



# OUR RESPONSE TO THE SYRIAN CRISIS

A CASE STUDY OF OUR WORK  
SUPPORTING THE RIGHT TO  
EDUCATION OF SYRIAN REFUGEES

## WHY WE MUST ACT NOW

**Official figures state that 5.6 million Syrians are refugees.<sup>1</sup> If children and young people do not receive an education the effects will impact on the rebuilding of their lives, the lives of their families and ultimately their country. If we do not act the consequences will be irreversible. The consequences also extend to the host countries providing refuge; refugees can contribute significantly to the economy and fabric of life if the local set-up is right. Given the length of the Syrian refugees' displacement, creating policy and conditions that facilitate this is vital.**

**Our work in response to the Syrian crisis has three core elements:**

- 1.** We work directly with teachers of refugees to support them and to improve education for displaced Syrian refugee children
- 2.** We support governments working in the Middle East and North Africa region with strategic elements of their education response to the crisis
- 3.** We continue to contribute to the much-needed evidence base around the teaching of refugees through our research.

Our work directly addresses some of the most serious challenges on the ground. Most refugees are generously hosted in countries that have limited resources and education systems in need of improvement. These host countries often do not have the capacity to provide education for all school-aged children and young people and the issues are multiple. There are legal and administrative hurdles and requirements which can be complex to change. Expanding access requires resource, new school buildings or the repurposing of existing school sites, introducing double shifts and arranging transportation for example. The provision of teachers is a major factor as is remuneration. While the number of refugees of school age rises, the teacher supply crisis gets worse. Refugee families, having suffered trauma, displacement and possibly separation, can face uncertain financial security and have concerns about the safety of their children travelling to school. The children themselves may have difficulty accessing education because of language barriers, may be suffering from trauma, find working in a new and different curricular challenging and may have experienced months, or years, of missed learning. There can also be resistance and prejudice from host populations towards refugees. Add to all this the protracted nature of the displacement faced by many refugee populations – most will be away from their homes for at least a generation, probably more. For some this is an entire childhood and could mean a missed education.

**SPECIALIST EXPERTISE AND EXPERIENCE**

We have been working in fragile and conflict-affected states as well as in contexts of forced displacement for more than 20 years advising governments, partnering with agencies, implementing change on the ground and conducting vital research. Our work ranges from large-scale post-conflict education capacity building and reform in Cambodia (1997-2017), Rwanda (2001-2006) and Somalia (late 1990s-2017) to providing immediate technical assistance in Ethiopia, Liberia, Libya, Malawi, Nigeria, South Sudan, Uganda and Zimbabwe among others.

**The scale of the Syrian crisis**

**5,678,127**

REGISTERED SYRIAN REFUGEES.<sup>2</sup>  
THERE ARE LIKELY TO BE MANY  
MORE UNREGISTERED REFUGEES<sup>3</sup>

**29.3%**

OF THE 5.6 MILLION REGISTERED  
SYRIAN REFUGEES ARE AGED  
BETWEEN 5-17 (SCHOOL AGE)<sup>4</sup>

**948,849**

REGISTERED SYRIAN REFUGEES  
IN LEBANON (16.7% OF THE  
POPULATION)<sup>5</sup>

**671,551**

REGISTERED SYRIAN REFUGEES  
IN JORDAN (11.8% OF THE  
POPULATION)<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>UNHCR (2019b), <sup>2,3,4,5,6</sup> Ibid.

# 1.ON-THE-GROUND SUPPORT FOR EDUCATORS

**The conflict in Syria has led to large groups of refugees fleeing to neighbouring countries, including Lebanon and Jordan, where refugees represent 16.7%<sup>7</sup> and 11.8%<sup>8</sup> of the population respectively and where we have been working actively since 2017. We work directly with teachers of refugees in both countries in different capacities and have impacted on the lives of 42,000 refugee children to date.**

## IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR REFUGEES IN JORDAN

In Jordan, we are working with teachers in the country's public schools. There are currently 671,551 registered Syrian refugees living in Jordan;<sup>9</sup> 233,052 are school-aged children.<sup>10</sup> The Jordanian Ministry of Education has allowed refugee children access to free education and a total of 207 Jordanian public schools are now operating second shifts to accommodate the refugee children residing in host communities. In addition, the state, supported by Unicef, operates a total of 45 schools in Jordan's refugee camps. A total of 130,668 Syrian children were enrolled in Jordan's formal education system in the 2017/18 school year, including in the double-shift schools and camp schools.<sup>11</sup>

Proficiency in English language is an issue in Jordan – for Jordanian students, but even more so for Syrian refugee students. English is introduced earlier in the Jordanian curriculum than in Syria and the Jordanian curriculum requires greater levels of English proficiency than the Syrian curriculum.<sup>12</sup> Most of the teachers that have been contracted to teach the refugee children in the public schools receive very little (if any) pre-service training and many of them are recent graduates.<sup>13</sup> Understandably, many Syrian students have difficulty with English language learning and

in a Unicef study, this issue was most prevalent among Syrian refugees between the ages of 10-13.<sup>14</sup> Using our ringfenced Alexandria School Trust funds, we are working directly with teachers of refugees in Jordanian public schools and subject-specialist supervisors to improve English language skills as well as pedagogical approaches.

### Working with teachers

Our project focuses on the proven pedagogic approaches to teaching English more effectively in Jordan; this means the focus is on rapidly enhancing teaching quality which drives improvements in student outcomes. Our teacher training focuses on teaching reading, writing, listening and speaking skills and is practical and aligned to the Jordanian curriculum, thoroughly preparing teachers to teach their own lessons following the training. The training also considers and prepares teachers for some of the specific challenges faced by teachers of refugees, such as multi-level classrooms.

### Working with supervisors

In Jordan, supervisors are key actors in the education system and are considered subject-specialists who drive forward pedagogical improvements; their role involves supporting, facilitating, mentoring, coaching and training teachers and principals to achieve educational goals. They therefore play a key role in our work by delivering training to teachers, leading communities of practice and observing and coaching teachers towards improved student learning. Our programme improves the professional relationship between teachers and supervisors, encourages collaboration and ensures a sustained improvement in practice.

### A sustainable solution

Our innovative approach combines leading evidence-informed practices with tried-and-tested methods in English language teaching. Teachers gain confidence through support and coaching from trained supervisors, appropriate to the local context of multi-level

## ALEXANDRIA SCHOOLS TRUST

Our work to support non-formal education for refugees in Lebanon and the Improving English Skills project in Jordan is being funded by Education Development Trust's ringfenced funds resulting from our merger with the Alexandria Schools Trust in 2014. We are committed to fulfilling the former charity's mission: to improve the teaching of the English language and other subjects taught in English in the Middle East and surrounding countries.

'Coaching is a different concept for me as a supervisor... You have given us something wonderful. How to deal with the teachers after observation, such as through questioning. I take the teachers' words and the teachers' notes and I don't give solutions, I ask questions.'

**SUPERVISOR, JORDAN**

classes of refugees, in a low-cost model that is sustainable and replicable to meet needs of the local environment.

The project has reached the governorates of Irbid, Mafraq, Ajloun, Amman, Madaba and Zarqa, with high concentrations of Syrian refugees. Now in its third year, by the end of this phase we will have reached 40 supervisors, 500 teachers of English and an estimated 40,000 refugee children.

## IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR REFUGEES IN LEBANON

Using our ringfenced Alexandria Schools Trust funds, we are working with educators in Lebanon delivering non-formal education. Lebanon currently has the largest number of refugees per inhabitant in the world, where every 1 in 6 people is a UNHCR refugee.<sup>17</sup> While the Lebanese government has made policy changes and established second shifts in the public schools to accommodate refugee students, the Lebanese education system was only designed to accommodate 300,000 students. Other solutions and providers have been playing an increasingly significant role and NGOs have been instrumental in delivering non-formal education – a transitional step before children can transfer to the formal education system where schools are bilingual. According to official figures in 2017, of the 625,222 registered school-aged Syrian refugees, 264,970 were enrolled in formal education and 92,617 were enrolled in non-formal education.<sup>18</sup>

Our work is focused on improving teachers' English skills. Syrian teachers and students face challenges with the Lebanese curriculum, where foreign languages are taught earlier than in the Syrian curriculum and core subjects are taught in either English or French. Our work in Lebanon aims to build the capacity of teachers delivering non-formal education to Syrian refugees to better teach their subjects in the medium of English.

### An innovative lexical approach

We have implemented an innovative lexical approach to equipping teachers with the language to embed good practice teaching in their own lessons. Language learners are taught 'lexical chunks' or groups of words which commonly occur together.<sup>19</sup> Certain pedagogical approaches are embedded in the language course curriculum and the language teacher explains and drills the associated lexical chunks. Additionally, the language teachers model the pedagogy in their own lessons, so that teachers can see it in action and then reflect on how it can be used in their own classrooms. As a result, teachers are equipped not only with the language skills but also the pedagogical approach to implement this in English, in their classrooms.

So far, we have worked with some 60 teachers from three NGOs, reaching approximately 2,000 refugee students.

'In the makeshift classroom in Lebanon where the state system is at capacity, alternative school settings are flourishing and the appetite to learn – and to teach – is as strong. Our language courses for teachers, customised to meet the needs of the teachers working in non-formal education and many of whom are refugees themselves, are welcomed with open arms. The teachers want to continue their mission to teach; they want to help pave a way out of the situation they find themselves in and they want to ensure that generations aren't lost.'

**EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT TRUST  
SENIOR PROJECT MANAGER**

'All our strategies changed completely. How to teach reading and writing, the steps before, during and after, the four Cs, smart outcomes. We learned a lot. Especially in the foundation skills – how to assess and give feedback.'

**TEACHER, JORDAN**



## 2. EXPERT SUPPORT FOR POLICYMAKERS

**We are called upon to advise and support governments and agencies in their response to the Syrian crisis. We have specialist expertise in Education in Emergencies (EiE) and forced displacement as well as in working in fragile and conflict-affected states. This is combined with our experience of education system reform at scale and, in particular, teacher and leadership development and accountability. We have worked with the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), Save the Children, World Bank, UNHCR, UNESCO and Unicef.**

### Supporting DFID

Between 2017 and 2018, we supported DFID staff on an 18-month learning journey concerning service delivery in protracted refugee and conflict crises. The aim of the work was to improve the knowledge, skills and resources available to DFID advisers working in protracted conflict or refugee crises. Support enabled DFID specialist staff (advisers with expertise in conflict, education, governance, health, humanitarian and/or social development) to better:

- prioritise, design and implement flexible and adaptive programmes that adopt a development approach and are mindful of their potentially long-term nature
- understand and be able to demonstrate the value of working across cadres and collaborating with external partners
- develop additional strategies for sharing learning within and between cadres and feeding experience back into policy and systemic change
- influence other DFID cadres, partner governments and development agencies, and other stakeholders to this agenda.

The work included drawing on the experiences of DFID staff supporting the Syrian crisis in Syria and in neighbouring countries.

### Informing 'Whole of Syria' support

Since 2014 separate responses to the Syrian crisis have been brought under the common banner of 'Whole of Syria' (WoS). The goal of the education component, called the Education Focal Point, is to ensure coherence and consistency of humanitarian action in the region.<sup>20</sup> During 2018, we were commissioned on behalf of Save the Children, to develop a WoS capacity development framework which focuses on teachers, headteachers, education supervisors and NGO staff.

Our work ensured all education actors working across the WoS have access to the relevant knowledge and skills they need to design and deliver high-quality EiE responses.

### Supporting the UN in coordinating a regional response

Nearly three years into the Syrian crisis, there had been very limited international response to meeting the education needs of refugees. This was partly because the international community were struggling to understand how to provide aid to support essentially middle- and high-income countries who were hosting large numbers of refugees.

As a result, UNHCR, Unicef and UNESCO decided to organise the first joint UN conference to explore a more coordinated regional response to the Syrian refugee crisis looking at research, technical and policy solutions, and finances.

We were one of three international development organisations advising UNHCR, Unicef and UNESCO and other development partners about how to build resilient education service delivery for Syrian refugees. We led the technical and policy strand at this conference which included active involvement from senior ministry officials from Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Turkey. This involved outlining the key

challenges and potential ways forward in looking at education interventions.

### Essential capacity building at ministerial level

As well as our Alexandria Schools Trust-funded work in Lebanon, we are also supporting the Government of Lebanon-led Reaching All Children with Education 2 (RACE 2) programme. The programme receives funding from the international community and seeks to promote equitable access to education services, enhance quality of student learning, and strengthen the education systems in the education sector in response to the protracted refugee crisis. Commissioned directly by DFID, we are part of the consortium delivering a technical assistance programme as part of RACE 2 working with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE).

We are leading a capacity needs assessment of the General Directorate Education (GDE) and the Center for Educational Research and Development (CERD), key directorates within the MEHE. The assessment considers the ministry's capacity to respond to five key challenges: ensuring appropriate education content and effective delivery of this to learners; teacher development and management; management and leadership; assessing learning; and system data and evidence. The key outputs of the work will be a roadmap defining a set of clear and actionable recommendations for the future.

It is anticipated that efforts under the RACE2 initiative will significantly contribute to minimising the short- and medium-term costs of displacement for refugee families, while strengthening the long-term capacity of the Lebanese education system to prepare children for life and work once regional stability returns.



Our work in response to the Syrian crisis:

Is informed by our research and evidence

Utilises our expertise and knowledge from our work all over the world

Supports teachers and leaders of English and subjects taught in English

Builds on existing skill sets of teacher

Uses our own tried-and-tested teacher development models

Develops capacity of teachers and leaders

Is built upon our 20 years of experience working with refugees and in conflict-affected areas

## 3. OUR RESEARCH IS INFORMING POLICY



**We are helping states understand how to build policy that supports refugee education. The value of evidence that can support effective policymaking is great. Our research programme prides itself on providing analysis that speaks to those needing guidance and direction, and to those that are primarily interested in taking action. Much attention has focused on refugee children however, to date, little attention has been given to teachers in this crisis. Teachers can make an enormous difference to the quality of education that all children, including refugee children have access to, so this is a vital area.**

We joined forces with IIEP UNESCO to conduct a much-needed review of the main aspects of management relating to teachers of refugees – from recruitment to certification and

professional development as well as incentives and retention.<sup>21</sup>

The review, *Teachers of refugees: a review of the literature*, concludes that context is key. For displaced populations, realising their legal rights, where afforded, can be challenging when international frameworks have not been ratified or adapted into national legal frameworks. It can be equally difficult when legal frameworks are poorly integrated into social service policies, plans and strategies such as within national education sector plans. Also, research is needed to understand what host governments managing large refugee populations have done to reconcile the tensions between their international obligations and their capacities to fulfil these.

The review also concludes that much of the literature indicates that teachers from the refugee community are best placed to teach or should at least be a part of education provision. Indeed, host countries are aware of this, and are utilising refugees to support national teachers, as is the case to some

extent in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. Issues like the portability of certification and adequate pay are important management factors for both refugee and national teachers.

Promising policy and solutions are not well documented, and this is where our own research programme continues to work to help shed light on what can be done to support the right to education for refugees. Together with IIEP UNESCO, we have been working on a programme of study that identifies current international, regional, and national policies that guide ministries of education in the selection and management of teachers for refugee populations. Specifically, we want to build an evidence base of promising existing policies for cost-effective, sustainable, and conflict-sensitive management of teachers in refugee contexts and to provide policy options for governments and policymakers on selecting and managing teachers of refugees.

We are engaged in a programme of research which will include country case studies in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey.



### We provide evidence where it is really needed

We are currently conducting research on the role of refugee teachers in non-formal education. Again, with a focus on teachers, our work is shining a light on the professional development needs of Syrian teachers. If they are to be a useful part of a solution, how can they be supported to offer great educational experiences? In partnership with the American University of Beirut, we are examining the profiles of displaced Syrian teachers who are working in non-formal education settings in Lebanon.

With nearly 700,000 Syrian refugee students in Lebanon, the government is struggling to provide education services and large numbers have been accessing education via the non-formal system. Non-formal education programmes in Lebanon are focused on providing education for Syrian refugee children who are not participating in the formal education system. One of the strengths of non-formal education is its flexibility to provide education close to where refugees live. In Lebanon, classes have been given on a wide array of subjects, from languages to personal hygiene and they are taught by teachers who come from a variety of different social and educational backgrounds. The purpose of our

collaborative research is to explore the stories, professional experiences and professional development needs of refugee teachers who have been operating in Beirut, the Beqaa Valley and the northern region of Lebanon.

The research will provide a substantial contribution to the current debate on the role of refugee teachers in the education in emergencies and to future policies to maximise the potential role of refugee teachers.

### We have helped to make the available evidence accessible

We worked together with the Institute of Development Studies at Sussex University on guidance notes for DFID advisers based on a review of the evidence on challenges and what works in education for refugees and internally displaced people. We have also brought researchers, practitioners and donors together to facilitate the interface between evidence policy and practice including convening a strand on education and forced displacement at the UKFIET conference and being a founding member of the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies, or INEE, subgroup on education and forced displacement as part of the policy working group.



<sup>21</sup> Richardson, MacEwen and Naylor (2018).

# BEYOND SYRIA: A UNIQUE EVIDENCE BASE ON A GLOBAL SCALE

We have a long history of work related to refugee education as well as education in emergencies (EiE) and conflict beyond Syria. The research listed below can be found at: [www.educationdevelopmenttrust.com/educatingrefugees](http://www.educationdevelopmenttrust.com/educatingrefugees)

## 2007/2009

From 2007 to 2009 we worked in partnership with IIEP UNESCO on a research programme on education in emergencies and reconstruction. The research included field work in Jordan, Liberia, Nepal, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Timor Leste and Uganda, including refugee contexts. This joint research programme resulted in the publication of four books and accompanying policy briefs:

Brannelly, L., Ndaruhutse, S. and Rigaud, C. (2009). *Donors' engagement: supporting education in fragile and conflict-affected states*, Paris: IIEP UNESCO and Reading: Education Development Trust (formerly CfBT Education Trust)

Baxter, P. and Bethke, L. (2009). *Alternative education: Filling the gap in emergency and post-conflict situations*, Paris: IIEP UNESCO and Reading: Education Development Trust (formerly CfBT Education Trust)

Penson, J. and Tomlinson, K. (2009). *Rapid response: programming for education needs in emergencies*, Paris: IIEP UNESCO and Reading: Education Development Trust (formerly CfBT Education Trust)

Sullivan-Owomoyela, J. and Brannelly, L. (2009). *Promoting participation: community contributions to education in conflict situations*, Paris: IIEP UNESCO and Reading: Education Development Trust (formerly CfBT Education Trust)

## 2010

In 2010 we worked with Brookings to investigate scaling up aid in fragile and conflict-affected states. The policy report outlines seven challenges that need to be addressed and recommendations for a way forward for donors and the international community.

The report is available on the Brookings website: Winthrop, R., Ndaruhutse, S., Dolan, L. and Adams, A. (2010). *Education's hardest test: scaling up aid in fragile and conflict-affected states*, Washington: Centre for Universal Education at Brookings and Reading, Education Development Trust (formerly CfBT Education Trust)

## 2014/2015

In 2014/15 we conducted a programme of research in partnership with Protecting Education in Insecurity and Conflict (PEIC). This focused on the quantitative impact of armed conflict. There was one country case study focused on Syria, commissioned by Save the Children and a further three country case studies commissioned by PEIC (Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria and Pakistan).

Jones, A. and Naylor, R. (2014). *The quantitative impact of armed conflict on education: counting the human and financial costs*, Reading: Education Development Trust (formerly CfBT Education Trust)

Ndaruhutse, S. and West, A. (2015). *The quantitative impact of armed conflict on education in Syria*. A research report for Save the Children UK

Jones, A. and Naylor, R. (2014). *The quantitative impact of armed conflict on education in Pakistan: counting the human and financial costs*. Doha: PEIC and Reading: Education Development Trust (formerly CfBT Education Trust)

Jones, A. and Naylor, R. (2014). *The quantitative impact of armed conflict on education in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: counting the human and financial costs*.

Jones, A. and Naylor, R. (2014). *The quantitative impact of armed conflict on education in Nigeria: counting the human and financial costs*.

Susy Ndaruhutse, Education Development Trust's Head of Education Reform, also co-authored an article in the *New Statesman* on 4 February 2016: *What can be done for Syria's refugees?*

## 2018

Between October-Dec 2018 we supported UNESCO with preparations for an international meeting of experts on the right to education of refugees. Members of our research and consultancy team participated, leading key sections of the three-day meeting in Barcelona. Publications are forthcoming from UNESCO.

# REFERENCES

Culberston, S. and Constant, L. (2015) *Education of Syrian refugee children: managing crisis in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan*, Santa Monica: RAND

Lewis, M. (1993) *The Lexical Approach: The State of ELT and a Way Forward*. First edition. Language Teaching Publications: Hove.

Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation. (2016). *Jordan Response Plan for the Syria Crisis 2017-2019*.

No Lost Generation (2018) *We Made a Promise: Ensuring Learning Pathways and Protection for Syrian Children and Youth*. Brussels Conference, April 2018.

Richardson, E., MacEwen, L. and Naylor, R. (2018) *Teachers of refugees: a review of the literature*, Reading: Education Development Trust

Schmitt, N. (2000) 'Lexical chunks', *ELT Journal*, 54: 4, p.400-401

UNHCR (2018) *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2017*. [Available online: <http://www.unhcr.org/5b27be547.pdf> [www.unhcr.org/5b27be547.pdf](http://www.unhcr.org/5b27be547.pdf)]

UNHCR (2019a) The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, [Available online: <https://www.unhcr.org/comprehensive-refugee-response-framework-crrf.html>]

UNHCR (2019b) *Operational Portal: Refugee Situations*, [Available online: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria>]

Unicef (2015). *Curriculum, Accreditation and Certification for Syrian Children in Syria, Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt*.

Whole of Syria Education Sector (2019) *Whole of Syria Education*, [Available online: <http://wos-education.org>]

## THANK YOU

Thank you to Jusoor for allowing us to use photos taken within their education centres and training sessions in Lebanon, which allow thousands of Syrian refugees access to a primary school education

[jusoor.syria.com](http://jusoor.syria.com)

