the education system or progress to tertiary education in Turkey or in other countries.

Although only limited numbers of Syrian students have enrolled in Turkish schools and therefore are eligible to obtain a national diploma or certificate (particularly for the end-of-cycle official exams), the issue of certification for the learning of Syrian children remains crucial. In the absence of any viable long-term solution, the MONE decided to provide attendance certificates to Syrian students in Grades 1–12 beginning in academic year 2012/2013. And for the first time in Turkey, at the end of the first semester of academic year 2014/2015, Syrian children attending the temporary education centres received school reports from the MONE.

In host communities in Turkey, the status of schools is complicated because in addition to the schools established by the Turkish authorities for Syrian children there is a large number of unregistered schools. Many of those schools provide their own certificates, although the MONE does not recognize them.

In August 2013, the Syrian Opposition Coalition, together with the support of the Higher Commission for Education,⁷⁰ organized the Grade 12 school-leaving examination (baccalaureate exam) for nearly 10,000 Syrian students⁷¹ residing inside Syria in areas no longer under the control of the Syrian Government⁷² as well as in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan. Similarly, in June 2014, the newly formed MOE for the Syrian Interim Government conducted the Grade 12 exam for more than 9,500 Syrian children in Syria, Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan.⁷³

⁷⁰ The Higher Commission for Education is the translation of the Arabic: Al-Hay'a Al-Wataneyya Al-a'liyah Lel-Tarbeyya Wal-Ta'lim al-a'li, <www.etilaf.org/الهيئة الوطنية العليا للتربية والتعليم-العالي/اجهزة الائتلاف/مكاتب الائتلاف/مكتب الهيئة الوطنية العليا للتربية والتعليم-العالي.html>.

⁷¹ A total of 5,431 male and 4,053 female Syrian students.

⁷² A total of 113 Directorates of Education were established in the governorates of Aleppo, Dara'a, Idlib, Deir ez-Zour, Raqqqa and Reef Damascus.

⁷³ Popović, Delplace and Bergan, 2014.

Those Grade 12 exams were similar to the one the Government of Syria conducts, with some modifications. They had three tracks (science, humanities and Sharia);⁷⁴ the exam was prepared by Syrian education specialists based in Turkey and distributed to Local Councils established by the opposition in Syria and to supporting organizations⁷⁵ in the host countries, such as the Education Board in Lebanon.

In 2013 and 2014, the Higher Commission for Education and the Syrian Education Commission also supported the organization of the Grade 12 examination according to the Libyan curriculum. This exam was found to be the most widespread and the most common option among Syrian children in Turkey in 2014;⁷⁶ yet, it will be dismissed in 2015 in favour of the Syrian Grade 12 examination.

The MOE for the Syrian Interim Government provides a certificate for the Grade 12 students who pass the school-leaving exam. The Turkish Government recognizes certificates provided by this entity (not only to Syrian students in Turkey but also to those who sat for the examination in Syria, Lebanon and Jordan) through an equivalency certificate that allows students to progress to tertiary education in Turkey and in some European universities with whom the Syrian Opposition Coalition has stipulated agreements covering Syrian students.

As of March 2014, the MEHE in Lebanon and the MOE in Jordan had made no commitment to provide certification for the different versions of the revised Syrian curriculum used in private schools in different parts of the country. In 2013, the Syrian Education Board as well as some

Islamic charities that conducted the Grades 9 and 12 examinations in Lebanon and Jordan arranged stipulated agreements with the Syrian Opposition Coalition based in Turkey to provide certificates for the Brevet and baccalaureate school-leaving exams.

There are national **recognition agreements** between the Government of Syria and the governments in Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt regarding the reciprocal equivalence of diplomas and certificates validated by Syria's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. There are no such agreements with the Government of Turkey, however. These inter-governmental agreements should be further considered when discussing efforts to promote the admission or readmission or admission of Syrian refugee children to schools when they return to Syria. There are fears that the current political and social tensions between Syria and some of the host countries may affect recognition of education certificates. This is the case in Lebanon and Jordan, for example. No formal follow up on previous agreements between the Jordanian MOE and the MOE in Syria, for instance, was conducted after the onset of the crisis to regulate the accreditation of certificates received in Jordan by Syrian students.

There are no agreements between the KRG (Iraq) and the Syrian Government on the recognition of education certificates. Generally, KRG certificates are internationally recognized and an MOE official in Syria suggested that they would be recognized, in the event of children returning. The use of the revised Syrian curriculum in some schools in some camps in the KRG and its certification, however, might create some uncertainty over recognition.

1.6 Comparative examples

To deepen the regional understanding and analysis of models of curriculum, certification and accreditation for Syrian children in the Middle East, the study reviewed a number of comparative examples of education for refugee children in diverse country contexts.

One such model, which has much relevance for the education of Syrian refugee children, is the education system developed by the **United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East**. With 703 schools, nine vocational colleges, two educational science

⁷⁴ The section is based on SPARK Syria Policy Brief: Baccalaureate Secondary School Leaving Certificate, 27 September 2013.

⁷⁵ The Syrian Education Board, for example, supported the logistics of the exam in Lebanon, while the Syrian Cultural Committee and the Jordanian MOE supported the logistics of the exam in Jordan.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

faculties and two teacher-training institutes, UNRWA manages the largest education system for refugees in the Middle East. With about half a million children enrolled,⁷⁷ it operates in five areas (Gaza, the West Bank, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan). Through its schools, UNRWA provides nine to 10 years of free basic education, depending on the regulations of the host authorities, to all Palestine refugee children. In Lebanon, exceptionally, UNRWA also offers secondary schooling.⁷⁸

UNRWA schools follow the host country/authority curriculum in each area where it operates, as agreed in 1953, with the objective of facilitating students' transition to secondary schooling in the host countries – with the exception of Lebanon. UNRWA schools operate at two levels: (i) They follow the curriculum of the host country or authority (the national curriculum), and (ii) they follow a set of enrichment materials that UNRWA schools provide for their students (the school curriculum).⁷⁹

Despite the strengths and achievements of the UNRWA education system, there was growing recognition of the need for comprehensive reform.⁸⁰ In 2011, the UNRWA education programme launched a major four-year reform, with the goal of meeting the demands of a 21st century education system and improving services for Palestine refugee students in UNRWA schools. This was to be achieved through the provision of well-trained and motivated teachers within empowered schools; equal access for all children regardless of sex, ability, health conditions and socio-economic status; a relevant and accessible curriculum; a suitable school and classroom environment; and well-developed learning resources, including the use of new technology.⁸¹

In Gaza, education at UNRWA schools is implemented in accordance with the Palestinian Authority curriculum for Grades 1–9.⁸² However, years of underfunding have left the education system in Gaza overstretched, with 94 per cent of schools operating on a double-shift basis.⁸³ To remedy the situation, UNRWA introduced a 'schools of excellence' initiative, which includes a dedicated human rights curriculum; the provision of support materials for low achievers and enrichment materials for gifted and talented students; assistance to vulnerable and low-achieving students, including summer learning programmes and after-school classes; and additional class time in Arabic and math.⁸⁴

In the West Bank, UNRWA provides only preparatory education up to Grade 9,⁸⁵ secondary-level students enrol in public schools. The agency operates 99 educational facilities, which reach more than 50,000 students.⁸⁶ UNRWA cooperates closely with the Palestinian Authority, participating in technical coordination committees to deal with such issues as textbooks, school buildings and teacher training. The agency was also involved in the discussions regarding the new Palestinian curriculum prepared for all grades in general education.⁸⁷

In Syria, young Palestine refugees have been especially vulnerable as a consequence of the conflict. Before the outbreak of the conflict, all of the 118 UNRWA schools in Syria were running on double shifts to provide around 67,300 students with primary and secondary education, following the Syrian curriculum. UNRWA also educates some of its students at 43 public schools as a result of an agreement with the MOE to use public schools in the afternoons.⁸⁸ The agency has worked with partners on numerous strategies to minimize disruptions for UNRWA students

⁷⁷ Education: In Action, <www.unrwa.org/what-we-do/education>, accessed 26 May 2014.

⁷⁸ UNRWA/UNESCO Education Programme, Annual Report, Amman, 2010, p. 9-10.

⁷⁹ UNRWA Framework for Analysis and Quality Implementation of the Curriculum, p. 3.

⁸⁰ UNRWA Education Reform Strategy 2012–2015, p. v.

⁸¹ Education: In Action, <www.unrwa.org/what-we-do/education>, accessed 26 May 2014.

⁸² UNRWA, 2013, <unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.nsf/361eea1cc08301c485256cf600606959/aa1b7b90f79c031e85257b9d004de092?OpenDocument>, accessed 26 May 2014.

⁸³ Education in the Gaza Strip, <www.unrwa.org/activity/education-gaza-strip>, accessed 26 May 2014.

⁸⁴ Education in the Gaza Strip, <www.unrwa.org/activity/education-gaza-strip>, accessed 26 May 2014.

⁸⁵ UNRWA considers preparatory education an integral part of the basic education cycle. Thus, it is compulsory and free. Upon successful completion of the elementary cycle (six years of schooling), UNRWA students are promoted to the preparatory cycle, which consists of either three years (in the West Bank, Gaza, Syria and Lebanon) or four years (in Jordan). See UNRWA Education Reform Strategy 2011–2015, p. 17.

⁸⁶ Education in the West Bank, <www.unrwa.org/activity/education-west-bank>, accessed 26 May 2014.

⁸⁷ UNICEF, 2010, p. 14 and 16.

⁸⁸ Education in Syria, <www.unrwa.org/activity/education-syria>, accessed 26 May 2014.

affected by the crisis. These strategies include developing self-learning materials, offering summer programmes and arranging for access to examinations.⁸⁹ The UNRWA Self-Learning Programme targets all children aged 6–15 (Grades 1–9).⁹⁰ It is a structured programme that can be adapted for use at school, home, refugee locations and shelters and other locations.⁹¹

Lebanon is the only area where UNRWA offers secondary education;⁹² the agency operates nine secondary schools.⁹³ Overall in 2014, UNRWA accommodated 31,753 students in its 69 schools throughout the country.⁹⁴

In **Jordan**, UNRWA provides basic education to more than 115,000 students at 172 schools. Students in Grades 4, 8 and 10 take national quality-control tests in the core subjects (Arabic, English, science and math) and consistently achieve better results than students in private or public schools.⁹⁵

Assessment in the UNRWA system operates at three levels: (i) agency-wide; (ii) area level, which leads to qualifications and awards; and (iii) school/classroom level.⁹⁶ Within the UNRWA Framework for Analysis and Quality Implementation of the Curriculum (Curriculum Framework), an assessment is deemed most effective when it is understood as a process reflecting the multifaceted nature of the curriculum and learning. Continuous classroom- and teacher-based assessment is encouraged (testing and/or national examinations). To foster a culture of meaningful, relevant and reliable assessment, UNRWA is committed to aligning curriculum, teaching, learning and assessment practices.⁹⁷

UNRWA examinations are accepted by most host governments for the purposes of transfer and movement of Palestine refugees into a host

public school in the areas in which it operates, with the exception of Lebanon. Thus, the UNRWA-developed and administered examinations are recognized by Jordan and Syria and by the Palestinian Authority (for Gaza and the West Bank). In Lebanon, children continue to either a UNRWA-secondary school or to a private school. The UNRWA examinations are recognized because the UNRWA curriculum is consistent with that of each host government or the Palestinian Authority. As discussed in more detail in the case study chapter, UNRWA enriches the curriculum of the host governments and the Palestinian Authority to meet the learning needs of Palestine children.

UNRWA provides a good example of how the education of refugee children can balance the needs of host governments while retaining a focus on refugee (Palestine) identity. The following describes other alternatives to address the challenges of education access, quality and certification for refugee children.⁹⁸

In **Pakistan**, the government policy and a desire for return to Afghanistan shape the education options for the refugee children. Because Pakistan's education system significantly differs from that of Afghanistan, many refugee students study the Afghan curriculum.⁹⁹ The International Rescue Committee (IRC) responded to pleas for support from Afghan refugee schools that no longer had the funds to provide programmes at an adequate standard. The IRC-supported schools now provide primary education for both refugee boys and girls, and secondary education (Grades 7–12) for refugee girls. In addition, home schools were formed in more remote and/or conservative areas where there were not enough students to establish a school or girls were not allowed to leave their neighbourhoods. These home schools followed the same curriculum as refugee schools.¹⁰⁰

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Refer to the section on Syria for more details on the Self-Learning Programme.

⁹¹ This section is based on a presentation by Alberto Biancoli, UNRWA Education Programme Specialist, at the UNICEF MENA Syria Crisis Education Strategy Meeting in Amman in April 2014.

⁹² Education in Lebanon, www.unrwa.org/activity/education-lebanon, accessed 26 May 2014.

⁹³ Education: Knowledge and Skills, www.unrwa.org/what-we-do/knowledge-and-skills accessed 5 June 2014.

⁹⁴ Education in Lebanon, www.unrwa.org/activity/education-lebanon accessed 26 May 2014.

⁹⁵ Education in Jordan, www.unrwa.org/activity/education-jordan, accessed 26 May 2014.

⁹⁶ UNRWA Framework for Analysis and Quality Implementation of the Curriculum. p. 14.

⁹⁷ UNRWA Framework for Analysis and Quality Implementation of the Curriculum. p. 14.

⁹⁸ Kirk, 2009, p. 34.

⁹⁹ Kirk, 2009, p. 129.

¹⁰⁰ Kirk, 2009, p. 130.

The IRC-supported schools use the curriculum of Afghanistan's MOE to promote learning in the children's first language. Since 2002, the IRC has made significant efforts to gain endorsement of the programme and the related certification of students' and teachers' training. The goal is to harmonize refugees' education with the education in their home country, thereby facilitating the processes of return and reintegration. However, when repatriation started in 2002, the IRC encountered a major challenge related to reintegrating students and teachers back in Afghanistan: the lack of a mechanism to recognize an IRC-issued secondary school certificate. Thus, the MOE in Afghanistan prepared guidelines for the Afghan Consulate in Peshawar (Pakistan) to follow, with the agreement that a Consulate stamp on students' certificates from schools registered with the Consulate would be recognized in Afghanistan.

More than 500,000 internally displaced persons are estimated to be living in **eastern Myanmar**. There are two official Karenni¹⁰¹ refugee camps in the northern province of Mae Hong Son in Thailand and seven official camps dominated by Karen located further south along the border. By the end of 2007, UNHCR had registered a total of 130,435 refugees.¹⁰² More than 200,000 refugees from Myanmar are estimated to be living outside the camps in Thailand and more than 2 million migrant workers from Myanmar are also estimated to be living in Thailand.¹⁰³

The Karen State has an Education Department that supports students and teachers inside Myanmar as well as many refugee and migrant schools in Thailand. The Karenni Education Department (KnED), which does not have as long a history as the KED, is responsible for Karenni education in the two northern refugee camps.¹⁰⁴ There are three main international NGOs working on education along the border: ZOA

Refugee Care, which works primarily in the seven Karen camps; Jesuit Refugee Care, which works in the two Karenni camps; and World Education Thailand, which focuses on migrant education and supports teacher training in the refugee camps.

In 1999, the Thai Government adopted an Education For All policy that enabled all children living in Thailand the right to attend Thai (and other) schools and the chance to obtain Thai certificates. However, a number of challenges have persisted, such as financial difficulties, language barriers, lack of access to Grades 11 and 12 (these grades are not considered a right by the Thai Constitution) and lingering discrimination.¹⁰⁵ Children and youth living in the refugee camps can be educated up to Grade 10, and both the KED and the KnED¹⁰⁶ are responsible for curriculum development, standardizing the curriculum, teacher training and school inspection.

At the height of the Chechen–Russian conflict in 1999, more than 200,000 Chechens were displaced to **Ingushetia**, with 45 per cent of them younger than 18. In January 2000, the IRC introduced its emergency education programme, which combined non-formal education and psychosocial activities. However, parents were concerned that their children's participation in the programme would not be recognized upon their return to Chechnya. To address this issue, the IRC sought recognition of its schools and formal certification via the Ministry of Education. As a result, the emergency education programme evolved from a non-formal to a formal education programme by November 2000. The IRC collaborated with both the Ministry of Education in Ingushetia and the MOE in Chechnya and received study plans from both ministries. In June 2001, the MOE in Ingushetia scheduled final examinations for all internally displaced children from Chechnya to assess academic progress and certify all qualifying students.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰¹ Karenni is one of the eight major ethnic groups in Myanmar: Burmans, the Chin, Kachin, Karen, Kayah (Karenni), Mon, Rakhine (Arakan) and Shan (Kirk, 2009, p. 138).

¹⁰² The Burma Border Consortium, December 2007, cited in Kirk, 2009, p. 140.

¹⁰³ The Burma Border Consortium, 2006, cited in Kirk, 2009, p. 140.

¹⁰⁴ Kirk, 2009, p. 141.

¹⁰⁵ Kirk, 2009, pp. 141-143.

¹⁰⁶ The Karen Education Department (KED) in exile in Thailand is regarded as a community-based organization. However, its members view themselves more as an MOE of a government in exile. As for the Karenni Educational Department (KnED), it is responsible for Karenni education in two of the northern refugee camps (Kirk, 2009, p. 141).

¹⁰⁷ Kirk, 2009, pp. 161-163.

There are a number of factors contributing to the certification access for internally displaced students in Chechnya. The involvement of parents, who were generally highly educated and saw education as the best means to secure a future, contributed to the high enrolment and attendance rates. IRC also benefited from the wealth of experience and expertise of some highly qualified displaced teachers in the settlement community who had teaching certification from the MOE in Chechnya. These teachers brought with them curriculum textbooks and materials, which considerably facilitated the processes of curriculum development and certification of teachers. In addition, the engagement of the MOE in Ingushetia in the initial stages of the formal education programme ensured that student learning and teacher training complied with education and certification standards.¹⁰⁸

At the end of the 1980s, civil war erupted in Liberia, and many people fled to neighbouring countries. By the end of 1990, there were 272,000 Liberian refugees in **Côte d'Ivoire**.¹⁰⁹ The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), UNHCR's implementing partner for emergency education,¹¹⁰ provided most of the education services for refugee students. In 1992, ADRA began providing primary and secondary education to refugee children. Teaching was primarily in English, using the Liberian curriculum, and schools were staffed by professional teachers and volunteers who had met certain academic requirements.¹¹¹ With the end of the first Liberian war and the start of UNHCR's repatriation programme, a large number of refugees returned home between 1997 and 1999; the Ivorian Government was pressured to accept the idea of local integration for the remaining refugees.¹¹² Secondary education for refugee students officially ended after 2000. Yet, integration into secondary Ivorian institutions was not possible due to the lack of an agreement protocol between the Ivorian Government and UNHCR and because of the high level of written French proficiency required at the secondary level. Refugee students' options at that point entailed dropping out, going back to Liberia,

moving to an Anglophone country to continue schooling or enrolling in one of the private institutions run by refugee teachers that had replaced the ADRA secondary schools.

Throughout the 1990s, conflict gripped Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire, resulting in hundreds of thousands of refugees moving to **Guinea**. However, in a Francophone host country, the Anglophone students found it difficult to integrate into the Guinean education system.¹¹³ There was also initially no overarching framework within which all refugee schools could operate. The IRC thus established a basic system, similar to the one used in Liberia. The IRC provided an organizing framework for the schools, but there was a shortage of textbooks and materials and no formalized curriculum. Despite students' and teachers' hopes, the wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone continued,¹¹⁴ and it became clear that a more long-term solution was needed. Parents and students wanted to be sure that the courses offered by the IRC schools would be equivalent to those in their home country and that their certificates would be recognized upon repatriation.¹¹⁵

Because there were refugees from two countries in the same camps, the IRC had to ensure that the curriculum it developed would be valid in both Liberia and Sierra Leone. This presented a significant challenge, although the two countries have similar curricula. In response, a curriculum was developed that could be used for Grades K–12, based on the unique needs of the IRC-operated school system catering for Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees in Guinea. This curriculum harmonizes the instructional systems in both countries by incorporating the objectives of the Liberian and Sierra Leonean school programmes, while adapting them to the refugee situation in Guinea. The development of the curriculum was accompanied by teacher training in this new curriculum and extra guidance for inexperienced teachers.¹¹⁶ The IRC was successful in obtaining the approval of the Liberian MOE and Liberia's West African Examinations Council

¹⁰⁸ Kirk, 2009, p. 167.

¹⁰⁹ Kirk, 2009, p. 201.

¹¹⁰ Kirk, 2009, p. 202.

¹¹¹ Kirk, 2009, p. 205.

¹¹² Kirk, 2009, p. 206.

¹¹³ Kirk, 2009, pp. 171-172.

¹¹⁴ Kirk, 2009, p. 173.

¹¹⁵ Kirk, 2009, p. 174.

¹¹⁶ Kirk, 2009, pp. 174-176.

officials for its adapted curriculum. Sierra Leone refused to approve the curriculum because it did not include critical courses from its national curriculum.¹¹⁷

Millions of Somalis have been internally and internationally displaced as a result of the long-term conflict that has raged in the country over the past 20 years. Close to 200,000 refugees¹¹⁸ are living in three refugee camps near the town of Dadaab in eastern **Kenya**.¹¹⁹ Each camp has five or six primary schools and one secondary school, all of which follow the Kenyan curriculum.¹²⁰ The UNHCR education field guidelines emphasize educational certification and the recognition of certificates by the education ministries in a host country and in the country of origin. The certification problem in this case was resolved by adopting Kenya's curriculum. Hence, upon completion of primary school, students receive the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE); upon completion of secondary school, they receive the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE).¹²¹ CARE Kenya began implementing the Kenyan curriculum in the camps in 1996. Until then, the Somali curriculum was taught at the primary level. Even though this had a number of advantages, there was no certification system and the system of education was non-formal and unrecognized. The Somali community preferred to adopt the Kenyan system in the camps. Thus, from 1996 until 2004, CARE hired teachers with Kenyan university degrees to facilitate the transition from the Somali system. In addition, the MOE sends representatives and school inspectors to the camps to monitor the KCPE and KCSE examinations as well as teaching and learning. Earning the KCSE certificates is especially advantageous for refugee students wanting to pursue their studies within Kenya because they are identical to those of Kenyan students.¹²²

From February to November 2000, around 30,000 refugees fled a conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo and took asylum in the district of Bétou in the **Republic of the Congo**. Because the local

population was small, the refugees overwhelmed the host community. Due to similar languages and customs, the refugees were relatively easily integrated, without the establishment of camps. In May 2001, as a result of an attempted coup in Bangui, Central African Republic, and the persecution of the Yakoma ethnic group, 1,000 to 1,500 refugees from Bangui were displaced to Bétou as well. Although they shared fewer language and cultural characteristics with the host community, they were provided with the same integration opportunities as the refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo.¹²³ In June 2001, the IRC and UNHCR began work on the recognition of their programme after refugee parents expressed dissatisfaction with the informal programme of studies. The IRC and UNHCR collaborated with the education authorities in the Democratic Republic of Congo to enable refugee students to follow an official curriculum and achieve recognized certification.¹²⁴ The IRC and UNHCR proposed that the MOE provide certification for its primary education programme; in September 2003, UNHCR began to provide technical support for secondary schools for refugee students and, with the IRC, worked with MOE officials to secure formal certification for that programme.¹²⁵

An additional programme exists for the Arab countries, that could provide a pathway for refugee children education in the region. Working within the framework of already accredited curricula, the Educational Research Center developed the **International Arab Baccalaureate** (IAB) for Arab countries. The IAB, which is implemented in general education schools, has the objective of preparing students for achievement in higher education and the workplace and, ultimately, empowering them for success. The IAB culminates in a common secondary school diploma that is gradually being recognized internationally. The IAB diploma is granted based on continuous and regular assessment in Grades 10, 11 and 12 rather than on a single set of exit exams.¹²⁶

¹¹⁷ Kirk, 2009, pp. 176-177.

¹¹⁸ As of 2007, there were 170,405 refugees (UNHCR, 2007a), cited in Kirk, 2009, p. 183.

¹¹⁹ Kirk, 2009, p. 183.

¹²⁰ Kirk, 2009, p. 185.

¹²¹ Kirk, 2009, p. 186.

¹²² Kirk, 2009, pp. 187-188.

¹²³ Kirk, 2009, pp. 192-193.

¹²⁴ Kirk, 2009, p. 194.

¹²⁵ Kirk, 2009, p. 195.

¹²⁶ International Arab Baccalaureate (IAB): Student License to the Future (leaflet).

These examples reflect a variety of strategies to educate refugee children and assure certification and accreditation of learning programmes. Some of these strategies have been effective and have had significant impact on thousands of students' education paths; some have had additional benefits (such as capacity building of education planners and managers in exile) and some have been less successful and more short-term.¹²⁷ As illustrated in the UNRWA case study, the challenges related to certification are political as much as they are educational. Solutions responding to the needs of students and families must take into consideration the complex differing

political contexts. For example, host governments may have concerns related to security, stability or resources and, as a result, may be reluctant to link refugee children to host education systems out of fear that this would prolong the displacement period. In fact, host governments may encourage education for repatriation, especially if the accreditation and certification of refugee children's learning would lead to successful competition in the home country's job market. On the other hand, governments in home countries may refuse to provide their own curricula and examinations to refugee children to encourage repatriation.¹²⁸

1.7 Policy recommendations: Scaling up quality education provision

Several policy recommendations and suggestions emerged through this study that warrant consideration by all parties involved in providing education for Syrian children. These recommendations are equally applicable to all contexts, although the specific implementation strategies and approaches may differ. The recommendations and suggestions are focused on scaling up the provision of quality education for Syrian refugee children in a context of meeting their needs and their right to education. It is more of an imperative in a context where there is no immediate end in sight to a conflict. The need for a sound, holistic, coordinated and durable approach to scaling up quality education is thus crucial.

Access

Access to education remains a barrier for many Syrian children in the host countries as well as in Syria. The huge influx of Syrian children has placed enormous pressure on host government education systems, particularly those with an existing refugee population or with weak infrastructure. It is evident that to meet the increased demand for schooling, alternative, bold and innovative approaches are required. There are several strategies that merit consideration.

First, community and private non-formal initiatives can take an important role in delivering education services to Syrian refugee children. In instances where demand outstrips the capacity of governments to supply formal opportunities,

alternative education provides a feasible option. However, governments have a crucial role in establishing an effective enabling environment for such community initiatives to flourish. Moreover, governments need to take an active role in overseeing and regulating such initiatives to ensure that there is high-quality learning for all. Initiatives that bridge formal and non-formal education programmes and that provide relevant learning and certification should be encouraged to widen access opportunities for Syrian children. An example can be found in Egypt, where Syrian children enrol in public schools but actually attend classes in NGO and non-formal settings.

Second, given the existing capacity constraints and the magnitude of the Syrian crisis, bold and innovative pathways to widen access are necessary. High-quality virtual learning is a feasible option. Providing the opportunity to overcome many of the infrastructure challenges, a virtual school can deliver high-quality learning to those children who remain unreached and out of school. For a displaced community, a virtual learning school has an added advantage of ensuring that the learning experiences of all Syrian refugee children are similar, irrespective of where they are located; it promotes the presumption of a return to the home country and can encourage a sense of social cohesion and peace-building in the long term. A virtual education approach will also facilitate the certification of learning and the accreditation of learning programmes. Given the psychosocial difficulties of Syrian refugee children and their

¹²⁷ Kirk, 2009, p. 44.

¹²⁸ Kirk, 2009, p. 51.

often disadvantaged background, there is a need to ensure that virtual learning is complemented by high-quality contact and support from trained and able teachers and facilitators.

Third, although much can be done to increase access, there is an urgent need to reduce barriers to education. On the supply side, attention needs to be given to removing the administrative burden of producing documents, such as refugee registration documents or school papers attesting to their level of schooling in Syria. Understandably, school papers are important documents; but there are alternatives, such as a placement test. There is a need to develop reliable and standardized placements tests across schools in each country. Additionally, placement tests should be offered more than once a year so that children who are displaced during an academic year or who want to transition from a non-formal programme to a formal programme can still have the opportunity to access school once the academic year has started.

Finally, a holistic approach to the education of Syrian children should increase access to post-basic education opportunities, in particular secondary and higher education. The reality is that the refugee population, as this study found, includes many who are of secondary school age, with little or no prospect of transitioning to higher education. The refugee population includes many young people who would benefit from accessing relevant vocational education to ensure decent work-related opportunities. All parties supporting Syrian refugees should develop a coherent and holistic post-basic and vocational education framework to increase access.

Quality and the curriculum

Although physical access to education is important, it is equally crucial to consider the quality of the education provided. The study found several challenges that also warrant close attention.

First, in some host countries, such as Turkey and Lebanon, the language of instruction in the public school differs from the Arabic used in Syrian schools. In such a situation, Syrian children need to be provided with support to ensure that they are fluent in the language of instruction so that they can learn. Consideration also should be given to provide initial support in Arabic to make the transition to the host country's language of instruction, such as Turkish in Turkey, which was done when the influx of refugees first started (but eventually interrupted).

Second, it is evident that the Syrian curriculum is unevenly used and applied in non-formal schools across the host countries. Practices vary, with some schools offering some of the subjects of the official Syrian curriculum and others removing what are considered the more unacceptable elements. A coherent framework and approach for the process of textbook revision and production of the Syrian curriculum should be developed. This is crucial because it is the completion of the Syrian curriculum that many refugee children will need upon their return. Coherent curriculum development – as difficult and politically charged as it may be – is one important recommendation for scaling up the provision of quality education.

Third, this study reveals the need for an enriched curriculum that addresses the psychological trauma that Syrian children have experienced as a result of the conflict. The immense social and psychological difficulties that children face have an adverse impact on their ability to learn and on their emotional and psychological well-being. It is therefore imperative that a comprehensive and holistic programme of psychosocial education and support be provided to all Syrian children, irrespective of which school they attend, whether formal or non-formal. Whichever curriculum is used, a host country or even a version of the revised Syrian curriculum, peace education and conflict resolution should be core elements.

Fourth and related to the previous issue is the need to create a positive learning environment for Syrian children. This includes tackling all forms of bullying and discrimination that Syrian children experience in some schools. A policy guide directed to all teachers that outlines positive strategies for tackling bullying and discrimination should be considered. Education ministries in host countries, together with international partners, should develop a code of conduct that speaks to the importance of an inclusive education approach for refugee children.

Finally, good-quality education is not possible without the presence of able and motivated teachers. Professional development to support teachers working with Syrian refugee children is an important recommendation. A holistic framework of professional development for teachers should encompass support in dealing with vulnerable children and in facilitating children's learning where the language of instruction is not their home language. Many qualified Syrian teachers should be deployed in formal and non-formal schools, given their experiences in teaching Syrian children. Host

governments, together with international partners, should consider ways in which Syrian teachers can be used to enhance quality education for Syrian refugee children. This would necessitate the recognition of the Syrian teacher qualifications and concrete discussions around their legal status.

Certification and accreditation

Despite international conventions, treaties, legal and rights-based instruments, there is a lack of consistency in the recognition and certification of learning, as this study discovered. Recognition of refugee children's prior learning by home or host government education ministries frequently requires difficult negotiations on an individual basis.¹²⁹ Even where there is willingness to create mechanisms for recognizing refugee children's qualifications or prior learning, technical challenges may need to be overcome, such as: matching a grade level in one system to the appropriate grade level in another; placing and absorbing students who transfer mid-cycle (such as in the middle of a primary or lower secondary cycle) or mid-school year (such as in the middle of a school year, whether or not in the middle of a certain cycle); and comparing curricula to identify differences and thus requirements for moving from one system into another.¹³⁰ Certification and accreditation is thus arguably one of the biggest challenges facing the provision of education for Syrian refugee children, given that education is provided across borders and in diverse host countries as well as in Syria, which is divided due to the conflict.

There are several types of coordinated education provision across borders, with differing forms of quality assurance and regulation. These include:

- various types of provision across agencies, such as UNRWA, IRC and UNHCR;
- various international and regional curricula, such as International Baccalaureate and the International Baccalaureate Evaluation;
- various regional examination and accreditation modalities, such as the West African Examinations Council, East African Examinations Council, South African Examinations Council and Caribbean Examinations Council; and
- cross-border higher education quality assurance mechanisms, such as the Bologna process, ASEAN Quality Assurance (QA), the UNESCO Higher Education Quality Assurance and Recognition Initiative and the Association of Quality Assurance Agencies of the Islamic World.

Cross-border certification and accreditation of learning programmes, coupled with the recognition of institutions providing education, is important to ensure that children educated in one context, particularly refugees, have their certificate of learning recognized and thus rendering it portable. For successful cross-border recognition, which is particularly challenging in a conflict context, trust between parties is vital. At the same time, a key principle is 'unity within diversity', whereby in curriculum terms, there may be agreement that all children follow a common curriculum and assessment framework, but there is much flexibility for additional enrichment, as is the case with the UNRWA education system. This does require, however, some organization or entity to ensure the integration.

In this context, all parties involved in the education of Syrian children should come together and develop a common framework for the certification of learning. Such a framework should consider ways in which Syrian children can take their Grade 12 Syrian examinations in a host country as well the recognition of those who take other examinations. A common framework for certification implies an agreed accreditation approach, which accredits all the learning programmes offered to Syrian refugee children. For this recommendation, consideration should be given to establishing an organizational structure able to certify learning and to accredit learning programmes. Such an entity must meet multiple objectives, including developing a common cross-border framework for certification and accreditation, validating learning and the assessment of end-of-cycle/phase examinations, coordinating and harmonizing the process of curriculum development and revision, and supporting and enhancing partnerships to increase refugee's children access to quality education.

¹²⁹ Kirk, 2009, p. 39.

¹³⁰ Kirk, 2009, p. 43.

All these recommendations and suggestions for enhancing and scaling up quality education and access to it require strong coordination and partnerships between international development agencies, government ministries and community and non-state initiatives to minimize duplication and fragmentation. Their successful implementation also relies on working closely with parents and local communities to increase the demand for schooling.

Participants in the workshop on Scaling Up Quality Provision for Syrian Children and Children in Vulnerable Host Communities in Amman in June 2014¹³¹ suggested many of the recommendations cited in this report. The participants were clear in supporting quality provision and equally strident in their call for adequate and sustainable financing for

implementing the recommendations, particularly supporting host governments that are shouldering most of the costs to provide education for Syrian refugee children. Without adequate financing, it is unlikely the recommendations to scale up quality education provision can be absorbed to the fullest extent possible.

The successful realization of these recommendations requires political will and commitment from all parties to find durable and lasting strategies to address the education needs of displaced Syrian children. At the heart of these recommendations is a commitment to allow all Syrian children realize their potential, especially those who remain out of school, and to mitigate the most adverse effects of the violence and conflict they have experienced and witnessed.

¹³¹ Subregional conference on Scaling Up Quality Education Provision for Syrian Children and Children in Vulnerable Host Communities, Amman, 17-19 June 2014, organized by UNICEF, UNESCO, UNHCR and the Centre for Lebanese Studies.



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CASE STUDIES

in Syria, Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt



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SYRIA

2 Syria

2.1 Social and political context

The political and humanitarian crisis in Syria that began in 2011 has resulted in death, destruction and human rights violation on a wide scale. It is estimated that at least 150,000 people have been killed since the beginning of the conflict, including children, teachers and students.¹³² The United Nations estimates that 12.2 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance inside Syria and 46 per cent of them, or 5.6 million, are children younger than 18. It is also estimated that there are 7.6 million internally displaced persons.¹³³ Host communities¹³⁴ and refugee communities are directly affected by the crisis, including at least 440,000 Palestine refugees.¹³⁵ A deep-seated economic recession, unilateral financial sanctions,

increasing levels of unemployment, depreciation of the Syrian currency, increase in fuel prices and disruption of markets have rendered the Syrian population vulnerable and fragile. As a consequence of the conflict and the lack of employment opportunities, the country is also facing a 'brain drain' of professionals, including teachers and doctors. Host communities and internally displaced persons have had to resort to adverse survival strategies, including removing children from school, reducing the quality and quantity of food, sharing accommodation, begging and sending children to work to generate needed income.¹³⁶

2.2 The education context

The crisis in Syria, now in its fifth year, has pushed the capacity of basic social services to breaking point, with a devastating impact on education access and quality for children countrywide. A generation of Syrian children risks being lost amid the crisis. Due to the conflict and internal displacement, a large number of children have already lost more than two school years, and many others have dropped out, without any opportunity to return or to benefit from alternative learning opportunities. Despite the crisis, an estimated 3.6 million children enrolled in Grades 1–12 in academic year 2013/2014.¹³⁷ Dramatically, however, an estimated 1.3 million to 1.6 million children at basic-school age (5–14 years) remain out of school or attend irregularly due to the ongoing conflict and massive internal displacement. When the number of adolescents is added to this group, an estimated 2.1 million to 2.4 million young people (aged 5–17 years) are not in school.¹³⁸ Low attendance rates are confirmed,

especially in the hard-to-reach areas. Although the national average attendance rate stands at 73 per cent, the percentage varies across the country. It is as low as 36 per cent in Raqqa, 46 per cent in Idlib and Dara'a and 50 per cent in Aleppo.¹³⁹

Prior to the crisis, Syria had a 106 per cent gross enrolment rate in basic education (Grades 1–9), one of the highest rates in the region. The conflict pushed the gross enrolment rate down to 78.6 per cent in 2013, far lower than the rate recorded in the mid-1990s. More than two decades of education access expansion have been lost due to the conflict.¹⁴⁰

Prior to the crisis, the Ministry of Education had embarked on a comprehensive curriculum reform programme to make learning more child-centred and interactive. The reform focused around the promotion of 'active learning', the reduction of the teacher-pupil ratio to 1:35 and the gradual

¹³² SHARP, 2014.

¹³³ UNICEF, 2015.

¹³⁴ Host communities are defined as those that have received large numbers of internally displaced persons in relatively safer areas of the country.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ SHARP, 2014.

¹³⁷ Syria Ministry of Education, 2014.

¹³⁸ Government of Syria, 2015.

¹³⁹ Ministry of Education, unpublished information on out-of-school children, September 2013.

¹⁴⁰ UNICEF, unpublished.

phasing out of the double-shift system through the construction of new schools. The MOE phased the roll out of new textbooks in the country, introducing them first in Grades 1–4, 7 and 10 in 2011/2012 and then in the remaining grades in 2012/2013. Despite the national launch of the new curriculum,¹⁴¹ not all teachers were trained to implement the new active learning pedagogy. By 2013, only about 100 schools in six governorates had been selected to participate in the training to implement active learning, suggesting that it has not yet been enacted in all schools and classrooms.

The crisis affected the education reform efforts at a time when the system was struggling to fully implement the new curriculum in all areas, especially in rural Damascus, as well as coping with the influx of a large number of Iraqi refugees. Despite the ongoing nationwide conflict, the MOE has remained committed to providing education for all children in Syria. It has instituted several measures, including encouraging internally displaced children to register in any school in the country; allowing children without official school documents to sit for placement tests and register in school; temporarily suspending the compulsory use of the school uniform; and organizing an extra round of exams for children who were not able to take their end year exams before the summer holidays in 2013.

However, the education situation varies from governorate to governorate, mainly because different actors control different areas. To accurately describe the education situation in Syria, it is important to distinguish among the following three broad categories: (i) relatively safe areas under government control; (ii) contested areas; and (iii) areas under the control of non-state actors. Within each category, there are several subcategories. Data from the field is hard to acquire, and it is thus not possible to create a detailed picture. In addition, the situation is fluid because the conflict is ongoing, resulting in frequent changes in control of geographic areas.¹⁴²

In the **relatively safe areas under government control**, the MOE – through the Directorate of Education at the governorate level – continues to deliver public education service. In these areas, most of the schools remain open, the Syrian

official curriculum is followed, and official exams take place. These relatively safe areas include two broad sub-categories: areas where public services function as much as before and areas that have experienced a large influx of internally displaced persons.¹⁴³

In the areas where there has been an influx of internally displaced persons, many displaced children do not go to school. The reasons for their low attendance are both supply and demand related. On the supply side, a number of schools are used as shelters – according to the MOE as of March 2014, 320 schools across the country. In addition, anecdotal evidence suggests that not all local MOE staff abide by decisions taken by the central MOE. In some schools, displaced children are not allowed to register because they do not have official documents or because the school is already overcrowded. They also have to pay a deposit for learning materials in some areas.

By October 2013, the governorates of Quneitra and Sweida had not been severely affected by the conflict. Quneitra hosts 30,000 internally displaced persons and has 107 damaged or destroyed schools and 17 schools used as a shelter. Sweida hosts 18,000 displaced persons and has no damaged or destroyed schools, while seven schools are currently used as a shelter. Lattakia and Tartous governorates are at present relatively safe but have received much larger numbers of displaced persons. At least 70,000 displaced persons are hosted in Lattakia and 90,000 in Tartous. The MOE reports that only 11 schools are used as a shelter in Lattakia, with 97 schools either damaged or destroyed; in Tartous, three schools are used a shelter and 65 schools are either damaged and destroyed.

In **contested areas**, security is the main reason why children and teachers do not go to school or only irregularly. In some cases, the school is not considered safe, while in other cases, the school is a long way from children's homes, making safe travel difficult. In addition, many schools have been damaged or destroyed. According to the MOE, a total of 4,676 schools – or one in four – are estimated to be affected by the crisis in Syria and categorized as not functioning. These schools are used as shelters, have been damaged and/or are inaccessible by the formal education system.

¹⁴¹ Textbooks are available online, see <syrianeducation.org.sy/ecurricula/>.

¹⁴² Although the real situations are more complex, the categorization is meant to offer a general understanding.

¹⁴³ It is important to stress that many of these relative safe havens have suffered from violence at some point, which means that they have a number of damaged or destroyed schools.

The city of Homs and parts of the governorates of Aleppo and Rural Damascus are heavily contested. Many people have consequently fled to safer areas, while others are trapped because of ongoing fighting. Homs has 347 schools that are not functioning. Respectively, Aleppo and Rural Damascus have 347 and 489 schools destroyed, damaged or used for shelters. In some areas in Aleppo, underground shelters reportedly have been turned into schools for children.¹⁴⁴

Save the Children works in 40 locations in Hama, Idleb and North Aleppo. They primarily work with communities and provide education for 70,000 children in premises made available by communities. The use of the official Syrian curriculum is based on communities' preference. They provide essential subjects and leave to the school management the authority to deal with more contentious subjects, such as national education and history. In various interviews for this study, interviewees reported that in contested areas, the preference for the official Syrian curriculum is driven by the need to obtain a school-leaving certificate and by fears that children may be more exposed to attack if they study one of the versions of the Syrian curriculum that was revised by an opposition group.¹⁴⁵

In **areas under the control of non-state actors**, it is more difficult for the MOE to operate and deliver public education services because the movement of its staff is limited. This makes it difficult to collect education information and thus plan on the basis of evidence. Similar to the two other categories (relatively safe areas under the control of the Government and contested areas), certain areas that are under the control of non-state actors have many schools destroyed or damaged. As a result, schools in relatively safe areas have been turned into shelters to accommodate displaced persons.

Further differences in the education situation, compared with the other two categories, are attributed to the actors in control. In areas controlled by moderate groups, education services often continue, using the official Syrian curriculum. However, some subjects, such as national education and history, have been removed because they are considered to be closely linked to the current Government. In other areas, the only subjects that are still taught are

Arabic, English, French, mathematics and science because they are considered to be politically neutral. Other conditions often include a ban on the Syrian flag and the picture of the President in schools, as is the case in Talbiseh and Rastan towns in the Homs Governorate. In areas under the control of more conservative or Islamist groups, it is difficult for schools to remain open. Some armed groups do not allow for mixed-sex classrooms or the use of certain official textbooks, such as those used for the subject of religion.

In the Kurdish areas in Hassakeh Governorate, some schools have started teaching Kurdish as a subject. In other schools, Kurdish has become the language of instruction, which prevents non-Kurdish-speaking displaced children from enrolling.

The administration of the official examinations for Grades 9 and 12 is not possible everywhere. In some areas, students are only able to take the exam if they manage to travel to another governorate. Raqqa Governorate is controlled by Islamist groups, with limited access for the MOE and education sector partners. Some areas of Aleppo and Rural Damascus experience similar problems.

Anecdotal evidence from the MOE indicates that the final exam for Grade 9 took place in May 2014. The MOE and its Directorate of Education in Damascus closely liaised with the communities and helped transport around 1,000 children out of the East Ghouta district, which was under siege, to participate in the national exam in a safe area.

Conditions of access. Given the large proportion of displaced children during the ongoing crisis, the MOE issued a regulation in September 2012¹⁴⁶ to encourage Directorates of Education and all school headmasters to accept students in public schools at the beginning of the academic year, even if they do not have official school documents and uniforms. The school managers who refused to receive displaced students were to be supervised and inspected by the responsible MOE department.

The MOE has instituted the following procedures to register or re-register students who have lost their official documents or school certificates.

¹⁴⁴ Al-Khatieb, M., 'Aleppo's Shelters Become Underground Schools', in Al-monitor, 29 December 2014.

¹⁴⁵ Focus group discussion with four international NGOs in Gaziantep on 4 April 2014; Save the Children, 2014.

¹⁴⁶ Regulation No. (1) 543/2053, 6 September 2012: to accept the children without uniform and not to ask for stationery to be brought by students who cannot afford it.

- Parents who have school age children are to apply for the official school documents.
- The official residence document is required to show which school catchment area a child lives.
- Documentation on a child's civil status from the official civil records is required.
- A certified document by the headmaster of the school in which the parents intend to register their child is required.
- The semester sequence that shows a child's grade or school records is required.
- The school certificate for preparatory learning and a secondary certificate are to be re-issued, if available.

If these documents are not available, children are permitted to take a placement exam to determine their education level and thereby secure admission. There are centres that are eligible to take placement tests that define and determine a child's grade level. The children who lost school years or who have never been to school have the opportunity to apply for accelerated and remedial courses. Then they are allowed to sit for an official exam or placement test. During the field research for this study, some parents mentioned that school headmasters refuse to register children because of the limited capacity of the school to accommodate the new arrivals in some governorates, such as Damascus and Tartous. In Tartous, for instance, more than 70 students have to sit in a classroom with a maximum capacity of 35 students.

2.3 Curriculum

There were no major **changes or adaptations introduced to the content of the Syrian curriculum** in government-controlled areas following the onset of the current crisis.

The situation is different in areas controlled by non-state actors. According to government education officers interviewed during the field research, there have been no specific amendments made to the national curriculum and subjects for the past two years. However, there were adjustments in the Grade 8 curriculum. In the areas where Directorates of Education function, public schools strive to follow the national curriculum, even with Islamic studies. Nonetheless, several changes were made in the education plan at the school level; teaching hours were reduced and certain subjects (such as history) were removed.

In Aleppo, some schools in the central district (a relatively safe area) that have received an influx of displaced children from other districts have had to introduce double-shift schooling to accommodate the increase in student numbers. For security reasons, the first shift runs from 8 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and the second shift from 12 p.m. to 3 p.m. This means that teaching hours are reduced by a half day for all students. Many children in Aleppo could not attend school in academic year 2012/2013. Prior to the crisis in Syria, Aleppo had as many as 1.2 million children registered in primary and secondary schools. The intensified conflict and violence have severely

disrupted education access, reducing the number of children enrolled in schools to 455,000 – a sharp drop of 62 per cent in enrolment in the governorate.

In areas controlled by the non-state actors, the curriculum content is, to some extent, different from what is used in government-controlled areas. According to families who come from the contested areas in Aleppo, certain subjects – especially politically oriented ones – have been removed from the curriculum. The subject of national education, which is considered to be based on the views of the Government-supported party, also has been removed in Aleppo. Instead, more teaching hours are allocated to Islamic religion to enable children to memorize the Holy Qur'an. The content of the subject of modern history has been modified to include stories and information on the 'revolution heroes'.

Interviewees reported that in many schools in ISIS-controlled areas, the official Syrian curriculum is taught with minor modifications made by teachers employed by the MOE.¹⁴⁹ There are, however, differing reports of how ISIS is dealing with education issues in the areas where they have taken control. For instance, in Raqqa Governorate, which is the ISIS base, they have issued programmatic regulations on the education system they strive to achieve, such as prohibiting the teaching of music, national education, social studies, history, artistic composition education,

¹⁴⁷ Focus group discussion with four international NGOs in Gaziantep on 4 April 2014.

sports, philosophy, psychology and Islamic and Christian religious education. They are replaced by subjects added by the Directorate of Programmes in the Islamic State. Other changes pertain to the complete abolition of the name 'Syrian Arab Republic', to be replaced by the 'Islamic State', removal of all photos, examples in math and science and laws in chemistry and physics that do not comply with Islamic Sharia interpretation and vision of the world.¹⁴⁸

In October and November 2014, ISIS conducted a two-day religious training for teachers who teach in the areas under their control. ISIS also announced that every teacher should undergo a one-month instructional course as pre-condition to teaching and being paid. Those teachers and school administrators who still receive their salary from the central MOE have refused to undergo the training and have gone on a strike (almost in all schools in Hama, Aleppo and Hassakeh governorates). In November 2014, ISIS issued new school regulations while announcing that they are revising the "infidel" Syrian curriculum. School regulations include the appointment of an ISIS commander to supervise and ensure that schools comply with the ISIS regulations, reduction of the school day to five hours, with three hours of religious learning, the obligation of girls to wear a veil and cover their face and the sex segregation of teachers and students.

In terms of curriculum revision, the curriculum is underpinned by the Wahhabi-Salafi-Hanbali theology and the Islamic State, or Caliphate, instead of the recognized Arab and Muslim States with their current national boundaries. According to information collected from Turkey, the majority of families in areas controlled by ISIS are not sending their children to school, aware that the certificates that they will receive will not be recognized by universities and colleges in Syria or abroad.¹⁴⁹

The official Syrian curriculum is used and followed in remedial education in shelters where internally displaced families and children live within Syria. According to MOE officials interviewed during the field research, there is no

formal permission to conduct remedial or accelerated courses in the shelters. However, many learners attend the nearest remedial courses and accelerated learning programmes available in the shelters. These are typically managed by NGOs and civil society organizations that are registered with the MOE and the Ministry of Social Affairs, both of which permit these activities inside the shelters.

In response to the many children who are unable to attend school because of the insecurity and internal displacement, the MOE, UNICEF and UNRWA jointly reviewed the self-learning materials that were originally developed by UNRWA for Palestine refugee children. They then revised the materials in line with the official Syrian curriculum, with technical input from the MOE. The self-learning materials, for four subjects for Grades 1–6 and six subjects for Grades 7–9, have been endorsed and adopted by the MOE. The Self-Learning Programme is designed to encourage children to continue studying at home or in community learning centres using the self-learning materials where possible, even though they have no access to a public school or NGO centre. UNICEF has formulated the national implementation guidelines in which community engagement and participation is an integral part of the management, implementation and monitoring and evaluation process of this programme. The Self-Learning Programme is an innovative and contextually relevant approach for helping out-of-school children access the official curriculum and continue learning even in hard-to-reach areas.

Difficulties with the curriculum for teachers and students. Due to the ongoing conflict and displacement, a large number of Syrian children have missed out on several school terms for one or two years. This is especially true for those who have been displaced. Many of the displaced also suffer from a shortage of textbooks and basic teaching and learning materials. Their subject knowledge and academic performance is relatively lower than their peers who have not been displaced. According to the teachers interviewed in Tartous Governorate, academic

¹⁴⁸ Al-Tamimi, A.J., 'The Islamic State's Education Regulations in Raqqa Province', 28 August 2014, <www.aymennjawad.org/2014/08/the-islamic-state-educational-regulations-in>; Robinson, Julian, 'Isis cancels all classes except religious studies in Syrian schools because 'even the two-times table shouldn't be taught as all knowledge belongs to the creator, in Daily Mail Online, 7 November 2014, <www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2825451/Islamic-State-shuts-schools-eastern-Syria.html>; Lane, Oliver, 'Syrian Schools Close as ISIS Develops New Islam Only Curriculum', 8 November 2014, <www.breitbart.com/Breitbart-London/2014/11/08/Syria-School-Closures-ISIS-Koran-Teaching-Only>; Ellass, Rasha, 'Islamic State Shuts Down Schools in Eastern Syria', Independent, 7 November 2014, <www.independent.ie/world-news/middle-east/islamic-state-shuts-down-schools-in-eastern-syria-30726961.html>.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

performance of students from Tartous who had not been displaced is relatively higher than that of those who have been displaced from other governorates.

Families living in areas under the control of non-state actors suffer from socio-economic difficulties as well as insecurity. Many children, displaced from their home, are forced to discontinue their schooling and learning, either temporarily or permanently. Some parents and children who were interviewed complained that the current education services are not adequate or sufficient for the vulnerable children who have missed out on periods of schooling or are lagging in academic performance.

Teachers and teacher training. Since the beginning of the crisis, the MOE in Syria has lost more than 52,500 (22 per cent) teachers and 523 (18 per cent) school counsellors.¹⁵⁰ The movement of teachers within and outside the country has led to an acute shortage of staff in some areas and a surplus in others. For example, Hassakeh Governorate has lost more than 1,600 teachers, while Lattakia Governorate has an additional 4,800 displaced teachers and administrative staff.¹⁵¹

Several NGOs have conducted induction sessions and capacity-development training for teachers to deliver psychosocial support. These sessions and training focused on teachers working with displaced children and were conducted by trained counsellors and specialists; but they were small in scale, did not cover all the teachers working with displaced children and had no standardized training material to draw upon. In response to the need, UNICEF thus developed standardized training modules for psychosocial support. Some teachers who used to volunteer for NGOs and other civil society groups now will be inducted on psychosocial support and equipped with practical skills in dealing with displaced children who may need psychosocial support.

Additionally, some NGOs, such as Save the Children and the IRC, have integrated life skills and psychosocial support for teachers in their foundational teacher training. Efforts to harmonize training packages were ongoing in March 2014 to produce a standardized (across NGOs) training package for teachers.¹⁵²

Interviews conducted in Daraya, an area in Rural Damascus controlled by non-state actors, revealed that teachers support each other and deal with psychosocial distress and 'emotional discharge'¹⁵³ among affected students. In other non-state-controlled areas, school teachers and counsellors are providing community and individual support to respond to the psychosocial needs of children. In Aleppo, however, no training has been provided for teachers over the past few years. Even though many children suffer from psychological distress due to the day-to-day violence, shelling and bombardment, teachers there are not able to provide any psychosocial support. There is no government or district work plan for teacher training, particularly for psychosocial support. Yet parents expressed their incapacity of dealing with their children's psychosocial distress when they are suffering from some psychological problems. One headmaster in Aleppo recalled, "A father of a child came to school and asked me if he could stay with his daughter in class or at least wait for her at the school gate to care for and protect her."

Other learning programmes. The MOE, NGOs, community-based organizations and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC), in partnership with United Nations agencies, provide remedial education and accelerated learning courses inside and outside the shelters in areas controlled by the Government and even in 'hot spots'. For example, the MOE and UNICEF run school clubs (a combination of remedial education and recreational activities as part of psychosocial support) that have reached more than 45,000 children in Aleppo, Raqqa and Deir ez-Zour, including in cross-line areas where there are no education NGO partners.

Importantly, education is appreciated in the hot spots controlled by non-state actors; thus, public school teachers can still reach the communities and run school clubs, keeping a low profile in the hard-to-reach governorates. This is a valuable initiative by the MOE and communities.

The Ministry of Social Affairs provides accelerated learning courses in clinics, mosques, churches, sport halls and other centres near the shelters for all students who want to apply for an official exam or placement test for school enrolment. Although

¹⁵⁰ School counsellors in Syria provide psychosocial support to students and manage administrative tasks, such as monitoring the presence of students. Figures are from SHARP, 2014.

¹⁵¹ SHARP, 2014.

¹⁵² Focus group discussion with four international NGOs in Gaziantep on 4 April 2014.

¹⁵³ Emotional discharge refers to the expression of emotions related to a past, often difficult, event that have not been expressed before.

the courses follow the national curriculum, they are not recognized by the MOE.

Support to students affected by the crisis.

Although many of the Syrian children are resilient and capable of adapting to their changed realities, they face a range of difficulties in the new communities and in schools, such as discrimination by teachers and students. As a result, some schools are not inclusive of vulnerable children, and many children are not willing to go back to school. Given this situation,

the MOE, UNICEF, NGOs and civil society groups now provide children with safe and learning-conducive environments both in and outside the school setting. As noted, the MOE and UNICEF have supported the establishment of school clubs in many governorates to enable displaced children to attend remedial education and recreational activities. Additionally, NGOs and civil society groups have set up education centres in conjunction with the school clubs that provide remedial education and accelerated learning classes for displaced children.

What is a school club?

A school club is a place where children can participate in remedial classes and benefit from psychosocial support through recreational activities under the care of qualified school counsellors. Some school clubs operate in a school compound while others provide activities in centres run by an NGO or in shelters for internally displaced persons.

From an academic point of view, the remedial classes offered in school clubs aim to improve the children's learning performance and prevent them from dropping out of school or help them re-enter school. In addition, children attending school clubs benefit from the psychosocial support through structured learning, play and recreation and referral to specialized services if required.

School clubs are free and open to all boys and girls aged 5–17 who live in the area where they operate, either permanently or temporarily.

Priority is given to:

- children who have not attended school for some time;
- children who moved to the area from elsewhere (displaced persons);
- children who have dropped out of school; and
- children with poor school results.

The remedial and accelerated learning courses that the MOE, UNICEF and other players offer are consistent with the national curriculum. Yet, children are not provided with all the education materials they need to follow the curriculum. These courses have focused on languages (Arabic, English and French), maths, science, physics, chemistry and geography for Grade 12 exclusively. The recreational activities include painting, music and sports as part of psychosocial support for children affected by the crisis. To be politically neutral, the courses have excluded religion, national education and history.

Due to the increasing number of displaced children and out-of-school children, the MOE instructed the Directorates of Education to facilitate school registration and promote enrolment at the basic education level during the crisis. According to the instruction, teachers also are encouraged to provide information to displaced families and children to encourage them to register in school. Fees for registration are waived for displaced children as is the mandatory requirement to purchase a school uniform and to have previous official school documents. Children without the official documents need only take a placement test before enrolment. Every public

school has a school counsellor who deals with children who need extra support; it is the counsellor who is responsible for the psychosocial needs of children affected by the crisis within schools.

With assistance from NGO and civil society volunteers and SARC, there is substantial effort inside the shelters to also provide peer support, psychosocial support and assessment of prerequisite learning needs. Some volunteer teachers in the shelters help displaced families to enrol their children in the nearest school and even prepare for the placement exam.

The **learning environment**. It is commonly reported that many schools in several governorates struggle with shortages of school furniture, textbooks and teaching and learning materials. The devaluation of the Syrian local currency, coupled with the destruction of printing houses in the country, has impacted the cost of producing education materials, such as textbooks and exercise books. As a result, the MOE cannot afford to procure and print national textbooks for all primary school students. Nationwide, the Directorates of Education are thus instructed by the MOE to collect used textbooks from primary

school students at the end of the term and re-distribute them to new students in the next academic year. Still, the shortage remains severe, with several students sharing a single textbook; which means they cannot study the textbook at home on their own. There is an urgent need to supplement the teaching and learning materials in schools, especially in areas with a huge number of displaced children.

The teaching aids used in the classroom are very basic – blackboards, white boards, chalk, markers,

rulers and exercise books. The classrooms in the shelters are more seriously affected by the lack of materials and teaching aids, such as in Tartous, Homs, Deir ez-Zour, Aleppo and Damascus. In Aleppo, many schools suffer from a shortage of textbooks due to transportation blockades. According to interviewed education officers and teachers, approximately 60 per cent of schools are suffering from an insufficient supply of textbooks. It is rare to find any ICT used in classrooms, from projectors to computers to other electronic instruments (such as an online learning system).

2.4 Certification and accreditation

The MOE relies on the Directorates of Education to manage its system of school supervision and inspection to inform government and school officials of education needs and to review relevant education regulations. The system is intended to ensure that public schools take proper care of vulnerable children, including displaced persons and those who are in need of assistance (through the remedial education support to improve poor academic performance and the psychosocial support).

Students are eligible for national certificates as long as they study the official curriculum and pass placement tests and formal examinations. As noted, placement tests are used to help children enrolling late, because of the conflict and displacement, determine their education level (which might mean they have to repeat a school year). All children enrolled in official courses are entitled to exam reports and quarterly evaluation reports.

Children who missed out on official exams in May and June 2013, especially those in Grades 9 and 12, were granted opportunity to attend a remedial education class or an accelerated learning course. They were able to sit for an extra round of exams before the academic year began in September 2013. During academic year 2013/2014, Palestine refugees from the besieged area of Yarmouk camp also were allowed to leave the camp to sit for the Grade 9 exam in Damascus, where education services were still available.¹⁵⁴

The remedial and accelerated courses are not certified unless students take the national official exams (placement test and formal examinations).

In some contested areas, national and international NGOs are providing their own report cards at the end of the academic year, which is the same as the one used by the public schools. However, these report cards are distributed at the school level and not issued centrally by the MOE. Interviewees during the field research reported that in contested areas, families are concerned about the security and safety of their children, both in registering them in government-established examination centres or in centres established by the Syrian Opposition Council.¹⁵⁵

In general, the MOE does not recognize the education courses conducted in shelters or in the non-state centres. Thus, students who complete such courses cannot obtain an officially recognized certificate from the Syrian Government. Instead, they are required to pass a placement test and formal exam to be issued an official certificate.

There is no government recognition of any formal education certificate given by any opposition groups using the revised Syrian curriculum in contested areas controlled by the non-state actors. For example, a local teachers union administered Grade 9 and 12 examinations, and students who passed received certificates from the Syrian Opposition Coalition. Some families from the contested areas in Aleppo insist on registering their children in a public school in safe areas so that they can take the formal exams and be issued the formal education certificate.

There is a Syrian national education database that manages certification data for all Syrian students and teachers inside Syria. It is possible for the

¹⁵⁴ See <www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=47829#.U3-qEHZrjOg>.

¹⁵⁵ Focus group discussions with four international NGOs and with five Syrian NGOs in Gaziantep on 4 April 2014.

Syrian MOE to re-issue and redistribute official education certificates to those who lost their certificates, especially for the Grades 9 and 12 exams. Other education certificates that are necessary for a child's return to school include the registration document, which is needed to access the school record which reflects a child's education level. This procedure, however, is not possible for children who live in areas controlled by the non-state actors (opposition groups).

2.5 Conclusion

This study on curriculum, certification and accreditation in Syria reveals that what is taught and what access Syrian children have to education differ from place to place, depending on who controls a specific area.

In areas that remain under Government control, the MOE continues to deliver public education services. In these areas, most schools remain open, the official Syrian curriculum is followed and official exams take place. These relatively safe areas can be further subdivided into areas in which public services function as they did before the crisis and areas that have experienced a large influx of displaced persons. In the areas that have accepted the influx of displaced persons, many young people do not attend school.

In conflict areas, security is the main reason why children and teachers do not go to school or do so irregularly. In areas that are not under Government control, it is more difficult for the MOE to operate and deliver public education

2.6 Recommendations

Several recommendations emerged through the field research for promoting access to quality education for vulnerable children affected by the crisis in Syria.

Due to the conflict, access to education is a challenge, particularly for children who are displaced or living in non-state controlled areas. Increasing safe access to school is a priority and requires coordinated efforts on the part of the Government, United Nations agencies and national and international organizations. Alternative delivery mechanisms, such as virtual learning, should be considered as a viable option for increasing access to school.

Additionally, increased access requires reducing the barriers to registration. Specifically, there

There are national agreements between the Government of Syria and governments of Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt (with the exception of Turkey) regarding the recognition of diplomas and certificates by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. These intergovernmental agreements are areas to further consider when exploring measures to promote re-entry of Syrian refugee children to schools when they return to Syria.

services because the movement of their staff is limited.

Many schools have been destroyed or damaged while others have turned into shelters for the internally displaced persons in the areas under the control of non-state actors. In the areas controlled by moderate groups, education services often continue, using the official Syrian curriculum, but with certain subjects removed, such as national education and history, because they are seen as reflecting the views of the present Government. In some of these areas, the Syrian curriculum revised by the Syrian Opposition Coalition based in Turkey is also in use. The Syrian Opposition Coalition conducted Grades 9 and 12 examinations during academic years 2012/2013 and 2013/2014 in these areas and provided certificates for students successfully completing their examination. There is no government recognition of any certificate issued by an opposition group, making educational progression difficult for Syrian children.

is the need to explore alternative registration requirements, such as placements tests rather than residence documents, which many displaced children do not possess.

Access to education can be enhanced by rolling out nationally the Self-Learning Programme developed by international partners and the MOE. This would require discussion between the MOE and United Nations agencies to ensure that the technical implementation issues for scaling up are resolved. This includes easing the requirements for school registration and ensuring that the programme is certified and accredited by the MOE.

Although there is a need to increase the number of learning spaces, on the demand side, there is a

need to build the capacity of communities to ensure that parents, caregivers and local authorities understand the value of education and support schools through the provision of resources and teachers.

To enhance the quality of education, clear guidance should be provided on the recognition of certificates obtained by Syrian children in host

countries who follow a curriculum other than the official Syrian one and sit for a Grade 9 or Grade 12 examination that differ from the official Syrian examinations. There is a need for engagement with parties who provide Grade 9 and Grade 12 Syrian examinations based on the revised versions of the official curriculum so that children who take these examinations are not penalized by receiving a certificate that is not recognized.



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TURKEY

3 Turkey

3.1 Social and political context

Since the start of the crisis in Syria, increasing numbers of Syrians have sought international protection in Turkey. According to Turkey's Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD), about 36 per cent of the Syrian refugees have settled in camps (or accommodation centres, as the Government of Turkey calls them), across 10 provinces (Adana, Adiyaman, Gaziantep, Sanliurfa, Kilis, Hatay, Kahramanmaras, Malatya, Mardin, Osmaniye) mainly in southern and south-eastern Turkey, while the remaining 64 per cent reside in various cities across the country.¹⁵⁶ In early October 2014, there were 1,065,902 Syrian refugees in Turkey, distributed between accommodation centres and urban areas;¹⁵⁷ in early March 2015, the number moved up to 1.7 million, with 500 more people arriving on a daily basis.¹⁵⁸

Once Syrians arrive in Turkey, they are expected to register with the Turkish authorities. The Government extends temporary protection¹⁵⁹ to all Syrian people as well as stateless persons and Palestine refugees from Syria. The Temporary Protection (TP) Regulation was passed and published in the Official Journal on 22 October 2014, with effect since then. The temporary protection has no restrictions on length of stay and guarantees no forced return (non-refoulement). The regulation governs foreigners' lawful stay in the country, including the provisions on registration and documentation procedures to be followed; it also establishes the creation of

a TP identification document that contains a foreigner's identity number and grants access to social benefits and services, such as health care, education and the labour market. According to the regulation, persons in possession of a TP identification document can apply for a work permit for certain sectors, professions or geographical areas. This element has positive implications on the legal status of Syrian teachers and on regulating their work.

Syrian refugees¹⁶⁰ living in AFAD-managed accommodation centres are provided with food, education, basic services and medical assistance.¹⁶¹ In contrast, refugees living outside the centres, who are entitled to health care, education and social assistance, typically face enormous challenges in accessing the essential services and experience poor living conditions. According to a United Nations report, one in four non-camp refugees live in inadequate conditions or in makeshift shelters in public parks.¹⁶²

The Syrian refugee response in Turkey has been managed from the onset almost solely by the Government through AFAD. In the second half of 2012, the Government declared that it would be open to cooperation with United Nations agencies to support their efforts. Despite this agreement, some functions remain the exclusive mandate of the Government, such as the collection of information through needs assessments and surveys.¹⁶³ In June and July 2013, AFAD

¹⁵⁶ AFAD, 2013; Kirishi, 2014.

¹⁵⁷ See <data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=224>.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., as of March 2015.

¹⁵⁹ The temporary protection regime was established by the Government in October 2011 to protect all Syrian citizens arriving in Turkey. In April 2013, Turkey passed a law regulating all procedures for foreigners arriving in Turkey in need of international protection. A new regulation came into force regarding the status of Syrians seeking international protection in Turkey in October 2014.

¹⁶⁰ When the term 'Syrian refugees' is used in this report, it refers to Syrian nationals under the temporary protection regime. Turkish authorities often refer to them as 'guests' or 'Syrian populations under temporary protection'.

¹⁶¹ With the protraction of the crisis, however, maintaining the same level of assistance in the camps and ensuring that those residing outside the camps are registered and have access to essential services, constitutes a major challenge to both the Turkish authorities and to United Nations agencies.

¹⁶² United Nations, 2014.

¹⁶³ Information on education is mainly collected through regular missions undertaken by United Nations agency staff to field locations, discussions with local authorities and desk reviews of reports from national and international organizations working in several urban areas. Individual agencies also collect their own programme monitoring data that is relied upon for the design of specific projects.

conducted a profiling survey aimed at assessing the needs of Syrian refugees to determine their difficulties.¹⁶⁴ In April 2014, a dedicated team was established within the Ministry of National Education (MONE) to exclusively deal with the education of Syrian children in the country.

Based on government registration data, more than half of the Syrian population (53 per cent) are children, with more than one third of the whole population (35 per cent) of school age (5–17 years).¹⁶⁵ In July 2014, more than 60,000 children had enrolled in camp schools, approximately 40,000 in host communities and some 7,446 in public schools¹⁶⁶ (following the Turkish curriculum) making a combined total of 107,714 children enrolled in school.¹⁶⁷ In December 2014, the number of Syrian children enrolled in school increased to 187,000. Although the percentage of children enrolled in school camps is relatively high (at 80 per cent), it is still worryingly low in the host communities (at less than 30 per cent). As of December 2014, almost 318,000 children were estimated to be out of school (see Table 1).

Syrian education initiatives. Several Syrian initiatives provide education for displaced and refugee Syrian children inside Syria and in refugee-hosting countries, such as Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in Iraq. Many of these initiatives are affiliated with the Syrian Opposition Coalition¹⁶⁸ and with the newly formed MoE within the Syrian Interim Government; they work in Turkey either in open collaboration or with the tacit knowledge of national authorities. The Syrian Opposition Coalition established a Higher Commission for Education¹⁶⁹ in Turkey to manage the education of Syrian children in some areas inside Syria that are not under the control of the Syrian Government as well as in areas outside Syria.

Syrian-Turkish NGOs also have been actively involved in the provision of education for Syrian children within Turkey and in the region. For example, the Syrian Education Commission¹⁷⁰ is a Syrian civil society organization based and registered in Turkey and specialized in education. It was established in 2013 to provide basic education opportunities to the greatest number possible of displaced and refugee Syrian children. Its geographical scope covers some of the territories inside Syria no longer under the control of the Syrian Government, Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq (KRG) and Egypt. The Syrian Education Commission is one of a few organizations that has revised the official Syrian curriculum; it printed and distributed the revised textbooks in Syria, Turkey and Iraq (KRG).

The Syrian Opposition Coalition, in collaboration with the Higher Commission for Education, coordinated the organization of Grade 12 examinations for more than 10,000 Syrian students inside Syria in 2013 in the areas no longer in control of the Syrian Government as well as in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan.¹⁷¹

The Syrian Interim Government was established in Turkey in March 2013, with a Cabinet of technical ministers. In April 2014, the Interim Government appointed Muhyi Al-Din Banana as the first Minister of Education with the mandate to find solutions for the difficulties that Syrian students experience inside Syria and in the five host countries, including recognition of certificates, university enrolment and harmonization of the revised Syrian curriculum with the education system in the five hosting countries.¹⁷² In June 2014, the newly formed MOE conducted Grade 12 exams for more than 9,500 Syrian children in Syria, Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁴ AFAD, 2013.

¹⁶⁵ UNHCR data, 2 October 2014, <data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=224#>.

¹⁶⁶ As of May 2014.

¹⁶⁷ These figures do not capture all Syrian children enrolled in temporary education centres operating in host communities.

¹⁶⁸ Founded in November 2012 in Doha.

¹⁶⁹ The Higher Commission for Education is the translation of the Arabic: Al-Hay'a Al-Wataneyya Al-a'liyah Lel-Tarbeyya Wal-Ta'lim al-a'li, <www.etilaf.org/أجهزة-الاتلاف/مكاتب-الاتلاف/مكتب-الهيئة-الوطنية-العلمية-للتربية-والتعليم-العالي.html>.

¹⁷⁰ The Syrian Education Commission is the translation of the Arabic Elm: Al-Hay'a Al-Surya Lil Tarbya wa Al-Ta'alim. The organization was founded in Turkey in early 2013 to provide education opportunities for Syrian students. See <www.syreducom.org/description>.

¹⁷¹ More information is provided in section 3.3.

¹⁷² See <syrtaig.org/syr14/index.php/minstmenu/edu-mnu/1393-2014-05-19-07-01-20>, accessed 20 May 2014.

¹⁷³ Popovic, Delplace and Bergan, 2014.

3.2 The education context

In Turkey, the MONE plans and monitors all education and training activities. Turkey has embarked on several education reforms, resulting in numerous changes in its education system. In March 2012, an education reform law was passed extending mandatory schooling to 12 years, divided into four years of primary school, four years of preparatory school and four years of high school (known as the '4+4+4' system)

(see Table 2). High school comprises several tracks: general academic, vocational and, after the reform, religious.¹⁷⁴ The exam system for transition to higher education is undergoing change. The starting age for basic education has shifted, and children can start at 60, 66 or 69 months (respectively, 5 years, 5.5 years and 5 years and 9 months) as opposed to the previous 72 months (6 years).

Table 2 The education system in Turkey

PRE-SCHOOL		PRIMARY		PREPARATORY		HIGH SCHOOL	
Age	Grade	Age	Grade	Age	Grade	Age	Grade
4	K1	6	G1	10	G5	14	G9
5	K2	7	G2	11	G6	15	G10
		8	G3	12	G7	16	G11
		9	G4	13	G8	17	G12

Conditions of school access for Syrian children.

Syrian children's enrolment in Turkey's public schools has been possible from the onset of the crisis, but the appropriate document required (residence permit),¹⁷⁵ language barriers (Turkish as the language of instruction), lack of information on enrolment procedures and financial constraints have deterred the majority of children from enrolling. Only some 7,446 Syrian children reportedly were attending a Turkish school as of May 2014,¹⁷⁶ while the public school system can absorb up to at least 20,000 Syrian children.¹⁷⁷

To help overcome some of the administrative barriers, the Turkish MONE lifted the requirement for a residence permit in September 2014¹⁷⁸ when it issued circular 2014/21, which comprehensively governs foreigners' access to education. The circular called for the establishment of Provincial Education Commissions in the

provinces hosting a large number of Syrian children, with the authority to determine educational needs, recommend the establishment of schools or temporary education centres¹⁷⁹ and facilitate the enrolment of Syrian children into public schools.

To register students, monitor their educational attainment and grant them certificates, the MONE developed an electronic EMIS, referred to as the 'e-okul'.¹⁸⁰ With UNICEF assistance for the registration and monitoring of Syrian children, a new EMIS, referred to as 'YÖBİS', was designed.¹⁸¹ Personal and academic data of Syrian students will be entered in this system, which will guarantee that Syrian children receive the same services as Turkish children and are granted certificates for their learning. The system will, in the long term, be used to manage education data of all foreigner children in the country.

¹⁷⁴ Imam Hatip schools were reopened following the reform. As promised to their supporters when the Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power, religious education at both secondary and high school levels were given a high priority by the AKP. Many students at both secondary and high school ages are directed to these schools. In the Imam Hatip schools, core courses are taught in Turkish and religious-related subjects are taught in Arabic.

¹⁷⁵ Prior to the issuance of circular 2014/21 in September 2014, the main document requested for enrolling in Turkish school was the residence permit. The residence permit gives every citizen or foreigners a unique identifier number, which is used to include students in the EMIS. Once included, students are officially recorded and can receive their education certificates. It was reported that Syrian children without a residence permit were allowed to enrol in Turkish school as 'guests' and but did not receive any formal recognition of their learning (interview with UNHCR in Ankara on 3 April 2014 and interview with UNICEF in Ankara on 2 April 2014).

¹⁷⁶ Data refers to May 2014.

¹⁷⁷ Interview with MONE official, Ankara 3 April 2014.

¹⁷⁸ Circular 2014/21 issued in September 2014 by the Ministry of National Education.

¹⁷⁹ Schools established for Syrian children are referred to officially as 'temporary education centres'.

¹⁸⁰ 'E-okul' means 'e-school' and refers to the EMIS designed for teachers and administrators as well as students and their parents. The data entered to the system by teachers and administrators are accessible to students and parents.

¹⁸¹ See <www.aa.com.tr/ar/news/421489>.

3.3 Curriculum

The situation in Turkey is particularly complicated regarding the learning programmes available for Syrian children, partly because the language of instruction is Turkish and partly because of the political involvement of the Turkish Government in the Syria crisis.

Public schools and the revised Syrian curriculum.

Syrian children in host communities have been allowed to attend Turkish schools. Yet, as noted previously, the percentage of Syrian children enrolled is limited.

The vast majority of Syrian children are enrolled in schools in accommodation centres and host communities that use a revised version of the Syrian curriculum. In camps in Turkey, schools have been established specifically for Syrian children. In host communities, some schools also have been established specifically for Syrian children, while others accommodate Turkish students in the morning hours and Syrian children in the afternoon. Schools established in refugee camps and those established at the provincial level (such as by municipalities) are under the oversight of the MONE and supported by the AFAD; but they have not been fully accredited.¹⁸² The 2014/21 circular makes provisions for the operation of these schools and gives the MONE the authority not to recognize those that operate outside its provisions. Certificates granted by these schools can be invalidated, with clear negative consequences on students' career advancement.

The content of curriculum and the language of instruction for Syrian children have been much debated in Turkey. In academic year 2011/2012,¹⁸³ the Turkish curriculum was used in schools set up in the Syrian accommodation centres, with support of Arabic interpretation. This situation changed in academic year 2012/2013 when the

Government tacitly agreed to the use of a revised Syrian curriculum in schools for Syrian children. The Government's policy traditionally has been to integrate refugees and children from minorities into the national school system, including through the teaching of Turkish to them. The unprecedented influx of Syrian refugees led to the emergence of an education system for Syrian children with a revised Syrian curriculum.

There have been several adaptations of the official Syrian curriculum, which has ushered in other complications. The Islamic Sham Organization,¹⁸⁴ a Syrian NGO based in Istanbul, provided an initial revision of the Syrian curriculum, removing content associated with the Syrian Government (such as photos of Bashar al-Assad, references to the Ba'ath Party and speeches of Hafez al-Assad) and editing several geographical maps.¹⁸⁵ Textbooks were downloaded directly from the Internet website of the Syrian MOE and edited in a short period of time, thus avoiding a thorough revision of the curriculum. These textbooks were widely distributed in camps and host communities. Some Syrian schools in Turkey's host communities reportedly had followed the Syrian curriculum for the previous academic year 2011/2012.

The Syrian Education Commission made its own revision of the revised Syrian curriculum, twice even.¹⁸⁶ The first revision was made with the support of Syrian education specialists and teachers, which was endorsed by the Syrian Opposition Council. The Education Commission circulated 1.4 million textbooks reflecting its first revision in mid-2013 in Syria, Turkey and to KRG (Iraq), where they were used in some schools in Syrian refugee camps.¹⁸⁷ Turkish language classes were also introduced and integrated in the revised Syrian curriculum taught in Turkey.

¹⁸² There is a variety of schools established for Syrian children in Turkey, and they are formally under the mandate of the MONE. For example, the temporary education centres that UNICEF supported will be issued with certificates from MONE. Some education programmes that have been supported by NGOs can be accredited based on the protocol signed between the MONE and individual organizations. However, some other programmes have uncertain status and are not fully accredited.

¹⁸³ The chronological order indicated is only for ease of reference; the different versions of the Syrian curriculum are taught simultaneously.

¹⁸⁴ See <islamicsham.org/news/786>.

¹⁸⁵ See <islamicsham.org/news/786>.

¹⁸⁶ See <www.syreducom.org/description>.

¹⁸⁷ The use of these textbooks took place during academic year 2013/2014 but has since been stopped.

UNICEF conducted a content analysis of the Education Commission's revised textbooks¹⁸⁸ and found that the revisions were primarily of a pedagogical nature, followed by political and then religious changes. In total, more than 400 pedagogical changes were made, mostly in the Arabic, science and math textbooks; 119 political and 22 religious changes were also detected.

There was, however, a lack of consistency and coherence in the pedagogical changes made to each subject across the different grades. Although the changes in the science books promoted inquiry and critical thinking, the approach was not maintained consistently throughout the science textbooks and was not integrated in other textbooks, including history and social studies.¹⁸⁹ The Grades 1 and 2 Arabic textbooks were revised with an underpinning similar vision. But the Grade 10 book, on the contrary, presented minor and insignificant changes, keeping to the underlying philosophy and strategies that appear in the official textbook.

This inconsistency was perhaps due to the lack of a clear vision when revising the textbooks, also manifested in the absence of a mission or an overall statement to underpin the revision.¹⁹⁰ The subject of national education was removed from the curriculum; reportedly civic education¹⁹¹ has been taught instead. Notably, the revised Syrian curriculum was not adapted to the new situation of displacement that Syrian children abroad were living, and it did not integrate any life skills, mine risk education or psychosocial programme.

In late 2013 and early 2014, the Syrian Education Commission circulated a second version of textbooks and made them widely available, publishing them online on its website.¹⁹² The Education Commission reportedly has distributed 1 million of this version of the textbooks to Syrian students in Syria, Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan, with a plan to reach 2 million textbooks by the end of 2014.¹⁹³

Then, following on the heels of those two versions, the Higher Commission for Education¹⁹⁴ turned out a third revision of textbooks for Grades 1–12, which was endorsed by the Syrian Interim Government, which plans to make the books available online as part of an e-learning project.¹⁹⁵ The Higher Commission for Education is an educational entity that functioned as a Syrian education ministry prior to the formation of the MOE within the Interim Government (based in Turkey) in April 2014.

Schools for Syrian children in host communities:

In Turkey's host communities there are varying types of schools for Syrian children: Those established by municipalities and public bodies and those set up through private initiatives. The first type of school is mainly based on municipalities' and governorates' efforts to provide education to Syrian children. In Gaziantep, for example, the municipality has opened two primary schools for more than 1,200 Syrian children. Although a complete mapping has not been completed yet, there were at least 35 Syrian schools in host communities in March 2014.¹⁹⁶

The private schools are products of:

- religious organizations affiliated with the Diyanet (the Directorate for Religious Affairs);
- community-based initiatives associated with the Syrian opposition in Turkey, with Syrian businessmen or with Syrian displaced communities (the so-called Syria diaspora); and
- local NGOs recognized by the Government.

¹⁸⁸ UNICEF, 2014.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Interview with the Syrian Education Board in Beirut on 19 March 2014.

¹⁹² See <www.syreducom.org/description>.

¹⁹³ See <www.syreducom.org/description/43>.

¹⁹⁴ See <www.etilaf.org/أجهزة-الإئتلاف/مكاتب-الإئتلاف/مكتب-الهيئة-الوطنية-العلمية-للترية-والتعليم-العالي.html>.

¹⁹⁵ See <www.syriaig.org/syr14/index.php/minstmenu/edu-mnu/2324-2014-08-13-19-40-37>.

¹⁹⁶ Interview with UNICEF in Ankara on 6 April 2014. Other sources put this number at 100 (see Kirishi, 2014). These 35 schools are in the south-eastern region and are recognized by the Government. Istanbul, Izmir and Ankara provinces are not included, despite the large numbers of Syrians residing in those areas.

There are extra classes for all students. Some students have not been studying for two years. But many students are not coming to school because their houses are far away from the school, and others have to work to help their families. Some as young as 10 years old have to work in the industrial region, in markets and in farms. Even smart students have to leave school and find themselves on the streets to help their families.

School principal in Gaziantep

Schools organized by the Diyanet generally use Turkish schools in the afternoon (after Turkish children go home) as the second shift. Community-based initiatives encompass a wide range of schools.¹⁹⁷ Some operate in private homes or buildings, often with inadequate premises and little quality assurance. Circular 2014/21 makes provisions for these schools, and it is the first attempt to regulate them. The schools that remain unregistered ultimately issue certificates regarded as invalid by Turkish authorities. There are increasing concerns about the quality and content of education provided through private and community-based initiatives.

Other learning programmes and psychosocial support. Some schools have programmes ready to assist Syrian children upon their arrival in Turkey. For instance, school arrangements in Kilis include remedial classes for those who have lost school years and individual support for those who need help. Unfortunately, these services vary across provinces and across schools. Variations also exist in terms of school arrangements relating to the enrolment of children, placement tests and the participation of families in the school process and environment.

Significant differences were apparent in the arrangements to help Syrian children in the two schools visited during the field research, one in Kilis run by an NGO and the other one in Gaziantep run by the Metropolitan Municipality. According to the teachers and the school principal, there is a lack of parental involvement in Kilis. In contrast, the school principals in Gaziantep reported satisfaction with parental involvement. An NGO runs the school in Kilis and is experiencing many difficulties, including lack of financing, educational materials and equipment and overcrowded classrooms. Provision of psychosocial support is fairly limited.

In the accommodation centres, social workers provide psychosocial support to refugees, but their work has not been integrated in an education programme. As noted, the revised Syrian curriculum has no provision for psychosocial support or even life skills. Where psychosocial services exist – in one school in Kilis – they are based on the NGO providing the service but are not systematically integrated into the education programmes. Although the Government seems quite open to the provision of psychosocial support, reportedly its requests for supplies cover hardware rather than technical help for delivering on the psychosocial needs. As of March 2014, however, referral systems for children in need of psychosocial support were being established in the camps under the umbrella of child-protection activities.

Non-formal education. There are NFE programmes organized for Syrian children, adolescents and adults in the accommodation centres and in host communities. These include vocational training, life skills education, pre-school education and adult literacy. However, NFE is not systematically provided and mainly relies on community and NGO efforts. In the camps, AFAD identified vocational training as a priority, and UNHCR provided supplies for courses. However, NFE programmes do not provide any certification upon completion because participants' personal details cannot be registered on the MONE information management system without having a foreigners' identification number.¹⁹⁸

Qur'anic schools have set up in accommodation centres. An AFAD survey found that Qur'anic classes are the most popular among the Syrian population, with some 40 per cent of the male population and 27 per cent of the female population having attended one of the available programmes.¹⁹⁹

The learning environment. In temporary education centres, the proposed management strategy jointly developed by MONE and UNICEF outlines the roles and responsibilities of education personnel as follows: Each education centre is managed by a MONE coordinator who functions as a principal or headmaster. These coordinators are Turkish MONE staff seconded from Turkish schools on a short-term temporary basis.

¹⁹⁷ Information about these schools is scattered because many of them are not registered.

¹⁹⁸ This situation will likely change with the introduction of the new EMIS for Syrian children (YÖBIS) and the issuing of foreigners' identification documents and numbers under the Government's Temporary Protection Regulation law.

¹⁹⁹ AFAD, 2013.

In addition, two vice principals or deputy heads are appointed from among Syrian volunteer teachers to assist the coordinator with administrative, teaching and teacher support duties.

One of the main problems for principals in the temporary centres is the overcrowded classrooms. A school principal in Kilis explained, "Turkish schools have around 25 students per class; but in our school, in one class or in one session, there are 199 students. We have four students per desk. Students are not able to study. They have to take exams to be quiet. With one teacher in each class, she or he has to control the class to be able to give the lesson."

Another teacher added, "There are about 90–100 students in each classroom and not one minute passes without one of them going out and another coming in. Teachers did not take a holiday in the summer. They have been teaching the whole summer."

Said another teacher, "Faces are changing every day; with some students going back to Syria and some students coming in. Only ten students have stayed in this classroom since the beginning of term."

When asked about their relationships with teachers, six students in a focus group described the relationship as "good". The responding comments included: "They [Syrian teachers] are engaging people."²⁰⁰ "They are doing their best to keep children busy and happy in the schools, and some of them are working for long hours."²⁰¹ And, "Turkish teachers have also provided some educational activities, such as giving some lessons in literature and history."²⁰²

There also seems to be a positive relationship between Turkish and Syrian students, although their encounters are sporadic. "Turkish students are bringing cakes and flowers from the neighbouring town of Gaziantep, and students from universities come to visit us during the summer holidays," explained one student.²⁰³

Syrian students came from a war situation. They watch news about the war; they have relatives back in Syria; they are worried about them. This impacts them negatively. These children are using social media actively. When you look at their Facebook pages you will see that they have been sending photos of war to each other. We see children crying; every day we see children on the streets, not going to school. Under these conditions, of course their academic achievement would be low, when compared with their Turkish peers.

School principal in Gaziantep

Anecdotal evidence seems to indicate that the academic performance of Syrian children is relatively weak. Even though some interviewees described learning achievements as poor, four people cited it as good. Explained one teacher, "They are good students because they have many, many problems in Syria ... they come here and started a new life, and I think if others were in their place, they would not be able to do the same". During one of the focus group sessions, a teacher remarked that under this circumstance, "With war in Syria and students far away from motherland, they are performing quite well. At least, they are coming to school. They are still willing to learn."

Most Syrian students who were interviewed reported experiencing social and psychological problems upon their arrival in Turkey, which impedes their adjustment to the new school environment. For some interviewees, social and psychological adjustment was problematic, although others saw no problem. A school principal in Gaziantep stressed that the children attending his school have not encountered social and psychological adjustment problems.

With the restricted facility we have, we are trying to create a beautiful school environment. When Syrian children first came to this school, they did not face any adjustment problems. We have a single uniform. As soon as they come to school, they acquire the student mood.

School principal in Gaziantep

²⁰⁰ Focus group discussion 1.

²⁰¹ Focus group discussion 1 and Head Teachers (HT) 1.

²⁰² HT2.

²⁰³ Focus group discussion 1 and HT1.

There are different accounts of Syrian families' views of co-education. Although there are reports that Syrian families do not accept the mixing of boys and girls, there are also indications that many school classes are mixed, even in the secondary grades, which are generally separated. There is no dress code in Syrian schools,²⁰⁴ although the MONE is planning to supply school uniforms.

Learning materials. Even though Turkish textbooks are used in Turkish schools and during Turkish lessons in the Syrian schools, the Syrian textbooks constitute the main educational resource that Syrian students currently use in the temporary education centres.

The temporary education centres in the camps are better situated with classroom libraries, computer labs and workshops, compared with the schools opened by NGOs in host communities. For example, schools run by the Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality have no shortage of classroom libraries, computer labs or workshops, which is not the case for all camp schools.²⁰⁵

In addition to the learning materials provided to schools and temporary learning centres, some teachers have managed in their free time to offer additional, or improved, learning materials and opportunities. One teacher reported being able to give "free time to students. We give stories to students that they can benefit from... Teachers write the stories...and students are given the underlying moral, values... Students are also given books relating to religion (prayer books)."

Said another teacher, "We teach morals, values". And another explained, "We give books relating to religion."²⁰⁶

Teachers and teacher training. When the MONE agreed to use the Syrian curriculum during academic year 2012/2013, it also agreed to the

mobilization of Syrian volunteer teachers, in the camps and host communities. Teaching personnel in the camps and host communities consist of:

- Syrian teachers;
- Syrian teaching personnel;
- Turkish (Arabic and non-Arabic speaking) teachers (recruited by MONE); and
- Turkish (Arabic and non-Arabic speaking) teachers (not recruited by MONE).

Although there is no detailed profile of the skills and human resources available in the refugee camps in Turkey, it is estimated that there are at least 3,650 Syrian teachers in the camps. Based on UNICEF observations²⁰⁷ and discussions with camp teachers, it seems that many teaching personnel in the camps are not fully qualified and experienced as teachers. Based on a UNICEF profiling study conducted during a teacher-training programme in June and July 2013, more than 70 per cent of teachers indicated that they have some kind of qualification in education. Many of the teaching personnel are university students and graduates with no prior teaching experience, and many of them had been recruited to work as volunteers – despite no prior teaching experience – because of the pressing need for teachers.²⁰⁸ The teacher profiles from the UNICEF teacher-training programme revealed that 45 per cent had fewer than two years' experience as a teacher. In addition to one-day orientation and training workshops,²⁰⁹ UNICEF has provided two rounds of training to Syrian camp teachers and teaching personnel on various subjects, including lesson planning, psychosocial support and classroom management.²¹⁰ UNICEF also initiated training for Syrian teachers in host communities.²¹¹

The MONE recently appointed full-time Turkish education staff in the camps. These are MONE focal points and are responsible for collecting

²⁰⁴ Interview with UNHCR in Ankara on 3 April 2014.

²⁰⁵ UNICEF will provide every camp school and host community education centre with necessary supplies and books to develop libraries.

²⁰⁶ Focus group discussion with teachers.

²⁰⁷ UNICEF, 2013.

²⁰⁸ A school principal, for example, mentioned that, "All the teachers teaching in the camps have a teaching diploma, but we do not know if this applies to teachers who are teaching outside the camps". Another principal added that, "There is a shortage of teachers, so some university students, who are about to graduate, are hired to teach in schools, but they do not have teaching certificates."

²⁰⁹ In June and July 2013, UNICEF provided a training programme in Turkish for teachers in camps in three provinces. The programme focused on a training of trainers for quality education (Help the Helpers for Quality Education) and on the INEE Minimum Standards for Quality Education.

²¹⁰ UNICEF has provided two rounds of training to camp teachers on: 1) Lesson planning. 2) Classroom management in crowded classes. 3) Psychosocial support in classroom for children affected by war. 4) Programme development 5) Reactive teaching and 6. Effective teaching methods.

²¹¹ Training for host community teachers started off with the subjects of reactive teaching, effective teaching methods and psychosocial support in the classroom for children who are affected by war.

education data and liaising on education matters between the camp management, school directors and the MONE. During the field research in 2013, teachers in the camps indicated that promises of training programmes were not met. It seems that the Syrian Education Commission and other NGOs had apparently promised training sessions to teachers that did not materialize.

The following excerpts from the research interviews confirm the need for more training: “Teachers are given psychosocial support for two hours, and Turkish courses, but not related to teaching...(for daily life)...they are given promises on teaching languages, training for teachers, psychosocial support, methods of teaching...promises and promises. They came, they told us and they were gone.”²¹²

Other teachers also noted that they had been out of teaching for some time, which had a negative impact on their teaching practice. “Teachers left school since three years, this impacts the teachers and not only the students; therefore, we need training and support. It will be good to have training on new teaching and learning strategies... It would be wonderful to be given special lessons in training, in the ways of teaching...any way to be able to help students.”

Because Syrian teachers are not formal MONE teachers, the EMIS does not accommodate them, which results in several accreditation and payment problems. Even under the Temporary Protection Regulation, Syrian teachers currently do not receive work permits²¹³ and therefore cannot be part of the MONE payroll, although they work in schools operated by AFAD and MONE. They are thus mobilized as volunteers and cannot receive a regular salary, but they report to local MONE officials. To compensate their voluntary teaching work, MONE and UNICEF jointly developed the YÖBİS, as explained earlier,

as a complementing EMIS for Syrians and foreign students in Turkey. The system consists of three modules that monitor:

- Syrian teachers and students in camps;
- Syrian teachers and students in the temporary education centres in the host communities; and
- Syrian students in Turkish schools.

The system operates in three languages (Arabic, Turkish and English) and will be used for all foreign students in the future. It provides a legal framework and recognition for the education of Syrian and foreign children in the country.

In host communities, school management varies. In schools opened by the provincial district authorities, the governorate often pays incentives for teachers. In contrast, a municipality (as in Gaziantep) in its school pays the incentives to teachers from its own funds. Teacher incentives are unregulated and irregular. During the field research for this study, teachers answered in different ways when asked about salaries or incentives. Some reported receiving a monthly incentive of 450 liras in some NGO-supported schools, while others said they receive 850 liras. Some were paid salary from the Syrian Government until that practice stopped in 2013. The MONE and UNICEF are working to develop a legal framework for the formal inclusion of Syrian teachers in the education system and thus find a sustainable solution to the payment of salaries.²¹⁴ In November 2014, UNICEF, MONE and PTT (postal bank) signed an agreement protocol that governs the provision of standardized incentives, or compensations, to Syrian teachers both in camps and host communities. The protocol establishes the first national mechanism for the payment of Syrian teachers through the MONE, with initial financial support from UNICEF.²¹⁵

3.4 Certification and accreditation

The learning assessment system in Turkey includes four exams every school year, including a mid-term and an end-of-term exam. There are

also school-based formative assessments during the year to improve children’s academic achievement. The final exam, however, is the

²¹² Focus group discussion in Kilis.

²¹³ The Ministry of Labour is in charge of pronouncement on the sectors and geographic areas in which work permits are issued to Syrians under the temporary protection scheme.

²¹⁴ UNICEF drafted an Education Personnel Management Strategy Paper to guide the development of the inclusion framework for Syrian teachers in the education system.

²¹⁵ Camp and non-camp teachers will receive monthly incentives distributed through PTT pre-paid cards that can be used to withdraw money from ATM machines or as debit cards in stores.

most important. At the end of Grade 8, students sit for an examination and receive a primary education diploma, which allows them progression to secondary school (but it is not a school-leaving exam). At the end of secondary education, students sit for the school-leaving examination and receive a high school certificate that enable those who pass to either leave the education system or progress to tertiary education in Turkey or other countries.

Although only limited numbers of Syrian students have enrolled in Turkish schools and therefore are eligible to obtain a national diploma or certificate (particularly for the end of cycle official exams), the issue of certification for the learning of Syrian children remains crucial. The lack of accreditation of schools using the Syrian curriculum is perceived as one of the concerns for Syrian students' continuous educational opportunity and career advancement.

In the absence of a long-term solution for the certification of learning, the MONE decided in 2013 to provide students, in grades lower than Grade 9, with certificates of attendance. At the provincial level, reports suggest that camp schools and those in host communities have provided attendance certificates to students. Reports also suggest that schools in host communities provide Syrian children with report cards and quarterly evaluation reports. Some schools have also designed their own certificates. According to one school principle, "We designed our own diplomas and certificates, such as the certification of primary education."

A major problem relates to the accreditation status of many education programmes for Syrian children in the country. Both the schools operating in camps with support from MONE and AFAD and others outside the camps do not have the same accreditation status as Turkish schools. As one school principal stated, "When we opened this school for Syrian children, the MONE asked us to close down this school as soon as possible, since municipalities do not have the authority to open a school. Later on, the Secretary of Education came over and encouraged us to keep the school opened. Then some people from the MONE visited our school and they liked it."

At the end of the first semester of academic year 2014/2015 and for the first time, Syrian children attending a temporary education centre received school reports from the MONE similar to their Turkish peers. The YÖBIS was used to issue the school reports.

Certifications and exams for Syrian students.

The Grade 12 school-leaving exam has been the most challenging issue in the education of Syrian children in Turkey. For Syrian students who have completed the revised Syrian education curriculum requirements, the MONE does not provide Turkish certificates for the accompanying exam.

Assuming a prominent role in the provision of education for Syrian children in Turkey and the subregion, the Higher Commission for Education organized a Grade 12 school-leaving examination (baccalaureate exam) for nearly 10,000 Syrian students²¹⁶ residing inside Syria in the areas no longer under the control of the Syrian Government²¹⁷ as well as in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan in August 2013. Similarly, the MOE (of the Syrian Interim Government) organized Grade 12 examinations for academic year 2013/2014 in June 2014. More than 9,500 Syrian students sat for the exam overall: 6,433 in Syria, 1,547 in Turkey, 1,225 in Jordan and 473 in Lebanon.²¹⁸ In camps and host communities in Turkey, more than 5,000 Syrian Grade 12 students sat for their exam in August 2013 and more 1,500 sat for the exam in June 2014. The MONE provided the venues for the exams, while the Higher Commission for Education and the Interim Government's MOE administered the exams and provided the certification for those who passed.

The exam is similar to that provided by the Government of Syria, with some modifications, and has three tracks:²¹⁹

- Science: Arabic language, foreign language (English/French), mathematics, physics, chemistry, sciences and religion;
- Humanities: Arabic language, foreign language (English/French), philosophy and civics, history and religion; and

²¹⁶ Of them, 5,431 were male and 4,053 were female Syrian students.

²¹⁷ A total of 113 directorates of education were established in the governorates of Aleppo, Dara'a, Idlib, Deir ez-Zour, Raqqa and Reef Damascus.

²¹⁸ Popović, Delplace and Bergan, 2014.

²¹⁹ The following section is based on the SPARK Syria Policy Brief: Baccalaureate Secondary School Leaving Certificate, 27 September 2013.

- Sharia: Qur'an – interpretation and Qur'anic science, Islamic dogma, Islamic law and fundamentals of jurisprudence, Hadeth (prophetic tradition), Islamic statutes, philosophy and civics, foreign languages (English and French), geography and history.

The exam papers were prepared by Syrian education specialists and teachers based in Turkey. Exam papers were distributed to all the directorates in Syria and to supporting organizations in host countries.

The subject of national education was removed from the revised exam. Conversely, both the official Syrian curriculum and the revised one have religious education in Islam and Christianity, and they are included in the Grade 12 exam. In the Syrian official system, however, the score for religion education is not calculated in students' grade point average. Yet, students who fail religious education and another subject thus fail the whole exam and must repeat the year. In the Grade 12 exam administered by the Higher Commission for Education and the MOE of the Syrian Interim Government, the score received in religious education *does count* against the final result. This was highlighted during the research interviews as a major change and one that gives religion more prominence than in the official Syrian exam.

In addition, an independent assessment of the Grade 12 exam²²⁰ pointed out that no Christian student applied for the Grade 12 exam in Turkey in 2014; there are differing reports on whether the exam was available. Reportedly, five students in the previous academic year applied and passed the exam, which included questions on Christian religious education.

Monitoring and evaluating the revised Syrian curriculum, whose content and objectives are not integral to the Turkish education system and societal values, have proven challenging for the MONE. The inadequate political influence of the Syrian Opposition Coalition and the Syrian Interim Government, which endorse one version of the revised Syrian curriculum, or that other governments do not recognize the revised curriculum were cited during the research

interviews as two of the most challenging issues facing the MONE in providing certification for the revised Syrian curriculum.²²¹

The Turkish Government has extended crucial support to Syrian students, recognizing certificates provided by the Syrian Interim Government (not only to Syrian students in Turkey but also to those who sat for examinations in Syria, Lebanon and Jordan) through an equivalency certificate. Children with these certificates (for Grades 1–12) can receive an equivalency certificate through provincial accreditation commissions that operate in the provincial education directorates of MONE (in all 81 Turkish provinces).²²² This means that the Government of Turkey accepts certificates provided by the Syrian Interim Government to Syrian children as equal to a Turkish certificate. Having a Grade 12 certificate provided by the Syrian Interim Government thus allows Syrian students to progress to tertiary education in Turkey (with the condition that students master either Turkish or English) and in some European universities with whom the Syrian Opposition Coalition has stipulated agreements.

Although the Turkish Government has gone a long way to recognize certification provided by the Syrian Interim Government, the Interim Government has regrettably not provided timely certification for Grade 12 examinations conducted during summer 2014. Internal debates and disagreements on whether certificates should use the 'Syrian Arab Republic' or solely the 'Syrian Republic' have hindered their prompt delivery, with the consequence that Syrian students are missing out on their opportunity to enrol in Turkish universities.²²³

During the field research, some school principals and teachers seemed concerned over teaching the revised version of the official Syrian curriculum and issuing students Syrian certificates because they thought that the curriculum and certificates were only recognized by the Turkish MONE and not acknowledged internationally. The MONE is considering an accreditation exam for all students who have passed the Grade 12 exam (either using the Syrian or Libyan curriculum), after which they could provide recognized Turkish certificates.

²²⁰ Popovic, Delplace and Bergan, 2014.

²²¹ Interview with MONE official in Ankara on 3 April 2014.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ See <www.all4syria.info/Archive/166346>, accessed 14 September 2014.

In 2013 and 2014, the Higher Commission for Education and the Syrian Education Commission also supported the organization of Grade 12 examinations according to the Libyan curriculum for 1,500 Syrian students in the subregion in 2013 and for around 7,000 Syrian students in 2014.²²⁴ This staggering number seems to indicate that the Grade 12 examination, according to the Libyan curriculum, remains the most readily option for Syrian children in the subregion (which offers the added value of being widely recognized).

During the field research, teachers were in favour of implementing the Libyan curriculum and issuing the Libyan certificates, a view commonly supported by school principals. "Since the Libyan school degree is accredited internationally, Syrian students are able to pursue their higher education anywhere in the world. A Syrian certificate has no such advantage, because it is not recognized. As a result some schools have accepted to follow the Libyan curriculum and have approved extending entitlement to the Libyan certification," explained one principal.

Interviews with MONE officials suggest that the Libyan solution is not encouraged, however, and it is considered to be a temporary measure. Furthermore, children and families seem to consider the Libyan curriculum as too easy and that children are not learning enough, when compared with the Syrian curriculum, and thus they do not support this solution.

Although the Libyan exam was found to be the most widespread and the most common option among Syrian children in Turkey in 2014,²²⁵ it will be dismissed in 2015 in favour of the Syrian Grade 12 examination.

3.5 Conclusion

From the onset of the crisis in Syria, Syrian children have been able to enrol in public schools in Turkey. However, the conditions for registration, combined with the language of instruction (Turkish as opposed to Arabic), have deterred the majority of children from enrolling. Only 7,446 Syrian children attended Turkish public schools

SPARK, an international NGO based in southern Turkey, is actively engaged in finding solutions towards recognition of the learning attainment of Syrian children using the revised Syrian curriculum. Although in theory Syrian students are entitled to continue their education in Turkish universities and despite the efforts to facilitate this, the field researchers encountered concerns about whether Syrian students are indeed enrolling in Turkish universities. An independent assessment commissioned by SPARK found that none of students interviewed had enrolled or knew anyone enrolled in a Turkish university.

Nonetheless, the Turkish Government and other education partners continue to seek solutions. For example, the Government waived University fees for Syrian students, and the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities has granted more than 1,000 scholarship schemes for Syrian students. As a result, a certain number of Syrian students can continue their education in public universities. They will be provided with housing in dormitories and are eligible for a scholarship, including a monthly stipend.²²⁶ UNHCR also has granted 12 students with full scholarships through the DAFI scholarship programme,²²⁷ initiated in Turkey in 2014. UNICEF has supported more than 2,000 Syrian students to enrol in Turkish language courses through TÖMER (Turkish and Foreign Language Application and Research Center of the Ankara University) so that they can continue on to their tertiary education.

At the time of the field research, there was no official agreement between the Syrian MOE and the Turkish MONE for the reciprocal recognition of diplomas and certificates in event of the return of Syrian children to Syria.

during academic year 2013/2014. Due to regulatory changes introduced at the start of the 2014/2015 academic year that number has tripled. According to the MONE, some 21,000 Syrian children had enrolled in Turkish schools by the end of 2014. In addition, temporary education centres have been established specifically for

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Those students who want to attend Turkish universities must attend a course organized by TÖMER and receive a B2 level in Turkish language to apply. UNICEF has provided financial assistance to the project, with the partnership of the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities.

²²⁷ Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative Fund, or DAFI.

Syrian children in refugee camps (accommodation centres) and in host communities. After teaching Turkish students in the morning, some Turkish schools accommodate Syrian children in the afternoon. During academic year 2013/2014, respectively, 69,000 and 70,000 Syrian children enrolled in temporary education centres or schools in camps and host communities. Due to the Syrian population influx in 2014, a considerable portion of the Syrian children population was likely not in school or participating in any other educational opportunity.

Schools established in refugee camps and at a provincial level (such as by a municipality) operate under the mandate of the MONE but are not accredited. Schools for Syrian children in host communities that do not register with the MONE are also not accredited. MONE officials expressed their concern over the quality and content of education provided in such schools.

The content of curriculum and the language of instruction have been much debated in Turkey. In academic year 2011/2012, Syrian students had access to the Turkish curriculum with translation into Arabic. This situation changed the following academic year when the Turkish Government tacitly agreed to the use of the revised Syrian curriculum in schools for Syrian students, while the Government's policy traditionally has been to integrate refugees and children from minorities into the national school system, including through the teaching of Turkish to them.

The unprecedented influx of Syrian refugees has led to the emergence of an education system for Syrian children using a modified version of the official Syrian curriculum. Monitoring and evaluating this curriculum, whose content and objectives are not integral to the Turkish education curriculum, have proven challenging for the MONE. The inadequate political influence of the Syrian Opposition Coalition and the Syrian Interim Government, which endorsed one version of the revised Syrian curriculum, and the lack of recognition for the curriculum are two of the major challenges for the MONE in accrediting the revised Syrian curriculum and issuing certificates for those who have completed it.

The Syrian Education Commission, the Higher Commission for Education and, since early 2014,

the MOE of the Syrian Interim Government, all based in Turkey, have increasingly taken a prominent subregional role in matters related to education, curriculum and certification for displaced Syrian students in Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt and Iraq (KRG).

With the support of the Higher Commission for Education in 2013 and with the MOE (of the Interim Government) in 2014, the Syrian Opposition Coalition organized the Grade 12 school-leaving examination (baccalaureate exam) for nearly 10,000 Syrian students residing inside Syria in areas no longer under the control of the Syrian Government as well as in Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon. It provided the exam for more than 9,500 students in 2014. The High Commission for Education and other entities, such as the Syrian Education Commission, supported the organization of Grade 12 examinations according to the Libyan curriculum for 1,500 Syrian students in 2013 and for some 7,000 students in 2014. This option, however, is phasing after 2015.

When the MONE in Turkey agreed to use the Syrian curriculum during academic year 2012/2013, it also agreed to the deployment of Syrian teachers in camps and host community schools. In camp schools under the mandate of MONE, and supported by AFAD, Syrian teachers are not formally part of the MONE payroll and they must work as volunteers in these schools. They have not received payment for their volunteer work. Some Syrian teachers recruited by NGOs or other organizations as volunteers in host community schools have received incentive pay for their work. However, their payment is not regulated, and teachers reported receiving varying amounts, according to the school and the area where they work. The MONE and UNICEF jointly developed a legal framework for the formal inclusion of Syrian teachers into the education system so they could find a sustainable solution to the payment of a salary. In November 2014, UNICEF, the MONE and PTT (postal bank) signed an agreement protocol that governs the provision of standardized incentives to Syrian teachers, both in camps and host communities. The protocol establishes the first national mechanism for the payment of Syrian teachers through the MONE with initial financial support of UNICEF.

3.6 Recommendations

A major challenge in Turkey for Syrian students is the limited access to public schools. The lack of access is compounded by the language of instruction, which is Turkish and not Arabic, as well as the requirement for a registration document. Most Syrian children in Turkey access school in camps or in host communities, with such schools falling under multiple authorities of the Government. Expanding educational access for Syrian children in Turkey would require a twin pronged strategy. This includes: (i) increasing the capacity of public schools to accommodate more Syrian children, such as by offering a double-shift system; and (ii) increasing access to educational facilities, like temporary education centres, in both camps and host communities, through the establishment of additional government or privately funded schools.

This strategy clearly has curriculum, certification and accreditation implications. Increasing access to public schools would require a curriculum approach that would support Syrian children making the language transition in the medium of instruction from Arabic to Turkish. Additional language support and training and perhaps employing Syrian teachers would facilitate such a transition. Moreover, in all educational settings, whether Turkish schools or temporary education centres in camps and host communities, there is a need to add a psychosocial curriculum and support for children fleeing violence and conflict.

Increasing educational access for Syrian children in both camps and host communities, wherein different versions of the Syrian curriculum are used, requires, first, the registration of these schools and educational programmes by relevant Turkish authorities. Second, the relevant authorities need to accredit the learning programmes, specifically, the curriculum and the

assessment in use at these schools. This is only possible if a clear and common framework is developed for the use of the revised Syrian curriculum, including what changes are to be made, how and by whom. The recommendation for a framework for the use of this curriculum and its certification extend beyond Turkey because the Syrian Opposition Coalition and the Syrian Education Commission based in Turkey are developing textbooks and examinations for other contexts, including Iraq (KRG) and opposition-controlled areas in Syria.

To enhance the quality of learning in all schools where there are Syrian children, due consideration needs to be given to employing Syrian teachers who have the understanding and experience of teaching these children. Turkish authorities, together with partners, need to clearly map who these teachers are and what their qualifications are as a starting point to securing their employment and professional development. More generally, it is evident that all teachers, including Turkish teachers, need professional development and support to work with Syrian refugee children. This includes training in dealing with children who have experienced trauma and violence as well as training in peace education and conflict resolution curricula.

A particular certification challenge is the recognition of learning assessments in schools in camps and host communities. Because the tests and examinations in these schools are not standardized, they are not recognized. There is a need to work with these schools to develop mechanisms and procedures for examination and for issuing certificates. This is linked to the earlier recommendation that procedures need to be put in place for registering such schools and accrediting their learning programmes.



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LEBANON

4 Lebanon

4.1 Social and political context

In March 2015, UNHCR had registered 1,191,451 Syrian refugees in Lebanon.²²⁸ These numbers, however, do not represent the total number of Syrians in the country. It is estimated that in some areas, as little as 37 per cent of Syrians are registered with UNHCR.²²⁹ Many have crossed borders illegally without proper documentation; some deliberately choose to avoid registration with UNHCR fearing that their security might be undermined, while others do not have the means to reach the UNHCR offices or are simply not informed about registration procedures.

The Government of Lebanon estimates that there are at least 1.5 million Syrians in Lebanon (as of March 2014), including more than 300,000 Syrian workers and their families who were present in the country prior to the crisis. Lebanon (which has a total population of 4 million people) also hosts nearly half a million Palestine refugees, in addition to 45,000 Palestine refugees from Syria and around 30,000 Lebanese returnees from Syria.²³⁰

There are no officially established refugee camps for the Syrian refugees. Instead, they are hosted in more than 1,400 cadastral localities across the country, with the majority of them continuing to seek shelter in the traditionally deprived northern (30 per cent) and Bekaa (34 per cent) regions of Lebanon. UNICEF conducted vulnerability mapping exercise in collaboration with the Prime Minister's Office and found 225 vulnerable localities in Lebanon, most in the North and in the Bekaa, where 85 per cent of registered Syrian

refugees and more than 68 per cent of poor Lebanese are located. There are also approximately 400 informal tented settlements²³¹ throughout the country, hosting an estimated 12.5 per cent of the registered refugee caseload plus a large proportion of unregistered refugees. And 285 of these tented settlements (or 77 per cent) are also located in vulnerable poor areas.²³² This situation was confirmed by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE)²³³ officials who noted that 67 per cent of the most vulnerable Lebanese localities have accommodated more than 80 per cent of the Syrian refugees.

The Government declared an emergency situation in 2013, and worked on securing the necessary support for hosting villages to rehabilitate their infrastructure and expand health and educational services and thus increase their absorption capacity. Government institutions, such as the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Social Affairs and the MEHE, are working to develop an overall plan to coordinate their efforts. Accordingly, a joint ministerial committee was formed, headed by the Prime Minister, to be in charge of the implementation. As coordinator, the Ministry of Social Affairs liaises with relevant authorities, international bodies and local NGOs.

At the beginning of the Syrian crisis, the Lebanese Government declared a policy of "neutrality and disassociation" to maintain its security. But the steady influx of refugees has generated

²²⁸ UNHCR registration data, <data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=122#>.

²²⁹ INEE, 2014.

²³⁰ Ferris, Kirisci and Shaikh, 2013.

²³¹ Although there is no agreed-upon definition of informal tented settlements, UN Habitat provides two definitions: 1) "Residential areas where a group of housing units has been constructed on land to which the occupants have no legal claim, or which they occupy illegally"; and 2) "Unplanned settlements and areas where housing is not in compliance with current planning and building regulations" (otherwise known as 'unauthorized housing') (REACH, 2013).

²³² This analysis is based on a vulnerability map developed in cooperation with the Information Management Unit of the Prime Minister's Office, UNICEF and UNHCR, which shows the distribution of poor Lebanese and registered Syrian refugees at cadastral locality level (using the latest Lebanese poverty data and UNHCR registration information).

²³³ Interview with Fadi Yarak, Director General, Ministry of Education and Higher Education.

divergence in opinion among political leaders.²³⁴ At the same time, the continued delay in the formation of the Cabinet impeded decision-making on the refugee crisis. This state of uncertainty might have also deprived Lebanon from additional aid funds because donors require parliamentary approval to extend support.²³⁵

The influx of the Syrian refugees has impacted on the already fragile social fabric of Lebanon: Most of the refugees are Sunni, and many of them are settling in the Hezbollah-controlled²³⁶ Bekaa region, which is raising fears of increased sectarian violence. The Christian community also feels threatened because they see Lebanon leaning towards a Muslim-dominated majority.²³⁷

The increasing number of refugees raises concerns about job opportunities for the poor, especially because refugees are commonly perceived as being willing to accept low wages, resulting in a fall in the overall wage rates. Additionally threatening is the opening of small trading stores by refugees that undercut prices compared with other businesses.²³⁸ Weak economic growth in Lebanon and the competition for scarce work opportunities have resulted in emerging social problems among refugees across cities and villages, particularly in the form of child labour,²³⁹ sex work, early marriage, homelessness, petty crime and begging for food and money.

4.2 The education context

The school system in Lebanon comprises pre-school,²⁴⁰ elementary, intermediate and

secondary levels (see Table 3).

Table 3 The education system in Lebanon

PRE-SCHOOL		ELEMENTARY		INTERMEDIATE		SECONDARY	
Age	Grade	Age	Grade	Age	Grade	Age	Grade
		Basic cycle I		Basic cycle III			
4	K1	6	G1	12	G7	15	G10
5	K2	7	G2	13	G8	16	G11
		8	G3	14	G9	17	G12
		Basic cycle II					
		9	G4				
		10	G5				
		11	G6				

Education in Lebanon is compulsory to the age of 15. The Lebanese public education system is dominated by private provision; the public sector

caters for approximately 30 per cent of the overall Lebanese student population, primarily those who are the poorest and most vulnerable. Because

²³⁴ For example, although the Shiite political parties, especially Hezbollah, are involved in the Syrian conflict, the Sunnite leaders are not critical of the uncontrolled influx but consider the increase in numbers "a time bomb". The Maronite community and its Kataeb militias are concerned with the internal security and want to control the Syrian presence by setting up camp settlements, whereas political leaders, such as Gibran Bassil from the Free Patriotic Movement and Caretaker (Water and Energy Minister), have called for controlling the influx of Syrian refugees by sealing the borders. At the time of this study, most of the political leaders were concerned with the continued presence of the Syrian refugees in Lebanon because the Government was requesting international support to ensure that the needs of the refugees are met rather than helping them to return to their country. One of the most popular solutions expressed is to set up camps to stop the demographic integration and the social inclusion of Syrian refugees. Thus, the Change and Reform Bloc, in cooperation with the Syrian authorities, demanded (4 October 2013) setting up of camp settlements, under the pretext of securing the safe return of the Syrians to their country.

²³⁵ "Political Stability Key to Securing Donor Funds for Lebanon", *The Daily Star*, 5 October 2013, <www.dailystar.com.lb/Business/Lebanon/2013/Oct-05/233641-political-stability-key-to-securing-donor-funds-for-lebanon.ashx#axzz2grOIGoKx>.

²³⁶ The Hezbollah is a Shi'a Muslim political and militant party based in Lebanon.

²³⁷ Ferris, Kirisci and Shaikh, 2013.

²³⁸ For instance, 16.6 per cent of shops in Baalbek are managed and owned by Syrians. They also constitute 94 per cent of those working in hospitality. In Aarsal, 380 of the 1,650 labourers working in the masonry industry are Syrian; and 2,300 Syrians work in agriculture and construction. With time, the competition is expected to become more intense. According to Gibran Bassil, there were 220,000 to 230,000 Lebanese threatened by unemployment, which poses security risks to the country.

²³⁹ UNHCR, 2013.

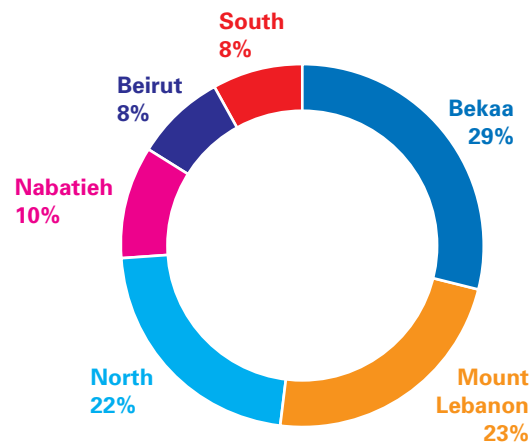
²⁴⁰ Pre-school education is not compulsory. There are some schools that have attached kindergartens. Other provision is private.

areas where Syrian children are concentrated are coincidental with those where the majority of the vulnerable Lebanese population reside, the increased number of children in need of education is creating an extra burden on often poorly resourced schools. The public education system in Lebanon is beset by weak infrastructure and a lack of equipment and materials. Of the 1,282 schools, 60 are non-operational and 250 need refurbishment although there are many examples of well-trained teachers and excellent schools that can act as models in the future.

Low enrolment of Syrian refugees in Lebanon.

Figures for academic year 2012/2013 indicate that of a total estimated refugee population of 200,000 school-age children, 30,000 (15 per cent) were enrolled in a public school, with enrolment in the secondary level as low as 2 per cent. This figure excluded some 13,000 Syrian children who were in the system prior to the crisis,²⁴¹ and as many as 15,000 Syrian children were estimated to be enrolled in private or non-accredited schools using the Syrian curriculum.

Figure 1 Distribution of Syrian children across governorates, academic year 2012/2013



Source: UNICEF

Although access to public schools for Syrian children has been allowed by the Government from the onset of the crisis, during academic year 2013/2014 there were varying announcements regulating the enrolment. According to the previous Minister of Education, Hassan Diab, public schools were not able to absorb a large number of Syrian students. He noted that the 1,300 public schools could only absorb around 40,000 new students across all levels, including Lebanese students entering the public system for the first time; the MEHE thus called for additional funds to rehabilitate and supply the public schools in order to accommodate the Syrian refugee students.

In December 2013, MEHE indicated that 85,000 Syrian refugee children could be accommodated in the public school system by introducing a second shift in the afternoon.²⁴² According to an

MEHE statement in January 2014, 50 per cent of the student population in the first shift were to be Syrian, thus indicating that the absorption capacity of the public schools was greater than initially indicated. In October 2014, the MEHE declared that 157,000 foreigners could be enrolled in public schools, with 100,000 in the first shift and 57,000 in the second shift²⁴³ (keeping the 50 per cent Lebanese to foreigner students' ratio). In mid-November 2014, the Minister of Education and Higher Education gave the permission to 400 schools to accept more Syrian students than Lebanese students; schools with the space could file a form to request permission to accept more Syrian students than Lebanese students as well.²⁴⁴ Even though the number of children who could be potentially included in the formal education has increased, nearly two thirds of Syrian school-age children remain out of school.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² UNHCR, RRP5 Update, December 2013.

²⁴³ UNHCR Lebanon, Education Update, October 2014, available at <data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/documents.php?page=1&view=grid&Language%5B%5D=1&Country%5B%5D=122&Type%5B%5D=6>

²⁴⁴ 'Schools Given Green Light to Accept More Syrians than Lebanese', The Daily Star, 15 November 2014, <www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Nov-15/277717-schools-given-green-light-to-accept-more-syrians-than-lebanese.ashx?utm_medium=email&utm_source=transactional&utm_campaign=Email>.

As of March 2014, there were more than 88,000 Syrian children enrolled in 524 public schools²⁴⁵ in both the first and second shifts (with the number decreasing to around 80,000 in July 2014). This remarkable improvement in the number of Syrian children accessing public education was attributed to several factors, including the concerted efforts by national and international organizations and strenuous advocacy with the MEHE to raise the ceiling on the number of Syrian students who could access public schools and the establishment of second shifts in public schools for Syrian children. In January 2015, some 8,000 Syrian children were enrolled in formal education and approximately 109,000 in NFE education programmes, leaving some 266,000 children (69 per cent) out of school.

High drop-out rates²⁴⁶ among Syrian refugees are also reported to be exacerbating the problem of low enrolment. The high drop-out rates and patterns of low enrolment likely is due to the poor socio-economic status of parents and the fact that they often lack information on the provision of free educational services in Lebanon. A majority of families interviewed for this study (98 per cent of those interviewed in the South, and 50 per cent of those in the Bekaa region) indicated that they were not aware of the services provided by both the MEHE and international organizations for their children to access education. The lack of awareness of education services available for Syrian children was confirmed by a recent assessment conducted by UNHCR as one of the principal barriers to accessing education in Lebanon.²⁴⁷

Controversial reports²⁴⁸ also indicate that in some regions of Lebanon, Akkar in particular, enrolment of Syrian children has become a lucrative business for organizations and free private schools. Such reports point out that school owners look for Syrian children's names and enrol them on paper to receive support from the Lebanese Government (the fees that should be compensated to schools for each Syrian student enrolled), while the children never actually attended. These reports suggest that

international organizations and United Nations agencies closely scrutinize the drop-out patterns of Syrian students. Although the number of out-of-school Syrian children is high, the drop-out rates suggests that number could be lower.

The education situation of Syrian adolescents and youth seems even grimmer. A recent survey conducted by the United Nations Population Fund on a sample of Syrian youth refugees found that 94 per cent of the surveyed respondents were not enrolled in any form of education. Of them, 35 per cent were enrolled in formal education back in Syria. The main reasons reported for not attending were attributed to the status of displacement as well as the difficulty of the Lebanese curriculum and the high costs associated with going to school. When asked about solutions to overcome some of these major difficulties, youth refugees suggested the recruitment of Syrian teachers, the use of the Syrian curriculum and the reduction of costs associated with education.²⁴⁹

The MEHE is coordinating with UNHCR, UNICEF and other international organizations and NGOs to ensure expanded access to quality education for Syrian children. An Education Working Group has been established, co-led by UNHCR with UNICEF, to ensure that education activities are coordinated and implemented. A steering committee of the Education Working Group was also established at MEHE level to set the strategic directions of the Group. As of January 2014, the sector strategic plan – Reaching All Children with Education in Lebanon – had been developed and officially endorsed as well as chaired by the MEHE in June 2014.²⁵⁰

Conditions of access for Syrian children. On 29 March 2012, the MEHE issued circular n.18/2012 to accommodate Syrian students on condition that they submit registration documents approved by the Syrian Embassy in Lebanon or by UNHCR. Given the unwillingness of the Syrian refugees to declare their presence for confidentiality and security reasons, the MEHE amended this circular on 8 September 2012 with the objective of

²⁴⁵ UNICEF, 2014. Approximately 58,360 are enrolled in first shifts and 29,902 in second shifts. As of January 2014, 79 schools had introduced the double-shift systems.

²⁴⁶ Rated at 30% for the academic year 2012/2013 (UNICEF and Save the Children, 2012). There are different reports on the rate of drop out of Syrian children, although they all point out to high level of drop-outs (see World Bank, 2013, p. 78 and UNHCR, 2013).

²⁴⁷ UNHCR and REACH, 2014.

²⁴⁸ Akkar, The Education of Syrian Refugee Children: A profitable business, Nejla Hammoud As-safir, 14 November 2014, <assafir.com/Article/1/383937

²⁴⁹ UNFPA, 2014.

²⁵⁰ The sector strategic plan 'Reaching All Children with Education in Lebanon' aims at providing 435,000 vulnerable school-age children (3-18 years) affected by the Syria crisis access to quality formal and non-formal learning opportunities in safe and protective environments.

simplifying registration procedures. The changes meant that only proof of identity was required and not original certification and official accreditation, as was previously the case.

The MEHE widely disseminated circular n. 1026/2013 to remind schools of decree No. 109 of the bylaw, which accords admissions priority to Lebanese students, followed by refugee students subject to the availability of places. Key informants in Bekaa and especially in Baalbeck reported that the governorate representative required school principals to stop accepting Syrian children in all cases, because of excess demand coupled with a lack of funds to cover fees. As a result, the MEHE requested educational counselling officers to supervise the registration process in each governorate, which concluded in January/February 2014 with the opening of the double-shift system for Syrian children.

The initial requirement of the MEHE that Syrian students had to submit their official transcripts

hindered them from registering in Grades 9 to 12.²⁵¹ During academic year 2012/2013, the vast majority of schools did not register students in the third cycle, because they were unaware of the correct procedures to follow and whether equivalence of education documents was permitted. To avoid unexpected registration and to reduce disruptions, most school opted not to accept students applying for the second and third cycles. Other principals imposed a difficult placement test because they were wary that accepting Syrian children might impact the academic standard of their school and consequently its reputation.

In May 2014, the MEHE has also signed a circular to allow Syrian children without their education transcripts to sit for national exams.²⁵² Although students are sometimes allowed to take the exams at the last minute, without the paperwork, this system causes disincentives to enrolment throughout the school year, particularly in Grades 9 and 12.²⁵³

4.3 Curriculum

Public schools and Syrian children who enter the single-shift system. The Lebanese curriculum is used in all public and private schools. To use a different curriculum, private schools need to be accredited by the MEHE, and schools are required to follow the official curriculum while also implementing the different curriculum.²⁵⁴

Mathematics and science instruction is generally conducted in French or English in the first and second cycles, although it could also take place in Arabic (in practice, though, this is not strongly encouraged). In the third cycle, instruction in mathematics and science is only in either English or French. The law in Lebanon requires public schools to teach the same official curriculum to refugees as to Lebanese students. This can pose serious learning difficulties for Syrian children, who are used to a curriculum that uses Arabic as the language of instruction for all subjects.

Schools can modify teaching methods within the ambit of the official curriculum. However, this is not coordinated and is usually the result of individual teacher initiatives. For example, in some schools where Syrian children's enrolment is high, supplementary classes in the first two cycles provided where the curriculum is taught in Arabic. This gives Syrian children some time to learn English and French and to understand what they are learning and thus to become better equipped to engage with the English and French subjects in the third cycle. This also gives a chance to Kurdish students from Syria to improve their skills in Arabic. In some areas such as southern Sarafand, Syrian children do not experience the same language difficulties because teachers explain the lessons in Arabic, even when using textbooks in foreign languages.

²⁵¹ According to the Lebanese law, Syrian children have to provide records with their grades from the last three years in Syria stamped by the Syrian Ministry of Education and certified by the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. These records have to be stamped by the Lebanese embassy in Syria too. Following entry into Lebanon, these records have to be taken to the Lebanese Ministry of Education for an "equivalency." There, refugees are asked for their residence permit (which costs approximately US\$200) and a Syrian identity card (*huwiyya*) that has been stamped by the Syrian embassy in Lebanon. Refugees younger than 15 do not have an identity card and are thus asked for their family's *ikhrāj qayd* (civil registry) instead which shows data about all the family (which may be sensitive information for a refugee) (Parkinson, 2014).

²⁵² UNHCR, Education Dashboard, May 2014.

²⁵³ Parkinson, S. (2014) Educational Aftershocks for Syrian Refugees in Lebanon, published on <www.merip.org/educational-aftershocks-syrian-refugees-lebanon>.

²⁵⁴ Mullis et al., 2012.

Public schools and Syrian children who enter the second-shift system. During academic year 2013/2014, second shifts exclusively for Syrian children were established to expand the absorption capacity of the education system. Syrian children attending the second shift receive a condensed Lebanese curriculum in Arabic, with a focus on core subjects, and have a reduced learning and teaching time. Arts, physical education and other extracurricular activities have been removed from the curriculum for those attending the second shift. The direct cost of the second shift is largely borne by the international community (costs set at US\$620 per child per year, with US\$30 for textbooks covered by a grant from the United Kingdom Department for International Development²⁵⁵) and indirect costs are met by the MEHE.

Non-formal education for Syrian children. NFE is provided by a number of international organizations, including UNHCR, UNICEF (who contract and coordinate the work of a number of NGOs) as well as the French and German embassies. As of December 2014, there were 109,503 Syrian and other vulnerable children enrolled in NFE programmes in Lebanon. NFE programmes are offered in a variety of venues (public schools and community centres but also private schools, religious buildings, tents, NGO offices and Palestinian camps) and use different syllabuses and certification procedures. Most NFE activities focus on accelerated learning, remedial classes and basic literacy and numeracy skills, with the highest concentration in the Bekaa region and the least in Al-Nabatieh.²⁵⁶ The Education Working Group recently formalized definitions of the different NFE activities and clarified the pathways to formal education. Vocational training, life skills and self-learning/home schooling are also reported, organized for small numbers by few organizations. Basic literacy and numeracy courses are offered for children aged 6–18.

Two curricula exist for the accelerated programmes, both developed by the Center for Education Research and Development (CERD), a technical institute under the MEHE that is responsible for curriculum development and teacher training, with the support of UNICEF and UNESCO. The UNICEF–CERD curriculum was initially developed as a catch-up programme for

Syrian children enrolled in the first cycle. Based on their needs, it focuses on languages (English and French) and English or French technical terminology used in mathematics and science. The main objective of the UNICEF–CERD accelerated learning programme is to enable Syrian children who have lost school time and who are used to Arabic as the sole language of instruction to reach the same level as Lebanese students, in terms of language proficiency. The UNESCO–CERD curriculum, on the contrary, was designed for Lebanese drop-outs in the second cycle and covers Arabic, English or French, mathematics, ICT and life skills. The ultimate goal of the programme is that children are either reintegrated into mainstream education or can attend vocational training.

Building on these two curricula, UNICEF and CERD are developing an accelerated learning programme curriculum for all three cycles with the aim of enabling children to complete each grade in four months, and thus to complete each cycle (three grades) in 12 months' time.²⁵⁷ The curriculum is a condensed basic education curriculum for Grades 1–9 for out-of-school children who have missed out on schooling for more than three years. The curriculum has been developed and the testing period was expected to roll out at the beginning of 2015, between January and March.

Meanwhile, organizations providing accelerated learning are using different curricula. In 2013, and given the difficulties Syrian students experienced in finding space in a public school, the existing accelerated programmes (which use different curricula) often functioned as a second-chance formal education for Syrian children, who then transitioned to public schools when space was available. Once the double-shift system for Syrian children opened, between December 2013 and February 2014, many of the Syrian children in the accelerated learning programme transitioned to the public school.²⁵⁸ Not all of them, however, were able to do so; transition to the second shift depended much on logistical factors. In the region of Mount Lebanon, for example, only some schools operating the accelerated learning programme in the afternoon were transformed into two-shift schools for Syrian children. Those children attending the accelerated learning

²⁵⁵ The Department for International Development grant provides textbooks for all children in public schools.

²⁵⁶ Workshop Report, Non-Formal Education Workshop, Beirut, January 30–31 (unpublished).

²⁵⁷ The MOU between UNICEF, the MEHE and CERD to develop the curriculum was signed in May 2014.

²⁵⁸ Interviews with TDH in Beirut on 19 March 2014 and with War Child in Beirut on 20 March 2014.

programme in schools that subsequently activated the double shifts automatically moved to them. Those attending schools that did not activate the accelerated learning programme have remained in the same programme, waiting to access formal education in the coming academic year.²⁵⁹

During the field research for this study (conducted in June, July and August 2013), 9 of the 34 students interviewed in Baalbeck were enrolled in school, compared with 19 registered to follow the curriculum developed by UNICEF and CERD. They all expressed uncertainty about their future.

We used to plan for our future, the current instability is preventing us from fulfilling our hopes, which have become a dream; a far distant one.

A Syrian student in Lebanon

Revised Syrian curriculum. Based upon the large number of Syrian children who did not enrol in Lebanese schools in 2011/2012 or who dropped out (the drop-out rates of Syrian children reached 70 per cent in 2011/2012), many private initiatives have flourished to provide education using a version of the revised Syrian curriculum. The aim was to respond to the capacity constraints of the Lebanese system but also to the difficulties Syrian children encountered in grappling with the Lebanese curriculum.

According to the Syrian Education Board (Al-Ha'ya Al-tarbawyah Al-surya), approximately 40,000 children were enrolled in schools using a version of the Syrian curriculum for academic year 2013/2014.²⁶⁰ Of them, 10,000 children were enrolled in schools set up directly by the Syrian Education Board. Established in 2012 by a group of young Syrian activists, the Syrian Education Board promotes the right to education of Syrian children in Lebanon. In 2012, the Board was officially appointed by the Higher Commission for Education and the Syrian Opposition Coalition, based in Turkey, as the only accredited entity in Lebanon to offer the Grade 12 examination, to be based on the revised Syrian curriculum. The

Board manages 8 schools in Tripoli,²⁶¹ 14 in Akkar District and 14 in the Bekaa Valley. The schools provide a version of the Syrian curriculum utilizing textbooks downloaded from the website of the Syrian MOE with the most contentious content removed. The Board removed national education from the curriculum and introduced a subject on civic education related to citizenship, rights and duties of the citizens.²⁶²

Although affiliated with the Higher Commission for Education and the Syrian Opposition Coalition, the Syrian Education Board schools only started using the textbooks developed in Turkey by the Education Commission and the Syrian Interim MOE during the academic year 2014/2015. In academic year 2013/2014 and for the first time, the Syrian Education Board used the Libyan curriculum for Grade 12 (for approximately 50 students in the literary branch and 50 students for the scientific branch in Tripoli). They also began piloting a project for 400 students up to Grade 6 using the Lebanese curriculum in Arabic, with a focus on languages and then moving to the Lebanese curriculum in either French or English for the upper grades. If this pilot project is successful, the Syrian Education Board will consider abandoning the use of the Syrian curriculum for the Libyan one because it would lead to a recognized certification. But they could also opt for the Syrian Government curriculum if that would lead to a recognized certificate.²⁶³

In addition to the Syrian Education Board, private Al-Iman schools opened second shifts in Tripoli during academic year 2012/2013 with the use of the revised Syrian curriculum. They provided education for Lebanese children in the morning and for Syrian children in the afternoon. Because only few Syrian children were accepted in public schools in the second and third cycles, Al-Iman schools offered an alternative to formal education. They also covered US\$25 per child for monthly transportation costs. Syrian activists reported that the Al-Iman schools were promised by MEHE officials that they could conduct Lebanese Grade 12 examinations even though the school used the Syrian curriculum. This did not happen eventually, due to decisions taken at the ministry

²⁵⁹ Interviews with TDH in Beirut on 19 March 2014.

²⁶⁰ Interview with the Syrian Education Board in Beirut on 19 March 2014.

²⁶¹ Tripoli is the area with the major concentration of schools providing the Syrian curriculum as well as of Islamic charities providing the Syrian curriculum with a focus on Islamic religion.

²⁶² A close analysis of what is taught in this subject would be useful in the perspective of strengthening the peace-building programming for Syrian children.

²⁶³ Interview with the Syrian Education Board in Beirut on 19 March 2014.

level. For academic year 2013/14, Al-Iman schools dismissed the use of the Syrian curriculum and returned to the Lebanese curriculum. This, combined with the fees that students are charged, reduced the number of Syrian children enrolled to some 400.²⁶⁴

Other schools and initiatives also provide the Syrian curriculum, including the Islamic Education Association (Al-Jama'a Al-Islamiya) and other Islamic charities. These non-formal schools provide education with a focus on few subjects and replace national education with Islamic religion. International organizations and Syrian civil society activists voice concern over the immense importance given to Islamic religion in these schools. Syrian children in these schools do not receive any form of financial compensation to attend (contrary to the experiences in Jordan) but receive food and other forms of aid.²⁶⁵

The learning environment. The teaching of the Lebanese curriculum is generally based on traditional methods focused on rote learning and memorization. Such an approach tends to ignore the learning needs of each child.

Syrian children are used to a dictatorial educational system, because when he asked Syrian students to stand up and face the wall, they spontaneously bent down on their knees and put their hands on their head, as they used to do in Syria.

A Lebanese teacher during an interview

Corporal punishment is still prevalent in public and private schools in Lebanon and continues to be the main disciplinary method. A UNICEF and Save the Children assessment²⁶⁶ conducted in July 2012 found that both female and male Syrian children in public schools experience some sort of discrimination, with incidents of physical violence more prevalent among male students. Syrian parents are often fearful that teachers and classmates will attack their children.²⁶⁷

Discrimination is on the rise, with Syrian students being stereotyped as poor, ignorant and inferior compared with their Lebanese peers. The discrimination children experience in schools is related to their low performance (in foreign languages, for example) and also adversely impacts their learning. Rising tensions between Lebanese people and Syrian refugees have increased outside the classroom but has impacted children in the classroom. Lebanese families believe that Syrian children are receiving more support for education than their equally vulnerable Lebanese children.²⁶⁸ Yet, a report by UNHCR and UNICEF points out, "Syrian students report feeling discriminated against and excluded by their classmates and teachers."²⁶⁹ There also seems to be a lack of awareness regarding the psychosocial needs of Syrian children who have experienced trauma and who have experienced discrimination and bullying in host schools and communities.²⁷⁰

Learning for Syrian children in public schools is impacted by the teacher–pupil ratios. CERD statistics show that Beirut suburbs, North Lebanon and Bekaa have the highest student–teacher ratios.²⁷¹ These are also the areas where the largest concentration of Syrian students. In such contexts, it is likely that Syrian children do not receive the attention they need, given their experiences in and out of school.

The **learning materials** used in formal settings comprise textbooks and other books for lab work, sports and art classes, in addition to newspapers articles, novels and scientific books. None of the schools visited during the field research were equipped with LCD projectors or any audio-video educational resources. Access to computers or the Internet was also poor or absent. Schools that were open in the afternoon for remedial classes did not provide access for teachers to their labs nor to the library.

In such a conventional system, teachers become the only source of creativity.²⁷² Around 40 per cent

²⁶⁴ Interview with the Syrian Education Board, Beirut on 19 March 2014.

²⁶⁵ Hassalbarth, 2014.

²⁶⁶ UNICEF and Save the Children, 2012.

²⁶⁷ UNICEF and Save the Children, 2012.

²⁶⁸ UNHCR and UNICEF, forthcoming.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ UNICEF and Save the Children, 2012.

²⁷¹ UNICEF, forthcoming.

²⁷² During the interviews, for example, personal efforts of teachers were reported to replace the lack of school materials. One biology teacher in Aarsal, in a top-ranking public school, managed to develop other means to test the iodine by using the Betadine antiseptic solution on flour and potatoes.

of the teachers interviewed reported developing elaborated maps, wall charts, kits and educational cards to support their teaching and learning activities. Teachers of science and literature have formed dynamic groups based on interest, by mixing weak-performing students with their stronger peers to work together on particular tasks. Not all the teachers, though, have an innate capacity to enhance the students' understanding and potential application in daily life. Innovation and critical thinking are still not yet prioritized in the prevalent teaching methods.

Teachers and teacher training. The first two cycles in Lebanon's public schools are taught by general classroom teachers who are either graduates from teachers colleges²⁷³ or possess a university degree. Teachers in the third cycle must possess a university degree, a university degree in instructional pedagogy or a degree from a university department of education. In the private sector, most teachers are either university graduates (including from education departments) but are generally not graduates from a teachers college.

The research revealed several issues regarding teachers' performance. Some are related to their teaching competencies and their capacity and readiness to deal with the provision of education in an emergency context. Schools in Lebanon do not have a specific component pertaining to education in emergency situations. Teachers working in the public sector are not trained to deal with children who may have experienced psychosocial distress. In addition, teachers engaged in the first cycles have weak content knowledge of their teaching subjects²⁷⁴ as well as little academic qualifications, according to a MEHE report.²⁷⁵ According to the UNICEF Education Rapid Needs Assessment,²⁷⁶ "22 per cent of

teachers are unqualified teachers working on a contractual basis, while more than half of the teaching force does not possess a university degree. At the same time, only 4.2 per cent of public school teachers have a specialized degree."

Because most of the teaching staff are employed on a temporary contract basis, they often teach in more than one school to obtain a decent wage, consequently reducing their class preparation and follow-up time.²⁷⁷ As well, contractual teachers are not subject to a performance evaluation, which may adversely impact their professional development. Teachers were characterized as not fluent in foreign languages and therefore have little capacity to teach them, nor do they have flexible teaching methods. As a result, most Lebanese students experience difficulties in foreign language exams. In Lebanon, Syrian teachers are not employed in the public system, although in theory they could teach after receiving an equivalence of their teaching certificates. Private schools can employ Syrian teachers after receiving a clearance from the MEHE. National and international NGOs employ Syrian teachers mainly to support the provision of NFE programmes in learning spaces other than schools, such as community centres and informal tented settlements. In those situations, they are employed as NGO staff and receive incentives for their work.²⁷⁸ The Syrian Education Board reports that there are between 1,150 and 1,200 Syrian teachers working currently in Lebanon to provide education for Syrian children.²⁷⁹ According to a Syrian Education Board member, it employs Syrian teachers but cannot pay salaries on a regular basis because it is highly dependent on funds from donors. Syrian teachers (with no prior training) are also employed in teaching the Libyan curriculum for Grade 12.

4.4 Certification and accreditation

Secondary education in Lebanon involves three years of schooling (students aged 15–18), with

two parallel systems of general education and technical education. School principals decide if

²⁷³ Up to 1985, all elementary teachers had to have a degree from a teachers college.

²⁷⁴ Interview with IQRA in Beirut on 19 March 2014.

²⁷⁵ CERD reports on the Effective Use of Human Resources in the formal education sector, 2010–2011.

²⁷⁶ UNICEF, 2012.

²⁷⁷ UNICEF, forthcoming.

²⁷⁸ The Education Working Group and the MEHE have agreed to provide a standard rate for incentives for Syrian and Lebanese teachers employed by national and international NGOs at the equivalent of US\$10 per hour.

²⁷⁹ Syrian teachers are distributed in the following locations: 400 in Akkar, 250 in Tripoli and 500 in the Bekaa region, Mount Lebanon and Aarsal.

students will follow an academic or vocational path, based on results of their Brevet examination taken at the age of 15 (Grade 9). Those students who enter secondary education can sit for the

Lebanese baccalaureate exam in their respective track. Students who pass obtain the Lebanese Baccalaureate Certificate of Secondary Education or the Technical Baccalaureate (Grade 12).

In general, there are two types of assessments: school and central official examinations.²⁸⁰

School-based examinations	<p>In public schools, students in the first two cycles and in Grades 10–12 take two examinations at the end of each term in addition to formative monthly tests.²⁸¹</p> <p>In the first two cycles, students are automatically promoted; weaker students can receive remedial education offered by the school.</p> <p>In private schools, students follow the public system examination; however, they take three term tests each school year.</p>
Central official examinations	<p>Students in public and private schools take the end of basic education stage official examination (Grade 9) to obtain an intermediate certificate to access secondary education.</p> <p>At the end of the secondary stage (Grade 12), students sit for an official examination in general science, life sciences, economics-sociology and arts-humanities to obtain a General Secondary School Certificate, which allows access to higher education.</p>

Placement tests for enrolment and school-based examinations are given in either English or French, which disadvantages Syrian students who are not used to using such foreign languages as the medium of instruction. Because the MEHE does not provide a standardized placement test, some of the school principals have simplified what they use to accommodate Syrian children.

Using the revised Syrian curriculum, the Syrian Education Board facilitated the organization of school-leaving examinations for Grades 9 and 12 (baccalaureate), for academic years 2012/2013 and 2013/2014. Examination questions were developed in Turkey by the Higher Commission for Education and the Syrian Opposition Coalition. The examination took place simultaneously in Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and in the areas inside Syria under the control of the opposition. Grade 12 was organized both for the 'literary' and 'scientific' branches of secondary education. The Syrian Education Board was appointed by the Higher Commission for Education as responsible for the examination in Lebanon while supervision was conducted by the Commission as well as by the Syrian Opposition Coalition.²⁸² There are reports that other initiatives using the revised Syrian curriculum in Lebanon have developed their own questions for the Grade 12 examination, with the support of education specialists and

experienced subject teachers.²⁸³ The Syrian Education Board also supported students who went back to Syria to sit the Grade 12 examination. For these students they reintroduced the teaching of national education, which is a subject of examination inside Syria.

The MEHE has shown no commitment to provide certification for the different versions of the revised Syrian curriculum used in private and non-accredited schools in different parts of the country. The Syrian Education Board and Islamic charities that conducted the Grades 9 and 12 examinations in 2013 had agreements with the Syrian Opposition Coalition based in Turkey to provide certificates for the Brevet and baccalaureate school-leaving exams. While Grade 12 certification had been granted, delays in the granting of Grade 9 certificates were reported. Grade 12 certificates granted by the Syrian Opposition Coalition are only recognized by the Government of Turkey through the provision of an equivalency certificate. The examination of Grade 12 according to the Libyan curriculum, which was used for the first time in Lebanon during academic year 2013/2014, was organized and managed by the Libyan Embassy in Lebanon, with certification provided by the Libyan Government. Not all issues related to the examination were clear at the time of this study.²⁸⁴

²⁸⁰ This section was adapted from Mullis et al., 2012.

²⁸¹ These results of these examinations do not affect promotions.

²⁸² The Lebanese MEHE reportedly was aware of the ongoing examination, although not directly involved in facilitating it. Some political parties affiliated with the Syrian Government reportedly tried to hamper the smooth organization of the exams.

²⁸³ It seems to be the case of Al-Iman schools, <education.mpelembe.net/home/syrian-students-sit-exams-at-lebanon-refugee-school>.

²⁸⁴ Interview with Syrian Education Board in Beirut on 19 March.

There is a reciprocal protocol of recognition between Lebanon and Syria for certificates issued respectively by the Lebanon and Syrian MOE, although the factional nature of the crisis does not necessarily provide certainty of acceptance. For the accelerated learning programme, UNICEF and the MEHE are also in discussion on standards of the programme and certification. As of June 2014, there was no certification for the learning acquired through the accelerated learning programme. Interviewees reported that the reintegration to formal education was done on a case-by-case basis, with different pathways according to different schools and areas in the country. Le Mouvement Social, for example, reported submitting to the MEHE a file for each Syrian child graduating from their accelerated learning programme, while other organizations reported

that some children had to submit a placement test results, and still others were automatically moved to formal second shifts.²⁸⁵ Certificates received through other NFE programmes are not recognized in Syria because there is no legal framework for their recognition.

Issues pertaining to enrolment, attendance of official exams and issuance of diplomas and certificates have been settled, with the exception of accreditation. MEHE confirmed that the correspondence of the Brevet and baccalaureate certificates still need to be approved by the Council of Ministers. MEHE has presented a demand to the Council on this regard, but with the Government still in transition, the decision is still pending.²⁸⁶

4.5 Conclusion

Prior to the Syrian crisis, the Lebanese public education system catered for approximately 300,000 Lebanese students, which represented 30 per cent of the overall Lebanese student population, while the other 70 per cent attended a range of private schools. Public schools appear to cater for the most vulnerable children, regardless of their nationality. Syrian children are concentrated in areas where the majority of the vulnerable Lebanese population reside. Increasing numbers of Syrian children in public schools exacerbate the quality and efficiency problems of a generally strained public education system.

Access to education has been expanded through NFE programmes offered by national and international organizations. The Education Working Group, established under the umbrella of the MEHE, has developed an NFE framework with definitions, targets and curricula used for such programmes.

An accelerated learning programme for the three cycles is under development, with the aim of enabling children to complete each grade in four months, and thus to complete each cycle (three grades) in 12 months' time. This accelerated learning curriculum is a condensed basic education curriculum for Grades 1–9 for out-of-school children who have missed out on

schooling for more than three years. The accelerated learning curriculum was developed and the testing period was expected to roll out at the beginning of 2015, between January and March.

Syrian teachers are not employed in the Lebanese public system, although in theory they could teach after their teaching certificate is approved as equivalent. Private schools employ Syrian teachers upon receiving clearance from the MEHE. National and international NGOs mainly recruit Syrian teachers to support the provision of NFE programmes in spaces other than schools. In this case, they are recruited as NGO volunteers and receive incentives for their work. The Syrian Education Board reports that between 1,150 and 1,200 Syrian teachers are working in Lebanon.

Curriculum remains a challenge for Syrian children. If accepted in public schools, Syrian children learn such subjects as mathematics and science in either French or English, which is the medium of instruction. The language used in Lebanon creates a substantial learning barrier for Syrian children who are used to learning in Arabic for all subjects in all grades. In contrast, schools that have established double shifts to accommodate the additional number of Syrian children provide a condensed and reduced

²⁸⁵ Interviews with TDH in Beirut on 19 March 2014, with War Child in Beirut on 20 March 2014 and with Le Mouvement Social in Beirut on 18 March 2014.

²⁸⁶ Interview with MEHE Director General in Beirut in 2013. Also refer to letter issued by the Presidency of Council of Ministers, 20 June 2013, No. 1486. As per article 2, paragraph 3 of the public order, certificates of cycles two to four, issued by public and foreign educational institutions, cannot correspond to their Lebanese equivalent, except for the Lebanese students who have been living abroad.

curriculum in Arabic with a focus on core subjects. Arts, physical education and other extracurricular activities – much needed by distressed Syrian children – had to be removed from the curriculum for those attending double-shift schools for reasons related to the late start of the academic year. Moreover, the curriculum omits critical aspects needed for refugee children, including psychosocial education and education for peace.

In Lebanon, Syrian students are allowed to sit for end-of-year and official school-leaving examinations as long as they provide proof of identity. In 2012, the requirement for an official transcript of previous school achievement prevented many children from registering in Grades 9 to 12. During academic year 2012/2013, therefore, the vast majority of schools did not register Syrian students in the third cycle for

several reasons. First, there was confusion on what documents were required and on who was going to refund the fees that Syrian children were exempted from paying. Second, they were unsure that the equivalence of education documents was permitted. Third, they wanted to avoid unexpected disruptions to examinations. Some school principals imposed a difficult placement test because they were wary that accepting Syrian children might adversely impact the academic standard of their schools and consequently its reputation. To facilitate students in submitting their exams, the MEHE dropped the requirement to provide transcripts, although this took place only a few days ahead of the official Brevet Grade 9 and baccalaureate Grade 12 exams. In 2014, Syrian children were allowed to sit for their official exams without the proviso of presenting certified transcripts.

4.6 Recommendations

Access to quality education remains a challenge for many Syrian children. Those able to access government public schooling, in a single or double shift, are few compared with the number of school-age Syrian refugee children in the country. There is a clear need to ensure that there is more space and capacity in public schools. A strategy is needed to increase access to public schools. Such a strategy should ensure that where double-shift schooling does occur, it does not come at the expense of quality and result in a condensed curriculum for children.

Although the non-state sector provides access to education for Syrian children including various accelerated learning programmes, the lack of a framework and recognition remains a stumbling block to ensuring coherence. Thus a recommendation is to audit and closely monitor such provision, with a view to creating a coherent framework to avoid fragmentation, duplication and overlap. Such a framework should also pay attention to issues of curriculum and certification.

Alternative learning options, such as the various accelerated learning programmes, enable flexible learning and modes of delivery to reach learners in diverse and challenging contexts. A concrete recommendation, applicable to other contexts, would be to further explore how such programmes can be developed and articulated with formal education provision. A model of accreditation should be developed so that accelerated learning programmes offer Syrian children learning pathways into the formal education system.

Across all types of education, two curriculum issues require urgent attention. Similar to Turkey, the language of instruction in English and French is a barrier to learning for Syrian children. It is thus imperative to support children whose previous language of instruction was Arabic. This includes the provision of additional classes as well as employing Syrian teachers in public schools. Second, there is a need to develop a responsive and enriched curriculum that provides Syrian children with an education that encompasses psychosocial support, peace education, sustainable development and gender equality. The addition of these crucial content issues will go a long way to mitigate the adverse psychological trauma that Syrian children suffer as a result of the conflict and involuntary displacement.

It is evident that there are multiple education providers within Lebanon offering diverse examination programmes. Among them, there are initiatives linked to the Syrian civil society or the Syrian Opposition Coalition in Turkey. They offer provision of education based on the revised Syrian curriculum and/or the Libyan curriculum. At the least, frameworks for acknowledging their often hidden work should be developed and these multiple forms of provision should be harmonized.

For curriculum delivery and quality learning, professional development for teachers should be provided to support them to educate Syrian children who have experienced conflict and violence. Such development should equip teachers to deal with children from difficult

contexts and environments, enabling them to respond empathetically and sensitively to their needs.

A final sets of recommendations deals with certification and accreditation. There are several issues to consider. First, there is a need for all partners to consider how the learning in public school can enable pathways and progression to further education for Syrian children. Second, a framework and strategy to accredit the learning programmes offered in non-formal schools

should be developed to ensure that appropriate phase level certificates for the learning are issued. Third, ways need to be considered to recognize and validate the learning of those Syrian children following some versions of the Syrian curriculum and who take the Syrian grade 9 and 12 examination. Fourth, the reciprocal recognition protocol needs to be reconsidered and activated. Finally, the accelerated learning programme needs to be accredited and articulated within the formal education system.



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JORDAN

5 Jordan

5.1 Social and political context

Hundreds of thousands Syrians have crossed the border into Jordan since the conflict in Syria began four years ago. Although in principle they were allowed entrance into the country, regulations unique to Syrian refugees were made on their freedom of movement in the country. Compounded by the opening and closing of borders, these regulations have created instability among the refugee community.²⁸⁷ Syrian refugees mainly reside in host communities, in formal camps and in informal tented settlements.²⁸⁸ Three camps were officially established in Jordan to host the Syrian refugees. The Za'atari camp, which was opened in July 2012 with a capacity to house 100,000 refugees, is the largest in the country and the third-largest refugee camp in the world. It is also the fourth largest town in Jordan.²⁸⁹ The Emirati Jordanian camp was opened in April 2013 with a capacity to house 5,000 refugees.²⁹⁰ A third camp, Azraq, was completed in 2013 and officially opened on 30 April 2014. These three camps account for less than 20 per cent of the refugee population, with the majority residing in host communities.²⁹¹

There has been a steady influx of refugees in the country. As of June 2013, 470,573 Syrian refugees had registered with UNHCR; by the end of the year, the number had increased by another 100,000. In November 2014, 618,420 Syrian refugees had registered. In March 2015, the number was fairly the same (with some 627,000 Syrian refugee registered). Government estimates (which include Syrians not registered with UNHCR) are generally higher, estimated at more

than one million refugees.²⁹² With a population of approximately 6.3 million, Jordan is also home to more than 2 million Palestine refugees²⁹³ – many of whom have acquired a Jordanian nationality – and more than 600,000 Iraqi refugees.²⁹⁴ The refugee population is thus about half the size of the Jordanian population.

Unlike the Palestine and Iraqi refugees, the majority of Syrian refugees arrived with limited resources and in immediate need of social service provision.²⁹⁵ The Syria crisis has placed an unprecedented burden on the social, political, economic and natural resources in Jordan,²⁹⁶ compounding a difficult ongoing economic crisis. Furthermore, many refugees have settled in the northern regions of the country (primarily in Mafraq, Irbid and Zarqa governorates), areas marked by high levels of poverty prior to the crisis.²⁹⁷ The refugee influx has exacerbated the situation, resulting in an increasing cost of housing, lowered wages (especially for manual and casual work) and increasing unemployment among Jordanians who are dismissed from employment by businesses favouring Syrian refugee employees willing to work for illegal lower wages.²⁹⁸

Fears that refugees are also depleting already-scarce water resources have further exacerbated tensions between communities, in the most deprived governorates.²⁹⁹ One of the findings of a recent REACH assessment conducted in Jordan is that many of the sources of tension between Syrian refugees and host communities

²⁸⁷ Amnesty International, 2013, <www.amnesty.org/en/news/jordan-children-among-syrian-refugees-denied-entry-2013-08-19>, accessed 15 May 2014; Human Rights Watch, 2013, <www.hrw.org/news/2013/07/01/iraqjordanturkey-syrians-blocked-fleeing-war>, accessed 15 May 2014.

²⁸⁸ See footnote 5 on informal tented settlements.

²⁸⁹ Carnegie, 2013.

²⁹⁰ As of June 2014, it was undergoing expansion to double its capacity.

²⁹¹ REACH, 2014.

²⁹² Zyck and Armstrong, 2014.

²⁹³ UNRWA, 2014, <www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/jordan>, accessed 14 May 2014.

²⁹⁴ Jordan Government estimates.

²⁹⁵ Carnegie, 2013.

²⁹⁶ Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, 2014.

²⁹⁷ Zyck and Armstrong, 2014.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ REACH, 2014.

relate to pre-existing structural vulnerabilities within the Jordanian population. Although pre-dating the Syria crisis, the refugee influx has intensified such conditions.³⁰⁰ The presence of the Syrian refugees has also impacted relations between different groups in Jordan and their

differing political and tribal allegiances. There is also a perception that Syrian refugees have enhanced support to the Muslim Brotherhood, which is Jordan’s best organized opposition group, reinforcing already existing political tensions.³⁰¹

5.2 The education context

The Jordanian national education system is comprised of two years of non-compulsory pre-school education (kindergarten 1 and 2) and

ten years of compulsory basic education, followed by two years of secondary education (see Table 4).

Table 4 The education system in Jordan

PRE-SCHOOL		BASIC EDUCATION				SECONDARY	
Age	Grade	Age	Grade	Age	Grade	Age	Grade
4	K1	6	G1	12	G7	16	G11
5	K2	7	G2	13	G8	17	G12
		8	G3	14	G9		
				15	G10		
		9	G4				
		10	G5				
		11	G6				

The grades achieved in the Grade 10 exams enable students to either follow the comprehensive (academic and vocational) secondary educational track or the applied secondary education track. At the end of the secondary level, students sit for the General Secondary Education Certificate Examination (called Tawjihi). Based on the grade obtained on this exam, students can pursue either courses requiring high Tawjihi grades for university entrance (Medicine and Engineering, for example) or courses requiring lower grades (Literature and Education, for example). Although students are assessed yearly in schools, the Tawjihi examination is the only high-stake examination that students take in Jordan.

the system at pre-school, basic and secondary so as to create a workforce suited to the knowledge economy and to modernize the system to meet changing and global labour market needs. These reforms include revising the education policy objectives, making governance and administrative changes, enhancing the physical learning environment, and promoting readiness for learning through early childhood care and education interventions targeted at learners from low-income areas. They also include a focus on the use of technology to extend the reach of education, in particularly at the university level.³⁰³

Jordan has over a long period of time embarked on ambitious education reform³⁰² to transform

The infrastructure of public schools is a major problem: a large percentage of schools are located in rented buildings not adequate to the standards set by the MoE, and many classrooms are overcrowded in many areas of the country.³⁰⁴

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ Carnegie, 2013.

³⁰² The Education Reform for the Knowledge Economy started in 2003, with a first phase until 2009 and a second phase from 2009 to 2014.

³⁰³ In April 2014, Edraak, an initiative of the Queen Rania Foundation for Education and Development, was developed based on edX technology, a leading global massive open online course provider founded by Harvard and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in the United States. The platform will offer Arab learners access to courses taught at universities, such as Harvard, MIT and University of California Berkeley, at no cost, with the potential to earn certificates of mastery for certain courses. In addition, Edraak will develop its own courses in Arabic, taught by leading Arab faculty members and well-known professionals in a variety of fields, offering original Arabic content. In June, Edraak will begin by providing a number of courses, with a new set of courses will be offered towards the end of August (*Jordan Times*, <jordantimes.com/queen-launches-edraak-platform-for-open-online-courses>).

³⁰⁴ Jorman and Murray, 2012.

At the same time, the underutilization of small schools undermine an efficient use of all the learning spaces available.³⁰⁵ A rampant economic crisis is also affecting many Jordanian families, who can no longer afford the costs of private schooling and therefore are transferring their children into a public school.³⁰⁶ In academic year 2013/2014, some 35,000 Jordanian students (2 per cent) moved from the private to the public sector.³⁰⁷

The capacity of the public education system to accommodate refugee children, especially outside the refugee camps, is severely constrained. An MOE study conducted in 2011 found that 36 per cent of schools were overcrowded, with the incidence of overcrowding most marked in Mafrqa, Irbid, Zarqa and Amman where most of the Syrian refugees are located. A follow-up analysis conducted in 2013 by UNICEF and the MOE found that 41 per cent of schools were overcrowded,³⁰⁸ partly due to the increased demand for access by Syrian and Jordanian children who have moved from private to public schools.

Low enrolment of Syrian refugees in public schools. Jordan, similar to other countries in the region, has allowed Syrian children to enrol in public schools. This includes public schools set up in make-shift camps in collaboration with United Nations agencies and other international organizations. As of March 2013, 29,400 Syrian children were enrolled in schools in host communities and 5,000 in the camps, for a total of 34,400 Syrian children across the country. Large percentages of Syrian out-of-school children were registered in the camp and host communities, with a larger percentage in the camps. A rapid education needs assessment noted that 78 per cent of the school-age population living in the Za'atari camp was not in school in April 2013.³⁰⁹

Home visits conducted by UNHCR teams in host communities during the 2012/2013 academic year

indicated that more than 50 per cent of Syrian school-age children were not attending school. In this study, Balqa and Mafrqa governorates had the lowest enrolment rates (at 31 and 35 per cent, respectively), while Amman, Karak and Aqaba had the highest enrolment rates (at 51, 51 and 61 per cent, respectively).³¹⁰ A steady improvement in the numbers of children enrolled in school appeared in academic year 2013/2014. As of July 2014, UNHCR registered 209,317 school-age children (5–17 years). Of them, 120,555 (57 per cent) were enrolled in public schools located in the camps and host communities, and around 30,000 are enrolled in informal education programmes.³¹¹

In December 2014, 127,857 Syrian children were enrolled in public schools, and 54,301 in informal education. Despite the substantial improvement in the enrolment of Syrian children in Jordan, this would still leave an estimated 30,000 Syrian children remain out of school and in need of either formal or informal education opportunities.

Conditions of access for Syrian children. Syrian children with official papers and documents can access education in Jordan free of charge at any point during the academic year.³¹² According to the MOE rules and regulations, students who do not possess the required documents are required to sit for a placement test to be admitted to school. Although the MOE policy provides for the admission of Syrian students at any time during the school year on condition that they take the entry placement test, these tests are available only once a year, mainly at the beginning of the academic year. International organizations are lobbying the MOE to ensure that tests are administrated at least at the beginning of each semester. Changing the timing of the admission test will provide children who have completed catch-up classes or accelerated programmes more frequent opportunities to make the transition to formal education.

³⁰⁵ The 2011 School Rationalization Study demonstrated that students performed better in larger schools than in the small schools.

³⁰⁶ Jorman and Murray, 2012; Zyck and Armstrong, 2014.

³⁰⁷ Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, 2014.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ Education Sector Working Group Joint Education Needs Assessment in the Za'atari refugee camp, April 2013.

³¹⁰ UNHCR, 2014.

³¹¹ Informal education and non-formal education are categories used in Jordan and explained in section 5.3.

³¹² Children who do not have the Ministry of Interior (MOI) card cannot access public services, including education. Save the Children Jordan, during an outreach campaign, identified at least 1,000 children without the MOI card, with more than 4,000 children who decided not to disclose this information.

5.3 Curriculum

Public schools. Jordan has a long history accommodating with refugees from Arab countries. The MOE has generally adopted an open-door policy regarding refugee students, who thus have access to the official Jordanian curriculum. Syrian students are no exception. In providing education to Syrian children, the MOE in Jordan did not formally consult their Syrian counterpart to discuss education related for the refugees entering public schools.³¹³ As is the case in Syria, Arabic is the official language of instruction in Jordan. However, only English is taught as the second language, in contrast with Syria where both English and French are second languages. This is not a major difference because French had only recently been introduced in Syria and then only in secondary schools. Thus, Syrian students do not expect to continue learning French in Jordan.³¹⁴

Public schools in refugee camps. Three schools were established in the Za'atari camp during 2013 with the support of international organizations, and three were established in 2014 but were not yet operational at the time of the field research. One school was also established in the Emirati Jordanian camp and two schools were set up in the Azraq camp (one opened in September 2014). These schools are under the mandate of the MOE and fully accredited. During academic year 2012/2013, all subjects were taught with the exception of art, vocational education and computer education due to the unavailability of learning and teaching resources. Syrian children were dissatisfied with this arrangement because these subjects are usually taught in schools in Syria and they find them stimulating and interesting. The full curriculum, including art, vocational education and computer education, was introduced during academic year 2013/2014; currently, camp schools are teaching a curriculum similar to the one taught in host communities.³¹⁵

In the research interviews, Jordanian teachers reported that some Syrian students find certain subjects, such as English and math, difficult. English, in particular, is a challenge because it is introduced earlier in the Jordanian curriculum, compared with the Syrian curriculum. However, the teachers think that the measures they use for

Jordanian students experiencing similar difficulties could be deployed to support Syrian students. Generally, Syrian teachers confirmed that the Jordanian curriculum is quite relevant and its manageability is equally quite feasible.³¹⁶ Except for English and math, Syrian students in general find the Jordanian curriculum easy, compared with the Syrian curriculum. In particular, Syrian students aged 10–13 experience difficulties with the English language. Students interviewed during the field research reported that in Syria they were used to having their English teachers commonly translating “every single word” into Arabic, which does not seem the case in Jordan.

Other impressions Syrian children expressed during focused group discussions:

- They do not expect schools in Jordan to offer them a French programme.
- Regardless of their sex, they find history and national education subjects boring and not useful.
- The Syrian curriculum has a more pronounced practical dimension, which provides skills and training that prepare students for a professional career.
- The overwhelming majority of Syrian students are rather upset because Jordanian teachers do not treat them as refugees. They commonly report that they are not in normal schooling conditions and should be treated leniently by teachers. Teachers, however, think that Syrian children should be treated the same as Jordanian students. All the Syrian children reported being eager to continue their education, despite all the challenges.

Children in the camps emphasized the need to include music, drama, visits to historical sites and other extracurricular activities as important in making them feel that they can live a reasonably normal life in Jordan. This they thought would also enhance their academic performance. School principals did not note any serious problems related to following the Jordanian curriculum. They expressed their readiness to do all that is possible to support Syrian students and to create

³¹³ Interviews with MOE officials.

³¹⁴ Focus group discussion with Syrian students in the Za'atari camp.

³¹⁵ UNICEF supports extracurricular activities through partners; computer education is only theory because the schools lack electricity.

³¹⁶ Focus group discussion with teachers in the Za'atari camp and in Amman.

a motivating and conducive learning-teaching environment. School principals recognize and appreciate the Syrian children's concerns about their education and future. However, they highlighted the need for funding in order to provide an environment that is conducive to teaching and learning. In general, the discussions during the field research with school principals, teachers and officials revealed that the academic performance of Syrian children is, on average, below that of their Jordanian peers. This is worrying and requires further systematic investigation to determine appropriate responses.

During the field visit to the Za'atari camp, parents reported anxiousness over their sons and daughters receiving a good-quality education, one that captures the interest of students and equally challenges them. But all the parents interviewed had varying views of the teaching-learning process in Jordan. Although they all expressed interest in visiting the schools regularly and participating in the teaching-learning process of their children, their involvement in the education of their children seemed quite limited.

Public schools in host communities. To respond to the increased needs for education, the MOE had established double shifts in some 99 schools across Jordan as of April 2014, with the morning shift dedicated to Jordanian students and the afternoon to Syrian children. Donors finance the logistical arrangements, such as learning and support materials and the appointment of teachers for the afternoon shift, while the Government covers some of the operational costs.³¹⁷ The total proportion of students attending double-shift schools has risen, from 7.6 per cent in 2009/2010 to 13.4 per cent in 2012/2013. Although the double-shift system responds to the increased needs of Syrian children, "it also places greater strain on the educational infrastructure, particularly sanitation and hygiene facilities in schools," acknowledges a government resilience plan. It has also, the plan states, increased the maintenance demands and shortened the lifespan of the school furniture.³¹⁸ It also runs contrary to the national education reform, which aims to reduce the number of double-shift schools and improve the quality of school infrastructure. Double-shift schools offer reduced learning time

for all children (morning and afternoon) and do not provide time for learning support and extracurricular activities. Although it is not clear how this reduction of time has impacted the quality of education, it has caused tension between refugee and host communities because Jordanian families are worried about the quality of their children's learning.³¹⁹

Informal education. The term 'non-formal education' in Jordan refers to several programmes, including the drop-out education programme, home schooling, the evening and summer studies programmes and the adult education and literacy programme.³²⁰ Until recently, children who had been out of school for more than three years were not entitled to enrol in public education. The MOE regulation was changed, and children who have been out of school for more than one year or have never enrolled in schools are not entitled to access formal education, without first attending an informal programme.

The MOE established a specific unit to develop and monitor the NFE programmes. The drop-out educating programme provides accelerated learning courses for children who have dropped out of the formal system. This programme is not only condensed and accelerated, it also offers a curriculum that is more contextually relevant as well as easier to understand for children who have been out of school and the academic context for some time. The aim of such a programme is to reach out to children who have not been in school for more than one year as well as those in difficult environments (the programme initially started as education provision in juvenile centres). One of the NGOs providing this programme draws on Paulo Freire's pedagogy and Robert Chambers' framework for participatory development.³²¹

The NFE programme comprises three cycles:

- Cycle one: covers Grades 1 to 4
- Cycle two: Grades 5 to 7
- Cycle three: Grades 8 to 10.

The three cycles can be completed in 24 months, although it generally takes longer, considering the disadvantaged backgrounds of students. Children

³¹⁷ United Nations and HCSP, 2013.

³¹⁸ Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, 2014, p. 5.

³¹⁹ REACH, 2014.

³²⁰ Education Sector Working Group Jordan, Glossary, 24 July 2014, <data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/working_group.php?Page=Country&LocationId=107&Id=14>.

³²¹ Jorman and Murray, 2012.

cannot enrol directly into the third cycle because the MOE requires they also attain other skills that are included in the previous cycles of the programme. Completion of the entire programme leads to a Grade 10 examination. Children can enrol in the NFE only starting from age 13. This NFE programme thus leaves a gap in provision of alternative or catch-up education for younger children.

The NFE programme is accredited by the MOE, and only registered NGOs that have agreements with the MOE can provide non-formal education.³²² Among the Syrian refugee children out of school in Jordan as of December 2013, some 60,000 had been out of school for more than three years; thus, they were no longer entitled to enrol in formal education³²³ and were in need of alternative education or pathways to be reintegrated into the formal system. With the recent change in the MOE regulation and the lowering of the time out of school to one year for eligibility to formal education, the number of children in need of alternative education has further risen. The NFE programme, however, seems to reach only a small proportion of Syrian children who are out of school.³²⁴ Questscope, one of the providers of non-formal education, reported having only 500 Syrian children in its classes as of March 2014.³²⁵

Informal education. There is a wide range of other education programmes available that are categorized as ‘informal education’ to distinguish them from ‘non-formal education’. These are not directly linked to the MOE and thus are not recognized by it. Oversight of these programmes is difficult at the institutional level: Although the Ministry of Social Development supervises all community-based organizations, it does not provide guidance for the content of the IFE programmes, nor does the MOE, which has no mandate. The MOE thus faces challenges in developing a proper informal education curriculum for crisis situations, although some international NGO staff expressed their fear that overregulating such programmes would

undermine their ‘informal’ status and make it difficult for NGOs to adapt programmes to the fast changing needs of Syrian children.³²⁶

Informal educational activities range from recreational activities to literacy and numeracy, life skills sessions and catch-up or accelerated education for children out of school. Although some community organizations base their curriculum on the MOE curriculum, the number of hours for courses varies significantly between providers.³²⁷ For example, the foundational manual for life skills differs as do the ancillary classes that make up the total IFE package. Additionally, there does not appear to be a standard or basic training for volunteers or facilitators who deliver the IFE courses.

The Norwegian Refugee Council offers a catch-up or accelerated programme (provided throughout the year) in the Za’atari camp. But it has proven controversial due to MOE concerns that, because it runs throughout the year, it is essentially a parallel system to its programmes.

Because there is no ministerial ‘home’ for an IFE programme, there is no official certification for students who enrol in them.

Some initiatives linked to the teaching of the Qur’an by Islamic charities and organizations fall within the IFE spectrum. Although some are linked to the Syrian opposition, others are community led. Families seem to trust these organizations³²⁸ and enrol their children into their programmes. Because some initiatives operate during public school hours, they result in children dropping out of formal education in favour of them. Some of the faith-based organizations also provide payment of up to 200 dinar for children to complete courses,³²⁹ which perhaps explains their appeal to families and children. At the same time, though, international organizations and moderate Syrian actors voice their concern around the provision of education by Islamic charities because they fear that they may propagate particular Islamic or political agendas.³³⁰

³²² Currently, Questscope, Johud and the Islamic Center Charitable Society (ICCS).

³²³ Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, 2014.

³²⁴ Through a project implemented with UNICEF, Questscope aims to reach 2,600 out-of-school Syrian children (100 in Azraq and the rest in host communities).

³²⁵ Interview with Questscope in Amman on 12 March 2014.

³²⁶ Interview with the Norwegian Refugee Council in Za’atari camp in Jordan on 11 March 2014.

³²⁷ In late June 2014, UNICEF began mapping informal education programmes, with a focus on the area of literacy and numeracy and with the aim of establishing a minimum standards framework for these programmes.

³²⁸ Interview with Questscope in Amman on 12 March 2014.

³²⁹ Hassalbarth, 2014.

³³⁰ Ibid.

Where schools are not available, especially in informal tented settlements, community initiatives and international NGOs fill the gap by providing temporary learning centres in makeshift schools but with little resources. The Education Sector Working Group, in collaboration with Save the Children Jordan, is producing a checklist to help community organizations and NGOs provide education services in the informal settlements to Syrian children who would otherwise not have access to any form of education.³³¹ Community initiatives are not accredited by the MOE.

Remedial education. Remedial education in the Za'atari camp and host communities are generally managed by national and international NGOs using schools as the venue. Remedial classes aim to help Syrian students catch up with the local curriculum and provide extra support to those who are not faring well. Classes are usually run after the school hours. This conflicts with the afternoon shift schooling, however, making it difficult for children and families to distinguish between formal and complementary provision.³³² These programmes are not accredited by the MOE, although they are generally taught by teachers employed by the MOE.

During the field research, both school principals and teachers emphasized the need for additional remedial programmes covering all school subjects for Syrian children. These must be offered in an intensive form prior to the admission of children to their equivalent class levels. They recommended that each intensive programme should last at least for one month and be offered three times a year. This they think would assist Syrian children to manage and integrate into schools on par with their Jordanian peers.

Vocational training. Providing vocational training to Syrian refugees is controversial for the Government and the MOE. Because technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is a priority of the Government's general education reform, the Ministry of Labour and the National Centre for Human Resources Development drafted a comprehensive Employment-TVET strategy to make vocational training more responsive to market needs and improve its quality (including increasing women's participation). However, concerns related to the employment of refugees (or the lack of a legal framework) and the high

rates of unemployment among Jordanian youth and adults have resulted in reluctance to offer vocational training courses for Syrian refugees.

The Government agreed to the establishment of post-basic technical skills training courses for Syrian youth in the refugee camps (Za'atari and Emirati Jordanian). The Norwegian Refugee Council manages one such programme, which provides courses in various technical areas, such as tailoring, hairdressing, welding, and a certified computer course to Syrian youth (aged 16–24). These courses last for three months and include life skills, literacy and numeracy training. Some 300 youth participate daily in the informal technical and life skills courses; more than 770 youth have graduated from the programmes since they began in mid-2013.

Revised Syrian curriculum. Even though there are no reports that the revised Syrian curriculum is being systematically used in Jordan, one informant noted³³³ that there are community initiatives in the camps and host communities that aim to help Syrian children pass the Grade 12 Syrian examination. Initiatives providing the revised Syrian curriculum are established in an informal way and take the shape of remedial or complementary education classes. The curriculum was taken from the Syrian MOE website, with its most contentious content edited out. As noted previously, community initiatives are not formally recognized by the MOE, although forms of home schooling are authorized at the policy level (but not encouraged). Some NGOs have been advocating for community-based schooling (regardless of the curriculum used) as a possible alternative to formal education for Syrian children.

The MOE position on the curriculum to use for Syrian refugees has been clear from the onset of the crisis, with the only recognized curriculum being the Jordanian one. Nevertheless, when the Grade 12 examination based on the revised Syrian curriculum was organized in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and opposition-controlled areas inside Syria, the Jordanian MOE provided some public schools (in Irbid Governorate, Amman Governorate and the Za'atari camp) as examination centres as well as space to correct the exam papers. The Syrian Cultural Committee supported the organization of the exam in the Za'atari camp.

³³¹ Jordan: RRP 6 Monthly Update, March 2014.

³³² Interview with Syrian Cultural Committee in the Za'atari camp on 29 July 2013.

³³³ Interview with Syrian Cultural Committee in the Za'atari camp and in Irbid Governorate on 11 March 2014.

The learning environment. Teachers reported that the living conditions of Syrian students, whether in the camps or outside communities, are not conducive to effective learning. The poor living conditions, especially in the Za'atari camp, adversely affect students' educational performance. During the field research, students reported not being able to dedicate all their time and effort to learning. For example, a large percentage of boys cannot register in school or cannot attend classes regularly because they have to work to help their parents. Also, many girls cannot register in school or attend classes regularly because they are married early, a decision over which they seem to have little voice. A survey conducted by Save the Children Jordan in December 2013 with more than 13,000 Syrian children found that among the main reasons for children to be out of school is the insufficient school places, followed by lack of financial resources, child labour, distance to and from schools, and parents not being interested in education.

The psychological state of Syrian children is a serious concern among teachers interviewed during the field research. They emphasized that this issue should receive more attention from both the MOE and UNICEF. They reported that many organizations visit camps and schools, with the claim they are qualified to provide psychosocial support and services to students and their families. Yet they underscore the need that the provision of psychosocial be reviewed, restructured and re-organized under the framework of one coherent umbrella. Almost every Syrian child met during the field research reported having his/her own personal problems. They affirmed the need for counselling units in each school, on condition that they are open to them and to their parents. Despite these challenging conditions, Jordanian teachers pointed out that the majority of Syrian students, whether male or female, are highly motivated and are eager to be involved in stimulating and intellectually demanding activities. Some of the students are overwhelmingly aware of the state of war prevailing in their country, feel the peculiarity of its complicated dimensions and consciously seek guidance and direction.

The MOE officials, school principals and teachers reported during the field research that the

textbooks and exercise books being used by Syrian children are the same materials as those used by Jordanian students in the public schools. This complies with official government and MOE policies to treat Syrian children equally. Thus, Jordanian MOE has not requested any Syrian textbooks or learning materials from the Syrian MOE. School principals and administrators from the MOE Directorate of Education at the district level all reported that teachers have the right and freedom to use any additional teaching materials and methodologies of their choice, based on their educational experience. Teachers concurred that in principle they have choice but because of the exceptional circumstances – the additional number of students and the shortened learning time – do not enable them to deliver even the most basic teaching and learning requirements.

The double-shift system compels school principals to condense activities and shorten the school day, limiting teachers' ability to offer more than the basics. As a result, they focus on meeting the minimum teaching requirements. School and classroom libraries, science laboratories and art and sports facilities are either absent or extremely limited in supporting teaching for Syrian students. This also affects Jordanian students, particularly with arts and sports facilities. School principals explained that such facilities are costly and require a sizable budget, which far exceeds their capacity.

Teachers and teacher training. All teachers teaching Syrian children in the camps are appointed by the MOE, in coordination with the UNICEF Country Office in Amman.³³⁴ The teachers are all university graduates, but most of them are newly graduated and do not have any previous teaching experience. Few others, on the contrary, are retired and live in the same area as a camp. However, all of them are required to participate in training courses focusing on teaching methods, psychosocial support, interpersonal interaction and dynamics as well as curriculum relevance. To respond to the increased student load, the MOE hired an additional 7,000 teachers, of whom 2,312 were deployed to the double-shift and camp schools.³³⁵

In addition and based on an agreement between the MOE and the UNICEF Country Office, 260 Syrian teachers were appointed to support their

³³⁴ UNICEF has paid salaries to camp teachers (both Syrian and Jordanian) when the camp was opened, while currently is paying salaries to the Syrian assistant teachers and the MOE is paying the salaries for Jordanian teachers.

³³⁵ Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, 2014.

Jordanian counterparts as assistant teachers. They reportedly are effective in helping students to socially and psychologically adjust to the Jordanian education system and the new living conditions in the camp. School principals and Jordanian teachers reported they are extremely happy with this arrangement because they realize that Syrian teachers are effective and practical, particularly when dealing with the problems of Syrian students. However, there has been some tension between the Syrian and Jordanian teachers, particularly in relation to the demarcation of their roles and to teacher status. Syrian teachers usually have many years of work experience and are often relied upon by the Jordanian teachers to conduct and lead lessons, yet they have to serve as assistant teachers for newly graduated teachers. This is creating frustration on the part of the Syrian teachers. In the IFE programmes, on the contrary, the majority of teachers is Syrian and only few Jordanians are employed to provide support.

A Syrian Cultural Committee was established in July 2012 with the former name of Syrian Education Committee. The Committee was established through a community mobilization campaign led by the international organization Intersos to deal with education issues. The Committee is intensely involved in managing the relationship between the community and the schools established by the MOE in the camps. The Committee conducted a survey of Syrian teachers in 2012 and early 2013 and estimated the presence of 1,000 teachers, although data from a REACH survey³³⁶ pointed to a slightly larger number (approximately 1,900 teachers). The Syrian Cultural Committee also organizes some direct education provision (mainly in the form of remedial education) and supports the organization of the Syrian Grade 12 examination in the Za'atari camp.

Jordanian teachers reported feeling satisfied with teaching Syrian children because they feel that they are helping Arab students in extremely difficult conditions and circumstances. But at the

same time, they reported not being satisfied with the financial arrangements because their salaries are less than that of their colleagues employed by the MOE in other schools. They also reported lacking job security because they are contract teachers. The Jordanian teachers explained that their mandate is confined to classroom teaching and performance evaluation. However, they think that their work should also include participation in curriculum activities, providing social and psychological support, meeting with parents and assisting school principals and supervisors with all matters relating to students. Many of them reported having the required background and capacity to organize workshops and training sessions on different subjects, including life skills relevant to Syrian students.

Some residents in the host communities voluntarily provide services and support to Syrian students and their families including providing food, clothes, educational materials, toys, transportation back and forth to school and home visits. Some teachers formed special groups from the community to provide services to Syrian children and their families to help keep them in school. Such services do not occur in the camps, making schools in the host communities more inviting to Syrian children.

Facilitators for the NFE programme are all MOE-certified teachers who participate in additional training. They are teachers who teach formal education in the morning and NFE in the afternoon; they are formally employed by the MOE. There is a particular focus in their training for the NFE: Questscope supports the training of facilitators by offering 40 hours of initial training on NFE content as well as teaching methodologies. Questscope bases its approach on participatory reflection methodologies and, in particular, on Paulo Freire's pedagogy.³³⁷ Syrian teachers are not currently teaching in the NFE programme but have been recruited by organizations to provide outreach and community mobilization activities around the programme.

5.4 Certification and accreditation

The Directorate of Examinations and Tests regulations specify that students from Grades 1 to 10 are automatically promoted to the next grade

unless they score less than 40 per cent in math and Arabic language from Grades 1 to 3 or they fail in four subjects from Grades 4 to 10. If they

³³⁶ REACH (2014) Evaluating the Effect of the Syrian Refugee Crisis on Stability and Resilience in Jordanian Host Communities: Preliminary Impact Assessment, January 2014.

³³⁷ Questscope has also done extensive translation to Arabic of pedagogical materials written by Paulo Freire.

fail in three subjects, they are given the opportunity to sit for an examination. If they fail this examination, they will still be promoted to the next level.³³⁸

Within the Education Reform for Knowledge Economy,³³⁹ a set of assessment strategies and tools have been developed to monitor individual child progress, employing “performance based assessment, observation, communication, reflection, checklists, rubrics and learning logs”.³⁴⁰ Grades received in these monitoring assessments are combined with grades collected from regular cumulative tests.³⁴¹ Upon completion of secondary school, all students meeting specific requirements are eligible to apply to sit for the General Secondary Examination (Tawjihi). The examination is taken at the end of four semesters of secondary education (Grades 11 and 12).

No Grade 12 was opened for Syrian children in the Za’atari camp during academic year 2012/2013, and no Syrian child was allowed to enrol in that grade in schools in host communities. Sitting for the Tawjihi exam requires that students have completed Grades 11 and 12, according to the Jordanian curriculum; therefore, no Syrian child in Grade 12 was allowed to sit for the Tawjihi in 2013. Syrian children sat the Tawjihi examination during academic year 2013/2014 for the first time.

Completion of the three cycles of the NFE programme leads to a Grade 10 examination. The certification obtained entitles students to enrol in the Army, to obtain a loan from the State or to register a business of their own.³⁴² If students are still in Grade 12 or within a range of three years, they can sit for a placement test and enrol in formal secondary education to sit for the Tawjihi.

During the field research, school principals and teachers clearly indicated that no policies were formulated by the MOE or the Directorates of Education in relation to the assessments for Syrian children. The learning assessment system for Syrian children is the same as that for Jordanian students. Based on the MOE policy, all schools use both ongoing assessment and end-of-year exams. The school principals and teachers interviewed for this study think that the

assessment of learning for all students, whether Jordanian or Syrian, should be the same because they are studying the same curriculum. The Syrian students reported that the assessment system in Jordan is much more demanding, compared with the system in Syria, and they asked to have more flexible examinations or easier ones, although the school principals and teachers, and some parents did not think it was warranted.

Students who successfully pass the Grade 12 examination are entitled to receive a diploma, which is recognized regardless of a child’s nationality. Whether Syrian or Jordanian, all students holding this diploma are eligible to apply for admission to universities. No formal follow up on previous agreements between the Jordanian MOE and the MOE in Syria was conducted after the crisis to regulate the accreditation of certificates received in Jordan by Syrian students. During the field research, parents very much doubted that their children’s education in Jordan will be accredited in Syria.

The official certificates received by students from schools located in the Za’atari camp were endorsed during academic year 2012/2013 with the name of the school and the exact location (the camp). Anecdotal evidence suggests that specifying the name of the camp on the certificate will lead to non-recognition of the certificate by the Syrian MOE for those who may return to Syria. In response, the certificate was changed so that the camp name was not endorsed in the certificate in favour of only naming the governorate. This then ensures that children who receive the certificate will not be identified as studying in a camp.

Using the revised Syrian curriculum, the Syrian Opposition Coalition based in Turkey organized with the support of the Higher Commission for Education, Grade 12 examinations in Jordan from 15 to 23 August 2013. The exam was administered simultaneously in Lebanon, Turkey and some areas inside Syria. In Jordan, the examination took place in the Za’atari camp and in Irbid Governorate and Amman. The Syrian Cultural Committee coordinated the administration of the examination in the Za’atari camp. A total of 500 students sat for the exam in the camp, while

³³⁸ This section is adapted from TIMMS 2011.

³³⁹ See footnote 223.

³⁴⁰ TIMMS 2011 Jordan.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² Interview with Questscope in Amman on 12 March 2014.

700 in Irbid Governorate and 300 in Amman took the exam (for a total of 1,500 students). As noted previously, the MOE provided public schools as examinations centres and other venues for marking the papers.³⁴³ Even though the MOE facilitated the administration of the Grade 12 examination for Syrian students, it did not commit to providing certificates for recognition of the examination. Certificates were provided by the Syrian Opposition Coalition from Turkey and are only recognized by the Turkish Government through an equivalency certificate (which allows students to only enrol in Turkish universities). Similar to the previous year, a second round of Grade 12 examinations according to the revised Syrian curriculum was conducted in June 2014 by the newly formed MOE (with the Syrian Interim

Government) for 1,225 Syrian students in Jordan.³⁴⁴

During academic year 2012/2013, Syrian children were not allowed to sit for the Jordanian Tawjihi exam; thus, the Grade 12 examination based on the revised Syrian curriculum filled the gap. Syrian children were able to sit for the Tawjihi during academic year 2013/2014.³⁴⁵

When asked why Syrian students would find this option appealing rather than the Jordanian Tawjihi, the Syrian Cultural Committee in the Za'atari camp explained that many Syrian students do not have the proper documentation to sit for the Tawjihi or that families are not fully satisfied with the education provision.³⁴⁶

5.5 Conclusion

Schools attended by Syrian children are generally overcrowded. The capacity of the public education system in areas (mainly Mafraq, Irbid, Zarqa and Amman) where there is a high concentration of Syrian refugees is overstretched. In addition to the large numbers of Syrian students, these schools have also received additional numbers of Jordanian children who have moved from private to public schools in the past few years due to the country's economic crisis.

The MOE, in cooperation with United Nations and international agencies, established schools in the refugee camps with fully accredited status, where students receive formal certificates at the end of the year. In these schools, Syrian children follow the Jordanian curriculum. Adapting to this new curriculum seems to be less problematic for Syrian students than in other countries in the region, given the use of the same language of instruction.

Non-formal education refers to reintegration into formal schooling for those children who have been out of school for more than one year or have never enrolled in Jordan. The non-formal education programme is recognized by the MOE; it is fully accredited and taught by teachers recruited by the MOE. NGO providers train MOE

teachers on how to deliver this condensed and accelerated learning curriculum and provide learning spaces for the programme in NGO centres. The main objective of the programme is to include children who have lost schooling years and may also come from particularly disadvantaged contexts. The programme is considered as non-formal education because it aims to be flexible, accommodate the needs of children and has a meaningful and relevant curriculum for excluded children. The programme, however, caters for only a small portion of Syrian out-of-school children in Jordan. Children must be at least 13 to enrol in the NFE programme, thus leaving younger children, who may need alternative or catch-up education, unreached.

Providing TVET to Syrian refugees in Jordan is controversial for the Government and the MOE; the Government is reluctant to provide TVET to Syrian adolescents and youth because of concerns related to the employment of refugees (or the lack of a legal framework for this) and of the already high rates of unemployment among Jordanian youth and adults. The Government, however, agreed to the establishment of post-basic technical skills training courses for Syrian youth in both the Za'atari and Emirati Jordanian camps and the Norwegian Refugee

³⁴³ Interview with Syrian Cultural Committee in Za'atari camp and in Irbid Governorate on 11 March 2014.

³⁴⁴ Popovic, M., Delplace S. and Bergan, G. (2014) Independent Assessment Report on the Implementation of the General Certificate Exam by the Ministry of Education of the Interim Syrian Government, August 2014.

³⁴⁵ Nearly 50 students sat for the Tawjihi exam in the camps for school year 2013/2014, and 5 of them (3 boys and 2 girls) passed with outstanding results.

³⁴⁶ Interview with Syrian cultural committee in Za'atari camp and in Irbid Governorate on 11 March 2014.

Council established a vocational training programme, which provides courses in various technical areas to Syrian youth aged 16–24 years.

In the Za'atari refugee camp, the Syrian Cultural Committee estimates the presence of 1,000 teachers, although data from a REACH survey found a slightly larger number (at approximately 1,900 teachers).

An agreement between the MOE and the UNICEF Country Office resulted in 260 Syrian teachers being appointed as assistant teachers to support their Jordanian counterparts in schools set up in

the camps. Contrary to the relatively small number of Syrian teachers engaged in public schools in camps, Syrian teachers are engaged in significant numbers in NGO settings.

No formal follow up on previous agreements between the Jordanian MOE and the MOE in Syria was conducted after the crisis regarding the accreditation of certificates received in Jordan by Syrian students. During the field research, parents very much doubted that their children's education in Jordan would be accredited in Syria, although there is no evidence for this.

5.6 Recommendations

Unlike other host countries, access to both public school and specially established schools in camps seems less of a problem in Jordan. However, there are considerable barriers to entry, including the need to be in possession of registration and school document and timing of the placement test. To ease access, United Nations agencies and international organizations should develop a framework for access with MOE, which includes easing entry requirement by providing for the placement test at least twice a year. As many efforts as possible should be extended so that children in school do not fail the academic year and need to repeat a grade. A framework for additional remedial education courses or summer classes should be developed in cooperation with the MOE so that children who enrol late due to displacement can transition to the next level. Similar to other host countries, it is evident that in Jordan, Syrian children need learning support to assist them to make the transition to a public school or newly established school, particularly in case when they enter out of the school calendar cycle. Such support should also include an enriched curriculum that provides them with the skills and knowledge to understand and cope with the trauma they have experienced.

Unlike other countries, non-formal education has a specific meaning in Jordan and is limited. There is a need to have a more tailored NFE programme for Syrian children in Jordan, including expanding

the age range of those able to participate. This is important because non-formal education offers Syrian children aged 6–12 an opportunity to catch up on the learning missed and integrate into formal schooling in Jordan.

As in other countries, there are numerous teachers who have fled Syria and are now resident in Jordan. One of the more promising innovations in Jordan has been to engage such teachers to work alongside Jordanian teachers in schools in camps. This is a good example of using human resources in the country. A recommendation is to learn from this innovation so that it may be scaled up in Jordan. It should serve as a model for the deployment of Syrian teachers in other host countries where there is a large presence of Syrian teachers who are qualified and experienced to teach.

Syrian children in public schools in Jordan are provided with certificates at the end of their phase of learning, which allows for progression and pathways to post-basic education options. However, there is a need to ensure that the certificate obtained in Jordan by Syrian children is recognized by the Syrian MOE to ensure a smooth and seamless return. Additionally, the status of the Grade 12 examination administered by the Syrian Opposition Council in some camp schools in Jordan need to be resolved and clarified.



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IRAQ

6 Iraq

6.1 Social and political context

As of March 2015, some 246,836 Syrian refugees had registered with UNHCR in Iraq, a jump up from the 150,000 Syrians who had registered in 2013. In mid-August 2013 and in one of the largest influxes, more than 48,000 refugees crossed the Peshkabour Bridge over the Tigris River.³⁴⁷ Most of the refugees reside in the three governorates of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) – Dohuk, Erbil and Sulaymaniyah – in north-eastern Iraq. A small number of refugees³⁴⁸ are sheltered in Al-Obaidi camp in Al-Anbar Governorate in the

north-western tip of Iraq. Others are dispersed in urban areas elsewhere in the country.³⁴⁹ Those residing in non-camp areas exceed those living in the refugee camps: At the end of February 2014, fewer than half of the registered population (95,631 refugees) resided in the camps, with the rest residing in host communities. Domiz camp, in Dohuk Governorate, has the largest refugee camp population, at more than 58,000 people, which exceeds its actual capacity (see Table 5).

Table 5 Camps and distribution of refugees in Iraq (February 2014)³⁵⁰

Camp name	Registered persons, as of 28 February 2014	Type of camp	Opening date
Akre	1,422	Community buildings	First half of September 2013
Al-Obaidi	1,781	Permanent	27 June 2013
Arbat	0	Under construction	
Arbat	3,000	Temporary	25 August 2013
Bahrka	0	Contingency	First half of August 2013
Bajid	0	Transit-reception centre	End of August 2013
Basirma	2,923	Permanent	26 August 2013
Darashakran	7,500	Permanent	29 September 2013
Domiz	58,500	Permanent	1 April 2012
Gawilan	2,720	Permanent	29 September 2013
Kawergosk	13,412	Permanent	15 August 2013
Qushtapa	4,373	Permanent	19 August 2013

Source: UNHCR.

Although the UNHCR records reflect an increase of Syrian refugees in the KRG, the numbers are falling in Al-Anbar Governorate, with refugees choosing to return to home. The voluntary return is linked to a number of factors, including the relative improvement in the security situation in the areas from which refugees fled, primarily bordering Iraq. The escalation of conflict into Al-Anbar and the increasing insecurity is also causing internal displacement and a new influx of

Iraqi refugees into neighbouring countries. Other underlying factors pertain to the Iraqi Government's restrictions on the freedom of movement of refugees who live in the camps to within the camp only.³⁵¹ Restriction of movement adversely impacts refugees' economic and psychological status, and its implications reach as far as having large numbers of students unable to register in a school.

³⁴⁷ UNICEF situation report No.7, 28 August 2013, Responding to the influx of Syrian refugees, Iraq Country Office.

³⁴⁸ It totalled 4,711 as of 15 April 2014, <data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=103>.

³⁴⁹ Given that the vast majority of Syrians have sought refuge in the KRG, the section on Iraq focuses on the KRG more than the rest of the country.

³⁵⁰ Adapted from UNHCR, Monthly Information Kit, March 2014, Erbil/Iraq.

³⁵¹ Restrictions of movement have not been applied in KRG.

6.2 The education context

The education system in the KRG is not unified with the rest of the country. The MoE in Iraq and the MOE in the KRG each implements its own education rules, regulations and curriculum. The formal education cycle in Iraq spans 12 years: starting at age 6, children complete six years of

compulsory primary education, followed by six years of secondary schooling (three intermediate and three preparatory levels). In the KRG, compulsory education includes the primary and intermediate levels (nine years of basic education) (see Table 6).

Table 6 The education system in the Kurdistan Regional Government

PRE-SCHOOL		BASIC EDUCATION				SECONDARY	
Age	Grade	Age	Grade	Age	Grade	Age	Grade
4	K1	6	G1	12	G7	15	G10
5	K2	7	G2	13	G8	16	G11
		8	G3	14	G9	17	G12
		9	G4				
		10	G5				
		11	G6				

The language of instruction in Iraq is Arabic, while it is mainly Kurdish in the KRG.³⁵² Two dialects of the Kurdish language are spoken in the KRG: Kurmanji is spoken in Dohuk Governorate and Sorani is spoken in Erbil and Sulaymaniyah. Arabic and English are also other languages of instruction used in public schools. Although the Syrians taking refuge in the KRG are mostly ethnic Kurds, they speak a slightly different dialect than what is spoken in the KRG. Additionally, the children spoke Arabic in school, which is thus their more familiar language of instruction.³⁵³

Low enrolment rates of Syrian children in public schools in Iraq. As of July 2014, UNHCR had registered 56,836 school-age Syrian children. Of them, only about 21,056 were enrolled in a public school in KRG. While the attendance rate in the camps is more than 90 per cent, the situation is particularly worrying in host communities, where children seem not to be accessing education adequately. In December 2015, more than 35,000 Syrian children were enrolled in public schools.

An assessment³⁵⁴ conducted by the Norwegian Refugee Council and UNICEF in July 2013 found that only one in ten children in host communities in the KRG was in school. Additionally, three quarters of children not in school had been

enrolled in a Syrian school prior to the crisis, directly linking the drop-out rate to displacement. This grim situation was echoed in a Mercy Corps assessment of adolescent refugees in June 2014,³⁵⁵ which pointed out the difficulties refugee adolescents encounter when accessing a public school. Refugee adolescent boys seem to experience the greatest challenges, especially because they need to work to help their family.

To manage the education response for Syrian children in the KRG, the curriculum to be used and the certification of their learning, the MOE established a specialized high committee.

Conditions of access for Syrian children in the KRG. Syrian children with proper documentation do not have difficulty enrolling in the correct grade for their school level and age in the KRG. Those without such documents can still enrol, although there is no clear MOE (KRG) policy on the process, which can vary greatly from governorate to governorate. It was reported that there are committees in schools to assess the education level of those children who cannot prove their grade (through a placement test). Syrian children were reportedly accepted throughout the year, regardless of regulations and timelines for enrolment. Once children have been placed in the adequate grade, they can start

³⁵² The curriculum is also available in Arabic, English and other languages to cater for the different language communities present in the country.

³⁵³ In some areas under Kurdish control inside Syria, the use of Kurdish has apparently been introduced recently in schools.

³⁵⁴ Norwegian Refugee Council, 2013.

³⁵⁵ Mercy Corps, 2014.

attending school. But to obtain a certificate for their learning, they will eventually need to produce the required documentation.

According to various interviews, families who cannot produce the required documentation can go to a public notary, where for a fee of US\$4–\$5 they receive a notarized statement of the education grade of their children (based only on their word). With this document, their children can enrol at the correct grade. Families in urban areas reportedly must go to the legal department of the Directorate of Education and provide the correct information for their children. This service is provided free of charge and entitles children to enrol in the grade deemed adequate by the legal committee. Given contrasting information on enrolment procedures, UNICEF and the Education Working Group have requested a formal clarification from the MOE.

6.3 Curriculum

Public schools in KRG. At the time of this study, schools in the KRG were considered regular schools administratively connected to the Directorate of Education in Dohuk and linked to the MOE in the Kurdistan Governorate. Although the Kurdish curriculum is available in Arabic, English and other languages spoken in the KRG, teaching is predominantly spoken in Kurdish. Given that the refugees are not familiar with the Kurdish accent spoken in KRG and that the language of instruction in Syria is Arabic, refugee students mainly register in the schools that follow a curriculum in Arabic, which are the schools set up in camps. The Kurdish curriculum in Arabic, however, includes Kurdish language as a core subject. This was reported as creating particular difficulties for Syrian children whose dialect of Kurdish is completely different than what is spoken in the KRG. This discrepancy in the two dialects is attributed to the learning difficulties the Syrian students have been experiencing, although many families reportedly would like their children to learn Kurdish and maintain their Kurdish identity.³⁵⁶

The lack of learning space is one of the main difficulties in the provision of education for Syrian children in the KRG. All the schools in the camps operate in double shifts. Few schools in host

Conditions of access for Syrian children in Al-Anbar Governorate. The admission of Syrian refugees in Iraqi schools is conditional on each child's submission of documents from their former school attesting to their registration and their class level. If these are not available, the MOE grants the child the right to attend and study in school and to go through exams. No reports or certificates are provided in this case, however, and children's standing grade is communicated to them orally (until they submit the documentation needed). Officials in Al-Anbar justify this practice by relating it to the large numbers of student applications as well as the discrepancy between the student performance on the assessment entrance exams and the class level they claim to have reached. The officials emphasize that such measure ensures the right to education for Syrian children, with the opportunity to subsequently submit the required documents.

communities provide education in Arabic.³⁵⁷ Given the scarcity of these schools, they are often far from where Syrian students live, making their prospects of attending remote. UNICEF and its partners have established 14 schools in camps in the KRG and are constructing six (each with 12 classrooms) prefabricated schools in non-camp settings. UNHCR provides support to 34 schools using the Kurdish curriculum in Arabic in non-camp areas (through new schools and the addition of second shifts in schools that use the Kurdish curriculum in Kurdish in the morning). There is an insufficient availability of schools in urban areas to accommodate all the Syrian children out of school.

Teacher absenteeism, a lack of textbooks and school supplies, low student attendance rates and poor physical space in schools were all reported as additional issues in the provision of formal education to Syrian children. Uncertainty over the curriculum used was also reported as an issue.

In addition to the Kurdish curriculum in Arabic, the Directorate of Education in the KRG introduced during the 2013/2014 academic year the Syrian curriculum that the Syrian Education Commission based in Turkey had revised. This move was attributed to the shortage of textbooks

³⁵⁶ Interview with the Norwegian Refugee Council in Erbil Governorate on 26 March 2014 and with Triangle in Erbil Governorate on 26 March 2014.

³⁵⁷ Schools using Arabic as the language of instruction were set up originally for Iraqi internally displaced children who did not speak Kurdish.

in Arabic available in the KRG.³⁵⁸ When the Syrian Opposition Coalition and the Education Commission offered textbooks based on the revised Syrian curriculum, the MOE seized the opportunity to provide more children with needed textbooks.³⁵⁹ However, the textbooks came late in the academic year (in December 2013), and schools were using the Kurdish curriculum in Arabic. The textbooks were distributed only to a limited number of schools in certain camps where the shortage was greatest. Thus the KRG curriculum in Arabic (in camps and host communities) and the revised Syrian curriculum (in some schools in some of the camps) are now both in use.

To complicate matters, MOE (KRG) officials have since declared that teaching a foreign curriculum inside the KRG is illegal, as is the revision of a national curriculum by a political party and not the State authority. Based on the illegality of and the difficulties in providing certification for a foreign curriculum, the MOE announced at the beginning of 2014 that all Syrian children will use the Kurdish curriculum in Arabic beginning with academic year 2014/2015. Use of the revised Syrian curriculum is no longer allowed.

In a focus group discussion conducted by the Norwegian Refugee Council in January 2014, children from low grades expressed their preference for the revised Syrian curriculum rather than the Kurdish one, whereas children in higher grades said they preferred to keep learning the Kurdish curriculum. Even though the Kurdish language seems to be important for families, it was also reported that they think the Syrian curriculum is more robust than the Kurdish curriculum.³⁶⁰ Compounding the issue, the Syrian curriculum could not be implemented in schools in host communities because they also cater to Iraqi children.

Support programmes for Syrian children in the KRG. Schools have special arrangements to support Syrian children in their studies and equally to help them adapt to their new situation. These include (i) organizing periodical support in a number of subjects in which students experience difficulty; (ii) preparing summary

notes in science subjects as well as in Kurdish and English; and (iii) opening summer schools that include support lessons (catch-up), sports, arts and recreational activities. All schools also organize periodic parents meetings at the beginning and during the school year.

There are no vocational schools providing instruction in Arabic in the KRG, although youth-friendly spaces organized by national and international organizations provide some vocational courses. These do not provide recognized certificates, however.

UNESCO has supported an accelerated learning programme for youth aged 18–24. The programme is in Kurdish and therefore difficult for Syrian children to access. Accelerated learning programmes or other remedial and alternative programmes are not strongly encouraged by the MOE, which supports the policy of reintegration into formal education of those children in the age range of basic education, even if they have lost schooling time. The MOE is phasing out the accelerated learning programme because it is seen as increasing the drop-out rates from formal education rather than providing a real alternative to expanding education access.³⁶¹

Psychosocial support is generally an element of organizations' programmes and includes hygiene and safety training for teachers. In 2013, UNICEF trained all teachers in the refugee camps on psychosocial support, but such training was not possible in 2014 because of a delay in the recruiting and appointing of new teachers. Referral pathways for cases of gender-based violence that emerge among students are being established for teachers to use.

Non-formal education. There are some sporadic NFE initiatives, mainly organized by international organizations. Triangle, for example, provides education in an area of Erbil Governorate where there is a concentration of 500 Syrian families but no schools with Arabic as a medium of instruction. Triangle set up a learning centre for 200 children from Grades 1 to 9 that operates similar to a school and uses the Kurdish curriculum in Arabic. It also provides recreational

³⁵⁸ Interview with MOE Emergency Focal point in Erbil Governorate on 25 March and interview with MOE Director General of Planning in Erbil Governorate on 27 March 2014. Funding for the printing of the textbooks was raised as one of the main MOE concern. The Education Working Group will support the printing of textbooks for next year.

³⁵⁹ Interview with MOE Emergency focal point in Erbil Governorate on 25 March and interview with MOE Director General of Planning in Erbil Governorate on 27 March 2014.

³⁶⁰ Norwegian Refugee Council, 2014 (unpublished).

³⁶¹ Interview with MOE Emergency Focal point in Erbil Governorate on 25 March and interview with MOE Director General of Planning in Erbil Governorate on 27 March 2014.

activities and a secure learning environment. Teachers and managers of the centre try to be as flexible as possible in accommodating children's needs and accept enrolment throughout the year. They hire Syrian teachers and provide transportation to students. Although Triangle received textbooks from the MOE, the school falls under the non-formal area because it is not directly under the umbrella of the MOE and therefore cannot provide certification for the learning of children.³⁶² The ultimate goal of this programme is to serve as a transition to formal schooling.

Some informal pre-school initiatives operate in some camps, but they are not supported by international organizations or by the Government. There is a curriculum for pre-school available in Kurdish and designed by the MOE, but it is not actively implemented. Provision of pre-school for Syrian children seems to fall beyond the capacity of the MOE, which has already limited capacity and no will to recruit more teachers to cater for children of pre-school age.

Public schools in Al-Anbar Governorate. When violence erupted in Syria, UNHCR and the Government of Iraq worked together to set up two camps in the city of Al-Qaim.³⁶³ The authorities also allowed 785 families (3,903 individuals) to live with their relatives in the city, in the framework of a hosting mechanism. This situation changed in 2013 when refugees were confined to living in the camps. The MOE opened four schools in caravans in the camps. They have basic air-cooling equipment but no labs or libraries. They are fully accredited by the MOE, and like all other Iraqi public schools, are subject to the same laws and regulations as well as the same accredited books and learning methods. These schools are managed by Iraqi directors from the same governorate.

By July 2013, the number of Syrian refugees in these camps had fallen to 2,408. These included 531 families, with 486 children aged 6–12. This regression was related to several factors: (i) the relative restoration of calm in their homeland; (ii) the regulations that prohibit their movement outside the camp; and (iii) the harsh desert climate of the camp, with the stifling heat in summer and severe cold in winter. These factors drove many refugees to go back home. As a result, the authorities consolidated the two camps

into one and transferred it to a different location. Three of the four schools were shut down. The remaining services provide only primary education, leaving children aged 12–17 largely unreachable.

Interviews with school principals revealed that the large number of students registered in the beginning of the 2012/2013 school year dwindled to less than half throughout the year. For instance, the number of female students registered in the second camp decreased from 600 to 210. Similarly, the number of male students in the first camp decreased from 425 to 198.

The official curriculum used in Al-Anbar is the same one approved by the Government of Iraq, and it varies little from the Syrian curriculum. In addition, Arabic is the official language of instruction in both countries. Differences are found in lesson arrangement and content grouping. All students who participated in the focus group discussions for this study reported that they found subjects easier in Iraq, compared with the corresponding subjects taught in Syria. Nevertheless, students related their weak performance levels to the difficulty of the exams in Iraq, compared with Syrian exams. They also mentioned the stress they experience when their school records are not accepted, which means they will not receive any official documentation of their learning. This situation reduces their motivation, promoting an attitude of indifference when going to school.

Most of the Syrian teachers who participated in the study reported on the effectiveness of the Iraqi curriculum and its straightforwardness, which they see as helping students adapt, considering their psychosocial needs. Teachers also reported low attendance rates among students and their lack of commitment to school hours, which they see as factors leading to low performance levels. Schools provide some assistance to students by offering support lessons periodically and preparing lesson summaries, often in English. Summer schools are also arranged to offer students cultural contests and special technical workshops, such as mobile telephones maintenance training.

Humanitarian organizations and NGOs provide recreational and cultural activities as well as psychological support to help students adapt.

³⁶² Interview with Triangle in Erbil Governorate on 26 March 2014.

³⁶³ At the border between Iraq and Syria.

UNICEF provides psychological support through drama and organizes contests while also sending out medical teams and arranging the provision of potable water. Similarly, schools and NGOs organize student cultural contests. The Iraqi Red Crescent also provides a psychological support programme. No programmes exist, however, to support children with disabilities or those who require additional help with their studies. Nor are there any pre-school facilities for young children in the camps. Furthermore, recreational and psychosocial support programmes are confined to camps and their respective schools, despite the existing need among the other Syrian students enrolled in schools outside the camps.

The learning environment. Although Grades 9 and 12 examinations were not provided during academic year 2012/2013 in the KRG (because the influx of refugees had not reached KRG yet at that time), the study found a low success rate among students who managed to get to the final school baccalaureate exam in Al-Anbar Governorate. Of the 35 male students who registered for the exam in the first camp, only 24 sat for it and none of them passed. Of the 42 female registrants in the second camp, only 13 sat for the examination and only four passed.

As noted, schools in the camps in Al-Anbar are set up in caravans, follow the basic Iraqi curriculum and are equipped in a similar fashion as other Iraqi schools (they have sports grounds and spaces for the arts but no labs and no libraries). Unlike other Iraqi schools, however, they are not equipped with computers. Classrooms far exceed their absorption capacity of 30 students and go beyond 50 students. The Government provides textbooks as well as daily meals for the students in the three schools. UNICEF provides stationery to all students in these schools. When interviewed, parents stressed the need for school uniforms. They reported that their children have to keep wearing their winter clothes in the summer heat because they cannot afford to buy a different set of clothes. Students also reported that they choose to spend more time in their schools because they find it more comfortable than the living conditions in the camps where they are sheltered.

Although learning is heavily based on the curriculum textbooks, the Norwegian Refugee Council is working with the Parent-Teacher

Associations (PTAs) in Kawergosk camp in the KRG to produce educational materials that can be used to enhance the learning of children (such as the use of puppets). This initiative is limited to one camp, and the Norwegian Refugee Council is hoping to replicate it in three more camps.

Teachers and teacher training. In the KRG, when teachers graduate from university they do not undergo any pre or in-service training. They apply for a job with the MOE and generally have to serve in remote locations for the first four years of appointment. To respond to the increased number of students in the country and the need for Arabic speakers, Syrian teachers have been appointed on a temporary contract basis. Recruitment of Syrian teachers and payment of their salaries has been a contentious issue. When applying for a teaching job, Syrian teachers are required to submit an attestation of their university degree as proof of eligibility and contracting transpires directly with the MOE.

In camps such as Kawergosk, recruitment of Syrian teachers by the MOE has been a lengthy process, which has led some teachers to leave the camp and look for better job opportunities outside. When the school year started in September 2013, a number of teachers started working, with the hope to be contracted soon. When recruitment began to be delayed, many teachers lost their commitment and high levels of teacher absenteeism were recorded. In Kawergosk camp, the team of teachers recruited by the Norwegian Refugee Council to support the PTAs had to step in and replace most of the teachers. In early December 2013, teachers were finally hired, although there were reports that the recruitment was not carried out in a transparent way but possibly based on political affiliations and interests. Contracts were finally signed in January 2014. There has been some progress in filling the teaching needs, but a shortage of teaching personnel in camps and host communities reportedly remains.

Since December 2013, the Government of Iraq suspended salary payments towards the KRG due to an ongoing disagreement with Erbil Governorate on the issue of oil exportation. Funds to cover salaries were sent for January and February 2014, while the KRG paid salaries to its employees only for March.³⁶⁴ Given the financial difficulties and the already uncertain situation

³⁶⁴ Teachers in Kurdistan went on strike in February 2014 to protest the delay of their salary payment, <knnc.net/en/full-story-17514-28-False#.U3xKIHZrgwo>.

of Kurdish and Iraqi teachers, the MOE decided not to recruit any more Syrian teachers, with no clear indication of what will become of the Syrian teachers contracted on a temporary basis. Neglecting to recruit Syrian teachers raises questions of how the education of Syrian children will be handled in the future, particularly around issues of Arabic as the language of instruction because there are few Kurdish teachers who can teach in Arabic.

The payment of salaries for Syrian teachers has also been controversial. Salaries of contracted teachers have different payment scales according to each person's qualifications. Although teachers receive their salary from the MOE in KRG, there has been an ongoing discussion with UNHCR, which initially offered to cover half of those salaries. Because the MOE has no system to monitor such co-financing, they ended up paying the entire amount, with UNHCR paying approximately US\$200 in addition to the salary in Domiz camp. Because this extra was not paid consistently across camps, it generated tensions among teachers and international organizations, raising questions of equality. During the field research interviews, there were contrasting reports: Some interviewees reported that UNHCR had stopped providing the additional incentive, while others indicated that it was still being paid in some camps (predominantly in Domiz camp), sustaining feelings of fairness of payments. To resolve the situation, a salary scheme for Syrian teachers was developed and approved by the MOE in October 2014.

The Directorate of Education in Dohuk organized a training programme for all Syrian teachers on teaching methods (improved skills in pedagogy and learning techniques) and psychosocial support. The authorities responsible for Syrian education were included in the courses and conferences to build capacity in emergency situations. Teachers who were interviewed during the field research emphasized the need for psychosocial support for themselves because they also live through the same difficult conditions as students. A number of training workshops have

been organized on teaching methods and psychosocial support for the teachers in the camps.

Al-Anbar Governorate. Syrian students in Al-Anbar attend camp schools and are taught by Syrian teachers as well as by retired Iraqi teachers. In Syria, basic education teachers teach all subjects, whereas their counterparts in Iraq only teach the subjects for which they are specialized. Such variance is unfamiliar for Syrian children, requiring them to deal with different faces and individual styles at an early stage of learning. To be recruited, teachers are expected to present an attestation of qualifications, but in most cases, claiming to have an academic qualification is enough to be hired. Some teachers have attended training on teaching methods and how to deal with students in emergency situations. In Al-Qaim camp, Syrian teachers are in charge of the teaching (using the Iraqi curriculum), while Iraqi teachers and principals mainly cover the management and administrative duties. In each school, there is a social worker in charge of providing school counselling and support to students. Social workers in schools in the camps are also Syrians.

From October 2012 to December 2013, UNICEF paid incentives to Syrian teachers working in Al-Qaim camp. These are the only payments they receive for their work inside the camp. In 2014, UNHCR took over payment of the teacher incentives. The MOE does not offer any kind of payment or remuneration; the incentive payment was characterized as a meagre amount, sufficient only for the basic needs of teachers. Given the restrictions of Syrian teachers to stay in the camp, they have no other recourse to enhance their earnings. This situation reflects negatively on teacher performance in class and, in turn, on students' education.

The Iraqi teachers also experience challenges, such as the 30-kilometer journey they must make each day to go to the camp. Around half of the Iraqi teachers were recently laid off following a decision to reduce the number of teachers.

6.4 Certification and accreditation

Students in Iraq are required to pass monthly tests and the half-term and final examinations in all levels to be eligible to sit for the official ministerial examination. In the KRG, there are two education system exit points, at Grade 9 (completion of basic education) and at Grade

12 (completion of secondary education). For the other grades, there are final examinations and mid-year exams. If students fail the first semester or the second one, they can repeat the exam in August. If they fail the second time, they need to repeat the whole year.

There are three ministerial examinations: in Grades 6, 9 and 12 (Adadiyah). Grades 1, 2 and 3 follow an automatic promotion policy. Students are given homework and are required to sit for monthly tests and the mid-term and the final exams. Class progression is automatic for students who pass, with the exception of the need for qualifying grades to sit for the Grade 12 school-leaving examination. Syrian students who reached their graduation year and who submitted the required school records are allowed to sit for the final ministerial examination and are given the same certificates as Iraqi students.

Syrian students reported finding homework challenging and preparing for exams difficult in the camp conditions, which they said lacks the most basic requirements needed for studying. At the end of the academic year, students and families do not automatically receive a report card; they need to request it from the MOE. As well, for the Grades 9 and 12 examination, students do not automatically receive any certificate unless their family requests it. They receive one original copy and they must justify a request for a second copy. The overall process can be lengthy.³⁶⁵

One of the major issues in the KRG is the certification of the learning based on the revised

Syrian curriculum. At the time of the field research, interviewees reported that those exam questions were developed by each school and grading scrutinized by the local Directorate of Education, whereas exams for Grade 12 were standardized. The issue of how to conduct examinations on a foreign curriculum and therefore supervise it and provide certification for it was not settled at the time of this study. When interviewed MOE officers reported that the KRG was going to provide all Syrian children enrolled in school with official certificates regardless of the curriculum used. This, in principle, would ease the certification process for Syrian children.

Additionally, parents remarked on what they see as weak educational supervision and assessment in the Al-Qaim camp school, which they attribute to the weak performance of the students.

There are no official agreements between the KRG and the Syrian Government on recognition of education certificates granted by respective education ministries. Generally, KRG certificates are internationally recognized, and an MOE official suggested that they would be recognized in Syria when children returned. This was agreed upon during the UNHCR-UNESCO conference that took place in Beirut in December 2013.³⁶⁶

6.5 Conclusion

In the KRG, the national Kurdish curriculum is available in Kurdish, English and Arabic. Syrian children access the Kurdish curriculum in its Arabic version, although the lack of schools using Arabic as a medium of instruction in host communities is a major issue for Syrian children. While all the schools that were set up in the camps operate double shifts to absorb as many children as possible, the number of schools available in urban areas and using Arabic is not sufficient to accommodate all the out-of-school Syrian children. Providing new schools or transportation is needed, especially for secondary education, to enlarge the catchment area of available schools. With a dominant formal education provision, there is scarce availability of NFE programmes for Syrian children, would help expand access to education.

In December 2013 and for the first time in the country, some camp schools began using the revised Syrian curriculum developed by the Syrian Education Commission and endorsed by the Syrian Opposition Coalition based in Turkey. A shortage of textbooks in Arabic was reported as the main reason for change. But then the MOE ended the practice as of academic year 2014/2015, allowing only the provision of the Kurdish curriculum. Certification for students using the revised Syrian curriculum has created heated debate within the MOE. In March 2014, the MOE eventually decided to consider the Syrian curriculum as part of the national education system for academic year 2013/2014 and agreed to certify the learning of Syrian children using that curriculum.

³⁶⁵ Interview with MOE Emergency Focal Point in Erbil Governorate on 25 March 2014.

³⁶⁶ In December 2013, a UNHCR-UNESCO regional conference was organized in Beirut on Exploring an Education Response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis.

In the KRG and in response to the increased number of students in the country and the need for Arabic-speaking teaching staff, Syrian teachers were hired on a temporary contract basis. The recruitment of Syrian teachers and payment of their salaries, however, has been a contentious issue. Since December 2013, the Iraqi finance authorities in Baghdad have suspended salary payments to the KRG because of an ongoing disagreement with Erbil Governorate on oil exportation. Given the financial difficulties and the already uncertain situation of Kurdish and Iraqi teachers in the KRG, the MOE decided not to recruit any more Syrian teachers. This leaves Syrian teachers contracted on a temporary basis uncertain of their position and raises questions about the education of Syrian children in the future because the KRG suffers from a shortage of teachers who can speak and teach in Arabic.

6.6 Recommendations

In Iraq and the KRG, access to education in host communities remains a challenge for Syrian children. The absence of sufficient physical primary and secondary school places requires priority attention. Strategies to increase schooling should be explored by creating temporary public schools in camps and host communities as well as providing virtual and alternative learning opportunities, such as catch-up programmes. There is already an accelerated learning programme available in Kurdish in the KRG, which could be expanded, including in Arabic.

Although there are several NFE programmes available for Syrian children, it is important to ensure that they are articulated within the formal education system. NFE programmes should offer Syrian children pathways into the formal education system. This includes programmes offered by the Norwegian Refugee Council and Save the Children, for example. These should be accredited and should provide certificates of learning.

It is crucial to ensure that Syrian children have access to education provision in Arabic in public schools. Psychosocial elements in the curriculum should be extended to all schools and education institutions working with Syrian children.

In Iraq, Syrian children who reach their graduation year and who submit the required school records are allowed to sit for the final ministerial examination and are given the same certificates as Iraqi students. In the KRG, no Grade 9 and 12 examinations were organized during academic year 2012/2013 for Syrian children; they were available the following year. In Al-Anbar Governorate, where Syrian students were mostly concentrated in 2013, the few Syrian students who managed to get to the final school baccalaureate exam performed poorly.

There are no official agreements between the KRG and the Syrian Government on the recognition of education certificates. Generally, KRG certificates are internationally recognized and the MOE trusts that they will be recognized in Syria when children return.

Unlike in other host countries, Syrian teachers are able to work in Iraq. This is a positive step because it allows Syrian children to be educated by teachers from their own country. However, there is a lack of consistency with the salary payments and the conditions of employment. A framework and administrative systems are needed for Syrian teachers' employment and financing.

To raise education quality, there is a need to put in place a professional development strategy to enhance the competencies and skills of Syrian and Kurdish teachers teaching Syrian children. Education authorities working in partnership with the teacher-training institutions and international partners should take this forward by conducting a needs analysis that can inform the design and delivery of a professional development programme.

There are several curriculum and accreditation challenges that need to be addressed. First, a policy framework should be developed that spells out whether education using the revised Syrian curriculum is accredited and what the certification process is for those children who take the Grade 12 Syrian examinations based on this curriculum. Second, Syrian children enrolled or attending in public schools should receive a certificate for their learning.



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EGYPT

7 Egypt

7.1 Social and political context

Egypt opened its borders to Syrians seeking refuge following the outbreak of armed events. Although Egypt does not have any direct land border with Syria, Syrian refugees favoured it to other neighbouring countries because of its relatively lower cost of living. Until recently, Egypt maintained its open-door policy towards Syrians, who were allowed to enter the country with no visa requirements. Once in the country, they had freedom of movement and could live anywhere. No camps were established for Syrian refugees, although they seem to reside mainly in the three main urban centres of Cairo, Alexandria and Damietta. Egypt is a signatory to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its protocol and to the 1969 Organisation of African Unit Convention governing specific problems of refugees in Africa. However, the Government has never developed any domestic legislation relating to asylum-seeking procedures; UNHCR registers and assigns refugee status to the population on behalf of the Government.³⁶⁷

As Syrians began arriving, Egypt began experiencing its own civil unrest, which resulted in President Hosni Mubarak stepping down. Since then, political instability combined with a static economy has resulted in greater socio-economic hardships for Egyptians as well as Syrian refugees. After the military's 2013 ouster of President Mohammed Morsi, whose Islamist-dominated government had offered favourable conditions to Syrians, many of the refugees who had taken refuge in Egypt found themselves the object of hate speech and intimidation,³⁶⁸ with subsequent restrictions on entry and residency requirements. As a result, feelings of insecurity among Syrian refugees have intensified. Changes in the political orientation of the new Government, coupled with delays in

renewing the presidential decree that provided Syrian children access to public schools beyond academic year 2012/2013 led to the halting of registration of Syrian children in public schools for academic year 2013/2014.

UNHCR advocacy efforts with Egypt's MoE brought about a change of policy, and in September 2013 a new ministerial circular was issued granting Syrian children unrestricted access to schools for 2013/2014.³⁶⁹

The education of Syrian children cannot be considered in isolation from their other basic needs. Although many Syrians who fled to Egypt seem well-off financially (at least based on their place of residency, their ability to send their children to private school and their ability to afford a flight to travel to Egypt), the continuation of the crisis in Syria together with the economic situation in Egypt is bound to have an adverse impact on them.³⁷⁰

School enrolment of Syrian children in Egypt. In December 2012, 10,100 Syrians registered with UNHCR; that figure jumped to 122,774 refugees in October 2013 and then to 140,406 refugees as of November 2014. Not all Syrians have registered with UNHCR, and the Government estimated between 250,000 and 300,000 Syrians were living in Egypt as of September 2013. Thus the number of school-age refugee children is likely to be greater than the records indicate.

In August 2013, 12,189 Syrian children had enrolled in either a public or private school, according to MOE figures.³⁷¹ In January 2014, that figure jumped to more than 36,000 Syrian children, accounting for 90 per cent of registered Syrian children in the country.³⁷² In July 2014,

³⁶⁷ UNHCR, WFP, UNICEF, IOM, CRS and RESALA, 2013.

³⁶⁸ "Syrian Refugees in Egypt Swept Up in turmoil", <news.yahoo.com/syrian-refugees-egypt-swept-turmoil-062400111.html>, accessed 4 June 2014.

³⁶⁹ The policy was renewed in June 2014 for academic year 2014/2015.

³⁷⁰ There is no data on child labour. UNHCR surveys reveal that 11.5 per cent of all respondents are not sending their children to school for different reasons, but none because children are working.

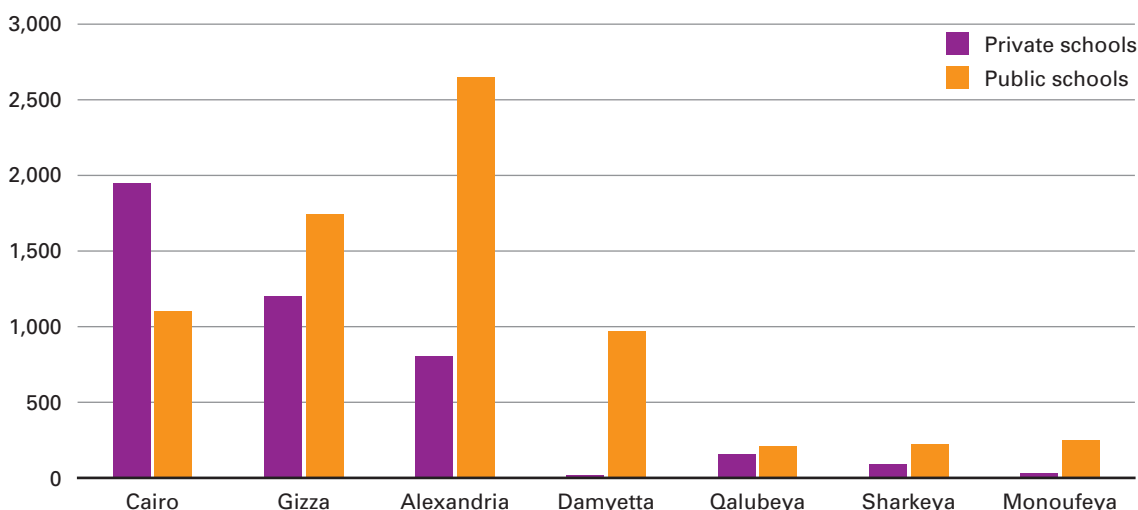
³⁷¹ It was reported during interviews that MOE figures are not completely accurate due to their registration system, especially at the central level (they may be accurate at the school, or *idara*, level).

³⁷² The percentage is based on Syrian children aged 5-17 registered with UNHCR.

more than 41,000 Syrian children were enrolled in school, with around 300 children out of school,³⁷³ in December 2014, 41,240 Syrian children were enrolled in school, with some 793 children out of school (2 per cent). Despite the notable progress in terms of education access, a Fard Foundation survey found a low level of attendance among Syrian children.³⁷⁴

Although foreign students generally are not allowed to access public schools, Syrian students have been allowed access as an exception. During academic year 2012/2013, approximately 10 per cent of registered Syrian students were enrolled in private schools³⁷⁵ while the majority of refugee children entered the public system (see Figure 2).³⁷⁶

Figure 2 Distribution of Syrian children between private and public schools during academic year 2012/2013



A UNHCR joint assessment conducted in February 2013³⁷⁷ indicated that public schools were the favoured option among Syrians, despite the prevailing political climate and diminished protection space for Syrians in Egypt. During the field research conducted for this study, 77 per cent of all Syrian students who were enrolled in primary and secondary education attended a public school, compared with

20 per cent in a private school and 3 per cent attending a community school. A small number also attended special needs schools.³⁷⁸ During academic year 2013/2014 (in March 2014), more than one third of the Syrian students (8,671) were enrolled in private schools compared with 22,249 who were enrolled in public schools (from pre-school to the secondary level).

7.2 The education context

Egypt has the largest education system among the countries included in this study (at 18 million children). Compulsory basic education covers Grades 1–9, divided into a primary phase (Grades 1–6) and a lower secondary phase (Grades 7–9)

(see Table 7). In primary education, there is an automatic promotion policy up to Grade 5. External exams administered by the MOE take place at Grades 6, 9 and 12.

³⁷³ All figures are calculated based on school-age children registered with UNHCR and children enrolled in private and public schools.

³⁷⁴ Fard Foundation, 2014.

³⁷⁵ Private schools in Egypt fall within A and B classes: international and high-level language schools (class A) and ordinary private schools using Arabic (class B). Cairo has large number and variety of private schools. The study does not include detailed analysis on what type of private schools Syrians enrol their children in; however, those who participated in this study were from class B schools. Enrolment in private schools can be attributed to their financial status but also to the perceived better quality of education that they provide. In 2013 Syrian children were allowed to enrol in language schools but not so in 2014 (although those who enrolled last year were allowed to continue their education in such schools).

³⁷⁶ UNHCR paid education grants to 4,000 Syrian students who were enrolled in private schools during academic year 2013/2014. This was almost 10 per cent of all Syrian students in the MOE statistics.

³⁷⁷ Ibid.

³⁷⁸ A total of 18 children with special needs are enrolled in public schools in Egypt (2014 Syria Regional Response Plan: Mid-year update).

Table 7 The education system in Egypt

PRE-SCHOOL		PRIMARY		PREPARATORY		SECONDARY	
Age	Grade	Age	Grade	Age	Grade	Age	Grade
4	K1	6	G1	12	G7	15	G10
5	K2	7	G2	13	G8	16	G11
		8	G3	14	G9	17	G12
		9	G4				
		10	G5				
		11	G6				

Public education is free, although families are required to pay fees to contribute to activities (such as arts and music) conducted in the school. Given the current economic situation of the

country, all children were exempted from paying these fees during academic year 2013/2014. Schools in Egypt can be categorized into two main types: government and private (see Table 8).

Table 8 Types of schools in Egypt

Government schools	
Arabic schools	Almost free of charge.
Experimental language schools	Science and mathematics are taught in English and the second foreign language is taught starting from preparatory level (instead of secondary level as in the Arabic schools). They require higher fees and usually students are one year older than their peers in Arabic schools. Syrian children were allowed to enrol in these schools during academic year 2012/2013 only and not for academic year 2013/2014. ³⁷⁹
Private schools	
Ordinary schools	Same as Arabic schools but with private management. This type of school requires fees and usually provides better education standards and fewer students in one class compared with the Arabic public schools. Also the private school administration can choose to teach advanced English subject.
Language schools	These schools teach science and math in English.
Religious schools	These schools are religiously oriented schools, such as Al-Azhar Islamic schools and the Catholic schools.
Community schools	There are three types of community schools: those for children who lost school time, schools for girls and vocational community schools, which focus on literacy, numeracy and vocational training.
International schools	These schools usually teach a foreign curriculum, such as the British, American, German or the French curriculum.

In all cases, the MOE controls almost every aspect of the schooling system, except for the international schools, which can implement their own system once they have registered with the Government.

Conditions of access for Syrian children. The MOE reported that residence permits are required for

children to enrol in school in Egypt, although they would still grant them the opportunity to enrol temporarily until they are in possession of all the required documents. Children who are enrolled temporarily are not included in the EMIS and thus are not counted in the statistics. This explains the discrepancy between the MOE data and the actual number of Syrian children recorded during the

³⁷⁹ Those enrolled since last year were allowed to continue their learning in these schools.

field research visits. Temporary students also do not receive any certificate of attainment until they are in possession of the required documents.

The number and types of documentation required often makes access difficult, if not impossible, for Syrian students. Required documentation can include government-issued residence permit, birth certificate, valid passport or a national identity document, original school certificate from the country of origin and a letter from UNHCR Egypt. Many Syrians have difficulties in providing the documentation that education officials require. To overcome these obstacles, the MOE established a placement test for children with no documents so that they could access school and receive a residency permit, based on their registration in school.

Challenges to school enrolment depend on factors related to school capacity. School principals can decide not to accept extra children if their school is already overcrowded. The perceived low performance of Syrian children was cited as a

factor discouraging principals from admitting Syrian children. Some school principals did not want to admit Syrian children, fearing that they would lower the academic attainment level of their school. To overcome this problem, some schools where the concentration of Syrian children is high, decided not to include their scores in determining the overall school score. The timing of arrival in Egypt as well as differences in the starting age and curriculum can result in children being set back. For example, children in upper secondary education are admitted to school in a lower grade. During academic years 2012/2013 and 2013/2014, Syrian students were systematically downgraded by one academic year to match the national system, which stipulates that the *thanaweyya amma* (general secondary education) should be for two academic years.³⁸⁰ For academic year 2014/2015, the general secondary education cycle was reduced to only Grade 12; Syrian children should have been able to enrol directly at this grade if they were in the correct age and grade level.

7.3 Curriculum

Public schools. Because Syrian students are accepted in Egyptian schools, they follow the Egyptian curriculum. Other migrant or refugee groups who have not been allowed to access public schools have been granted the opportunity to learn their national curricula in private and NGO-based schools. There have been no modifications or enrichment to the national curriculum to help Syrian students integrate. Some children reported experiencing differences between Syrian and Egyptian schools, especially in such subjects as history, geography, philosophy, physics and chemistry. According to Syrian teachers in an education centre, such variation is one of teaching and learning approach rather than content. Having Arabic as the main language of instruction, with English and French as second languages, has helped Syrian children to integrate into the Egyptian education system. However, the delivery of lessons in the Egyptian dialect was acknowledged as a challenge because as children are not able to completely follow and understand lessons in this different dialect.³⁸¹ The Egyptian dialect is not easily understood by

Syrian children; with the MOE, UNICEF is planning to produce videos in which Syrian teachers explain lessons in the Syrian dialect to help Syrian children better grasp the content and a booklet with the main terminology used in school translated from the Egyptian dialect to the Syrian one.

The majority of Syrian parents met during the field research reported challenges in responding to the educational needs of their children. The generally perceived low quality of the Egyptian education system is a great barrier to education for refugee children as it is for Egyptian children. Overcrowded classrooms were reported as one of the main issues. Interviewed children explained that they were not able to attend school on a regular basis because of the overcrowding and lack of language skills. Many Syrians have difficulties in providing the documentation that education officials require for school entry. Many of the children live a long distance from the schools they attend and must leave early in the morning and take two or more forms of public

³⁸⁰ Interview with Christian Relief Services staff in Cairo on 10 April 2014; UNHCR, WFP, UNICEF, IOM, CRS and RESALA, 2013.

³⁸¹ Textbooks are written in classical Arabic, which is common across Arabic countries. Classes are delivered in the so-called colloquial Arabic, which has different dialects and not all are easily understood.

transport, which makes children vulnerable and parents anxious about their children's safety. This also results in poor attendance.

Violence and discrimination were highlighted as challenges and often a reason why refugee children are unable to go to school. Respondents indicated that violence and discrimination appear inside and outside of the school and are perpetuated by students, teachers and gangs. Beyond the primary level, affording the cost of education is a widespread challenge for Syrian children and families. Fees in secondary education are high, and large families can often only afford to send one or two children to school, thus having to make tough decisions on who completes their education through the secondary level.³⁸² Education grants are available for Syrian refugees through the NGO Catholic Relief Service.³⁸³ Applications for grants take a long time to be scrutinized, and it was reported that the grants do not cover all education costs.³⁸⁴ These grants are not available for families that do not register with the UNHCR.

Informal education. The Syrian Education Centers began as a non-structured volunteer organization to assist Syrian children cope with their study in Egyptian schools. Over time, they have become more institutionalized, even though they are not officially approved by the MOE. Syrian children formally enrol in public schools in the morning but do not attend except once a week or when needed. Instead, they attend school in these centres. This allows them to receive formal accreditation for their learning in the centres because they sit exams in the formal system. For example, the Education Center in 6th of October City in Giza Governorate (and within Cairo) currently functions as a school for Syrian students. The teachers are mainly Syrian and provide a familiar environment to Syrian children while still using the Egyptian curriculum. Although the Syrian Education Centers in 6th of October City and in Qalyoubeyaa were not licensed at the time of the research, they provide extensive learning support and services for Syrian students. In addition to the regular studies, students are provided with extracurricular

activities to encourage their participation in social activities. About 2,500 Syrian children benefited from these centres during academic year 2012/2013 and about 2,000 during academic year 2013/2014. UNICEF³⁸⁵ and UNHCR support the centres, particularly Nasa'em Al Ganna, which is located in 6th of October City. Syrian groups and NGOs in Egypt have expended much effort to secure legal recognition for the Syrian educational centres but without success.

One public school in Cairo has been piloting a model of the education centres. Because public schools are allowed to open in the afternoon for remedial education classes, a community with the support of UNHCR set up afternoon classes for Syrian children by Syrian teachers. The Egyptian curriculum is used, and children are formally enrolled in the school in the morning, so that they can sit for examinations and receive recognized certificates. The Syrian teachers are not recruited by the MOE and are paid by the community.

Gamasa model

Syrian children are enrolled in the school and sit for national exams with their Egyptian peers, however, they are taught the Egyptian curriculum in the afternoon by Syrian teachers. This provides a safe and culturally familiar environment to them, keeping the opportunity to receive formal recognition of their learning.

Additional programmes for Syrian children.

The Egyptian NGO Tadamon runs a community centre in 6th of October City where they provide education support to children through language (English, French and German), computer and communication skills courses. Tadamon, in collaboration with Save the Children, developed an accelerated education programme called Forsa to provide additional support to Syrian children and prepare them to access Egyptian schools at the beginning of the academic year. They teach children in multi-grade classes using a condensed programme that is based on the Egyptian curriculum. It is an intense summer programme to help children enrol into the formal education system.

³⁸² Syrians were exempted from paying any tuition fee during academic year 2013/2014.

³⁸³ Christian Relief Services Egypt reaches more than 10,000 children of refugees and asylum seekers with educational grants to go to pre-school, primary and secondary schools. Christian Relief Services supplements the educational grants with non-formal educational and cultural events consisting of field trips and seminars to enhance refugees' learning and interaction with Egyptian society. Grants come from UNHCR and Christian Relief Services private funding.

³⁸⁴ UNHCR maintains that the grant should be sufficient because it means to cover transport, tuition fee, stationery and uniform costs.

³⁸⁵ UNICEF supports these NGOs to establish kindergartens.

The Egyptian education system has evolved in such a way that private schools and private tuition outside of the formal public school system has become the norm, and private tuition is considered essential for passing exams. Private tuition has engendered much debate about the causes of its growth, and its effects on the public system.³⁸⁶ Concerned about its growth, the MOE expended much effort in eradicating the practice, now considered as illegal.³⁸⁷ The MOE has institutionalized remedial classes after the regular public school day, offered by the same teachers who teach regular classes in the morning. To access these remedial classes, families pay a small fee. These classes are also open to Syrian children, although families seem reluctant to send their children because they are concerned about the long hours children will spend outside the home.

Pre-school. Similar to other countries in the region, provision of pre-school education is limited or non-existing. UNICEF is helping NGOs to establish community kindergartens in which Syrian children can enrol. Twelve community kindergartens were established during school year 2013/2014.

Community-based school is a model developed in Egypt to provide education services in those areas where there are no public services provided by the Government. Although based on community efforts and support, community-based schools are formally under the umbrella of the Ministry of Social Affairs and the MOE, which sets the standards and regulates the provision and thus accredits them.

The learning environment. When interviewed, Syrian children reported experiencing overcrowded classes and delays in receiving school textbooks in the public schools. UNICEF and UNHCR worked together to improve the learning environment of schools with the largest concentration of Syrian children during academic year 2013/2014. UNHCR built classroom extensions, while UNICEF provided supplies, furniture and teacher training for almost 100 public schools.

Additionally, 20 per cent of parents interviewed mentioned that their children were psychologically affected by the different school

culture and were slow to adapt to the new environment. The head of the Syrian Education Centers referred to the same issues and mentioned that one of the purposes in creating the centres was to assist students adapt to the new country and environment as well as providing education in a class that is smaller in size. These centres also provide summary notes of lessons to help students learn. Although they are not officially approved notes, they obviate the need for private tuition. As is the case in the five hosting countries, teaching is textbook based and constitutes the only learning resource used by Syrian students.

Other than the official textbooks, children also use other textbooks that are either recommended by teachers or bought by students. They are generally referred to as *kutub kharijiah*, or additional books. Students obtain these materials to complement the official textbooks when preparing for tests. Syrian children reported that they are not accustomed to having additional textbooks, plus they are not able to afford them.³⁸⁸ There is also a widespread perception that the academic performance of Syrian children is lower than their Egyptian peers. This may be because Syrian children were accepted in school after the academic year had started. This required them to study on their own to catch up, which adversely affected their grades. About 2,000 students at different stages were assisted by volunteers from the Syrian community to study. Yet many of them were still not able to pass their exams.

Teachers and teacher training. No additional teachers were recruited by the Egyptian MOE to respond to the increase of students with the influx of Syrian refugees. Syrian teachers were not been recruited to teach Syrian children in public schools for several reasons. First, Egypt ratified the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees with a reservation regarding the access of refugees to public services and employment. Second, there is a surplus of Egyptian teachers waiting to be hired as well as a general lack of resources in the Ministry of Finance.³⁸⁹ Syrian teachers, however, are employed in the Syrian Education Centers and in community centres managed by NGOs and private initiatives. Their salaries derive from either the NGO or the community.

³⁸⁶ Bray, 2003; Hartmann, 2008.

³⁸⁷ Interview with MOE officials in Cairo on 8 April 2014.

³⁸⁸ They are generally not available in the school library.

³⁸⁹ Interview with MOE officials in Cairo on 8 April 2014.

7.4 Certification and accreditation

The Egyptian education system conducts school-leaving examinations at Grades 6, 9 and 12. Until academic year 2013/2014, students were entitled to sit for Grade 12 examination only after attending at least two years of secondary education in Egypt. This changed in 2014, and currently students can sit for the Grade 12 examination after attending one year of secondary school.

UNHCR agreed with the MOE that children may present themselves for standardized national exams without required documentation and a valid residency permit on condition that results are withheld until parents acquire the residency.³⁹⁰

School-leaving certificates are recognized by both the Egyptian and Syrian Governments because of a previous mutual binding recognition agreement between them.

7.5 Conclusion

As an exception, Syrian children were granted the right to access public schools. However, they experience difficulties, as do their Egyptian peers, with overcrowded schools, lack of school resources and the high level of violence in schools. Three are additional challenges in understanding the Egyptian dialect and integrating into the school environment.

in the formal system and have the opportunity to sit for the end-of-year and school-leaving exams and thus have their learning certified and recognized. They learn the Egyptian curriculum in an NGO/community setting, in a culturally familiar environment with Syrian teachers who have a familiar and (to them) comprehensible dialect.

Innovative approaches have been initiated to extend formal schooling in non-formal settings. To overcome issues related to overcrowded and underresourced schools, Syrian children have enrolled in public schools but attend after-hours classes in the schools run by NGOs or in community centres. In this way, they are included

In Egypt, Syrian teachers have not been recruited to teach Syrian children in the public schools due to a surplus of teachers, a constrained budget and legal issues related to refugees and employment. Syrian teachers have been recruited in the Syrian Education Centres and in community centres managed by NGOs and private initiatives.

7.6 Recommendations

Although there is access to public schools for Syrian children, the learning conditions could be enhanced by providing support for understanding the Egyptian dialect. Still, Syrian children experience difficulties in enrolling in public schools. There is a need to clarify to all schools and principals the conditions for enrolment of Syrian children to reduce variation in practice, which impacts adversely on enrolment. It is important to have placement test for admission, but consideration should be given on the frequency and content of such test so that it is not a barrier to access.

their learning programmes are not officially accredited. A framework for the registration of NFE centres and accreditation of their learning programmes should be developed. At the same time, there is a need to consider ways to scale them up and replicate in other areas of Egypt where there is a large concentration of Syrian refugees and where there are capacity constraints in the public schools to accommodate refugees.

The Syrian education centres have an important role in providing access to schooling for Syrian children. However, they are not recognized and

Although the expansion of NFE is important, it is equally crucial to pay attention to ways to bridge and articulate the formal and non-formal education systems so that Syrian children can move from an NFE centre to a public school. This is particularly needed in cases where Syrian children attend NGO classes in the afternoons.

³⁹⁰ UNHCR, December 2013 – education report fact sheet.

There are several curriculum aspects that need attention to improve the quality of education for Syrian children. First, there is an urgent need to provide language support for Syrian children so that they can understand the Egyptian dialect in public schools. The lack of such support inhibits children's learning and progress.

Second, effort should be made to reduce the financial burden faced by Syrian children having to purchase additional textbooks and learning resources. Consideration should be given to providing Syrian children with an extra small education grant to overcome such costs – in addition to the education grant schemes already provided.

Third, Syrian children, as in some other host countries, report feeling stigmatized and bullied in school. There should be an inclusive education policy developed to ensure that Syrian children are integrated into public schools.

Fourth, the curriculum in public and non-formal schools should be enriched to include learning about peace-building and conflict resolution. In particular, the psychosocial need of Syrian children should be considered to enrich the school curriculum. Finally, consideration should be given to engaging Syrian teachers in different capacities to provide learning support for Syrian children.

Egypt, unlike other host countries, has fewer difficulties regarding accreditation and certification. The existence of a binding agreement between Egypt and Syria provides for the recognition of certificates obtained in Egypt. How this model could be developed in other contexts should be explored.

Syrian children are able to sit for the Egyptian national examination but the condition that their results are withheld until their parents acquire residency needs to be reconsidered because it limits their progression and pathway to further education opportunities.



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UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST

8 United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

8.1 Context

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) was established by United Nations General Assembly resolution 302(IV) in December 1949, following the 1948 Arab–Israeli conflict.³⁹¹ The UNRWA mission is to carry out direct relief and works programmes for Palestine refugees. UNRWA is unique with its long-term commitment to one group of refugees; its mandate has been repeatedly renewed in the absence of a durable solution to the Palestine refugee situation. Palestine refugees are defined as “persons whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict”.³⁹²

UNRWA initially responded to the needs of about 750,000 Palestine refugees; today, around 5 million Palestine refugees are eligible for UNRWA services.³⁹³ Almost one third of the registered Palestine refugees (more than 1.5 million) live in 58 recognized Palestine refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. A Palestine refugee camps refers to a plot of land provided by the host government for UNRWA to

accommodate refugees and set up facilities. In addition, UNRWA maintains schools, health centres and distribution centres outside the camps where Palestine refugees are concentrated.³⁹⁴

Acknowledging that education is essential to helping children reach their full potential, UNRWA has worked for more than 60 years to ensure that all Palestine refugee children have access to quality education. With 703 schools, 9 vocational colleges, two educational science faculties and two teacher-training institutes, UNRWA operates the largest education system for refugees in the Middle East, with about half a million children enrolled.³⁹⁵ Out of the 703 UNRWA schools, 285 are elementary; and 398 are preparatory (with 344 of the 398 preparatory schools including elementary education as well); and eight are secondary schools. The total student enrolment during the 2012/2013 school year was 424,349 (excluding Syria), with an almost equal number of boys and girls (at 50 per cent each). The 703 schools operate in 431 buildings (74 rented and the rest owned by UNRWA), with 74 per cent of these schools running on a double-shift system.³⁹⁶

8.2 UNRWA Education Programme

The UNRWA Education Programme operates in the five areas and is headed by the Chiefs Field Education Programme responsible for leading on the delivery of quality education. The Chiefs report directly to the Field Director regarding

administrative matters and to the Director of Education at headquarters regarding technical matters. Professional training and development involve the Education Development Centres (EDC) at the field level and two higher education

³⁹¹ UNRWA began operations in May 1950.

³⁹² UNRWA: Who We Are, <www.unrwa.org/who-we-are>, accessed 26 May 2014.

³⁹³ UNRWA: Who We Are, <www.unrwa.org/who-we-are>, accessed 26 May 2014.

³⁹⁴ Palestine Refugees, <www.unrwa.org/palestine-refugees>, accessed 26 May 2014.

³⁹⁵ Education: In Action, <www.unrwa.org/what-we-do/education>, accessed 26 May 2014.

³⁹⁶ UNRWA Teacher Policy, 2013. p. 4.

institutions: Faculty of Educational Sciences and Arts in Jordan and Educational Sciences Faculties in the West Bank (which includes the field EDC).³⁹⁷ The Education Programme provides Palestine refugees with lessons plans that promote dignity, tolerance, cultural identity, gender equality and human rights and help young people develop the skills needed to thrive as adults in an evolving and challenging environment.³⁹⁸

UNRWA provides nine to ten years of free basic education, depending on the regulations of the host authorities, to all Palestine refugee children through its schools in the five areas where it operates.³⁹⁹ UNRWA schools follow the host country/authority curriculum in each area of operation, as was agreed in 1953 with the objective of facilitating students' transition to secondary and post-secondary education. In addition, it supports out-of-school children and youth through regular and short-term continuing education and skills training programmes offered in its vocational training centres. Additionally, UNRWA provides psychosocial support and integrated life skills and maintains safe play and learning areas. Both in terms of staff engaged and budgetary allocation, the Education Programme is the largest of the UNRWA programmes.⁴⁰⁰ However, not all refugee children enrol in UNRWA schools for a number of reasons, including distance from home, travel costs, military checkpoints and parents' financial resources.⁴⁰¹

Partnerships with host governments are crucial for UNRWA. The Education Programme adopts the education structure and systems of the host governments/authority, especially in terms of curriculum, textbooks, teacher qualifications, recruitment, retention and some exams.⁴⁰²

In the **Gaza Strip**, education at UNRWA schools is implemented in accordance with the Palestinian Authority curriculum for Grades 1–9.⁴⁰³ The 245 UNRWA schools there serve more than 225,000 students a year.⁴⁰⁴ In addition, UNRWA offers technical and vocational training opportunities to about 1,300 students each year at its training centres in Gaza and Khan Younis, targeting the poorest and most vulnerable low-achieving students.⁴⁰⁵

Before the Education Programme launched, years of underfunding have left the education system in Gaza overstretched, with 94 per cent of schools operating on a double-shift basis. As a result, children's education has been negatively affected, with high percentages failing the math and Arabic exams. In the 2006 examinations, for example, nearly 80 per cent of students failed the math course and more than 40 per cent failed Arabic.⁴⁰⁶ To reverse this alarming trend, UNRWA introduced a "schools of excellence" initiative, which includes a human rights curriculum; provision of support materials for low achievers and enrichment materials for gifted and talented students; assistance to vulnerable and low-achieving students; and additional class time in Arabic and math.⁴⁰⁷

To support the work of the Education Programme on improving basic literacy and numeracy, UNRWA in Gaza also developed a satellite television channel that broadcasts educational programming.⁴⁰⁸ The channel began producing lessons in February 2012 and, as of 2013, had produced 1,050 lessons based on the Syrian curriculum in Arabic, math, English and science for six grades (402 lessons were produced in 2012 and 648 in 2013). Science for Grades 4–9 was added in 2013.⁴⁰⁹ Around 200,000 children regularly

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

³⁹⁸ Education: In Action, <www.unrwa.org/what-we-do/education>, accessed 26 May 2014.

³⁹⁹ UNRWA and UNESCO Education Programme, 2010, pp. 9-10.

⁴⁰⁰ UNRWA and UNESCO Education Programme, 2010, pp. 9-10.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid., p. 12.

⁴⁰² Ibid., p. 10.

⁴⁰³ Gaza in 2020: UNRWA operational response, May 2013, <unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.nsf/361eea1cc08301c485256cf600606959/aa1b7b90f79c031e85257b9d004de092?OpenDocument>, accessed 26 May 2014.

⁴⁰⁴ Education in the Gaza Strip, <www.unrwa.org/activity/education-gaza-strip>, accessed 26 May 2014.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁸ Gaza in 2020: UNRWA operational response, May 2013, <unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.nsf/361eea1cc08301c485256cf600606959/aa1b7b90f79c031e85257b9d004de092?OpenDocument>, accessed 26 May 2014.

⁴⁰⁹ UNRWA, 2013, pp. 17-18; "UNRWA and the EU Collaborate on Education in Emergency", 18 July 2013, <www.unrwa.org/newsroom/press-releases/unrwa-and-eu-collaborate-education-emergency-0>, accessed 26 May 2014.

watch UNRWA TV. According to a 2012 survey, 81 per cent of students in Gaza who watch televised lesson assistance think that there has been an improvement in their studies.⁴¹⁰ In 2013, some 6,736,177 viewers visited the UNRWA YouTube channel, a 19-time increase from 2012.⁴¹¹

In the **West Bank**, UNRWA provides only preparatory education up to Grade 9;⁴¹² secondary students enrol in public schools. UNRWA operates 99 schools that reach more than 50,000 students each year. Two vocational training centres accommodate more than 1,400 students a year in skilled trades and manufacturing.⁴¹³

UNRWA cooperates closely with the Palestine Authority, participating in technical coordination committees to deal with such issues as textbooks, school buildings and teacher training. The agency was involved in discussions regarding the new Palestine curriculum for all grades in general education, which was initiated in 2000 in public, private and the UNRWA schools.⁴¹⁴

In **Syria**, young Palestine refugees, particularly students, have been especially affected by the conflict. Because the majority of UNRWA schools are located within the Palestine refugee camps, which are areas that have suffered serious violence, the learning of children has been adversely affected. Before the outbreak of the conflict, all 118 UNRWA schools in Syria were running on double shifts to provide around 67,300 students each year with primary education, following the official Syrian curriculum. However, due to violence, damage, closures and other factors, only 42 of the 118 schools are currently operational. Some of them even operate with three shifts. UNRWA is providing education to some students in the afternoons at 43 public schools, with permission of the Syrian MOE.⁴¹⁵

UNRWA has made critical improvements to its emergency operations and has adapted its services to ensure their effectiveness and sustainability in response to the Syrian crisis.⁴¹⁶ Around 44,000 young Palestine refugees in Syria, which is around 70 per cent of the pre-conflict enrolment, are enrolled in an UNRWA school. The agency has worked with partners, including UNICEF and the General Administration for Palestine Arab Refugees, on numerous strategies to minimize the disruptions for students affected by the crisis. These strategies include self-learning materials; the TV programming broadcast by the Gaza-run UNRWA satellite station or posted on YouTube; summer programmes; transport to examinations; and psychosocial support for both students and teachers.⁴¹⁷

UNRWA plans to begin a feeding programme in its schools to ensure nutritional well-being and as extra incentive to prevent children from dropping out.⁴¹⁸ The agency remains committed to continuing its reform efforts despite the ongoing security conditions. It also recently launched a School-Based Teacher Development and a Leading for the Future initiatives to strengthen its commitment to provide high-quality basic education to Palestine refugees in Syria.⁴¹⁹

Also in Syria, the Self-Learning Programme⁴²⁰ targets all Palestine refugee children aged 6–15 (Grades 1–9). It is both a structured programme and a set of learning resources. It can be adapted for use at school, in the home, in refugee locations or shelters (which is related to non-formal education) and elsewhere (where there is no type of direct contact with children and families). Despite its flexibility, the programme is beset with several challenges: reduced instructional contact hours, disrupted attendance, psychosocial difficulties of children and a high

⁴¹⁰ Gaza in 2020: UNRWA Operational Response. May 2013. <unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.nsf/361eea1cc08301c485256cf600606959/aa1b7b90f79c031e85257b9d004de092?OpenDocument>, accessed 26 May 2014.

⁴¹¹ UNRWA, 2013, p. 19.

⁴¹² UNRWA considers preparatory education an integral part of the basic education cycle. Thus, it is compulsory and free of charge. Upon successful completion of the elementary cycle (six years of schooling), UNRWA students are promoted to the preparatory cycle, which in the West Bank, Gaza, Syria and Lebanon consists of three years and in Jordan it is four years (UNRWA Education Reform Strategy 2011-2015, p. 17).

⁴¹³ Education in the West Bank, <www.unrwa.org/activity/education-west-bank>, accessed 26 May 2014.

⁴¹⁴ UNICEF, 2010, pp. 14, 16.

⁴¹⁵ Education in Syria, <www.unrwa.org/activity/education-syria>, accessed 26 May 2014.

⁴¹⁶ UNRWA, 2014, p. 5.

⁴¹⁷ Education in Syria, <www.unrwa.org/activity/education-syria>, accessed 26 May 2014; UNRWA, 2014, p. 12.

⁴¹⁸ UNRWA, 2014, p. 12.

⁴¹⁹ Education in Syria, <www.unrwa.org/activity/education-syria>, accessed 26 May 2014.

⁴²⁰ Also refer to chapter 2, Syria, on the development, purpose, use and inclusion of the self-learning materials within the MOE emergency programmes.

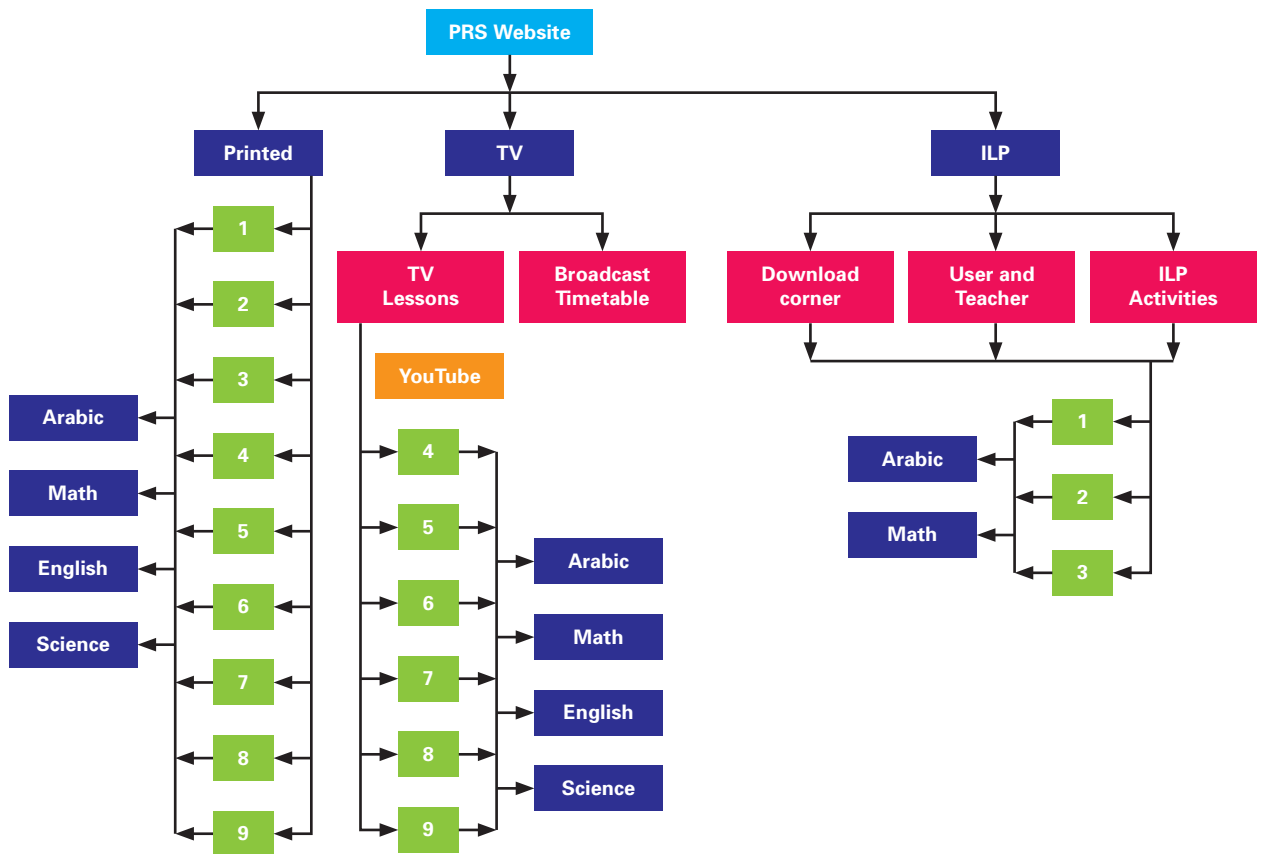
drop-out rate. Systemic adjustments are needed in relation to system capacity and teacher and student support to overcome those issues, in particular:

- Essential skills – The focus should stick to basic skills, such as literacy, numeracy and life skills.
- A variety of learning tools – A variety of media and writing styles should be used to engage different learning needs.
- A modular approach – It is important to adopt a flexible deployment of space and time. Materials should reinforce each other in a coherent way.
- Support and delivery structures – The role of teachers should be defined and learning should be supported through lesson plans and formative assessment.

Prior knowledge is required for the use of the self-learning tools, particularly the technology and computer literacy and self-learning skills (learning to learn skills).⁴²¹ The tools adapted by the Self-Learning Programme to the Syrian curriculum (see Figure 3) include:

- Grades 1–9: printed self-learning materials in core subjects.
- Grades 1–3: Interactive Learning Programme, with a focus on literacy and numeracy and is available online and on CDs.
- Grades 4–9: education TV lessons in core subjects (English, Arabic, math and science).
- Games and support videos (Taallam TV): available online and on CDs.⁴²²

Figure 3 UNRWA self-learning tools adapted to the Syrian curriculum



Lebanon is the only area where UNRWA offers secondary education, with nine schools.⁴²³ In total, its 69 schools reach some 31,750 students a year

throughout the country. UNRWA also operates two vocational training centres, reaching 1,082 students. In addition, UNRWA has taken a special

⁴²¹ This section is based on a presentation by Alberto Biancoli, UNRWA Education Programme Specialist, at the UNICEF MENA Syria Crisis Education Strategy Meeting in Amman (April 2014).

⁴²² Ibid.

⁴²³ Education in Lebanon, <www.unrwa.org/activity/education-lebanon>, accessed 26 May 2014.

interest in inclusive education for students with disabilities. It is piloting a Special People Special Focus Project in the city Saida and in coordination with other UNRWA departments and NGOs. The project includes awareness-raising campaigns for school staff, parents and community members; building teachers' capacity to identify students with disabilities; and forming Student Support Teams in schools.⁴²⁴

Although the UNRWA education system provides an important response for thousands of Palestine refugee children from Syria, absorbing the continuing addition of students is a growing challenge. The transition between the Syrian curriculum and the Lebanese curriculum has been difficult to manage. To continue assisting children during this difficult time, UNRWA is enhancing its psychosocial support to Palestine refugee children in schools through the training of teachers and school counsellors as well as the recruitment of counsellors.⁴²⁵

In **Jordan**, UNRWA provides basic education to more than 115,000 students at 173 schools. Students in Grades 4, 8 and 10 take national quality-control tests in the core subjects (Arabic, English, science and math) and consistently achieve better results than students from the private and public schools. UNRWA also provides university education in teaching, Arabic and English to about 1,200 students through the Faculty of Educational Sciences and Arts. Based on its commitment to accessible education, UNRWA is developing a scholarship and stipend programme for Palestine refugee students. The programme will allow study fellows to serve at UNRWA schools for twice the period of their study, which will not only help students access further education but will also help the agency by filling vacant posts in high-demand subjects. UNRWA plans to initiate a similar scholarship programme for post-graduates to ensure the sustainability of the faculty teaching staff.⁴²⁶

Continued education is vital to alleviate the impact of conflict and displacement on refugee children and youth, to maintain a sense of normalcy in their lives and to equip them with the academic, vocational and life skills they need to lead

productive and fulfilling lives. Palestine refugee children (from Syria) and Syrian children living in Palestine refugee camps can access Grades 1–10 in the 173 UNRWA schools across the country. Outreach initiatives and flexible entry requirements have boosted total school enrolment to more than 1,800 students. Another 1,100 students are reportedly registered in a private or public school, including children who live in Cyber City and are transported to a nearby school by UNICEF. The school enrolment rate of Palestine refugee children (from Syria), which is estimated at 60 per cent, remains low and thus requires targeted solutions. UNRWA has recruited four counsellors who will train 173 teacher counsellors to help address the many psychosocial problems affecting Palestine refugee children (from Syria).⁴²⁷

Despite the many strengths and achievements of the UNRWA education system, there has been growing recognition, both within and beyond the agency, of the need for comprehensive reform. The results of the agency-wide Monitoring Learning Achievements tests reinforced a perception of declining quality.⁴²⁸ In response, the UNRWA Education Programme in 2011 launched a major four-year reform strategy with the goal of meeting the demands of a 21st century education system and improving services for Palestine refugee students. The strategy covers:

- The provision of well-trained and motivated teachers within empowered schools.
- Equal access for all children, regardless of sex, ability, health conditions and socio-economic status.
- A relevant and accessible curriculum.
- A suitable school and classroom environment.
- Well-developed learning resources, including the use of new technology.⁴²⁹

Assuring quality curriculum in UNRWA schools is an integral component of its Education Reform Strategy 2011–2015. UNRWA strives to ensure that the education it provides to its nearly 500,000 students is aligned with broader United Nations development goals, values, principles and purposes.

⁴²⁴ Education in Lebanon, <www.unrwa.org/activity/education-lebanon>, accessed 26 May 2014.

⁴²⁵ UNRWA, 2014, p. 18.

⁴²⁶ Education in Jordan. <http://www.unrwa.org/activity/education-jordan> Accessed 26 May 2014.

⁴²⁷ Syria Regional Crisis Response January – December 2014. UNRWA. p. 25.

⁴²⁸ UNRWA Education Reform Strategy 2012–2015. p. v.

⁴²⁹ Education: In Action, <www.unrwa.org/what-we-do/education>, accessed 26 May 2014.

Within the reform strategy framework, the **UNRWA Framework for Analysis and Quality Implementation of the Curriculum (Curriculum Framework)** was developed to support the schools and teachers in enriching the curriculum and students' learning experiences (see Figure 4).⁴³⁰ The Curriculum Framework provides an important element of commonality across the areas where UNRWA operates as well as an opportunity to analyse and enrich the host

country/authority curriculum. The curriculum in UNRWA schools operates at two levels: (i) the curriculum as set out at the national level by host countries/authorities (the national curriculum); and (ii) the set of enrichment materials that UNRWA schools provide to students (the school curriculum).⁴³¹ By adopting the host governments' curricula and standards, UNRWA ensures the smooth transition of students from its schools to the mainstream education system.⁴³²

Figure 4 Curriculum Framework model

Aims				
Proud Palestinians	Successful life-long learners	Confident young people	Active citizens	
Values underpinning the curriculum				
Pride in Palestinian identity	Achieve every student's full potential	Commitment to justice, tolerance, inclusiveness, diversity and human rights	Respect for nature, environment and sustainable development	
Principles of the curriculum				
Students competencies				
Critical and creative thinking	Constructive learning	Communication and literacy	Cooperation	Citizenship

In addition to being a framework for curriculum analysis, the Curriculum Framework serves as a policy reference document – a way of ensuring that the curriculum embodies United Nations values and a framework for professional development.⁴³³

The Curriculum Framework will add quality to the host country/authority curricula by reflecting the aspirations of the UNWRA Education Reform Strategy. The strategy envisages a curriculum that:

- develops the full potential of all Palestine refugees;
- supports a holistic approach to learning and personal and social development;
- combines subject learning, skills and attitudes to develop competencies;

- provides equal access for all students to quality education;
- promotes critical thinking, problem-solving, team work and creativity;
- engages students in active learning that excites imaginations and extends their horizons; and
- promotes a culture of human rights, conflict resolution and tolerance.⁴³⁴

In Lebanon, UNRWA has also established committees at the central and area levels as a preliminary step to implementing a Curriculum Framework. Standards, instructional materials and tools have been introduced with education specialists, and curriculum analysis based on the framework was scheduled to begin in January 2014.⁴³⁵

⁴³⁰ UNRWA Framework for Analysis and Quality Implementation of the Curriculum, p. 1.

⁴³⁰ UNRWA Framework for Analysis and Quality Implementation of the Curriculum, p. 3.

⁴³² UNRWA and UNESCO, 2010, p. 16.

⁴³³ UNRWA Framework for Analysis and Quality Implementation of the Curriculum, p. 1.

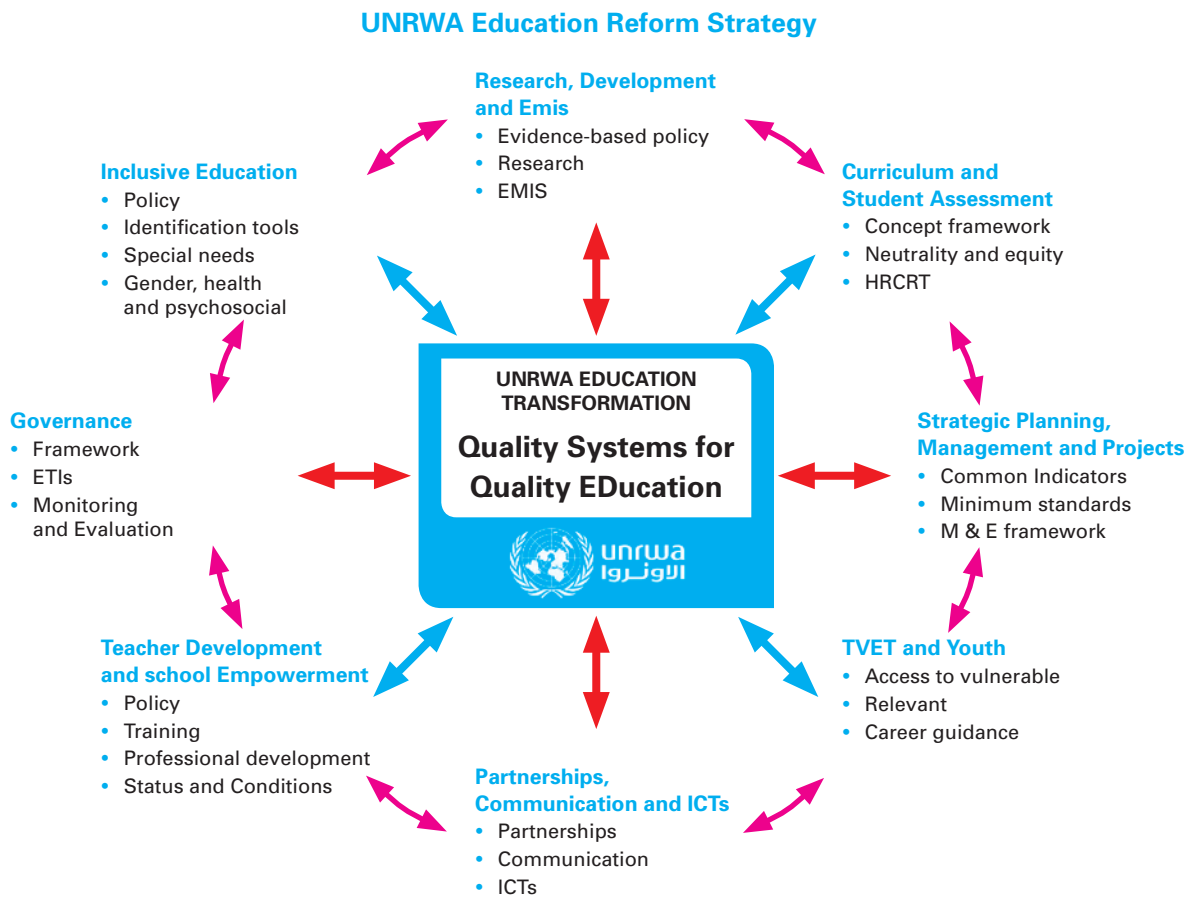
⁴³⁴ UNRWA Framework for Analysis and Quality Implementation of the Curriculum, pp. 3-4.

⁴³⁵ Ibid.

The Curriculum Framework is aligned with and supported by all areas of the Education Reform Strategy. This involves four reform programmes and the four reform support areas (see Figure 5):

- Substantive reform programmes:
 - Teacher Development and School Empowerment
 - Inclusive Education
 - Technical and Vocational Training and Youth
 - Curriculum and Student Assessment.
- Reform support areas:
 - Research, Development and EMIS
 - Governance
 - Strategic Planning, Management and Projects
 - Partnerships, Communication and ICT.⁴³⁶

Figure 5 The eight interrelated areas of the UNRWA Education Reform Strategy⁴³⁷



The Education Reform Strategy includes a number of cross-cutting issues for curriculum delivery in UNRWA schools. Two issues of particular importance are inclusion and gender equality. The inclusive approach to curriculum delivery requires enrichment, differentiation and adaptation of curriculum content, materials, methods and assessment to meet the individual needs of all

students. The gender analysis of curriculum involves recognition and the addressing of behaviours, attitudes, teaching practices, textbooks and other materials that reinforce gender stereotypes and bias.⁴³⁸

In addition, there are several important cross-curriculum themes:

⁴³⁶ UNRWA Framework for Analysis and Quality Implementation of the Curriculum, p. 4.

⁴³⁷ The figure is taken from a presentation by Caroline Pontefract, UNRWA Director of Education, at the 2012 UNICEF MENA Education Network Meeting in Amman.

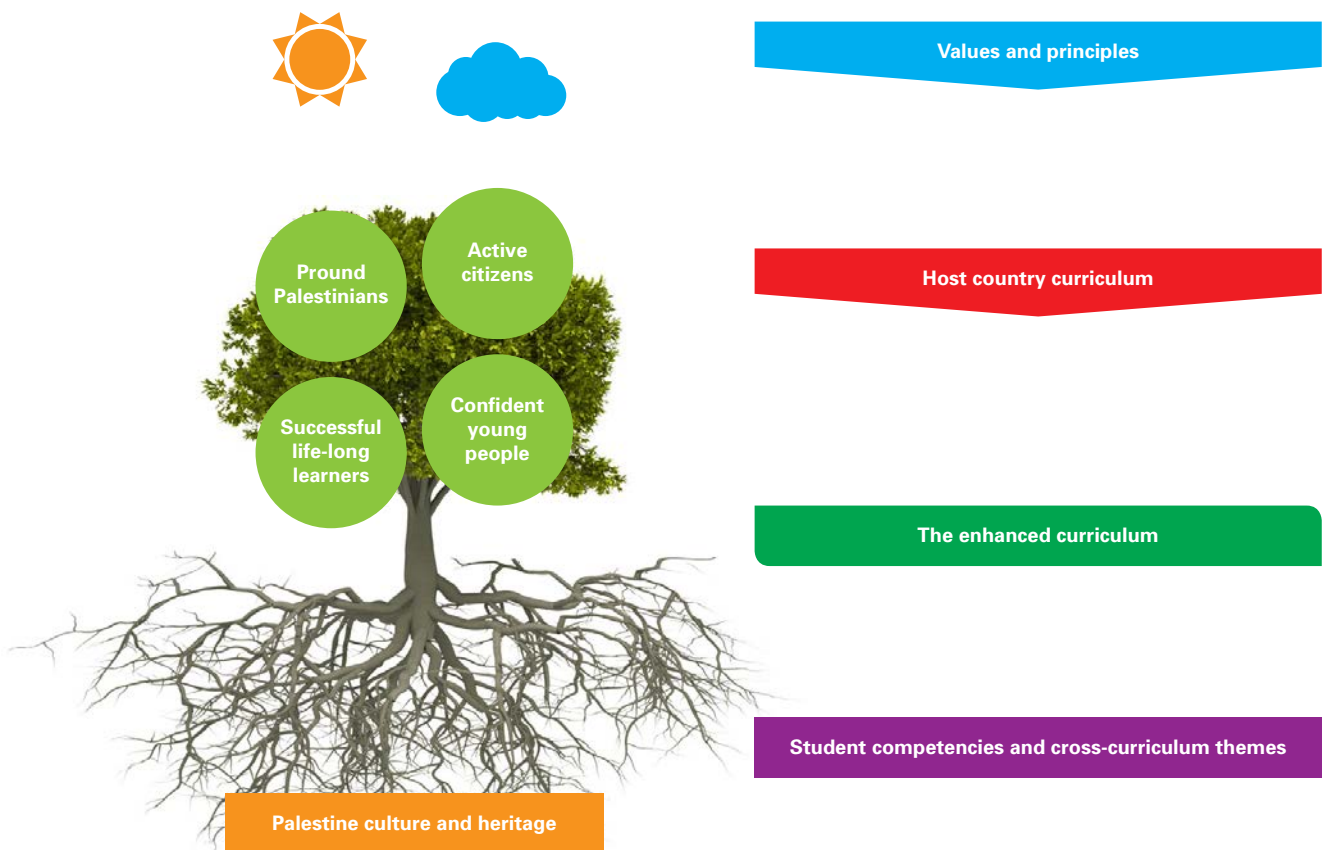
⁴³⁸ UNRWA Framework for Analysis and Quality Implementation of the Curriculum, p. 4.

- environmental education
- human rights education
- health and life skills
- Palestinian culture and heritage
- information and communication technology.⁴³⁹

The way in which aims, values, principles and student competencies can impact on the host country/authority curriculum is illustrated in

Figure 6. The Curriculum Framework model as a tree shows how these elements can come together to promote an effective curriculum. In this model, the student competencies are the roots of learning and the subjects are the leaves. The subjects of the host country/authority curriculum are linked together by the UNRWA cross-curriculum themes. The roots and the leaves, which are both essential to the tree's growth, are joined together by the trunk, which is the enhanced curriculum.⁴⁴⁰

Figure 6 Curriculum Framework model: the enhanced curriculum



UNRWA also developed a Human Rights, Conflict Resolution and Tolerance Programme,⁴⁴¹ also in line with the Education Reform Strategy, the United Nations Charter and international human rights documents. UNRWA developed a human rights policy, through which it seeks to promote a unified rights-based approach to education.⁴⁴² The human rights education intends to empower Palestine refugee students to:

- enjoy and exercise their rights;
- uphold United Nations and human rights values;
- be proud of their Palestine identity; and
- contribute positively to their society and the global community.

⁴³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁰ UNRWA Framework for Analysis and Quality Implementation of the Curriculum, pp. 9-11.

⁴⁴¹ Education in the Gaza Strip, <www.unrwa.org/activity/education-gaza-strip>, accessed 26 May 2014.

⁴⁴² UNRWA HRCRT Programme.

The policy focuses on human rights principles that are of particular relevance to the Palestine context and outlines the competencies to be developed by the students throughout their schooling. It also addresses competencies related to conflict resolution and tolerance.⁴⁴³

In line with the World Programme for Human Rights Education, the UNRWA policy defines human rights education as “education, training and information aiming at building a universal culture of human rights through the sharing of knowledge, imparting of skills and moulding of attitudes”.⁴⁴⁴ Thus, the UNRWA human rights policy is learner-centred, allowing for a range of approaches to integrate human rights education within the curricula of host countries. It also addresses cross-cutting issues: gender, youth, protection, inclusive education for children with disabilities and the educational environment.⁴⁴⁵

The agency’s 20,000 teachers and education staff have a central role in the delivery of quality education to Palestine refugee children.⁴⁴⁶ As part of its reform strategy, a single coherent and unified teacher policy was developed⁴⁴⁷ after extensive meetings with Chiefs and staff from its headquarters and the five areas where it operates.⁴⁴⁸ The Teacher Policy addresses issues related to recruitment, professional development, continuous support and career progression.⁴⁴⁹ Teachers are encouraged to engage in lifelong professional learning; as well, there are clear and transparent mechanisms for monitoring teacher performance and school quality.⁴⁵⁰

The professional training and development that UNRWA offers its teachers covers:

- In-service training – Upgrading teachers’ professional qualifications helps them adapt to curriculum changes, improve their teaching methods and develop their educational and supervisory skills.

- Pre-service teacher training – UNRWA offers a two-year pre-service teacher education programme for those who do not have a teaching qualification in fields where they are needed. This programme is intended to meet the needs of operation areas, such as Lebanon and Jordan, where teachers without pedagogic training are recruited.⁴⁵¹

UNRWA conducts regular internal testing of its operations. In 2009, the first agency-wide monitoring learning achievement (MLA) test was implemented to provide comparable data on student achievement (Arabic and math in Grades 4 and 8). The MLA also sought to identify the skills and concepts with which students have specific difficulties and to support the design of appropriate remedial strategies. More than 50,000 students participated in the first MLA (more than 10,000 students for each grade level and subject), with at least one class section involved in each UNRWA school. To link students’ achievement to contextual factors, supplementary information was gathered through 1,800 teacher and 7,000 student questionnaires.

The MLA revealed overall low achievement compared with curricular expectations, with students performing lowest when items were linked to real-world contexts or required higher-order thinking. There were also important differences between individuals and schools within each area of operation, with these differences significantly greater than between operation areas. The MLA provided the impetus to focus on improving learning and education quality in general and was the impetus for the reform strategy.⁴⁵²

Since first conducting the MLA testing, UNRWA has worked to enhance and improve the tests. In May 2013, the MLA tests in Arabic and math were administered to a sample of 64,000 students in Grades 4 and 8 in Lebanon, Jordan, Gaza and the West Bank. Due to the emergency situation,

⁴⁴³ UNRWA HRCRT Programme.

⁴⁴⁴ *Plan of Action for first phase (2005–2009) of the World Programme for Human Rights Education (A/59/525/Rev.1)*; UNRWA HRCRT Programme.

⁴⁴⁵ UNRWA HRCRT Programme (one pager).

⁴⁴⁶ UNRWA Teacher Policy, 2013, p. ii.

⁴⁴⁷ UNRWA Teacher Policy, 2013, pp. 1-2.

⁴⁴⁸ UNRWA Teacher Policy, 2013, p. 3.

⁴⁴⁹ UNRWA Teacher Policy, 2013, p. ii.

⁴⁵⁰ UNRWA Teacher Policy, 2013, p. 8.

⁴⁵¹ Education: Teacher Training, <www.unrwa.org/what-we-do/teacher-training>, accessed 26 May 2014.

⁴⁵² Based on a presentation by Gabrielle Bonnet, former UNRWA Senior Education Programme Specialist, at the 2012 UNICEF MENA Education Network Meeting in Amman (September).

it was not possible to test students in Syria. According to Caroline Pontefract, UNRWA Director of Education, the periodic implementation of the MLA is an important milestone of the development of a unified education assessment system. The results will also help the agency develop baseline data with which to measure the impact of the Education Reform Strategy over time.

UNRWA intends to administer the MLA every two years as part of its monitoring and evaluation strategy and to support informed decision-making and continued improvement of quality education.⁴⁵³ The results will help UNRWA to develop appropriate agency-wide and area-specific interventions to improve students' performance.

⁴⁵³ "UNRWA evaluates student progress to improve education programme" (July 2013), <www.unrwa.org/newsroom/press-releases/unrwa-evaluates-student-progress-improve-education-programme>, accessed 26 May 2014.



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REFUGEE EDUCATION IN DIVERSE CONTEXTS

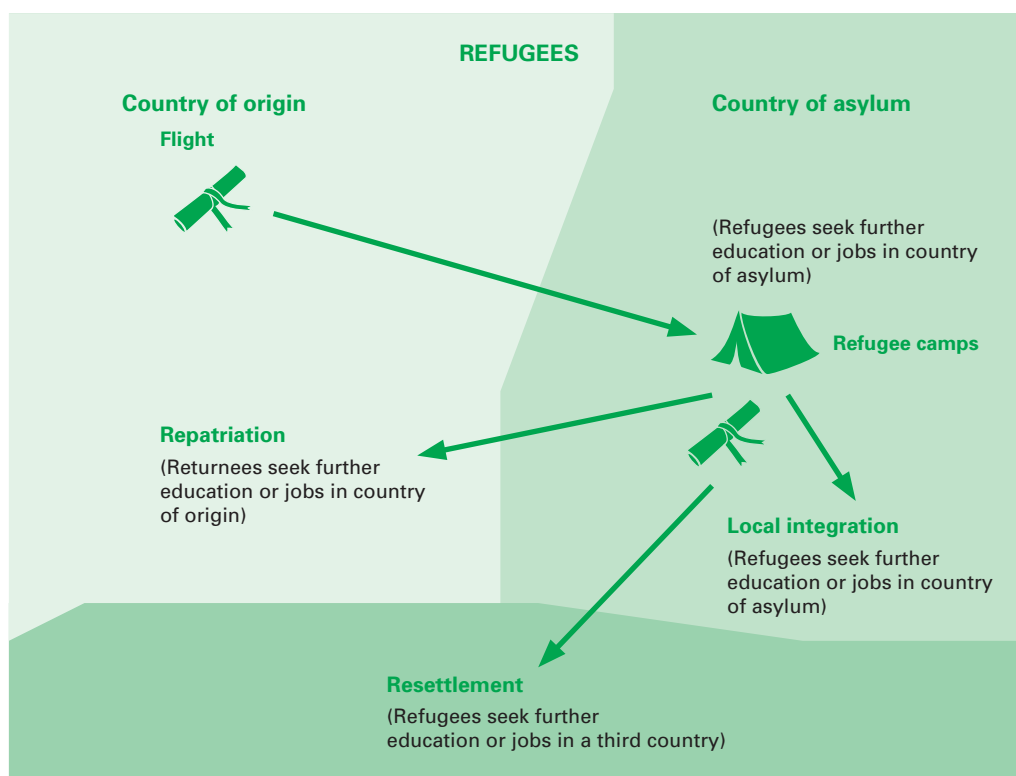
9 Refugee education in diverse contexts

9.1 Introduction

Refugee children are often confronted with multiple challenges in terms of access to quality learning and obtaining official recognition of such learning. As Figure 7 suggests, there are different possible ‘certification scenarios’ in the experience of a refugee child, even within one level of education.⁴⁵⁴ Certification is usually of particular concern at the end of an education cycle (primary, lower secondary or upper secondary education).⁴⁵⁵ Despite international conventions, treaties and legal and rights-based instruments, there is a lack of consistency in the recognition and certification of learning. Furthermore, recognition of refugee children’s prior learning by the home or host government education ministry frequently

requires difficult negotiations on an individual basis.⁴⁵⁶ Even where there is willingness to create mechanisms for recognizing refugee children’s qualification or prior learning, technical challenges may need to be overcome, such as: matching a grade level in one system to the appropriate grade level in another; placing and absorbing students who transfer mid-cycle (in the middle of a primary or lower secondary cycle) or mid-school year (in the middle of a school year, whether or not in the middle of a certain cycle); and, comparing curricula to identify differences and thus requirements for moving from one system into another.⁴⁵⁷

Figure 7 Displacement and educational certification for refugee children⁴⁵⁸



⁴⁵⁴ Kirk, 2009, p. 34.

⁴⁵⁵ Kirk, 2009, p. 36.

⁴⁵⁶ Kirk, 2009, p. 39.

⁴⁵⁷ Kirk, 2009, p. 43.

⁴⁵⁸ Talbot, 2006, cited in Kirk, 2009, p. 34.

To address these challenges and enable refugee children to achieve certification for their learning, education ministries, United Nations agencies, NGOs, education experts, teachers and students around the world have developed and implemented a variety of strategies. Some of these strategies have been effective and have had significant impact on thousands of students' education paths; some have had additional benefits (capacity building of education planners and managers in exile); and some have been less successful and more short term.⁴⁵⁹

As evidenced by the UNRWA case study and the following examples, the challenges related to certification are political as much as they are

educational. Therefore, solutions responding to the needs of students and families need to take into consideration the complex and differing political contexts. For example, host governments may have concerns related to security, stability or resources and, as a result, may be reluctant to link refugee children to host education systems out of fear that this would prolong the displacement period. Host governments may encourage education for repatriation, especially if the accreditation and certification of refugee children's learning would lead to successful competition in the home country's job market. Governments in home countries may refuse to provide their own curricula and examinations to refugee children to encourage repatriation.⁴⁶⁰

9.2 Afghan refugee children in Pakistan

In 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, leading to a massive influx of Afghan refugees into Pakistan. In 1996, the Taliban came to power, which resulted into another wave of refugees sent to Pakistan. The crisis was further exacerbated by the United States-led invasion in 2001.⁴⁶¹ Despite continuing political and economic instability, substantial voluntary repatriation to Afghanistan took place in 2002. Still, by the end of January 2007, the Pakistan Government registered 2.16 million Afghans of an estimated 2.4 million still in the country.⁴⁶²

Although there is some cultural resistance to girls' education, especially among illiterate refugee families, many Afghan refugees value education and consider it to be important for their children's future. In Pakistan, government policy and a desire for return to Afghanistan shape the educational options for refugee children. Because Pakistan's education system significantly differs from that of Afghanistan, many refugee students study the Afghan curriculum.⁴⁶³ The International Rescue Committee responded to pleas for support from existing Afghan refugee schools that no longer had the funds to now provide programmes at an adequate standard. IRC-supported schools provide primary education for both refugee boys and girls and secondary

education (Grades 7–12) for refugee girls. In addition, home schools were formed in more remote and/or conservative areas where there were not enough students to establish a school or girls were not allowed to leave their neighbourhoods. These home schools followed the same curriculum as refugee schools.⁴⁶⁴

The IRC-supported schools use the curriculum of Afghanistan's MOE, promoting learning in children's first language. Since 2002, the IRC has made significant efforts to gain endorsement of the programme and the related certification of students and teachers' training with the goal of harmonizing refugees' education with education in their home country, thereby facilitating the processes of return and reintegration. At the height of the programme in 2001/2002, IRC-supported schools (38 regular schools and 37 home-based schools) enrolled 26,000 students and hired 1,000 teachers. To support the expansion of the programme and access, particularly for girls, emphasis was placed on teacher training. With time, IRC could also rely on a cohort of Grade 12 female graduates, some of whom were interested in training as teachers.⁴⁶⁵

However, as repatriation started in 2002, IRC faced a major challenge related to reintegrating

⁴⁵⁹ Kirk, 2009, p. 44.

⁴⁶⁰ Kirk, 2009, p. 51.

⁴⁶¹ Kirk, 2009, p. 128.

⁴⁶² Kirk, 2009, pp. 128-129.

⁴⁶³ Kirk, 2009, p. 129.

⁴⁶⁴ Kirk, 2009, p. 130.

⁴⁶⁵ Kirk, 2009, p. 130.

students and teachers back in Afghanistan – the lack of mechanisms to recognize an IRC-issued secondary school certificate. Thus, the MOE in Afghanistan prepared guidelines for the Afghan Consulate in Peshawar (Pakistan) to follow, with the agreement that an Afghan Consulate stamp on students' certificates from schools registered with the Consulate would facilitate recognition in Afghanistan. All students sit for examinations at the end of the school year and all teachers in IRC-supported schools receive certificates. The IRC became the first NGO supporting refugee education to achieve this official certification. Consequently, parents prefer to send their children to schools with this official certification because it facilitates repatriation and reintegration. In addition, a 'reintegration unit' was established within the IRC Afghanistan office in Kabul to facilitate the return of both students and teachers to Afghanistan. The unit also supports the exchange of curriculum and teacher-training materials developed in Pakistan,

which constitutes a valuable resource for the new Afghan education system.⁴⁶⁶

The registration of the IRC-supported schools with the Afghan MOE has guaranteed all repatriating students placement at the appropriate grade level in Afghanistan. Since IRC formalized its relationship with the Afghan MOE, there have been no reports of students from IRC-supported schools having difficulties transferring to the appropriate grade level back home. Thus, the IRC-supported schools were the first refugee schools in Pakistan to use the officially endorsed Afghan curriculum and to be officially recognized by the Afghan MOE. This curriculum did not have to undergo significant changes to bring it up to date with Afghanistan's new policy. The IRC-supported schools also made every effort to follow policy developments and adopt new guidelines and directives issued from Afghanistan.⁴⁶⁷

9.3 Refugee and migrant children on the Thailand–Myanmar border

More than 500,000 internally displaced persons are estimated to be living in eastern Myanmar. There are two official Karenni⁴⁶⁸ refugee camps in the northern province of Mae Hong Son in Thailand and seven official camps dominated by Karen residents located further south along the border. More than 200,000 Burmese refugees live outside the camps in Thailand, and more than 2 million migrant workers from Myanmar are living in Thailand.⁴⁶⁹

The Karen State has an education department that supports students and teachers inside Myanmar, as well as many refugee and migrant schools in Thailand. The Karen Education Department (KED) in Thailand views itself as an MOE of a government in exile. The Karenni Educational Department (KnED), which does not have as long a history, is responsible for Karenni education in its two northern refugee camps.⁴⁷⁰

The first schools in the refugee camps and migrant areas used ad hoc curricula based on the old British curriculum, the Burmese curriculum and elements of Australian and American curricula brought in by expatriate volunteers. There are three main international NGOs working on education along the border: ZOA Refugee Care, which works primarily in the seven Karen camps; Jesuit Refugee Care (JRC), which works in the two Karenni camps; and, World Education Thailand, which focuses on migrant education and supports teacher training in the refugee camps.

A 1999 change in government policy granted, at least in theory, migrant, refugee and stateless children the right to attend Thai schools and the chance to obtain Thai certificates.⁴⁷¹ Many challenges have persisted, however, such as financial difficulties, language barriers, discrimination and lack of access to Grades 11 and 12 (these grades are not considered a right by the Thai Constitution).⁴⁷²

⁴⁶⁶ Kirk, 2009, p. 131.

⁴⁶⁷ Kirk, 2009, pp. 132-133.

⁴⁶⁸ Karenni is one of the eight major ethnic groups in Myanmar: Burmans, the Chin, Kachin, Karen, Kayah (Karenni), Mon, Rakhine (Arakan) and Shan (Kirk, 2009, p. 138).

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁰ Kirk, 2009, p. 141.

⁴⁷¹ In 1999, the Thai Government adopted an Education For All policy that enabled all children living in Thailand the right to attend Thai (and other) schools and the chance to obtain Thai certificates.

⁴⁷² Kirk, 2009, pp. 141-143.

Children and youth living in the refugee camps can be educated up to Grade 10, and both the KED and the KnED⁴⁷³ are responsible for curriculum development, standardizing the curriculum, teacher training and school inspection. Some of the Karen displaced persons and migrant schools use the KED curriculum, testing and certification processes, but some migrant schools employ different curricula and issue their own certificates. The Karen and Karenni organizations want to foster a generation of students who know the languages and customs of their ancestors. Thus, Karen and Karenni groups along the border have a special interest in the curriculum and the certificates issued. However, even though the KED and the KnED regard themselves as education ministries in waiting, they are not internationally recognized. Furthermore, the curriculum they have developed and the certificates they provide are not recognized beyond their own communities.⁴⁷⁴

Karen and Karenni groups are part of a larger umbrella group called the National Health and Education Committee (NHEC) located in Thailand, India and China. The NHEC has developed a curriculum that could be used for Myanmar, although it also lacks international recognition. Even though it produces certificates for its formal education programmes along the border, they cannot be used by refugee and migrant school students as the basis to attend a university, including Thai universities. The KED has been trying to establish its own university, but such an institution would face the same problems as the primary and secondary schools – its certificates would unlikely enable graduating students to pursue further academic or career opportunities.⁴⁷⁵

Although many ethnic Burmese young people without Thai citizenship receive a Thai education, it is still difficult for them to obtain the certification needed to apply to Thai universities. Thus, in terms of accreditation and certification, it has been proposed that migrant and refugee schools

teach the Thai curriculum for math, science, Thai language and English, with additional courses in ethnic culture and indigenous languages, such as Karen and Karenni. This would allow migrant and refugee children to receive an internationally recognized Thai education certificate as well as protect and promote their cultural identity. However, translating the migrant, refugee and Thai curricula and identifying common content areas has proven to be a major obstacle. Although Thai certificates will resolve some of the issues related to certification, some concerns persist. The most significant ones are the mobility within Thailand of students who obtain certificates, and local ownership and relevance of the education curriculum. Even though Thai certification could give migrants and refugees access to universities and jobs in Thailand, there are severe limitations on travel and employment for workers from Myanmar in Thailand. Also, the issue of local ownership needs attention, given the pride of local authorities in the curriculum they helped develop.⁴⁷⁶

There are a select few migrants and refugees along the border who have access to internationally recognized certificates. For instance, one religious school in Mae La refugee camp uses a curriculum from India, and students earn internationally recognized Indian certificates. There is also an NGO assisting refugees, migrants and internally displaced persons to obtain a General Educational Development certificate, which is an American test for those applying to American universities that is accepted by some Thai universities. However, the programme is very competitive, with only about 20 students admitted each year. The main drawback in these two cases is that both Indian and American curricula, despite their international recognition, are not completely relevant for refugees from Myanmar living in Thailand.⁴⁷⁷

⁴⁷³ The Karen Education Department (KED), in exile in Thailand, is regarded as a community-based organization. However, its members view themselves more as an MOE of a government in exile. As for the Karenni Educational Department (KnED), it is responsible for Karenni education in two of the northern refugee camps (Kirk, 2009, p. 141).

⁴⁷⁴ Kirk, 2009, p. 143-144.

⁴⁷⁵ Kirk, 2009, pp. 144-145.

⁴⁷⁶ Kirk, 2009, pp. 145-146.

⁴⁷⁷ Kirk, 2009, pp. 146-147.

9.4 Internally displaced children from Chechnya in Ingushetia

At the height of the Chechen–Russian conflict in 1999, more than 200,000 Chechens were displaced to Ingushetia, with 45 per cent of all internally displaced persons younger than 18. In January 2000, the IRC introduced its emergency education programme, which combined non-formal education and psychosocial activities. However, parents were concerned that their children’s participation in the programme would not be recognized upon their return to Chechnya. To address this issue, the IRC sought recognition of its schools and formal certification via the Ministry of Education. As a result, the emergency education programme evolved from a non-formal to a formal education programme by November 2000. The IRC collaborated with both the Ministry of Education in Ingushetia (where Chechen refugees had fled) and the MOE in Chechnya and received study plans from both ministries. In June 2001, the MOE in Ingushetia scheduled final examinations for all internally displaced children from Chechnya to assess academic progress and certify all qualifying students.⁴⁷⁸

The lack of appropriate textbooks initially posed the biggest barrier to student certification; but with the support of the MOE in Ingushetia, the IRC managed to negotiate subsidized Chechen-language textbooks at half the price. This was accompanied by training of additional teachers to meet increased enrolment. By the end of 2003, 1,560 of all 1,597 students in the IRC education programme passed their certification exams, and 1,544 received grade-level certificates. In addition, the introduction of the IRC formal education programme coincided with the process of standardizing the education curricula throughout the Russian Federation. This meant that preparation for a nationwide test had to be included into the IRC curriculum, for which the IRC received support from both the MOE in Ingushetia and the MOE in Chechnya.⁴⁷⁹

There are a number of factors contributing to the certification access for internally displaced students in Chechnya. The involvement of

parents, who were generally highly educated and saw education as the best means to secure a future, contributed to the high enrolment and attendance rates. The IRC also benefited from the wealth of experience and expertise of some highly qualified displaced teachers in the settlement community who had teaching certification from the MOE in Chechnya. These teachers brought with them curriculum textbooks and materials, which considerably facilitated the processes of curriculum development and certification of teachers. In addition, the engagement of the MOE in Ingushetia in the initial stages of the formal education programme ensured that student learning and teacher training complied with education and certification standards. The IRC also utilized various resources for capacity building and further development of the education programme, including other NGO implementing partners: the Centre for Peacemaking and Community Development, which provided school meals; the Danish Refugee Council, which provided staff and teacher training on mine awareness; and CARE, Médecins Sans Frontières France and ARD, which provided teacher training on psychosocial support.⁴⁸⁰

The IRC drew out a number of lessons from this experience.

- Early collaboration with the education ministry is essential. A close working relationship with the education ministry is crucial because it will minimize the chances of creating parallel education programming that is difficult to certify.
- Community participation and capacity building must be encouraged. Making use of the human resources within the displaced community can promote community ownership and encourage enrolment and attendance.
- Organizational links in the territory of origin must be maintained. The IRC presence in Chechnya and communication with the MOE facilitated negotiation to certify IRC settlement schools and teachers in Ingushetia.

⁴⁷⁸ Kirk, 2009, pp. 161-163.

⁴⁷⁹ Kirk, 2009, pp. 163-165.

⁴⁸⁰ Kirk, 2009, p. 167.

- Education partners must be encouraged to coordinate. Through coordination and collaboration among partners, minimal resources have a significant impact. Collaboration includes partners implementing

formal education programmes as well as others providing support in the form of training, classroom tents and extracurricular activities.⁴⁸¹

9.5 Refugee children in the IRC Guinea Education Programme

Throughout the 1990s, conflict gripped Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire, resulting in hundreds of thousands of refugees moving to Guinea. However, the Anglophone students could not easily integrate in the Francophone Guinean education system.⁴⁸² There was also initially no overarching framework within which all refugee schools could operate. The IRC thus established a basic system, similar to the one used in Liberia. The IRC provided an organizing framework for the schools, but there was a shortage of textbooks and materials and no formalized curriculum. Despite students' and teachers' hopes, the wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone continued,⁴⁸³ and it became clear that a more long-term solution was needed. Parents and students wanted to be sure that the courses offered by the IRC schools would be equivalent to those in their home countries and that their certificates would be recognized upon repatriation.⁴⁸⁴

Because there were refugees from two countries in the same camps, the IRC had to ensure that the curriculum it developed would be valid in both Liberia and Sierra Leone. This presented a significant challenge because the Guinean Ministry of Education, with its French-language curriculum, could not help. The IRC was thus faced with three challenges: how to combine the Liberian and Sierra Leonean curricula so that

students could return at any time without losing credit for class hours; how to ensure that refugee students were adequately prepared to take their separate West African Examinations Council (WAEC) examinations; and, how to convince the WAEC examiners and the Liberian and the Sierra Leonean education ministries that refugee students were qualified to sit for the same examinations as their peers in their home countries.⁴⁸⁵

In response, a curriculum was developed that could be used for Grades K–12 based on the unique needs of the IRC-operated school system catering for Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees in Guinea. This curriculum harmonizes the instructional systems in both countries by incorporating the objectives of the Liberian and Sierra Leonean school programmes while adapting them to the refugee situation in Guinea. The development of the curriculum was accompanied by teacher training and extra guidance for inexperienced teachers.⁴⁸⁶ IRC was successful in obtaining the approval of the Liberian MOE and Liberia's WAEC officials for its adapted curriculum. This was not the case with Sierra Leone, however, because the curriculum did not include critical courses from its curriculum.⁴⁸⁷

9.6 Liberian refugee children in Côte d'Ivoire

At the end of the 1980s, civil war erupted in Liberia, and many people fled to neighbouring countries. By the end of 1990, there were 272,000 Liberian refugees in Côte d'Ivoire.⁴⁸⁸ Most refugee

education was provided by the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), the UNHCR implementing partner for emergency education.⁴⁸⁹ In 1992, ADRA began providing

⁴⁸¹ Kirk, 2009, p. 168.

⁴⁸² Kirk, 2009, pp. 171-172.

⁴⁸³ Kirk, 2009, p. 173.

⁴⁸⁴ Kirk, 2009, p. 174.

⁴⁸⁵ Kirk, 2009, p. 174.

⁴⁸⁶ Kirk, 2009, pp. 174-176.

⁴⁸⁷ Kirk, 2009, pp. 176-177.

⁴⁸⁸ Kirk, 2009, p. 201.

⁴⁸⁹ Kirk, 2009, p. 202.

primary and secondary education to refugee children. Teaching was conducted primarily in English, using the Liberian curriculum, and schools were staffed by professional teachers and volunteers who had met certain academic requirements.⁴⁹⁰ However, with the end of the first Liberian war and the start of the UNHCR repatriation programme, a large number of refugees returned between 1997 and 1999 and the Ivorian Government was pressured to accept the idea of local integration for the remaining refugees.⁴⁹¹

Local integration meant the end of refugee schools and the integration of the remaining students into the Ivorian education system.⁴⁹² Instead of immediately instituting local integration, however, a one-year transition period was established, which extended to a two-year phase and is thus considered to have failed due to: a lack of qualified teachers in the transition schools; lack of alternatives for ensuring the continuity of education in places where there were no Ivorian schools or they were too far to reach; lack of financial support for constructing additional classrooms; and, resistance to integration on the part of many refugees (particularly teachers).⁴⁹³

In August 2001, the Ivorian Government committed to supporting local integration by directly integrating the youngest refugee students into Grade 1 in Ivorian schools and by placing children enrolled in higher grades at equivalent levels. There was no standard for assessing refugee students' learning, with the result that

the majority of Liberian children were placed into the first two grades, regardless of their prior schooling in the refugee system. Thus, refugee students began schooling again. In some instances, students were given the chance to catch up a few years based on their performance.⁴⁹⁴

Refugee secondary education officially ended after 2000. Yet, integration into the secondary Ivorian institutions was not possible due to the lack of an agreement protocol between the Ivorian Government and UNHCR as well as the high level of written French proficiency required at the secondary level. Thus, refugee children's options included dropping out, going back to Liberia, moving to an Anglophone country to continue schooling or enrolling in one of the private institutions run by refugee teachers that replaced the ADRA secondary schools. These private institutions provided an opportunity to continue secondary education under the Liberian curriculum for Grades 7–12.⁴⁹⁵

Several lessons from the 1990s experience are evident.

- Parents should have been advised to enrol their youngest children in the lower grades in host schools.
- Private refugee schools should have been the alternative for parents who preferred having their children follow the Liberian curriculum.
- UNHCR should have supported secondary education to avoid serious certification problems for Liberian boys and girls.⁴⁹⁶

9.7 Educational certification for Somali refugee children in Kenya

Millions of Somalis have been internally and internationally displaced as a result of the long-term conflict that has raged in the country over the past 20 years. Close to 200,000 refugees⁴⁹⁷ are living in three refugee camps near

the town of Dadaab in the east of Kenya.⁴⁹⁸ Each camp has five or six primary schools and one secondary school, all of which follow the Kenyan curriculum.⁴⁹⁹ The UNHCR education field guidelines emphasize educational certification and

⁴⁹⁰ Kirk, 2009, p. 205.

⁴⁹¹ Kirk, 2009, p. 206.

⁴⁹² Kirk, 2009, pp. 206-207.

⁴⁹³ Kirk, 2009, pp. 209-211.

⁴⁹⁴ Kirk, 2009, p. 212.

⁴⁹⁵ Kirk, 2009, p. 213.

⁴⁹⁶ Kirk, 2009, p. 216.

⁴⁹⁷ As of 2007, there were 170,405 (UNHCR, 2007a), cited in Kirk, 2009, p. 183.

⁴⁹⁸ Kirk, 2009, p. 183.

⁴⁹⁹ Kirk, 2009, p. 185.

the recognition of certificates by the education ministries in the host country and in the country of origin. The certification problem has been addressed by adopting the curriculum of the host country, Kenya. Hence, upon completion of primary school, students receive the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE); upon completion of secondary school, they receive the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KSCE).⁵⁰⁰

Regardless of their certifications from Somalia, all students are tested upon arrival and placed in the appropriate grade level. Students are often on a par with their certificates in certain subjects, such as math and Somali, but their English is of such a low level that they need to be put in a lower grade. CARE Kenya, which is the UNHCR main implementing partner for education in Dadaab,⁵⁰¹ has a policy not to accept certificates from Somalia at face value. The main reason for this is the lack of a centralized education authority in Somalia that is able to validate the quality of educational institutions and accredit learning achievement.⁵⁰²

CARE Kenya began implementing the Kenyan curriculum in the camps in 1996. Until then, the Somali curriculum was taught at the primary level. Even though this had a number of advantages, there was no certification system and the system of education was non-formal and unrecognized. The community preferred to adopt the Kenyan system in the camps. Thus, from 1996 until 2004, CARE hired teachers with Kenyan university degrees to facilitate the transition from the Somali system. In addition, the Ministry of Education Science and Technology sends representatives and school inspectors to the

camps to monitor both the KCPE and KCSE examinations as well as teaching and learning. Earning the KSCE certificates is especially advantageous for refugee students wanting to pursue their studies within Kenya because they are identical to those of Kenyan students.⁵⁰³

With the prospect of repatriation still not in sight due to the continuing conflict in Somalia, UNHCR, CARE and all NGOs working with education in southern and central Somalia must negotiate the recognition of school certificates from Dadaab prior to repatriation. The recognition of Kenyan certificates needs to be part of any formal agreement to allow the integration of refugee children into the education system. Keeping in mind the limited resources and challenging conditions in Dadaab, a number of possible solutions have been highlighted:

- streamlining the process already in place for integrating new arrivals in the camp into the education system;
- increasing the education and employment of refugees within Kenya, which would enable refugee students certificates after graduation;
- enhancing teacher training opportunities, both UNHCR and CARE supported and those of the Ministry of Education Science and Technology;
- collaboration between UNHCR, implementing partners and the Kenyan authorities to find ways to adapt the Kenyan curriculum to include more use of the Somali language; and
- lobbying for a mechanism for recognizing Kenyan certificates, which could be formalized in a trilateral agreement between UNHCR, Kenya and Somalia.⁵⁰⁴

9.8 Certification for Democratic Republic of Congo refugee children in the Republic of Congo

From February to November 2000, around 30,000 refugees fled a conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo and took asylum in the district of Bétou in the Republic of the Congo. Because the local population was small, the refugees overwhelmed the host community. Due to similar languages

and customs, the refugees were relatively easily integrated, without the establishment of camps. In May 2001, as a result of an attempted coup in Bangui, Central African Republic, and the persecution of the Yakoma ethnic group, 1,000 to 1,500 refugees from Bangui were displaced to

⁵⁰⁰ Kirk, 2009, p. 186.

⁵⁰¹ Kirk, 2009, p. 185.

⁵⁰² Kirk, 2009, p. 187.

⁵⁰³ Kirk, 2009, pp. 187-188.

⁵⁰⁴ Kirk, 2009, pp. 190-191.

Bétou. Although they shared fewer language and cultural characteristics with the host community, they were provided with the same integration opportunities as the refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo.⁵⁰⁵

In June 2001, the IRC and UNHCR began work on the recognition of their programme because refugee parents expressed dissatisfaction with the informal programme of studies. Thus, the IRC and UNHCR collaborated with the education authorities in the home country to enable refugee students to follow an official curriculum and achieve recognized certification.⁵⁰⁶ Specifically, the IRC and UNHCR worked with the Ministry of Education (in the Democratic Republic of Congo) to provide certification for the IRC-supported primary education programme. From September 2003, UNHCR began to provide technical support for refugee secondary schools and, then together with the IRC, worked with ministry officials to secure formal certification for secondary education.⁵⁰⁷

Having realized that the refugees would stay in the Republic of the Congo for some time, the IRC started working on a parallel integration strategy. This strategy involved the integration of local curricula into the refugee schools and, at the

same time, refugee students were encouraged to enrol in local schools. Because the curricula of the two countries were similar, the integration did not create many problems. However, although liaison with both the local education authorities and the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education in the Republic of the Congo increased, large-scale integration did not follow, with refugee students continuing to complete the curriculum and take the examinations of the Democratic Republic of Congo. In 2005, after massive repatriation efforts, local integration into schools in the Republic of the Congo became a more relevant option for the remaining students.⁵⁰⁸

This case shows that contact with the local authorities is crucial for facilitating integration into the host system for those refugees who opt not to return. In addition, continued access to the curriculum of the home country and official examinations, including the delivery of certificates, facilitates reintegration into the education system for repatriating students.⁵⁰⁹

The following section touches upon a programme existing for the Arab countries that could provide a pathway for refugee children in the region, because it works within already established and accredited curricula.

9.9 International Arab Baccalaureate

The International Arab Baccalaureate (IAB) is an educational programme developed by Educational Research Center. The IAB, which is implemented in general education schools, has the objective of preparing students for achievement in higher education and the workplace and, ultimately, empowering them for success. It is grounded in the framework of existing curricula but does not impose any rigid programme of study. Instead, it fosters the development of generic learning outcomes mapped onto various curricula implemented in the Arab world. The IAB works

with all stakeholders, particularly parents, to uphold standards. It provides teachers with opportunities for professional development as well as with an electronic platform to help them conduct assessments and track individual students' progress. The IAB culminates in a common secondary school diploma that is gradually being recognized locally and internationally. The IAB diploma is granted based on continuous and regular assessment in Grades 10, 11 and 12 rather than on a single set of exit exams.⁵¹⁰

⁵⁰⁵ Kirk, 2009, pp. 192-193.

⁵⁰⁶ Kirk, 2009, p. 194.

⁵⁰⁷ Kirk, 2009, p. 195.

⁵⁰⁸ Kirk, 2009, pp. 196-197.

⁵⁰⁹ Kirk, 2009, p. 198.

⁵¹⁰ 'International Arab Baccalaureate (IAB): Student License to the Future' (leaflet).

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Annexes

Annex I Glossary

The following defines several terms used throughout the study.⁵¹¹

Formal education is used in this report to refer to regular schooling that follows a conventional pattern, from admission of students at the age of 6 years or older to promotion from grade to grade on a yearly basis using a curriculum that is recognized by the relevant authorities in the country. It refers to education that is provided and approved by a State, with learning outcomes certified by the education ministry in the form of a relevant certificate. Formal schooling allows for regular and steady transition through the phases of the schooling system, dependent upon achievement in learning assessments, with the possibility of enrolling for higher education upon the completion of schooling.

Non-formal education is used in this report to refer to any organized and sustained educational activity that is not officially sanctioned or recognized by a government and does not confer certification upon completion. In terms of venues used, non-formal education may be delivered in public schools, community centres and NGO offices and cater to person of all ages. Depending on country contexts, it may cover educational programmes to impart basic literacy and numeracy skills for out-of-school children, life skills, remedial and catch-up education. Non-formal education programmes do not necessarily offer progression from grades to grades and may vary in duration. In the context of this study, non-formal education provision is also closely associated with NGO provision and is distinguished from formal schooling, which is mainly provided by governments.⁵¹²

Informal education generally refers to learning channels, such as mass media and mass publicity campaigns. But in this report, it is used specifically for the Jordan context to refer to what is normally referred to as non-formal education in the other countries of the study.

NGOs represent a form of civil society, although contrasting views on this assertion can be found in the literature.⁵¹³ There are various forms of associations apparent at the level of civil society. Klees (2008), for example, mentions international NGOs, national NGOs, government-run NGOs and advocacy NGOs. In this report, a much-quoted definition of NGO as “self-governing, private, not for profit organizations that are geared to improve the quality of life of disadvantaged people”⁵¹⁴ is adopted as the meaning of the term.⁵¹⁵

Curriculum can be defined from different perspectives. What societies envisage as important values and objectives in teaching and learning is generally defined as the ‘intended’ curriculum.⁵¹⁶ The school curriculum is that which is taught in in the classroom setting and is defined as the official implemented curriculum. What students learn as measured through varied forms of assessment, including class tests and external examinations, is considered to be learning performance and the ‘achieved’ curriculum. This report uses curriculum as the intended and the enacted curriculum delivered by teachers in particular institutionalized settings, such as classrooms, and which is assessed through test and examinations.

⁵¹¹ Definitions adapted from International Institute for Educational Planning, 2010 and UNESCO, 1997.

⁵¹² Rose, 2009.

⁵¹³ Vakil, 1997; Edwards, 2000.

⁵¹⁴ Vakil, 1997, p. 2060.

⁵¹⁵ The use of such terminology as NGO in Syria is rather problematic because the concept of non-governmental is understood more at the level of financial than political independency from the Government (George, 2003).

⁵¹⁶ UNESCO, 2011.

Certification is defined as a mark of quality that publicly attests the worth of a learning programme. Certification might be the provision of a formal certificate recognizing a student's achievement in the end of cycle examinations. [Adapted from Kirk, J., ed., *Certification Counts: Recognizing the learning attainments of displaced and refugee children* (UNESCO IIEP, 2009)]

Accreditation is similar to certification and accords a programme official recognition or endorsement – most likely recognition or endorsement by an education ministry. Accreditation applies more to the status of a learning programme, whereas certification usually means the provision of proof of successful completion by a learner. [Adapted from Kirk, J., ed., *Certification Counts: Recognizing the learning attainments of displaced and refugee children* (UNESCO IIEP, 2009)]

Host community in this study refers to the country of asylum and the local, regional and national governmental, social and economic structures within which refugees live. Urban refugees live within host communities with or without legal status and recognition by the host community. In the context of refugee camps, the host community may encompass the camp or may simply neighbour the camp but have interaction with, or otherwise be impacted by, the refugees residing in the camp. In case of internally displaced persons, host community refers to the community that receive the influx of displaced persons. (Adapted from www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c146.html)

Remedial or catch-up education focuses on mastery of competency while expansion and detail is omitted. Remedial education programmes identify the core competencies in each learning 'block' and teaches the absolute core elements that must be known to a student in order to move ahead with the next block. Associated competencies, applications and revisions are generally left out of the remedial or catch-up education programme. (Adapted from: Baxter, P. and Bethke, L., *Alternative Education: Filling the gap in emergency and post-conflict situations*, UNESCO IIEP and CfBT Education Trust, 2009)

Internally displaced persons are among the world's most vulnerable people. Unlike refugees, internally displaced persons have not crossed an international border to find sanctuary but have remained inside their home country. Even if they have fled for similar reasons as refugees (armed conflict, generalized violence, human rights violations), internally displaced persons legally remain under the protection of their own government – even though that government might be the cause of their flight. As citizens, they retain all of their rights and protection under both human rights and international humanitarian law. (Adapted from www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c146.html)

Programme is a system of educational courses, with a selection and sequence of contents to be covered in order to reach expected learning objectives and outcomes and assessment or evaluation schemes of a specific course, unit of study or teaching subject.

UNHCR registration is the recording, verifying and updating of information on people of concern to UNHCR so they can be protected and UNHCR can ultimately find durable solutions for them. The number of people requiring protection and assistance determines the amount of food, water and other material help needed as well as the extent of shelter, health service and sanitation facilities. Registration is crucial for identifying those individuals who are at risk or have special needs. Registration, by providing a record of their status, helps protect refugees against refoulement (forced return), arbitrary arrest and detention. It can give them access to services or assistance and can foster freedom of movement to make them more independent. Registering children helps prevent military recruitment, keeps families together and assists UNHCR in reuniting separated children with their families. UNHCR advocates that all refugees and asylum seekers be registered individually. The registration of people, which includes details of the reasons they have sought asylum, is essential for identifying those for whom resettlement or local integration, rather than repatriation, are the most appropriate solutions. Since 2004, the process has been facilitated by the introduction of progGres, a UNHCR database application that is now in use in more than 70 countries and contains not only written details of individuals but also their photos. Although registration of refugees and asylum seekers remains the responsibility of host states, UNHCR assists them when needed. (Adapted from www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646cf5.html)

Annex II Interview checklist

The interview will start with an introduction about the interviewer and about the aim and scope of the study. The interviewer will also introduce all the elements mentioned in section 3 (confidentiality of information, withdrawal from the interview at any time, etc.) so that the interviewee is fully informed and empowered to decide to either participate or decline.

Note that not all issues will be extensively covered in every interview. The intention is to provide an analytical overview of these dimensions of the curriculum, highlighting issues and priorities in each context rather than to go into depth on any single area. The emphasis will be different depending on the context and the organization/stakeholder involved in the interview.

Checklist of issues and questions to cover in the study

1. CURRICULUM

- What official curriculum is being used in schools where Syrian refugee children are enrolled? Are there any exceptions? What subjects are taught? Any alteration to standard time allocation (length of sessions, for example). If so, is it simply related to the existence of a double shift system?
- Regarding the curriculum adopted, are there differences between schools in refugee camps and schools in host communities?
- What is the language of instruction and what foreign languages are taught?
- What are the main differences between the Syrian curriculum and that of the host country in question?

Adaptations to the curriculum

- Has there been any change or adaptation introduced to the official host country curriculum to take into account the presence of Syrian refugee children? If so, in which subjects?
- If yes, who has initiated these changes?
- What is the rationale for and the scope of these changes?
- How effective were the changes? How well have they been received by children and parents?
- What are the difficulties faced by Syrian refugee children to adapt?

Learning materials

- What type of learning material (textbooks and exercise books) is used in the classroom?
- Is it strictly the learning material (textbooks and exercise books) authorized by the MOE or does the teacher have flexibility to choose, use and adapt other material?

Support to Syrian students

- Have any specific mechanisms been set up in schools to support Syrian refugee students to adapt to the new curriculum including, the language of instruction and other languages taught? Such as, for example:
 - remedial classes prior to enrolment;
 - remedial classes in parallel with classes;
 - individualized support by teacher or other support teacher, counsellor, NGO volunteers;
 - assessment of prerequisite learning;
 - peer support, etc.
- Are the results of placement tests used to orient this remedial education?
- Any psychosocial services available (briefly describe).

Teacher training

- Who is in charge of teaching (strictly national or also Syrian teachers)?
- If Syrian assistant teachers work also in the classroom, how does the teaching team coordinate the work and agree on responsibilities and roles?
- Are the teachers in charge of classes that include Syrian students benefiting of any specific extra training; and if so how is this organized and what is its basic content?
- Who was it organized by and how long was the training?

Other learning programmes

- What are other programmes provided to Syrian refugee children or adolescents (vocational training, non-formal learning programmes, such as accelerated learning, life skills based education, pre-school education, literacy classes)?
- What curriculum or learning material is being used for these programmes?
- Is there demand for these programmes?

School and class environment

- Student–teacher ratio.
- Is the school and class environment inclusive and receptive to Syrian children needs? (any child with disabilities?)
- Are there any initiatives taken in this regard?
- Any issues with violence in school.
- What is the average attendance rate?

2. CERTIFICATION

- What learning assessment systems are applied in the different countries (both ongoing and end-of-year exams)?
- What are the regulations (if any) being applied to Syrian students concerning the certification of learning acquisitions?
- Are they receiving score cards and quarterly evaluation reports?
- Are they eligible for obtaining national diplomas/certificates of the hosting countries particularly for end of cycle national exams (Grades 6, 9 or 12)?
- Are there any particular dispositions for children enrolling late?
- Was there a 'fit for purpose' school supervision system set up to help, guide and supervise schools?
- Are there any official agreements existing between the Syrian Ministry of Education and MOE in your country regarding reciprocal acceptance/equivalency/ recognition of diplomas and certificates and if so, are there specific dispositions facilitating or hindering this?
- Are school principals well informed of all these dispositions?
- Are schools operating in refugee camps clearly accredited as per the regulations of the Ministry of Education?
- Is information relating to school accreditation and to certification issues readily available to parents (and children and the refugee community) and what are their common perceptions/attitudes pertaining to this question?

Annex III Discussion guide for focus group discussions

The focus group discussion starts with an introduction on the facilitator and the note taker. The introduction also includes the general objective of the discussion, confidentiality of information and seeks the consent of participants to continue. Ground rules for the discussion can also be set in this phase. Participants are then asked to introduce themselves so that everyone has the opportunity to speak and break the ice.

The discussion starts with fairly general comments and then strives to touch upon the following issues and questions.

Note that the following questions are not exhaustive and issues having emerged during the interviews should be further explored during the group discussions. Furthermore, question formulation will need to be adapted according to whether participants are children, adolescents, teachers or parents while some questions may be relevant only for specific groups.

Draft discussion guide with teachers and school personnel

CURRICULUM

- What curriculum is used in the school where you teach?
- What are the main difficulties Syrian refugee children face in adapting to this curriculum?
- Has there been any change to the curriculum to take into account the presence of Syrian refugee children? (If yes, who initiated these changes? Why? How effective they were? If no, what difficulties do Syrian refugee children face to adapt?)
- What learning material (textbooks and exercise books) do you use? (Investigate whether it is strictly the learning material authorized by the MOE or if teachers have flexibility to choose, use and adapt other materials)
- Is there any specific measure to help Syrian refugee students adapt to the new curriculum? This could include:
 - remedial classes prior joining regular classes;
 - or in parallel with classes;
 - individualized support by teacher or others (support teachers, counsellors, NGO volunteers, etc.);
 - assessment of prerequisite learning;
 - peer support, etc.
- Do you use the results of placement tests to orient remedial education?
- Are you benefitting of any specific extra training to support you in including Syrian refugee children? (If yes, explore how training sessions are organized and what are the content of training sessions).
- Do you know of other learning programmes provided to Syrian refugee children (for example, vocational training, non-formal learning programmes such as accelerated learning, life skills based education, pre-school education or literacy classes).
- Is the school and class environment inclusive of refugee children? (Explore what are – if any – the initiatives taken in this regard).

CERTIFICATION

- What learning assessment systems are applied in your country (both ongoing and end of year exams)?
- What are the regulations being applied to Syrian students concerning the certification of learning acquisitions? (For example, do they receive score cards or quarterly evaluation reports? Are they eligible for obtaining national diplomas/certificates of the hosting countries particularly for end of cycle national exams?)
- Are there any particular dispositions for children enrolling late?

- Was there a ‘fit for purpose’ school supervision system set up to help, guide and supervise schools?
- Do you happen to know if there are any official agreements between the Syrian MOE and the MOE in your country regarding reciprocal acceptance/equivalency/recognition of diplomas and certificates (If yes, are there specific disposition facilitating or hindering this?)
- (for those teaching in camps) Is your school clearly accredited as per the regulations of the MOE?
- Is information relating to school accreditation and to certification issues readily available to parents (and children and the refugee community)?

Draft discussion guide with school principals

CURRICULUM

- What curriculum is used in the school where you work?
- What are the main difficulties Syrian refugee children face in adapting to this curriculum?
- Has there been any change to the curriculum to take into account the presence of Syrian refugee children? (If yes, who initiated these changes? Why? How effective they were? If no, what difficulties do Syrian refugee children to adapt?)
- What learning material (textbooks and exercise books) can teachers use? (Investigate whether it is strictly the learning material authorized by the MOE or if teachers have flexibility to choose, use and adapt other materials)
- Is there any specific measure to help Syrian refugee students adapt to the new curriculum?
This could include:
 - remedial classes prior joining regular classes;
 - Remedial classes in parallel with classes;
 - individualized support by teacher or other support teachers, counsellors, NGO volunteers, etc.;
 - assessment of prerequisite learning;
 - peer support, etc.
- Do you use the results of the placement tests to orient remedial education?
- Was any specific extra training organized to support teachers in including Syrian refugee children? (If yes, explore how training sessions are organized and what is the content of training sessions).
- Do you know of other learning programmes provided to Syrian refugee children (for example, vocational training, non-formal learning programmes, such as accelerated learning, life skills based education, pre-school education, literacy classes).
- Is there demand for these programmes?
- Is the school and class environment inclusive of refugee children? (Explore what are – if any – the initiatives taken in this regard).

CERTIFICATION

- What learning assessment systems are applied in your country (both ongoing and end of year exams)?
- What are the regulations being applied to Syrian students concerning the certification of learning acquisitions? (For example, do they receive report cards or quarterly evaluation reports? Are they eligible for obtaining national diplomas/certificates of the hosting countries particularly for end of cycle national exams?)
- Are there any particular dispositions for children enrolling late? Was there a ‘fit for purpose’ school supervision system set up to help, guide and supervise schools?
- Do you happen to know if there is any official agreement between the Syrian MOE and the MOE in your country regarding reciprocal acceptance/equivalency/recognition of diplomas and certificates (If yes, are there specific disposition facilitating or hindering this?)
- Do you have clear information on these official agreements?

- (For schools in camps) Is your school clearly accredited as per the regulations of the MOE?
- Is information relating to school accreditation and to certification issues readily available to parents (and children and the refugee community)?

Draft discussion guide with students

CURRICULUM

- What curriculum is used in the school where you learn?
- What are the main difficulties that you face with this curriculum?
- Do you possess your personal textbooks or do you share them with other students or you have none.
- Where did you get your textbooks from?
- Do you know of or do you attend remedial education or similar activities?
- Did you undergo a placement test when you arrived?
- Describe your class and school environment. Are you comfortable? Do you feel included and well accepted?

CERTIFICATION

- Have you received score cards during the year and an evaluation report at the end of the year?
- Have you taken an end of year exam?
- Were you informed of that exam ahead?
- Did your teachers help prepare with it?
- Do you have any information on the accreditation and certification of your learning achievements?
- Do you have any concern on accreditation and certification issues?
- Do you know if your parents know the system?
- What do you think are the concerns of your parents on the system?

Draft discussion guide with parents

CURRICULUM

- What curriculum is used in the school where your child is learning?
- What are the main difficulties of your child in adapting to this curriculum?
- Do you know of any change in the curriculum to take into account the presence of Syrian refugee children? (If yes, who initiated these changes? Why? How effective they were? If no, what difficulties do Syrian refugee children to adapt?)
- Do you know what learning materials do teachers use? (Investigate whether it is strictly the learning material authorized by the MOE or if teachers have flexibility to choose, use and adopt other materials)
- Are you aware of any measure to help your child adapt to the new curriculum?
- Is there any specific measure to help Syrian refugee students adapt to the new curriculum. This could include:
 - remedial classes prior classes;
 - Remedial classes in parallel with classes;
 - individualized support by teacher or others (support teachers, counsellors, NGO volunteers, etc.);
 - assessment of prerequisite learning;
 - peer support, etc.

- Do you know of other learning programmes provided to Syrian refugee children (for example, vocational training, non-formal learning programmes such as accelerated learning, life skills based education, pre-school education).
- Is the school and class environment inclusive of your child? (Explore what are – if any – the initiatives taken in this regard).

CERTIFICATION

- What learning assessment systems are applied in your country (both ongoing and end-of-year exams)?
- What are the regulations being applied to Syrian students concerning the certification of learning acquisitions? (For example, do they receive score cards or quarterly evaluation reports? Are they eligible for obtaining national diplomas/certificates of the hosting countries particularly for end of cycle national exams?)
- Are there any particular dispositions for children enrolling late?
- Do you know of any official agreement between the Syrian MOE and the MOE in your hosting country regarding reciprocal acceptance/equivalency/recognition of diplomas and certificates (If yes, are there specific disposition facilitating or hindering this?)
- Do you have clear information relating to school accreditation and to certification issues?

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