

# Opportunities for Accelerating Progress on Education for Syrian Children and Youth in Jordan

September 10 2015



By Maysa Jalbout

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# Acknowledgements

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Questions about this report can be directed to [info@theirworld.org](mailto:info@theirworld.org)

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# Acronyms

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3RP	Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan
CBO	Community Based Organisation
DFID	Department for International Development
EJC	Emirati Jordanian Camp
ERfKE	Education Reform for the Knowledge Economy
ESWG	Education Sector Working Group
EU	European Union
IE	Informal Education
JRP	Jordan Response Plan
JRPSC	Jordan Response Platform for the Syrian Crisis
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOPIC	Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation
NFE	Non-formal Education
NLG	No Lost Generation
OOSC	Out Of School Children
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
TEC	Temporary Education Centre
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education Training
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency

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# Introduction

Conflict in the Middle East has taken a massive toll on several countries and has caused waves of refugees to spill into neighbouring countries. Jordan has a history of welcoming refugees fleeing from violence and conflict in the region, beginning with the Palestinians who have sought asylum in Jordan since 1948, the Iraqis in 1991 and 2003, and most recently, the Syrians. There are an estimated 2 million United Nations-registered Palestinian refugees and approximately 30,000 UNHCR registered Iraqi refugees currently in Jordan (UNICEF, 2010; Refugees International, 2014).

Since the beginning of the Syrian crisis in 2011, Jordan has served as a safe haven for hundreds of thousands of refugees seeking asylum, taking in 654,141 Syrian refugees (UNHCR, 2015a), increasing from 120,018 to 490,880 between January and July 2013 alone (UNHCR, 2015d). Unofficial estimates of unregistered refugees increase the total to 741,000 people or more (ILO, 2015). In addition to the approximately 740,000 Syrians who were already living and working in Jordan, Syrian refugees now comprise nearly 10% of Jordan's population (MOPIC, 2015).<sup>1</sup>

Jordan's response to the influx of Syrian refugees has been generous but has also placed tremendous pressure on the country's economy, infrastructure and social services, including education. With approximately 350,000 Syrian refugee children and young people in Jordan, about 215,000 children are of school age and 90,000 are still out of school (OOSC). Jordan is facing a daunting challenge in providing education to all refugee children and youth while continuing to strengthen its own education system.

This report highlights some of the key challenges Jordan faces in providing education to Syrian refugee children and youth and lays out the critical need for greater international engagement, financing and technical support.

There are five opportunities for the international community and Jordan to form a stronger partnership to ensure education opportunity for all children in Jordan. Over the next school year, a strengthened partnership could mobilize \$65 million and support approximately 215,000 school age children, including 90,000 out-of-school Syrian refugee children. Achieving these targets would help Jordan achieve the Education For All (EFA) and No Lost Generation (NLG) initiative goals.

**Opportunity #1:** Scale up access to primary and secondary education for out-of-school children and youth who are ready for formal school. The Government of Jordan has already demonstrated a high level of leadership and commitment in facilitating access to formal education through its public schools. However, financial and technical support is needed in five areas that would enable it to scale up access to state schools: 1) providing funding for teacher salaries and training, 2) providing funding for more double-shift schools, 3) increasing the number of schools in highly populated areas, 4) eliminating enrolment barriers to Jordanian and refugee children with special needs, and 5) strengthening child protection policies and practices.

*Over the next year, a strengthened partnership could mobilize \$65 million and support 215,000 children*

<sup>1</sup> There are approximately 350,000 children and youth ages 0-18 of which approximately 215,000 are of school age 5-17.

<sup>2</sup> NLG is a global multi-stakeholder initiative to support the education and protection of Syrian refugee children.

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**Opportunity # 2:** Provide alternative education for children and youth who are unable to enter state schools. Refugee and Jordanian children and youth who were unable to enrol in formal education deserve greater opportunities to access informal and non-formal education. Therefore, there is a need to increase support to alternative education centres, establish clearer links between alternative learning pathway programs and formal education that allow children and youth to re-engage in the formal system, and offer other targeted interventions organised by NGOs and Community Based Organisations (CBOs).

**Opportunity #3:** Invest in early childhood education for all children. As only one-third of Jordanian children and a much fewer percentage of Syrian children attend kindergarten, increasing access to early childhood education would benefit both Syrian and Jordanian children and contribute to fulfilling Jordan's own education goals.

**Opportunity #4:** Increase post-secondary education for youth. With the growing number of disenfranchised youth in the region and the limited opportunities to pursue post-secondary education, additional investment in improving access to and quality of higher education and vocational education for Syrian refugees is needed. This would offer youth better employment prospects and would produce a more educated and productive workforce.

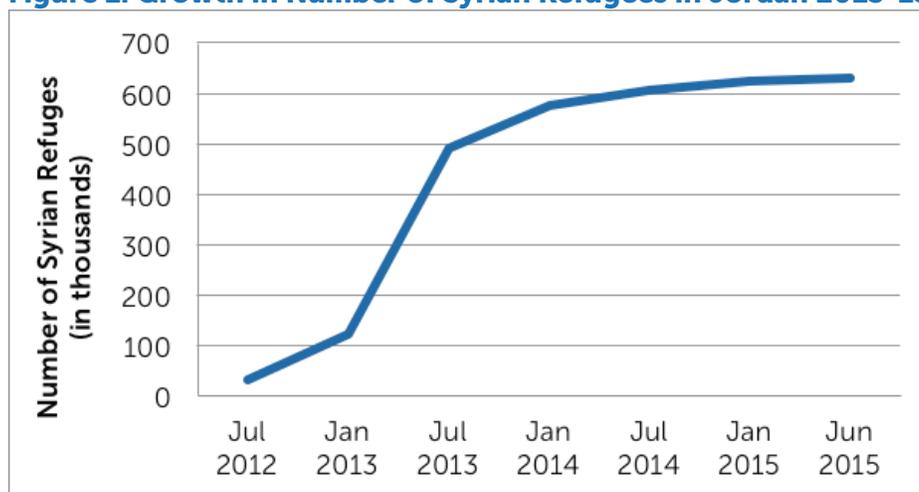
**Opportunity 5:** Develop a longer-term costed education sector plan with a focus on resilience and emphasis on stronger coordination among donors. With no end to the Syrian crisis in sight, there is a need for the educational response to shift from a short-term humanitarian response plan to a more sustainable long-term plan. Although Jordan is currently developing the Jordan Response Plan (JRP) for 2016-18, a longer-term plan would better address Syrian refugee education within the broader context of the Jordanian education system and require stronger funding modalities to improve donor coordination and support provided to the Jordanian Government.

## Part I: The Impact of Hosting Syrian and Other Refugees in Jordan

Over the past two years, the number of Syrian refugees in Jordan has skyrocketed to over 650,000. Approximately 85% of refugees live outside of camps in Amman (27.7 per cent), Irbid (23.3 per cent) and Mafrq (12.4 per cent) governorates (MOPIC, 2015), cut off from their networks and opportunities for work, education, and social services.

The remaining 15% live in one of three refugee camps: Za'atari, Azraq, or the Emirati Jordanian Camp (EJC) (MOPIC, 2015). The Zaatari Camp based in the Mafrq governorate, hosts approximately 120,000 people – the vast majority of the refugees living in camps. It is the largest refugee camp in Jordan and the second largest in the world (Rawlings, 2014).

**Figure 1. Growth in Number of Syrian Refugees in Jordan 2013-15**



Source: UNHCR (2015d)

Social services, such as basic public health care and education, are accessible (some without charge) to refugees. In the case of public education, the influx of Syrian students has resulted in overcrowded classrooms, limited school resources and overworked teachers, all of which are likely to further lower the quality of the education system (MOPIC, 2015).

The large influx of refugees has placed tremendous pressure on Jordanian politics due to strain on the economy and social systems. This is particularly true in cities with the highest population of Syrian refugees where prices of basic commodities have risen around 15% (MOPIC, 2015). Housing costs have also nearly tripled in border towns such as Mafrq and Ramtha, making housing much less affordable for many Jordanians (Sharp, 2015).

The international community of donors and United Nations (UN) agencies in Jordan recognize this added pressure and consultations for this report revealed a concern and desire to both alleviate Jordan's burden and address these systemic issues as a commitment to Jordan's stability and development. For a country with few resources besides human capital, Jordan is largely reliant on remittances and aid to fund development. Therefore the country's political and economic stability is dependent to a large extent on international support.

A national policy delineating the rights and regulations related to refugees working in the formal sector does not yet exist and Syrians are competing with Jordanians for jobs in the informal sector, which accounts for 44% of total employment in the country (ILO, 2015). This

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places the most vulnerable Jordanians at a disadvantage and raises the country's already high unemployment rates (ILO, 2015).

Many of the challenges that affect the most disadvantaged in Jordan pre-existed the Syrian refugee crisis. Jordan has long faced persistent poverty, high youth unemployment and low quality public education. Data from 2010 indicate that approximately 14.4% of the population is living on or below the poverty line (World Bank, 2015a). In addition, Jordan's youth (15-24 years old), who make up one third of the country's population, face some of the highest unemployment rates in the world with a rate of 33.7% for 2010-14 (World Bank, 2015b). Among the greatest challenges in the education sector are low learning outcomes. Statistics for 2011/12 indicate that almost 50% of lower secondary students were not meeting the basic learning level (Brookings, 2014).

## The Impact of the Syrian Crisis on Children and Youth

Syrian children have paid a heavy cost for the Syrian crisis both inside Syria and in neighbouring countries. These children represent 53% of the refugee population in Jordan, with five out of six living outside of camps in host communities (MOPIC, 2015; UNICEF, 2015a). Many are below the age of 5 and upwards of 215,000 are of school age (MOPIC, 2015).

Children, severely affected by their families' dire financial situation, are forced to work or get married (mostly girls) at a young age, leaving them more susceptible to harassment and exploitation (Save the Children, 2014).

According to a recent study, in almost 50% of Syrian households children make some contribution to the family income through child labour. It is estimated that approximately 16% (or 30,000) of Syrian children in Jordan engage in child labour, with the rates rising to 40% in Balqa and Ghor/Jordan Valley, which have large areas of agricultural lands (UNICEF, 2015b).

The main reasons Syrian children are forced into child labour are lack of financial resources for food, rent, and other basic needs; lack of access to education or vocational and skills training; and to support their families (UNICEF, 2014).

According to UNHCR (2014), two-thirds of refugees across Jordan are living below the national poverty line, and one in six refugee households live in abject poverty, with less than \$40 (£26; €34) for each person every month. UNHCR is providing monthly cash assistance to 21,000 of the most vulnerable Syrian families, or 14% of the Syrian refugee population living outside camps. As of the end of 2014, more than 10,000 additional Syrian refugee households had been identified as eligible for such assistance but, due to lack of funds, could not be helped.

**Figure 2. Map of Jordan**



Source: World Travels

# Part II: Current Government Support for Education of Syrian Refugees

## Lack of Education Opportunity Among All Syrian Refugee Children and Youth

Education is a basic human right and is known to have a transformative impact on children, particularly in conflict and emergency settings. Education not only provides the skills and qualifications needed to become independent and productive members of communities, but also offers a renewed sense of hope for the future. Yet, many Syrian refugee children still lack access to education, particularly those living in host communities.

Prior to the conflict in Syria, around 97% of Syrian children were enrolled in primary school and 67% were enrolled in secondary school (REACH, 2014). In 2014/2015, 129,058 Syrian children were enrolled in public schools across Jordan. While the majority of the children attend public schools, around 90,000, or almost 40%, remain out of school. Of those who attend school, 105,832 are living in host communities while the remaining 23,226 are living in camps. In other words, approximately 70% of Syrian children living in host communities in Jordan attend primary school while just 51% attend secondary school, with the rate dropping to 47.5% among boys (REACH, 2014) due to institutional, financial, and other barriers to accessing education.

## Current Government Support for Education of Syrian Refugees

Despite the high numbers of out-of-school children particularly among adolescents and youth, Jordan fares well in comparison to the situation of refugee children in other host countries, thanks in large part to the Government of Jordan's generous policy to provide free access to education. Jordan has been working proactively with the international community to provide education and make sure the basic needs of refugees are met.

The Government of Jordan has received over \$1 billion in international aid from key allies including Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) since the beginning of 2015, in part to help alleviate the pressure of hosting Syrian refugees. The largest contributors to the Jordan Response Plan (JRP) for education for 2015 have been from the USA, UK, EU, Canada and Germany for a total of \$74 million (MOPIC interview). In addition, DFID committed to investing almost \$28 million towards a Reading and Mathematics Program (RAMP) (with U.S. support) and UNICEF has raised contributions worth \$42 million while Save the Children has raised \$11 million (UNHCR, 2015).

**Table 1: Top Donors for Educational Opportunities in Jordan**

Donor	Total Budget for Funded Projects (Millions USD)
Japan	\$319.8
USA	\$264.7
European Union	\$118.57
World Bank	\$60
Germany	\$48.25
Canada	\$31.96

Source: MOPIC (2015)

<sup>3</sup> This data is for the academic year 2014/2015 and was provided by the Ministry of Education.

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Jordan also has long standing partnerships with donors funding education under the Education Reform for the Knowledge Economy (ERfKE) policy and other programmes as well as through direct budgetary support to the MOE to strengthen the national education system. However, these partnerships do not necessarily directly contribute to or require channelling funding for refugee education.

For 2015-16, the government requires \$1.14 billion in direct budget support to address the Syrian crisis, in addition to \$1.85 billion in programmatic support, of which \$257 million is needed for the educational response across two components:

- Refugee component - \$79,230,750
- Resilience component - \$177,672,696 (MOPIC, 2015)

It is unlikely this requirement will be fulfilled without a major, new effort and new financing from the international community. As of August 2015, only around 14% of Jordan's education funding appeal had been fulfilled, none of which came in the form of direct budgetary support (MOPIC, 2015b).

Jordan has benefited from strong policy and coordination. Key components of the Jordanian response so far include:

- The Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MOPIC) has played the leading role in driving the overall Syrian response effort on behalf of the government. In 2014, the task force established the Jordan Response Platform for the Syrian Crisis (JRPSC) Secretariat, a multi-stakeholder platform, to oversee the financing and implementation of a shared response program.
- The Jordan Response Plan for education was developed by an Education Task Force led by the MOE (Ministry of Education) in close coordination with the UN, donor agencies, and other partners. The task force is also responsible for the coordination of the refugee and resilience refugee responses in the JRP. In other words, it aims to address the short-term needs of Syrian refugees, but also to align and coordinate them with longer-term sustainable and development-driven resilience plans across all sectors (MOPIC, 2015a).
- An Education Sector Working Group (ESWG) for Syrian refugee education, co-chaired by UNICEF and Save the Children, was also set up at the start of the crisis to address the needs of the refugees. It coordinates the work of all non-governmental stakeholders, including the UN agencies, various national and international non-governmental organizations, and CBOs (ESWG, 2014). The ESWG has played an important role in ensuring that all the strategies and activities of the various donor agencies and partners are aligned with the government and that they are working towards greater access to quality public education.
- Given Jordan's long history as an aid recipient, most donors are well-established in the country, have an understanding of the context and the needs of the education sector, and are already working in partnership with the government.

## Opportunities for Accelerating Progress on Education for Syrian Children and Youth in Jordan

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The Government of Jordan introduced a clear policy at the start of the Syrian crisis offering free access to education for all refugee children and youth. Although this situation placed significant strain on Jordan's educational system, it did not change the decision of the government to provide an open door policy to refugee children.

The result of this policy has been high enrolment rates of Syrian children in public schools across the country. Most Syrian children are currently enrolled in formal education, with around 73% of children attending MOE accredited schools in camps and 86% attending public schools in host communities (UNICEF, 2015a).

There have also been concerted efforts from the MOE and its partners to provide greater access to education through double shifts, building of new schools, and small-scale renovations and other infrastructure work in approximately 140 schools across the country (MOPIC, 2015a).

Double shifting has been a big part of the strategy, particularly in the six governorates, which house the largest population of Syrian refugees. Jordanian children attend in the mornings, while Syrian children attend in the afternoons with some classes shortened from 45 to 30 minutes. Currently, 98 schools operate on double shifts. Although this structure has allowed for a much greater number of Syrians to access public schooling, it has placed a large burden on the schools and their teachers, which have been under-resourced and unprepared for this change (UNICEF, 2015b; MOPIC, 2015a).

For students who have missed out on over a year of schooling or have never enrolled in school and may be unprepared for formal education, alternative education programs in Jordan have also offered another path. The most successful effort so far has been UNICEF's 250 alternative learning centres called Makani (My Space) that offer both informal education (IE) and non-formal education (NFE) programs. According to the latest 3RP (Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan) Progress Report, approximately 96,500 Syrian children and adolescents are benefiting from this program (UNHCR 2015b).

The informal education programs – although uncertified by the MOE – teach numeracy, literacy, English and science classes, which provide remedial education for children typically enrolled in the formal education system. They also offer counselling, psychosocial support and life skills (UNICEF interview). NFE at Makani includes certified programs for children ages 12 and over that cover dropout education, home schooling, adult education and summer programs. (UNICEF, 2015d).

In light of the high dropout and out-of-school rate among children and youth in particular, these programs provide the critical support system and positive environment that can shield children from negative influences and exploitation and offer them an opportunity to continue developing themselves outside of school.

## Part III: The Education Challenge for Syrian Refugees in Jordan

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Jordan is now hosting more than 215,000 school age Syrian refugee children, over 90,000 of them still out-of-school and faces major challenges. Without significant, additional financial support from the international community, Jordan will not be able to reach its goal of providing all children with access to education. In addition to the funding shortage, consultation with stakeholders in Jordan pointed to a few key obstacles that could be resolved with increased commitment and support from partners.

### Limited Funding for Education of Refugees

With the conflict in its fifth year now, the resources required to provide both short-term and long-term support for Syrian refugees across all sectors continue to grow, contributing to donor fatigue and a challenge of prioritization among needs and countries affected by the conflict.

According to the Jordan Response Information System for the Syrian Crisis (JORISS) Funding Update for July 2015, Jordan has only received \$35 million of the total \$257 million – around 14% – that it requested to meet the education needs of refugee children for this year (MOPIC, 2015b).

As the conflict becomes more protracted, there is a growing awareness that the demands on Jordan will grow and the response plan must shift towards establishing longer-term development goals that will focus on building resilience not only among the refugees, but within host communities and the country overall.

### Multiple Funding Channels Reduces Coordination

In order to make the shift to the medium- and long-term, there is a need for greater and more aligned coordination between government and donor agencies and partners involved in the educational response effort. The JRPSC in cooperation with MOPIC have established six channels for funding; direct budgetary support (to the education sector), UN agencies, bilateral donors, a multi-donor trust fund and multilateral financing, national non-governmental organisations (NGOs), international NGOs, the private sector and foundations. While having multiple financing channels creates an 'open door' for those interested in supporting Syrian refugees in Jordan, it also creates a very decentralized structure for funding, leading to far greater coordination challenges for the government (MOPIC, 2015a).

### An Overstretched Public Education System

On the implementation level, challenges are closely tied to the context of Jordan, where prior to the Syrian crisis the national education system still required significant external support to improve access and raise quality.

The main challenges facing Jordan's education system include old or overcrowded school buildings and classrooms, insufficient school resources, badly trained or untrained teachers dependent on traditional teaching methods, an out-dated curriculum that does not sufficiently prepare students with necessary critical thinking and problem solving skills needed for post-secondary education and the work place, as well as a lack of continuity in reform efforts.

## Opportunities for Accelerating Progress on Education for Syrian Children and Youth in Jordan

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Learning challenges have been priority areas in the country's ERfKE since 2003 (MOE, 2012). Nevertheless, falling scores of Jordanian students in international assessments such as Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) suggest progress is not being made. Student test scores remain well below the international average (Mullis et. al, 2012; OECD, 2014).

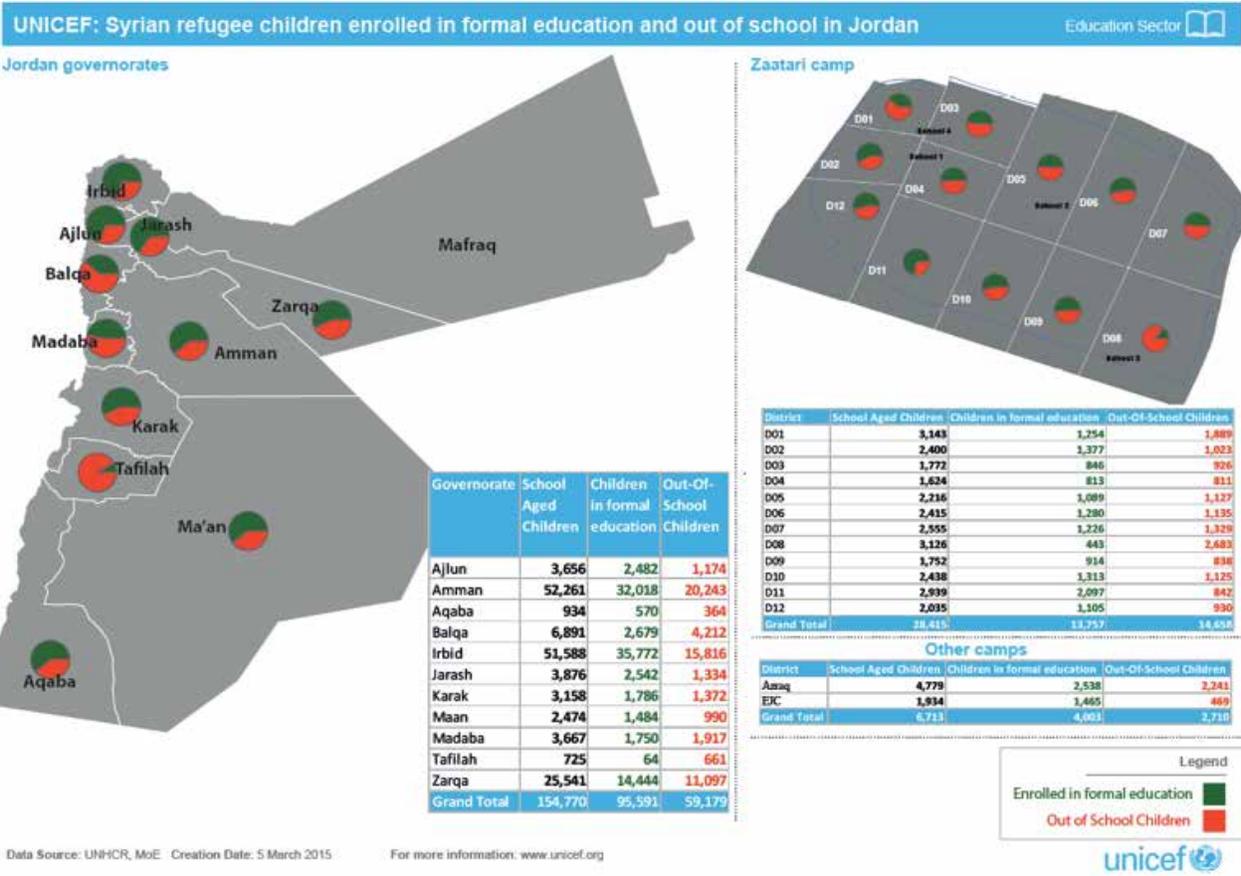
### Limited Access to Formal Education Among Syrian Refugees

Notwithstanding the success of the Jordanian Government and its partners in placing approximately 130,000 Syrian children in formal education, 90,000 children continue to face significant barriers to enrolment and attendance both in and outside the camps. These include:

- Limited school spaces (particularly in Northern towns where most refugees are based)
- Lack of financial resources (to cover the costs of uniform, transportation, etc.)
- Difficulty adapting after being out of school for long time
- Violence experienced in and outside of school
- Lack of access to school due to long distances and lack of transport
- Child labour (UNICEF, 2015b; 2015c)

The numbers of out-of-school children are the highest in host communities, such as Tafilah, Madaba, and Balqa, where half of all children (or almost all, in the case of Tafilah) do not go to school (see figure 3). Although these figures are lower in the camps due to the smaller population of children there, estimates from March 2015 show that over half of school-aged children in Zaatari Camp are out of school. The out-of-school rates are significantly lower in the other two camps (UNICEF, 2015b).

**Figure 3. Syrian Refugee Children Enrolled in Formal Education and Out of School in Jordan, March 2015**

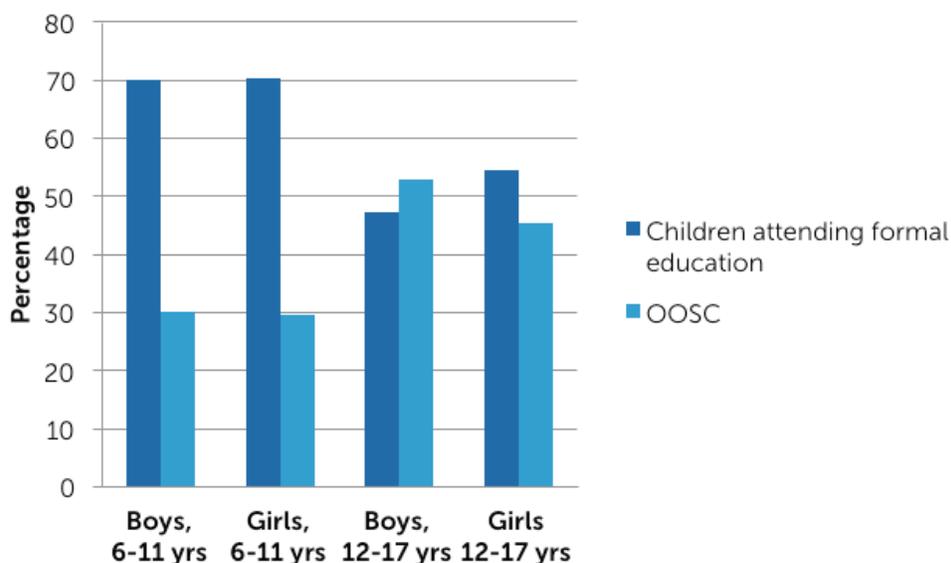


Source: UNICEF (2015b)

The rates of out-of-school children vary based on age and sex, with boys, particularly those aged 12-17, being the most likely to be out of school. Figure 4 below illustrates these differences (see Appendix 1 for out of school rates for boys and girls by governorate).

## Opportunities for Accelerating Progress on Education for Syrian Children and Youth in Jordan

**Figure 4. Percentage of Syrian Children in Host Communities Attending and Not Attending Formal Education by Age and Sex**

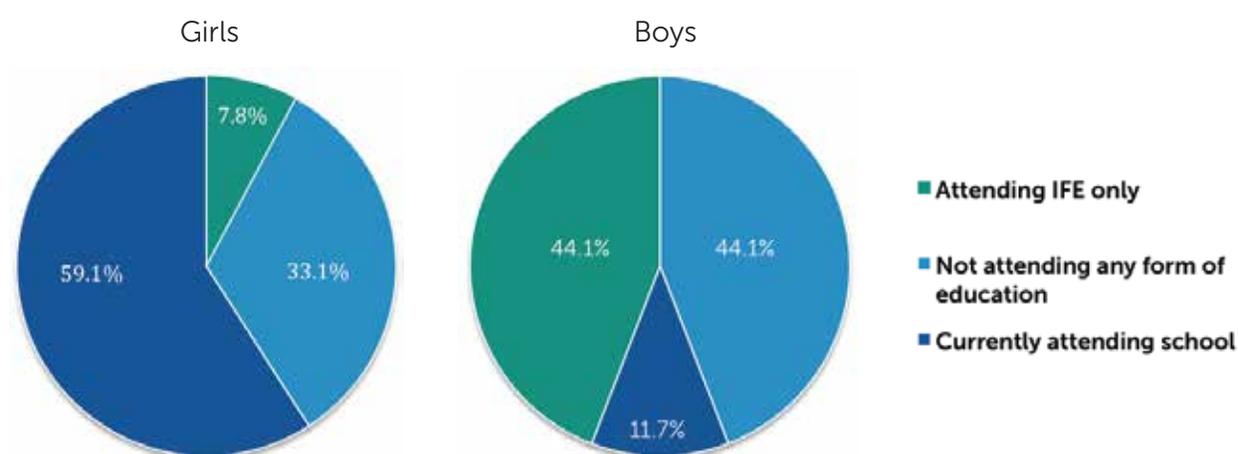


Source: UNICEF (2015b)

Note: OOSC here refers to children not attending formal education

An assessment of out-of-school children in Zaatari Camp found similar results — the most vulnerable group of Syrian children is 12-17 year old boys (ESWG, 2014). According to the study, only 33.2% are attending formal education and over 50% have never had any form of education.

**Figure 5. Rates of Attendance of Different Forms of Education in Zaatari Camp by Sex**



Source: ESWG (2014)

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## Lack of Education Opportunity for Youth

Youth (15-24 years old) have arguably been the most underserved and the most negatively impacted by the Syrian crisis (UNICEF, 2014). Many have been forced to quit school to ensure the economic survival of their families and provide better opportunities for their younger siblings.

Those youth that have chosen to continue their education have very few options due to the limited access to and quality of alternative education, vocational education, and post-secondary education. In particular, there is a limited awareness surrounding technical and vocational education and training (TVET), with it being seen as a lower status alternative to higher education among students, their families, and potential employers offering very limited work opportunities in the future (UNDP, 2014).

In 2014, only about 3,000 youth living in the camps — which house almost 100,000 Syrians — benefitted from post-basic and higher education opportunities (MOPIC, 2015a). If left unchanged, this situation gives them little hope for a better future. Without better prospects, Jordan and partners are particularly concerned refugee youth may become more vulnerable to disenfranchisement, extremism and exploitation, potentially creating security risks for Jordan and the region.

Note: From UNHCR (2014)

## Part IV: Opportunities to Accelerate Progress on Education for Syrian Refugees

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With the help of the international community, the Government of Jordan and its education partners, all children in Jordan can access education. Although Jordan is one of three countries that host the largest number of Syrian refugees, and 90,000 children remain out of school, the Jordanian government is committed and the challenges are not insurmountable. An investment of \$65 million for this school year would help achieve five opportunities that would reach 90,000 Syrian refugees out of school while also helping Jordan sustain its education efforts to 130,000 children and youth and build up the resilience of its education system for the benefit of all children.

### Opportunity 1: Scale up access to primary and secondary education for out-of-school children and youth who are ready for formal school.

The Government has already demonstrated a high level of leadership and commitment in facilitating access to formal education through its public schools. Since 2012, it has worked in partnership with UNICEF to operate the growing population of Syrian children in 98 double-shifted schools and 65 prefabricated classrooms and 26 schools have been established (UNICEF, 2015c). The Government needs financial and technical support in five areas that would enable it to scale up access to state schools.

#### 1. Funding for Teacher Salaries and Training

The Government of Jordan estimates that over 7,000 teachers are needed to serve the Syrian student refugee population alone, yet so far only the European Union (EU) and Canada have supported the efforts to cover salaries and training respectively (MOPIC interview). The JRP's goal for 2015-16 was to train 3,500 teachers at an estimated cost of \$595,000 (MOPIC, 2015). An investment in the training of these new teachers would not only ensure that Syrian children receive quality education, but would also contribute to the development of a more highly qualified teaching cadre for the long-term benefit of Jordan. Teachers who work with refugee children need additional training and tools to help them provide psychosocial support for children who are often traumatized and suffered as a direct result of the Syrian crisis.

#### 2. Fund More Double-shift Schools

Jordan has already double-shifted 98 public schools in order to accommodate Syrian children and youth in areas of high numbers of refugees. A thorough mapping of all schools in areas with high numbers of refugees, similar to a process carried out by UNICEF and UNHCR in Lebanon, may result in identifying additional schools ready for double-shifting. Despite the concerns over the quality of education in second shifts for both Jordanian and Syrian children, second shifts represent the most affordable and immediate approach to increasing access to formal education in areas where it is not possible to either increase intake in regular shifts or to build more schools.

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### 3. Increase Schools In High Population Areas

At the same time, the Government of Jordan is requesting funding for building schools. While this is necessary where schools are uninhabitable or it is not possible to increase their size, there is concern by the Government and donors about sustaining new schools and their operating costs into the future. Some donors are working with the Government to provide incentives for Jordanians to bus their children to nearby schools rather than continue to operate many small under-utilized schools in rural areas. A similar strategy could be adapted for refugees, which could include providing incentives for Syrian families to move to less populated areas of the country where schools can accommodate a larger population of students.

### 4. Eliminate Enrolment Barriers to Jordanian and Refugee Children with Special Needs

Fifty-four per cent of Syrian refugee children with special needs in Jordan are without access to education (UNICEF, 2015b). The Government of Jordan and its partners are committed to equipping public schools with the facilities and support needed to integrate children with special physical needs and learning difficulties into formal education. UNICEF estimates the cost of providing rehabilitative support to a child in Jordan to be \$2000 for one school year (UNICEF, 2015c). While this support is necessary and important for some, not all children require such high level of care. Therefore, other more cost-effective solutions that address children's special needs should also be explored.

### 5. Strengthen Child Protection Policies and Practices

Ensuring the safety of all children in school is paramount to protecting them and to enabling them to continue their education. A high number of refugee children in Jordan are reporting incidents of violence and citing it as the reason for dropping out (UNICEF, 2015b). Violence in schools however, is an issue that Jordanian public schools have long suffered from, particularly in boys' schools (USAID, 2012). More support is needed for the Government of Jordan to develop strong child protection policies for Jordanian and refugee students; to scale up programs addressing violence and bullying in schools; and to reduce children's exposure to harassment while walking to school through these interventions and by opening additional schools in high-density refugee areas.

## **Opportunity 2: Provide alternative education for children and youth who are unable to enter state schools.**

Refugee and Jordanian children and youth who are unable to enrol in formal education, must have a second chance through alternative (non-formal and informal) education. Although the needs of these children may differ, flexible approaches through Community Based Organisations offer learning solutions that address the obstacles they are facing such as working to support their families and being out of school for an extended period of time and therefore unable to go back to formal education. Youth, who are neither in formal schools nor receiving any form of learning support, are of particular concern as they vulnerable to disenfranchisement, extremism and exploitation.

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UNICEF is working alongside the Government of Jordan to establish alternative education centres — Makani — targeting children and youth who are not eligible to enter formal education without additional support. Additional funding would allow UNICEF to expand on the 200 alternative education centres that are currently delivering life-skills training, psychosocial services and various forms of learning through an existing network of national and international non-governmental and community based organisations. The centres would aim to prepare 90,000 children and youth (at the cost of \$282 per student) for formal education through accelerated learning programs and skills development as well as provide flexible learning arrangements for hard to reach children, including those who may already be in the labour force (UNICEF, 2015c).

Although these alternative education centres have a strong appeal among Syrian refugees and some Jordanians, the Government and donors are concerned about building a parallel system to the formal education system that cannot be sustained over the long-term. The Government does not grant certificates to students of these centres as they do not provide a full curriculum and do not apply the same assessment processes. These centres should be viewed as a stopgap measure to support children and youth who are not able to enter formal education, not a replacement for formal education. UNICEF readily acknowledges the need to work more closely with the Government on a plan to ensure that children receive education in these centres more aligned with formal system. While not all children can or will access formal education, these centres need to exist, but could be ramped up or scaled back quickly to respond to the needs of out-of-school youth.

Ultimately, all partners need to work more closely to maximise the pathways to learning for all children and youth. These include — as in Lebanon and Turkey — greater access to non-formal education and in particular accelerated learning programs that act as bridge back to formal education for a greater number of children and youth or other targeted interventions and outreach organised by NGOs and CBOs (UNICEF, 2014). Non-formal education should be strengthened and featured as part of the ERfKE plan of the MOE.

### Opportunity 3: Invest in early childhood education for all children.

Increasing access to early childhood education would yield high dividends for Syrian and Jordanian children and contribute to fulfilling Jordan's own education goals. Only about one third of Jordanian children attend kindergarten. Of those, 88% attend private kindergarten (UNICEF, 2015b). While some public kindergartens exist, they are extremely limited. The limited availability of ECE centres has restricted access for Syrian children, which puts already vulnerable children at a disadvantage as they are deprived of a safe educational and social environment that can help prepare them for formal education (ESWG, 2014). At present, such services are only provided to families living in the Zaatari camp, where approximately 22% of children are enrolled in programs (ESWG, 2014). The 2015-16 target in the Jordan Response Plan calls for providing 3,750 vulnerable Syrian children living in camps and host communities with access to early childhood education (MOPIC, 2015a).

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#### **Opportunity 4: Increase post-secondary education for youth.**

Given the growing concern over the future of disenfranchised youth in the region, every opportunity should be afforded to Syrian refugee youth who are committed to furthering their education and contributing to a better future for themselves and their families. There is a high demand among Syrian refugee youth coupled with a greater willingness among donors to consider additional opportunities in the form of seats and scholarships in universities in and outside of Jordan. Currently, higher education is not addressed in the 2015-16 funding target (MOPIC, 2015a). A number of donors have recently established a working group, co-chaired by UNESCO and UNHCR, to discuss opportunities to increase support for higher education (UNHCR interview). This could take the form of grants and scholarships provided to students as well as institutional support to universities and institutions accommodating a larger student population.

There is also an opportunity to strengthen Technical and Vocational Education Training institutions for both Jordanian and refugee youth, who do not have access to it, as an alternative to higher education aimed at improving the employability of youth and filling market needs. Currently, this option is stigmatised both by students and potential employers while the types of programs available do not provide relevant employment skills. More targeted reforms to address the range and quality of the programs are required to ensure they address market needs. This would raise the profile of these institutions so they are seen as offering a meaningful career path rather than an undesirable alternative to higher education with limited or no future employment opportunities. In addition, incentives for students and employers to promote these career paths will make this option more attractive, further shifting the life opportunities of youth who chose to pursue this training as well as the broader contribution of 'these institutions to the labour market (UNDP, 2014).

#### **Opportunity 5: Develop a longer-term costed education sector plan with a focus on resilience and emphasis on stronger coordination among donors.**

Given the protracted nature of the Syrian conflict, both the Government of Jordan and partners are under pressure to begin adopting longer-term planning cycles rather than one-year emergency plans for every aspect of the refugee response. Jordan needs an education plan that not only considers the needs of the refugees but also mitigates the risks for Jordanian students while building up the resilience of the education system for all children.

Although the JRP 2015-16 provides a clear strategy consisting of two components — refugee and resilience — across all sectors to address the Syrian crisis, the current plan has so far been determined on a year-to-year basis. The next plan, 2016-2018, will have a two-year timeline. Donors are calling for the development of longer-term costed plan with time-bound resilience based strategies to provide more effective services to address the educational needs of Syrian refugees. More importantly, they have to be incorporated as part of the national education strategy for Jordan, such as the ERfKE II. In order to further improve donor coordination, there is a need to clarify and strengthen the funding modalities established by

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the JRPSC, which currently provide 6 different mechanisms for channelling resources to the Syrian refugee crisis. (MOPIC, 2015a).

In the long-term, providing increased direct budgetary support, as opposed to programmatic support, will serve to improve coordination of efforts and support the Jordanian government in covering the educational, and other, costs of Syrian refugees. A longer-term approach to planning might also allow for a more cost-effective and sustainable approach to funding refugee education. Currently, the Ministry of Education estimates the cost of integrating each child into a Jordanian public school to be \$1544 (MOPIC, 2015a). This must be coupled with a focus on increasing the effectiveness of the limited programmatic funding received from donors such as the US and Japan.

Another benefit of a longer-term plan could include a greater investment by donors in technical support needed by the Government. This is also required to ensure a more effective implementation of the refugee response, including strengthening monitoring and evaluation as part of an accountability framework. The JRP has established a number of mechanisms to ensure transparency and accountability among all partners involved in addressing the Syrian response effort. These include a centralised system for reporting and tracking projects. However, a greater investment in increasing the capacity of all partners is needed to build in stronger tracking instruments as part of their programming. This would complement the Government's efforts to implement a robust information management system and improve evidence-based decision-making in the education sector.

# Conclusion

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Since the start of the Syrian crisis, Jordan has been working proactively with the international community to provide access to education to refugee children and youth. Despite its challenging national context, the Government of Jordan has been both generous and responsive in putting in place the necessary mechanisms to manage and coordinate the efforts so far. This report suggests five opportunities that will strengthen the Syrian educational response effort in Jordan, allowing it not only to maintain the level of support it has provided to date, but also to garner greater and more long-term investment from the international community to reach all the children and youth that remain out of school. With a sustainable plan in place, the Government of Jordan and its partners will better be able to address the educational needs of Syrian refugees children and their Jordanian counterparts, which will ultimately make for a safer and more secure environment for all.

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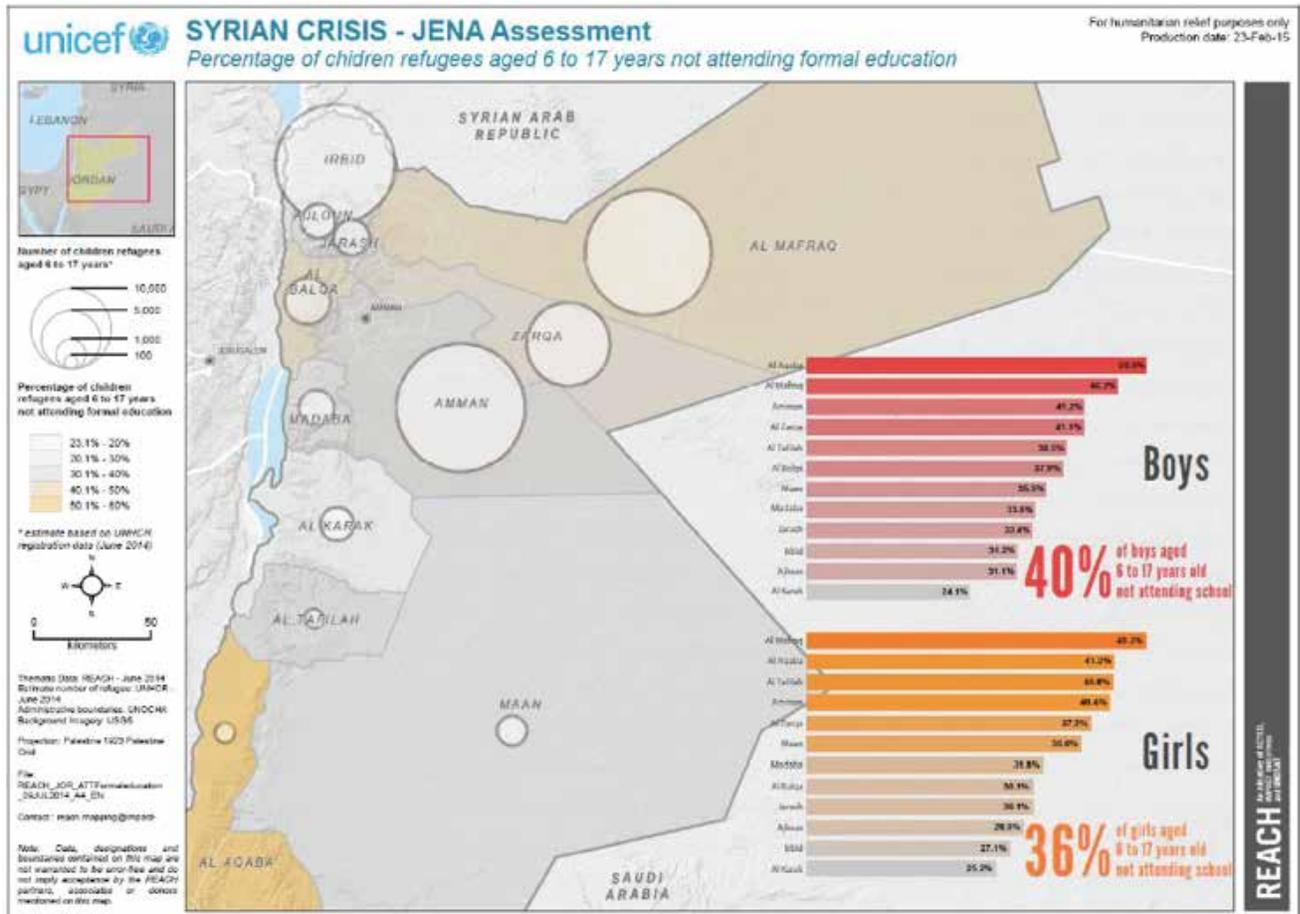
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# Appendix

## Proportion of School-aged Syrian Refugees Not Attending School



Source: UNICEF (2015b)

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