

THE EDUCATION OF SYRIAN REFUGEES IN JORDAN: SUMMARY OF DEMAND-SIDE CONSTRAINTS AND INTERVENTIONS

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

3RP	Regional Refugee Resilience Plan
CRF	Common Results Framework
DSS	Double-Shift Schools
EMIS (OpenEMIS)	Education Management Information System
ESP	Education Strategic Plan
EU	European Union
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
GoJ	Government of Jordan
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ILO	International Labour Organization
ITS	Informal tented settlements
L4A	Learning For All
LSCE	Life Skills Citizenship Education
MoE	Ministry of Education
MOPIC	Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation
NCFA	National Council for Family Affairs
NFE	Non-formal education
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NLG	No Lost Generation initiative
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OOSC	Out-of-school children

PSS	Psychosocial support
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations Higher Commission for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund
WebGIS	Web-based Geography Information System
WGMB	Women – Girls – Men - Boys

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report highlights the main findings of a literature review that has been undertaken at the start of the “*Assessment of Education Strategies and Interventions Adopted in Jordan as a Response to the Syrian Crisis*” project. The report provides a succinct review of barriers and challenges Syrian families and their children face accessing formal education, i.e. the report looks at the issue of ‘access’ from the demand-side. The second part of the report provides the reader with a list of initiatives from the Government of Jordan and its partners designed to address those barriers. The report starts with an overview of Syrian refugee out-of-school children (OOSC) highlighting the difficulty of identifying precise figures for the number of children who are not in school.

A survey conducted by UNICEF in 2017 as part of the Learning for All (L4A) Campaign indicated that almost half of families perceive the administrative constraints to be the biggest barrier to accessing formal education. Lacking appropriate registration documents hindered proper family registration and ultimately enrolment of children in schools. The second administrative constraint is the ‘three-year-rule’ which does not allow any child who has been out of school for three years or more years, to re-integrate into the formal education system. Furthermore, the inability of Syrian refugees to obtain permits to work lawfully, exploitative low wages, as well as non-payment for many who work informally, increases family dependence on children to earn income. This has led to high rates of child labour among Syrian refugee children, which in turn impacts their education by either preventing enrolment, or compelling them to drop out. Even if the child does not enter the labour market, too often the economic circumstances of families renders them unable to pay for education-associated costs, resulting in their abstaining from sending their children to school.

Other barriers to accessing education are issues related to child protection and safety concerns. Syrian refugee children report suffering from bullying, humiliation, physical abuse, psychological distress and discrimination, which have been key reasons for drop out. UNICEF reported that 11% of Syrian families indicated that schools are too distant from the child’s residence (UNICEF, 2018-a). Transportation costs have also been cited as a reason behind children’s non-attendance at Saturday classes which are run to make up for the shortened instruction periods within double-shift schools (DSS). Another barrier that appeared in the literature is related to the lack of mental health and psychosocial support (PSS) available within schools for traumatized Syrian refugee

children.

The second part of the report highlights a set of initiatives undertaken to address these barriers. Initiatives addressing the administrative constraints include easing the enrolment requirements related to documentation, and sensitizing parents to new regulations and programmes through the use of technology such as SMS messages and hotlines. The Government of Jordan (GoJ) has established committees to address issues related to the lack of documents, such as birth certificates. The three-year-rule, while still being one of the biggest obstacles, is an improvement on the previous two-year rule. In addition, the GoJ has implemented two large non-formal education programmes for OOSC: the Catch-up programme and the Drop-out programme.

The financial obstacles have been addressed through a set of initiatives, e.g. UNICEF-led Hajati, child cash grant, transferring cash to households with three school aged children, where at least one of them is at risk of dropping out. Other initiatives include the provision of school meals through a nation-wide feeding programme, the provision of free textbooks, and a project to respond to child labour, conducted in collaboration between UNICEF, UNHCR and International Labour Organisation (ILO).

To address issues of violence within schools the MoE implemented the Anti-bullying programme that is currently implemented in ten schools, and should cover all schools hosting grades 7-9 by the year 2023 (MoE, 2018). UN organizations are also working to improve the school environment. UNICEF in collaboration with numerous governmental organizations implemented “A Multi-Sectoral Changing Norms and Behaviour strategy to End Violence Against Children”. The MoE also launched the Nashatati (“my activities”) programme, which aims to develop life skills and citizenship, to foster social cohesions and enhance children’s psychosocial wellbeing through after-school activities.

Through the expansion of some school buildings, part of the issue of schools being too far from children’s residence, has been addressed. The new classes opened have not necessarily benefited OOSC but they have provided an opportunity for families to shift their children from private schools to public schools and to save money and time on commute to school. The final barrier discussed in this report has been the lack of PSS. While the MoE’s Education Strategic Plan (2018-2022) does not mention plans related to the provision of PSS to refugee children, some documents published by the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation mention that

there have been thousands of teachers, facilitators and counselors who have been provided with PSS training. The literature review points to the area of mental health and PSS as still requiring attention in order to meet the demand.

SUMMARY TABLE OF BARRIERS AND CORRESPONDING INITIATIVES

Barrier	Initiative/ Intervention	Purpose	Reach	Evidence
Lack of proper enrolment documentations	Circulars sent to school principles	To facilitate the enrolment process, even if not all correct documentation is present	Nation-wide	Evidence is needed of impact
Daunting family registration process	Urban Verification Process	To allow Syrian refugee families to have access to subsidized public healthcare and public schools	Open to all refugees living in urban host communities	Evidence is needed of impact after having lowered the cost and eased the requirements
Lacking birth certificates	Special Committees established	To resolve cases of Syrians who entered Jordan without documentation, or whose marriages or children were incorrectly registered.	In 96% of cases the special committees have resolved the problems	Evidence is needed of impact
Three-year-rule preventing (re-) entry to formal education	Catch up Programme in partnership with Questscope	To provide children aged 9-12 who have been out of school (OOS) for three years or more with an accelerated learning curriculum to re-integrate them into the school system.	Directed to children aged 9-12 who have been out of school (OOS) for three years or more and are not eligible to enrol in the formal system	According to June 2018 CRF report, evidence is still needed about how many children have been integrated into the formal schooling system

	Drop-out Programme in partnership with Questscope	To provide condensed educational curricula in an accelerated format	Directed to 13-18 years old males & 13-20 females (refugees and marginalized Jordanians) esp. in hard to reach environments (over 100 centers established)	Little available evidence on the progression pathways of youth on the programme.
Financial constraints (leading to child labour and child marriage)	Child Cash Programme (Hajati- UNICEF –led programme)	A tool to reduce economic vulnerability as a reason for school dropout.	55,000 boys and girls (in DSS) from 15,000 of the most vulnerable registered Syrian refugee families have benefited	Impact evidence needed
	Enabling free enrolment in public schools		Nation-wide	Impact evidence needed
	Feeding programme	Providing a daily meal in poverty-stricken areas for children from KG to Grade 6.	The current school feeding programme reaches 350,000 students. Presently 69% of the poverty-stricken directorates receive school feeding in the northern region, 67% in the central region, and 91% in the southern region.	Impact evidence needed
	Free packages of textbooks	To provide Syrian school-children with free packages of textbooks	98% of all Syrian children within public schools were provided with free packages of textbooks	Reported by EU within the June 2018 CRF report
School violence (Child Protection & Safety Concerns)	“Ma’an” (i.e. "Together for a Safe Environment") campaign	To reduce violence in schools	Covers 10% of school children, according to MoE (2018)	Impact evidence needed

	Anti-bullying Programme	To reduce bullying in schools	Ten schools in Jordan in 2017.	Impact evidence needed
School being too distant from child's residency	Expanding schools and school rehabilitation	To enhance infrastructure and services in host community schools experiencing particular strain due to the Syrian crisis	Limited to a set of schools	Evidence (NRC report) is showing that the indirect impact was on saving families time and money (which was not the initial intention)
Lack of Mental Health & Psychosocial Support	The provision of PSS training to teachers, facilitators and counselors	To support teachers to deal with traumatized children	Needs to be extended to all public school teachers.	Evidence is needed

BARRIERS TO EDUCATION

2.1 OVERVIEW

This report considers the barriers and challenges faced by Syrian refugee families and their children in accessing education. The report mainly focuses on formal education and highlights non-formal or informal education programmes only in relation to initiatives implemented to address the barriers to formal education. When UNICEF (2018) analyzed data from the latest round of the Learning for All (L4A) campaign¹ it drew a clear picture of the perceived barriers to education. According to that survey, almost half (46%) of families with out of school children quoted administrative issues (including lack of identity documents to register children in school) as a barrier to access schooling. The remainder indicated child labour (16%), inability to afford costs connected to schooling (11%), and school being too far from the child's residence (11%). A high level of family mobility was cited in 7% of the cases. Below is a discussion of each of these barriers and how Government initiatives and international organizations have attempted to address them. Despite other literature² highlighting the issue of 'violent school environments', with its manifestation in bullying, corporal punishment and harassment, according to the UNICEF analysis this was cited by only 2% of parents (UNICEF,2018-a).

2.2 SYRIAN REFUGEE OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN

Defining the precise number of Syrian out-of-school children (OOSC) in Jordan is challenging. According to the 2017 Education Response Factsheet (2017) the number of Syrian OOSC in Jordan is 72,393 (2017 Education Response)³. The number reported by the 'No Lost Generation' initiative during the Brussels Conference in April 2018 was similar (73,137) (NLG, 2018, p.29). The Ministry of Education (MoE) did not mention numbers in the latest Education Strategic Plan (ESP: 2018-2022), but indicated the urgent need to build 51 schools in the various governorates of the

¹ Although there are many other surveys related to barrier to education, this is the most up to date. Secondly, being based on the MoE's L4A campaign and UNICEF-led gives it greater credibility.

² An account of the other literature and findings is given in the section below 'Protection and safety concerns'.

³ At the time of writing this was the latest reference point available.

Kingdom to reach out to all Syrian OOSC (MoE, 2018). The difficulty of having accurate and very precise numbers was highlighted by the EU in the Common Results Framework (CRF) progress report:

....there is no scientifically acceptable evidence available for making any projections on the number of out of school Syrian pupils, which makes the setting of adequately ambitious targets impossible (EU, 2018-c,p.38).

The reasons for the difficulty of arriving at a clear number of OOSC include:

- The UNHCR registrations show a total of 230,000 school-aged Syrian refugee children (aged 5-17) in Jordan. However, given the official Education Management Information System (EMIS) figures of current Syrian enrolment of 129,809⁴, this would mean that around 100,000 Syrian refugee children would currently be out of school. This would result in a rate for Syrian refugee OOSC of 43.2 %. It is more likely that families and children have registered but subsequently “disappeared” at rates of as high as 57% (EU, 2018-c).
- During the past two years there has been a considerable number of Syrian refugees who repatriated to their country; this impacts the ability to properly assess the current number of school-aged Syrians in the country, as well as the number of OOSC. There is a need for a number that can be formally adopted by the MoE, given that currently the MoE can only verify the number of those in formal education. The number of Syrians repatriating to their country also needs to be monitored (AAI Report, 2017).
- Syrians tend to relocate frequently. Relocation is mainly based on the head of household finding a job. This instability reflects the MoE’s ability to develop sustainable solutions to issues like rationalising double shift schools (DSS), as well as the accuracy of the number of Syrian students enrolled in schools (AAI Report, 2018).

In order to address this issue, the EU is recommending that a realistic assessment of the number of Syrian refugee OOSC should be made by going beyond reliance on MoE figures and/or UNHCR registrations, e.g. “by undertaking a study on identifying the number of Syrian out-of-school

⁴ Enrolment rates do not differentiate between Syrian refugee children and “other” Syrian children, so the enrolment of Syrian refugee children might even be lower.

children in the country as a foundation for reviewing the targets of Syrian enrolment” (EU, 2018-b, p.11). The MoE, on the other hand, is suggesting “a consultation meeting with all the partners to discuss the projected numbers of Syrians for the coming years, in addition to the importance of discussing the possibility and requirements of refining the number of Syrians taking into consideration those out of school, those not registered with the UNHCR, those who do not have ID, ... etc.” (AAI Report, 2018).

The following section will highlight the key barriers to education in some detail. This is followed by an overview of how each of those barriers and challenges is being mitigated through initiatives, some of which are implemented by the GoJ and some in collaboration with international organizations.

2.3 ADMINISTRATIVE CONSTRAINTS

2.3.1 Registration policies

Through successive circulars to school principals and newly issued registration policies significant progress has been achieved and families can now more easily enrol their children. However, prior to these initiatives, between 2011 and 2015, many families abstained from sending their children to school. After three years or more out of school, children become ineligible to enter public schools under the ‘Three-year rule’ (to be explained below). Even with the positive change in registration policies, many families still appear unaware of these amendments as indicated by the 46% of parents who cited ‘administrative constraints’ as the key barrier to the education of their children. Below is an overview of previous registration policies that negatively impacted children's enrolment.

According to Government policy, from 2012 up to 2015, Syrian refugees who entered Jordan were sent to refugee camps. At first however, camp residents had the option of applying to be ‘bailed out’ by a Jordanian relative aged 35 or over. In practice, before July 2014, Jordan allowed refugees who left camps without going through the bailout process to receive the Ministry of Interior service cards that are required to access government services (e.g. enrolling children in school). But in 2015, the GoJ ended the bailout process altogether. When in 2014/2015 an

estimated 45% of Syrians⁵ had left refugee camps without going through the bailout process, they were not allowed to register with UNHCR to obtain asylum seeker certificates or to obtain service cards, rendering them ineligible to receive humanitarian assistance or to enrol their children in public schools (HRW, 2016).

In early 2015, the Government began to require all Syrians living outside the camps to re-register with the Interior Ministry, a project called the “Urban Verification Exercise” that would allow them to have access to subsidized public healthcare and public schools. But the high cost and mostly unattainable documents required, rendered this process ineffective in regulating the status of thousands. Later, during the last months of December of 2015 the associated costs were lowered and the requirement for documents eased. Additionally, from 2012 to 2014, Jordanian authorities had retained around 219,000 documents of Syrians crossing the borders. There was a big delay in returning these documents to the Syrians, which meant many families lost the opportunity of enrolling their children during those years (HRW, 2016).

Despite the MoE directive that ordered all schools to accept children regardless of their documentation status (UNICEF, 2018-a; Carlier, 2018), a significant number of families are not aware of the changes and stated that ‘administrative issues’, such as the lack of identity documents as a barrier to access schooling. A further administrative barrier is the availability of the placement tests which all students must sit prior to being admitted to school. According to UNICEF (2015-b), “[a]lthough 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” (p.72). There is nothing in the literature to indicate that availability of placement tests has changed and therefore we assume this administrative barrier is still in place.

Furthermore, there is the issue of lacking birth certificates. According to Human Rights Watch (2016), UNHCR estimates that up to 30 % of Syrian refugee children born in Jordan lack birth certificates, which will prevent tens of thousands of children from enrolling in school when they reach school-age.

⁵ According to HRW (2016) from August 2014 to August 2015, around 11,000 people left Azraq camp without being bailed out.

2.3.2 The Three-year Rule

It is important to note that it is not only ‘documentation’ that is an obstacle, but more so the ‘age requirement’ which has been strongly cited by parents as a key barrier to education (UNICEF, 2018-a, p.44). According to MoE’s policy, in order to enrol in Jordanian public schools, a student cannot be three years older than the rest of his or her peers in any given grade. According to a 2014 UNHCR estimate (cited in HRW, 2016), the “three-year rule” barred some 77,000 Syrian children from formal education. The GoJ says that the three-year rule is necessary to maintain the quality of education. However, the regulation has excluded thousands of Syrian children who had been out of school in Syria because their schools were closed or destroyed, or because their families were internally displaced (HRW, 2016).

2.4 FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS

2.4.1 Poverty

Currently, 86% of Syrian refugees live under Jordan’s poverty line (USD 96 / month) and one in six, live on less than USD 1.3 / day, which is considered by UNHCR to be the absolute poverty line (NRC, 2015-a; 2015-b; UNHCR, 2015). This is mainly due to the difficulties in meeting requirements that allow them to lawfully be granted a ‘Work Permit’. Those requirements include paying an equivalent of USD 100 to find a Jordanian sponsor (HRW, 2016). The financial situation of Syrian families has been aggravated since January 2018 when the GoJ revoked the eligibility for subsidized health care for people living outside refugee camps. This means that Syrian refugees in urban areas now have to pay high rates at public hospitals, with 80% of the payment made up-front. This new regulation annuls the free health care granted to refugees prior to January 2018 (HRW, 2018).

2.4.2 Child labour

The inability of Syrian refugees to obtain permits to work lawfully, exploitative low wages, or non-payment for many who work informally, increases family dependence on children to earn income—in turn impacting their education by either preventing enrolment or compelling them to drop out (HRW, 2016, p. 55).

According to UNHCR (2018) “extremely vulnerable households are depending on child labor” (p.35). UNICEF’s (2018-a) survey suggests that 17% of surveyed families resorted to child labour (seasonal, full time and part-time) as a coping mechanism. Figure 1 below displays the percentage of children involved in diverse modes of child labour.

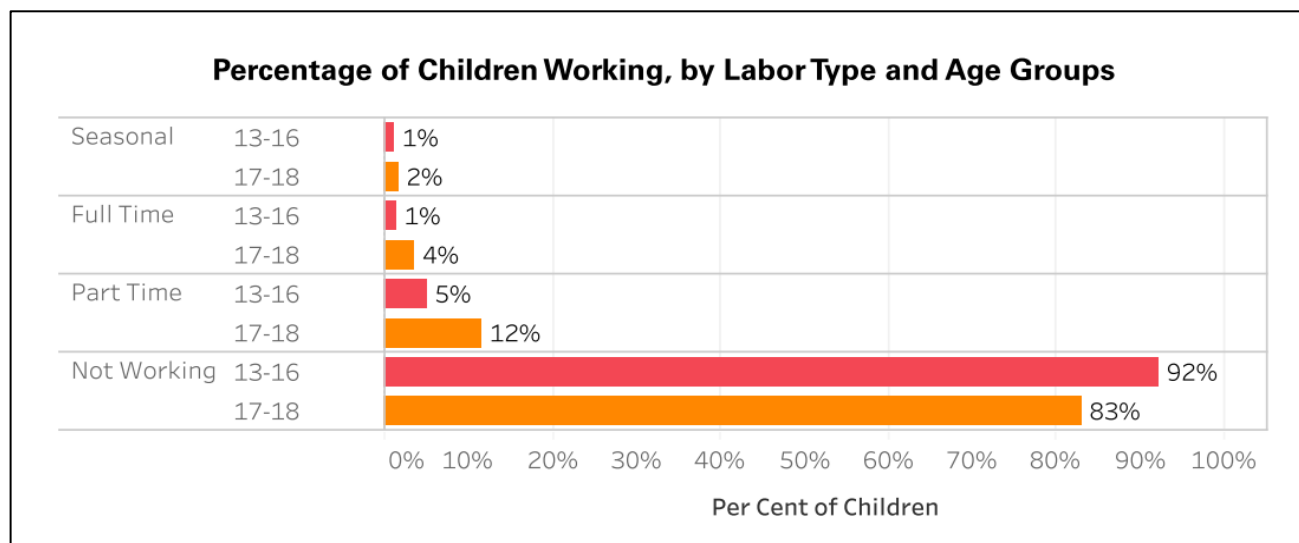


Figure 1: Percentage of Children Working, by Labour Type and Age Groups (UNICEF, 2018-a)

In 2016 UNICEF’s Jordan office reported that child workers are four times more likely to be out of school than other children (UNICEF, 2016). According to Human Rights Watch (2016) there are numerous studies that found that more than a quarter of Syrian households rely on children as the primary breadwinner, and 50% depend on child labour for some household income.

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO) Syrian children in host communities, who are in the labour market, work 6-7 days/week and one-third work more than eight hours a day, for a daily income of USD 4- 7 (Save the Children & UNICEF, 2015). A joint ILO–Fafo survey (2015) found that 37% of Syrian refugee children employed in Jordan work in construction, and that half of those are between the ages of 15 and 17. A study by Save the Children and UNICEF (2015) in the Jordan Valley found that about 18% of Syrian children working in agriculture were under 12 years old.

A survey conducted by UNICEF (2018-a) showed that only 32% of Syrian parents had strong feelings against the perception that children should leave school to work and support the

household⁶. This was echoed by MoE in its ESP (2018-2022): “Of note is the significant dropout rate, particularly for males from grade 7-11. This may be explained by social norms and gendered expectations, whereby males are expected to assume the role of breadwinner and therefore need to seek employment from an early age” (MoE, 2018, p.12).

2.4.3 Costs related to transportation and school supplies

It is noteworthy that there has been a positive achievement of exempting all children from tuition fees and textbooks. According to two successive assessments (June 2017 and December 2017) conducted by the EU to evaluate progress in achieving the Common Results Framework (CRF) targets, the MoE has supplied every Syrian child in school with a package of free textbooks. Yet, researchers are pointing to other associated costs⁷ of enrolling children (EU, 2018-b; EU, 2018-c). According to Barbelet, Hagen-Zanker & Mansour-Ille (2018) costs associated with transport and school supplies can be a real deterrent to attendance. The fact that transportation costs are turning education to a prohibitive endeavour, was also echoed by Human Rights Watch (2016). According to UNICEF’s survey (2018-a) 11% of surveyed families indicated that costs of transportation is a key financial constraints, and another 11% pointed to the costs associated with school supplies.

2.4.4 Child Marriage

Child marriage is defined as any formal marriage or informal union where one or both of the parties are under the age of 18 (Girls not Brides, n.d.). According to a UNICEF report issued in 2014, the rate of child marriage among Syrians in Jordan has risen from 18% in 2012 to 25% a year later, and reached 32% in the first quarter of 2014. “The pre-war figure inside Syria included an average of 13% of marriages as involving an under 18-year old” (UNICEF, 2014-a). A more recent report drawing on data from Jordan’s court system suggests that child marriage of Syrian refugee girls reached 36% in 2018, indicating a continued upward trend. (Al Jazeera, 2018). There are common factors that lead to child marriage among the Syrians in Jordan. Those include

⁶ Jordanian parents on the other hand expressed strongly (65%) that they are against pulling their children out of school to help financially sustain the family.

⁷ Literature does not identify what exactly those ‘costs’ are. However, it is anticipated that the costs are related to the purchase of school bags, uniforms, school supplies (stationary) and the daily snack.

“alleviating poverty or the burden of a large family with many daughters; providing protection for young girls; continuing traditions (cultural or family); and serving as an escape for girls living in an abusive home environment” (UNICEF, 2014-a). According to Save the Children, some girls are also married off to facilitate the entry of Syrian men into Jordan, a process easier for married men. Girls who marry Jordanian husbands may also be able to get sponsorship allowing them and the girls’ family to move out of the camp (Save the Children, 2014).

Girls are disproportionately affected by early marriage, and particularly girls with low education. “Evidence suggests that girls who have little or no education are up to six times more likely to marry as children compared with girls with secondary schooling” (UNICEF, 2014-a). According to UNICEF’s 2014 in-depth study on child marriage in Jordan, most interviewed females who had married before the age of 18 stated that they had dropped-out from school before marrying. According to the same study, among those who had been enrolled at school up until the time of marrying, very few were able to continue their education after marriage, and only then with strong family support to make it happen (UNICEF, 2014-b).

Many participants in FGDs [Focus Group Discussions] expressed the opinion that although girls might continue attending school after getting married, they would be expected to leave when they became pregnant, possibly continuing to learn in alternative educational programmes or home schooling. This expectation that pregnant girls should not attend mainstream schools is not supported in law (UNICEF, 2014-b, p.29).

2.5 CHILD PROTECTION AND SAFETY CONCERNS

The prevalence of a violent school environment, and that this is a barrier to education, has been cited in diverse literature resources (UNICEF, 2018-a; UNICEF, 2018-b, UNHCR,2018; HRW, 2016; NRC, 2018-a). A violent school environment which includes, according to interviewed parents, bullying, humiliation, physical abuse, psychological distress and discrimination, is a key reason for drop out (UNICEF, 2018-a). “Violence is widespread in the school system in Jordan, with 15 percent of children reporting staying out of school at least one day per year for fear of bullying or being physically attacked” (UNICEF, 2018-b). NRC (2018-a) found that violence and bullying are significant issues within Jordanian schools.

18% of out of school (OOS) boys and 12% of OOS girls report violence in school, either from other students or their teachers, as their reason for dropping out of the formal system. Additionally, harassment and violence by other children on the way to school or just outside schools have caused some Syrian refugee children to drop out of school, or to take longer alternative routes to school (p.2).

According to a survey conducted by the MoE (cited in UNICEF, 2018-a) 18% of the general school-children population, reported having experienced verbal teasing in schools and 10.9% experienced physical teasing. These figures indicate a significant discrepancy between children's perception of the challenges they face in accessing school, and parents' perception articulated earlier. This bullying, teasing and violent environment is a major barrier to keeping children in school. "Syrians might be facing these problems more because they are more likely to be refugees and newly integrating into society. As such, they may be more prone to this teasing than others, and may pull their children out of school because of this" (UNICEF, 2018-a, p. 104). In fact, a survey conducted by UNICEF (2018-a) has displayed the discrepancy between the perception of Jordanians and Syrians when it comes to whether children are teased or ridiculed at school; 25% Syrians versus 20% Jordanians (See Figure 2).

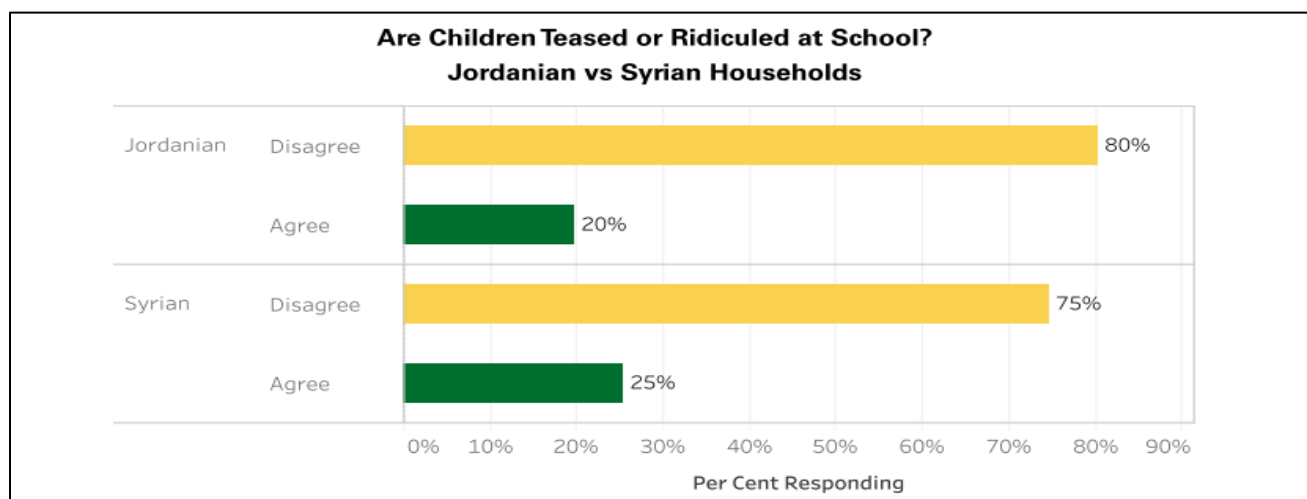


Figure 2: Jordanian vs Syrian Children being Teased or Ridiculed at School (UNICEF, 2018-a)

However, Barbelet et al. (2018) added a noteworthy perspective. Parents of female children are reluctant to send them to school when it gets dark in the afternoon⁸. They do not find it to be safe. According to Hagen-Zanker et al., (2017 cited in Barbelet et al., 2018) “Attending afternoon shifts also identifies pupils as Syrians, making them vulnerable to physical and verbal harassment” (p.6).

Despite these statistics and comments, there is some improvement and it seems that initiatives being undertaken (see below) are starting to bear fruit. According to the 2017 end of year Common Results Framework (CRF) progress report “... the perceptual survey has shown an improvement for male students from December 2016, both regarding being bullied at school and also in terms of corporal punishment applied by teachers” (EU, 2018-b,p. 31).

2.6 SCHOOL TOO DISTANT FROM CHILD’S RESIDENCE

Much literature mentioned lack of schools in appropriate proximity to the child’s residence as among the barriers to education (e.g. Barbelet et al., 2018; UNHCR, 2018). According to an analysis conducted by UNICEF (2018-a), households that are in need of cash grants are on average living further away from educational services; i.e. their children cannot just walk as the distance is too far, and there will be costs associated with transportation. Moreover, it might not be very safe for children to commute alone after darkness in remote areas.

Transportation appeared in the literature when the issue of non-attendance of Syrian children on Saturdays was discussed. Syrian children who attend the double-shift schools (DSS), have to make up for the shortened instruction periods on Saturdays. Surveys conducted by the EU (EU, 2018-b) proved that this is not effective, due to the very high percentage of absenteeism on Saturdays. Transportation was the most common cited reason for not attending school on Saturdays. The EU, therefore, recommends that schools with Saturday classes provide parents with transportation costs (EU, 2018-b).

⁸ The second afternoon school shift is devoted to Syrian children.

2.7 LOW QUALITY OF EDUCATION

According to NRC (2018-a) “21% of boys and 19% of girls report as their reason for dropping out the poor-quality teaching and learning environments they encounter” (p.2). UNHCR (2018) noted that “poor learning environments, insufficient and underqualified teachers, inadequate teacher training and outdated curriculum and pedagogy are equal deterrents for learners and are increasing the risk of drop-out” (p.35). The No Lost Generation initiative in its report that was prepared for the Brussels conference (April, 2018) mentioned almost the same manifestations of low quality in their report (NLG, 2018, p.30). However, ‘quality’ per se was not mentioned highly by parents with OOSC as a barrier to schooling when interviewed by UNICEF (2018-a). In all cases, quality is a highly convoluted and multi-faceted concept, the issue of ‘quality’ is discussed in more depth in the main report.

2.8 TRAUMA AND INADEQUATE MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Many Syrian children have undergone traumatizing events before fleeing to Jordan and during their journey. The Human Rights Watch 2016 Report has a set of disturbing accounts of events that changed children’s lives and personalities. In some cases, these experiences prevented them from enrolling in school. Humanitarian organizations including Mercy Corps, and UNICEF-supported Makani centers have provided tens of thousands of refugees in Jordan with psychosocial support services (PSS) in host communities and refugee camps. However, a 2015 UNICEF (2015-c) review of its PSS response in Jordan noted that support centers “were overcrowded and should be open longer, staff lacked adequate training to deal with issues such as child labor and early marriage” (HRW, 2016, p. 4-6). “A 2015 UN-coordinated survey that addressed the educational needs of Syrian refugee children with disabilities in Jordan found lack of physical accessibility, specialist educational care, and psychological effects of the Syria conflict were key barriers to Education”(HRW, 2016, p.42). There is a clear lack of teacher training in supporting children with disabilities.⁹

⁹ Education Sector Working Group (UNICEF), “Access to Education for Syrian Children and Youth in Jordan Host Communities: Joint Education Needs Assessment,” March 2015,

INITIATIVES ADDRESSING BARRIERS TO EDUCATION

3.1 INITIATIVES ADDRESSING ADMINISTRATIVE CONSTRAINTS

To ease the enrolment requirements related to documentation, Syrians are now allowed to enrol in schools without identification documents. There have been directives sent out by the MoE to schools to allow the enrolment of children regardless of their legal registration status. While this has helped increase access, it is difficult to track these students and their enrolment in DSSs and in other (non-camp) school types, given that they are not registered on the OpenEMIS databases (there is no unique identification number to use for registering them on the system) (AAI Report, 2018).

To sensitize parents about new regulations, a nation-wide¹⁰ campaign called **Learning for All (L4A)** was implemented in 2016, to target parents with OOSC and those who are at risk of dropping-out. After an in-depth survey to identify Syrian refugee households with OOSC and those at risk, UNICEF started to send out awareness SMSs and used a helpline to boost knowledge dissemination about the options and possibilities for schooling. UNICEF also made use of the referral list¹¹ of 9,923 households it received from the **Makani** network to contact parents (UNICEF, 2018-a, p. 19). Makani, which means in Arabic “My Space” is a network of centers. Each Makani center offers a comprehensive approach to service provision covering skills programmes and psychosocial support. Makani centers also have a community outreach component that is linked with services being provided at the center; these services include the provision of learning support for those within the formal school system to help them to succeed and to avoid dropping out, and also to refer ‘out-of-school’ children to the public schools as a step towards their re-integration.

This sensitization (plus data collection) campaign reached over 126,628 children all over Jordan of which 13% were OOSC. UNICEF reported a subsequent increase in enrolment of around 20% (approximately 1,400 enrolled children), suggesting that this simple SMS tool was an effective campaign tool (UNICEF, 2018-a). In their December 2017 progress report the EU (2018-b) praised the MoE for its leading role in the campaign; it also recommended making further use of the initiative to raise parents’ awareness about the importance of attending Saturday classes.

¹⁰ A MoE-owned but UNICEF-led initiative

¹¹ Referral lists include information about out-of-school children who need to be re-integrated in the school system. The data has been collected by the MAKANI network.

To address the lack of certificates (e.g. birth certificates), special committees comprising representatives of diverse ministries meet weekly in cities around the country to resolve cases of Syrians who entered Jordan without documentation, or whose marriages or children were incorrectly registered. In 96% of cases the special committees have resolved the problems (HRW, 2016).

Addressing the impacts of the **Three-year Rule**, is probably the hardest task. The MoE has taken steps to boost re-integration of OOSC through the Catch-up programme. However, this programme is only open to children aged 8 – 12 years old. The Drop-out programme for older children provides less clear pathways to re-integration and progression.¹²

3.2 INITIATIVES ADDRESSING FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS

In 2015 UNICEF initiated **Hajati**¹³, a ‘child cash grant’ that transfers cash (20 JOD = USD 28) to vulnerable households, aiming to increase school enrolment and decrease dropouts. One of the eligibility criteria for this cash programme was having three school-aged children with at least one with considerable risk of dropping out before finishing basic education. Hajati was introduced in 2017 and aimed to assist 55,000 boys and girls from 15,000 of the most vulnerable registered Syrian refugee families. UNICEF claims that the Hajati programme managed to bring 3,241 children back to school. Those who returned to school lived mostly in informal tented settlements (UNICEF, 2018-a).

Hajati aims not only to facilitate entry of OOSC into the school system, but also to combat school absenteeism, which puts students at risk of falling behind academically, and ultimately dropping out. Students in grades 1-11 are allowed up to 39 days of absenteeism per academic year for automatic promotion to the next grade. After 39 days they must repeat the grade the following year. Hajati staff have access to absenteeism data generated via the OpenEMIS and after 5 and 10 days of absenteeism the programme sends automated SMS or phone calls reinforcing the importance of education. Hajati works closely with UNICEF’s Makani programme, and after 15

¹² Further information can be found in the report: “The Education of Syrian Refugees in Jordan: Issues of Access & Quality: A review of policies and initiatives

¹³ Hajati, is not the only cash grant provided for Syrians in Jordan. For more information see UNHCR, 2018-a.

days of absence a home visit takes place by a Makani partner. In their evaluation of the Hajati programme UNICEF point to its effectiveness in enhancing enrolment rates and the importance of developing cash programmes in synergy and alignment with existing services and programmes on the ground (UNICEF, 2018-a).

The MoE is aiming to alleviate poverty as a constraint through implementing a **feeding programme**¹⁴ for students in poverty-stricken directorates. Currently there are 355,000 students within 1,760 schools, who benefit from the programme. The Ministry aims to extend the programme to all poverty-stricken areas (MoE, 2018).

According to the CRF, there is a commitment to provide all Syrian students with **packages of free textbooks**. MoE has achieved that by supplying 99.8% of students with free textbooks as per June 2018 report and 100% as per December 2017 report (EU, 2018-b; EU, 2018-c). As child labour continues to be a widespread phenomenon, UNICEF, UNHCR and ILO have collaborated on a project to prevent and respond to child labour¹⁵ by further developing and strengthening existing policies in close collaboration with national authorities and 3RP partners (UNHCR, 2018).

3.3 INITIATIVES ADDRESSING ISSUES OF CHILD PROTECTION AND SAFETY CONCERNS

In 2009, i.e. before the Syria crisis, the MoE had launched the **Ma'an**, (Together for a Safe Environment) campaign to address issues of violence within schools. According to the Education Strategic Plan (2018-2022), this programme should cover 10% of all school children by 2017. The programme includes a range of activities to reduce violence in schools, and e-surveys to measure violence in schools (UNICEF, 2017). There are plans by the MoE to extend the programme to reach out to all schools by 2023 (MoE, 2018). Another programme implemented by the Ministry is the **Anti-bullying programme** that is currently being piloted in ten schools, and also according to the Education Strategic Plan published in 2018, the programme should cover all schools hosting grades 7-9 by the year 2023 (MoE, 2018).

¹⁴ No evaluation of the feeding programme has been conducted yet, and therefore the effect of these programme are unknown.

¹⁵ Information about this programme is limited to the literature referred to here.

UN organizations are also working to improve the school environment. UNICEF and the National Council for Family Affairs (NCFA) developed ***A Multi-Sectoral Changing Norms and Behaviour strategy to End Violence Against Children*** in collaboration with 18 key governmental organizations, NGOs, and the private sector. The goal of the strategy is to reduce physical violence and bullying at institutional, individual and community levels by 50% by 2021. UNICEF is currently also trying to provide teacher training for in-school facilitators who can

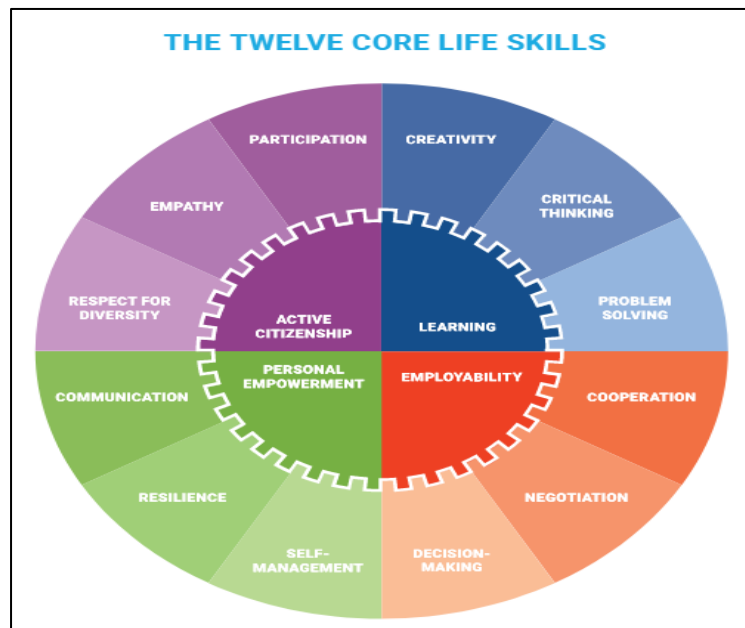


Figure 3: The Twelve Core Life Skills underpinning the Nashatati activities

support teachers in tackling those issues. It is important to mention the role of Makani centers in mobilizing skilled outreach workers to tackle problems of violence in school when they are identified as a cause for non-attendance (UNICEF, 2018-a). However, according to the 2017 Education Response Factsheet (2017) “more cross-sectoral efforts must be scaled up to address violence against children”.

Additionally, in autumn 2017 the MOE launched the ***Nashatati*** (My activities) programme in public schools, in collaboration with UNICEF and Generations for Peace. The Nashatati Model of education programming is aligned with the vision of the ***Life Skills and Citizenship Education (LSCE) Initiative*** agenda and aims to foster life skills and social cohesion, while increasing access for all vulnerable children to quality after-school activities.

There are twelve underpinning life skills for the programme (see Figure 3) using the four-dimensional learning model: ‘Learning to Know’ (Cognitive Dimension), ‘Learning to Do’ (Instrumental Dimension), ‘Learning to Be’ (Individual Dimension), and ‘Learning to Live Together’ (Social Dimension). The twelve core life skills are lifelong and they build on evidence that underlines the importance of skills acquisition from an early age (LSCE, n.d).

The programme also aims to increase participation and greater psychosocial wellbeing of children and youth, ultimately leading to greater tolerance and appreciation of diversity, interpersonal acceptance, teamwork, and shared sense of belonging (UNICEF, 2018-b). During its pilot in the 2017/18 school year, the programme ran in 100 public schools, reaching 10,000 female and male students. It is expected to continue in the 2018/19 school year¹⁶, providing a total of 60 hours of quality programming for each participating student. Evaluations of the programme, undertaken by the ‘No Lost Generation’ suggest 20% of the target group students reported that they would deal calmly with confrontation and not resort to violence and an increase of 21% of students who would play and work with other students of different ages and nationalities (UNICEF, 2018-b).

3.4 INITIATIVES ADDRESSING SCHOOLS BEING TOO FAR FROM CHILD’S RESIDENCE

There are two types of initiatives to address the issue of school distance from home. In the short-term, there are interventions that provide **transportation assistance**. The 3R Plan (UNHCR, 2018, p. 35) refers to this as a ‘new intervention’ and we have been unable to locate evidence of its impact. There are middle and longer term interventions such as the expansion and refurbishment of school facilities which can reduce both the cost of travel and the protection risk associated with longer journeys to school (NRC, 2018 –a). Improving the Ministry’s school mapping process to more accurately assess the extent of overcrowding in some areas and the distance from schools to population centers, is a longer-term solution. This will enable the Ministry to develop a more coherent strategy for constructing new school facilities. MoE developed the Geographic Information System (WebGIS) to integrate educational data and transform it into digital spatial maps for decision-making (MoE, 2018).

3.5 INITIATIVES PROVIDING PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT TO SYRIAN REFUGEE CHILDREN

¹⁶ No information was found on whether the programme continued as planned in the 2018/2019 school year.

The only time psychosocial support is mentioned within the new ESP document (2018-2022) is within the list of challenges to be addressed to ensure safe and stimulating learning environments. The ESP refers to the “[w]eakness in activating the educational and guidance role, which is concerned with supporting the behavioral and psychological aspects of students in schools” (MoE, 2018, p.68). Despite this, there was no mention of corresponding projects or actions to be undertaken. UN organizations, on the other hand are categorizing ‘PSS activities’ under ‘Protection’ and not under ‘Education’. This explains why it is very difficult to find separate information related to ‘children’ receiving PSS, as women, girls, men and boys (WGMB) are all clustered together (3RP 2017-2018).

While the MoE (2018) does not mention any kind of PSS training provided to teachers, the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MOPIC, 2018) noted in the Jordan Compact¹⁷ (JC 2018-2022) that 5,102 teachers, facilitators, counselors and school staff were trained on PSS, and that training was also provided for the proper care of children with disabilities (p.18). It is not clear if those teachers were within the formal or non-formal education (NFE) sector. The EU recognises that there is insufficient attention to the importance of providing teachers with proper PSS training, and therefore recommended putting more focus on students’ personal development and well-being through the development of core capacities at school level, as well as “introducing mandatory psycho-social training for all contract teachers in camp and DSSs in order to address and counteract the high incidence of violence in schools” (EU, 2018-b, p.48).

CONCLUSION

Syrian refugee children in Jordan suffer from a long list of barriers hindering their access to quality education. This report highlights the demand-side barriers, i.e. barriers and challenges impacting Syrian families, either by impeding the enrolment of their children in formal education, or leading to their drop-out. Many interventions and initiatives have been put in place since the start of the Syria crisis to address those constraints. While the GoJ has conducted a set of steps to direct school administrators to facilitate the enrolment of refugee children, even when they do not hold the proper documentation, more has to be done to disseminate information related to those new regulations. Progress has been made in terms of solving refugees’ lack of certificates

¹⁷ To read more about the Jordan Compact and the ten indicators related to education (EU, 2018-a)

and documentations, e.g. birth certificates, and their legal registration. However, the more convoluted 'three-year-rule' has barred thousands of Syrian children, who have been out of school for three years or more, from integrating in the formal schooling system. The implementation of the 'Catch-Up' and the 'Drop-Out' programmes are designed to address this barrier.

The financial constraints have been reported by Syrian families to be one of the main barriers to accessing education. While the GoJ has allowed Syrian children to enrol in public schools for free, provided free packages of textbooks and free meals in poverty-stricken areas, there are still families who are suffering from poverty and who resort to negative coping mechanism such as 'child labour' and 'child marriage'. UNICEF's "Hajati" programme aims to help families keep their children in school and to enrol their children if they are not in school. However, the literature review conducted could not find other nation-wide cash programmes; and research is needed to understand the impact (if any) of those initiatives on child labour and child marriage.

The diverse reports reviewed indicated that there is a difference in perception related to the magnitude of school violence, e.g. bullying, humiliation, physical abuse, psychological distress and discrimination on school enrolment and drop-out. Children are more vocal in expressing the impact of these factors, while parents focus more on issues related to financial and administrative constraints. However, while the report highlighted some programmes that have been launched and implemented to address school violence, such as "Ma'an" and the "Anti-Bullying programme", these programmes are not yet implemented throughout all schools in Jordan, and there is also a need to understand how effective those programmes have been to reduce the safety concerns and to address school violence. Another barrier that deserves more attention is the lack of PSS support for refugee children, who may have experienced trauma; this review could find little data on the effectiveness of MoE training initiatives.

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