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**Futures under Threat:
Education Policy and Barriers to Access for
Syrian Refugees in Jordan and Lebanon**

An Honors Thesis Presented by

Ann Foster Monk

To the Department of Global Islamic Studies

In partial fulfillment of the requirement for

Honors in the Major Field

Connecticut College

New London

May 5, 2021

Abstract

This study provides a nuanced analysis of some of the most pressing barriers to education for Syrian refugees in Lebanon and Jordan, including: curriculum usage, language barriers, certification, accreditation, insufficient infrastructure, a lack of qualified teachers, child labor and early marriage. In addition, the study proposes a multitude of policy responses to reduce the barriers to access for Syrian refugee students. Several of the most important policy proposals include: standardizing curricula, certification and accreditation, developing remedial programs, enhancing teacher training, hiring Syrian teachers, reducing employment restrictions for Syrians, establishing family outreach initiatives and investing in transportation for students. Furthermore, case studies analyze the benefits and drawbacks of three of the most influential education policies: accelerated learning programs, the second shift system, and cash transfer programs. Lastly, this study includes several reflections on my own experiences as a teacher and as a student in order to illuminate the potential impact of my policy proposals at the individual level.

Keywords: Refugee Education, Syrian Refugees, Jordan, Lebanon, NFE Drop-Out Program, Remedial Education, Accelerated Learning Programs, Cash Transfers, Second Shift System

Acknowledgements

I owe heartfelt thanks to the many advisors, family, and friends who supported me throughout the writing process. A sincere thank you goes, first and foremost, to Professor Karolin Machtans, who graciously agreed to advise my thesis all the way from Germany. The successful completion of this thesis is due in no small part to her tireless encouragement and guidance throughout the past year.

I am also indebted to Professor Caroleen Sayej, my advisor in the international relations department and the second reader of this thesis. Most importantly, her courses on the Iraq War and Israel and Palestine have pushed me to see the world in new ways, and her influence has made me a better researcher, writer and life-long learner.

I am immensely grateful to my advisor in the Global Islamic Studies department, Professor Sufia Uddin, who has been a wonderful mentor since my first semester at Connecticut College. I would also like to thank Professor Dean Accardi, Professor Marie Otsby, and Professor Eileen Kane, whose engaging courses have helped the GIS department to flourish. I must also express my sincere gratitude to Professor Michael Rapoport. I owe my Arabic proficiency, first and foremost, to his extraordinary teaching abilities, and it was in his classroom that I fell in love with the language.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Ashley Hanson, who has tirelessly advised me in all of my important writing, from my first college paper to this thesis, and every research paper in between. I would also like to give special recognition to the staff in the Walter Commons and CISLA: Dean Amy Dooling, Lauren O’Leary, Laura Little, Shirley Parson, Mary Devins, Cara Masullo, Andrea Lanoux and Betsy Lebel. Thanks to these wonderful women, I gained the international experiences that form the foundation of this project.

I am profoundly grateful to Melissa Ryan, who was the staff advisor for my FYS during my first semester of college. Since that time, Melissa has helped me with *every* application that I have written, including the Marshall Fellowship I received this year. She also helped me to found a new student-led organization on campus - the Student Refugee Alliance. Most importantly, her unwavering support and guidance have helped me thrive at Connecticut College, and for this I am eternally grateful.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents, whose unwavering support has helped me through even the most trying of times. I am grateful to have inherited my mum’s determination and my dad’s curiosity, without which I would not have been able to undertake this project. Thank you for your endless patience and love.

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Terminology

Refugee: A person who has fled their home country due to conflict or persecution.

IDP: An internally displaced person has been forcibly displaced *within* their home country.

Asylum-seeker: A person seeking international protection from persecution, but whose request for sanctuary has not yet been processed.

Statelessness: People who are stateless do not have a recognized national identity and often struggle or are unable to realize their rights.

UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was founded in 1950 with a three-year mandate to help millions of refugees in Europe after World War II. 70 years later, the organization's mandate covers more than 20 million refugees, 45 million internally displaced people, and 4 million asylum-seekers.

UNRWA: United Nations Relief and Works Agency was founded following the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, in which over 700,000 Palestinians were forcibly displaced. The number of Palestinian refugees increased dramatically after subsequent conflicts, and 5.7 million Palestinian refugees are now under UNRWA's temporary mandate, with little hope of ever returning home.

MOE: Jordan's Ministry of Education oversees general education (both primary and secondary) as well as technical and vocational education and training (TVET) programs

MHESR: Jordan's Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research runs higher education

MEHE: Lebanon's Ministry of Education and Higher Education regulates all levels of formal education, including primary and secondary schools, TVET programs and higher education.

Tawjihi: The grade 12 certificate examination, which grants students a secondary school diploma. The *Tawjihi* certification is recognized regardless of the student's nationality, and all students with the certificate are eligible to apply for admission in Jordanian universities.

Za'atari: Located in Jordan, Za'atari is one of the largest refugee camps in the world, and it is *the* largest camp for Syrian refugees.

CTP: Cash Transfer Program (see the case study in Chapter 4).

VASyR: The Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon provides an insight into the evolving situation of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, and it is the only annual assessment in Lebanon covering all sectors and allows for the identification of changes and trends.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Since fighting broke out in Syria in 2011, over 6.6 million Syrians have fled the country and another 6.2 million people are internally displaced. It all began in the town of Dara'a, where protesters mobilized in peaceful demonstrations against Syria's president Bashar al-Assad, taking inspiration from the so-called Arab Spring that would eventually topple dictators in Tunisia and Egypt. But when the Syrian army brutally suppressed the peaceful protests, the situation quickly descended into a civil war that would claim the lives of hundreds of thousands of Syrians. Ten years later, the war continues with no end in sight.

There are now more refugees from Syria than any other country in the world, and Syria also has the highest number of internally displaced persons (IDPs). These devastating figures have led many to refer to the situation as a “refugee crisis,” but this framing may contribute to a moral panic and even legitimize authoritarian forms of intervention. Instead, this ‘crisis’ should be recognized as a failure of wealthy societies to manage immigration and integration, highlighting the need for a system of global responsibility sharing.¹

Instead, current practices operate on the basis of ‘responsibility by proximity,’² with the vast majority of Syrian refugees residing in a handful of neighboring countries. Over half of all Syrian refugees are currently located in Turkey alone, and even more striking, Lebanon hosts more refugees per capita than any other country in the world.³ According to UNHCR, there are approximately 1.5 million Syrian refugees in Lebanon as of January 2021, in addition to over 200,000 Palestinian refugees under the UNRWA mandate and 16,000 refugees of other

¹ Jan-Jonathan Bock and Sharon Macdonald, *Introduction to Refugees Welcome? Difference and Diversity in a Changing Germany* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2019), p. 1-38

² Peter Sutherland, quoted in Alexander Aleinikoff, *The Arc of Protection: Reforming the International Refugee Regime* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019), p. 4

³ The percentage of refugees in Lebanon’s population is so high that the country would rank first on this measure even if non-Syrian refugees were excluded from the statistic.

nationalities. With a pre-war population just under 5 million, refugees represent an astonishing 35% of Lebanon's current population.⁴ Meanwhile, Jordan hosts the second largest number of refugees on a per capita basis.⁵ The UNHCR reports that Jordan currently hosts 665,000 registered Syrian refugees along with almost 68,000 Iraqi refugees, and more than 8,000 refugees of other nationalities. In addition, Jordan hosts over 2.2 million Palestinian refugees, many of whom have been in Jordan for 70 years.⁶

Lebanon's government has made the unusual decision not to open formal camps for Syrian refugees, who live either in host communities or in makeshift tented settlements.⁷ In Jordan, more than 84 percent of Syrian refugees live in host communities, while the remainder reside in three official camps: Za'atari, Emirati Jordanian, and Azraq.⁸ Za'atari is the largest refugee camp for Syrian refugees, and it was the second largest refugee camp in the world during the early years of the war.⁹ Each refugee camp in Jordan has at least one school, and in both countries, public schools are striving to accommodate refugee students in host communities.

Unfortunately, Syrian refugees face countless barriers to completing their education, and enrollment rates for Syrian students are significantly lower than those of their host country peers. It is estimated that just 136,000 out of 233,000 school-age Syrian refugees were enrolled in formal schools in Jordan, translating to an enrollment rate of less than 60%.¹⁰ In Lebanon, only 30% of school-age Syrian refugees are enrolled in formal schools for the 2020-2021 academic

⁴ UNHCR, "Lebanon," UNHCR Global Focus, accessed April 11, 2021b, <https://reporting.unhcr.org/lebanon>

⁵ UNHCR, "1 Percent of Humanity Displaced: UNHCR Global Trends Report," UNHCR Jordan, June 18, 2020c, <https://www.unhcr.org/jo/13317-1-per-cent-of-humanity-displaced-unhcr-global-trends-report.html>.

⁶ UNRWA, "Where We Work: Jordan," UNRWA, accessed April 11, 2020, <https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/jordan>

⁷ Shelly Culbertson and Louay Constant, "Education of Syrian Refugee Children: Managing the Crisis in Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan," (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, November 23, 2015): p. 5 https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR859.html.

⁸ UNICEF, "Curriculum, Accreditation and Certification for Syrian Children," (New York: UNICEF, December 1, 2015a): p. 70 <https://www.unicef.org/mena/reports/curriculum-accreditation-and-certification-syrian-children>.

⁹ UNHCR, "Total Persons of Concern in Za'atari Refugee Camp," UNHCR Operational Portal Refugee Situations, accessed April 17, 2021c, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria/location/53>

¹⁰ UNHCR, "Jordan Continues to Support Refugee Education as Students Head Back to School," UNHCR Jordan, September 3, 2020b, <https://www.unhcr.org/jo/13733-jordan-continues-to-support-refugee-education-as-students-head-back-to-school.html>

year (190,000 out of 660,000).¹¹ Enrollment rates among secondary school students are particularly alarming: a 2017 study found that only 4.8% of Syrian refugees ages 15 to 18 were enrolled in secondary schools in Jordan, with corresponding enrollment at just 1.4% in Lebanon.¹² By comparison, approximately 80% of Jordanian citizens ages 16 to 18 are enrolled in secondary schools.¹³ Together these statistics present a discouraging picture, and donor organizations and host countries must redouble their efforts to address these barriers to refugee education.

1.1 The Importance of Refugee Education

Unfortunately, education provision is often considered part of short-term, humanitarian responses to displacement. As a result, refugee education is largely financed with emergency funds and is generally absent from host countries' national development agendas or education sector planning.¹⁴ In addition, education is often considered non-essential - a luxury for refugee youth. Thus, when funding is limited (as is almost always the case), education is often the first item to be cut from the agenda. However, education provision is a crucial part of any refugee response, especially in protracted situations like that of Syria. Education must be considered a

¹¹ HRW, "Lebanon: Action Needed on Syrian Refugee Education Crisis," HRW, March 26, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/03/26/lebanon-action-needed-syrian-refugee-education-crisis>

¹² Hana Addam El-Ghali et al., "Pathways to and beyond Education for Refugee Youth in Jordan and Lebanon," American University of Beirut (Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs, March 2019): p. 6 <http://www.aub.edu.lb/ifi/news/Pages/20190305-pathway-to-and-beyond-education.aspx>.

¹³ HRW, "I Want to Continue to Study: Barriers to Secondary Education for Syrian Refugee Children in Jordan," HRW, June 2020, p. 2 ISBN: 9781623138363

¹⁴ UNHCR, "Missing Out: Refugee Education in Crisis," UNHCR, September 2016a, p. 5, <https://www.unhcr.org/57d9d01d0>

core component of humanitarian assistance, along with food, water, shelter and medical care, and also included in long-term planning.

There are several reasons why education must be treated as a high priority. Perhaps the most commonly cited rationale among humanitarian actors is that education provision is crucial for preventing a ‘lost generation.’ Without education opportunities for refugees, affected countries may be deprived of an entire generation of leaders, engineers, teachers, and doctors. This concern is especially acute in the case of Syria, where more than half of the population is currently displaced, and the country’s basic services and infrastructure have been ravaged by ten years of war. The next generation of Syrians may be displaced for their entire childhoods. Donor organizations and host countries must provide adequate learning opportunities to Syrian refugees, because their education will help determine the future of their country, the post-war rebuilding process, and even the stability and prosperity of the entire region.

Education is also important because it provides a protective environment for vulnerable youth, especially refugees. The benefits of education have been widely researched, and the scholarship clearly demonstrates that investments in education produce substantial and far-reaching returns. In particular, studies (UNHCR 2016a; UNHCR 2019; Culbertson and Cosntant, 2015) have shown that education reduces the incidence of child labor, early marriage, teenage pregnancies, criminal activity, recruitment to radical groups, and sexual and gender-based violence. At the same time, education provides refugees and other vulnerable youth with skills for self-reliance, problem solving, critical thinking, and teamwork, while also improving their job prospects, confidence, and self-esteem. Schools also provide a space for children to learn about basic health care, hygiene, and human rights, as well as how and where they can seek assistance and receive services.

Above all, education must be a central component of any refugee response because it is a basic human right. Education is not a luxury - it is a necessity for every child, *especially* refugees and other vulnerable youth. Attending school not only helps children to improve their future employment prospects and escape poverty, but it is also indispensable for children's mental, emotional, and social development. Indeed, Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms that education is a fundamental right for every human being, regardless of nationality or refugee status.¹⁵

Refugee rights to education are also enshrined in Article 22 of the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, which declares that signatory states must ensure that refugees are accorded the same access to basic education as nationals. In addition, the article states that refugees must be provided with the same secondary and tertiary education opportunities as non-nationals, as well as equal recognition of foreign school certificates and eligibility for scholarships. Although neither Jordan nor Lebanon is a signatory of the 1951 Geneva Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol, both countries have adopted policies promoting refugees' rights to education.¹⁶

¹⁵ United Nations, "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," December 10, 1948, p. 54, https://www.un.org/en/udhrbook/pdf/udhr_booklet_en_web.pdf

¹⁶ UN General Assembly, "Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees," 28 July 1951, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 189, p. 137, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3be01b964.html>

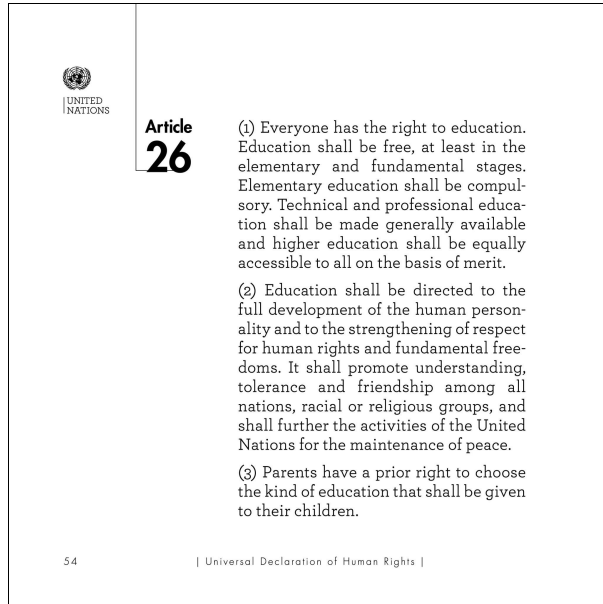


Figure 1.1 Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights



Figure 1.2 The author at the UN headquarters in New York City with artwork depicting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

1.2 The Education System in Jordan and Lebanon

To assess the situation of Syrian refugee students in Jordan and Lebanon, it is first necessary to examine the structure of each country's education system. Most of Jordan's education system falls under the auspices of the Ministry of Education (MOE), which regulates general education (both primary and secondary) as well as technical and vocational education training (TVET) programs. Meanwhile, higher education in Jordan falls under the mandate of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MHESR).¹⁷ The country's national education system begins with two years of non-compulsory pre-school education for children age

¹⁷ El-Ghali et al., "Pathways to and beyond Education," p. 11

five and under. Kindergarten 1 and 2 are followed by ten years of compulsory and free basic education, which is divided into two levels: lower primary includes grades 1 through 3, and upper primary is grades 4 to 10. Grades 11 and 12 constitute the secondary level, which is non-compulsory, and may be followed by either TVET programs or tertiary education.¹⁸

In general, students in primary school are automatically promoted to the next grade level regardless of their end-of-year examination scores. However, students in grades 1 to 3 must repeat the class if they score less than 40 percent in both math and Arabic, and those in grades 4 through 10 cannot progress to the next level if they fail four or more subjects.¹⁹ After grade 10, students may enroll in secondary school, in a technical or vocational program, or they may end their education altogether. Students who complete their secondary education will take the grade 12 certificate examination, called the *Tawjihi*, in order to receive a diploma. This certification is recognized regardless of the student's nationality, and all students who have passed the *Tawjihi* are eligible to apply for admission in Jordanian universities.²⁰ Those with lower *Tawjihi* scores may apply for humanities programs, whereas students must obtain high *Tawjihi* grades in order to pursue degrees such as medicine and engineering.²¹

Meanwhile, Lebanon's education system is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE), which regulates all levels of formal education, including primary and secondary schools, TVET programs, and higher education.²² The public education system in Lebanon is composed of five cycles. Primary I (with grades 1-3), primary II (grades 4-6), and complementary (grades 7-9) are free and compulsory, while preschool and

¹⁸ UNICEF, "Access to Education for Syrian Refugee Children and Youth in Jordan Host Communities," March 2015b, p. 81 https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/REACH_JENA_HC_March2015_.pdf

¹⁹ UNICEF, "Curriculum, Accreditation and Certification," p. 78

²⁰ Ibid, p. 79

²¹ Ibid, p. 71

²² El-Ghali et al., "Pathways to and beyond Education," p. 11

secondary school (grades 10-12) are not.²³ There are two parallel tracks for the secondary school system, one for general education and one for technical education. Students sit for the Brevet examination upon completing Grade 9, and school principals will decide which secondary school track students will follow based on their Brevet scores. The secondary cycle culminates with the Lebanese baccalaureate exam, and those who pass the exam will receive either the Lebanese Baccalaureate Certificate of Secondary Education or the Technical Baccalaureate, depending on the student's track.²⁴

Lebanon is unusual in that, prior to the war in Syria, only 30% of students in Lebanon attended public schools (approximately 300,000 students). The remaining 70% of Lebanese students attend various private institutions, usually separated by social class, religion, and ethnicity.²⁵ Because the public school system only caters to a small proportion of students in Lebanon, these schools were wholly unprepared to accommodate the arrival of Syrian refugee students in the country. Indeed, the UNHCR estimates that there are currently 488,000 school-aged Syrian refugee children in Lebanon, meaning that the number of students trying to enroll in public schools has more than doubled.²⁶ Furthermore, the public education system has traditionally catered to the most vulnerable children, who are concentrated in the same areas where the majority of Syrian refugees now reside. Thus, student demand has increased even more dramatically in these regions (such as Bekaa Valley, North Lebanon, and Beirut), causing further strain on schools already lacking infrastructure and funding.²⁷

In the initial years of Syria's war, refugee education in Lebanon was not incorporated into the public school system and was primarily coordinated by UN agencies. However, the MEHE

²³ Ibid, p. 11

²⁴ UNICEF, "Curriculum, Accreditation and Certification," p. 64-65

²⁵ Ibid, p. 53

²⁶ UNHCR, "Education," UNHCR Lebanon, accessed April 17, 2021a, <https://www.unhcr.org/lb/education>

²⁷ UNICEF, "Curriculum, Accreditation and Certification," p. 66

has since taken responsibility for coordinating education provision for Syrian refugees in Lebanon.²⁸ This was an important decision on the part of the government, as Palestinian refugees are still educated in a parallel education system run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). However, the scholarship tends to heavily favor integrated education, both to ensure that refugees have higher-quality learning opportunities and because integrating schools has been shown to improve social cohesion in host communities.²⁹

1.3 Framework and Methodology

Syrian refugees face innumerable challenges in pursuing a quality education, and researchers have employed various frameworks for analyzing these barriers to education. Numerous reports by organizations like UNHCR and UNICEF are scoping studies that seek to identify as many obstacles as possible. Meanwhile, other studies often employ a more narrow framework that focuses on specific barriers and opportunities. For example, the International Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) examines refugee education through five lenses: foundational standards, teachers and staff, access and learning environment, teaching and learning, and education policy.³⁰ Meanwhile, researchers at Oxford's Refugee Studies Center have employed a framework focusing on educational supply and demand, as well as gaps and good practices.³¹ At the Issam Fares Institute of the American University of Beirut, scholars

²⁸ Culbertson and Constant, "Education of Syrian Refugee Children," p. 33

²⁹ Ibid, p. 52

³⁰ INEE, "Standards: INEE Minimum Standards," INEE, accessed April 18, 2021, <https://inee.org/standards>

³¹ Hashem Ahmadzadeh, et. al., "Ensuring Quality Education for Young Refugees from Syria: A Mapping Exercise," Refugees Studies Centre, University of Oxford, September 2014, <https://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/files/files-1/rr-syria-youth-education-2014.pdf>

examine legislative, institutional, financial, and societal barriers to education for refugee youth.³² Similarly, the RAND Corporation has sought to map education barriers for refugees through a framework highlighting issues of access, management, society, and quality.³³

In contrast, this study adopts a somewhat different methodology and provides an in-depth analysis of several of the most prevalent obstacles that Syrian refugee students face. The first centers broadly around curriculum usage and includes the language of instruction, the certification process for refugee students, and the accreditation of schools. Unfortunately, these issues are often dismissed as being of secondary importance to getting children into the classrooms, when in fact they have a significant impact on both the enrollment rates and academic performance of Syrian refugee students. Thus, this study seeks to fill the gaps in previous scholarship regarding barriers that relate to curriculum, language, certification, and accreditation. Based on my own work in curriculum development, particularly with forcibly displaced students, I have concluded that these obstacles merit considerably more attention than they have received to date.

In addition, my research highlights the profound negative impact of child labor and marriage on enrollment rates. Syrian refugees often face extreme levels of poverty, forcing children to drop out of school to support their families financially. In Jordan, a Save the Children survey found that child labor and lack of financial resources were among the top three reasons for Syrian refugee children to be out of school.³⁴ Early marriage is another negative coping mechanism used by refugee families, either to reduce the number of mouths to feed or to protect girls' honor in the face of insecurity and displacement. Once married, girls are rarely allowed to continue their studies, even through informal or remedial programming, and are significantly

³² El-Ghali et al., "Pathways to and beyond Education," p. 18

³³ Culbertson and Constant, "Education of Syrian Refugee Children," p. 10

³⁴ UNICEF, "Curriculum, Accreditation and Certification," p. 77

more likely to die in childbirth. Although child labor and early marriage are two of the most significant obstacles to refugee education, studies show that attending school actually *reduces* the incidence of both problems.

Finally, this study will analyze the effects of inadequate education infrastructure on refugee enrollment and student performance. Several studies (UNICEF 2015a; Culbertson and Constant, 2015) have concluded that the lack of school space in host community schools is the single most important cause of low enrollment among Syrian refugees in both Lebanon and Jordan. As the number of students continues to increase, it is vital that new teachers are hired with the proper training, skills and experience to manage a large classroom with students who are at varying levels and may have experienced trauma. Thus, I have chosen to focus on these facets of education infrastructure because they constitute the most widespread and prevalent barrier to education for Syrian refugees.

Each chapter will focus on a particular category of obstacles to education, providing a nuanced discussion of the political, social, cultural, and historical elements of each barrier. Specific policy recommendations are offered for every obstacle, including an evaluation of their respective merits and drawbacks. A case study is also included in each chapter, which analyzes a specific initiative of host country governments or donor organizations to address one or more of the obstacles discussed in the chapter. This analysis evaluates the initiative's implementation, its benefits and shortcomings, and how the policy can be scaled up and improved. Finally, each chapter incorporates a reflection on my own experiences, as a teacher and as a student, to illuminate the potential impact of my policy proposals at the individual level. Although there are many barriers to education for Syrian refugee students, this study has uncovered numerous promising solutions to address these obstacles.

Chapter 2: Curriculum, Certification and Accreditation

One of the most important but under-recognized challenges in refugee education is the lack of standardization of curricula, certification, and accreditation for schools serving Syrian students. The curriculum and the level of accreditation will determine the form of certification that students can earn. The degree of recognition accorded to a school's certification will, in turn, determine how its students integrate into the labor market and what higher education opportunities are available to them. Thus, it is imperative that donor organizations and host country governments coordinate these three interrelated components of education. In particular, stakeholders must prioritize coordination both across the region's national education systems and across the informal education sector to ensure that Syrian refugee students receive a high-quality education that is both meaningful and widely recognized.

2.1 Inconsistent Curriculum Usage

Unlike some host countries, Jordan and Lebanon have remained fairly consistent in their curriculum usage within the formal education system. In particular, Jordan's MOE has been clear from the onset of the crisis that the only recognized curriculum in formal settings is the Jordanian one.³⁵ Official government policy dictates that Syrian and Jordanian students be treated equally in public schools; thus, no textbooks or other learning materials have been requested from the Syrian MOE. Overall, the high degree of standardization within Jordan's public school curricula

³⁵ UNICEF, "Curriculum, Accreditation and Certification," p. 76

is a positive accomplishment because it better allows students to achieve the desired learning outcomes and receive recognized certification for their education. However, the inflexibility of the curriculum can be frustrating for Syrian students who wish to take official Syrian examinations but do not have access to the exams or do not feel adequately prepared by the host country curriculum.

To provide more flexibility within the curriculum, the MOE allows teachers to supplement the curriculum with any additional materials of their choosing, so in theory, textbooks produced by the Syrian MOE or NGOs could be used in an auxiliary way. However, an interview conducted by UNICEF revealed that although teachers have this choice in principle, the challenging circumstances such as large class sizes and shortened learning time do not enable teachers to deliver all basic teaching requirements, much less the chance to incorporate additional learning materials.³⁶ The system's inflexibility can present a challenge for students who hope to return to Syria and want to ensure that their education is recognized there by taking Syrian examinations. Consequently, students may decide instead to study in informal programs, where the quality and type of curriculum used often varies significantly. In particular, informal education programs often use their own, unique curriculum, while community-run schools may use various forms of the Syrian curriculum or religion-based curricula.

Syrian Curricula

Although there are no reports of the Syrian curriculum being used in formal Jordanian schools, there are community initiatives to help students pass the Grade 12 Syrian examination. These informal programs usually take the form of remedial classes and can be found in both

³⁶ Ibid, p. 77

camps and host communities.³⁷ Some programs use the curriculum from the Syrian MOE website with the most contentious content removed; most commonly, the history materials are revised (removing references to the Assad family or the Ba'ath party) and the subject of national education is removed or replaced with civic education. However, the revision of the Syrian curriculum has not been carried out in a systematic or coordinated manner in either Jordan or Lebanon.³⁸

In Turkey, where the Syrian opposition government is located, officials have developed the “Syrian Adapted Curriculum,” which has similarly been modified in terms of political messages and pedagogy. This curriculum is used in various Syrian community schools in Lebanon, which even allow some students to travel to Syria to sit for official examinations.³⁹ However, the Syrian Adapted Curriculum is only formally recognized in Turkey’s education system, where it is used in UNICEF camp schools. A survey distributed by the RAND Corporation found that even in Turkey and Lebanon, many parents hesitate to send their children to schools using the Syrian Adapted Curriculum because it is politically charged and they are worried that any certification associated with the opposition could lead to retribution upon return to Syria.⁴⁰

Nevertheless, Syrian Grade 12 examinations following the Syrian Adapted Curriculum have been offered by the Syrian Opposition Coalition in Turkey, opposition-controlled areas of Syria, Lebanon, and even Jordan.⁴¹ Despite official policies in Jordan, the MOE has provided some public schools as examination centers in Amman, the Irbid Governorate, and the Za’atari camp. In August 2013, 1,500 students in Jordan took the Syrian Grade 12 exam based on this

³⁷ Ibid, p. 76

³⁸ Ibid, p. 10

³⁹ El-Ghali et al., “Pathways to and beyond Education,” p. 12

⁴⁰ Culbertson and Constant, “Education of Syrian Refugee Children,” p. 57

⁴¹ UNICEF, “Curriculum, Accreditation and Certification,” p. 76

revised curriculum - 500 in Za’atari, 700 in Irbid, and 300 in Amman. In June of the following year, 1,225 Syrian students took the examination in Jordan with the help of the MOE, the Syrian Opposition Coalition, and the Syrian Cultural Committee.⁴² Despite MOE assistance in administering the Syrian Grade 12 examinations, the government did not provide Jordanian certificates recognizing the exam. The Syrian Opposition Coalition in Turkey does provide certificates to students in any country who take the examinations, but these certificates only allow students to enroll in Turkish universities.

Thus, there are two main obstacles presented by the Syrian Adapted Curriculum and the grade 12 examination more specifically. One drawback is the limited recognition provided by certificates of the Syrian Grade 12 exam, and another is the association with Syrian opposition that could lead to retribution upon return to Syria. But despite these significant drawbacks, a large number of students have been taking the Syrian Grade 12 exam in Jordan, and even larger numbers in Lebanon. A UNICEF study examining this apparent contradiction has revealed several reasons as to why refugee students continue to take the revised Syrian Grade 12 examination. One issue is a lack of documentation required to sit for the more official exams such as the *Tawjihi* (Jordan’s Grade 12 examination), which is recognized not only in Jordan but also in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Egypt.⁴³ In light of the war, however, many parents worry that the Syrian government will no longer honor or recognize the *Tawjihi* because of political tensions between the Arab countries. Thus, some parents feel that the revised Syrian examination is more likely to be recognized than host country certifications and as such, they encourage their children to take the Syrian exam. A third reason is that some families report not feeling “fully

⁴² Ibid, p. 80

⁴³ Ibid, p. 15

satisfied with the education provision” in Jordan and feel that studying the Syrian Adapted Curriculum is more relevant for their children’s education and future.⁴⁴

This section has focused predominantly on the usage of Syrian curricula in Jordan because their usage in Lebanon is concentrated in Syrian community schools, which are not accredited and rarely monitored. As mentioned previously, several Syrian-run schools in Lebanon are known to be using the Syrian Adapted Curriculum and even allowing some students to travel to Syria for examinations.⁴⁵ But beyond this, Lebanon’s MEHE acknowledges that very little is known about these Syrian community schools, including the number of students and teachers, student completion rates, the specific curriculum used, or the background and training of teachers at these schools.⁴⁶

Curricula in Informal Programs

The curriculum used in informal education programs also varies widely, both in Jordan and in Lebanon. It is particularly challenging to coordinate curricula within the informal education sector because of the many types of programs that fall under this category, which include remedial classes, literacy and numeracy programs, community schools, and various drop-out or accelerated learning programs. The lack of a coherent curriculum is particularly apparent in NGO-run programs, where each organization often creates its own, unique curriculum. However, this duplication is not a good use of resources, and the curricula often do not meet national quality standards or learning objectives. Furthermore, the uncoordinated usage of so many different curricula makes certification of learning and accreditation of programming much more difficult and costly.⁴⁷ Even in organizations employing a curriculum based on the

⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 80

⁴⁵ El-Ghali et al., “Pathways to and beyond Education,” p. 12

⁴⁶ Culbertson and Constant, “Education of Syrian Refugee Children,” p. 67

⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 21

official MOE or MEHE curriculum, class time still varies significantly between providers. In addition, these programs often lack a coordinated framework for teacher training and pedagogy.⁴⁸

This uncoordinated approach among informal programs in regard to curriculum (as well as certification, teacher training, and other education policies) is primarily due to a lack of oversight at the institutional level. In Jordan, the Ministry of Social Development oversees community-based organizations but does not have the authority to determine the curriculum, pedagogy or teacher training of informal education programs. And in both Jordan and Lebanon, the education ministry (MOE and MEHE, respectively) only have authority over the formal education system, not the informal education sector. Thus, the current delegation limits the ability of the MOE and MEHE to develop rigorous informal education curricula in times of need, such as the arrival of large groups of refugees first from Palestine, then Iraq, and now Syria.

Despite the compelling arguments for increased oversight and regulation of the informal education sector, some NGO staff fear the risk of overregulation, which would undermine the autonomy of these programs. After all, standardizing the informal education sector would inhibit NGOs from adapting their programs in response to the fast-changing needs of refugee children.⁴⁹

2.1.1 Utilize the Syrian Curriculum and Examinations

The outcome and duration of Syria's war remains uncertain, and thus curriculum standards and certification exams must simultaneously prepare refugee students for two scenarios: integrating into the host country and returning to Syria. The easiest way to ensure that refugee students' learning is recognized upon return home is to offer Syrian examinations in a

⁴⁸ UNICEF, "Curriculum, Accreditation and Certification," p. 75

⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 75

formal capacity. The Jordanian government has proven particularly hesitant to provide Syrian examinations, which are viewed as a competing alternative to the Jordanian *tawjihi*.

Furthermore, efforts to prepare students for the Syrian exam by using materials from the Syrian curriculum is considered to contradict MOE policies requiring the equal treatment of Syrian and Jordanian students and recognizing only education programs that utilize the national Jordanian curriculum.⁵⁰ However, I believe that education policymakers should view the Syrian curriculum and examinations not as competing alternatives to those of the host government, but rather as an opportunity for additional learning and as supplements to the national curriculum.

This is not to say that the Syrian curriculum should be used in place of the national curriculum or that parallel education systems with different curricula should be implemented. Rather, I suggest a thorough comparison of learning objectives and standards between the Syrian curriculum, the Syrian Adapted Curriculum, and the national curriculum of the host country. Where the objectives or standards of the two Syrian curricula are not met by the host country curriculum, supplemental materials should be developed and incorporated.⁵¹ Such materials could be introduced directly into the formal curriculum, which might be an optimal solution in public schools serving large numbers of Syrian students.

Alternatively, if there are objections to expanding the subject matter taught to students native to the host country, supplemental learning materials could be provided on a self-selected basis to those students who plan to sit for Syrian examinations. Even better, host governments or multilateral organizations could develop accredited remedial programs that prepare students for Syrian examinations. For example, the United Nations is currently in the process of developing an online version of the Syrian curriculum to help students prepare for Syrian examinations

⁵⁰ UNICEF, "Curriculum, Accreditation and Certification," p. 76

⁵¹ Culbertson and Constant, "Education of Syrian Refugee Children," p. 63

outside of the classroom.⁵² Such programs would be in the best interest of Syrian students because they would increase their future education and employment opportunities. In addition, this form of programming is a more ethical way to support Syrian repatriation, in contrast to discriminatory policies that aim to coerce refugees to return to Syria, such as by limiting education or employment opportunities.

2.1.2 Standardize and Coordinate Curricula

The inconsistencies between various versions of formal and informal curricula can also be addressed by standardizing curriculum usage across education systems. NGO-run schools, those in camps, and other informal programs should use the national curriculum of the host country whenever possible. In situations where this is not an option, efforts should be made to coordinate the learning materials for the particular type of program at all program sites across the country. For example, I advocate for all accelerated learning programs to use the same curricula, and for all remedial programs to coordinate their curricula as well (the case study at the end of this chapter provides a specific example).

In addition, policymakers should standardize the different versions of the Syrian curriculum. This initiative requires addressing the controversies surrounding both the Syrian government's official curriculum and the Syrian Adapted Curriculum of the opposition. However, developing a regional board to coordinate curriculum development could help to mitigate this issue. Both versions of the Syrian curricula are unevenly applied in informal programs across the region, with many schools also implementing their own revisions of the

⁵² Ibid, p. 47

curriculum. In order to ensure that students receive quality learning and are prepared for the Syrian examinations, it is important to develop a coherent framework for both textbook revision and curriculum development. Although this process will prove difficult and politically charged, coherent curriculum development is crucial for scaling up the provision of quality education and ensuring that student certifications will be recognized both in host countries and back in Syria.⁵³

To ensure that such a curriculum is as neutral as possible, I recommend that a regional education board be established to develop this new Syrian curriculum and host examinations throughout the region. Alternatively, a multilateral agency such as UNHCR or UNICEF could be tasked with coordinating and developing a new Syrian curriculum to be used in host countries.⁵⁴

2.2 Difficult Curricula and Language Barriers

Syrian refugee students often struggle in host country schools not only because the curriculum is significantly different from what they are accustomed to, but also because they find the curriculum to be too challenging. This issue is particularly acute for older children and for those who have gaps in their education due to displacement. A RAND survey found that it is more challenging for students to adapt to secondary-school curricula than that of basic education and that older students find it more difficult to cope with a new curriculum than younger ones⁵⁵.

Another survey revealed some of the specific difficulties that students face in adjusting to the Jordanian school system. Interviewees who had dropped out of public school cited numerous

⁵³ UNICEF, "Curriculum, Accreditation and Certification," p. 22

⁵⁴ Culbertson and Constant, "Education of Syrian Refugee Children," p. 63

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 18

reasons relating to the curriculum, such as: “the school environment and the teachers were not helping them to keep up with the demanding curriculum”; “they did not understand the teacher and could not keep up with school demands”; and “they had difficulty performing on tests and could not focus on studying once back home in the camp.”⁵⁶ Similarly, a UN Population Fund survey in Lebanon found that “the difficulty of the Lebanese curriculum” was cited as one of the three most-common reasons for dropping out of school. When asked for possible solutions to remedy this issue, participants advocated for the recruitment of Syrian teachers and the use of the Syrian curriculum.⁵⁷

UNICEF interviews with Jordanian teachers revealed that Syrian students (irrespective of sex) find history and national education subjects to be boring and not useful, likely because these subjects are often specific to the host country. Students also expressed a desire for music, drama, cultural/historical field trips and other extracurricular activities to give them a sense of normalcy and belonging in their host community and to enhance their academic performance.⁵⁸ This survey also found that mathematics and English are, on average, the most challenging subjects for Syrian refugee students.

Although the Jordanian curriculum is taught in Arabic, English is introduced several years earlier than in the Syrian curriculum. Consequently, Syrian students aged 10 to 13 are especially likely to struggle with English because this is the time frame when English has already been introduced in the Jordanian curriculum but not yet in most Syrian schools.⁵⁹ The Jordanian curriculum also expects higher levels of English proficiency than does the Syrian curriculum. Students interviewed during UNICEF field research reported that in Syria, English teachers

⁵⁶ Marianne Hattar-Pollara, “Barriers to Education of Syrian Refugee Girls in Jordan: Gender-Based Threats and Challenges,” *Journal of Nursing Scholarship* 51, no. 3 (March 7, 2019): p. 247, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jnu.12480>.

⁵⁷ UNICEF, “Curriculum, Accreditation and Certification,” p. 59

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 73

⁵⁹ Culbertson and Constant, “Education of Syrian Refugee Children,” p. 17

commonly translated “every single word into Arabic,” which is not standard practice in Jordanian schools.⁶⁰

Language is an even more significant barrier in Lebanon, where the curriculum is taught in three languages: Arabic, English, *and* French. In the first two cycles (grades 1 through 6), mathematics and science are almost always taught in English or French, and these subjects are *only* taught in English or French in the third cycle. Lebanese public schools are required by law to teach the same curriculum to both refugees and Lebanese students. However, this poses serious learning difficulties for Syrian children who are used to a curriculum that uses Arabic as the *only* language of instruction and that does not teach French at all (even as a foreign language).⁶¹

To address the language challenges posed by the Lebanese curriculum, some public schools attempt to teach the English and French portions of the curriculum in Arabic. Such initiatives are largely confined to informal programs or to schools that employ the second-shift system or are located in areas mainly populated by Syrian refugees. However, even those schools attempting to provide instruction for all subjects in Arabic have found this to be challenging in practice because Lebanese teachers are not trained or accustomed to teaching these subjects in Arabic.⁶²

2.2.1 Remedial Programs

Remedial education programs can benefit Syrian refugee students in several ways, including overcoming language barriers, adjusting to a new or more challenging curriculum, and

⁶⁰ UNICEF, “Curriculum, Accreditation and Certification,” p. 73

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 60

⁶² Culbertson and Constant, “Education of Syrian Refugee Children,” p. 17

compensating for gaps in their education. In Lebanon, language-related remedial programs often take two forms: Arabic-taught classes covering subjects that the Lebanese curriculum teaches only in French or English, and programs teaching English and/or French as a second language. The first option tends to work better for older students who already have some foreign language experience and who are studying challenging subjects (such as mathematics and science) in a foreign language. The Arabic instruction in remedial programs ensures that students master the learning materials, while the French or English instruction covering the same topics in the formal classroom will allow students to rapidly improve their foreign language skills in a practical setting.⁶³

For younger students or those with minimal exposure to French and English, remedial programs for second language acquisition may be the optimal choice. These programs focus explicitly on teaching English or French as a foreign language, usually at an accelerated pace. Attending this form of remedial programming is perhaps the most rapid and efficient way for refugee students to achieve significant proficiency in a foreign language. In addition, these programs emphasize learning technical vocabulary in the target language to prepare students for studying subjects such as mathematics and science with foreign language instruction.

I believe it is crucial that all Syrian refugee students are encouraged to enroll in remedial programs as soon as they arrive in the host country. This will minimize the degree to which students fall behind during the transition, in addition to helping students adjust to the new curriculum as quickly as possible. Prompt enrollment in remedial programs is particularly important for refugees in Lebanon to ensure that they do not fall behind in subjects with foreign language instruction.⁶⁴ After all, “the difficulty of the Lebanese curriculum” is commonly cited

⁶³ UNICEF, “Curriculum, Accreditation and Certification,” p. 60

⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 61

as one of the most common reasons that Syrian refugee children drop out of school. In addition, it is difficult for teachers to provide tailored support to struggling students in host country classes that are quite large due to limited infrastructure and the rapidly growing refugee population.

Thus, remedial programs present an excellent opportunity to help Syrian students catch up to their host community peers without reducing the overall quality of instruction in public schools.

Unfortunately, the limited number of remedial programs that currently exist cannot possibly accommodate the large number of Syrian refugee students in Lebanon and Jordan. Scaling up these initiatives should be a high priority for host country governments because remedial programs have been shown to reduce the overall dropout rate for refugees and host country nationals alike. However, the scaling process must ensure that all remedial programs are accredited by a recognized agency, such as a government institution or multilateral organization. This body will need to standardize teaching materials, pedagogy, and teacher training to ensure that students receive relevant and high-quality instruction. In addition, it is important to note that remedial programs tend to be offered only in the afternoons, which conflicts with the second session in double-shift schools. As such, I suggest that remedial programs in neighborhoods with double-shift schools offer classes in both the morning and the afternoon so that children can attend remedial programming regardless of whether they are in the first or second shift of their school.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 76

2.3 Reflection: Remedial Programming

Remedial programs are invaluable in many different education settings, but they are particularly well suited for supporting refugee students in large classrooms who face language barriers or have gaps in their education. In this section, I will reflect both on my experience as a student in a remedial language program in Spain and on my role as a remedial tutor in Guatemala teaching students with gaps in their schooling. Through these reflections, I will offer insight into the value of remedial programs as well as their potential for supporting students in the context of displacement.

When I was 11 years old, my mother and I moved to Madrid, Spain. Although I had grown up speaking some Spanish at home, I was not fluent and certainly did not have the necessary vocabulary for navigating academic contexts. My mother's friend, who worked in the ministry of education, suggested that I enroll in a public school with a Spanish language remedial program to help me integrate into the school system. In my first weeks in the program, I spent the full school day in the *aula de enlace*, the "liaison classroom," learning Spanish as a second language. I gradually began to integrate into the sixth grade classroom, starting with the subjects that were least language-intensive, such as music and art. As my command of the language improved, I joined my sixth grade peers for classes like mathematics and geography. Ultimately, I was able to join my classmates for even the most language intensive subjects: grammar and literature. At long last I no longer needed the *aula de enlace* remedial program and could engage fully in my sixth grade class.

Participating in a remedial program enabled me to rapidly improve my Spanish without falling behind in academic subjects. In addition, integrating gradually into the classroom further accelerated my language acquisition: studying easier subjects in Spanish allowed me to apply my

language skills to real-world contexts. Attending remedial classes within my public school also helped me to connect with my peers and feel at ease in my new community.

These advantages to remedial programming are also relevant in the context of forced displacement. Such programs could be particularly beneficial for refugees in school systems where the language of instruction is different from their native language, as is the case for Syrian refugees in Lebanon. Remedial programs are especially effective when located in public schools because refugees can also attend classes with their host country peers, which increases social cohesion in the community (as discussed in the case study of chapter 3).⁶⁶ In addition, integrating remedial programs into public schools reduces the need for new infrastructure to implement these programs. For example, the *aula de enlace* at my school did not require significant changes to the infrastructure: two additional teachers, Spanish language learning materials, and one extra classroom.

Meanwhile, my experiences as a remedial tutor in Guatemala illustrate how these programs can also support students with gaps in their education. My students frequently missed school to work in the home or support the family financially, and some had even missed many consecutive months or started school several years late. With 50 or more students in a class, these students struggled to keep pace with their peers and often dropped out altogether. But once the school began offering remedial programming, these students were able to overcome the gaps in their education and catch up to their peers.

As a remedial tutor, I pulled the students with gaps in their schooling out of their normal classes during the subjects they found to be most challenging. For example, during math class I worked with small groups of students to provide tailored instruction and individualized support

⁶⁶ Culbertson and Constant, p. 52

to help them reach the expected proficiency for their grade. This strategy was extremely cost-effective because it required significantly fewer resources than reducing class sizes. In addition, the remedial program enabled students who had fallen behind in their learning to receive individualized support while still integrated with their peers and remaining at their current grade level.

Similarly, remedial initiatives can support refugee students who have gaps in their education as a result of war and displacement. Studies (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006; Van Laar, Levin, and Sidanius, 2008) show that integrating refugee students into the national education system alongside their host country peers promotes social cohesion. However, due to the trauma of displacement and their gaps in learning, refugee students often struggle to keep up with their peers, especially because classrooms have become so crowded. In these situations, remedial programs could be a powerful tool for addressing gaps in learning among refugee students with only minimal investments in additional infrastructure.



Figure 2.1 Author's Remedial Class in Spain



Figure 2.2 The Author Working as a Remedial Tutor in Guatemala

2.4 Barriers to Registration and Enrollment

Syrian refugee students face several barriers affecting their registration and enrollment in host community schools. In Lebanon, placement examinations are typically conducted in English or French. This poses an enormous obstacle for Syrian students, particularly those who wish to enroll in public school but have never studied English or French and thus cannot take the placement test to register.⁶⁷ In addition, it has been reported that principals in Lebanon often impose inordinately difficult placement tests in order to limit the number of Syrian students at the school.⁶⁸ Sometimes such actions are motivated by space or funding limitations, but more often, these principals are acting out of fear that allowing a significant number Syrian students to enroll will adversely impact the academic standard and reputation of the school.⁶⁹

Another formidable barrier to enrollment is the difficulty of recognizing prior learning, an obstacle that affects most refugee populations irrespective of host country or nation of origin. By nature of their forced displacement, refugees are often unable to bring school certificates such as transcripts or diplomas with them into exile. Furthermore, it is inherently challenging to obtain such documentation from the home state's ministry of education when the government is experiencing conflict, or even famine or a natural disaster. But without documentation attesting to a student's prior learning, it is exceedingly difficult both to register the child in a school and to determine the student's appropriate grade level.⁷⁰

Recognizing prior learning can present a challenge because it often requires determinations on a case-by-case basis due to the complexities of displacement and variations within the region's education systems and programs. Cross-border communication between

⁶⁷ UNICEF, "Curriculum, Accreditation and Certification," p. 65

⁶⁸ Ibid, p. 13

⁶⁹ Ibid, p. 14

⁷⁰ El-Ghali et al., "Pathways to and beyond Education," p. 20

different education ministries and schools is particularly difficult in conflict-affected contexts. Even when such communication is possible, significant technical barriers still remain, such as determining equivalent grade levels between different education systems. Placement is especially complicated for those who arrive in the host community mid-cycle (for example during a primary or lower-secondary cycle), and even more so for those who are displaced in the middle of the academic year.⁷¹ In Jordan, Syrian children who have the required documents certifying previous learning can enroll in the public education system at any point during the academic year. However, students without the proper documentation must sit for a placement test before they can be admitted to school, and the MOE only offers the examination once a year. Thus, Syrian children often miss many months of school as they wait to take the placement examination.⁷²

Furthermore, grade placement is difficult because curricula vary significantly both between countries and among different education systems within individual states. Comparing the curriculum of each country's public school system reveals substantial differences in the timing and order in which certain topics are introduced. As such, a Syrian student could be placed at the 5th grade level for English, the 7th grade level for mathematics, and the 8th grade level for other subjects. However, many schools simply don't have the capacity to accommodate large numbers of students switching back and forth between different levels for different subjects. This is even more challenging for students who place into different cycles; for example, a student who places into the primary school level for some subjects and the secondary school level for others.⁷³

⁷¹ UNICEF, "Curriculum, Accreditation and Certification," p. 23

⁷² Ibid, p. 72

⁷³ Ibid, p. 23

Lastly, Syrian refugee students have difficulties enrolling in host country schools because of registration document requirements, such as those from UNHCR or the local or national government. In Jordan, Syrian children cannot enroll in school without a “service card,” which is a registration document issued by the interior ministry that many families struggle to obtain. Furthermore, these service cards are only valid in the district where they were issued, but many families must move in search of work, in which case they can no longer enroll their children in school. The education ministry had previously waived the service card requirement because of the barriers that it presented to Syrian refugee students. However, the Jordanian government decided to reintroduce the requirement in 2019, once again preventing Syrian children without a service card from obtaining an education.⁷⁴

In both Jordan and Lebanon, the documentation required for university enrollment is even more strict than for primary and secondary school. This is due largely to the fact that both countries treat tertiary Syrian students as international, *not* as refugees, and consequently there is less leeway in terms of document requirements. In Lebanon, public universities require refugees to present some form of equivalent education documentation as well as residency documents, which many Syrians do not have. However, the majority of universities in Lebanon are private universities, which do not have common enrollment policies for Syrian refugees. As such, some private universities have demonstrated a willingness to enroll students who are missing certain documents, although usually only on the condition that the student obtains all necessary documentation by the time of graduation.⁷⁵ Generally, university admission in Jordan is even more difficult for Syrian students. All universities have firm documentation requirements that include a valid service card and certified equivalency documents. Students are given four months

⁷⁴ HRW, “I Want to Continue,” p. 5

⁷⁵ El-Ghali et al., “Pathways to and beyond Education,” p. 23

upon acceptance to present all required documentation; if they cannot, they will lose their university admission.⁷⁶

2.4.1 Reduce Registration Requirements

Attention must be given to removing the administrative burden of producing documents in order for refugee students to enroll in the host country national education system. Excessive registration requirements are inconsistent with international law, which guarantees all children - including Syrian refugees - the “right to free and compulsory primary education and access to secondary education without discrimination.”⁷⁷ In addition, these barriers to enrollment are counterproductive to host country initiatives that seek universal access to education for all children.

In 2016, Lebanon’s ministry of finance and the MEHE passed a resolution called Reaching All Children with Education (RACE) in coordination with several UN agencies, international donors, and NGOs. The RACE initiative aims to ensure that 470,000 vulnerable school-age children - both Syrian and Lebanese - are able to access quality formal education opportunities, and to improve the quality of learning for all children in Lebanon.⁷⁸ Similarly, both Jordan and Lebanon are members of the Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan (3RP) and the No Lost Generation initiative, which promote social cohesion and resilience through expanded

⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 10

⁷⁷ HRW, “Growing Up Without an Education: Barriers to Education for Syrian Refugee Children in Lebanon,” July 2016, p. 3, https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/lebanon0716_brochure_web.pdf

⁷⁸ Maysa Jalbout, “Reaching all Children with Education in Lebanon: Opportunities for Action,” RACE, April 2015, p. 1, http://www.sonbola-ngo.com/cms/lib/downloads/1462965579RACE_Education_Lebanon_MaysaJalbout.pdf

access to certified, quality education for Syrian youth. However, barriers to enrollment persist in the form of registration requirements, hampering the ability of host countries to fully implement the national and regional initiatives to which they have subscribed.

Restricting school enrollment through registration requirements is a common response from host countries that are experiencing the arrival of large numbers of refugees, and it is natural for states to be concerned about continued education access for host country nationals in these situations. However, it is counterproductive to the country's long term wellbeing if a large segment of the population does not have access to education (and thus employment) opportunities. In the short term, these registration requirements for refugees may seem beneficial because they reduce the fears of host country nationals surrounding access to education and employment opportunities and thus may prevent a sharp rise in xenophobia towards refugees. However, the long term effects of restricting refugee enrollment in schools include high unemployment, illiteracy, lack of social cohesion, and an overburdened social sector. For these reasons, certain enrollment requirements should be done away with altogether, such as proof of registration with the UNHCR or MOI. These barriers to education provide minimal benefits to the host country in the short term and are in fact detrimental in the long run. Furthermore, such requirements are unethical and directly contradict both international laws and host country initiatives that promise equal education access to all children.

The other variety of registration requirements - certifications of prior learning - do serve an important purpose, but there are alternative methods for evaluating prior learning and determining grade placement. I believe the most straightforward approach is to develop a reliable and standardized placement test to be utilized throughout the formal education system. Such a test would ensure that the assessment of previous learning and grade placement is systematic for

refugee students across the country, and this will also prevent schools from imposing overly difficult placement tests with the intention of preventing Syrian students from enrolling.

Furthermore, it is essential that placement tests are offered multiple times a year. This will allow Syrian refugees to resume their education as soon as they arrive in the host country, instead of exacerbating the gaps in their education by forcing them to wait for the next academic year. In addition, offering placement exams regularly will allow children to transition from non-formal programs to the formal education system as soon as students reach the minimum learning requirements or as school spaces become available.⁷⁹

Some countries already use placement tests as an alternative to requiring certifications of prior learning, but such initiatives still need to be expanded and standardized. For example, Jordan's MOE does allow refugee students without recognized diplomas or transcripts to enroll after taking a placement test. However, the examination is only available once a year, for a few days in August.⁸⁰ Thus, children who arrive in Jordan after the placement test will have to wait up to a year before enrolling in school. To increase formal education access for Syrian refugees, international organizations, NGOs, and other actors must lobby the MOE to offer the placement test more frequently - twice a year, at the bare minimum.

2.5 Lack of Certification and Accreditation

Certification refers to the issuing of a certificate to validate a student's mastery of specific learning objectives. This is distinct from *accreditation* - the process by which a

⁷⁹ UNICEF, "Curriculum, Accreditation and Certification," p. 22

⁸⁰ Ibid, p. 81

government or other formal body certifies a school and validates its quality. Certification requires some form of external assessment that is usually in the form of an exam and associated with learning cycles. As with enrollment, missing documentation such as residency permits can present challenges for certification.

For example, the MEHE in Lebanon requires that students present identification papers when taking the secondary-school exit exam. This documentation is necessary in order to prevent fraud, according to the MEHE, but many Syrians lack the necessary documents to take the exam and thus to certify their completion of secondary education.⁸¹ Initially, the MEHE also required students to submit their official transcripts in order to sit for the grade 9, 10, 11, and 12 end-of-year exams. This policy prevented the vast majority of Syrian students from taking the exams because they had only recently arrived in Lebanon and did not have official transcripts. Although the MEHE ultimately repealed this regulation in 2013, the situation still illustrates the enormous and detrimental impact that registration barriers place on Syrian refugee students.⁸²

Certification is particularly challenging within the nonformal education system. By nature of their informality, such programs do not operate under a formal body with the ability to issue certificates that will be recognized by other education systems or governments. This presents the biggest challenge for students who hope to return to Syria, where there is no legal framework for recognizing certificates from informal programs. After all, each country has a unique informal education sector with different organizations running different forms of informal learning programs.⁸³ In addition, Lebanese community schools that employ the Syrian Adapted Curriculum are unable to recognize and validate student learning through a formal certification process that would be recognized in Syria.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Culbertson and Constant, "Education of Syrian Refugee Children," p. 58

⁸² UNICEF, "Curriculum, Accreditation and Certification," p. 13

⁸³ Ibid, p. 66

⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 68

Even the formal education sector suffers from uncertainty in regard to the certification of learning for Syrian students who wish to eventually be repatriated. For example, a national recognition agreement existed prior to Syria's war between the Government of Syria and the governments in Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt. According to this agreement, Syria's Ministry of Foreign Affairs recognized the reciprocal equivalence of diplomas and certificates from the national education systems in the other four countries. However, education officials in both Lebanon and Jordan have expressed concern that the current political and social tensions between Syria and neighboring host countries may affect recognition of education certificates.⁸⁵ Similarly, interviews conducted by UNICEF revealed that "parents very much doubted that their children's education in Jordan [would] be accredited in Syria."⁸⁶ The issue remains uncertain, as no formal follow up agreement has been discussed between the countries' ministries of education since the onset of the conflict.

Thus, certification challenges often have as much to do with politics as with legislation and education. Another example is that host governments are often reluctant to link refugee children to the country's formal education system for fear that it could prolong displacement. In particular, host governments may put up barriers to certification for refugees to prevent increased competition in the job market for host country nationals. Alternatively, these governments sometimes refuse to provide the national curriculum and certification examinations to refugee children with the intent of encouraging repatriation.⁸⁷ Consequently, education certification is one of the most urgent challenges facing refugee students because it is the key to higher education and employment opportunities in both the host country and back in Syria.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Ibid, p. 15

⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 79

⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 21

⁸⁸ Culbertson and Constant, "Education of Syrian Refugee Children," p. 57

The accreditation process for authorizing and validating learning programs is important for similar reasons. At the start of the war in Syria, many unaccredited education programs were formed as a rapid response to support Syrian refugees on a short-term basis. However, the conflict is now entering its tenth year and yet many of these uncertified parallel systems still persist. Unaccredited education programs that are formed as part of a humanitarian response are only intended to be temporary because they are generally of poor quality, do not follow a formal curriculum and are unable to provide a recognized certification of learning. Without a formal accreditation process, it is difficult to regulate these programs or ensure that they provide quality learning to students and proper training for teachers. As a result, children who pursue their studies with courage and diligence despite the challenges of displacement will graduate from these programs to find that they have no official qualifications and little hope of continuing their education in a formal setting.⁸⁹

Accreditation may not be essential for some types of informal education - such as remedial classes - if they are intended to augment a certified education program. However, accreditation is *crucial* for catch-up programs that offer accelerated learning for students with gaps in their schooling. Such programs must be accredited by a recognized body (and provide certifications of learning) if children are to re-enter the formal education system upon completing the program.

Jordan has made significant progress in accrediting the country's accelerated programs, as discussed in the case study later in the chapter. However, other informal programs are still not accredited because the MOE only has jurisdiction over the formal education system. And while the Ministry of Social Development supervises all community-based organizations, education programs are not considered to fall under its mandate. This disconnect at the institutional level

⁸⁹ UNHCR, "Stepping Up: Refugee Education in Crisis," UNHCR, August 30, 2019, p. 13, <https://www.unhcr.org/steppingup/>

has resulted in a significant lack of monitoring, data, and supervision of informal education programs in Jordan because there is no ministerial ‘home’ for these programs.⁹⁰ Still, there are certain benefits to preserving the ‘informality of certain types of programs. For example, reduced restrictions give organizations the freedom to quickly adapt their programs in response to the changing needs of the Syrian refugee population.

While Jordan has at least managed to accredit the country’s accelerated learning programs, the majority of Lebanon’s programs are still informal and do not easily facilitate the integration of Syrian students into the formal education sector.⁹¹ As previously mentioned, the Syrian community schools represent one of the most prevalent forms of informal education in Lebanon but receive the least oversight. With a lack of available school spaces, particularly in areas with high concentrations of refugees, these community schools have begun to fill the gaps of Lebanon’s formal education sector. However, the MEHE and UN have no way of monitoring these schools, they possess minimal information on their teacher training, curriculum, and pedagogy, and they do not even know how many Syrian community schools are in operation.

Despite the lack of government oversight for non-accredited programming, UN agencies and donor organizations do provide some level of oversight for the programs they fund. In addition, host country governments sometimes fund these organizations and are thus able to provide some guidance and monitoring as well.⁹² In particular, both UNHCR and UNICEF provide various informal education programs in addition to contracting and coordinating the work of many smaller NGOs. Overall, however, the large number of informal education programs is a legacy of the short-term, humanitarian response to displacement and this lack of accredited programming has negatively impacted the learning of Syrian refugee students.

⁹⁰ UNICEF, “Curriculum, Accreditation and Certification,” p. 75

⁹¹ Culbertson and Constant, “Education of Syrian Refugee Children,” p. 21

⁹² UNICEF, “Curriculum, Accreditation and Certification,” p. 61

2.5.1 Coordinate Certification and Accreditation Regionally

Accreditation and certification policies need to account for the longevity of Syria's civil war, which creates uncertainty regarding when or even whether refugees will be able to return home. Refugee education policies must simultaneously prepare students for two different scenarios: permanent or long-term integration into the host country and the possibility of future employment in Syria.⁹³ It is crucial that accreditation and certification prepare Syrian children for vocational training, employment, and higher education opportunities in *both* the host country and in Syria. Although this is an ambitious endeavor, two solutions that have been employed in previous situations of forced displacement show promise in their application to the situation of Syrian refugees. One of these ‘best practices’ is to prepare students for both host-country and home country examinations, and the other is establishing a regional board for the specific conflict to coordinate curricula, accreditation, and certification for affected students.⁹⁴

I advocate for establishing a regional education board (either independently or through a multilateral organization), which could develop a common framework both for certifying learning and for accrediting learning programmes. Such an entity could thus undertake many different functions, including: coordinating certification and accreditation; validating learning and hosting examinations; harmonizing curriculum development and revision; and enhancing partnerships between educational institutions and programs across the region.⁹⁵

Alternatively, there are opportunities to build upon existing regional programs instead of (or in addition to) creating an entirely new education board. For example, the Educational Research Center expanded upon previously accredited curricula in developing the International

⁹³ Culbertson and Constant, “Education of Syrian Refugee Children,” p. 57

⁹⁴ Ibid, p. 57

⁹⁵ UNICEF, “Curriculum, Accreditation and Certification,” p. 23

Arab Baccalaureate (IAB). The IAB is a school-based program culminating in a common secondary school diploma that is gradually becoming recognized internationally. The IAB diploma is not based upon a single set of exit exams, but rather continuous assessment in Grades 10 through 12. As a school-based program, students must attend an IAB-accredited school in order to receive the diploma. But, once a school is granted accreditation, all students are automatically enrolled in the program and will receive IAB diplomas upon graduation. Although the IAB program is relatively new, increasing the number of IAB-accredited schools in areas with large populations of Syrian refugees would give students the opportunity to receive an additional certification that might be recognized in countries where a host-country diploma would not.⁹⁶

2.6 Case Study: NFE Drop-Out Program in Jordan

Like remedial programs, accelerated learning initiatives have proven remarkably effective in helping Syrian refugee students transition to new curricula and pedagogies and to overcome language barriers. In addition, such programming reduces drop-out rates and helps refugees keep up with host country peers in the classroom in spite of the obstacles posed by displacement. Unfortunately, both remedial and accelerated programs tend to suffer from many of the same issues that afflict the informal education sector as a whole, such as lack of monitoring and accreditation, inconsistent curriculum usage, unrecognized certification, and low-quality instruction and teacher training. However, the Jordanian government has spent the

⁹⁶ IAB, “IAB FAQ,” Educational Research Center, accessed March 13, 2021, <http://www.educationalrc.org/IAB/faq.html>

past several years developing a new accelerated learning program that is now being implemented across the country. This initiative has successfully addressed many of the setbacks encountered in accelerated and remedial programs, and the framework shows promise in its application to the informal sector as a whole, both in Jordan and in other host countries.

Jordan's new Drop-Out Education Program is open to Syrian refugees and vulnerable Jordanian students alike, and the three cycles can be completed in as little as 24 months. However, refugee students often need more time to complete the program due to the challenges posed by poverty and displacement. The first cycle of the program covers first through fourth grade, the second cycle covers fifth through seventh grade, and the final cycle covers eighth through tenth grade.⁹⁷ Students may choose to rejoin the formal education system once they reach the appropriate grade level for their age. Alternatively, students can complete the entire program and then take the final examination to receive the certification. This certificate enables students to apply for government loans, enroll in the army, and register a business. As a third option, students who do not reenter the formal education system but complete the drop-out program can self-study for the *Tawjihi* exam and then pursue higher education programs.⁹⁸ As of 2017, there were over 4,000 students enrolled in 120 centers across the country.⁹⁹

The organizational structure of the Drop-Out Education Program is one of its biggest advantages. Standardizing the program's structure and curriculum ensures that students receive a meaningful and high-quality education regardless of where in Jordan they are located. It is *imperative* to provide learning materials that are both standardized and aligned with the national curriculum to ensure a seamless transition for students who reenter into the formal education system. Otherwise, students of informal programs are unable to enroll in formal schools

⁹⁷ UNICEF, "Curriculum, Accreditation and Certification," p. 74

⁹⁸ Ibid, p. 79

⁹⁹ MOE, "Education Strategic Plan 2018-2022," The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan Ministry of Education, 2018, p. 9, http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/FIELD/Amman/pdf/ESP_English.pdf

precisely because these programs utilize ad-hoc, low-quality curricula that do not prepare students for formal education settings. Jordan's Drop-Out Education Program is an excellent model for standardizing the structure and curriculum of informal programs in order to provide a higher-quality education that reflects the learning outcomes of the national curriculum.

In addition, this drop-out program still retains much of the flexibility that is characteristic of the informal sector.¹⁰⁰ For example, students are able to proceed through each cycle at their own pace and are not pressured to finish the program within the 24-month timeframe. Self-paced learning allows students to learn the material more thoroughly and it is especially beneficial for refugee students, who often have difficult home situations limiting their free time for studying. Students are also given flexibility in choosing their educational pathway. The Drop-Out Education Program has direct links to Jordan's formal education system, which is a unique and valuable opportunity that many children take advantage of. Alternatively, students can choose to receive the program's official certification, accredited by the MOE, or they can study for the *Tawjihi* and then pursue higher education opportunities.

The second reason that the Drop-Out Education Program is so unique and effective is that the initiative is designed and operated by the MOE itself. This is a novel approach because by definition, only formal programs such as public schools receive full government accreditation. Thus, the MOE has coined the term 'non-formal' to distinguish this drop-out program from those in either the formal or informal sectors, and the Drop-Out Education Program is commonly referred to as the Non-Formal Education (NFE) Program. This can create confusion because other host countries use the terms 'non-formal' and 'informal' interchangeably. However, the NFE drop-out program is distinct because it is under the full jurisdiction of Jordan's MOE, whereas informal programs are not recognized or regulated by host country governments.

¹⁰⁰ UNICEF, "Curriculum, Accreditation and Certification," p. 9

This special designation as a non-formal program means that only organizations with MOE approval can provide Drop-Out Education programming. In addition, all NFE teachers must be recruited and trained by the MOE.¹⁰¹ The importance of such training cannot be overemphasized, as there is very little oversight of teachers in the informal education sector. As a result, children in these programs often receive a low-quality education. For example, NGOs that provide informal programs typically have very little funding to pay their teachers. As a result, students frequently report that their teachers are either not invested in their work or lack adequate teaching experience. Even among the minority who possess an advanced degree in education, these teachers are rarely trained to work with displaced populations.

High-quality teacher training is especially important in programs designed for refugees or other vulnerable children, who often have difficult home situations or histories of trauma, which is known to affect student performance. For example, a survey of Syrian refugee students in Turkey's Islahiye refugee camp found that "65 percent [displayed] psychosomatic symptoms to a degree that seriously reduce[d] the children's level of functioning" in the classroom.¹⁰² But with specialized MOE training tailored to working with vulnerable children, teachers in the Drop-Out Education Program are given the tools and resources to support these students. In fact, the program was initially developed in juvenile correction centers to provide youth with both academic and psychosocial learning opportunities, but the program has since expanded to serve vulnerable students of various backgrounds with an emphasis on displaced students and those in extreme poverty.¹⁰³ Above all, the Drop-Out Education Program's success is due to the MOE's oversight of teacher recruitment and training, in addition to the program's centralized structure and a high-quality curriculum that allows students to reenter the formal education system.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, p. 75

¹⁰² Serap Özer, Selçuk Şirin and Brit Oppedal, "Bahçeşehir Study of Syrian Refugee Children in Turkey," Bahçeşehir University, March 2016, p. 36, <https://www.fhi.no/globalassets/dokumenterfiler/studier/ungkul/bahcesehir-study-report.pdf>

¹⁰³ UNICEF, "Curriculum, Accreditation and Certification," p. 74

Chapter 3: Education Infrastructure

The existing education infrastructure in Jordan and Lebanon is insufficient to successfully accommodate the large numbers of Syrian refugee students in each country. This infrastructure includes not only school buildings but also teachers (with proper qualifications and training), desks and chairs, learning materials, electricity, technology, sanitation facilities, and recreational space for recess and physical education. To understand how insufficient school infrastructure impacts Syrian refugee students, we will first analyze the lack of qualified teachers in both Jordan and Lebanon and discuss how teacher training programs and the employment of Syrian teachers can remedy this issue. Next, we will examine the shortage of school spaces in each country resulting from the lack of physical infrastructure such as buildings, classrooms, and learning materials. Then, a case study of second shift systems will analyze the benefits and downsides of this solution, which was developed in response to insufficient school infrastructure in Jordan and Lebanon. Lastly, I will reflect on my experiences with Paper Airplanes, an organization that provides virtual one-on-one tutoring to Syrian refugee youth, and I will discuss the potential for remote organizations to support refugee students in areas with limited infrastructure.

3.1 Lack of Qualified Teachers

Unlike some host countries, such as Turkey, the ministries of education in Jordan and Lebanon have managed to hire a substantial number of new teachers since the war in Syria began. Expanding the teacher workforce has been possible because both countries have large

numbers of unemployed university graduates who are willing to work for low pay. However, these new hires usually lack teaching experience, a specialized degree, and the skills to manage challenging classroom situations.¹⁰⁴ For example, all teachers in Jordan's camps are appointed by the MOE and all have university degrees; however, they are recent graduates without teaching experience and may not even have a degree relating to education.¹⁰⁵ Similarly, a UNICEF Education Rapid Needs Assessment in Lebanon found that 22% of teachers were unqualified and working on a contractual basis. In addition, more than half of the teachers did not even have a university degree, and just 4.2% of teachers had a degree specializing in education.¹⁰⁶

Often, the ministries hire unqualified teachers to conserve funds because it is deemed too expensive to hire those with the proper degrees and experience. As a result, many teachers work in more than one school in order to obtain a decent wage, which in turn reduces their class preparation and follow-up time. Those hired on a contractual basis are also rarely subject to performance evaluations, inhibiting their professional development as well as schools' ability to monitor teacher quality.¹⁰⁷

An MEHE report evaluating teachers' performance found several issues that adversely affect the education provided for Syrian refugee children. The investigation found that teachers in the first two cycles of public school had inadequate content knowledge to properly teach even the basic academic subjects. Furthermore, public sector teachers in Lebanon do not receive training for working with students who have experienced psychosocial distress. Consequently, the report concluded that teachers were unprepared to provide education in an emergency context.¹⁰⁸ This issue is also reflected in HRW interviews with Syrian families, who reported that

¹⁰⁴ Culbertson and Constant, "Education of Syrian Refugee Children," p. 66

¹⁰⁵ UNICEF, "Curriculum, Accreditation and Certification," p. 77

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, p. 64

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, p. 64

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, p. 64

“the sacrifices required to keep children in school were difficult to justify because of the low quality of education and the minimal benefits that an education would bring.”¹⁰⁹ Parents singled out the lack of adequate teacher training as the main cause for the poor quality of education, and they generally agreed that improving teacher training should be a priority in the refugee response and future education initiatives.

3.1.1 Improve Teacher Training

The need for teacher training is significant, and host country governments, UN agencies, and NGOs must all prioritize expanding and improving opportunities for such training. Several reports (UNICEF 2015a, Culbertson and Constant, and HRW 2020) have found that teacher training was needed on multiple subjects. First, the large number of inexperienced teachers necessitates more opportunities for curricular and pedagogical training. With the significant increase in average class size, both new and experienced teachers also need training on classroom management, especially for teaching students at multiple levels in the same class. Most important, in my opinion, is the need for teacher training that is specifically tailored to working with refugee students. This includes training on psychosocial support and on working with students that have gaps in their education, have experienced trauma, and have trouble concentrating. Similarly, teachers should be provided with training on inclusive education, interpersonal interaction and dynamics, and issues of bullying and discrimination.

Studies (Culbertson and Constant, 2015; El-Ghali, 2019; UNICEF 2015a) show that Syrian refugees are frequently targets of bullying at host country schools, due to their vulnerable

¹⁰⁹ HRW, “I Want to Continue, p. 6

status and host populations' perception that refugees are a 'burden' on the community and state. According to one UNICEF study, 1,600 Syrian refugees in Jordan dropped out of school due to bullying in 2016 alone, and a similar study conducted in Lebanon showed the Syrian students experienced bullying at a significantly higher rate than their Lebanese peers.¹¹⁰ Teacher training is needed not only to help prevent bullying by host country students, but also because many accusations of discrimination are directed at the teachers themselves. A joint report by UNHCR and UNICEF found that "Syrian students report feeling discriminated against and excluded by their classmates and teachers [alike, and] Syrian parents are often fearful that teachers and classmates will attack their children."¹¹¹ Thus, a policy guide should be developed to give teachers positive strategies for addressing bullying and discrimination in the classroom. In addition, schools must increase their monitoring and evaluation of teachers to ensure that Syrian refugee students are treated with respect and receive adequate support.

Much needs to be done to improve teacher training in both Jordan and Lebanon, and these changes will require significant resources and time. To begin, I suggest prioritizing teacher training initiatives in areas with high concentrations of refugees: Bekaa, North Lebanon, and Beirut in Lebanon, as well as Mafraq, Irbid, Zarqa, and Amman in Jordan. This process is in its early stages in Jordan, where refugee camps now require all teachers to participate in training on teaching methods and psychosocial support.¹¹² However, a RAND corporation study revealed that trainees saw room for improvement in the quality and amount of training they received and felt that it should be expanded to cover a broader range of topics, particularly bullying and trauma.¹¹³ The study also recommends that a mix of new and experienced teachers be appointed

¹¹⁰ UNHCR, "5 Challenges to Accessing Education for Syrian Refugee Children," UNHCR Innovation Service, August 4, 2016b. <https://www.unhcr.org/innovation/5-challenges-to-accessing-education-for-syrian-refugee-children/>

¹¹¹ UNICEF, "Curriculum, Accreditation and Certification," p. 63

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 77

¹¹³ Culbertson and Constant, "Education of Syrian Refugee Children," p. 68

to each school, which would enable new teachers to receive support and mentoring from those with more experience.¹¹⁴

3.1.2 Employ Syrian Teachers

The optimal strategy for mixing new and experienced teachers would be to hire experienced *Syrian* teachers to work alongside recent graduates. However, labor laws in both Jordan and Lebanon prohibit Syrian refugees from public sector employment (including teaching), which is restricted to citizens of the host country.¹¹⁵ However, Jordan's MOE is allowing 260 Syrian teachers to work as 'teaching assistants' in camp schools and are compensated for their work with UN stipends.¹¹⁶ Principals and teachers in camp schools report that this arrangement has proven remarkably effective because Syrian teaching assistants are able to help students adjust to the new curriculum. As refugees themselves, these Syrian teachers are also better positioned to help students adjust to the Jordanian education system and to cope with the realities of displacement and life in the camp.¹¹⁷

Nevertheless, Syrian teachers have expressed some frustration with this initiative, particularly regarding the demarcation of their roles and teacher status. They often have extensive teaching experience and are heavily relied upon by the Jordanian teachers, yet their formal role is as an 'assistant' to new graduates. Syrian teachers are also paid less than their Jordanian counterparts and receive none of the benefits of public sector - or even formal - employment.¹¹⁸ Thus, I believe that efforts to scale up initiatives for hiring Syrian teachers must

¹¹⁴ Ibid, p. 71

¹¹⁵ Ibid, p. 66

¹¹⁶ HRW, "I Want to Continue, p. 7

¹¹⁷ Culbertson and Constant, "Education of Syrian Refugee Children," p. 31

¹¹⁸ UNICEF, "Curriculum, Accreditation and Certification," p. 78

ensure that they receive adequate salaries and employment benefits and are assigned teaching positions that reflect their level of education and experience. Ideally, host country governments would reduce labor market restrictions in order to allow Syrian teachers to enter the formal labor market, even if they do not receive the full benefits of public sector employment. And in the meantime, I suggest expanding UN stipends and opening more informal teaching positions to Syrians while labor market reforms are underway.

The Syrian Cultural Committee estimates that 1,000 certified teachers reside in the Za'atari camp, although data from a recent REACH survey indicates that the number of refugee teachers in the camp could be twice as many.¹¹⁹ Even in camps like Za'atari, where some Syrians are allowed to teach in formal schools, refugee teachers are a resource that remains largely untapped. More Syrian teachers should be employed both in camp schools and in public host community schools with large classes or many refugee students. This would require host countries to recognize Syrian teacher qualifications and engage in potentially difficult and politically-charged discussions about the employment and legal status of Syrian refugees.¹²⁰ Although host countries are hesitant to allow refugees to enter the formal labor market, the right to gainful employment is a universal right for all people, regardless of refugee status.¹²¹ In addition, host country students would benefit from having more and better qualified teachers, and host country teachers would have smaller class sizes and more time for lesson planning.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, p. 11

¹²⁰ Ibid, p. 23

¹²¹ United Nations, "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," p. 54

3.2 Shortage of School Spaces

In both Jordan and Lebanon, the shortage of spaces in formal schools is one of the most prevalent and dire obstacles that refugee students face. For example, a Save the Children survey of 13,000 Syrian children in Jordan found that the insufficient school space was the number one reason that participants cited for being out of school.¹²² The challenges faced by host country school systems in accommodating refugee students are compounded by the fact that Syrian refugees tend to be concentrated in specific areas of the country. For example, the arrival of Syrian refugees has increased Jordan's population by as much as 20 percent. But because the refugees are disproportionately concentrated in the regions along the border, schools in these areas (Mafraq, Irbid, Zarqa, and Amman) have experienced much larger increases in their student bodies.¹²³ The insufficient space in public schools is further exacerbated by an economic crisis that has forced many Jordanian families to enroll their children in public schools because they can no longer afford the tuition for private institutions. In the 2013-2014 academic year alone, 35,000 Jordanian students moved from the private to the public school system, representing an estimated 2 percent of all students in Jordan.¹²⁴

In Lebanon, the shortage of spaces in public schools is even more dire. Approximately 1.1 million Syrian refugees are registered in Lebanon, and potentially many more are unregistered. With a pre-war population of 4.4 million, Lebanon's population has increased by 25 percent in the span of just a few years.¹²⁵ Unfortunately, the country's public school system was wholly unprepared to accommodate the large number of new students because it only served approximately 300,000 Lebanese students, with the other 70 percent enrolled in various private

¹²² UNICEF, "Curriculum, Accreditation and Certification," p. 77

¹²³ Culbertson and Constant, "Education of Syrian Refugee Children," p. 16

¹²⁴ UNICEF, "Curriculum, Accreditation and Certification," p. 72

¹²⁵ Culbertson and Constant, "Education of Syrian Refugee Children," p. 3

institutions.¹²⁶ The MEHE has endeavored to expand the country’s education infrastructure and the capacity of schools, most notably through widespread implementation of the second shift system (which is discussed in the case study below). By adding shifts, the MEHE increased the number of Syrian refugee students enrolled in primary public schools by 152% between 2013 and 2016. But despite this dramatic increase, half of all Syrians aged 6 to 14 remained outside of the formal education system.¹²⁷

3.2.1 Expand Education Infrastructure

Jordan and Lebanon have two primary options for rapidly expanding the infrastructure of their formal education systems, and both methods should be pursued simultaneously for maximum impact. Perhaps the most obvious strategy is to increase the number of schools by constructing new ones and/or repurposing other buildings. However, host governments should also work to make more efficient use of existing school infrastructure, such as through geographic information system (GIS) mapping. It is especially important for host countries to conduct GIS mapping because refugees tend to be dispersed unevenly and their numbers may fluctuate significantly over the course of the conflict. Mapping would indicate where school-age refugees are located in relation to available school spaces. Then, transportation systems can be developed to distribute refugees among schools with openings, thereby allowing out-of-school refugees to enroll in formal education even if their neighborhood school is at capacity.¹²⁸

Such a transportation system would be a cost-effective approach that could be implemented rapidly, and in some cases it could even be a long-term solution. For example, a

¹²⁶ UNICEF, “Curriculum, Accreditation and Certification,” p. 66

¹²⁷ El-Ghali et al., “Pathways to and beyond Education,” p. 13

¹²⁸ Culbertson and Constant, “Education of Syrian Refugee Children,” p. 24

RAND Corporation study found that some schools struggled to accommodate large numbers of refugee students while other schools *in the same community* had comparatively few.¹²⁹ In such instances, GIS mapping and transportation can increase refugee enrollment by utilizing existing infrastructure but without busing students far from home. Long distance busing is not ideal because of the burden it places on students, especially those who work in the home or take outside jobs to support their families financially. Thus, in cases where there are no school spaces within the immediate area, busing should serve only as a temporary solution while new schools are being constructed. Mapping is essential here, too, because it will indicate where new schools are needed most urgently.

In addition to using existing school infrastructure more efficiently, it will be necessary to construct new schools to accommodate the large number of refugee youth that are still out of school in Jordan and Lebanon. Both host countries should develop a coherent framework for establishing new schools that includes repurposing buildings, constructing new schools, developing long-term financing and commitments, and preparing for both short- and long-term scenarios.

Repurposing buildings that were not originally built as schools can be an excellent approach to expanding infrastructure because it is faster and less expensive than constructing brand new schools. This solution is not necessarily ideal in the long term, as buildings may lack recess space or not be designed to support educational needs. Still, access needs are so great in both Jordan and Lebanon that they may outweigh these considerations. Like busing, repurposing existing buildings could also serve as a short-term solution while new schools are being built. Some policymakers have advocated for repurposing buildings because they could be shut down

¹²⁹ Ibid, p. 24

when it is safe for Syrians to return home.¹³⁰ But with the Syrian conflict entering its tenth year, it seems that longer-term solutions are needed to ensure that Syrian refugees have access to quality education.

Constructing new schools is the best way to ensure that Syrian refugee students receive the quality education they deserve, but this process takes time and is quite expensive. Still, host countries should remember that such an investment will benefit their own citizens as well. Even before Syria's war, Jordan and Lebanon were in need of additional and higher-quality school buildings, and the current circumstances provide an opportunity to improve this infrastructure with the support of donor countries and organizations. One innovative option for long-term financing of school construction could be public-private partnerships (PPPs), in which "private companies finance and construct buildings in exchange for the government leasing the building over time."¹³¹ This method of financing infrastructure development is used around the world and has been especially effective in countries with a shortage of public capital funding.

3.2.2 Allocate Funding More Effectively

Funding for the refugee response consistently falls short of what is needed, especially in the education sector, as shown in Figure 3.1. As this study seeks to demonstrate, education initiatives are a crucial but underfunded part of the refugee response and they deserve more attention and support. In addition to increasing education funding, however, there are several steps that host country governments, stakeholders, and donor and country organizations can take to ensure that the limited funds are used as efficiently as possible.

¹³⁰ Ibid, p. 27

¹³¹ Ibid, p. 27

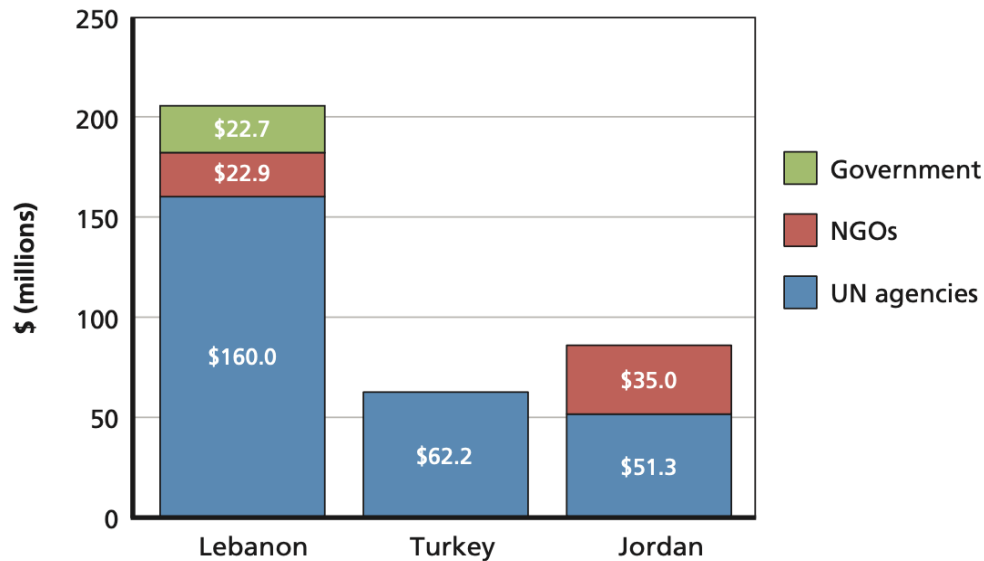


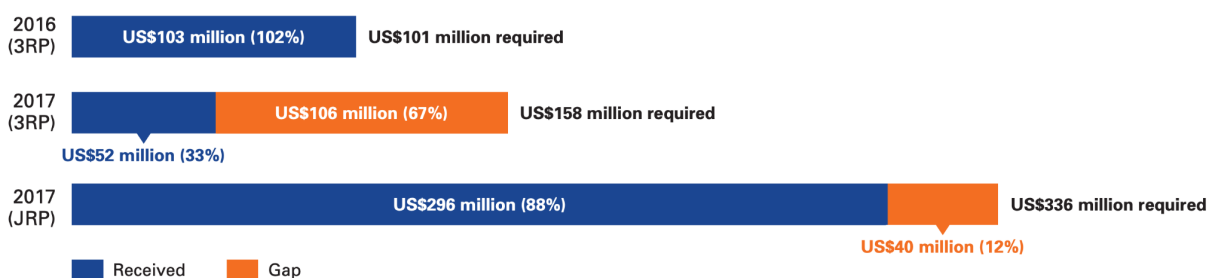
Figure 3.1 Education Budget Requests for the 2014 Regional Response Plan 6. *Education of Syrian Refugee Children: Managing the Crisis in Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan.* Shelly Culbertson and Louay Constant. Nov 23 2015, p. 36. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR859.html

At the most basic level, donors and stakeholders must recognize that Syrian displacement will likely continue indefinitely. Short-term projects may be less expensive, but they are not a viable option in situations of protracted displacement, and our focus must turn to more sustainable approaches that can continue to support Syrian refugee students in the years to come. Thus far, most education initiatives for Syrian refugees have been pursued under the broader umbrella of humanitarian aid. As shown in Figure 3.2, most of the refugee education budget allocated by the Syrian Regional Response Plan (RRP6) has been distributed to UN agencies and NGOs for short-term, humanitarian initiatives. However, I recommend pivoting toward development-based approaches that are designed to succeed in the long term, primarily by providing direct budget support to host country governments.

The importance of this issue is recognized in the 2015 report of the Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan (3RP), which called for “a new aid architecture ... combining humanitarian and

development priorities ... [because] traditional humanitarian assistance is no longer enough, especially given that an end to the crisis is not imminent.”¹³² Despite this bold statement announcing a change in direction, the refugee response is still in the early stages of moving away from short-term, humanitarian responses: two years after the report was issued, the RRP6 provided only a small amount of the support requested by Lebanon’s government and no funding for Jordan’s request.¹³³

2016 and 2017 education funding in Jordan



2016 and 2017 education funding in Lebanon



Figure 3.2 Education Funding Gaps in Jordan and Lebanon. *We Made a Promise: Ensuring Learning Pathways and Protection for Syrian Children and Youth.* No Lost Generation. April 2018, p. 27 and p. 30. <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Brussels%20conference%20education%20report.compressed.pdf>

It is especially important to provide funding for host country governments so that Syrian refugees can be integrated into the formal education system. As illustrated in Chapter 2, students in protracted displacement situations are most successful when they are able to attend accredited schools, follow a coherent and high-quality curriculum, and receive recognized certificates of

¹³² 3RP, “Regional Strategic Overview 2015-2015,” 3RP in Response to the Syria Crisis, 2016, p. 5-6, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/3RP-Report-Overview.pdf>

¹³³ Culbertson and Constant, “Education of Syrian Refugee Children,” p. 35-36

learning. Thus, I strongly recommend prioritizing funding for host-country institutions, with a reduced focus on the ad hoc collection of informal and NGO-run schools. Prioritizing the public school sector also means shifting the focus and resources to host communities outside of camps, as this is where the vast majority of refugees are located and where families will eventually integrate in the long run.¹³⁴

Unfortunately, it is politically difficult for host governments to acknowledge that Syrian refugees will likely remain in the country for many years. Already weak and underfunded before Syria's war began, public services in host countries for education, housing, and healthcare are overwhelmed and struggle to support host country citizens and refugees alike. However, planning must take a long-term perspective into account, and donor countries and organizations should broaden their support for host country infrastructure and public services. A RAND Corporation survey found that "Jordanian and Lebanese citizens increasingly believe that Syrian refugees are placing a strain on resources, while they have received insufficient funding and support."¹³⁵ These grievances are a main contributor to the growing tension between Syrian refugees and host country citizens, resulting in bullying and discrimination within the classroom and safety concerns for refugee students who must walk to school.

To improve social cohesion and reduce this tension in host country communities, donors should consider earmarking some funds specifically for the needs of host country nationals. The world's current system for protecting and supporting refugees operates on the basis of 'responsibility by proximity.' As a result, "countries and communities of first asylum ... bear a disproportionate responsibility due simply to proximity and happenstance."¹³⁶ One of the first steps to establish a global system of responsibility-sharing is for countries with relatively few

¹³⁴ Culbertson and Constant, "Education of Syrian Refugee Children," p. 45

¹³⁵ Ibid, p. 40

¹³⁶ Alexander Aleinikoff, *The Arc of Protection: Reforming the International Refugee Regime* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019), p. 115

refugees to contribute significantly more funding to both refugees and host countries. After all, these communities have development needs and vulnerable populations of their own, and international education assistance should take into account the broader development needs of host countries when planning the refugee response. For example, the Jordanian government recently instituted a policy that 30 percent of foreign aid for Syrians should be reserved for projects that will benefit both refugees and vulnerable Jordanians.¹³⁷

Funding for refugee education has fallen short year after year, but funding for secondary education has been particularly neglected. For example, UNHCR allocated just 13% of its 2015 global education budget to secondary school programs while spending three times as much on primary education.¹³⁸ With most resources directed to primary schools, “refugee students are left with few, if any, pathways to continue their education,” as evident from the alarmingly low enrollment rates at the secondary level. As of 2019, only 4.8% of secondary school-age refugees in Jordan were attending school, with enrollment at just 1.4% in Lebanon.¹³⁹ The stark drop in enrollment between the primary and secondary cycles reflects a collapsing pipeline of education for refugee youth, as illustrated in Figure 3.3.

This phenomenon is a direct result of donor organizations neglecting initiatives that target secondary school students, who tend to face even *more* significant barriers than refugees at the primary level, such as child labor and early marriage. Thus, I believe it is imperative that donor countries and organizations prioritize funding for secondary education and explicitly earmark resources for this cause. In addition, I recommend that stakeholders set enrollment targets and

¹³⁷ Culbertson and Constant, “Education of Syrian Refugee Children,” p. 69

¹³⁸ UNHCR, “Issue Brief 6: Secondary Education for Refugee Adolescents,” UNHCR, July 2015, p. 1, <https://www.unhcr.org/560be1759.pdf>

¹³⁹ El-Ghali et al., “Pathways to and beyond Education,” p. 6

other goals specific to secondary education to ensure that funding is used as efficiently as possible in order to combat the collapsing pipeline at that stage of the education system.¹⁴⁰

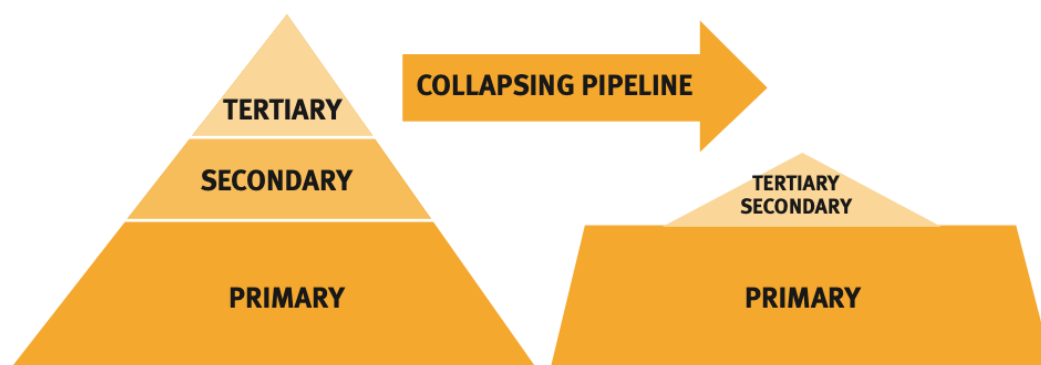


Figure 3.3 Collapsing Pipeline of Education for Refugees in Lebanon and Jordan. *Pathways to and beyond Education for Refugee Youth in Jordan and Lebanon.* Hana Addam El-Ghali, Fida Alameddine, Samar Farah, and Soraya Benchiba. March 2019, p. 19. <https://www.aub.edu.lb/ifi/news/Pages/20190305-pathway-to-and-beyond-education.aspx>.

3.3 Case Study: Second Shift System

Countries around the world, even those without large refugee populations, are adopting the second shift system as a way to increase enrollment capacity despite limited infrastructure. Double shift schools are, in theory, able to accommodate twice as many students by hosting a ‘second school day’ in the afternoon and early evening. Despite several significant drawbacks to the second shift system, it is immensely popular because it enables schools to double their capacity in a very short period of time and requires significantly fewer resources than constructing new schools. Some schools even employ the same teachers for both shifts.

¹⁴⁰ HRW, ‘I Want to Continue,’ p. 2

In Jordan, the second shift system was introduced in 1960 to better accommodate the large number of Palestinian refugees in the country. There are currently 340 double shift schools in operation, 200 of which serve Syrian refugees in the afternoon shift.¹⁴¹ The large number of Jordanian-only shifts reflects the infrastructure crisis that has crippled Jordan's education system since long before the war in Syria began.

Jordan and Lebanon have relied heavily on second shifts to increase enrollment for Syrian refugee students, and both countries hope to open more shifts if funding can be secured. Jordan opened 99 new shifts at the start of the 2014 school year, increasing the number of Syrian refugees enrolled in formal education from 30,000 to 100,000.¹⁴² Lebanon also introduced a second shift in 2014, which allowed public schools to enroll 57,000 new Syrian students.¹⁴³ These numbers represent an astounding increase in enrollment rates after just one year, and it is no wonder that both countries herald the second shift system as essential for rapidly scaling up education provision.

Double shift schools are a rapid and cost-effective solution for enrolling out-of-school children, but this approach entails several unfavorable side effects. One of the most significant drawbacks is that the second shift system reduces instructional time for students in both shifts. Jordanian schools typically provide six hours of instruction a day, from 8 am until 2 pm.¹⁴⁴ However, double shift schools are only able to provide 4.5 or 5 hours of instruction per shift, with each lesson lasting only 30 to 40 minutes instead of the standard 45 minutes. Over the

¹⁴¹ "Double Shifts: A Multimedia Documentary of Syrian Refugees in Jordanian Schools," Double Shift (Berlin Social Science Center WZB), accessed April 13, 2021, <https://www.double-shift.org/double-shift/double-shift>.

¹⁴² Mona Christophersen, *Securing Education for Syrian Refugees in Jordan*, International Peace Institute, May 1, 2015, p. 11 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep09545.8>

¹⁴³ UNICEF, "Curriculum, Accreditation and Certification," p. 58

¹⁴⁴ Culbertson and Constant, "Education of Syrian Refugee Children," p. 66

ten-year span of basic education, this discrepancy in instruction time amounts to losing *three years* of education.¹⁴⁵

Unsurprisingly, the reduced instructional time has adversely affected the quality of schooling. In particular, the second shift system restricts teachers to covering only the most basic subjects, and students often struggle to achieve the minimum learning objectives required by the Jordanian school system.¹⁴⁶ Furthermore, Syrian students rarely have access to school libraries, computers, science and computer laboratories, or sports facilities. In focusing exclusively on core subjects, double shift schools remove arts, physical education, and other extracurricular activities from the curriculum, even though these are much needed subjects for students struggling with trauma and displacement.¹⁴⁷

Still, there are ways that schools can compensate for the lost instruction time. Generally speaking, it would not be advisable to extend school hours later into the evening because it is not safe for students to walk home alone in the dark, particularly for girls. However, school days could be added to compensate for the shortened school day, either by operating schools on the weekends or by extending the academic year into the summer. For example, South Korea, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Brazil, and Chile have all managed to implement second shift systems, without reducing instruction time, by adding school days. Studies (Bray, 2008; Farrell and Schiefelbein, 1974; Fuller et al., 1999; Linden, 2001) of these countries' programs demonstrate that adding a second shift does not decrease student performance as long as there is adequate instructional time and teaching quality is maintained.¹⁴⁸

The shortage of qualified teachers afflicting both Jordan and Lebanon is especially acute in double shift schools. Employing the same teachers for both shifts leaves no time for lesson

¹⁴⁵ HRW, "I Want to Continue," p. 7-8

¹⁴⁶ UNICEF, "Curriculum, Accreditation and Certification," p. 77

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 7

¹⁴⁸ Culbertson and Constant, "Education of Syrian Refugee Children," p. 70

planning and quickly leads to teacher burnout. To staff additional shifts, the MOE and MEHE have had to hire recent university graduates with no teaching experience or relevant qualifications. Participants interviewed by HRW agreed that this new teacher cohort was unprepared to deal with the challenges of teaching in large classrooms, supporting vulnerable students or delivering education at the desired quality. One Syrian boy reminisced about the high teaching quality and support he had received at a previous school in Jordan, which had only one shift. But his new double shift school employed untrained and unqualified teachers, whom he lamented “were not really teachers.”¹⁴⁹

This study also noted a high turnover rate among teachers in double shift schools, who were hired on temporary contracts instead of through the public sector and did not receive benefits or paid vacations. Several participants reported that their teachers were unmotivated and spent much of the class time on their smartphones.¹⁵⁰ Fortunately, this drawback of the second shift system could be remedied with some of the approaches discussed previously, such as improving teacher training and employing experienced Syrian teachers.

The second shift system also presents concerns for social cohesion in host communities because most schools restrict the first shift to host country students and place all Syrians in the second shift. While separating students can enable teachers to better support vulnerable Syrian students and may reduce the incidence of bullying, scholarship continues to heavily favor integrated education.¹⁵¹ Because Syrian refugees will likely be displaced for years to come, segregated schools risk creating a population that is alienated from the rest of the community. This is precisely what has occurred to Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, where a short-term response to displacement evolved into parallel education systems with de facto segregation

¹⁴⁹ HRW, “I Want to Continue,” p. 6

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 6

¹⁵¹ Culbertson and Constant, “Education of Syrian Refugee Children,” p. 52

between Lebanese and Palestinian students.¹⁵² But while segregation may lead to polarization, stereotyping, and social isolation, integrated education has been shown to improve social cohesion, reduce prejudice, and facilitate more harmonious intergroup relations.¹⁵³ Thus, host country governments must work toward ending this de facto segregation in schools by dispersing Syrian students among both the first and second shifts.

Although there are several significant downsides to the second shift system, it is important to reiterate that this solution is unparalleled in its ability to dramatically increase student enrollment in the face of limited infrastructure. In addition, this solution can be scaled up much more rapidly and cost-effectively than almost any other enrollment initiative. Still, host countries and donors must bear in mind that improvements in enrollment do not automatically signify improvements in student learning. Attention to quality is especially important in double shift schools because where instruction time is limited and teachers tend to be less experienced. Still, some possible solutions have been developed to mitigate these challenges, and host countries should continue to refine their approach to double shift schooling.

3.4 Reflection: Remote Education Programs

Remote education programs have also shown significant potential in helping refugee students overcome infrastructure-related barriers to education. Like the second shift system, there are several drawbacks to remote programming, but the benefits outweigh the costs in many circumstances. Developing a high-quality remote education program can be time- and

¹⁵² Ibid, p. 61

¹⁵³ Ibid, p. 52

resource-intensive, and there are barriers to certification and accreditation as well. Nevertheless, I believe that remote programs can be a highly effective solution for displaced students, particularly for those who want to learn a specific language or skill set.

I have spent several years working with a remote education program called Paper Airplanes, first as an English tutor and later as a tutor coordinator and a curriculum development intern. The non-profit provides one-on-one virtual tutoring to Syrian refugees and IDPs through four different programs: English, Turkish, Journalism, and Women in Tech. Paper Airplanes was founded by Carleton College student Bailey Ulbricht after she spent the summer of 2013 volunteering in a town on the Syrian-Turkish border. When Bailey returned to the U.S., she met regularly with her Syrian friends over Skype to help them practice their English during displacement. Word of Bailey’s tutoring quickly spread, and more and more young Syrian refugees reached out requesting English lessons. By June of 2014, ten other students at Carleton College had offered to help with the tutoring, and Paper Airplanes’ English program was born.

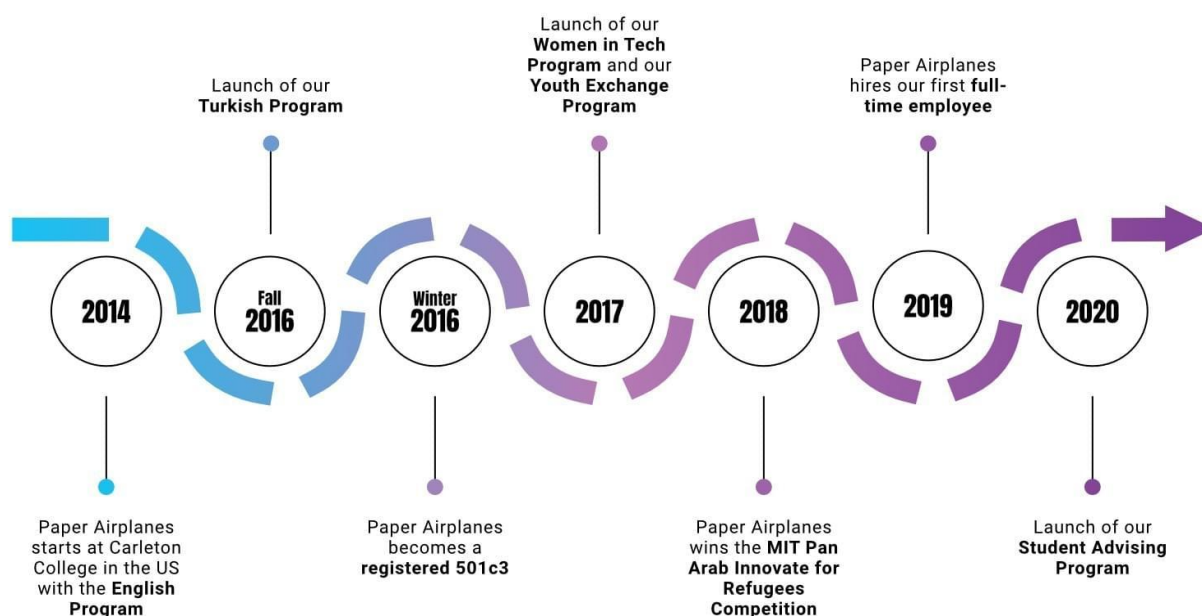


Figure 3.4 Evolution of the Paper Airplanes program. “2019 Annual Report.” Accessed April 13, 2020. <https://uploads.strikinglycdn.com/files/fbc25d6f-5c99-493c-bf33-18b450c7a22f/PA%20Annual%20Report%202019.pdf>.

I began volunteering as an English tutor with Paper Airplanes in January of 2018, working with a Syrian refugee in Jordan who was studying English to pursue a career in computer science. In May of 2020, I was promoted to Tutor Coordinator, overseeing roughly 50 tutors from around the world, assisting in their training, and monitoring their lessons. Currently, 17 of these tutors are students at Connecticut College, where I founded a university chapter of Paper Airplanes. In addition, I became a curriculum development intern and helped create the new reading-focused course, an offshoot of the main English program.

Paper Airplanes' English program curriculum has eight levels, each a semester in length, and it was created by a curriculum development specialist. Although the curriculum is of high quality, the one-on-one lessons are taught by volunteer tutors who rarely have prior teaching experience. Paper Airplanes does provide a mandatory virtual training for new tutors that can be completed in 8-10 hours. The tutor training covers a remarkable amount of information on teaching strategies and working with refugees, but it is no substitution for a TEFL certification course. However, restricting the program only to ESL-certified tutors would severely limit the number of students that the organization could serve. Paper Airplanes has recruited more than 500 volunteer English tutors to meet student demand, which has only been possible because the organization accepts inexperienced tutors as well.

Remote programming can be an excellent solution in the absence of education infrastructure. In a sense, this is another approach to repurposing existing infrastructure, but instead of converting empty warehouses into schools, remote programs are repurposing technological infrastructure to fit educational needs. Countries such as Jordan and Lebanon are ideal for remote learning because they already have much of the necessary infrastructure, such as widespread smartphone ownership and inexpensive data. For example, a 2018 Pew survey found

that 94% of adults in Jordan own a cell phone, and an additional 3% share a phone with a friend or family member.¹⁵⁴ Most Paper Airplanes students use their phones for classes and speak with their tutors through free video conferencing platforms, such as Skype, Google Meet, WhatsApp and Zoom. Paper Airplanes disseminates the curriculum, including all lesson plans and worksheets, through Google Drive, which students can also access for free via their phones.

Remote programs are not reliant on expensive physical infrastructure such as school buildings, desks, and books, and they also enable students to learn from the safety of their own homes. For girls who have dropped out of school due to sexual harassment in the classroom or walking to school, remote programs provide an opportunity to continue their education. In addition, students who are internally displaced or living in conflict zones can continue to learn virtually, even when schools are closed or it is not safe to leave the house. Paper Airplanes is a testament to the potential for remote learning in war zones. 1 in 3 students are currently in Syria but are able to continue their studies thanks to the program.¹⁵⁵ For example, one of my colleagues had been a student in the English program before joining the staff as a Student Coordinator. Ahmad had been pursuing a bachelor's degree in English when the war forced his university to close. Luckily, Paper Airplanes enabled him to continue his English studies online until his university could reopen. Now, Ahmad is himself an assistant English professor at a university in Syria, and he is also pursuing a degree in business administration from one of Paper Airplanes' partner universities.¹⁵⁶

Unlike the second shift system, which can be implemented in a matter of weeks, it has taken Paper Airplanes many years to reach its current scale and level of sophistication. The

¹⁵⁴ "Majorities of adults own a mobile phone," Pew Research Center, March 5, 2019, https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2019/03/07/use-of-smartphones-and-social-media-is-common-across-most-emerging-economies/pi_2019-03-07_global-mobile_-1-01/

¹⁵⁵ Paper Airplanes, "2019 Annual Report," Paper Airplanes, accessed April 13, 2020, p. 12

<https://uploads.strikinglycdn.com/files/fbc25d6f-5c99-493c-bf33-18b450c7a22f/PA%20Annual%20Report%202019.pdf>

¹⁵⁶ Paper Airplanes, "Out Staff," Paper Airplanes, accessed April 13, 2020, <https://www.paper-airplanes.org/our-staff>

organization is also resource-intensive, relying on more than 500 volunteer tutors and 40 unpaid staff members. More often than not, I found managing such a massive - and volunteer-based - workforce to be a significant logistical challenge, and the organization has had to constantly refine its management practices to keep pace with the growing number of students and tutors.

An even more significant obstacle for remote education programs is the lack of recognized certification and accreditation. As discussed in the previous chapter, both accreditation and certification are essential components of any formal education program. However, with widely dispersed student populations, it would be difficult for virtual organizations to achieve accreditation and to obtain recognition for student certificates in every country where their participants are located. Fortunately, this is less of an issue for Paper Airplanes because it is not intended as a substitute for formal schooling. Instead, the organization focuses on specific subject areas, many of which have corresponding standardized examinations and certifications. For example, students who successfully complete the Paper Airplanes English program receive a scholarship for the TOEFL, which is the English proficiency examination with the highest level of international recognition.

Similar to other remote programs, the Paper Airplanes graduation certificates are not widely recognized. In order to demonstrate student achievement to future employers or schools, Paper Airplanes mandates that all students craft a portfolio, which they update twice a semester with new examples of their work. Not only do these portfolios showcase student accomplishments, they also reveal just how much the student has improved over the course of the program.

An additional challenge for Paper Airplanes is that, similar to the second shift system, relying on inexperienced teachers typically results in lower quality learning for students.

However, the program has labored to remedy this issue by creating a highly structured teaching environment for tutors that includes detailed lesson plans for every tutoring session. Each lesson plan is broken down into five or ten-minute increments and includes warm-up exercises, reading and writing worksheets, listening and speaking activities, and even student reflections on their progress.

In my opinion, Paper Airplanes' curriculum is the organization's biggest strength. It is so comprehensive and easy to follow that even tutors without any prior experience are able to provide high-quality teaching by their second or third week in the program. It took Paper Airplanes several years to develop the curriculum, and the organization had to allocate a significant portion of its budget to hiring curriculum development specialists. However, the speed at which my tutors' teaching performance improves is a testament to the curriculum's success, and I believe that the costs of creating such a curriculum are well worth the benefits.

I believe that the Paper Airplanes curriculum offers an exceptional model for addressing the shortage of qualified teachers in Jordan and Lebanon, particularly in double shift schools. Creating such a detailed curriculum is incredibly time-intensive and expensive, but these lesson plans would allow inexperienced or underqualified teachers to provide a much higher quality learning experience. I highly recommend that the MOE and MEHE develop similarly detailed versions of their national curricula. Ideally, these learning materials would be adopted by NGO-run and double shift schools, or at a minimum, made available to inexperienced teachers to elevate the quality of their teaching.

Chapter 4: Child Labor and Early Marriage

Two of the most concerning barriers to education are early marriage and child labor, both of which have a negative, long-term impact on children's health and wellbeing. Furthermore, a higher prevalence of child marriage and labor is symptomatic of a larger problem: debilitating levels of poverty that require survival to take precedence over children's education and well-being. When access to food and shelter is so fragile, attending school is simply not an option for many children. Instead, children are forced to enter the labor market to support the family financially, or girls are married early in order to decrease the number of dependents needing support.¹⁵⁷

In Lebanon, three out of four Syrian refugees live below the poverty line and 58% live in extreme poverty. In addition, two thirds of Syrian refugees in Lebanon have reportedly adopted emergency coping strategies such as selling belongings and withdrawing children from school.¹⁵⁸ Similarly, a recent UNICEF assessment reported that 79% of Syrian refugee households in Jordan are below the national poverty line and that half of refugee children are both monetarily and multidimensionally poor.¹⁵⁹ In addition, Human Rights Watch reports that only 2 percent of Syrian refugees in Jordan have savings and that most rely heavily on financial support from humanitarian agencies for basic survival needs. This is especially concerning in light of the substantial reductions in aid in recent years.¹⁶⁰

These high levels of poverty have contributed heavily to rising rates of early marriage and child labor. However, this correlation means that successful efforts to reduce the incidence of

¹⁵⁷ HRW, "I Want to Continue, p. 3

¹⁵⁸ "VASyR 2017 Report: Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon," UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP, December 15, 2017, p. 86 <https://www.unhcr.org/lb/wp-content/uploads/sites/16/2018/01/VASyR-2017.pdf>

¹⁵⁹ UNICEF, "Assessment of Syrian Refugee Children in Host Communities in Jordan," UNICEF Jordan, February 2015, 2018, https://www.unicef.org/jordan/Assessment_Syrians_in_Jordan_host_communities2018_online.pdf

¹⁶⁰ HRW, "I Want to Continue, p. 2

child marriage and labor will also reduce poverty levels more broadly, and vice versa. Thus, the solutions discussed in this chapter deserve attention because they address multiple issues simultaneously: high levels of poverty, educational barriers, and the overall wellbeing of Syrian refugee children.

4.1 Child Labor

In Jordan, a Save the Children survey of 13,000 Syrian refugees found that the third most-cited reason for children to be out of school was child labor. The second most common reason was a lack of financial resources, which is a root cause child labor.¹⁶¹ In another survey of different stakeholders in both Jordan and Lebanon, respondents unanimously agreed that the need to work is a major cause of student dropout across all educational levels.¹⁶² A third study found that, in 47 percent of households reporting paid employment, a child was contributing to these earnings by selling wares on the street, begging, waiting in lines to receive aid, or working in construction, domestic labor or agriculture.¹⁶³ These children typically work for long hours with little pay, and often in dangerous or exploitative conditions. The majority of working children are boys, many of whom are the sole breadwinners of their households.¹⁶⁴ Meanwhile, girls are employed mostly in agriculture or domestic work.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶¹ UNICEF, "Curriculum, Accreditation and Certification," p. 77

¹⁶² El-Ghali et al., "Pathways to and beyond Education," p. 24

¹⁶³ Culbertson and Constant, "Education of Syrian Refugee Children," p. 19

¹⁶⁴ El-Ghali et al., "Pathways to and beyond Education," p. 21

¹⁶⁵ Culbertson and Constant, "Education of Syrian Refugee Children," p. 58

4.1.1 Reduce Employment Restrictions for Syrians

Enabling Syrian refugees to participate in host country labor markets and obtain gainful employment is one of the most direct approaches to reducing child labor. Unfortunately, however, unemployment rates for Syrian refugees are extremely high in both Jordan and Lebanon. Parents' inability to find work frequently forces children to drop out of school in order to support their families financially and also contributes to the increased prevalence of early marriage. Unemployment data from Jordan reveals that only 19% of working age Syrian refugees had formal work - 38% of men and 3% of women between the ages of 15 and 64. Similarly, Lebanon's Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees (VASyR) found that only 56% of Syrian men had been employed for at least one month during the year 2017, in either the formal or informal job market.¹⁶⁶

The high levels of unemployment among Syrian refugees is due in a large part to the labor market restrictions implemented by host country governments. In both Lebanon and Jordan, refugees are only permitted to work in specific sectors, such as agriculture and construction. In Jordan, 13 professions are completely closed for non-nationals and 24 are restricted, but even 'open' fields have maximum quotas for non-nationals.¹⁶⁷ In addition, obtaining work permits is a consistent struggle for Syrian refugees, and many jobs also require additional documentation that refugees do not always have, such as valid residency permits. Thus, even when refugees are able to find work, it is often in the informal sector and is rarely linked to refugees' skills and previous job experience.¹⁶⁸ Informal employment also comes with a host of negative consequences: unsafe working conditions, long hours, lack of employee rights,

¹⁶⁶ El-Ghali et al., "Pathways to and beyond Education," p. 10

¹⁶⁷ HRW, "I Want to Continue," p. 4

¹⁶⁸ El-Ghali et al., "Pathways to and beyond Education," p. 10

physical or emotional abuse, and inadequate pay.¹⁶⁹ However, barriers to formal employment are often so impenetrable that refugees have no choice but to work in the informal sector.

Host governments impose these employment restrictions out of fear that the rapid increase of competing workers will cause the unemployment rate to surge and put host country citizens out of work. For example, a World Bank report found that Lebanon's unemployment rate doubled in the first two years of the war with the arrival of more than one million Syrian refugees.¹⁷⁰ However, barring refugees from gainful employment renders a large segment of the population vulnerable and dependent on government aid and social services, which is detrimental to host countries in the long-term. Even more importantly, such policies directly contradict the principle that employment opportunities are a basic right for all people, regardless of nationality or refugee status. According to Article 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, "everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, and to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment."¹⁷¹

Unfortunately, host countries are generally not addressing the issue of refugee employment directly, which is simply not a sustainable approach in the long run. As the Syrian conflict enters its tenth year, host governments are gradually beginning to shift toward more equitable employment policies. For example, Jordan recently began to issue short-term work permits for sectors previously closed to refugees, as well as allowing some refugees residing in camps to seek work opportunities outside the camps.¹⁷² Still, such changes have been minimal, and I strongly recommend that both Jordan and Lebanon continue to ease labor market restrictions for Syrian refugees. Increasing employment opportunities would greatly reduce

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, p. 24

¹⁷⁰ World Bank, "Economic and Social Impact Assessment of the Syrian Conflict," Lebanon, September 30, 2013, p. 4 <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/925271468089385165/pdf/810980LB0box379831B00P14754500PUBLIC0.pdf>

¹⁷¹ United Nations, "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," p. 54

¹⁷² El-Ghali et al., "Pathways to and beyond Education," p. 10

families' reliance on income from child labor for survival. As a result, the school dropout rate among Syrian refugees would also drop significantly, especially for boys.

Expanding formal employment for refugees would also reduce dropout rates because children who stay in school longer would qualify for better and higher-paying jobs. Currently, many refugees make enormous sacrifices to complete secondary school and earn the *tawjihi* certificate only to discover that their employment prospects are no better than before. Even refugees with university degrees are commonly unemployed and unable to find work except as unskilled labor.¹⁷³ Thus, Syrian children under the poverty line often drop out despite free tuition or stipends for books and uniforms, because attending school presents an opportunity cost in the form of lost wages. Removing formal employment restrictions for Syrian refugees would incentivize children to stay in school so as to take advantage of the better job opportunities available with secondary and tertiary school certificates.¹⁷⁴

4.1.2 Remedial Programs

While some children drop out of school permanently to take up full-time employment, others may be enrolled in school but frequently miss class in order to support their families. For example, girls are often kept home from school to help with domestic work or to go to the market. Similarly, students often miss school to pick fruits and vegetables during harvest season, which begins as early as March and may last through the end of summer. In fact, one study measuring school attendance among Syrian refugees in Jordan found that truancy in Za'atari camp schools increased as much as 75 percent during harvest season.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ HRW, "I Want to Continue," p. 7

¹⁷⁴ El-Ghali et al., "Pathways to and beyond Education," p. 24

¹⁷⁵ Hattar-Pollara, "Barriers to Education," p. 247

Camp schools are particularly affected by low attendance rates during harvest season because most camps are located in rural areas close to agricultural land. In addition, adults are generally not permitted to leave the camps for work, but children are more able to get past security undetected and face less severe punishment when caught. Thus, parents in camps often send their children to work in the fields as a way to “earn money without having to endure stern security service consequences.”¹⁷⁶ Students who periodically miss class in order to work are much more likely to fall behind in school. This is especially true for children working in agriculture, who may miss many consecutive weeks. Unable to keep up with their peers and the pace of instruction, these students are at risk of giving up and dropping out of school altogether. Thus, remedial programs have an important role to play in helping students keep up with the curriculum even if they also have irregular employment.

One solution for increasing school attendance during harvest season would be to reduce restrictions on Syrian employment, particularly for those residing in camps. Unfortunately, removing employment barriers for refugees is often a slow and politically charged process. In the meantime, I suggest implementing remedial programs to support students with irregular employment. Such programming shows promise both in improving students’ academic performance and in reducing dropout rates among refugee youth.¹⁷⁷

Three schools in the Za’atari camp have adopted a double-shift system for remedial classes in order to better accommodate working students, with girls attending the early afternoon shift and boys attending classes in the evening. Separating students on the basis of gender helps families to feel more comfortable about sending their daughters to school, especially at the secondary level. In addition, attending afternoon classes ensures that the girls do not have to

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 247

¹⁷⁷ “Promising Practices in Refugee Education,” Save the Children, UNHCR and Pearson, September 22, 2017, p. 16, https://connectedlearning4refugees.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/PromisingPracticesinRefugeeEducationSynthesis_Report_FI_NAL_WEB.pdf

walk home from school in the dark, which is both an issue of safety and of honor for many refugee families. And because the majority of working children are male, the evening remedial classes allow these youth to keep up with school even when they have to work.¹⁷⁸

I believe it is particularly important for refugee camps to expand remedial learning opportunities that are explicitly designed for students employed in agriculture. For example, students would benefit from intensive supplemental education programs at the beginning of each school year, because many children may not have attended school since March or April. In addition, camp schools should consider other options for better adjusting the academic calendar to the harvest season. One option would be to move the summer vacation so that it is a month or two earlier. The bulk of the harvest season is late spring and early summer, so schools could consider starting in July or August and ending in April or May, which would also ensure that students are in attendance for final examinations. Alternatively, schools could shorten the academic year with a condensed curriculum and longer school hours, while extending the summer vacation to cover the entire harvest season. Ultimately, however, I believe that remedial programs are one of the most straightforward and cost-effective approaches to keeping Syrian refugee students in school, particularly those who are engaged in agriculture work or other forms of child labor.

4.2 Case Study: Min Ila Cash Transfer Program, Lebanon

Direct financial assistance, like remedial learning opportunities and reducing employment restrictions for Syrians, would help to expand education access for Syrian youth. Financial aid

¹⁷⁸ Hattar-Pollara, “Barriers to Education,” p. 242

for refugee students is crucial in ensuring equal access to education, and providing free tuition, while important, is inadequate. After all, free education is a universal right, so scholarships covering tuition should not be viewed as ‘aid’ but rather as a requirement meeting a basic necessity. Free tuition should be the norm, with additional forms of aid as appropriate, such as stipends, scholarships, and subsidies. This supplemental aid is crucial because students incur many other educational expenses, including books, uniforms, food, and transportation. Any one of these expenses can be prohibitive for refugee students, and if faced with multiple such expenses, the financial barrier is often insurmountable. Thus, free tuition should be accompanied by other forms of aid, such as subsidized education and stipends for books and uniforms, in order to ensure that education access is truly equitable.¹⁷⁹

Although these traditional forms of financial support can help families to cover the explicit costs of education, they do little to address the opportunity costs related to school attendance, such as child labor and unpaid housework. Cash transfer programs, on the other hand, have shown promise for fighting poverty in crisis-affected contexts because of their ability to cover the implicit costs associated with attending school. Existing literature (Galasso, 2006; Attanasio et al., 2005; Petrosino et al., 2012; Snilstveit et al., 2016; Saavedra and García, 2012; and Baird et al., 2013) reveals that both conditional and unconditional cash transfers positively affect school enrollment, especially among high out-of-school populations such as refugees. In addition, cash assistance is more efficient than in-kind assistance, as it affords recipients more financial autonomy, and it has been shown to transfer significant educational, social, and health benefits to children, serving as a form of social safety net.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁹ El-Ghali et al., “Pathways to and beyond Education,” p. 24

¹⁸⁰ Wael Moussa, et. al., “The Impact of Cash Transfers on Syrian Refugee Children in Lebanon,” Economic Research Forum, 2020, p. 2-3, https://erf.org.eg/app/uploads/2021/02/1614178280_293_580738_1457.pdf

The Min Ila cash assistance program in Lebanon has shown remarkable success in increasing refugee student enrollment and reducing the incidence of child labor and early marriage. The program serves as an excellent model for other education-oriented cash assistance programs for Syrians and refugees more broadly. Min Ila, which means “from-to,” is a cash transfer program (CTP) in Lebanon that was first developed in 2016 and is jointly operated by UNICEF and WFP. The program was “designed to reduce negative coping strategies harmful to children and reduce barriers to children’s school attendance, including financial barriers and reliance on child labor.”¹⁸¹ In addition, the program was implemented alongside other forms of education-based financial assistance, including a fee waiver for public school tuition and the provision of school supplies.¹⁸²

The pilot phase of the program was implemented during the 2016-2017 academic year, with cash assistance provided for children between the ages of 4 and 14 living in the Mount Lebanon and Akkar governorates. Children between the ages of five and ten received the equivalent of US\$10 per month, while children over the age of ten received US\$45 “to factor in the higher earnings of a working child in this age group.”¹⁸³ The monthly payments were made on a common ATM card used by all major aid organizations in Lebanon, called the Lebanon One Unified Inter-Organizational System for E-cards, or LOUISE (see Figure 4.1). Although the cash grants were unconditional, school attendance was monitored and families received household visits if children frequently missed school. However, staff conducting household visits were trained to emphasize that the purpose of these visits was to offer additional support and referrals,

¹⁸¹ “Min Ila Cash Transfer Program for Displaced Syrian Children in Lebanon: Impact Evaluation Endline Report,” UNICEF and WFP, June 2018, p. 11, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/67504.pdf>

¹⁸² Ibid, p. 24

¹⁸³ Ibid, p. 24

not to evaluate how families spent the cash or to take away benefits if children were not attending school.^{184 185}

Common Card for Cash Payments: LOUISE



Figure 4.1 The LOUISE Card is used for the monthly cash payments in the Min Ila program. Cash assistance is more time- and cost-effective than in-kind assistance and it offers more financial agency and dignity to displaced families.

Image Source: *Min Ila Cash Transfer Program for Displaced Syrian Children in Lebanon: Impact Evaluation Endline Report*. UNICEF and WFP. June 2018. <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/67504.pdf>.

The pilot program showed remarkable improvements in several issue areas related to children’s education achievement. First, school enrollment increased by 10% in the Akkar and Mount Lebanon governorates compared to the ‘control’ districts where Min Ila was not implemented. In fact, the program would likely have shown an even greater improvement in enrollment if not for the school infrastructure limitations that the MEHE is still struggling to address. More than half of all second-shift schools in the pilot areas reached full capacity during

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 24

¹⁸⁵ Despite these efforts and the unconditionality of the cash transfers, the misperception persisted that regular attendance was a requirement for receiving Min Ila benefits. One principal interviewed in a study on the program reported that teachers leverage the cash transfers to encourage good behavior among students, saying “When they misbehave, we just tell them: we will tell UNICEF to stop all benefits.” SOURCE: “Min Ila Cash Transfer,” Unicef and WFP, p. 73

the initial registration period before the academic year even began, forcing schools to turn children away and resulting in long waiting lists for limited school spaces. Thus, the program could not demonstrate its full potential in the pilot year due to the limit on spaces to enroll children in schools, although the MEHE has since made some progress in expanding Lebanon's education infrastructure.¹⁸⁶

Secondly, the amount of money that families spent on their children's education more than doubled, reaching an annual average of US\$103.18 per child. Interestingly, education spending for girls increased more than for boys, with families spending an additional \$65.59 per girl compared to an increase of \$56.24 for boys. However, the *total* spending averages were equivalent for boys and girls, meaning that the program resulted in more gender equity for education spending.¹⁸⁷ This also suggests that the devaluation of girls' education is driven largely by poverty and insecurity (not religious or cultural norms) and that anti-poverty initiatives produce real and tangible improvement in gender equity.

Furthermore, studies evaluating the effectiveness of Min Ila found that the program reduced the prevalence of child labor by 3.7%.¹⁸⁸ However, parents tend to underreport child labor (and early marriage), particularly in baseline surveys when families' eligibility for aid is still being confirmed. Thus, the impact of Min Ila on child labor is likely much more significant than the quantitative data suggests. Interviews with principals and teachers during the qualitative data collection process seem to support this view. For example, a principal in Akkar said that he had known of more than 20 cases of child labor among his students in the 2015-2016 academic year, but that he did not hear of any such cases during the pilot year of the Min Ila program.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 14

¹⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 24

¹⁸⁸ Wael Moussa, et. al., "Impact of Cash Transfers," p. 20

¹⁸⁹ "Min Ila Cash Transfer," Unicef and WFP, p. 62

Additionally, children who received cash assistance spent significantly less time doing unpaid household labor. For example, Min Ila reduced the number of children caring for another family member by 17% and reduced the number of children collecting firewood or water by 14%. The program's impact was particularly significant for girls above the age of 10, who were 23% less likely to engage in unpaid household labor than those who did not receive cash assistance.¹⁹⁰ This significant progress in reducing domestic work, in combination with the more modest improvements in formal labor, further supports the claim that cash assistance is an effective way to “compensate the household for the foregone opportunity of income that could be generated from child labor.”¹⁹¹

Finally, Min Ila was shown to reduce families' reliance on child marriage as a coping strategy for financial hardship.¹⁹² A study evaluating the first two years of the Min Ila program found that cash assistance reduced the incidence of child marriage for girls between the ages of 15 and 19 by 7%. Again, it is difficult to accurately capture the program's full impact because families have a strong tendency to underreport early marriage, and the researchers asserted that the program's impact was likely much greater than the quantitative data suggested. Regardless, a 7% reduction is no small accomplishment, especially in a two-year period.¹⁹³ Similarly, studies (Nanda et al., 2014; McQueston et al., 2013) of CTPs in other regions support the claim that cash assistance can significantly increase the age of marriage among girls as well as delaying the age of girls' first childbirth.

The success of the Min Ila program in its pilot year prompted UNICEF and WFP to expand the program in subsequent years. Unfortunately, due to the limited funding for the international response to Syria's war, not all families who are eligible for Min Ila have been able

¹⁹⁰ “Min Ila Cash Transfer,” Unicef and WFP, p. 13

¹⁹¹ Wael Moussa, et. al., “Impact of Cash Transfers,” p. 22

¹⁹² “Min Ila Cash Transfer,” Unicef and WFP, p. 18

¹⁹³ Wael Moussa, et. al., “Impact of Cash Transfers,” p. 11

to enroll in the program and receive cash assistance. However, UNICEF data shows that the trends established during this first year of receiving aid continued even when the aid was later discontinued. A study comparing families who received and lost aid with families who had never participated in Min Ila found that the former group continued to have significantly higher rates of school and enrollment and lower rates of child labor and early marriage. This finding is important because it suggests that CTPs offer “a protective mechanism for children that increases enrollment and lowers the risk of child labor and early marriage.” From a policy perspective, CTPs are both cost effective and resilient despite fluctuations in available aid, because such programs are able to produce lasting effects on school enrollment, child labor, and early marriage even without continuous cash inflow.¹⁹⁴

4.3 Early Marriage

Before the war, child marriage accounted for 13% of all Syrian marriages.¹⁹⁵ However, several factors have caused the incidence of early marriage to more than triple in recent years, despite laws in both Syria and host countries that prevent the practice. In Jordan, 44% of Syrian girls between the ages 13 and 18 are married,¹⁹⁶ while in Lebanon the number stands at 41%.¹⁹⁷ Additionally, data from 2014 shows that 16.2% of married Syrian girls wed men who are at least

¹⁹⁴ Wael Moussa, et. al., “Impact of Cash Transfers,” p. 23

¹⁹⁵ El-Ghali et al., “Pathways to and beyond Education,” p. 22

¹⁹⁶ Ruba Hikmat, “Child Marriage in Jordan: Policy Brief,” Higher Population Council of Jordan, May 2017, p. 5, <https://www.hpc.org.jo/sites/default/files/Policy%20Brief%20-%20Child%20Marriage%20in%20Jordan%202017.pdf>

¹⁹⁷ El-Ghali et al., “Pathways to and beyond Education,” p. 22

15 years their senior, although this number has likely increased as the overall incidence of child marriage continues to rise.¹⁹⁸

Child marriage has severe and lasting consequences for young girls, including health risks from early pregnancy, lack of economic independence, domestic violence, and marital rape.¹⁹⁹ In addition, marriage almost inevitably marks the end of a girl’s education, making her more vulnerable to poverty, exploitation, and a loss of rights and agency. Early marriage cuts girls’ education short and, conversely, studies show that increasing education opportunities for girls actually *reduces* the incidence of child marriage. For example, UNESCO research suggests that the rate of child marriage globally would drop by 14 percent if all girls completed primary school, and it would plummet by 64 percent if all girls finished secondary school.²⁰⁰ Thus, the initiatives discussed in the following section represent valuable investments in the future of refugee youth because their effects are twofold, simultaneously reducing the incidence of early marriage and the dropout rate for female students.

Several intersecting themes “influence girls’ right to education and their right to making their own decisions about marriage,” including “gender role[s] and the cultural devaluing of girls’ education, survival priorities and child labor, and the intersection of environmental stressors with the preservation of family honor.”²⁰¹ Having discussed child labor in the preceding section, we will now turn our attention to the issues of devaluing girls’ education and preserving family honor to better understand how they affect education opportunities for Syrian refugee girls.

¹⁹⁸ Hattar-Pollara, “Barriers to Education,” p. 242

¹⁹⁹ HRW, “I Want to Continue,” p. 3

²⁰⁰ UNESCO, “Teaching and Learning: Achieving Quality for All, Gender Summary,” January 29, 2014, p. 29, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000226662>

²⁰¹ Hattar-Pollara, “Barriers to Education,” p. 245

4.3.1 Devaluing Girls' Education

Like other patriarchal societies, traditional gender norms in Syria dictate that men are the breadwinners while women are expected to work in the home and care for the family. As a result, girls' education is often considered to be less important.²⁰² Nonetheless, it should be noted that education is highly valued in Syrian society and the country made remarkable progress in achieving gender parity for school enrollment prior to the war. For example, Syria's literacy rate for young adults (ages 15 to 24) was 97% for males and 93% for females in 2002, with an overall literacy rate of 83%.²⁰³ Additionally, data from 1996 reveals that 92.6% of primary-age females were enrolled in primary school, along with more than 99% of males.²⁰⁴

Despite this progress toward gender equity, Syrian refugee families are increasingly devaluing their girls' education. With the hardships of war and displacement, many families cannot afford school fees for all of their children and often prioritize the education of their sons.²⁰⁵ A series of interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) conducted in several Jordanian camps help to illuminate how young Syrians and their families perceive gender norms relating to education. In interviews and FGDs, many girls reported that they were not equally valued or supported compared to their male siblings. In addition, they expressed frustrations about gender-based expectations of self-denial and self-sacrifice that forced additional responsibilities onto them, such as domestic labor and childcare.²⁰⁶ Similarly, participants agreed that they had no choice but to comply if parents or male siblings demanded that the girls miss school in order to attend to family needs. As one participant explained, "I really want to come to

²⁰² Ibid, p. 241

²⁰³ UNESCO, "Syrian Arab Republic: Education and Literacy," UNESCO, accessed March 23, 2021, <http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/sy>

²⁰⁴ World Bank, "Syrian Arab Republic: School Enrollment, Primary, Female," World Bank, accessed March 23, 2021, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.PRM.NENR.FE?locations=SY>

²⁰⁵ Eva Iversen and Else Oestergaard, "Gender Equality in Education in Emergencies," *Forced Migration Review* 60, (March 2019): p. 11 <https://www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/education-displacement/iversen-oestergaard.pdf>

²⁰⁶ Hattar-Pollara, "Barriers to Education," p. 245

school and to study, yet when my parents forbid me from going to school, I get physically beaten by my father and brothers if I resist.”²⁰⁷

For younger girls, the devaluation of their education is apparent in the constant pressure to prioritize household chores over school. But as they get older, this devaluation becomes both a cause and a symptom of early marriage. Parents who choose to delay their daughters’ marriage in spite of societal pressures are often motivated by the desire not to cut their girls’ education short. However, in situations where girls’ education is routinely devalued, parents may be more likely to succumb to societal pressure and marry their daughters earlier. For example, a UNICEF study found that girls were significantly more likely to be married underage “where attitudinal barriers to education [were present] among both parents.”²⁰⁸

Compounding the problem, girl’s education is further devalued after early marriage, and they have few chances to continue their studies after they are wed. Interview and FGD participants frequently expressed this frustration, recounting how “parents regard girls’ education as a total waste of time because parents expect us to get married as soon as we become of child-bearing ability.”²⁰⁹ Initiatives that aim to broaden parent perspectives on their daughters’ education will both reduce the incidence of early marriage and also help girls reach higher levels of achievement in school.

²⁰⁷ Ibid, p. 246

²⁰⁸ UNICEF, “A Qualitative Study on the Underlying Social Norms and Economic Causes that Lead to Child Marriage in Jordan,” UNICEF, 2019, p. 13, <https://www.unicef.org/jordan/media/1796/file/Jordan-Reports.pdf>

²⁰⁹ Ibid, p. 246

4.3.2 Reflection: Family Outreach Initiatives

Family outreach initiatives provide an avenue for expanding the factors that families consider when they make value judgments concerning girls' education. For example, the UN's Joint Programme on Girls' Education in Malawi trains mothers to provide counselling to girls who have left school and reach out to the girls' families to support re-enrollment.²¹⁰

Unfortunately, limited research exists on the effectiveness of family outreach programs in reducing dropout rates and early marriage, and a systematic evaluation of such initiatives is needed, particularly in the context of displacement. However, my own experiences as a teacher have led me to believe that family outreach initiatives show significant promise for reducing early marriage and keeping girls in school in a variety of contexts.

As a teacher in a Muslim community in India, I strove to form strong relationships with the families of my students and I visited them often. I met Shabana,²¹¹ the older sister of my student Raniya, on my first home visit. Shabana's parents had pulled her out of school the previous year, when she was about 14 years old. I talked with the mother at length about her decision to withdraw Shabana, and she gave numerous reasons. Like many of the mothers in the village, she needed help in the home, such as cooking, cleaning, and going to the market. As the oldest daughter, these responsibilities fell to Shabana. The mother also cited poverty as a reason for withdrawing Shabana from the school, even though the school does not charge tuition and provides books and uniforms free of charge. Earning only \$30 USD per month, the family of eight lived far below the World Bank's poverty line of \$1.90 USD per person per day.²¹² The role

²¹⁰ UNFPA, "Teachers and mothers join forces to keep girls in school in Malawi," UNFPA, July 1, 2020, <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/news/teachers-and-mothers-join-forces-keep-girls-school-malawi>

²¹¹ All names included in this reflection section are pseudonyms to protect the identity of these individuals.

²¹² World Bank Group, "Poverty and Equity Brief: South Asia," World Bank, April 2020, p. 7, https://databank.worldbank.org/data/download/poverty/33EF03BB-9722-4AE2-ABC7-AA2972D68AFE/Global_POVEQ_SAR.pdf

of poverty in the family's decision, despite free tuition, speaks to the opportunity costs of attending school and the importance of initiatives like cash transfers for keeping girls in school.

As our conversation continued and the mother became more comfortable with me, she confided that *sutra* was also a significant motivator for pulling Shabana out of school. *Sutra* is an Arabic word meaning "cover," and in Islam, it refers to the responsibility of protecting a girl's chastity and family honor until it is transferred from her family to a suitor through marriage. *Sutra* has been a significant concern for many of my students' families in India, and the same is true for many Syrian families as well (see Section 4.3.2). In Shabana's case, her mother emphasized that she was "concerned with boys" and felt that Shabana was "too old to be spending so much time out of the house." Although I knew that Shabana was unhappy about leaving school, her mother said she felt she had made the right decision and planned to pull Raniya out of school once she reached the same age.

Amit, the school's founder and main teacher, was deeply concerned by the dropout rate among the older girls. He began visiting the students' families frequently to build relationships with them, gain their trust, and assist them in any way that he could. Amit encouraged the parents to spend time at the school and meet other teachers, and he strove to reassure them that their daughters would be safe at school. Because of his relationship with the families, Amit gained an intimate understanding of parents' concerns and was able to allay their reservations about sending their daughters to school. During his home visits, Amit also consistently emphasized some of the specific benefits that families would reap from their daughter's education. For example, because few in the village could count and mothers had to trust shopkeepers to give proper change, Amit pointed out that studying math would allow their

daughters to compute the proper amount owed. As parents began to witness these tangible benefits of attending school, they became very enthusiastic about their daughters' studies.

Today, Raniya is 16 years old and she is still in school. Her parents have moved far beyond merely tolerating her educational aspirations and instead actively promote them. The impact of Amit's family outreach initiative is evident in the family's support both for Raniya's studies and for the school itself. On days when it is too hot to work, Raniya and Shabana's father now spends the day at the school, helping with the pre-primary class and chatting with the teachers. It has been truly remarkable to witness this evolution in the family's perception of their daughters' education. This and similar experiences have persuaded me that family outreach initiatives show extraordinary promise for reducing dropout rates among Syrian refugee girls.

4.3.3 Sutra and Family Honor

The most significant driver of early marriage among Syrian refugees is the desire to secure *sutra*. Successfully guarding a girl's chastity while unmarried is a testament to parents' honor and signifies that the family is worthy of society's respect. Parent concerns regarding chastity are significantly greater in displacement due to insecurity in both camps and host communities. Many girls in the FGDs recounted their parents' constant fears that "forces outside their control" could violate their daughters' chastity and dishonor the family.²¹³ Participants agreed that the insecurity and sexual harassment within the camps was one of the most significant reasons that "pushed parents to forbid them from going to school and to find them a suitor as soon as possible."²¹⁴ Indeed, 78% of students between the ages of 6 and 17 who

²¹³ Hattar-Pollara, "Barriers to Education," p. 248

²¹⁴ Ibid, p. 248

unenrolled from Za’atari schools reported dropping out primarily because of harassment or abuse walking to and from school, according to an education needs assessment in the camp.²¹⁵

4.3.4 Free and Safe Transportation

The natural solution for ensuring student safety and reducing families’ concern about *sutra* is to expand access to safe transportation for Syrian refugee students. Transportation is especially important for older girls, who are more likely to face sexual harassment or violence, and because there are fewer secondary schools than primary schools, so older students have to travel longer distances.²¹⁶ In interviews conducted by UNICEF and the American Institute for Research, many participants noted that their older sisters were out of school because higher grade levels were not available in their community, and the lack of safe transportation prevented them from attending secondary schools in nearby towns. According to one young girl in Mount Lebanon, her older sister dropped out of school because “there is no higher class here and my father doesn’t allow her to go to Saida alone to attend Grade 8 and above.”²¹⁷

Not only would transportation initiatives be invaluable for older girls whose families are concerned about protecting family honor, but it would also benefit the many refugees who do not live within walking distance of a free public school with open spaces. In fact, several recent reports (Carrier, 2018; HRW, 2020) have found that the lack of safe and affordable transportation is one of the main causes for low enrollment among Syrian refugees more broadly.

²¹⁵ UNHCR, “5 Challenges to Accessing Education”

²¹⁶ HRW, “I Want to Continue, p. 5

²¹⁷ “Min Ila Cash Transfer,” Unicef and WFP, p. 65

Transportation is rarely available outside of camps, and even when available, it is often too expensive or perceived as unsafe by refugee families.²¹⁸

The lack of transportation is particularly acute in Lebanon, where no official camps have been established and many refugees live in informal tented settlements that lack formal schools. The distance between public host community schools and these make-shift camps is usually significant. Refugee students are often unable to attend school because the journey to school is too far and dangerous, and families cannot afford the cost of transportation.²¹⁹ For many Syrian refugees in Lebanon, the cost of transportation is *as much as* the cost of attending school itself. Thus, simply providing free tuition is not enough to increase enrollment for Syrian refugee students; stakeholders must prioritize transportation initiatives as well.²²⁰

I recommend that donor organizations experiment with different approaches to determine what will work best in each community. In places where public transportation systems already exist, such as Amman and Beirut, the best solution may be to provide stipends specifically for transportation to and from school. For example, cash transfer programs such as Min Ila could include an additional cash stipend specifically intended for transportation and calibrated based on the distance students must travel to school. However, stipends would not be as effective in areas where public transportation systems do not exist. In these situations, donor organizations should provide transportation that is free, or at a minimum, heavily subsidized. This could be an ideal solution for the tented settlements in Lebanon, as bus routes can be established to carry Syrian refugee students between the informal camps and the schools in nearby host communities.

Even when students live within walking distance to school, stakeholders should strive to implement daily escort services to accompany girls to and from school in order to ensure their

²¹⁸ Culbertson and Constant, "Education of Syrian Refugee Children," p. 18

²¹⁹ El-Ghali et al., "Pathways to and beyond Education," p. 21

²²⁰ Culbertson and Constant, "Education of Syrian Refugee Children," p. 18

safety. In Za’atari, several schools have begun offering ‘walking buses’ or escort services in response to parents’ concern about *sutra* and the high level of insecurity within the camp.²²¹ This initiative has been well received by students and families alike, and it should be scaled up to include schools in other camps as well as host communities. I suggest that donor organizations prioritize these three transportation policies because they have the potential to dramatically increase school enrollment for Syrian refugee students, especially among older girls and students with disabilities. Equally important, stakeholders should emphasize funding for transportation system improvements because getting to school is also a significant challenge for many Jordanian and Lebanese students.²²² As a result, directing funding from the refugee response toward safe and affordable transportation would benefit all students in host communities while also enhancing social cohesion.

²²¹ Hattar-Pollara, “Barriers to Education,” p. 242

²²² Culbertson and Constant, “Education of Syrian Refugee Children,” p. 18

Chapter 5: Conclusion

It is a global responsibility to protect refugee children and safeguard their futures. Far too often, this responsibility falls disproportionately on the shoulders of neighboring countries, which are typically facing their own development challenges with limited infrastructure and public services already stretched thin. This dilemma is particularly pronounced in the case of Lebanon²²³ and Jordan,²²⁴ which host the largest number of refugees per capita of any country in the world, the vast majority of whom are Syrian.

Education provision must be a central component of the refugee response, both in terms of humanitarian assistance and long-term planning. It is critical that Syrian refugee youth have the opportunity to continue their studies during displacement, not only to prevent a ‘lost generation,’ but also because education promotes personal development and serves as a protective mechanism for vulnerable youth. Most importantly, attending school is a universal right to which all human beings are entitled, regardless of nationality or refugee status, obligating donor organizations and host countries to provide education opportunities for Syrian refugees.

5.1 Key Findings and Policy Recommendations

In order to guide policymakers and donors involved in the refugee response, this study has provided an in-depth analysis of some of the most pressing educational barriers facing Syrian refugee youth. These obstacles are divided into three main domains: those relating to curriculum,

²²³ UNHCR, “Lebanon,” UNHCR Global Focus

²²⁴ UNHCR, “1 Percent of Humanity Displaced”

certification and accreditation, those arising from inadequate education infrastructure, and those relating to child labor and early marriage. I have provided several policy recommendations for each barrier addressed in this study, as summarized below in Figure 5.1.

There are four main first obstacles within the first category. Inconsistent curriculum usage can be addressed by standardizing and coordinating the various curricula, and also by utilizing the official Syrian curriculum and examinations. Remedial programs can provide language support, and accelerated learning programs can help students both overcome language barriers and adjust to new curricula. Registration and enrollment can be facilitated by reducing registration requirements and by offering placement tests more frequently. With regard to the lack of certification and accreditation, I recommend that policymakers coordinate on a regional basis by establishing cross-border organizational structures to certify learning and accredit academic programs.

Within education infrastructure, it has proven challenging to find enough qualified teachers to support the large increase in student enrollment. Instead of hiring recent university graduates without relevant experience or qualifications, host countries should employ Syrian teachers in a formal capacity and provide more rigorous training for all teachers. The most prevalent barrier to enrollment for refugees is the shortage of school spaces. Education infrastructure can be expanded through initiatives such as constructing new schools, repurposing buildings, and adding second shifts. In addition, education infrastructure can be improved by allocating funding more effectively and by conducting GIS mapping to help utilize existing infrastructure more efficiently.

The final category focuses on two main obstacles to education: child labor and early marriage. I recommend that policymakers allow Syrian refugees to enter the formal labor market,

which would reduce the incidence of child labor and enable more children to enroll in school. In addition, remedial programs should be expanded to provide alternative learning opportunities to students who must support their families financially. Early marriage can also be addressed by reducing employment restrictions for refugees, as well as through family outreach programs and by providing free, safe transportation. Finally, cash transfer programs expand education access for Syrian refugee youth by addressing the root causes of both child labor and early marriage. The following chart [Figure 5.1] outlines the barriers to education discussed in this study and their corresponding policy recommendations.

Barriers to Education	Policy Recommendations
Curriculum, Language, Certification and Accreditation	
Inconsistent Curriculum Usage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Standardize and Coordinate Curricula ● Utilize the Syrian Curriculum and Examinations
Language Barriers and Adjusting to a New Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Remedial Programs ● Accelerated Learning Programs
Barriers to Registration and Enrollment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reduce Registration Requirements ● Offer More Placement Tests
Lack of Certification and Accreditation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Coordinate Certification and Accreditation Regionally
Insufficient Education Infrastructure	
Lack of Qualified Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Improve Teacher Training ● Employ Syrian Teachers
Shortage of School Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Expand Education Infrastructure ● GIS Mapping to Better Utilize Existing Infrastructure ● Allocate Funding More Effectively
Child Labor and Early Marriage	
Child Labor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reduce Employment Restrictions for Syrian Refugees ● Remedial Programs ● Cash Transfer Programs
Early Marriage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Family Outreach ● Free, Safe Transportation ● Cash Transfer Programs

Figure 5.1: Policy Recommendations to Address Barriers to Education for Syrian Refugee Youth in Jordan and Lebanon SOURCE: Ann Foster Monk, “Futures under Threat: Education Policy and Barriers to Access for Syrian Refugees in Jordan and Lebanon,” May 2021

5.2 Gaps in Scholarship

In order to better serve Syrian refugee students, scholars and researchers must address several gaps in existing literature on refugee education in Jordan and Lebanon. One of the most pressing but contentious issues is how Syrian refugees can best be incorporated into the formal labor market while minimizing increases in unemployment and depreciation of wages for host country citizens. Labor market reforms are often politically challenging to implement, but all human beings have a basic right to gainful employment, and allowing Syrian refugees to work could significantly reduce the incidence of child labor, early marriage, and poverty while also increasing enrollment rates among refugee students. Thus, it is imperative that more research be conducted on potential labor policies for Syrian refugees, particularly the outcomes that such policies could have on refugee education for Syrian youth.

In addition, more research is needed on classroom environments where Syrian students are mixed with host country nationals. Existing scholarship widely suggests that segregated classrooms have a negative impact on the social cohesion of host communities, but that “under the right conditions, intergroup contact ... reduc[es] prejudice and facilitates more harmonious intergroup relations.”²²⁵ However, there has been significantly less research into what these ‘proper conditions’ would be in the case of Syrian refugees. In particular, bullying and discrimination are significant and real concerns for these students, and more studies should be conducted to determine how to integrate classes without increasing the incidence of violence against Syrian students.

Similarly, more research is needed to evaluate the quality of the various education programs in Lebanon and Jordan. Studies in both countries have shown that significantly less

²²⁵ Culbertson and Constant, “Education of Syrian Refugee Children,” p. 52

information is available on the quality of learning in second shifts catering to Syrian students.²²⁶

There is also a dearth of data on NGO-run schools, especially the Syrian community schools that have proliferated across Lebanon. Very little research has been done on these schools, and MEHE officials do not even know how many Syrian community schools operate in Lebanon, much less the number of students enrolled, the backgrounds and qualifications of teachers, or what curriculum is being used.²²⁷

Perhaps the largest gaps in scholarship are a result of insufficient or outdated data on Syrian refugee students. Although substantial (albeit incomplete) data exists on student enrollment, research on attendance and student performance is severely lacking. Host countries and donor organizations tend to evaluate the success of new education initiatives by measuring enrollment rates. However, this data reveals very little about student learning, which is the ultimate goal. Thus, future research must endeavor to gather useful information about attendance and, especially, student achievement.

A broader concern is that, even within existing scholarship, much of the data is outdated. Excellent research was conducted on Syrian refugee education during the early years of the war, but there has been a noticeable decline in data collection since 2015 as the international spotlight has moved onto other countries and issues. Keeping data current is particularly important in this context because the demographic data for Syrian refugees frequently fluctuates, especially in Lebanon, which shares a porous border with Syria such that refugees often move back and forth. In addition, previous studies have focused more on mapping the various barriers to education for Syrian refugees, with less attention to the relative impact of these obstacles. Future research should seek to rank these barriers in order of importance to help donors and stakeholders

²²⁶ Ibid, p. 32

²²⁷ Ibid, p. 67

determine which policies should be prioritized. This issue will be the focus of my next study, as described below.

In light of the Covid-19 pandemic, the need for new research and scholarship has become even more critical. The pandemic has significantly impacted refugee education and dramatically altered these statistics, especially those relating to student enrollment, attendance, performance, and location. Furthermore, new mapping studies are urgently needed because the relative impact of these education barriers on refugees have likely changed as well.

Refugee education is now more important than ever. A recent study in Lebanon found that the pandemic has forced 70% of Syrian refugees to drop out of school. 65% of these refugees have had their education discontinued because their schools are unable to provide online learning resources, while the remaining 35% are unable to access the online learning materials due to lack of internet or smartphones.²²⁸ In addition, roughly 80% of Syrian breadwinners in Lebanon have lost their job due to the pandemic, 90% of refugee families have been pushed into poverty,²²⁹ and food prices have increased by 423%.²³⁰

The Covid-19 pandemic has disproportionately devastated refugees, especially in Lebanon, and the consequences will affect these families for years to come. Even when the pandemic ends, the spike in poverty levels among refugees will render education unaffordable for most families, and many children will have already been married off or begun working in response to increased poverty. Indeed, a Malala Fund analysis of UNHCR data on school

²²⁸ Marwan Hajjar and Ghassan S Abu-Sittah, "The Multidimensional Burden of COVID-19 on Syrian Refugees in Lebanon," *Journal of Global Health* 11, (January 16 2021). DOI: 10.7189/jogh.11.05003

²²⁹ "VASyR 2020: Key Findings of the 2020 Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon," Inter-Agency Coordination of Lebanon, UNHCR, WFP and UNICEF, February 19, 2021, <https://www.unhcr.org/lb/wp-content/uploads/sites/16/2020/12/VASyR-2020-Dashboard.pdf>

²³⁰ WFP, "Lebanon VAM Update on Food Price and Market Trends," WFP, December 2020, p. 1, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/WFP-0000122981.pdf>

enrollment suggests that half of all refugee girls will never return to school, even when in-person learning resumes.²³¹

The hard-won gains in refugee student enrollment, representing decades of hard work, are at risk of being completely erased. Mitigating the devastating impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on refugee education will require the coordinated and concerted efforts of all stakeholders: host country governments, donor organizations, schools and universities, foreign states, private sector companies, and UN agencies. This pandemic has added innumerable new challenges for those whose lives have already been torn apart by conflict and persecution. It is the responsibility of the global community to safeguard the futures of refugee youth by ensuring access to high-quality education opportunities.

5.3 Future Research

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the in-person research planned for this study has been deferred. Fortunately, I have received a Marshall Fellowship from the British Government to continue my research at the School for Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) and University College London (UCL). I will pursue a master's degree in Migration and Diaspora Studies, followed by a master's degree in International Education and Development. My dissertations will continue this study, expanding to include the impact of Covid-19 on education of Syrian refugees and identifying appropriate solutions and policies to address these new barriers. In addition, my

²³¹ UNHCR, "Coming Together for Refugee Education," UNHCR, September 21, 2020a, p. 5, <https://www.unhcr.org/5f4f9a2b4>

research will seek to rectify the absence of data regarding the pandemic's impact on Jordan's education system and to supplement the preliminary data from Lebanon.

More specifically, the next phase of my research will gauge parent perspectives on education opportunities and policies for Syrian refugee youth in Lebanon and Jordan. This research will consist of two parts: a written survey and in-person interviews. The survey (included in Appendix A) seeks to determine which education barriers parents believe are most pressing and what forms of support would be most helpful. In addition, in-person interview questions have been developed to acquire a more holistic understanding of the experiences of Syrian refugee students in both Jordan and Lebanon. The interview questions (included in Appendix B) have been adapted from a Save the Children framework called Improving Learning Environments Together (ILET).²³² This framework seeks to improve learning environments in humanitarian contexts through community participation, which I have tailored to education provision in situations of protracted displacement. Thus, I hope that my future research will help to address these gaps in the scholarship and make a significant contribution toward advancing access to education for Syrian refugee children in Jordan and Lebanon.

²³² ILET, "Improving Learning Environments in Emergencies Package," Save the Children, accessed February 2020, <https://ilet.savethechildren.net/>

Appendix A: Parent Survey on Barriers to Education for Syrian Refugee Youth

PART 1: BACKGROUND

You must be at least 18 years old to participate in this survey. If you are age 17 or younger, please ^{*} exit the survey now.

I am at least 18 years old

Are you answering this form for yourself or for your children? ^{*}

I am a student who is age 18 or older (answering for myself)

I am a parent and I am answering for my children

Where do you currently live? (Note: you must live in either Jordan or Lebanon to participate in ^{*} this survey. If you lived in Jordan or Lebanon within the past 8 years, please chose "Other" and tell me which country you lived in and the last year that you were there. In answering the following questions, please answer them based on your experience in either Jordan or Lebanon, not a third country if you are currently living somewhere else)

Lebanon

Jordan

Other...

What grade level are you or your children in? Please check all that apply if you have more than one child. *

- Pre-primary school
- Primary School
- Secondary School
- Tertiary (University)
- Graduate School
- Technical or Vocational School
- Accelerated Learning Program
- Literacy Program
- Other...

What education programs have you or your children participated in? Check all that apply *

- National school (public)
- Private school (charging tuition)
- Temporary Education Centre (TEC)
- NGO-run school (outside of camp)
- Refugee camp school
- Second-shift system school
- Religious Institution
- Other...

Are you or your children the typical age for your grade level? If not, how many years older or younger are you/your children?

Short answer text
.....

PART 2: BARRIERS

What is the biggest obstacle that you or your children have faced in attending school? *

- School fees/tuition
- Transportation
- Safety
- Don't have proper registration/paperwork to enroll in school
- No schools with open spaces in our community
- Need to work to support the family financially
- Need to help in the house
- Do not feel welcome at school
- Not learning relevant material in school
- School isn't important to me/my children
- Other...

If you feel comfortable, please tell me more about your previous response. Why has this been the biggest obstacle to school attendance? What solutions have you tried to overcome this obstacle? How could the school, government, or local non-profits help your family to overcome this obstacle?

Long answer text

What is the second biggest obstacle that you or your children have faced in attending school? *

- School fees/tuition
- Transportation
- Safety
- Don't have proper registration/paperwork to enroll in school
- No schools with open spaces in our community
- Need to work to support the family financially
- Need to help in the house
- Do not feel welcome at school
- Not learning relevant material in school
- School isn't important to me/my children
- Other...

If you feel comfortable, please tell me more about your previous response. Why has this been the second biggest obstacle to school attendance? What solutions have you tried to overcome this obstacle? How could the school, government, or local non-profits help your family to overcome this obstacle?

Long answer text

What is the third biggest obstacle that you or your children have faced in attending school? *

- School fees/tuition
- Transportation
- Safety
- Don't have proper registration/paperwork to enroll in school
- No schools with open spaces in our community
- Need to work to support the family financially
- Need to help in the house
- Do not feel welcome at school
- Not learning relevant material in school
- School isn't important to me/my children
- Other...

If you feel comfortable, please tell me more about your previous response. Why has this been the second biggest obstacle to school attendance? What solutions have you tried to overcome this obstacle? How could the school, government, or local non-profits help your family to overcome this obstacle?

Long answer text

PART 3: SOLUTIONS

Do you ALREADY receive any assistance or incentives for attending school from either the government, your school, or another organization (like the UNHCR or a local NGO)? Please check ALL that apply *

- Scholarship for tuition
- Scholarship for books, uniforms or other school supplies
- Free or subsidized transportation to/from school
- Cash transfer for school attendance (CBI)
- None
- Other...

Is your family currently ELIGIBLE for any tuition scholarships (regardless of whether or not you have chosen to receive the scholarship)? *

- Yes
- No
- I do not know

Is your family currently ELIGIBLE for any scholarships for books, uniforms or other school supplies (regardless of whether or not you have chosen to receive the scholarship)? *

- Yes
- No
- I do not know

Is your family currently ELIGIBLE for any tuition scholarships (regardless of whether or not you have chosen to receive the scholarship)? *

- Yes
- No
- I do not know

Is your family currently ELIGIBLE for free or subsidized transportation to/from school (regardless of whether or not you have chosen to receive the scholarship)? *

- Yes
- No
- I do not know

Is your family currently ELIGIBLE for any scholarships for any cash transfer (CBI) programs (regardless of whether or not you have chosen to receive the scholarship)? *

- Yes
- No
- I do not know

Is your family currently ELIGIBLE for any other forms of assistance that I have not already mentioned? If so, please explain what other forms of assistance are currently available to your family

Long answer text

Which of the following forms of assistance would be most helpful for your family to increase school attendance? Please rank the options according to preference *

	1st Choice	2nd Choice	3rd Choice	4th Choice	Not Applicable
Scholarship for ...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Scholarship for ...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Free or subsidiz...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cash transfer f...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Are there any other forms of assistance that your family would find helpful? How do they compare to the options in the previous question?

Long answer text

Appendix B: Interview on Syrian Refugee Experiences in Host Country Schools

1. How many sons do you have and how old are they?
2. How many daughters do you have and how old are they?
3. How long have you been in [COUNTRY]?
4. Please tell me about your children's experience in school back home. Did they enjoy going to school? Did they get good grades?
5. Are your children currently receiving an education in [COUNTRY]?
 1. If so, what has their experience been?
 2. If not, why?
6. What subjects do you think are most important for you children to study and why?
7. Are there subjects that your children struggle with? What might help your children to be more successful in these subjects?
8. What are some of your children's goals for their education? How would you like to see your children supported in reaching these goals?
9. Do your children have friends at school? Have any of your children ever been bullied at school?
10. If you have both sons and daughters, is their education supported by the school equally and in the same way?
11. Do you feel that your children can get to school safely? Have there been any incidents where students were exposed to any danger on their way to or from school?
12. How do teachers let students know about their progress at school? How do teachers communicate feedback with students? With parents?
13. Would you like to talk about any other topics related to your children's education?

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