

RESEARCH REPORT

PATHWAYS TO AND BEYOND EDUCATION FOR REFUGEE YOUTH IN JORDAN AND LEBANON

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FOREWORD

Since the launch of the Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation for Education in 2015, we have been singularly focused on supporting Emirati and Arab youth to succeed through education opportunities. It was also our Founder's mission to make sure the generous funding he provided supports the most vulnerable youth in the Arab region, including refugees. Refugee youth are now 20% of the beneficiaries of the Foundation.

Inspired by the vision of Abdulla Al Ghurair, his son – Abdul Aziz Al Ghurair established his own initiative to support refugee education in June 2018. The Abdul Aziz Al Ghurair Refugee Education Fund constitutes the largest financial commitment by a private donor in this field, but it is still modest given the massive gap in refugee education funding in the Arab region.

With this report, we hope to shed light on the urgent need for more funders to address the alarmingly low enrollment and completion rates of less than 5% at the secondary and tertiary education levels in Jordan and Lebanon. The report illuminates critical information all donors need to better understand the best ways to engage with organizations serving refugees.

This report is a joint effort between the Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation for Education in collaboration with the Issam Fares Institute (IFI) at the American University of Beirut with whom we share a commitment to contributing to the public awareness on the urgent plight of refugees in the region. Both entities welcome feedback and collaboration.

Maysa Jalbout

CEO

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Arab world hosts almost 35% of the world's refugees, coming primarily from Syria, Palestine, Iraq, Yemen, Libya and Sudan¹. Almost eight years since the start of the Syrian crisis, which displaced 6.1 million people internally, more than five million are living in neighboring countries and over a million in Europe. Almost three million Syrian refugees have sought refuge in Jordan and Lebanon in addition to the almost 2.2 million and 450,000 of Palestinian refugees who have been living there respectively for decades².

More than half of Syrian refugees are children and youth. Enrollment in formal education for refugees has only slightly increased since the start of the conflict, although rates vary significantly across different levels of education. In both Lebanon and Jordan, almost 45% of the 631,000 school-aged refugees are out of school, with the vast majority being at the secondary school level³. At the post-secondary level, only around 5-8% of refugees complete higher education, while data on the numbers pursuing technical and vocational education remain largely unavailable.

Despite global efforts to address education, the scale of the need and the protracted nature of the conflict, among other reasons, have resulted in a continued state of crisis. This study explores the state of refugee education in Jordan and Lebanon to identify the key challenges inhibiting access and completion of secondary, technical and vocational (TVET), and tertiary education. The study focuses specifically on Syrian and Palestinian refugees as they are the two largest refugee populations in both countries, although the findings and recommendations are relevant and applicable to all other refugee populations living in the host countries as well. The findings from the study highlight four key challenges below:

Finding 1 - Although the funding for refugee education has not been sufficient, it has been largely focused on the primary level. Although, overall funding for refugee education has been falling short year after year, evidence suggest that most of this funding has focused on primary education, mirroring the global trends in situations of crisis where students are left with few, if any, pathways to continue their education beyond the primary level.

Finding 2 - Significant gaps in access continue to persist at all levels of education, but most strikingly at the secondary level. While both Lebanon and Jordan have made progress in reducing the number of refugee children out of school across all levels of education, at the secondary level, statistics are still alarming. In Jordan, only 4.8% of Syrian refugees attend secondary education.⁴ In Lebanon, total secondary enrollment rate still hovers around 1.4%.⁵ The main reasons for this are financial, legislative, and institutional.

Finding 3 - Vocational education lacks data, investment and quality interventions. Vocational education institutions and programs in Jordan and Lebanon remain largely traditional and are not seen as a desirable education pathway for youth. The main reasons are manifold but have mostly to do with the quality and cultural perception around TVET education.

Finding 4 - While support for increasing access to higher education for refugees remains low, another critical challenge is its relevance to the labor market and the employability of refugees upon graduation.

While refugees' access to tertiary education needs to be addressed, with only 5-8% of Syrian and Palestinian refugees attending university in Jordan and Lebanon, the quality and relevance of education are also critical issues. Most of the few scholarships available for refugees enable them to enroll in any academic programs and at any university regardless of labor market expectations as well as employment opportunities they can access, particularly given the restrictions on employment for refugees in the host countries.

Policy Recommendations

The report further presents the opportunities for action to address the refugees' access to and completion of their education in Jordan and Lebanon. These include the following:

1. **Providing more sustainable financing for secondary education and TVET in order** to ensure that students have access to secondary schools and do not drop out before reaching this educational level, as well providing them with an alternative to secondary education by supporting pathways to TVET programs in both countries.
2. **Investing in remedial and accelerated learning**

1 World Bank, 2018

2 UNRWA, 2018

3 Carlier, 2018

4 Authors' interview with UNICEF.

5 El Ghali et al., 2017.

programs at the secondary level that address both access and successful completion for students enrolled in grades 6 to 9, prior to transitioning to secondary education or TVET at which levels they are at high risk of dropping out. This includes English language training and other academic support.

3. **Providing professional academic orientation and college and career counseling** for refugee youth at the pre-secondary, secondary and post-secondary levels to identify suitable educational pathways and support them in accessing them as well as building the hard and soft skills they need to succeed.
4. **Offering more innovative and labor market-responsive solutions to TVET** that will change its image, build on and customize successful solutions from other regions, and establish strong and sustainable connections with employers.
5. **Aligning higher education with the needs of the future**, including connecting what is taught in academic programs with the realities in the labor market through updating curricula to ensure their relevance, offering internships and traineeships to provide better livelihood opportunities to students, as well as exploring new models of learning, such as connected learning, which can provide alternative academic opportunities for refugees and vulnerable youth and present opportunities to use technology as a means for reaching a larger population of youth.

INTRODUCTION

Refugees have been living alongside local societies in Jordan and Lebanon since 1948 when Palestinians sought refuge in nearby countries. This was followed by the influx of Syrians since 2011. Both refugee crises are protracted crises, with Palestinian refugees residing in the host countries for seven decades now, and the Syrian refugees for almost eight years. Syrian refugees account for almost one-third of the world's refugee population, out of which almost 50% are children and youth within the age range of school and university. These forced displacements interrupt children and youth's education leading to a significant drop in the enrollment rate across all educational levels: primary, secondary, higher, and technical and vocational education (TVET).

Education is a vital component in the life of a refugee because it creates a safe environment amidst the disruption, provides employment opportunities post-graduation, improves the livelihood of the refugees and their families, equips them with the necessary skills and knowledge to be able to rebuild and sustain their country, and in the process enables them to positively contribute to the hosting country⁶.

RATIONALE AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This report is a joint study between the Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation for Education and the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs (IFI) at the American University of Beirut (AUB) that aims to understand the educational status of refugees residing in Jordan and Lebanon. The study maps the key challenges refugee youth face regarding access to and completion of secondary, TVET, and higher education, and identifies the available opportunities for current and future stakeholders to scale support to refugees in the hosting countries. Although both countries host refugees from several different countries, all of whom are equally deprived, the focus of this study is on Syrian and Palestinian refugees as they form the majority of refugees in both countries. However, the findings and recommendations are largely reflective of the experience and support needed for all refugees living in these countries.

While the need for educational support for refugees is critical at all levels of education, research shows that in times of crisis the secondary, TVET, and tertiary education levels tend to get most overlooked.⁷ Ensuring that refugees have access to education, particularly those between the ages of 15 and 24, is important because not only would they improve their livelihoods and their socio-economic status, they would also be less prone to recruitment by armed forces⁸ and radicalization. Having access to education would ensure that refugees can actively contribute to their communities and the societies they are living in, rather than solely rely on humanitarian aid.⁹

The report begins with an overview of the current status of refugees in Jordan and Lebanon. The next section describes the educational system of the hosting countries with a focus on the three levels of education of refugees. This is followed by the methodology used to conduct the study. The next section presents and discusses the main findings of the study. Finally, the report concludes with recommendations on opportunities for further supporting refugee youth in accessing and completing their education.

7 El Ghali et al., 2017.

8 Van Esveld et al., 2016.

9 Avery & Said, 2017.

THE FRAGILE STATE OF REFUGEES IN JORDAN AND LEBANON

In 2017, Jordan and Lebanon were hosting the largest number of refugees relative to their national populations, 1 to 3 in Jordan and 1 to 4 in Lebanon as reported by UNHCR.¹⁰

Jordan currently hosts an estimate of 666,113 Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR¹¹ and 2,175,491 Palestinian refugees registered by UNRWA¹², among other refugees. It is estimated that 81.1% of the Syrian refugees live in the northern urban governorates while the remaining refugees (about 18.9%) are residing in the Zaatari (78,994), Azraq (53,967), and Emirati Jordanian camps (7,041).¹³ Similarly, only 18% of the registered Palestinian refugees live in camps. It is important to note that many Palestinian refugees in Jordan, but not all, have full citizenship¹⁴, a situation which, at times, has led to the remaining Palestinian refugees being overlooked and data around them to be lacking.

In Lebanon, however, it is estimated that over 2 million Syrian refugees arrived since 2015¹⁵, and an estimate of 986,942 Syrian refugees are currently registered by UNHCR¹⁶, in addition to the 449,957 Palestinian refugees registered by UNRWA.¹⁷ The majority of the Syrian refugees are residing in the Bekaa region while the rest are living in the capital, Beirut, and in the northern and southern provinces¹⁸. It is estimated that 73% of the Syrian refugees reside in residential buildings¹⁹,

around 17% live in informal tented settlements²⁰, while the remaining 9% are residing in non-residential infrastructures such as farms and garages.²¹ Unlike the Syrians, who live in host communities, around 63% of the registered Palestinian refugees are distributed across the 12 recognized Palestinian refugee camps across the country.²² The majority of the Palestinian refugees (52%) reside in camps that are located in the south of Lebanon. The remainder lives in camps that are in the central (24%), northern (20%) and Bekaa (4%) regions.²³

Despite hosting a significant number of refugees, both Lebanon and Jordan are not parties to the 1951 Refugee Convention, nor its 1967 Protocol.²⁴ Palestinians in Lebanon are recognized as refugees, while in Jordan most have been naturalized, although some remain without a Jordanian citizenship. They have been treated as refugees since 1948 and have limited access to support services. Syrians, however, are referred to by the Lebanese government as “displaced persons” rather than “refugees” and have to obtain a legal residency status.²⁵ As of 2017, a substantial number of Syrians in both countries did not have a legal residency status, namely 74% in Lebanon²⁶ and around 16.5% in Jordan.²⁷ Having legal residency status is vital for the refugees’ livelihood because it provides protection from detention and arrest, facilitates their movement, enables them to work, allows enrollment in public education institutions, and facilitates access to healthcare services.²⁸

To facilitate refugees’ access to education provision in each of the host countries, governments waived the requirement of legal residency for enrolling in public schools. However, admission to universities is more complicated. In Lebanon refugees are required to present their residency documents, which many Syrians do not have. This includes a valid permit, along with the equivalent education documentation, and/or other certified documents. Given that higher

10 UNHCR source last updated as of April 2018: <http://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria/location/71>.

11 UNHCR source last updated as of May 2018: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria/location/36>.

12 UNRWA source as of June 2018: <https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/jordan>.

13 UNHCR Factsheet source as of February 2018: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/FactSheetJordanFebruary2018-FINAL_0.pdf.

14 El-Abed, 2004.

15 *Terre des hommes* – retrieved from www.tdh.ch/en/our-interventions/lebanon.

16 UNHCR source last updated as of April 2018: <http://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria/location/71>.

17 UNRWA source as of June 2018: <https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/lebanon>.

18 UNHCR source as of June 2018: <http://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria/location/71>.

19 VASyR, 2017.

20 VASyR, 2017.

21 VASyR, 2017.

22 Chaaban et al., 2016.

23 Chaaban et al., 2016.

24 El-Ghali et al., 2017, p. 12 & Van Esveld, 2016.

25 El-Ghali et al., 2017, p. 12.

26 LCRP, 2017.

27 JIF, 2018.

28 VASyR, 2017.



education in Lebanon is largely privatized, it is reported that students may be granted a grace period to obtain valid residency permits. In Jordan, students are granted conditional admission if they do not have the Ministry of Interior (MOI) card or academic transcripts. They must then present all required documentation within four months in order to maintain their place at the university.

Access to the formal labor market in each of the host countries presents yet another challenge for refugees. In 2016, only 19% of working age Syrian refugees in Jordan, between the ages of 15 and 64, were working (38% of men and 3% of women)²⁹, while the labor force participation rate for Palestinian refugees both in and outside the camps is at 36%.³⁰ In Lebanon, the Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees (VASyR) survey in 2017 reported that 56% of the displaced Syrian men, between the ages of 15 and 64, have

been working for at least one month prior to 2017. The employment rate in Lebanon most likely captures both formal and informal forms of employment, which may explain the stark difference between the employment rates of Syrian refugees in the two countries.

However, refugees in both countries can only work in restricted sectors, namely agriculture, construction, and environment^{31 32} and obtaining a work permit is a persistent obstacle; thus, in most cases the skills and expertise of refugees are not linked to the jobs they perform.³³ Additionally, as valid residency permits are also required for employment, most refugees work in informal settings. In the case of Jordan, however, the government is trying to facilitate some work opportunities for Syrian refugees by issuing short-term work permits and allowing those residing in camps to seek work opportunities outside the camps.³⁴

29 Krafft et al., 2018, P18.

30 Tiltne, Å, & Zhang, H. (n.d.). *Progress, challenges, diversity Insights into the socio-economic conditions of Palestinian refugees in Jordan (Rep.)*. p.p. 187.

31 LCRP, 2017.

32 UNHCR, 2017 (*Global Appeal for 2018-2019*).

33 ILO, 2017 (*Examining Barriers to Workforce Inclusion of Syrian Refugees in Jordan*).

34 UNHCR, 2017 (3RP).

THE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE OF REFUGEES IN JORDAN AND LEBANON

This section presents a brief overview of the educational systems in Jordan and Lebanon. Next, it describes the current situation of secondary, TVET, and higher education of refugees in both hosting countries.

The Structure of Educational Systems in Jordan and Lebanon

In Jordan, two distinct ministries address issues of education. The Ministry of Education (MoE) regulates general education, including secondary education and TVET, and the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MHESR) oversees higher education provision. The education system is comprised of pre-primary, basic (grades 1-10), and secondary levels (grades 11-12), where the primary and secondary levels are free to all children; however, only basic education is compulsory.³⁵ In grade 10, students are evaluated to determine whether they will continue to secondary or applied secondary education. The secondary track is further divided into academic and vocational education tracks, while the Vocational Training Corporation (VTC) supervises the applied secondary education. Students in the secondary track can opt to continue their education by enrolling either in universities or community colleges that also offer technical training. It is noteworthy to mention that admission to public universities in Jordan is centralized and closely linked to students' *tawjihi*³⁶ grades.

In Lebanon, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) regulates all levels of education, including secondary education, technical and vocational education (TVET) and higher education. The educational system is composed of the following cycles: preschool, primary I (grades 1-3), primary II (grades 4-6), complementary (grades 7-9), and secondary (grades 10-12), where the primary I, II, and complementary cycles are free and compulsory. Students have the option in the complementary cycle to opt for general education or formal technical and vocational training.³⁷ Students that choose the general education track may then continue in higher academic

education or technical colleges.³⁸ Depending on the paths the students pick, they can earn the *Brevet Professionnel* (BP)³⁹ and *Baccalauréat Technique* (BT)⁴⁰ to further pursue their higher education in universities or technical colleges⁴¹ and the Vocational Secondary Certificate (LP)⁴² followed by the Masters Degree⁴³ for TVET.

The State of Refugee Education

Host countries have taken generous steps to increase the enrollment of young refugees at all education levels. Although there have been considerable gains since the start of the Syrian crisis, the landscape remains largely underfunded and solutions that exist are temporary stopgaps focused on the basic needs, leaving many youths behind.

Public and private universities and institutes, in addition to UNRWA schools, are the main educational institutions offering education in Lebanon and Jordan. Refugees can enroll in any of these schools on certain conditions. In reality, the barriers to access and completion are rooted in, but also go beyond the education sector itself.

In both countries, UNRWA schools were established to provide educational opportunities to Palestinian children and youth. In Jordan, according to data from 2017, UNRWA provides basic education to an estimate of 121,368 students in 174 UNRWA primary schools⁴⁴, and vocational and technical education to about 2,378 students.⁴⁵ In Lebanon, about 82% (36,088⁴⁶ ⁴⁷) of school-aged Palestinian students are enrolled in one of the 68 UNRWA schools (at both the primary and

35 UNESCO-IBE, 2011.

36 Official national grade 12 exam.

37 European Training Foundation, 2000.

38 Loo & Magaziner, 2017.

39 Loo & Magaziner, 2017.

40 Loo & Magaziner, 2017.

41 Loo & Magaziner, 2017.

42 UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2012.

43 UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2012.

44 At the secondary level, students from UNRWA schools have to transfer into public or other schools.

45 UNRWA source as of June 2017: https://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/content/resources/unrwa_in_figures_2017_english.pdf

46 CERD, 2018: <https://www.crdp.org/files/201803190157241.pdf>.

47 It is important to note that among the 36,255 students enrolled at the UNRWA schools in Lebanon, 89% are Palestinians, whereas the remaining students are Lebanese (4%), Syrians (2.5%), and other nationalities – which may include those without an identification (4.5%) مكتومي القيد.

secondary levels), and 992 in vocational and technical education. It is also estimated that 5,482 Palestinian refugee children from Syria are enrolled in UNRWA schools in Lebanon and 974 in Jordan.⁴⁸ These are refugees that have been displaced at least two times and although their numbers are not large, data shows that their communities have been most badly affected by the conflict.⁴⁹

Table 1 below depicts the distribution of refugee students across the different school types in Jordan and Lebanon.

TABLE 1. DISTRIBUTION OF REFUGEE STUDENTS ACROSS SCHOOL TYPES IN JORDAN AND LEBANON

Country	Nationality	School Type				
		Public	Private	UNRWA	Free-Private ¹	
Lebanon ²	Syrian	208,916 ⁴	33,752	893	12,954	N/A
	Palestinian	5,530	8,352	32,376	2,011	N/A
Jordan ³	Syrian	N/A	No data available	1,700 ⁵	N/A	130,668 (enrolled in camps & public schools) ⁶

1 In Lebanon, free-private schools are usually run by non-profit religious organizations. Some of the schools are subsidized by the Lebanese government (Ministry of Education and Higher Education, "Reaching all Children with Education in Lebanon," June 2014, p. 15. Retrieved from <http://www.mehe.gov.lb/uploads/file/2015/Feb2015/Projects/RACEfinalEnglish2.pdf> (accessed August 8, 2018).

2 CERD, 2018. The data found in CERD represents the number of Syrian students enrolled only in the morning shifts regardless of the type of school.

3 Data on the different types of schools that Palestinians attend in Jordan is usually included within the data on Jordanians because most are well-integrated into the Jordanian society and hold the nationality.

4 208,916 is the total number of Syrian students enrolled in the morning (CERD, 2018) and afternoon shifts (MEHE, RACE II FactSheet 2019) during the academic year 2017-18.

5 This number consists of only Syrian refugees, a small number of whom have been residing in Palestinian refugee camps since 2015 (Queen Rania Foundation, 2017).

6 UNHCR, 2017 (3RP).

In addition to the existing traditional schools, a number of schools have been created to cater for the growing needs of Syrian children. Although they are not recognized by any official authority, a number of *Syrian-run schools* in Lebanon teach the Syrian official curriculum and allow some students to travel to Syria to sit for the official exams.⁵⁰ Similarly, *Coalition schools* that teach a curriculum created by the Syrian

coalition, are not recognized by any official authority in Lebanon and Jordan, but are accredited in Turkey, Oman, Somalia, and France.⁵¹ Data on the number of students enrolled in these schools is not available.

Stretched Resources at Primary Education

Before the war, enrollment rates at the primary level in Syria were almost universal with 94 to 97% of children between 6 and 11 enrolled in a formal school in 2009.⁵² Today, 45%, that is 280,000 children, of Syrian children and youth aged 5-18 in Lebanon and Jordan are not enrolled in any formal education.⁵³

In Jordan, the government's provision of free access to public schools to Syrian children helped over 130,000 go to school since the start of the war, increasing year on year.⁵⁴ However, increased class sizes and stretched school resources led Jordan's Ministry of Education to open afternoon shifts for Syrian students in primary schools. Although that has allowed more

48 *No Lost Generation*, 2018.

49 *European Union Trust Fund*, 2018: https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/eutf_madad_action_document_8th_ob_palestinian_refugees_20062018.pdf

50 *Shuayb et al.*, 2014.

51 *Shuayb et al.*, 2014.

52 *ERF*, 2018.

53 *UNICEF*, 2018.

54 *No Lost Generation* 2018.

students access education, it has impacted the quality of the educational experience for all students. Unfortunately, there is no data on the enrollment rate of non-naturalized Palestinian refugees in primary schools in Jordan.

In Lebanon, in the 2013-2016 period, the number of Syrian refugees enrolled in public schools from kindergarten to grade 9 increased by 152%, rising from 62,664 to 157,984.⁵⁵ Yet, in the same year, 48.8% (180,000 students) of Syrian children aged 6-14 were still not attending primary school.⁵⁶ Moreover, approximately 20% of Palestinian children are also not enrolled in primary school. While the quality of public education in Lebanon was an issue before the onset of the Syrian crisis⁵⁷, the influx of Syrian refugees coupled with a lack of resources further challenged the provision of basic education in Lebanese public schools.

The Narrowing Pipeline at Secondary Education

At the secondary level, enrollment rates are low among refugees. The relatively low enrollment rates at the primary level lead to a narrowing pipeline of youth at the secondary level across both countries, with the trend getting worse with every year of education. As shown in Table 2 current enrollment rates of Syrian students in Jordan and Lebanon are significantly lower than in Syria prior to the crisis, where it was around 50.5%. In Lebanon, there were 2,709 Syrian and 867 Palestinian refugee youth enrolling into public secondary education in the 2017/18 academic year.⁵⁸ In Jordan, the enrollment rate is around 4.8%, which is much lower than the basic education enrollment rate of 66%.⁵⁹

Data available only in Jordan portrays the gender differences among the Syrian refugees in secondary schools. Data shows that girls' enrollment rate at the secondary level is higher than boys with approximately between 50% and 60% of 15-year-old boys enrolled in a secondary school institution in 2016 versus almost 70% of 15-year-old girls.⁶⁰

TABLE 2. NUMBER OF SYRIAN STUDENTS IN SCHOOLS DURING THE CRISIS

Education Level	Syria (2013)	Jordan (2017-18)	Lebanon (2017-18)
Secondary Cycle	50.49% ⁶	5,887 ⁷ (4.8%)	2,000 ⁸ (1.4%)

6 World Bank Statistics.

7 From authors' interview with UNICEF in Jordan.

8 El Ghali et al., 2017.

Although Palestinian refugees have been living in Jordan and Lebanon for a much longer time, and as a result more students have accessed secondary education, their rates are still below the average, particularly in Lebanon. Data indicates that the enrollment rates in Jordan are slightly higher than in Lebanon, estimated at 75% for students living outside of refugee camps and 54% for students living inside camps.⁶¹ In Lebanon, according to data from 2016, only 61% of the Palestinians were enrolled in secondary education.⁶² Contrary to Jordan, in Lebanon the enrollment rates are higher in camps, where most students attend UNRWA schools, compared to those in host communities (Fact-Finding Mission Report⁶³ 2016). One plausible reason for the low enrollment rates in Lebanon is the lack of IDs which prevents youth from sitting for the Brevet exam required to transition to the secondary cycle.⁶⁴

55 United Nations Lebanon, 2016.

56 UNICEF, 2016, http://files.unicef.org/transparency/documents/Lebanon_Education_StrategyNote_3MAY2016.pdf.

57 IBID.

58 Department of Secondary Education at MEHE in Lebanon, 2019.

59 No Lost Generation, 2018.

60 Krafft et al., 2018.

61 Tiltne & Zhang, 2013.

62 Chaaban et al., 2016.

63 Country Information Service of the Finnish Immigration Service, 2016.

64 UNHCR, 2016.



TVET Education – undervalued, underfunded and undersubscribed

TVET is one of the sub-sectors that remains a challenge to access and succeed in for both host community youth and refugees in Jordan and Lebanon. It is also the sub-sector that is most severely lacking data and information. According to the available information, there are almost 32,000 students currently enrolled in vocational education in Jordan (this includes Jordanians and non-Jordanians), with between 12,000 and 13,000 students, ages 15 to 17, in vocational training, and 19,000 in technical training.^{65 66} Although data on the enrollment rates of Syrian refugees is not available, around 10-13% of Palestinians living in Jordan are enrolled in TVET, with some attending one of two UNRWA TVET institutes, Wadi Seer and Amman Training Centre.

In Lebanon, enrollment rates are higher, with 85,244 students enrolled in public and private TVET schools and

institutes during the academic year 2016-17.⁶⁷ However, this included only about 1.6% of Syrian youth aged 15 to 24⁶⁸, and 4% of Palestinians⁶⁹. Of the Palestinians in Lebanon that do enroll in TVET, one out of three attends the UNRWA Siblin Training Center (a local UNRWA TVET center), where they do not pay tuition fees. Students studying at Siblin Training Center choose their specialization in collaboration with the career guidance officer to pursue a specialty needed in the labor market. In 2016, the Center was accredited by the Lebanese government and it offers courses equivalent to those offered at public TVET centers or institutes as well as other short-term courses. ANERA TVET training programs are also operating in the country and are enrolling refugees to become preschool teachers, electricians, mechanics, accountants, and nurses. ANERA is one of the non-governmental organization providing TVET training programs to refugee youth in the country. In 2018, it engaged 6,048 refugee youth in vocational courses, and 8,121 refugee youth in Arabic, English, math, and life-skills courses. Due to limited access to data, it is not clear what other official TVET centers in Lebanon refugee youth enroll in, how they perform in the programs, and what they choose to do afterwards.

⁶⁵ From the authors' interview with GIZ.

⁶⁶ Vocational education is the vocational stream at the upper secondary level (Leney, 2014). Vocational training "provides workforce training, both preservice and upgrading, at the different occupational levels" (European Training Foundation & World Bank Statistics, 2003, p. 8) such as semi-skilled, skilled, and craftsmen levels (ILO, 2015). Technical training is the highest practical degree that prepares students for the labor market and/or to enter universities (European Training Foundation & World Bank Statistics, 2003).

⁶⁷ CERD, 2017.

⁶⁸ VASyR, 2017.

⁶⁹ International Labour Organization, 2012.

Limited Opportunities at Tertiary Education

Access to tertiary education for all refugees in Jordan and Lebanon is similar to that at the secondary and TVET levels. It is estimated that less than 5% of Syrian youth aged 18-24 are able to access higher education in both countries. In 2015-16, the most recent data available, of the university-enrolled students in Jordan, 4.5%⁷⁰ were Syrians while in Lebanon they were estimated at 2.9%.⁷¹ These enrollment rates are considered low compared to the 20% enrollment rates in Syria prior to the conflict.⁷² They are also much below the current regional average tertiary enrollment rate of 28%.⁷³

In both countries, most refugees are enrolled in private universities. In Jordan, it is estimated that they make up between 68 to 75% of the total student population. In the 2017/18 academic year, less than 7,000 Syrian youth were enrolled in higher education institutions, primarily for bachelor's degree programs, as shown in Table 4 below. There were around 600 more males enrolled across the different types of institutions than females.⁷⁴

Similarly, in Lebanon, the majority of the Syrian students are enrolled in private universities. Table 3 depicts the enrollment of Syrians in institutions of tertiary education in Lebanon since 2014-15. In the Lebanese University, the only public university in Lebanon, Syrian students composed only 2% of the student population in the academic year 2016-17.⁷⁵

TABLE 3. DISTRIBUTION OF SYRIAN STUDENTS ACROSS UNIVERSITIES IN LEBANON SINCE 2014

Year	Type of Institution	
	Public University	Private Universities
2014-15	2,013	5,059
2015-16	1,490	4,370
2016-17	1,466	4,599
2017-18	1,600	5,715

Source: MEHE, 2018

The enrolment data for Palestinians in Jordanian and

Lebanese universities is very limited, however data in Table 4 indicates that they have better access to university in Jordan than Syrian youth do. Although there are no exact numbers to illustrate the number of Palestinians enrolled in universities, the data below shows the enrolment of Syrians and Palestinians in the different higher education programs in universities in Jordan. Unsurprisingly, it confirms that many of both Syrian and Palestinian students are enrolled in bachelor's degree programs. In Lebanon, a recent UNRWA study revealed that only 6.2% of PRLs of over 25 years of age attend university and 5.2% obtain a degree, a statistic similar to that of their Syrian counterparts.

TABLE 4. DISTRIBUTION OF SYRIANS AND PALESTINIANS ACROSS THE DIFFERENT DEGREE PROGRAMS IN UNIVERSITIES IN JORDAN FOR 2017-18

Degrees	Nationalities		
	Syrian	Palestinian of 1948 ⁹	Palestinian
Diploma	35	0	49
Technical Diploma	0	0	1
Bachelor	6,552	990	8,014
Specialization	8	0	28
Master	299	70	315
Doctoral	15	126	160
Higher Diploma	0	0	2

9 This captures Palestinians who sought refuge in Jordan during the 1948 war and were then granted the Jordanian citizenship (Al-Abed, 2004). However, although they may be treated as Jordanians, the Ministry lists them in a separate category.

Source: MHESR, 2018

Another noticeable trend in both countries is that students are selecting degree programs based on the language of instruction and accessibility into certain programs. For example, in both countries, Syrian students were pursuing literary majors in public universities because most of the courses in these fields were offered in Arabic. At the Lebanese University, more males were pursuing literary majors because it is easier to study for while also working. However, at private universities, Syrian students seemed to enroll in scientific majors such as STEM, pharmacy, nursing, public health, medical laboratories, and business. This is because students pursuing a scientific degree at the Lebanese University are required to sit for entrance exams, whereas this is not always the case in private Lebanese universities.

70 El Ghali & Al-Hawamdeh, 2017.

71 El Ghali, 2017 PPT.

72 EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis, 2016.

73 World Bank, data bank, 2017.

74 MHESR, 2018.

75 MEHE, 2018.

METHODOLOGY

This study followed an exploratory qualitative approach where the aim was to explore the status quo of the refugees in secondary school, technical and vocational education, and higher education in each of the host countries, namely Jordan and Lebanon. The study investigated issues related, but not limited, to access and quality of education in each of the levels identified, the challenges, and available opportunities within the scope of education for refugees. The research presented in this report provides recommendations for action within the scope of programming and policy-making.

Data Collection Procedures

The available literature on refugee education in Lebanon and Jordan were reviewed on the topic, including a review of relevant policies issued by each of the host countries related to the status of refugees. Next, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with key stakeholders on the perceptions of the participants regarding access,

quality, available opportunities, and challenges faced by refugees within the secondary, TVET, and higher education levels in both Jordan and Lebanon in summer 2018.

Research Participants

The research participants in both Jordan and Lebanon were purposefully sampled from the Ministries of Education, including directorates of vocational and technical education; institutions of higher education and universities; international organizations; non-governmental organizations; scholarship providers, and other entities whose work is relevant to the education of refugees within the scope of the three levels addressed within the study. Tables 5 presents the number of participants interviewed from each type of organization in Jordan and Lebanon. It is important to note that the participants remained anonymous throughout the research study as per their request.



TABLE 5. NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS INTERVIEWED IN JORDAN AND LEBANON

Type of Organization	Jordan	Lebanon
Ministries of Education & Higher Education	6	5
Universities	2	12
International Organizations	5	4
NGOs	2	10
Scholarship Providers	2	8
Other Entities	2	2
Total	19	41

The participants from the ministries of education and higher education were chosen for their roles in regulating the legislation of the education of refugees hosted within each country. Representatives from universities were selected based on the number of refugees enrolled at the institution (based on statistical data provided by the Ministries of Education and Higher Education in both countries). Participants from the scholarship providers, international and non-governmental organizations, and other entities were targeted based on their work in addressing the education of refugees hosted in Jordan and Lebanon.

Data Analysis

Because of the qualitative nature of this research, the study used the interpretive data analysis technique. The steps employed to analyze the data using the inductive approach included (1) transcribing the interviews and notes, (2) coding the data [emerging from the interviews as well as other sources of data as noted earlier] into segments, (3) rearranging the segments into meaningful data in order to interpret the findings, and (4) clustering the segments into key findings and themes to further map them across the different education sectors and countries. Initial data analysis was followed by participant data validation through policy dialogues (focus groups), convened with study participants and sector stakeholders in Jordan and Lebanon.

Limitations of the Study

The recent Syrian crisis is the primary focus of the MENA region within the context of this study. This presented a key limitation of the study as participants immediately perceived refugees as only Syrians,

whereas both the reality and the study illustrate that Palestinian refugees in both Lebanon and Jordan face similar challenges in accessing education services in the host countries. Time allocated to conduct the study also presented a further limitation in reaching many of the stakeholders identified within each of the three sectors, particularly in Jordan. Finally, data availability and data accessibility emerged as major limitations in this study (particularly at the TVET level), which are not unique to research in the MENA region. Data on student enrollment and persistence was not always available, particularly not across all three sectors addressed within the study and it was not necessarily comparable across the two hosting countries. Finally, the complex political environment surrounding the issue of refugees in both countries presented further challenges to ensuring accurate statistical data on the educational status of refugee children and youth was used. As many are not enrolled in the formal education sector, that limited the accuracy of the numbers provided.

KEY FINDINGS

This section presents the key challenges impacting refugee education in Jordan and Lebanon. Four key findings were identified throughout the review of previous research and data collected during fieldwork in the two countries. Additionally, four sub-themes were identified as cutting across most of the key findings, influencing access to and completion of education for refugee youth. They are defined as follows:

- **Legislative:** refers to the legal and policy restrictions within the host countries that impact educational opportunities of refugees, such as the ability to obtain the certification of the equivalency documents and residency status.
- **Institutional:** addresses the major barriers to access and success within educational institutions that continue to persist for all refugees, such as the language of instruction, academic difficulty, integration into the educational institutions, and administrative requirements that may exist.
- **Financial:** consists of the financial factors that either directly or indirectly determine whether a refugee can access and complete their education. It is made up of two components. First, the direct cost of education (through

tuition fees) as well as other educational expenses such as books, stationary, other materials, transportation, etc.; and second, the livelihood component, which includes more general costs of living such as food, shelter (and place of residency), healthcare, and other necessary services needed for survival.

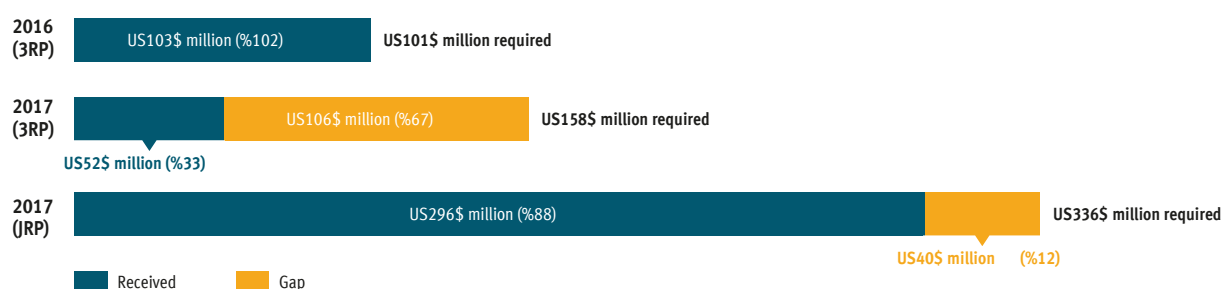
- **Societal:** encompasses all the societal and cultural factors that influence the experience of refugees in the host country, including in the pursuit of their education. It includes a range of factors such as cultural perception of a TVET education, tension between the refugees and the host community, and the government's perception of the refugees' status.

Finding 1: Although overall funding earmarked for refugee education has not been sufficient, it has been largely focused on the primary level

Among the major causes for the ongoing refugee education crisis in both Jordan and Lebanon is the consistent funding gap between what is needed and what has been committed by the donor community. Underfunding has hampered both countries' efforts to cater for the needs of their refugee populations.

Overall funding for Syrian refugee education has been falling short year after year. In 2016, donors

2016 and 2017 education funding in Jordan



2016 and 2017 education funding in Lebanon



FIGURE 1. GAPS IN EDUCATION FUNDING IN LEBANON AND JORDAN IN 2016 AND 2017

Source: No Lost Generation, 2018

agreed that host countries would need \$1.4 billion for refugee education for the year. By the end of the year, less than 50% was received. Figure 1 on the left shows that Lebanon was missing around 28% of the education funding it requested, in 2016 and 2017. This is equivalent to \$713 million in total.

In 2017, Jordan received \$296 million, accounting for 88% of the \$336 million requested for 2017 through the Jordan Response Plan (JRP)⁷⁶, but had a shortfall of 67% in the 3RP funding, the planning and resource framework set up by the UN and agencies to address the educational and other needs of refugees and host country communities.

The overall funding crisis is aggravated by the shortfall of funds for UNRWA. Following a deficit of \$126 million in 2017, in the past year, UNRWA has faced a shortfall of \$150 million which was made worse following the US administration's decision to cut its contribution to the agency by half. All of this has severely impacted UNRWA's provision of its services, particularly in education beyond primary education.⁷⁷

Evidence further suggest that most of the funding that has been earmarked for education, albeit insufficient, has focused on primary education, making access for students beyond that level uncertain. This mirrors global trends in crisis situations where primary education, although essential, is given priority but those completing that level are left with few, if any, pathways to continue their education.⁷⁸ Indeed, at the global level, UNHCR allocated only 13% of its education budget to secondary education in 2015. The organization spent three times as much on primary education.⁷⁹

The stark difference in enrollment rates of refugees at the different levels confirms that secondary education and beyond have been particularly neglected. According to the latest data from the Department of Secondary Education at the Ministry in Lebanon, only 2,709 Syrian and 867 Palestinian refugees were enrolled in public secondary education in 2017/18. These numbers are

almost insignificant compared to the over 140,000 refugee youth in these age ranges. The situation, while slightly better in Jordan, similarly reflects a collapsing pipeline of refugee youth at the secondary, TVET, and higher levels.⁸⁰

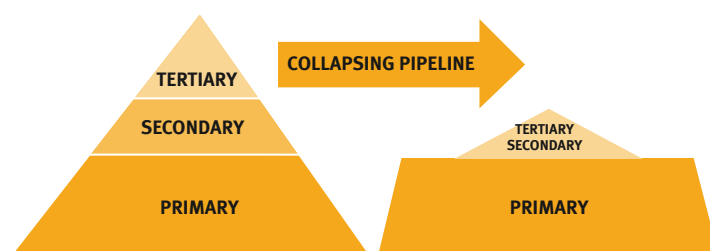


FIGURE 2. COLLAPSING PIPELINE OF EDUCATION FOR REFUGEES IN LEBANON AND JORDAN^{81,82}

These three levels of education constitute part of the educational continuum, which begins with early childhood education and ends at the higher education level. As in a continuum, these levels are closely connected, and moving on from one to the other depends on the successful completion of the previous level (Dryden-Peterson, 2010). Within the context of Jordan and Lebanon, refugees are not reaching the later stages of the continuum for several reasons discussed in this report. However, it is important to note that as the access to the lower levels of the continuum is falling, this pipeline to education is rapidly evolving into a collapsed pipeline illustrating the impending danger of losing the students at the higher levels of education.

Finding 2: Significant gaps in access and completion continue to persist at all levels of education, but most strikingly at the secondary level

As indicated earlier, access to all levels of education for refugees remain extremely low compared to the needs. Yet, barriers to access and effective learning are particularly more acute at the secondary level and beyond. These barriers range from restrictive

⁷⁶ *The JRP is an initiative led by the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation in Jordan to address the impact of the Syria crisis on Jordan.*

⁷⁷ *Ramsay and Al-Orzza, 2018, http://www.badii.org/phocadownloadpap/Badii_docs/bulletins-and-briefs/bulletin-no27-unrwa-financial-crisis.pdf.*

⁷⁸ *UNHCR, 2015, <https://www.unhcr.org/560be1759.pdf>.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *It is important to note that this pipeline does not depict the population enrolled in vocational education as it is relatively limited.*

⁸¹ *This figure has been adapted from Dryden-Peterson's model of the evolving pipeline to education in emergencies based on a close observation of decreasing enrollment at the secondary and tertiary levels, paralleled with high drop-out rates at the primary and middle school levels.*

⁸² *Dryden-Peterson, 2010*

government and education institutions' policies, to poor socioeconomic conditions, resulting in negative emergency coping strategies such as child labor and early marriage, or harassment and bullying.⁸³

These challenges have contributed to the sobering statistics around secondary education enrollment rates in both Jordan and Lebanon, which according to the authors' interview with UNICEF, are as low as 4.8% for Syrian refugees in Jordan and hover around 1.4% in Lebanon.⁸⁴ Discussions with various stakeholders highlighted several reasons that explain these low enrollment rates.

First, *legislative policies* related to registration that require refugees to provide identification documents, "service cards", certificates of equivalence and old transcripts severely hamper their access to secondary education. Most refugees have forcibly fled their homes and therefore do not have the needed documents to re-enter or progress through a new education system.⁸⁵ Obtaining these documents is both costly, complicated and, in some cases, impossible, especially for Syrian youth in Jordan and Lebanon.

Although enrollment rates are higher in Jordan, a noticeable difference between the educational institutions in the two countries is the more stringent administrative requirements in Jordan. These include documents such as valid service cards, proof of previous learning (transcripts), and entrance exams for Syrians to enroll in educational institutions.

Palestinians, because of their unique history, also face difficulties in not having valid residency statuses. Palestinians residing in Lebanon and who are not registered, or who are un-documented, and/or coming from Syria, are deprived of a legal status. As a result, they are reportedly forbidden from sitting for the official national grade 9 exams, which eventually prevents them from enrolling in public secondary schools.⁸⁶ This does not seem to be the case for most Palestinians in Jordan who have national identity cards. However, according to some participants in the study, efforts have been made

to facilitate refugees' access to secondary education in both host countries by the respective ministries of education. In Jordan, for example, a participant from an international organization explained that the Ministry of Education has agreed to waive the requirement for Syrian students to present a valid service card or UNHCR registration to enroll in schools. Likewise, in Lebanon, a MEHE representative reported that they are helping Syrian students who do not have their equivalency documents but want to sit for the Brevet exam by securing the Council of Ministers' approval on a case-by-case basis.

Second, for the small number of refugee students who succeed in enrolling in a secondary education institution, several *institutional factors* limit their ability to complete their education. This includes unfamiliarity with the language of instruction, adjustment to a new curriculum and subsequent academic difficulties. Indeed, as reported by most interviewees, refugee students from Syria face the challenge of learning in non-Arabic settings as the language of instruction is either in French in Lebanon or English in Jordan. They further specified that this led many to drop out of school even prior to arriving at the secondary level. In fact, statistics show that 68% of Syrian children who are currently not in school in Jordan are school dropouts.⁸⁷

In addition to the challenges with the language of instruction, representatives from the ministries of education and universities reported that Syrian students are struggling with cognitive skills such as critical thinking, which are an important component in the Lebanese and Jordanian educational systems. Moreover, just like any student population, a few university and international non-governmental organization participants stated that some of the Syrian students have weak academic levels, particularly in Jordan. A representative of an international NGO explained that "students dropped out because the grade 12 official exams were difficult". One plausible explanation could be that in addition to the difficulty of studying in a new language, students have to adjust to a new curriculum and an education system with different academic requirements and expectations.

Most of the local and international NGOs as well as respective ministries interviewed in Lebanon and Jordan indicated that they provide support services to refugee

⁸³ *KidsRights*, 2018, https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Background%20Report%202018%20-%20The%20Widening%20Educational%20Gap%20for%20Syrian%20Refugee%20Children_0.pdf.

⁸⁴ *El Ghali et al.*, 2017

⁸⁵ *UNFPA et al.*, 2014.

⁸⁶ *UNHCR*, 2016.

⁸⁷ *JIF*, 2018

students as well as disadvantaged local students to remedy these issues. These services range from remedial English and academic courses for students struggling at school, to integration activities such as sports and arts and soft skills trainings. Although these initiatives clearly aim at tackling pressing issues, the reality on the ground confirms that they are not sufficient to address all the needs of refugee youth and further research is needed to understand their actual impact on students' access to and success in secondary education institutions.

Finance is another important factor hindering refugees' access to secondary education. Local and international organizations, scholarship providers, representatives of universities and ministries of education all reported that many secondary school-aged boys are often the sole breadwinners of their households.

In Lebanon, where 58%⁸⁸ of Syrian refugee households live in extreme poverty and 78% live on less than \$3.84 per person per day, it was reported that two thirds of Syrian refugees choose to withdraw their children from school (among other coping mechanisms such as selling their goods, housing or land).⁸⁹ Recent assessments conducted by UNICEF with Syrian refugee households in Jordan similarly found that 79% of them have a monthly income below the national poverty line (roughly \$2.80 per person per day) and 50% of refugee children are both monetarily and multi-dimensionally poor.^{90 91}

In these contexts of extreme vulnerability, it is not surprising that refugee youth prioritize employment over their education, forcing them to drop out of school. Others simply cannot afford it. Some schools' tuitions fees, even if minimal, coupled with other educational expenses such as textbooks or transportation, become an obstacle. There is anecdotal evidence, based on

the interviews conducted, that individuals, schools, and NGOs are attempting to address this issue. For example, some international NGOs reported that they are paying the tuition fees in both countries while others reportedly cover related expenses such as textbooks. Yet even others stated that they pay the registration fee of the *tawjihi* exam, even if it is the student's second attempt to sit for the exam.

Related to this, the place of residency of a refugee also has financial and other implications on their ability to access education. Study participants representing the ministries of education and international organizations reported that it is a challenge for Syrians residing in camps in Jordan to attain an education in comparison to those residing in residential buildings outside camps. On the contrary, surveys from UNRWA in Jordan from 2011-2012 show that there is an education gap between Palestinian refugees residing outside and inside of camps.⁹² For example, 3% of Palestinian adults living outside of camps have not completed their elementary education in comparison to 7% of those living inside of camps.⁹³ Given the absence of official camps for Syrians in Lebanon, the location of residency is less likely to be a barrier to access education. However, a few NGOs reported that the distance between informal settlements where Syrian refugees reside is perceived as dangerous by some parents who refuse to send their children to schools for safety reasons or because they couldn't afford the cost of transportation.

Finally, several *societal* factors explain refugees' low enrollment rates in secondary education. These include societal tensions between refugees and the local community, early marriage, bullying and more. To address the tension between the host community and refugees, one of the interviewed organizations in Lebanon stated that it is offering non-formal training courses in new and innovative sectors for youth aged 18 and over. It believes that creating new work opportunities, especially in blue-collar professions, may help reduce this hostility. Similarly, in Jordan, an international organization reported that it too offers life skills trainings and other activities for refugees centered on themes such as social cohesion.

Another societal challenge facing the refugee population is early marriage. It mostly affects girls, especially but

88 For these 58%, their monthly expenditures are less than the Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB) (Yassin, 2018).

89 Yassin, 2018, https://website.aub.edu.lb/ifi/publications/Documents/books/20180601_101_facts_and_figures_on_syrian_refugee_crisis.pdf

90 Multidimensional poverty is an index used to understand poverty based on a number of different indicators related to health, education, and standard of living. This study finds that for refugees aged 15-17 in Jordan, child protection (77%), education (38%) and social cohesion and safety (36%) are the highest deprivations.

91 UNICEF, 2018, https://www.unicef.org/jordan/Assessment_Syrians_in_Jordan_host_communities2018_online.pdf

92 Tiltne & Zhang, 2013.

93 Tiltne & Zhang, 2013.

not exclusively, at the secondary level as reported by representatives of international NGOs, local NGOs in both countries and the Ministry of Education in Jordan. In 2017, 41% of young women from Syria living in Lebanon were married before the age of 18⁹⁴, whereas in Jordan, the latest available statistics date back to 2014 and indicate that child marriages accounted for 32% of Syrian marriages, compared to 13% before 2011 in Syria.⁹⁵ Several interviewees further specified that girls who get married at an early age are more likely to drop out from school. Early marriage may be perceived as a means to protect the girls and shift the caretaking responsibility from the father to the spouse.⁹⁶ At this point, few initiatives exist to specifically address or delay this trend.

The other societal factor leading refugees to drop out from school is bullying. Because of their vulnerable status and the fact they are viewed as a burden by parts of the host populations, refugees, especially younger ones, suffer from different forms of bullying at school and on their way to and from school. According to UNICEF, this has led 1,600 Syrian children to drop out from school in 2016 in Jordan, and an education needs assessment conducted in Zaatari camp found that 78% of children aged between 6 and 17 were not in school anymore mainly because they have been harassed or abused walking to and from school.⁹⁷ Reports confirmed that some refugees in Lebanon experience the same challenges.⁹⁸ A recent study in Lebanon shows that Syrian children in public schools were more likely to be victims of bullying than their Lebanese counterparts.

Finding 3: Vocational education lacks data, investment and quality interventions

There is no question that the vocational education track is not seen as a desirable education pathway for high school graduates, among refugees and local youth. The limited data available shows that only 10 to 13% of Palestinians living in Jordan are enrolled in TVET (there is no official data on the enrollment of Syrian youth in TVET in Jordan). In Lebanon, only 1.6% of Syrian youth aged 15 to 24 and

4% of Palestinians were enrolled in a TVET school in the academic year 2016-17.

The reasons for these low enrollment rates are manifold, but most have to do with the quality of the educational experience and its lack of connection to the labor market. A study by the International Labour Organization (ILO) raised the issue of quality and equivalences of vocational training offered by non-governmental organizations. It showed that only 27% of TVET Palestinian graduates end up working in their field of specialization because of the absence of linkages between the TVET programs, the national qualifications defined by the state and the skills sought by the private sector.⁹⁹ This leaves graduates unprepared for the labor market.

Next, several *legislative* factors also contribute to the lack of popularity of TVET. An UNRWA representative reported that Palestinian students studying at the Siblin Training Center in Lebanon are not eligible to sit for the official Ministry of Education and Higher Education's TVET exams, which limits their capacity to join professional orders and prevents them from finding formal employment. The certificate they currently receive from the Lebanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs is only a proof of completion. As for Syrian students, a representative in the TVET directorate reported that students who do not have all the required documents cannot apply to enroll in a TVET institution. Unfortunately, in Jordan, no information was available on Syrian students studying at the TVET level.

Refugee students who choose this path also face *financial* challenges. The lack of affordability of TVET centers coupled with the limited number of scholarships available reduce their ability to access such education or training. Although interviewees in local and international NGOs did mention the availability of some scholarships or free access to TVET centers, particularly in Lebanon, information was insufficient to determine the extent of demand and supply of scholarships to pursue a TVET education.

The final challenge associated with TVET that was raised in the study is *societal*, illustrating that the perception around TVET education remains negative. Two NGOs in Lebanon interviewed for this study reported this to be the case among both the host community and refugee youth. One of the study participants explained that this perception exists because it is believed that students

⁹⁴ *No Lost Generation, 2017.*

⁹⁵ *Culberston & Constant, 2015.* (https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR800/RR859/RAND_RR859.pdf)

⁹⁶ *UNICEF, 2017* (https://www.unicef.org/lebanon/KAP_Study_12-01-2018_FINAL.pdf).

⁹⁷ *UNHCR, 2016*, <https://www.unhcr.org/innovation/5-challenges-to-accessing-education-for-syrian-refugee-children/>.

⁹⁸ *El Ghali et al., 2016*, http://website.aub.edu.lb/ifi/publications/Documents/policy_memos/2015-2016/20160406_responding_to_crisis.pdf.

⁹⁹ *International Labour Organization, 2012.*

pursue the TVET track because they have not been able to succeed in the general track.

In an attempt to change the negative perception around TVET, some small efforts are being made. For example, in Jordan, a representative of MHESR reported that they are deploying more efforts to encourage both Jordanians and refugees to pursue a TVET education. Similarly, a private TVET institution in Jordan, Luminus Education, is reimagining this model of education by investing in the latest facilities, internationally recognized certifications in a range of specializations, and internships and apprenticeships for its graduates to ensure that they are competitive in the labor market. Finally, an international NGO operating in Lebanon has a career guidance officer who explains to its students what TVET is, identifying it as a parallel track to a university education. However, much more is needed across all aspects of TVET to ensure that it is a more desirable educational pathway, both for refugees and local youth.

One important aspect to consider moving forward will be to ensure that tensions between the host community and refugees does not rise regarding employment opportunities as organizations seek to attract more students to TVET. According to a local NGO operating in Lebanon, such hostility already exists, particularly in saturated occupations such as beauticians and chefs.

Finding 4: While support for increasing access to higher education for refugees remains low, another critical challenge is its relevance to the labor market and the employability of refugees upon graduation

For the small number of refugee youth who are able to successfully complete secondary education and choose to pursue further studies, access to and completion of higher education depend on a series of factors that range from academic preparedness to affordability of education and livelihood prospects.

As seen earlier, only between 5 to 8% of refugees have access to university in Jordan and Lebanon. One of the biggest challenges for Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon is that they are treated as international students, not as refugees, and as such, they face several *legislative* challenges on their way to college. As in secondary education, Syrians' access and admission is more limited in Jordan than it is in Lebanon because there is still a need to present valid service cards as proof of residency and certified equivalency documents. A representative from MHESR in Jordan explained that

an extension period is granted to Syrian refugees to be able to secure the certified equivalency documents, however if the student is unable to secure them, they lose the university admission. On the other hand, in Lebanon private universities form most institutions; they do not have common policies and procedures applicable to Syrian refugees. Some universities reported that they do not accept any application with a missing document regardless of the refugee's situation; other universities do accept applications on the condition that the refugee obtains the document before graduation. None of the universities reported any specific challenges in processing certificates or other documents for Palestinians in the two countries.

Similar to the secondary level, refugee students at the tertiary level in Lebanon or Jordan also face significant *institutional* barriers such as a lack of English language proficiency and academic difficulties. Yet, most interviewees reported that they provide support services for refugees in these areas. Several local and international organizations and universities reported that they provide complementary remedial English and academic courses for refugees. However, this study did not delve into detail to assess the reach and impact of these services. Furthermore, such support may be more critical at the earlier educational levels to ensure that students can transition directly into higher education without requiring additional academic support.

Finance also plays a significant role in the refugees' educational journeys. The first component is the cost of attending university, with tuition fees in particular being the biggest challenge for refugees in both countries. A cursory review of scholarship programs available for refugees finds that there are at least 69 scholarship programs available to refugees in Jordan and Lebanon to enroll in over 34 undergraduate programs, and 41 for graduate studies.

Scholarship opportunities are the primary mechanism for refugee youth to pursue and complete a university degree in Jordan and Lebanon. Yet, the demand for scholarships is still much higher than the supply. In Jordan, around 2,000 refugee youth were supported with scholarships for higher education in the 2017/18 academic year.¹⁰⁰ Similar information was not available for Lebanon. However, interviews in Lebanon revealed that in addition to scholarships, different payment

models are used by some organizations and universities to help refugees access tertiary education. While some universities pay full tuition fees, others share the costs with an NGO or an IO, offering discounted tuition fees, or rely on private donors. Although PRL students are considered foreigners in many Lebanese institutions, they have reportedly been paying university tuition fees similar to fellow Lebanese students since 2005.¹⁰¹ Similar approaches have been adopted in Jordan towards Palestinians by granting them the Jordanian identification card. However, for those residing in Jordan without a Jordanian identification card, particularly those in remote areas and camps, they are more likely to miss out on opportunities to pursue higher education. There is no other information available on whether universities in Jordan are assisting other refugees in paying their tuition fees.

The other finance component that poses a challenge to refugees accessing tertiary education is livelihood. Different stakeholders in both countries unanimously reported that one of the major reasons for students dropping out across all educational levels is the need to work. For many, pursuing a tertiary education, even if a scholarship is provided, is a missed opportunity to earn money, even though in both countries, refugees can only work in informal settings and a few formal sectors, such as agriculture and construction that involve low-skilled jobs. A representative of a local NGO that supports Palestinians in Lebanon reported that the refugees they serve are working in informal settings despite the fact that the workplace is unsafe, they are paid below the minimum wage and their employees' rights are not reserved. At any time, the employer may fire them, request them to work for longer hours, delay salary payment, and abuse the employee physically and/or emotionally.

The importance of finding employment for refugee youth is not just a question of contributing to their family's income. Scholarship providers and university representatives explained that most refugee youth, particularly males, are the households' main breadwinners and it is therefore very difficult for them to attend university and study while working full-time. Even when refugee youth receive scholarships to support their education, study participants such as local and international NGOs and scholarship providers in both countries reported that many still need to pay

for other educational expenses such as transportation costs, food or books. As such, refugee students must work to be able to cover the other costs of living while pursuing an education.

Given the limited livelihood opportunities for refugees, all the study participants mentioned the importance of efforts aimed at increasing the competitiveness of the youth. For example, several local and international NGOs operating in both countries reported that they offer IT and soft skills, which they believe are much needed to help refugee youth secure jobs. Moreover, a few local and international NGOs and scholarship providers in both countries are providing internship opportunities, linking the students to work opportunities, providing career guidance and start-up kits, assisting start-up businesses through grants, mentorship, and providing follow-up support to refugees.

The final factor that influences the refugee youths' educational attainment and completion is their future employment prospects after graduation. A representative from an international organization operating in Jordan and a representative of a private university in Lebanon reported that refugees, whether Syrian or Palestinian, do not perceive that they have any future prospects to further pursue their education or to secure formal job opportunities. The policy restrictions around employment of refugees, particularly in highly-skilled sectors, in both countries do limit the opportunities that are available to them. However, notwithstanding these challenges, higher educational attainment for refugees in Lebanon has been found to be correlated with accessing more skillful jobs. Forty-two percent of skilled Syrian refugee workers have either a secondary education (25%) or a university (17%) degree, whereas only 9% (7% with a secondary education and 2% with a university degree) hold an unskilled job.¹⁰² Although similar data is not available for Jordan, this data does reflect that more educated refugees may have greater labor mobility.

101 UNRWA, 2014.

102 Banks, 2017.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

This section presents five recommendations that emerged from the findings, with an emphasis on opportunities for scaling support to refugees (based on gaps in what is already available) in both Jordan and Lebanon. The section aims to identify how prospective opportunities that are either not explored or not done so sufficiently, may be further cultivated. The recommendations, although developed based on the context of Syrian and Palestinian refugees, are applicable to all refugees and any solutions pursued by stakeholders need to be holistic, taking into account the needs of all refugee populations in the host countries.

Policy Recommendation 1: Providing more sustainable financing for secondary education and beyond

Increased sustainable financing for refugees at the secondary education and TVET levels, in particular, is needed in order to ensure that students have access to secondary schools and beyond, providing them with more than one pathway to complete their education. Funding tends to focus on pre-secondary education leading many refugee students to drop out prior to arriving at the secondary level. Although funding at the tertiary level is far from sufficient, with the funding gap in earlier years, it is less likely that students will be able to transition successfully from the secondary school to TVET or tertiary. Moreover, the lack of consistent funding year on year is what results in educational institutions working in a state of crisis, without planning for the future and implementing sustainable programs that address critical needs beyond access at the basic levels.

Policy Recommendation 2: Investing in remedial and accelerated learning programs at the secondary level

Academic support prior to tertiary education is critical in order to overcome the crisis of the collapsing pipeline from secondary to vocational and tertiary education in both countries. Such support presents the opportunity for youth who are in pre-secondary classes, at which school dropout is highest, to persist in school and continue their education through the secondary level. Remedial classes in English, and other subjects, are recommended for students enrolled in grades 6 to 9 in order to ensure that students make it to secondary school. With increased opportunities for scholarships, particularly ones focused on achievement, many refugee youths tend to be left behind and miss the opportunity to pursue a diploma pathway. Such academic support, which may be provided by NGOs, may offer youth with more educational pathways.

Policy Recommendation 3: Providing professional academic orientation and college and career counseling for refugee youth at the pre-secondary, secondary and post-secondary levels to identify suitable educational pathways and support them in accessing them.

Academic orientation is recommended for students who are within secondary education and pre-secondary education in order to familiarize them with academic options that are not necessarily limited to traditional university pathways. It has emerged that some youth do not consider TVET as an option, and when pursuing higher education, they tend to choose majors, which are not necessarily in demand in the labor market (neither locally nor internationally). Although data is not available on the numbers of unemployed refugee youth, it is reported that many of them are actually working within the informal sector. Academic orientation is not only limited to choosing their educational trajectory, but also addresses issues linked to the application process, and integrating into the university or TVET life once there. A guidebook on integrating vulnerable youth into post-secondary education pathways is recommended.

Mentorship and college counseling programs may also be introduced for refugee youth enrolled within the pre-tertiary education levels in order to provide youth with the opportunity to explore possible options prior to dropping out or pursuing further education. If provided effectively, these programs may also have an impact on the community of refugee youth whereby the youth themselves become ambassadors supporting further education of others. It is critical that NGOs, scholarship providers and academic institutions all collaborate in order to address academic orientation and college counselling.

Policy Recommendation 4: Offering more innovative and labor market-responsive solutions to TVET that will change its image, build on and customize successful solutions from other regions, and establish strong and sustainable connections with employers.

As noted above, TVET is not the preferred choice of Arab youth, whether refugees or nationals. Until TVET programs begin to respond to labor market needs, providing internationally recognized credentials, and offering desirable career pathways, these perceptions are unlikely to change. There are extensive examples of success of TVET institutions across Europe, and there seem to be some efforts in the region to begin



to emulate these successes. More funding and serious engagement with industry is needed to continue to drive this change. Most importantly, more data needs to be collected by all relevant stakeholders and on all aspects of TVET to better understand the current state of the sub-sector and to inform the way forward.

Policy Recommendation 5: Aligning higher education with the needs of the future

It remains a challenge to identify what options refugee youth have after they complete their education. With local labor laws limiting the participation of refugee youth within the labor markets, one thing is clear: having a degree in a highly demanded area of specialization will make a refugee more competitive and desirable compared to their peers (whether through employment locally, internationally, remotely, and/or upon returning to his/her home country or in the pursuit of entrepreneurial opportunities). Specifically, online employment and employment through digital zones is one of the key outlets for labor market engagement of youth that has not been explored through organized programs yet.

Moreover, providing youth with volunteering opportunities, internships, or apprenticeships does not only help them gain professional experience, it can potentially connect them to more permanent livelihood opportunities. Therefore, it is important for higher education institutions to connect what is taught in academic programs with the needs in the labor market

through updating curricula to ensure their relevance and connecting with employers to explore innovative ways to labor market participation for refugees.

Finally, there has been an increased interest from the international community and some of the local education providers to develop and adopt connected learning opportunities, primarily through online platforms, targeting refugee youth. These efforts were initiated by UNHCR and Inzone Geneva through the Connected Learning Consortium. This has emerged as one of the modalities sought to bring education to refugee youth.

There are several existing initiatives that are working towards using connected learning platforms like MOOCS in order to provide opportunities for fully online degrees or blended models, such as Kiron, which is helping students transition to local universities after completing their first year online. However, both host countries remain cautious about recognizing any education sought through online platforms. The impact of engaging in such modalities, while promising, is still unclear because such practices are still not widely used, particularly among refugee populations. The quality of this modality of education also remains to be addressed by local governments in order to ensure that quality assurance standards are respected. Yet, it should remain a possibility to explore online learning and connected learning opportunities as modalities of alternative learning.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Both Lebanon and Jordan have hosted Palestinian refugees for decades; so, refugee crises are not new to them. However, it becomes challenging to cope with the impact of such crises in fragile states where host communities are already struggling to address issues of livelihoods and education. The influx of Syrian refugees has shifted the attention of the international community away from the Palestinian refugees leading to an imbalance in services being offered to different groups of refugees in the host countries. This has placed the Palestinian refugees at a disadvantage, although they struggle with the same challenges facing the Syrians, particularly in accessing education provision services. It is important to note that many of these challenges are rooted within the host country's state political agenda, which are beyond education. However, it is important to work to address challenges within the education sector, which international organizations and local institutions can work towards mitigating.

It is important to recognize that the discussion on the “lost generation” has now become a reality with the low enrollment rates and increased dropout among refugees, resulting in a collapsing pipeline of youth from the primary to the secondary, vocational and

tertiary levels. Therefore, it is critical to begin pursuing alternative choices of education for refugee youth in order to capitalize on the “alternative generation” who will be leading families themselves in the next 10 years. Investing in this population is important in order to enable them to make educated choices that will impact them in the present time, and also their families in the near future.

Widening the scope of scholarships and exploring options of bridging the middle school years to secondary school, TVET and tertiary education remain among the most pressing needs in order to overcome the low rate of enrolment and the high rate of dropout among refugee youth. Exploring alternative pathways for refugee youth, particularly in light of the restrictive labor laws within each of the host countries, arises as an essential next step for all stakeholders. Both refugee crises are now considered to be protracted, and this will demand innovative approaches to address the education of refugees in both Lebanon and Jordan in order to ensure that these vulnerable populations are receiving what is rightfully theirs, the right to an education *at all levels*.

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ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Education and Youth Policy

The Education and Youth Policy Research program at the Issam Fares Institute aims at informing educational policy and promoting improved educational practices and achievement through an increased understanding of the issues of education in the Arab world and their impact on children and youth in the region.

The program further aims at engaging in applied, policy-relevant research to help policymakers make decisions based on best available information. The program will serve as a resource for government agencies and other institutions in order to shape the education and youth policy debate through evidence.

The mission of the Education and Youth Program will be accomplished by:

- ▶ *Collaborating with AUB faculty members on policy-relevant research*
- ▶ *Producing and disseminating original research*
- ▶ *Providing the tools and resources to utilize research for informed policy-making and improved practice*
- ▶ *Working in collaboration with institutions and organizations of common focus*

ABOUT THE ISSAM FARES INSTITUTE

The Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs (AUB Policy Institute) is an independent, research-based, policy-oriented institute. Inaugurated in 2006, the Institute aims to harness, develop, and initiate policy-relevant research in the Arab region.

The institute is committed to expanding and deepening policy-relevant knowledge production in and about the Arab region; and to creating a space for the interdisciplinary exchange of ideas among researchers, civil society and policy-makers.

Main goals

- ▶ *Enhancing and broadening public policy-related debate and knowledge production in the Arab world and beyond*
- ▶ *Better understanding the Arab world within shifting international and global contexts*
- ▶ *Providing a space to enrich the quality of interaction among scholars, officials and civil society actors in and about the Arab world*
- ▶ *Disseminating knowledge that is accessible to policy-makers, media, research communities and the general public*

ABOUT THE ABDULLA AL GHURAIR FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATION

The Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation for Education, founded in 2015 and based in Dubai, is the largest privately funded foundation in the Arab world focused exclusively on education. It aims to improve access to quality education for high-achieving, underserved Emirati and Arab youth. Abdulla Al Ghurair pledged one third of his wealth to the Foundation and set out a target of reaching 15,000 youth over the next 10 years via secondary and higher education programs and scholarships valued at over US\$1 billion. For more information, please visit: www.alghurairfoundation.org.

