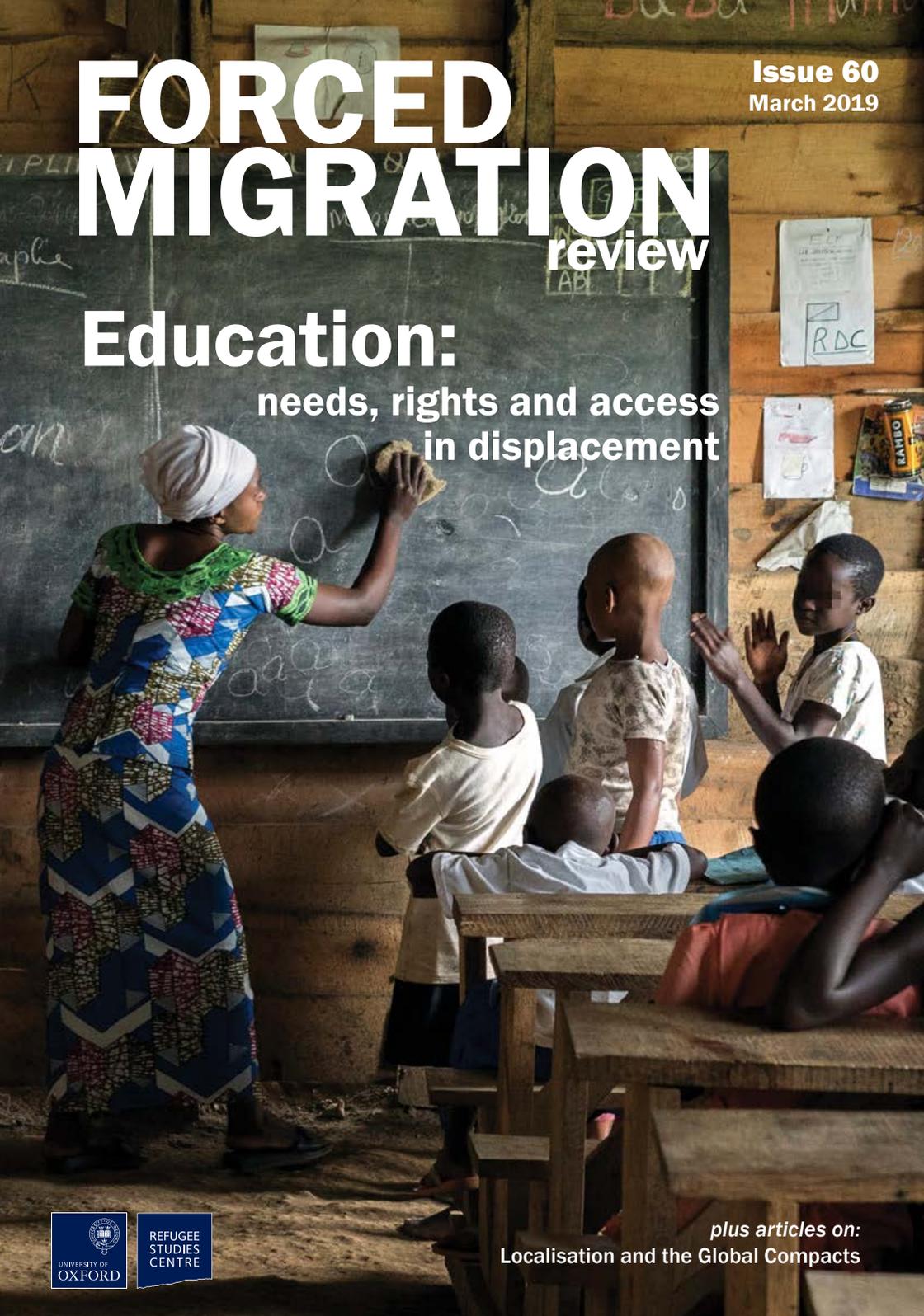


# FORCED MIGRATION

review

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## Education: needs, rights and access in displacement



## Forced Migration Review

(FMR) provides a forum for the regular exchange of practical experience, information and ideas between researchers, refugees and internally displaced people, and those who work with them. It is published in English, Arabic, Spanish and French by the Refugee Studies Centre of the Oxford Department of International Development, University of Oxford.

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## From the editors

Education is one of the most important aspects of our lives – vital to our development, our understanding and our personal and professional fulfilment throughout life. It is, as described by 23 displaced students who have co-authored one of the articles in this issue, the “key to life”. In times of crisis, however, millions of displaced young people miss out on months or years of education, and this is damaging to them and their families, as well as to their societies, both in the short and long term.

In this issue of FMR, authors from around the world debate how better to enable access to quality education both in emergency settings and in resettlement and asylum contexts. These authors represent governments, international donors, non-governmental organisations, UN agencies, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, academia, local education projects and a legal firm. And some of the authors have themselves experienced the challenges of learning and teaching while displaced.

**The full magazine is online** at [www.fmreview.org/education-displacement](http://www.fmreview.org/education-displacement), alongside our **Editors' briefing** which provides a quick overview of the coverage of the issue and its principal points. Also available is our **digest**, which provides an expanded list of contents with QR codes and web links for individual articles. All articles are available individually in PDF, HTML and podcast formats.

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**Forthcoming issues:** see back cover for details.

**Marion Couldrey and Jenny Peebles**  
Editors, Forced Migration Review

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**Front cover image:**

Having lost out on education because of conflict, these internally displaced children in the Democratic Republic of Congo are now continuing their education.

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## Foreword: Education – a humanitarian and development imperative

Manuel Bessler

For far too long, donors and the international community have neglected education in humanitarian response. Switzerland was no exception. Food, water, health and shelter were the usual priorities during emergencies, while education was considered more of a long-term objective to be tackled by national governments and development agencies once a crisis was over.

However, we were wrong. We simply ignored the families' tendencies to see their children's education – often interrupted or absent – as a priority need in displacement. We were not sufficiently aware of education's life-sustaining and protective role during conflict and crisis. We underestimated the impact education can have on peaceful coexistence and misjudged the social and economic consequences of the lack of education during displacement for both host and home countries.

Luckily, we have come a long way. Since the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, there has been growing awareness of the humanitarian imperative to ensure access to education during crises. Fifty-two per cent of the 69 million people displaced globally are under the age of 18. Displacement crises are increasingly protracted and often affect a significant proportion of the time a child takes to grow, develop and prepare for adult life. The right to quality education does not stop because of conflict and displacement. National governments, international organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), parties to the conflict and we as donor agencies have an obligation to protect the right to education, regardless of the circumstances. Children must be able to go to school and learn in a safe environment. They must be given the chance to develop their potential to the full, whether they live in a refugee camp, a makeshift settlement or a town, or are still on the move. Education – a right

enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child – is a collective responsibility.

Switzerland regards education as the essential foundation for individual, social and economic development and as a pillar for values such as equality, respect, tolerance and dignity. Accordingly, basic education and vocational skills development are priority areas of our international cooperation. Hence for the 2017–20 period, we have doubled our financial support in these areas. In 2017, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) published its first education strategy to guide Switzerland's bilateral and multilateral engagement in this sector. Increasing education support in fragile and crisis-affected contexts is a strategic priority for Switzerland as this is where inequalities and vulnerabilities are greatest and where education can help bring about more inclusive, just and peaceful societies. Protecting the right to education during emergencies, protracted crises and displacement is part of Switzerland's humanitarian mandate and an indispensable aspect of protecting children and giving them hope for the future.

This edition of Forced Migration Review is timely and necessary. In a time of unprecedented displacement, rising hostilities and an increase in protracted conflicts, it is important to recall what is at stake if displaced girls and boys are prevented from going to school. Education is the most powerful means of breaking cycles of vulnerability and poverty, and without education there can be no sustainable development. The young displaced generation has enormous potential for contributing to society. However, greater international commitment is needed to support countries dealing with rising population movements. Eighty-five per cent of refugees live in developing countries that already struggle with over-stretched education systems. We

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need to provide assistance to countries to ensure that displaced children can access local schools. We need to provide support to national education ministries, teachers and parents so that both displaced and host-community children can learn and grow up in safe, child-friendly environments. We need to find creative solutions to enable children and youth who have missed out on learning to catch up. All this requires the joint action of the humanitarian and development communities, NGOs, multi- and bilateral agencies and the private sector. Switzerland calls on others to follow suit by prioritising education in policy making, funding and

action on the ground. The provision of education for displaced children and youth is both an immediate emergency response and an effective way to work towards durable solutions during protracted displacement.

#### Manuel Bessler

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## Feeling safe enough to learn in a conflict zone

Bethan McEvoy

**Building an internal sense of safety, while also teaching coping skills and how to remain alert to the very real risks outside, is essential if psychosocial programming in Afghanistan is to provide a 'safe space' for children to learn in a context of high insecurity.**

Frequently, traditional psychosocial programming focuses on incidents that have taken place in the past and is implemented in spaces that are now physically safe. However, in protracted crises such as in Afghanistan, children are coping not only with past trauma but also with ongoing stress and fear. In these contexts, psychosocial programming must take a different approach. Building a sense of safety must focus on strengthening children's awareness of risk and stress, teaching them individual coping skills and creating a feeling of safety through play, creative expression and trust exercises.

In Afghanistan, there are approximately 767,600 children who have been internally displaced by conflict.<sup>1</sup> Ensuring continuity of education during a crisis is vital to providing routine and structure, enabling children to pursue longer-term goals and reducing lifelong dropouts from education. The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) provides education for thousands of displaced children across Afghanistan but has found that, with increased exposure to horrific violence over recent years, it is now even more challenging for children

to integrate into their new environment and stay motivated in their education.<sup>2</sup>

In response, since December 2017, NRC Afghanistan has been implementing a supplementary classroom-based programme within schools across the country in order to address the acute psychosocial needs of children affected by conflict-induced trauma. This programme – the Better Learning Programme (BLP) – was developed by NRC and the University of Tromsø in 2007 and piloted first in Uganda and then in Palestine. The programme helps students to identify their reactions to stress, learn techniques to calm themselves and feel safe, be active in their own recovery, and be able to talk to teachers and family about their problems. It also aims to build resilience in the school community by strengthening collaboration between teachers and parents in supporting students' well-being.

#### Identifying stress and feeling safe

Our sense of safety is often distorted following a life-threatening event, and survivors can feel terrified at the slightest noise or sensory reminder. Trauma models



Norwegian Refugee Council, Afghanistan

Children practise tensing and releasing their muscles, for relaxation. Better Learning Programme, Afghanistan.

for recovery focus on the need to re-establish a sense of safety in order to regain control over the body's physiological response to traumatic events. Survivors are frequently encouraged to separate the past from the present, recognising that the life-threatening event is in the past and that now, in the present, they are safe. BLP teaches students to identify the sources of, their reactions to and the physical impact of stress and then to learn practical calming exercises including deep breathing, tensing and releasing muscles, balances and various stretches. Children practise these exercises in each session and are encouraged to practise them at home and with their parents. The exercises help children to take control of their symptoms and to feel able to manage their own stress.

However, in Afghanistan, conflict-related risks continue to affect children even when they have been displaced to safer provinces. It is common for children to continue to hear rocket fire or shooting in their new communities, and encouraging children to believe they are now safe could actually be harmful and leave them vulnerable to further trauma if they experience another incident – or are forced to move once again. One exercise, called 'safe space', helps children to visualise a real or imagined place where they feel safe, thereby experiencing and internalising a sense of safety. Exercises such as this aim to help students not only to cope with nightmares or intrusive memories but also to deal with distressing sounds, rumours or experiences encountered in their daily lives. Children were encouraged to use the

exercises when they were woken in the night by an explosion (provided of course that they were not in immediate danger) and by doing so they felt able to remain calm even when there was fighting in nearby districts.

*"I love the safe space. To just close my eyes and think of somewhere calm and safe, somewhere nice... it's amazing."*

### Keeping physically safe

In the pilot phase of BLP, it was noted that children felt safe during the session but then would encounter frightening situations outside the classroom. On the way to school children face the possibility of being kidnapped or encountering armed clashes or explosions, landmines, harassment from community members and traffic accidents. There are also high instances of domestic abuse and child labour. Telling children that they are safe when they face numerous risks on a regular basis can disempower them and leave them unprepared. In the second phase of developing BLP, therefore, a new session was added to help children to be aware of risks in their communities and to identify measures to keep themselves safe, such as walking in groups to school or identifying alternative routes. Children are encouraged to draw a map of their community and discuss potential risks; with the support of the teacher, they then explore ways to keep themselves safe.

The combination of practical solutions to real problems and coping strategies to deal with the emotional impact has helped to increase students' sense of safety. Meanwhile, teachers also found the session useful to

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help them better understand the particular risks individual students face and the different ways that the teachers can support them. Students also had more confidence in seeking support from adults about risks in the community. However, the new session will need further evaluation to determine the effectiveness of the risk mitigation strategies.

### Creating safety through play

For many children in Afghanistan, it is difficult to find a place that is physically completely safe and/or child-friendly. BLP therefore sought to help children to experience a feeling of safety that did not rely on their physical environment. Each BLP session followed the same pattern each week in order to build familiarity and predictability, and creative exercises and games formed an essential part of the weekly routine.

Play is essential for a child's development and it also creates and strengthens a sense of safety. Play helps children to process and express emotions in a measured way and it can help raise self-esteem. Yet for many children in Afghanistan, they have little or no opportunity to play, including at school. Teaching methods tend to be quite traditional, with the teacher relaying knowledge while students take notes. At the start of implementing BLP, teachers tended to talk a lot, explaining the programme concepts, which reduced the time and space available for children to express themselves. As the programme developed, games were therefore introduced into every session. This had two objectives. The first was to help students and teachers to relax, and to increase the feeling of trust and safety within the group. The second objective was to ensure that children left the session feeling good. In light of the lack of support services and networks in the children's communities – including extremely limited access to any form of psychological counselling – it was important to ensure that if difficult emotions or memories emerged during the session, a game could be used to help shake off any uncomfortable feelings.

Since introducing games to each session, there has been a noticeable shift for both students and teachers, in particular in the

level of laughter and ease in the room and the close bond within the group. Teachers said how much they enjoyed seeing their students laugh and how it had increased their confidence as teachers. Observations showed that children's feelings of safety increased and that they could express their feelings and be helped to manage them – children who were observed crying in the middle of the session while sharing a story finished the session laughing and smiling after participating in a group game.

### Impact and implementation

BLP can be implemented almost anywhere and even when classes must be relocated due to security problems, a feeling of safety can be built because it is reliant on the trust of the group, rather than the physical space.<sup>3</sup> To date, evaluation of the programme has indicated a reduction in nightmares, distressing emotions and physical illness, an increase in interest in attending school and completing homework and, perhaps most importantly, an increased sense of safety. Seventy-eight per cent of children who had participated in BLP said that they felt less scared because of the BLP group. Students saw BLP as a space where they felt comfortable, relaxed and safe and said they could access these feelings at home at any time by practising BLP exercises, either alone or with friends and family.

Implementing BLP in Afghanistan has required several rounds of adaptation and we are still in the process of developing the session plans and teacher training and considering how best to involve parents and the wider community. It will continue to require further adaptation and strengthening in the face of Afghanistan's deteriorating security.

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1. As of September 2018.

2. NRC (2018) *Education in Emergencies; Children in Distress. A Child Protection Risk Analysis for NRC Afghanistan's Education Programme* [bit.ly/NRC-eie-afghanistan-2018](https://bit.ly/NRC-eie-afghanistan-2018)

3. For more information on NRC's BLP, please contact [sonia.gomez@nrc.no](mailto:sonia.gomez@nrc.no).

## Early childhood development and psychosocial support in Syria

Fatima Khaddour

**Programming for early childhood development and psychosocial support needs to be able to evolve in order to cater for changing needs and to respond to emerging challenges.**

From the onset of the Syrian crisis, internally displaced persons (IDPs) from all over Syria sought safe haven in Salamieh District in eastern Hama Governorate, increasing the population by 40% to its current total of 300,000. Many of those who were displaced – including children – were suffering from severe trauma. Humanitarian actors in Salamieh City, including the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) and the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), deployed psychosocial support (PSS) teams but responders soon realised that they were unprepared for dealing with the sheer extent of mental health needs.

The AKDN therefore developed a strategic plan for providing comprehensive psychosocial support in Salamieh District, using sustainable, community-based approaches to mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS). In addition to advocacy and awareness raising around MHPSS in conflict settings, and strengthening capacity in terms of skills and number of mental health workers, the plan also incorporated protection elements specifically designed for children. These included the provision of non-formal friendly spaces and support in helping children develop coping mechanisms, plus activities to help adults understand their child's psychological, social, cognitive, motor and linguistic development.

### Me and My Child in Crisis

One of the key elements of the strategic plan was the Me and My Child in Crisis programme (MMIC), which integrated PSS into AKDN's well-established early childhood development (ECD) programming. The MMIC programme was initially set up to provide parenting sessions, whereby both IDP and host community parents could

come together in a friendly safe space where they could discuss their experience of trauma (including death, loss, grief, shock and the challenges they face in bringing up their children in stressful environments). It became clear during the sessions that parents were unable to manage the pressures of coping with their children's trauma in addition to the stresses they themselves faced; as a consequence, this group of children was becoming more neglected and therefore increasingly vulnerable.

Targeting both parents and their children up to eight years of age, MMIC sought both to introduce ECD concepts and to teach methods of providing psychosocial support to children. The project also presented an opportunity for facilitating better relations between IDPs and host communities – enabling them to sit together to discuss challenges in adapting to their new situations, in a safe space alongside people they could relate to.

Parents learned about aspects such as the importance of growth and early development of the child, the development of the brain, methods of 'active learning', characteristics of early childhood, advantages of engaged parenting, psychosocial support for parents and for children, effective communication skills for children, and the notion of positive discipline. In parallel, children were enrolled in related activities. For example, children were asked to create stories which were then shared with their parents, as a way for children to express themselves and for parents to understand what takes place in their children's minds. Another exercise was the 'safety tree', where a child wrote the names of trusted family members as branches of a tree, helping their parents to understand who exactly makes their child feel most safe.

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### Adapting for long-term sustainability

As the number of participants increased, the project's long-term sustainability had to be considered. The project managers consulted the INEE Minimum Standards,<sup>1</sup> two of which were particularly pertinent to the MMIC programme: blending emergency assistance with early recovery, and encouraging community-led education initiatives. As a result, the project shifted towards school-based parent-teacher associations (PTAs) as a means of implementation. By doing so, the project reached even more parents and children (of both IDP and host communities), which increased ECD awareness and the contribution of PSS in children's lives. However, there were several challenges associated with this.

Firstly, some parents did not have the right skills to deliver the information included in the training materials, especially education-specific concepts. In addition, not all facilitators were committed to voluntary training without financial incentive. Secondly, facilitators conducted MMIC sessions in schools but not all schools had the necessary resources, such as projectors, electricity or heating. And, thirdly, the training materials introduced characteristics of early childhood for all ages up to eight but parents of school-aged children (6–12) found discussions about infant brain development irrelevant.

Consequently, the project content was simplified, and MMIC facilitators were trained in delivering topics related to ages 6–12, while younger children's needs were

targeted through different AKDN initiatives. More focus was placed on using interactive activities to provide PSS for children and parents. The project helped parents to enhance their knowledge of ECD and the importance of PSS, put ECD concepts and PSS into practice (for example, allowing a child to cry when they are sad) and build better communication channels with their child (for example, using positive discipline methods).

Since its establishment, the project has faced another major challenge: the lack of fathers' participation. This relates to a number of factors, including the belief that childcare is the mother's responsibility, the physical absence of fathers (many of whom are fighting in the war, in which many others have been killed), and the increased pressure on men to work (given the declining financial situation). MMIC sessions were delivered by facilitators who were themselves

married couples in order to encourage parents to participate as couples but the lack of male participation persisted. Between 2014 and 2018, 2,216 parents took part, of whom only 131 were fathers.

### Moving towards recovery

As the intensity of armed conflict decreased over 2018, the project's name – Me and My Child in Crisis – came to be perceived as being associated with a former and particularly difficult phase of the crisis. MMIC's content was therefore reviewed to adjust to the recovery phase (though it should



Reading with Children session for parents and children.

AKF Syria

not be forgotten that there continue to be very serious PSS needs for IDPs, returnees and host communities) and was transformed into the Reading with Children (RWC) programme.

RWC aims to raise parents' awareness about the role of reading in developing their child's language skills and the importance of establishing reading habits as part of a child's daily routine. It also covers topics of psychosocial support for parents and children (including positive discipline). The project provides 15 storybooks for parents to borrow and read to/with their children at home.

The project also helps parents prepare their children psychologically for school through the project's I Am Ready for School calendar, and immerses parents, teachers and children in interactive activities during the first week of school so that children feel safe as they become familiar with new environments and teachers. Between March and August 2018, 375 children and 323 parents participated in RWC (though the participation of fathers remains low).

### Challenges and options

A notable challenge has been securing consistent attendance. Attendance rates for both parents and facilitators in both MMIC and RWC have been unstable. In order to improve programme participation in contexts where people's financial resources have been diminished, incentives are highly recommended. The type of incentive offered can be used in conjunction with other humanitarian programmes and be based on need and appropriate to the context, whether cash, vouchers or food, non-food items (WASH or winterisation kits) or child-friendly baskets (including items such as storybooks, underwear, school uniform and nutrient supplements). Providing incentives from the beginning of a project (as opposed to midway) will help ensure that delivery of PSS and ECD is maintained from birth into childhood and thereafter. Although AKDN in Syria has not actually applied an incentive-based approach, it appears – from looking at the experiences of actors around the world who use cash or food incentives – to be an approach worth considering.

Another option that could be explored is the use of mobile technology and applications to facilitate parental access to ECD products. As mentioned earlier, many parents, especially fathers, were not able to attend sessions because of work commitments. Providing mobile platforms or utilising those that are commonly used (such as WhatsApp or Facebook) could improve coverage and access. For example: a free app could offer learning videos, awareness messaging and interactive group discussions; Facebook pages allow programme staff to post topics and readers to discuss issues and raise questions; on WhatsApp, awareness messaging can be sent to groups of participants who can forward them in turn; and local mobile service providers can be contracted to send SMS messages about ECD to reach everyone living in a certain area. (The Aga Khan Foundation already uses SMS messaging as part of its health awareness campaign.) Such initiatives might work well in the Syrian context, given the large number of households owning mobile devices.

AKDN is currently working with government and non-government actors to establish a national ECD framework. The success of PSS programming for children in Salamieh District during the crisis was due in part to the fact that ECD programming was well established in this area before the crisis. For communities vulnerable to conflict and subsequent mental health challenges, ECD programming may at least provide the infrastructure upon which MHPSS programming can later build, to help mitigate against and cope with mental health conditions, including the onset of severe trauma.

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[www.akdn.org](http://www.akdn.org)

1. The INEE Minimum Standards articulate the minimum level of educational quality and access in emergencies through to recovery, presenting best practice in meeting the educational rights and needs of people affected by disasters and crises. [www.ineesite.org/en/minimum-standards/translations](http://www.ineesite.org/en/minimum-standards/translations)

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## Gender equality in education in emergencies

Eva Iversen and Else Oestergaard

**Evidence shows how a gender-responsive approach can alleviate the particular risks that girls and boys face during crisis and displacement.**

Major achievements have been made worldwide to ensure education rights for both girls and boys. When crisis or disaster erupt or people have to flee, however, these achievements are jeopardised. Statistical data on displaced people's access to education is difficult to obtain, and statistical information that is disaggregated by sex even more scarce. In a country like South Sudan, for example, which has suffered many years of war, violent conflict and displacements, it is estimated that 75% of girls are not enrolled in primary education.<sup>1</sup> Emergency situations may change existing gender dynamics and affect boys and girls differently but – most often – conflict reinforces existing barriers to education which in turn tend to reinforce gender disparities. Evidence from Oxfam IBIS' education in emergencies programming, which is based on a framework for analysing and addressing barriers to gender equality in education, identifies several such barriers:

**Gender stereotypes and the devaluing of girls' education:** Men are traditionally supposed to be breadwinners, while women are expected to become mothers and wives and their education is therefore considered less important. Although progress has been made in terms of promoting gender equality in education, in a time of crisis or displacement the gains that have been made in a stable context can sometimes be lost: response efforts focus on other areas, meaning it is difficult to ensure education is prioritised. And when education is delivered in an emergency it is often hard to find the resources to continue specific efforts and initiatives to promote gender equality that have been implemented by States and non-governmental organisations.

**Gender stereotypes and economic factors:** Poor families generally tend to prioritise the

education of boys, and in crisis situations they are even less likely to support girls' education. When families are displaced, both boys and girls may be forced to drop out or stay out of school to support themselves or their family by taking on jobs or engaging in prostitution, or parents may arrange marriages for girls at an early age. A recent study carried out in Nyal, South Sudan – located close to some of the most brutal fighting during the five-year conflict – shows that it now has some of the highest early marriage rates in the world, with an estimated 71% of girls married before the age of 18, significantly higher than the national pre-conflict average of 45%.<sup>3</sup>

**Violence and safety:** Both girls and boys, but in particular girls, are exposed to the risk of sexual harassment and violence in schools and on the way to school, especially in crisis situations. This risk is greatly increased in a situation of conflict, both for those in school and for the considerable number of children who are left without access to education. For example, in Nyal most community members interviewed felt that women and girls faced serious risks of sexual violence. They also felt that these risks had increased as a result of the crisis, to the extent that women and girls could not go out alone or go to school without risk.

### Promoting gender equality

Although approaches to ensuring gender equality in emergency education are essentially the same as in a stable context, advocacy efforts are needed to ensure that all actors involved in emergency settings incorporate gender responsiveness into their education programming, and that authorities and donors provide the necessary funding. Interventions must be based on an initial gender analysis of how conditions for male and female children and youth are affected by the crisis and on identification

of the specific risks they are exposed to and any barriers to their education and safety.<sup>4</sup> It is important that all actors, including local and national authorities, international and non-governmental organisations, consider the following interventions:

**Changing gender stereotypes:** Education interventions in communities affected by crisis or displacement should include sensitising parents on the importance of education for both boys and girls in a time of crisis, showing them how education can protect their children and promote gender equality, and also be an investment in a better and more gender-equal future. To ensure equal access, teachers should be trained on how to promote gender equality and safety in the classroom, and female teachers should be engaged to act as role models and advocates for girls' education. For example, in an accelerated learning programme (ALP) for 12–18-year-old South Sudanese who had previously been unable to access education because of crisis, the female teachers were strong advocates for female enrolment and for activities to help girls stay in education, providing menstrual hygiene kits and gender-segregated latrines.<sup>5</sup>

**Addressing economic barriers:** Even in a situation where families' livelihoods or incomes are diminished because of an emergency, different types of support can help crisis-affected and displaced families send all their children to school. This may include offering free school meals (and being aware that food insecurity particularly affects women and girls), providing free school learning materials, and giving access to micro-credit programmes. This support is particularly important for youth and adolescents, who may be left to support themselves in a situation of crisis and may need economic support alongside skills training and assistance to establish a decent livelihood. Adolescent girls interviewed in the Nyal study noted that poverty was a particular barrier to girls' education, and suggested that incentives could help girls stay in school. Evaluations of the Girls'

Education South Sudan programme show that the cash transfers that were given directly to girls to support their access to education and mitigate poverty at household and community levels helped them remain in school longer and improved their attendance.

#### **Eliminating violence and ensuring safety:**

Special measures should be put in place to counter gender-based violence and harassment both within and outside the school, including ensuring that the route to school is safe, providing separate toilet facilities for girls and boys, and offering psychosocial support for children affected by gender-based violence or crisis-related stress. Conflict-sensitive programming can also help reduce gender-based violence. This is not possible without involving school management, parents' associations and teachers, and without sensitising parents and communities, setting up protection systems and reporting mechanisms for violations, and establishing codes of conduct for teachers and school personnel. In the ALP in South Sudan, for example, the parent-teacher association acted as guards during classes to prevent youth from taking part in or being subject to revenge attacks.

In a situation of crisis, gender equality comes under pressure. However, providing gender-responsive education in emergencies is an effective way of protecting both boys and girls from severe risk, and of providing them with opportunities to rebuild their future.

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## Breaking the silence: sexual coercion and abuse in post-conflict education

Sophie Bray-Watkins

**Experience from the Central African Republic makes clear that global efforts to increase numbers of children in school, particularly in conflict-affected areas and for displaced children, need to pay greater attention to safety and accountability.**

For many countries affected by war, education prior to conflict will have already been in a poor state, with a lack of materials and resources, overfull classrooms and low quality of teaching. Conflict will have further exacerbated these conditions, disrupting or even destroying what limited provision was in place. School buildings may have been looted, damaged or occupied, and trained teachers may have fled or been injured or killed, and all this against a backdrop of increased violence and non-functional State-run systems. The challenges of reinstating education in such places are considerable.

Furthermore, ensuring children's safety in educational contexts continues to be difficult. Children face multiple risks, such as dangerous journeys to and from school, an increased risk of physical and sexual and gender-based violence from armed groups or members of the community, and peer violence inside the school gates. These issues also need to be considered within a wider context in which corporal punishment is commonly accepted and the role of women and girls as subjects of sexual violence is often normalised.

### A silent issue

Another form of violence and abuse also affects children in schools but is perpetuated in near silence: sexual abuse and coercion from teaching staff. 'Sex for grades' – or, as children call it in many places, 'sexually transmitted grades' – refers to teaching professionals asking children to carry out sexual acts in exchange for regular teaching tasks, such as marking an assignment, or for awarding the grades they need to progress. Sometimes children are asked for money in exchange for these basic teaching

tasks; when they are unable to pay, other forms of payment such as sexual favours have to replace financial contributions.

Since 2016, War Child UK has been supporting children in Bangui, in the Central African Republic (CAR), to campaign against these types of abuses in schools. Through a youth advocates project called VoiceMore, children conducted their own research<sup>1</sup> with pupils from ten different state schools, finding that high numbers of children reported incidences of this type as common, with students intimidated, harmed and dropping out of school as a result.<sup>2</sup> Their findings reflect other reports of sexual abuse and corruption in school systems in Africa.<sup>3</sup> In 2015 UNICEF's U-Report programme asked children in Liberia an open question about what their biggest concerns were, and 86% of children responded saying sex for grades was their biggest worry.<sup>4</sup> And in 2017 Maastricht University published a report on education in CAR which described the use of violence, coercion and corruption in schools by teaching staff as prevalent and persistent.<sup>5</sup>

Although pockets of reporting exist, this hidden form of abuse has been overlooked in discussions surrounding other forms of violence in and around schools. Perpetrators in places which lack adequate community and State protection systems – such as in post-conflict CAR – can act with near impunity. Initiatives like the Safe Schools Declaration<sup>6</sup> have helped set standards and guidelines for protecting education in conflict-affected areas, such as banning attacks on schools, but do not extend to these specific types of protection issues that can become prevalent inside schools as a consequence of conflict. Contributing and exacerbating factors are numerous and include:

- lack of money and resources to invest in schools and in training for teachers, to improve quality and safety of education
- lack of systems for reporting and enforcing codes of conduct
- lack of functioning justice systems to deal with perpetrators
- limited capacity of State-run departments such as ministries of education to oversee and manage schools
- poor school governance systems and lack of parental engagement with schools to address the issue, tackle corruption and hold teachers to account
- late or non-payment of teachers
- prevalence of unqualified 'parent-teachers' in place of professional teachers
- acceptance and normalising of a culture of violence and corruption
- lack of power and status of children in relation to adults, particularly those in positions of authority, such as teaching staff.

### Impact and consequences

The impact of these problems on children, their education, families, communities and countries is significant. Children who are asked for payment or sexual favours commonly respond by attending school less frequently or dropping out as a protective measure, despite their strong motivation to get an education. For those who are coerced or forced, particularly girls, the effects of this sexual and emotional abuse on their psychological well-being are considerable, and can also result in pregnancy, STIs and – when their peers and the community know about it – significant social stigmatisation.

Corruption in schools also contributes to household stress by increasing the financial burden on families and caregivers as well as on children themselves, who often engage in additional risky work in the informal economy to find money for school. In the longer term, the presence of abuse and corruption in the school system lowers pupil retention rates, damages the academic success

of generations of children and reduces the country's chances of economic development.

*"We must break the silence around these issues and do something today to hope for a positive change tomorrow. ...if we act together today, tomorrow our country will be better."* Stephanie, aged 16, VoiceMore participant

### Breaking the silence: recommendations

**Safety first:** In recent years, and in large part because of the Sustainable Development Goals and other international initiatives such as the Global Campaign for Education<sup>7</sup> and Education Cannot Wait<sup>8</sup>, many countries have committed to drastically increasing school attendance. In the drive to raise numbers, safety and accountability must not be forgotten, and there needs to be more emphasis on ensuring schools are safe places for children to learn.

**Greater accountability:** Teaching staff committing abuse should be held to account. A lack of adequate systems in schools for monitoring and disciplining teachers means that teachers in many places can act with impunity. Governments need to take a greater interest in this issue and ensure a zero-tolerance message is communicated to schools and head teachers, with those committing sexual abuse being reported to relevant authorities.

**Ways to report:** Corruption and abuse in schools tend to be hidden. It is very difficult for children to speak up, and they lack ways to do so, which is why demands for money and sexual favours often result in children dropping out of school. Every school should have child-friendly systems in place that allow children to report demands for sexual favours or payment.

**Raising awareness:** Most children are not aware of their rights or that these practices are illegal. While codes of conduct might exist in some schools, schools do not communicate to pupils or communities what is expected. All schools should have clearly defined protocols for how staff and students are expected to

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behave. They should also help ensure that children and adults are informed about the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the protections and assurances it contains relating to education and protection from abuse.

*“One child being abused in school is too much. We must promote a culture of honesty.”* Jean, aged 17, VoiceMore participant

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6. The Safe Schools Declaration, developed through a series of consultations led by Norway and Argentina in 2015, provides the opportunity for States to express broad political support for the protection and continuation of education in armed conflict. [www.protectingeducation.org/guidelines/support](http://www.protectingeducation.org/guidelines/support)

7. [www.campaignforeducation.org](http://www.campaignforeducation.org)

8. [www.educationcannotwait.org](http://www.educationcannotwait.org)

## Strengthening education systems for long-term education responses

Thea Lacey and Marcello Viola

**Implementation of programmes in DRC and Nigeria demonstrates how the building blocks for long-term improvements can be laid in the earliest stages of an education in emergencies response, even in the most challenging contexts.**

Between 2016 and 2017, Street Child and Congolese partner Ebenezer Ministry International (EMI) supported the secondary education sector in Lusenda refugee camp, South Kivu, in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), where around 32,000 Burundian refugees live.<sup>1</sup> The schooling system – into which refugee children have been integrated – has suffered from years of neglect and underinvestment<sup>2</sup> and schools were ill-prepared to receive the 7,000 refugee students (including over 1,200 at secondary level) who began arriving in June 2015. Several new secondary schools were rapidly established in rented or shared buildings to meet demand, and mainly unqualified teaching staff were employed.

Street Child and Ebenezer Ministry International provided training and resources to meet immediate and urgent education needs, including distribution of uniforms, teaching materials, stationery and recreational resources, infrastructure

improvements, and teacher training on context-relevant topics such as gender-sensitive pedagogy, child psychology and contingency planning. In addition, the support they provided integrated elements borrowed from a model for long-term, community-led strengthening of education systems. Developed by the partners over a decade in a non-refugee setting in South Kivu, this long-term model aims to enhance self-sufficiency by building structures, capacity and skills in order to empower teachers, head teachers and parents to own and lead quality improvements at an individual school level without government support.

### Elements in long-term capacity building

The first element adopted from this long-term approach is a focus on building core pedagogical competencies including classroom management, student evaluation, child-centred learning and positive discipline, in order to offset the lack of qualifications

and experience of both new and existing teaching staff and raise the overall standard of teaching in a sustainable way. It comprises group training activities followed by a year of in-school mentoring by dedicated EMI teacher trainers. In long-term development contexts, both in South Kivu and elsewhere, such ongoing classroom-based support has shown excellent results in improving teacher knowledge and skills and in eliminating persistent bad practice such as lack of lesson planning, non-participatory teaching methods and regular use of corporal punishment.

The second element is a sustained focus on school management capacity in relation to finance, administration and pedagogy through working with head teachers and parent committees to establish strong, durable school management systems. This approach also combines group training sessions with in-school mentoring to reinforce learning and good practice. A particular strength of this approach in Lusenda has been the opportunity to establish parent committees (which did not previously exist in any of the schools) which include both female representatives and members of the refugee community.

A third element is the introduction of school-based income-generating projects, managed jointly by teachers, students and parents. The income is kept by schools and Street Child's recommendation is they spend 20% of profits on resources – such as teaching materials or student scholarships – in accordance with their priorities, reinvesting the remainder in developing and growing the project, particularly early on in its establishment. In long-term development settings this approach has proven an effective way to create additional resources for the school, to engage more parents in school activities and to expand students' entrepreneurial skills, business knowledge and experience.

A year after the intervention ended, these three elements are showing promising initial results. Observation of teachers and their self-evaluations indicate a marked improvement in core competencies and classroom practice as well as a growth in self-confidence. School

management shows sustained improvement, and registers, accounts, teaching timetables and student records are now being used in all schools. Parent committees have been established in all schools, most of which meet regularly and contribute effectively to school management decision making. Two thirds of the school enterprises have generated a profit, some of which has been invested in infrastructure improvements and teaching materials. And all schools report a positive change in terms of refugee integration and cooperation both among students and at the parent committee level.

### **Strengthening the education system through accelerated learning**

Since January 2018, Street Child has been implementing a UNICEF-funded informal accelerated learning programme for 5,700 children in north-eastern Nigeria, most of whom have been internally displaced. Displacement and insecurity brought about by conflict in the north-eastern states have had a devastating effect on primary education<sup>3</sup> and, as in DRC, prior to the onset of violence, the school system had suffered decades of neglect and under-investment and was therefore extremely poorly prepared to deal with the challenge of large-scale displacement. Nearly three million internally displaced and host community children are out of school, 57% of schools in Borno State are closed and 42% of classrooms are hosting 80+ children.

While prioritising the meeting of immediate educational needs through provision of education in emergencies (EiE) assistance (including distributing teaching and learning materials, repairing classrooms and providing teacher training), this accelerated learning programme has also been designed to strengthen education systems in the longer term.

The first element that contributes to this aim is the innovative design of the 60 temporary learning centres (TLCs) that have been created across the states of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa. These have a robust concrete floor, low walls that can be heightened as resources become available and solid roof supports, with the aim that

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they can be easily converted in the future into permanent structures at low cost. Many of these TLCs have been constructed in the grounds of existing primary schools, which will enable them to become permanent classrooms. In more remote locations, TLCs have been established in communities where no other school infrastructure exists, so their conversion into permanent learning centres may be necessary in the medium term in the absence of a comprehensive national-level school-building programme. Community Education Committees (CECs) have been set up to manage the TLCs, and Street Child is carrying out concerted advocacy with the Nigerian education authorities in favour of standardising them. This would include the creation of a mechanism for transforming them into permanent structures, formal recognition of the CECs, and making the TLCs eligible to receive State support like that received by their formal sector equivalent.

The second element is the focus on generating new teaching capacity within the most under-served communities. A major challenge facing the education system in the north of Nigeria is the difficulty of recruiting qualified teachers for rural schools. Street Child has recruited 120 local Community Volunteer Teachers (CVTs) in collaboration with the CECs. This approach enables teachers, who already hold a minimum qualification and are

generally integrated in the community, to gain teaching skills and experience through access to language-appropriate teaching in their remote communities. The CVTs receive regular mentoring visits from government education staff to motivate and support them, and Street Child is working closely with the Nigerian education authorities to develop a mechanism through which CVTs can apply to the Teachers' Registration Council of Nigeria to gain accreditation as primary teachers. This accreditation would permit them to take on permanent roles in the formal sector, and thereby pave the way to boosting the number of qualified teachers in the hardest-to-reach locations.

Close collaboration and sustained advocacy with the State and federal government authorities are integral to Street Child's approach in north-eastern Nigeria. As part of a consortium of non-governmental organisations, Street Child is supporting the government to develop an accredited EiE national curriculum, which incorporates essential life skills alongside numeracy and literacy and which sets forth clear pathways for reintegrating children who have received EiE teaching into mainstream education provision.

### Learning from EiE programming

Although eastern DRC and north-eastern Nigeria face distinct challenges



Temporary learning centre in Lusenda refugee camp, Democratic Republic of Congo, constructed in such a way that it can be easily converted in future into a permanent structure at low cost.

and constraints, learning can be drawn from the experience of EiE programming in these two locations.

Firstly, the DRC example demonstrates that an EiE intervention can be used to both deepen and expand core teacher competencies and skills beyond those required to meet immediate teaching needs, and that such an approach can be integrated easily and cost-effectively even within a short-term intervention. For locations where low teacher capacity and skills are a core weakness of the education system, these case-studies suggest that even early-stage interventions are an opportunity to build back better by addressing the full range of teachers' core pedagogy and classroom skills.

Secondly, both the DRC and Nigeria examples demonstrated that it is never too early in an emergency to rehabilitate weak school management and ineffective community engagement by instituting empowering, community-led models that focus on self-sufficiency. Such transformation can bring lasting and sustainable benefits to a school. Structures such as parent associations and school management committees are integral to this and require strengthening not only through ongoing training and mentoring but also through access to funds, particularly by means of sustainable income-generation projects. Effective parent-teacher collaboration brings the additional advantage of fostering cooperation and breaking down barriers between displaced and host communities, while also filling a critical gap in the absence of strong State support and the implementation and enforcement of government education quality standards.

Thirdly, the Nigeria case provides a strong example of how an emergency intervention can address the chronic challenge of a shortage of teachers in remote and hard-to-reach areas. If, as anticipated, the Nigerian government institutes a mechanism for fast-tracking the conversion of CVTs into formal schools, this will be a permanent benefit to the education system, particularly to the schools of north-eastern Nigeria – and a significant victory for the stakeholders who have advocated for it.

Finally, the temporary-to-permanent infrastructure model piloted in Nigeria offers a potentially compelling approach to addressing long-term infrastructure gaps – in this and other settings – although there is still more to do to secure government endorsement of the model and to institute community-led or government funding mechanisms for supporting the transition. Collaboration with State authorities is more viable in some situations than others but in all situations EiE responses should prioritise the central role of communities and the need to work in close coordination with other humanitarian actors.

The short-term nature of much EiE funding remains a key challenge, and advocacy to donors for a shift to multi-year and flexible funding should be sustained. A core goal of interventions like these is to address, at least in part, the sustainability challenge caused by short-term funding. They do this by, among other things, fostering volunteerism, building skills and capacity at the heart of schools and creating income-generating solutions. In Nigeria, where government intervention to take forward the interventions is a realistic prospect, we have focused on activities such as teacher recruitment and classroom creation in such a way that they can be developed by local government authorities in the future. In DRC, where government is likely to remain weak in the short and medium term, our focus lies primarily on strengthening communities within and around schools to increase their resources and improve management and teaching standards in a lasting way.

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1. The organisation Children in Crisis established a partnership in DRC with EMI in 2007 and carried out the 2016–17 work on which this article reflects. In early 2018 Children in Crisis merged with Street Child.

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## Jordan: education policy in transition

Julie Chinnery

**As the education sector in Jordan moves from a humanitarian to a development response, a lack of planning for an appropriate transition risks excluding some groups of learners.**

In most cases the best way to transition from a humanitarian to a development response is not immediately clear. Although the education sector has produced guidelines that outline the process for drafting transitional plans in “crisis-affected and challenging situations”,<sup>1</sup> in many contexts the capacity and coordination of sector stakeholders (including the government, donors and international and local practitioners) to collectively identify and agree on the needs and the best ways forward remain a challenge, resulting in some key elements of this transition period being overlooked.

In relation to this transition in Jordan, the key approach of the education sector was initially based on a strategic plan with a humanitarian framework but is now based on a clearly development-focused plan. The initial plan (the chapter on education in the Jordan Response Plan, JRP<sup>2</sup>) was drafted by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with national and international humanitarian partners. The new plan (the Ministry of Education’s national Education Strategic Plan 2018–2022, ESP<sup>3</sup>) was drafted by the Ministry with limited consultation with other actors. The transition from the first to the second plan has been relatively abrupt, and insufficient attention has been paid to what occurs during the period in between the two plans – where we are now. As such, needs that were highlighted in the first plan persist but the newer plan does not address how to continue to meet these.

In addition, there are differences in how the two documents define certain key terms. For example, the target group of the JRP education chapter is identified largely as ‘children, adolescents and youth’. When humanitarian operations started, the rationale was that all children had the potential to be in the formal education system, whether in formal school, vocational

training or higher education, and thus in effect all children came under the remit of the Ministry of Education. However, as the crisis has become protracted, and national-level education priorities and policies have changed, the rhetoric in the response has narrowed from children to schoolchildren, thus clearly including only those who are already inside the Ministry of Education system, which comprises formal, non-formal, higher and one stream of vocational education; informal and other forms of vocational education fall outside this system.

### Vulnerable groups

As a result, it is those children who are outside the system that are the most vulnerable. They fall into two categories. Firstly, some children remain outside the system because of reasons such as family poverty (which may result in child labour or early marriage). This group largely comprises adolescents and includes vulnerable Jordanians. The needs of this group used to be a core concern of the education sector but they no longer receive a similar level of attention; meanwhile, responsibility for this group has not been clearly transferred to the ESP (or to any other sector or line ministry). These adolescents are at risk of falling off the national agenda altogether unless another government ministry directly assumes responsibility for them. This could potentially be the Ministry of Social Development, although its capacity to cover these additional needs is not clear. This leaves these children at risk of having no educational options and limited protection.

The second category at risk is those who are pursuing certified non-formal education programmes. These children currently have two nationally accredited options: one for 9–12-year-olds and one for boys aged 13–18 and girls aged 13–20. These non-formal

options were noted in the JRP but, without Ministry of Education capacity to run either programme, their implementation was outsourced to sector partners. Although the needs of this group appear in the new response plan, the lack of ESP capacity means that they are not prioritised. Furthermore, pupils following these programmes are excluded from following the upper years of study that are required to complete certified higher education. As a result, the efficiency of these programmes and their relevance to children's needs in the current context are in question, as is their effectiveness as a pathway into formal higher education. And in the absence of a focus in the ESP on revising the policy frameworks around vocational training for refugees, there are few if any relevant pathways for out-of-school adolescents. Had there been a designated, better-designed period between the two plans, this could have allowed for sufficient capacity to be built within the Ministry of Education in order to address the educational needs of this group.

Additionally, whereas the main recipient of the service provision in the JRP is the children themselves, the main recipient in the ESP is now the Ministry of Education itself – technically and financially. Through a Joint Financing Agreement (JFA), the major education sector donors have pooled their funds to provide direct budgetary support to the Ministry of Education to implement the ESP. Under the JRP, the Ministry received only a percentage of the refugee response-related funds coming into the country; the JFA, on the other hand, invests directly in government and services. This provides the Ministry of Education with more flexible and predictable funding – clearly more favourable to the Ministry but not necessarily to children's needs. The JFA approach – largely dictated by aid effectiveness agendas – makes perfect sense for certain parts of the protracted response in Jordan, such as sector-wide education planning, teacher training and data management. However, by taking this approach, both the funds and the focus are being drawn away from needs that persist outside the formal school system. A more structured approach is

needed for the overlap of the ESP and the JRP to ensure that all needs are being funded and addressed along concurrent timelines.

### Why do transitional frameworks matter?

Displacement crises are lasting longer and responses to them – as in the case of Jordan, a lower-middle income country with a strong government mandate and capacity – are becoming more politically intricate and are receiving higher levels of international funding. There is increasing recognition at an international level of the significance of transition from a humanitarian to development response, yet international guidelines and frameworks for this remain subject to interpretation and contextualisation, and the ability to follow them depends on the continued availability of funding to the range of actors who are best placed to address different needs. In the current context in Jordan, frontline agencies are struggling to advocate for all education needs while systemic reform takes place.

Creating systemic change is a slow, long-term process. Vulnerable children need support now or risk not benefiting from participation in the education system at all. Humanitarian and development responses need not be binary: with structured planning, collective, expected outcomes can be agreed that will meet humanitarian need while at the same time reducing the risk to and vulnerability of people and systems. Those sectors who are making the humanitarian–development transition should consider the following:

- Transitional frameworks and a common narrative are needed in order to provide a structure that functions clearly over time and to comprehensively address the complex issues involved in a protracted context. A transitional framework should include national-level medium- and long-term goals which can be funded by the same means.
- Frameworks should be drafted in consultation with a broad range of stakeholders, not just ministries and donors but also, for example, those

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receiving assistance and those working in education provision, including national and international non-governmental organisations.

- Agreements around actors' roles and responsibilities should be clear, and should include plans and timeframes for transferring responses to other sectors or ministries for those needs that the sector development plan does not reflect.
- Humanitarian plans should allocate sufficient time and resources to line ministries to build capacity to meet all the needs identified in the development plan.
- Government partners in protracted crises should be offered sufficient capacity development in transitional/recovery approaches as well as in development approaches.

- All responses, whether humanitarian, transitional or developmental, should be linked by the common approach of doing no harm.

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## Applying learning theory to shape ‘good learning’ in emergencies: experience from Dadaab, Kenya

Allyson Krupar and Marina L Anselme

**Applying one learning theory retrospectively to a non-formal education programme for youth shows how learning theories can be used to assess learning in diverse EiE programmes and how including such theories when programming could help ensure quality and relevance.**

Rarely do humanitarian agencies and donors have the opportunity to meaningfully reflect on how and what type of learning occurs as a result of education in emergencies (EiE) provision. The lack of a theoretical base, however, may decrease a programme's effectiveness in supporting learners' ability to generate positive social change or pursue professional and vocational aspirations.

We applied a learning theory retrospectively to a project targeting youth in Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya. The project, entitled Youth Capacity Building for Social Change, was launched by RET International in 2012 to empower disadvantaged refugee youth, aged 14–24, and to increase their social engagement through active participation in community-led projects and initiatives, initially focused on ensuring children's right to education.<sup>1</sup>

Those participating in the programme attended five days of training during the first year, followed by three to five days of consolidation during the second year, with subsequent opportunities for selected youth representatives to develop leadership and peer educator roles within their respective associations and communities. The programme included the following topics: Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD),<sup>2</sup> conflict resolution skills, and youth-adult partnerships. As part of the ABCD curriculum, learners mapped the needs and problems affecting their communities, and what community assets were available, with the goal of developing community projects to address the problems identified. The youth then spread the training curriculum to their peers, employing a peer-educator approach, and ultimately led the design, planning and

implementation of social change projects in their communities with the support and guidance of RET International field staff.

### Good learning

Michael Newman's theory of 'good learning'<sup>3</sup> incorporates a number of different aspects of learning, which he calls: instrumental, communicative, affective, interpretive, essential, critical, political, passionate and moral. We analysed the RET project and its results in terms of each of these aspects, relating the theory of types of learning to how the young learners actually learned throughout the project and to where any gaps in their learning were.

**Instrumental learning:** This aspect focuses on skill-based content – exemplified in this case by the young refugees learning to write short proposals, develop activity plans, conduct monitoring and evaluation, and report on activities and their results, communicating to others in English. Much of the instrumental learning, then, relates to encouraging youth to engage in their communities to take on roles as planners and leaders.

### Communicative, affective and passionate learning:

This type of learning is based on relationships, social behaviour (communicative learning) and how learners interpret and act on their emotions (affective and passionate learning). Youth in Dadaab are often under-represented in community leadership positions as elders traditionally fill these roles. This aspect involved developing learners' leadership skills and engagement within their communities, enabling them to become more proficient at presenting themselves and others to older community members, particularly to those in positions of power, other youth and the wider camp society. The discussions that formed part of the training helped to challenge misconceptions about youth and to encourage learners to value other community members' views. However, it was difficult to identify evidence of affective and passionate learning.

**Interpretive learning:** This relates to self-awareness: understanding oneself in the world and how one is perceived by others. For the young people in Dadaab, this was also about gaining a greater understanding of what they, as young refugees, can do within



Refugee youth engaged in a discussion with an education facilitator, Dadaab.

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the systems in which they live in order to help create social change – particularly important in light of recognised dependency patterns between refugees and service providers. The ABCD training starts with identifying individual assets (discussing personal strengths and weaknesses) and then expands outwards to the group and community.

**Essential learning:** Essential learning is the understanding of what Newman describes as the “symbolic significance, value, and beauty (or otherwise) in people, objects, and events”: an appreciation that is important given tensions between diverse communities in Dadaab. Learners were able to identify change in the camps and the significance of their work in their own communities to bring about these changes, especially through ABCD, as an aspect of essential learning. Although we found some evidence that learners gained an appreciation for people in their community who were not like themselves, and that learners acted as mediators, especially in disagreements among other youth, it was difficult to discern much evidence of essential learning in the programme.

**Critical learning:** This refers to how learners understand power relationships. From the inception of the programme, the power dynamics in the camps – where youth were often excluded from decision making – were addressed by encouraging youth-adult relationships through training and specific activities (such as youth-adult forums). In order to develop community voice (and pave the way for eventual repatriation), youth were encouraged to see themselves as both current and future leaders. However, although the social action projects established by the trained youth were initially dedicated to increasing access in education, they did not address the root causes of children dropouts in emergency contexts. Instead, they focused on encouraging children who were at one time unable to attend school to return. The learners did not critically consider, for example, under what conditions the children had originally left school, and why the existing school system is unable to retain

vulnerable children and respond to their specific needs, thereby suggesting that they approached the problem with preconceived ideas rather than with an openness to others’ experiences or with a critical understanding of power relations in others’ lives.

**Political learning:** The political aspect of ‘good learning’ relates to part of the process of understanding power in the community and to community members’ capacity to take action. It appeared, however, that both political and critical learning were limited by restrictions imposed by the learners’ status as refugees. For example, although learners mobilised the community around the issue of low retention levels for children at school, the issue was approached at the family and individual level only, rather than with reference to Dadaab’s political systems or to the lack of continuum between humanitarian and development funding in the education sector.<sup>4</sup> The refugee youth involved in the project did not believe that they – as refugees – could change systems so instead they focused on the more immediate issues within their control. Programme planners could perhaps further consider the pre-existing limitations, both systemic and self-imposed, that constrain learners’ ability to address critical and political elements in programming.

**Moral learning:** This centres on questions of right and wrong: how learners make judgements and appraise situations – in this case, how learners come to their own conclusions concerning marginalisation and disputes within the community, and concerning collaboration across and within youth associations. Moral learning was in evidence in the youth-led projects where participants emphasised the importance of education, avoidance of drugs, and need for conflict resolution between groups and interpersonally.

### Recommendations

The RET Youth Capacity Building for Social Change project did not set out to apply Newman’s learning dimensions – and thus this evaluation is indeed

an academic, retrospective exercise. However, by applying such a theory at the planning stage, the planners might have been able to think more deeply about what different elements make up 'good learning' and how a programme might thereby achieve more of its objectives.

Irrespective of whether the learning theory was applied before the project was designed, it is evident that, for refugee youth in Dadaab, restrictions on movement plus the lack of quality education available throughout childhood into adulthood, combined with the lack of development opportunities, would in any case have affected the degree to which they could fully develop Newman's political and critical learning dimensions. Further replication of this type of study in contexts where refugees have greater access to education, employment and host-society benefits may enable a fuller assessment of the extent to which structural contexts have an impact on 'good learning' as defined in Newman's theory.

The main recommendation emerging from this exercise is to encourage greater application of learning theories during training for practitioners and in the development of education programmes, whether formal or non-formal. We recognise that non-governmental organisations (NGO) are not always able to prioritise how learning occurs in their programmes (given time constraints, isolation and other challenges prevalent in emergency-affected environments) but we suggest that NGOs need to build internal capacity specialising in learning, or to work with education specialists in programme development (and in implementation and monitoring and evaluation), particularly by translating the main aspects of such theories into measurable performance indicators, even in emergency contexts.

We recommend that donors serve a supportive function to increase efficacy of programmes by explicitly investing in the application of learning theories. This could be reflected in donors' evaluation criteria and in the allocation of specific funds; donors could also organise or sponsor events and

working groups in which practitioners, donors and other key stakeholders come together to discuss and define guidelines, roadmaps and methodologies in order to mainstream learning theory when designing, implementing and evaluating EiE programmes.

Further study is needed to understand how affective and passionate learning could occur in EiE and refugee education. Although less quantifiable than other aspects of Newman's learning theory, the achievement of these could increase the efficacy of educational programming, particularly in conflict-sensitive education. It is also vital that the voices of practitioners, learners, teachers and other education personnel in emergency settings inform the theory that shapes their educational programming and the goals they aim to achieve.

As emergencies change and the learning environment alters, educational programming must also adapt. This study shows that 'good learning' in emergency settings can happen – and can be part of a process to develop individual and community agency, to give voice to marginalised youth and, in the best of cases, to work towards changing those local, national and international systems that lead to marginalisation.

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1. After the first, education-focused year of the project, youth focus on other issues which include peace building and conflict mitigation and prevention of gender-based violence.
2. Kretsmann J P and McKnight J L (1993) 'Introduction' in Kretsmann J P and McKnight J L (Eds) *Building communities from the inside out: A path toward finding and mobilizing a community's assets*, Institute for Policy Research, Northwestern University.
3. Newman M (2010) 'Calling transformative learning into question: Some mutinous thoughts', *Adult Education Quarterly*, 62, 1: 36–55. His theory complements INEE's conflict-sensitive education guidance about establishing "new positive identit[ies] in the community" and about resource mobilisation. Explanation and tools at [www.ineesite.org/en/conflict-sensitive-education](http://www.ineesite.org/en/conflict-sensitive-education).
4. The existing funding cycle of one year is not conducive to planning and implementing comprehensive, sustainable responses to refugees' education needs. Programmes tend to be primarily donor-driven, instead of learners' needs-driven.

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## Child-friendly spaces: enhancing their role in improving learning outcomes

Gurvinder Singh and Charlotte Tocchio

**Providing psychosocial support to children through the medium of child-friendly spaces can improve learning outcomes for children but requires more localised, partnership-driven and gender-responsive approaches and strengthened monitoring and evaluation.**

Children's psychosocial well-being is directly correlated with their ability to learn. In contexts of conflict and humanitarian crises, child-friendly spaces (CFS) can promote psychosocial well-being and provide a safe space for learning but research has shown that their quality, relevance, effectiveness and sustainability vary widely.<sup>1</sup> They are too often implemented for long periods without being phased out or converted into sustainable and relevant formats. In addition, they can too easily become places where kicking a ball and drawing pictures are the goal rather than thought-through, research-based and focused psychosocial support. Important stakeholders such as local teachers, school administrators, parents and community leaders can be left out of the planning, thereby weakening the relationship between CFS and the improvement of learning outcomes.

However, while CFS are not a comprehensive answer, they can be important tools to enhance learning outcomes. Experience gained by the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in country-specific contexts highlights a number of lessons learned which underscore the need for localised, partnership-driven approaches that build on existing capacities and provide children with safe spaces. This allows children to meaningfully build resilience and provides enough stability for them to be able to focus on education during humanitarian crises.

### Yemen

Since 2015, insecurity and instability in Yemen have forced approximately 2.8 million civilians to flee their homes. The consequences of the conflict have been particularly difficult for children. Local volunteers report that pupils in Yemen have been feeling disconnected

from school and are not motivated to continue their education. Children are overwhelmed by the conflict and do not feel safe hearing the sounds of bombs and warplanes. They risk being killed on their way to school and many parents choose to keep their children at home.

At least half a million children have dropped out of school since the conflict escalated in 2015. In addition, there is a severe shortage of teachers, and 2,500 schools are out of use because they have been damaged or destroyed, used for military purposes or used as shelters for displaced people. The lack of access to education has also pushed children and families into dangerous alternatives, including child marriage, child labour and recruitment as fighters.

To try to address this lack of access, the Red Crescent first assessed the needs, in consultation with the Ministry of Education. Then 118 Red Crescent volunteers and 133 school teachers from 40 schools were trained in providing psychosocial support, and CFS were developed in each of these schools to provide a place where girls and boys can access psychosocial support, play games, learn protection skills (such as accessing help and getting to safety) and be taught about topics such as child rights and preventing child marriage. In the CFS, emphasis is put on peer education because the schools and Red Crescent believe that youth-led activities are the best way to maximise impact. For example, children from the CFS lead school assemblies and put on plays to highlight protection and psychosocial issues. Moreover, volunteers have held psychosocial support sessions for children of different ages. Nearly 5,000 girls and boys (and 350 adults) have been reached each month through the project that began in 2016 and continues today.

## Kenya

Life is hard for the migrants and refugees living in informal settlements in Kenya's urban centres – and perhaps particularly so for children, living in poor and cramped conditions, struggling to access school, some having to work, and facing the ever-present risk of gender-based violence. In response, the Kenya Red Cross has partnered with 30 schools to organise CFS within schools where girls and boys aged 11–14 years learn new skills, plan social activities and access psychosocial support provided by approximately 40 Red Cross volunteers. The volunteers are professional counsellors who run activities designed to boost self-esteem, self-awareness and trust. They also provide the children with someone to talk to, offer advice and help them to access protection, health and social services through local non-governmental organisations. Over 3,000 children are reached annually through these partnerships with schools.

Youth volunteers complement the work of the counsellors by sharing knowledge and skills – through workshops and school events such as after-school mentorship – that help the children to be safer and more resilient. They also act as a link between the Red Cross, schools and parents, including by organising school meetings with parents and other caregivers in order to help engage them in finding ways to improve children's learning and psychosocial well-being.

## Questions around CFS

The measurable impact and sustainability of projects such as these remain open to question. Barriers to measuring interventions include a lack of planning at the start to build evaluation into the projects, limited financial resources within the projects, a lack of local professionals who are experienced in conducting evaluation, the time required to do so, the constant movement of participants in and out of projects, and the unpredictable security situation of many hard-to-access locations. Furthermore, the relationship between psychosocial well-being and learning outcomes among children in humanitarian settings is itself still based on general observation, and requires more scrutiny.

A problem across many CFS that aim to improve psychosocial outcomes is a lack of gender-responsive programming. Too often, in our experience, children are seen and treated through an approach that does not take adequate account of gender. This results in projects that miss important psychosocial elements, do not recognise the full needs of children, and can perpetuate gender-based power inequalities and discrimination. Gender analysis of psychosocial and educational projects – at both the planning and evaluation stages of such projects – is needed if this issue is to be tackled.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) in partnership with World Vision International has developed a new CFS toolkit; this draws on a series of evaluations conducted by World Vision and a review by IFRC of lessons learned in implementing CFS in emergencies programming.<sup>2</sup> IFRC has also published a new study that examines the need to improve the protection of unaccompanied and separated children from sexual and gender-based violence in hard-to-access locations.<sup>3</sup> These findings further reinforce the need to ensure children's psychosocial well-being in order for them to access basic services including protection and education. Promoting the psychosocial well-being of children through the use of CFS allows children to spend time learning and gaining the skills necessary for managing the challenges that they face and for achieving better learning outcomes in humanitarian settings, including situations of displacement.

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1. World Vision (2015) *Evaluation of Child Friendly Spaces* [bit.ly/WVI-CFS-2015](http://bit.ly/WVI-CFS-2015)

2. Toolkit at [http://pscentre.org/archives/publication/child-friendly-spaces; Lessons learned report at bit.ly/IFRC-CFS-Lessons-2017](http://pscentre.org/archives/publication/child-friendly-spaces; Lessons%20learned%20report%20at%20bit.ly/IFRC-CFS-Lessons-2017)

3. IFRC (2018) *Alone and Unsafe: Children, migration and sexual and gender-based violence* <http://bit.ly/IFRC-Alone-unsafe-2018>

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## Refugee education in Greece: integration or segregation?

Giorgos Simopoulos and Antonios Alexandridis

**The closure of the ‘Balkan route’ in the spring of 2016 has trapped around 21,000 children in Greece. Although education policies have been devised to integrate these children into the Greek education system, these policies have actually led to some students being segregated.**

In March 2016, Greece’s Ministry of Education was tasked with formulating a plan for integrating refugee children into the educational system. Three options were proposed:

- to integrate all refugee students into public schools, providing support based on the existing institutional framework for students with migrant backgrounds
  - to create Special Educational Structures within the reception centres where refugees live
  - to develop a ‘bridge system’ between the first two options.
- the development of preschool education programmes inside reception centres
  - the creation of Reception Facilities for Refugee Education (RFRE) for children living in reception centres;<sup>1</sup> these would operate in nearby primary and secondary schools, with teaching taking place between 14:00 and 18:00, after the end of the regular school day
  - the integration of refugee children living in urban locations into the regular morning classes of local schools, with the support of reception classes.

One might have expected the Greek authorities to have drawn upon their more than 25 years of experience acquired from integrating migrant students, including the development of supportive mechanisms such as reception classes, and the experience and skills gained by teachers from teaching in multilingual environments. Such experience could have been utilised to support and strengthen integration, inclusion and intercultural interaction. A considerable proportion of educators, solidarity groups and communities of activists recognised this experience and supported the immediate enrolment of all refugee students in public schools, without exception.

However, the Ministry of Education, which has ultimate decision-making power, opted to create a system of afternoon classes within public schools, creating a segregated school for a particular group of students. The school year 2016–17 was designated ‘pre-integrational’ or ‘transitional’, and involved the following features:

The aim was for students ultimately to progress from RFREs into the reception classes of public schools, either when their families were transferred from reception centres to urban accommodation managed by the UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR, or after the students had completed a year of study in an RFRE.

### Challenges in practice

A number of persistent problems, however, became evident in the first year of RFRE implementation. For a population that is by definition on the move, the plan created inflexible structures. For example, teachers (a majority of whom were part-time substitute teachers) were assigned to teach in specific RFREs and so were unable to continue teaching those pupils who were subsequently moved from some reception centres to others with better living conditions.

There were many negative reactions to the planning and operation of RFREs, although for opposing reasons. On one hand, part of the educational community supported the full integration of refugee

students into formal public schools, without exception, highlighting the dangers that they felt would be created by the development of a parallel system. On the other hand, some groups of parents voiced xenophobic attitudes and threatened to occupy schools (some actually did so).

Although RFREs were created to minimise the tensions that would arise if refugee students were integrated into the morning hours programme, nevertheless there were many incidents, some of which were violent. By contrast, refugee students living in urban environments were integrated smoothly into reception classes and into the morning hours programme, largely without major incidents, just as migrant students had been before them. The choice of a segregated school, then, instead of serving to soften xenophobic reactions, led to the schools that hosted RFREs being targeted, and stigmatised the refugee population.

The teachers of the RFREs struggled to create an elementary framework of school normality. The practices of ghettoised life that had been created in the reception centres were mirrored in a school experience that was equally disconnected from normality. Those children integrated into the regular morning programme, however, were able to get involved with school practices – able to cooperate and interact. And although RFREs provided certificates of attendance, formal schools offered students a graduation certificate, which facilitates pupils' progression from one class to the next, as well from primary to secondary education.

RFRE students' educational achievements were very limited: without interaction with the Greek-speaking community their language skills did not develop, thereby reducing the students' motivation and reinforcing the public's vilification of them as merely people 'in transit'. Teachers in schools that hosted both afternoon RFREs and students in the morning programme seem to support the view that children who attended normal classes, even those who did not receive special support, covered and learned more over the same period than those attending the RFREs.

### Refugee-friendly or refugee-hostile?

The selection of those schools in which RFREs were to be established was based on a system of informal request and consent which saw some schools identified as likely to be 'refugee-friendly' and others 'refugee-hostile'. The school principals and the Regional Directors for Education (the heads of the regional administrative bodies) were then required to formally agree to the establishment of an RFRE, and submit a proposal for final acceptance by the Secretary General of the Ministry of Education. Principals were given the power to indicate when they considered the incoming number of students to be too large for their school to accept – a key flaw of this system of informal consent, which led in the 2016–17 and 2017–18 academic years to waiting lists (sometimes many months long) for refugee students to be appointed a school.

Despite legislation confirming the legality of enrolling students with incomplete documents (regardless of the legal status of their families in Greece), the enrolment of children who lived in areas where they were permitted to attend the morning programme was, in many cases, complicated or not guaranteed. For example, students attending morning classes are supported in reception classes for 15 hours per week; the rest of the time they attend the school's mainstream classes, with the aim of gradually moving towards full integration into mainstream school within one to two years. In practice, however, a considerable number of refugee students only attend reception classes and some schools have decided, despite the fact that they are formally enrolled, to discourage children from attending mainstream classes. This has in many cases effectively transformed these reception classes into a segregated system that resembles the RFREs.

### Misconceptions and realities

The development of RFREs was based on a number of misconceptions. The first was that what was being undertaken was somehow unprecedented – that the large number of students was hard to manage, that their integration into the morning programme

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would create serious negative reactions, and that these children were a group with entirely different characteristics from those migrants who had previously been integrated into the Greek educational system. The second misconception was the idea that as these students had been out of school for several years (some never having attended at all), they would need at least one 'preparatory' year before they could be integrated into the regular morning programme. And the third was the conviction that these children's families rejected the prospect of integration in Greece, and that being in transit and living in unstable conditions were barriers to their children's integration into school.

Except for the lack of stability in terms of living conditions, and the very real problem of overconcentration of students in some schools in central Athens, none of these misconceptions is well substantiated. The number of refugee students is only a small percentage of the 150,000 immigrant (including refugee) students that have been integrated into public schools since 1995, for whom it was not felt necessary to develop a special educational framework. Thousands of students from Syria, Egypt, Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan have been integrated into Greek schools since 2000, without having a special framework created for their education. Moreover, most of the reception centres (with the exception of the large centres such as Elaionas or Skaramagkas) provided the afternoon RFRE classes with 40–100 students during the 2016–2017 school year, a number which could have easily been absorbed in the morning reception classes run by nearby schools.

### Recommendations

In order for this segregation to be reversed, and to address the 'lost generation' of students in refugee host countries, the following minimum requirements must be met:

- RFREs not to be established unless there is no alternative (such as for large reception centres whose student populations cannot be absorbed by local schools) and then

only as a short-term solution until these students are transferred to morning schools

- the establishment of greater numbers of morning reception classes, which take place within public school hours and should be supported by teachers and social workers to help pupils integrate (despite an increase in such classes in the 2018–19 school year, significant need remains)
- the provision of institutional support for schools and teachers, through training and access to interpreters who speak children's mother tongues
- the lifting of barriers to the enrolment in upper secondary schools and tertiary education of students who lack documentation, and the adoption of this as a standard policy
- the integration of preschool-aged children into public preschool education
- the assurance of progressive transition for students from reception classes to the regular classrooms.

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1. All reception centres in Greece (with the exception of one site in Athens) are located outside urban areas.

2. Part of this article is based on unpublished postdoctoral research provided by a scholarship from the Greek State Scholarship Foundation through the 'Enabling post-doctoral researchers' project as part of the 'Human Resources Development, Education and Life-long Learning' programme, co-funded by the European Social Fund and the Greek State.

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## Street schools and school buses: informal education provision in France

Maria Hagan

**In the face of increasingly limited access to schooling for asylum seekers and migrants in France, volunteer initiatives have sprung up to provide much-needed informal education.**

It was following the destruction of the Calais Jungle in 2016 that the French government rolled out its policy of zero tolerance towards camps, whereby any informal settlement is now systematically destroyed by police and 'clean-up' teams. The rationale is that France has institutions in place to host migrants – as long as they agree to enter the formal asylum system. For those who, for whatever reason, do not enter the system, however, it means greater exclusion; by pursuing this policy the French authorities undermine access not only to basic living standards but also to education and other crucial services that were being provided by volunteers in the informal settlements.

There is no official language provision for asylum seekers in France until refugee status has been granted. However, starting classes earlier in the asylum process would not only facilitate integration for those whose claims

are accepted; it would also provide valuable skills and offer a distraction during months of anxious waiting. Asylum seekers view education as a driver for change through which they can improve the quality of their lives, compete in the job market and so on: in other words, as essential to a new life in a new society. Many people are advocating for simple spaces of hospitality in France, spaces without conditions or obligations which allow asylum seekers the time to rest and think through their plan for the future. Providing education could be an ideal way of facilitating this.

### Reclaiming the classroom

Despite the difficult conditions, there are many community initiatives which provide education informally. Every evening at 18:30, migrants and asylum seekers gather at the Place de Stalingrad in north-eastern Paris. They divide themselves into three groups according to their proficiency in French, sitting on the stairs leading down to the public square. Three volunteer teachers – one for each level – from local volunteer organisation BAAM (Bureau d'accueil et d'accompagnement des migrants<sup>1</sup>) bring whiteboards and pens, going through the alphabet, basic sentences and vocabulary or grammar for the more advanced learners.

In Calais, meanwhile, the School Bus Project<sup>2</sup> seeks to provide basic education to those youth living informally. Every



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day this bright-yellow, double-decker bus drives to a site in Calais or Grande-Synthe, within walking distance of where people live in wooded areas, hidden as best as they can. The top deck of the bus has been turned into a classroom, with a smaller room in which small group sessions can take place. The lower deck is a recreational area for playing games and musical instruments. For many this mobile school is one of the few safe spaces in which learning is possible. On most days the bus is crowded with eager learners, especially in the winter months when it

is also one of the few spaces providing shelter. Beyond providing much-needed informal education, the School Bus publicly displays the willingness of newcomers to learn (and volunteers to teach), countering the criminalisation of displaced people and demonstrating a humane reception model.

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1. <https://baamasso.org/en>
2. [www.schoolbusproject.org](http://www.schoolbusproject.org)

## Adult literacy: an essential component of the CRRF

Massimo Lanciotti

**Literacy needs among the refugee populations of Uganda and Ethiopia are vast, yet although both are CRRF pilot countries – and therefore in theory committed to promoting literacy – functional adult literacy is barely supported at all.**

People uprooted from their homes are even more vulnerable if they cannot read and write. Adult education and Functional Adult Literacy (FAL) – that is, the ability to apply the skills of reading, writing and written calculations to the requirements of daily life – are crucial for refugees to be able to realise their rights to education, development and meaningful participation. The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) and the Global Compacts on Refugees and for Migration emphasise the need to find ways to help displaced people gain access to jobs and income opportunities, for which FAL is essential. However, even when FAL in refugee and internally displaced persons contexts is promoted and included in national response plans, it often receives little or no funding.

Uganda and Ethiopia host the largest refugee populations in Africa. The majority of these refugees are from South Sudan, a country with a general literacy rate of just 27%. Both are CRRF pilot countries and both have refugee policies in place (in addition to the CRRF commitments) that promote education for adults: in Uganda's case, through its Protection and Durable Solutions Strategy (PDSS) 2016–2020; and

in Ethiopia's case, through its Refugee Education Strategy 2015–2018. However, the reality in terms of implementing and providing support for FAL programmes for refugees has been disappointing.

In Uganda, the Finnish Refugee Council (FRC) has been supporting and facilitating FAL and English language learning groups in refugee settlements and camps since 1997 but it is still the only non-governmental organisation (NGO) doing so, apart from UN Women which has recently started a literacy programme for South Sudanese women in four districts in the Northern Region. In settlements where FRC does not operate, there are only a couple of NGOs running just a few learning groups (to complement their routine activities). UNHCR Uganda has made no allocation for FAL in its education budget, and in the last five years no funds have been allocated by the Government of Uganda for adult literacy.

In Ethiopia, FRC recently carried out a needs assessment in Gambella region, where South Sudanese refugees are hosted; our findings indicate that as of September 2018 only two small FAL projects, reaching just a few hundred learners, are currently

being implemented, despite the ambitious target of enrolling 25,000 adults set out in Ethiopia's Refugee Education Strategy.

### Implementing FAL in Uganda

The demand for FAL among South Sudanese refugees is very high, including in English, which is the language of communication with government officials, social service providers and Ugandans, for studying and for interacting in the marketplace. During 2015–17 some 9,000 learners in Uganda, from both refugee and host communities, regularly attended FRC's FAL courses in their mother tongues (68% of learners) and functional English language (32%).

The learning cycle includes two levels: basic (lasting 11 months) and intermediate (five months). No more than 30 learners are enrolled per learning group, which is facilitated by one community instructor. Functionality is emphasised throughout the learning cycle, which includes essential skills that refugees need in order to be active in their communities and to operate more confidently, effectively and independently. Topics include maternal and child health and nutrition, hygiene and sanitation, environment-friendly agricultural practices, financial literacy for transactions and savings, and gender equality, rights and obligations. Reading materials have been reproduced in the most widely-spoken languages in the settlements, and mobile libraries have been established to circulate books for learners to practise and sustain the skills they have acquired.

At the end of each course, written tests evaluate learners' reading, writing and numeracy skills and their ability to adapt acquired skills to everyday life, while a qualitative monitoring tool called Pathways of Empowerment captures information on learners' sense of empowerment and self-reliance. For instance, some learners have become less dependent on others, demonstrated by their new ability to use mobile phones independently to make calls, send texts and make simple calculations. Others reported their ability to check their names in distribution lists and verify whether

they had actually received the food and non-food items to which they were entitled. And it was observed that parents, especially mothers, were able to support, or at least motivate, their children in doing homework and to monitor their progress at school, as well as to follow written medical prescriptions.

In 2017 FRC started piloting learning groups in three settlements – Kyangwali, Kyaka and Nakivale – with more tailored curricula. The courses run for six months and provide functional curricula tailored to each learning group's core interest, such as poultry keeping or the establishment of a savings and loan group. Literacy topics arise naturally from the livelihood activities in which learners are engaged.

### Good practice and remaining challenges

It has proven helpful that the programme has a strong presence within learners' communities; offices and staff are located in the settlements or close by and it utilises the local leadership structure to involve their communities (refugee as well as host) and to seek and identify community members as prospective instructors/facilitators (for whom high-quality training has been vital). The programme responds to requests and needs particularly relevant in the refugee context; topics and themes are often suggested directly by learners, and it is evident that combining literacy/language courses with livelihood skills training further motivates learners.

However, some challenges remain. Despite the use of the Pathways of Empowerment monitoring tool, the impact of the programme is still not being adequately recorded and documented; this will require further efforts and enhancing the skills of and tools available to the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Team. The programme is not yet fully inclusive; thanks to specific actions taken to include them (such as by encouraging young mothers to attend classes with their babies), women now represent the majority of learners but there is still little participation of persons with disabilities of either gender. Specific needs assessments should be carried out, possibly by persons with disabilities themselves, with the aim of creating friendly



and accessible learning environments for learners with special educational needs.

Furthermore, recruiting refugees who have the educational level required to become instructors can be challenging. And skilled instructors often resign to take up better job opportunities elsewhere, while mobility among refugees and an inevitable turnover mean the programme has to keep identifying and mentoring new facilitators. Many languages are spoken in the settlements but organising FAL courses in all languages is not feasible, and there is always the risk that choosing one of the main ethnic languages over others could raise tensions among the groups; reproducing reading materials in as many languages as possible, however, even though the classes cannot be provided in these languages, has helped.

Effective application of the CRRF in pilot countries like Uganda cannot occur if refugees' access to wider and better education services continues to be overlooked. FRC's experience of providing and promoting adult education and functional literacy services over the last 20 years, through a development-oriented approach, highlights the potential of such interventions. With further fine-tuning, greater coordination with adult education organisations and synergies with livelihoods programmes, this model could be expanded to have much greater impact on improving displaced people's skills, productivity and income, thereby helping them to reduce their vulnerability and enhance their opportunities.

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## Navigating curricula choices for Palestine refugees

Jo Kelcey

**Curriculum choices matter greatly in countries that host large numbers of refugees for increasingly long periods of time.**

The question of what refugees learn is often absent from discussions of the importance of education. This oversight is significant. Curricula choices and the textbooks that convey these choices reflect a vision of society: who is included, who is not and how they are represented.

There are longstanding disputes over the curricula taught to Palestine refugees<sup>1</sup> who learn in schools run by the UN. Following Palestinian displacement in 1948, public, private and volunteer-run schools accommodated Palestinians in their places of exile. In some cases, existing schools expanded their capacity to include refugee students; in others, new schools for the refugees were created. The piecemeal emergence of schools and inadequate funding for education meant that providers relied heavily on existing education resources, including host-state curricula and textbooks. When the UN Relief and Works Agency for

Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) took over the schools in May 1950 it was more expedient, cost-efficient and politically viable to continue using these resources than to create new ones. Furthermore, the use of host-state curricula at primary level meant that students could more easily continue their studies in host-state secondary schools. Finally, alignment with host states' curricula facilitated the certification and accreditation of learning outcomes by these states.

The importance of the refugees' right of return led the UN and Arab States' representatives to "strongly recommend" that the geography and history of Palestine be taught not only in UNRWA schools but also in government and private schools that accepted Palestinian children.<sup>2</sup> In the ensuing years, however, UNRWA has faced numerous challenges implementing these policies.

One of the most notable challenges occurred in 1967 immediately following

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Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. Within weeks, Israeli authorities attempted to change the curricula used in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, claiming that the curricula promoted hatred and incited violence. UNESCO was called on to conduct a review of the textbooks used in UNRWA schools in order to assess their appropriateness. The decision-making process was tortuous. On the one hand, the review commission recognised the importance of freely discussing history, as well as the right of displaced persons to express dismay or despair. On the other hand, the commission was concerned that refugee students should be exposed to more than just frustration, despair and revenge.

At the conclusion of the review, the commission recommended that a minority of books should be discontinued, others edited, and the remainder continue to be used as they were. The Arab governments and Israel were recalcitrant, however. The Syrian government, for example, refused to cooperate with the commission, arguing that a review of their textbooks was a violation of Syrian sovereignty. Initially cooperative, Jordan and Egypt later rejected criticism of their textbooks for much the same reasons. Israel also disagreed with the findings, claiming the review was too lenient and unilaterally banned textbooks they deemed inappropriate.

The impact of these disagreements on students was significant. In Gaza, UNRWA students started the 1967–68 academic year with almost no textbooks while those in the West Bank were deprived of a third of their required textbooks as a result of the Israeli ban. Shortages and delays in receiving teaching materials also affected schools in Jordan and Syria. To address this, UNRWA, at its own expense, produced millions of pages of teaching notes based on the textbooks but excluding the passages of text that the commission had deemed problematic. Arab governments considered this a form of censorship, however, and banned UNRWA from distributing the teaching notes.

Disagreements continue to shroud UNRWA's curricula policies. The introduction of a Palestinian curriculum in the early

2000s and its implementation in UNRWA schools reignited accusations from Israel and prominent Western donors that the refugees learn hatred and violence in their schools, in spite of findings to the contrary.<sup>3</sup> In 2017 the Palestinian Authority accused UNRWA of censorship and threatened to suspend ties with the Agency. Most recently, in 2018 the US government – UNRWA's biggest funder – withdrew its funding, reiterating Israeli claims that UNRWA schools promote anti-Semitism, claims that are denied by the Agency. Although others have stepped in to offset some of the shortfall (at least temporarily), this latest crisis continues to jeopardise the education of over half a million Palestinian refugees.

Throughout all this, refugees' perspectives on the education they receive have been marginalised. And it should be remembered that refugee children learn what they live. For Palestinians, like many other refugee populations, this means ongoing and persistent violations of their rights. Those sharing responsibility for refugee education – whether host states, multilateral organisations or donor nations – should remember that when education content ignores these realities, schools become less relevant and education outcomes may be compromised, to the detriment of all.

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1. UNRWA was created in the aftermath of the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict. After fleeing or being expelled, over 900,000 Palestinians sought refuge in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, while others were displaced to the West Bank or the Gaza Strip. While there have been other waves of displacement, only those displaced in 1948 and their descendants are considered 'Palestine refugees' and thus fall under UNRWA's mandate. The term 'Palestine refugees' is used here as this article is predominantly about UNRWA. See FMR issue 26 (2006) 'Palestinian displacement: a case apart?' [www.fmreview.org/palestine](http://www.fmreview.org/palestine)

2. UNESCO (1952) 'Report of the working party convened by UNESCO to make recommendations on the possible development of the UNRWA-UNESCO Education Programme for Palestine Refugees in the Near East' <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0017/001785/178569eb.pdf>

3. Brown N (2001) 'Democracy, history and the contest over the Palestinian curriculum', prepared for the Adam Institute [http://llp.iugaza.edu.ps/Files\\_Uploads/635063694488064181.pdf](http://llp.iugaza.edu.ps/Files_Uploads/635063694488064181.pdf)

# Refugee children with communication disability in Rwanda: providing the educational services they need

Helen Barrett, Julie Marshall and Juliet Goldbart

**Research undertaken in Rwanda aims to provide firm evidence for use in improving access to inclusive educational services for refugee children with communication disability.**

The term ‘communication disability’ (CD) refers to the barriers to participation in society experienced by people who have difficulties understanding what others are trying to communicate to them or being understood when they try to communicate with others. Despite the inclusive nature of the early childhood development (ECD) and education policies of the Government of Rwanda (and of the humanitarian organisations providing support to these policies), implementation of ‘inclusive and equitable quality education’ (Sustainable Development Goal 4) for children who experience CD continues to be challenging, and many are excluded from the education system from an early age.

Education and ECD services for refugee children from the Democratic Republic of Congo and Burundi are well established in Rwanda. However, there are concerns about the level of access to these services for children who experience disabilities and for their families. Refugees who experience disabilities are recognised as being one of the most excluded and vulnerable groups of people in the world and are known to be under-identified. Consequently, the humanitarian support they need fails to reach them.<sup>1</sup> Those who **are** identified are likely to have visible or commonly recognised impairments. People with less visible challenges, such as intellectual or communication impairments, often go unnoticed, their exclusion perpetuated by a lack of identification and registration of their health, social, protection and education needs.

Communication disability includes diverse challenges which may exist independently or be part of other health conditions and/or impairments. CD is often perceived to be caused exclusively by hearing impairment and this understanding is

perpetuated by the use of the term ‘hearing and speech disability’ in the humanitarian sector. This ties the two impairments together under one disability label and serves to obscure the existence and needs of people with other types of communication disability, such as stammering or limited understanding of, or spoken, language, or those whose CD results from illnesses such as cerebral malaria, stroke or head injury who may be able to hear but who struggle to express themselves and/or understand others.

## Addressing the evidence gaps

To address the lack of robust evidence around this topic, we are undertaking research in two Congolese camps and one Burundian camp in Rwanda, each at a different stage (post-emergency, protracted and emergency respectively) of humanitarian response.<sup>2</sup> This mixed method study also uses registration data from the UNHCR database on CD in Rwanda, analyses policies and guidelines pertaining to refugee registration, ECD and educational provision, and looks at qualitative data gathered from policymakers, service providers, community members and service users. The study aims, firstly, to understand the reasons why CD is under-identified. Secondly, it looks at the needs and wishes of carers of refugee children (aged 2–12) with CD, and the barriers the carers face in securing identification of needs and access to services for the children.

Analysis of UNHCR’s ProGres database undertaken in September 2017 revealed that only 0.01% of refugees in Rwanda are currently registered as experiencing a ‘speech disability/impairment’ and that only 10 out of almost 55,000 refugee children under 12 in Rwanda are registered as having a special educational need. Yet research suggests that

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15% of any population are likely to have a disability<sup>3</sup> and prevalence may be even higher for refugees, some of whom may have trauma-related disabilities, including CD. It is clear from this initial analysis that prevalence of CD – and related needs – are currently under-estimated among refugees in Rwanda.

Initial analysis of interview and focus group data revealed that CD, as a concept, is misunderstood at all levels, from service users to policymakers. The UNHCR registration system for specific needs does not allow for registration of CD in forms other than ‘speech impairment/disability’ and ‘hearing impairment’. The interchangeable use of ‘impairment’ and ‘disability’ is the first point of confusion,<sup>4</sup> the second being that CD often co-occurs with other impairments and/or health conditions. Most often, only one, or the most visible, impairment is documented but the associated disability and individual needs are not.

It is the responsibility of data collectors during initial registration/verification to decide if a person needs to be referred for a specific needs assessment – and a refugee’s needs may go unreported if the data collector does not communicate directly with them. This is particularly the case for highly stigmatised conditions, such as intellectual disability (that often leads to communication disability). Many children who experience CD are registered by an accompanying adult and their communication needs may not be reported or recorded. Data suggest that children with hearing impairment, particularly those who are non-verbal, are most likely to have their needs identified and registered. This may contribute to the misunderstanding that CD is solely related to hearing impairment and, as a result, may contribute to the focus on specialist services designed for the hearing-impaired (such as sign language tuition) to the exclusion of services addressing other needs.

As the needs of many children who experience CD are not even identified, it is unsurprising that their needs in an educational environment are largely unmet, with camp-based disability services in Rwanda focusing primarily on physical

rehabilitation and provision of assistive devices for physical and sensory impairments. Parents of children with disabilities are encouraged to send their children to the ECD centre or school but teachers feel unprepared to support them and education partners report having little knowledge and few skills within their organisations to train teachers on inclusive practices.

Some teachers have received some sign language training but the training has been sporadic and often without continuing support, leaving teachers trying to continue their sign language learning independently. When teachers leave, a skills gap remains. In addition, service providers at all levels tend to believe that sign language is a panacea for everyone with CD – a dangerous assumption since sign language is complex and should be taught consistently and with the inclusion of families, communities and service providers. It may also require considerable adaptation for people with limited understanding. Despite this, there is little evidence of knowledge or use of any methods of communication support other than sign language (such as picture- or symbol-based approaches which support understanding and may provide an alternative means of communication) to facilitate and support educational access.

### **Mainstream versus segregated learning**

Despite mounting evidence that inclusive education is cost-effective and results in better educational and social outcomes for some children with disabilities and their peers, a number of children with mild/moderate intellectual impairment and associated CD, and children with hearing impairment, have been sent to residential special schools/centres outside the camps. This option is highly valued by parents as they – and teachers – believe this is the only way to give these children an education. However, the costs associated with sending children with CD away to segregated special education sites are high, and not only financially.

Parents and camp disability committees<sup>5</sup> report a number of difficulties, including the isolation that children face when they return home in the school holidays as their families

continue to struggle to communicate with them and they have few, if any, friends outside their school environment. If anything, the children are reported to be more isolated after being sent to segregated residential schools/centres than before, and are considered to be 'different' by the community because they are no longer a part of it. Children with severe/profound CD, often associated with other impairments, are excluded both from specialist centres and their local mainstream school. Ironically, those with mild/moderate CD would be most able to cope in an inclusive mainstream ECD/school environment and the funding that is currently used to send a small number of these children to special schools could potentially be used to train and support entire teams of staff and many children in camp and host-community mainstream ECD centres and schools, and provide the additional resources required for children to access the curriculum.

### Working together to identify solutions

Communities, service providers and carers of children with CD increasingly recognise the exclusionary nature of existing registration, ECD and education services, and desire services that better cater for their needs. Requests include:

- implementation of a community sensitisation programme to promote behaviour change
- training for carers and service providers on how to communicate with children using different methods
- training and skills development for teachers and education partners on inclusive education and inclusive teaching methodologies, plus ongoing support from experts in the fields of inclusive education and CD.

In order for services to respond to the needs of families supporting children who experience CD, it is critical that the families' voices are heard and that they are empowered to participate in service planning. We look forward to completing our study and formulating recommendations that

could improve access to inclusive ECD and education services for refugee children with CD in Rwanda, ensuring that no child is left behind.

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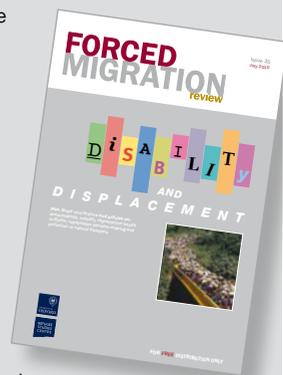
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1. See FMR issue 35 (2010) on Disability and displacement [www.fmreview.org/disability](http://www.fmreview.org/disability)
2. The authors wish to thank UNHCR Rwanda (particularly Machtelt De Vries, Nathalie Busien, Anna-Katharina Reiser, Jackson Ndagijimana, Sophie Mwiseneza and Claudine Mukagatare), all implementing partners, and the refugees who took part in this research.
3. WHO and World Bank (2011) *World Report on Disability* [www.who.int/disabilities/world\\_report/2011/report](http://www.who.int/disabilities/world_report/2011/report)
4. Impairment is the actual condition, while a disability is the experience of functional limitation caused by the interaction between the condition, the social and physical environment, and the person.
5. Each camp has a disability committee with a representative from each quarter in the camp. The executive secretary of the disability committee sits on the camp executive committee.

### FMR issue 35, July 2010 Disability and displacement

The 27 feature theme articles in this issue of FMR show why disabled people who are displaced need particular consideration and highlight some of the initiatives taken (locally and at the global level) to change thinking and practices so that their vulnerability is recognised, their voices heard – and responses made inclusive.

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# UK immigration policy: restrictions on asylum seekers' right to study

Helen Baron

**Changes to immigration legislation in the UK have led to restrictions on many asylum seekers' right to study.**

The Immigration Act 2016 brought a new regime of 'immigration bail'<sup>1</sup> into force in the UK, expanding the powers of the UK Secretary of State for the Home Department ('the Home Office') to impose restrictions on asylum seekers, including on their right to study.

While the 2016 Act was being drafted, all indications were that the application of this restriction on study would be exceptional. It is also clear from parliamentary discussions around the passing of the Bill that the power to restrict study was intended to be used only rarely and for specific purposes.

However, when the relevant provisions came into force in January 2018, charities and asylum caseworkers saw that the imposition of study restrictions was widespread. The Home Office's response to a freedom of information request reveals that between 15<sup>th</sup> January and 31<sup>st</sup> May 2018, of the 53,901 individuals given immigration bail forms (a document defining the conditions of a person's immigration bail) by the Home Office, 12,642 individuals (24%) were prohibited from studying. The stories of some of the individuals whom our law firm has assisted over the past eight months show a range of experiences.

## Aims and hopes

**Sharif, Henry and Farooq**<sup>2</sup> arrived in the UK as unaccompanied minors and were enrolled in school and then college. As young people leaving the care system, they were eligible for State support, including a stipend and accommodation provided by the local authority, on condition that they were engaged in study and would remain studying until the age of 21. **Josie**, who came to the UK with her mother and brother, won a scholarship for asylum seekers

which allowed her to accept a place to study biomedical sciences at university, where she hoped to build on her impressive secondary qualifications and become a scientist.

**Mustafa** wanted to improve his English so that once he got refugee status he could study illustration at university and build on the many exhibitions and competitions in which he had already participated. **Ali**, a victim of trafficking, aspired to study law and policing at university, in order to one day start an anti-trafficking organisation and help others in his situation. **Mary**, also a victim of trafficking, was encouraged to enrol in assertiveness, healthy eating and understanding anxiety classes at a college as part of her recovery while she was on the waiting list for counselling. **Kit**, a young mother, wished to attend an ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) course, which offered childcare facilities. She wanted to learn English to be able to care for her daughter better, to more easily navigate supermarkets, buses, doctors and lawyers, and to make friends with other parents.

## Effects of restrictions on study

When a query was raised in Parliament in April 2018 about the objectives of the study restrictions and numbers to whom it had been applied, the Immigration Minister replied that individuals could discuss possible amendments to their bail conditions with staff at the Home Office centre where they report on a regular basis. However, after the new regime came into force, each of the individuals whose stories are recounted here was informed that they no longer had the right to study in the UK; none was asked about their plans to study or whether they were enrolled in studies at the time. No one explained the restriction, or provided

any reasons for the change. Breaching immigration bail conditions is a serious matter – had they continued to study, their ‘non-compliance’ could have been held against them in their asylum claims. Many did not even realise that the restriction had been applied to them until it was spotted by a social worker or their asylum caseworker. Those who tried to request any changes to this condition were told to submit their requests in writing via their solicitors. However, those requests sent by asylum seekers’ legal representatives were ignored. In our experience, the only way to get the restrictions removed was to threaten the Home Office with court proceedings if they did not do so. In many cases, this was not enough, and we were forced to pursue court proceedings.

Sharif, Henry and Farooq were placed in a terrible position, caught between ceasing their studies – and so losing their local authority support (including accommodation) – or continuing to study, potentially breaching their bail conditions. Mary was deeply concerned that the courses she had been enrolled on as part of her recovery would be considered ‘study’. Mustafa and Kit had to withdraw from their ESOL courses, while Josie and Ali had their offers to study withdrawn by the university.

According to the Home Office’s own policy on immigration bail, restrictions must achieve the legitimate purpose of maintaining contact with individuals while their asylum claims are being processed and reducing the risk of individuals absconding. It is hard to envisage a situation in which a restriction on a person studying could logically be said to further this legitimate aim. Indeed, when challenged in judicial proceedings or correspondence prior to commencing proceedings, the Home Office has conceded in every case, removing the restriction and failing to provide any reasons for its imposition.

### Alteration of policy

On 8<sup>th</sup> May 2018, following a series of successful judicial challenges, media attention and intervention by Members of Parliament, the Home Office altered its policy, substantially amending the section

on study restrictions. The new policy provides more guidance about who should be subject to study restrictions and clarifies that in most situations asylum seekers should and will be allowed to study.

The Home Office has also instigated a process to identify those to whom the study condition had been applied erroneously and send new immigration bail forms without study restrictions to these individuals. By the end of that month the Home Office had removed study restrictions from 4,709 individuals, presumably leaving 7,933 individuals still restricted at the end of May 2018. A senior representative of the Home Office must now first approve the application of a bail condition. A letter has also been sent to non-governmental organisations to enable them to encourage individuals who may have concerns to contact the Home Office to seek a change to their bail conditions. However, despite these measures, individuals who have had study restrictions incorrectly and unreasonably applied to them continue to be referred to us.

The battle over study restrictions shows how statutory powers, granted for a specific and restricted purpose, can be misused by a government whose policies make life very difficult for those without legal status in the UK. Charities, politicians, the media and support workers have a vital role to play in monitoring how such executive powers are applied, in order to prevent unjustified and irrational limitations on individuals’ rights and freedoms.

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1. Immigration bail is the temporary status granted to individuals without leave to remain (such as asylum seekers). This permits them – subject to certain conditions – to remain in the UK and reside in the community (often restricted to a particular address) while their claims are processed or their appeals are heard. All asylum seekers in the UK who are not detained are on immigration bail.
2. All clients’ names have been changed to preserve their anonymity.

### Interested in writing for FMR?

We welcome offers of articles on any aspect of contemporary forced migration. Check our guidelines at [www.fmreview.org/writing-fmr](http://www.fmreview.org/writing-fmr) and get in touch.

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## “Education is key to life”: the importance of education from the perspective of displaced learners

OLive course students, IT trainer and director

**Students on the University of East London’s OLive course – a preparatory course for university access specifically tailored to refugees and asylum seekers in the UK – share experiences of accessing education as displaced learners.**

Education is a basic human right for all and should be accessible regardless of the fact that we have been displaced. As forced migrant students, we face several barriers to entry into higher education in the UK, which include:

**Immigration status:** While most asylum seekers have the right to study in the UK as long as their case is active, this right is not widely known and many universities and educational institutions are still reluctant to accept us. Often, when we call and inquire about our right to study, the people we speak to in these institutions do not know that we have the right to study and they turn us away.

**Access to finance:** Asylum seekers and those who have temporary leave to remain are not eligible to apply for government-provided student loans, nor other types of related student finance including hardship funds, bursaries and travel funds. For those with refugee status, access to student finance is limited and depends on their length of time in the UK, age and level of study. Student finance is only available where students wish to study at a higher level than they have done previously but because we face problems in getting our previous qualifications recognised we may need to repeat studies at a similar level.

**Recognition of previous qualifications:** Many of us do not have access to our transcripts and for those of us who have copies, the cost of having them translated and validated is prohibitive. Universities should be more proactive in recognising and accrediting refugee and asylum-seeker students’ prior learning.

**English language requirements:** To accept a place in a university we are required to provide evidence of our English language competence. Places on English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and International English Language Testing System (IELTS) courses are limited and asylum seekers do not automatically qualify for free provision. Many universities are inflexible with what they accept as proof of competence, requiring IELTS exams even when other documentation can prove similar attainment. Sitting an IELTS exam is costly and the waiting time for a speaking test can be several weeks. Arranging and paying for an IELTS test is often impossible within the timeframe available after having secured both a place to study and a scholarship or student finance.

**Trauma and ongoing struggles to live a dignified life:** Experiences of trauma – escaping war, conflict and violence, and then being put in the asylum process – cause post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression and other mental health difficulties. This reduces our ability to engage in application processes and our studies. We need additional support and information in order to navigate these processes without them causing us further anxiety and exclusion.

**Academic skills and culture:** Even though many of us have been to university before, the expectations of UK universities are different and the culture is unfamiliar. Not being able to express our thoughts in perfect academic English can mean people underestimate our intelligence and skills. We have all had our educational path interrupted by conflict, war, violence and displacement. There are gaps in our education which are

difficult to bridge, and for which we need additional support, but these gaps are not an indication of lack of ability or drive.

**Lack of support and exclusion:** We often struggle to access mental health services, childcare support and information about our rights. We are being moved into housing in areas where there are no educational opportunities, and we do not have adequate funds to travel to available courses. Those of us whose asylum claims are unsuccessful end up losing our housing and benefits altogether. It is virtually impossible to study and make progress in the face of such pressures.

**Lack of access to information:** Although some opportunities are available (including generous scholarships for asylum seekers), information about services, funding opportunities, policies and practices regarding higher education is difficult to access. Some of us have been offered places in universities and invited to come and enrol, only to be told on arrival that we cannot start as our status does not permit access to student finance.

**Changing policies:** Ever-changing policies make it even harder to know our rights regarding education and mean that many educational institutions are reluctant to support us. In 2017 some of us were banned from studying by a randomly applied immigration bail condition.<sup>1</sup> Although the decisions were later overturned, this took several months, further increasing the gap since we last studied and further damaging our confidence.

### Initiatives and recommendations

Since April 2017 the University of East London has been offering an Erasmus+ funded ten-week weekend course for refugees and asylum seekers who wish to prepare for university studies. In addition to the core teaching team, the course is run by enthusiastic volunteers, who are students and staff in UEL, colleagues in other institutions and community actors. This Open Learning Initiative (OLive) course

offers English language tuition, academic skills and writing, academic lectures, IT literacy, creative writing, photography and other workshops and classes. It also offers students advice in planning their pathways through education: choosing universities and programmes, finding scholarships and getting through the application processes. An important aspect of this course is the physical access to higher education institutions and networking opportunities it provides.

The course – the first one of this kind in the UK – has the potential to support new arrivals in their first steps towards achieving independence by providing them with the necessary skills to eventually make meaningful progress in their personal and educational development. It also provides a space for social gathering and peer support for forced migrants, who often feel isolated. The main limitations of the programme are lack of funds for travel, lack of access to childcare and limited opportunities after the course finishes. As opportunities like this are very limited in all of the UK, some students travel long distances to attend, coming from as far as Birmingham, Swansea and Manchester.

We welcome the scholarship schemes that many universities have established but there needs to be better coordination and availability of information regarding these opportunities, not least inside the institutions which offer them. More scholarship opportunities are also needed, countrywide, in a broader variety of courses and universities, and these should be supported by the State as well as by individual universities.

Scholarships alone, however, do not solve all the issues. We would like to encourage other universities, especially those outside London, to develop access, pre-sessional and foundation programmes with fee waivers and additional funds for travel and study materials for forced migrants. Community-based education programmes outside formal educational institutions are also important as they can help enhance the skills we require for studying and working in the UK, and can also help us form supportive communities, reducing the sense of exclusion.

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Although Student Action for Refugees and Article 26<sup>2</sup> have made great efforts to make information available regarding rights and opportunities, this should also be more readily available through the State-provided support structure for those in the asylum process. We would welcome an open and accessible platform that provides information in several languages about the education system, application processes, students' rights and available support. We would also like to see the setting up of educational consultation centres where we could find support and access all this information.

Some of the barriers we have faced, especially financial ones, are particular to the UK but most apply in all host-country contexts. A wider perspective and a large-scale evaluation of the challenges faced by forced migrants, involving all stakeholders, is needed. This would help the UK and other host countries to develop better strategies and policies to improve displaced people's access

to education at all levels. We believe education is key to life. It benefits each of us individually but it also has a positive impact on those around us. Through higher education we can obtain knowledge, skills and qualifications that can give us better jobs and better lives.

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1. See article by Baron in this issue.
2. See Article 26 <http://article26.hkf.org.uk> and Student Action for Refugees [www.star-network.org.uk](http://www.star-network.org.uk)
3. Susan Razawy, Elizabeth, Senait, Jamaalatu, Nisaar Ahmeed, Fernando Chathveragh, Majid Adin, Rajmonda Kurti, Mohamed Alie Jalloh, Elizabeth K Johnson, Fatema, Elijah, B U, Ghirmay, Talatu Stella Bernard, Hatixhe Madana, Cleofe Pingol, Saud Aman, Adnan Baessa, Mahmoudod Sarsak, Younes Soaryeni, Muhammad Babar and Yusuf Ferah Iman.

## Accessing and thriving in education in the UK

Catherine Gladwell

**Research shows that significant barriers confront refugee and asylum-seeker children arriving in the UK in terms of them getting into school and thriving in education. Central government, local authorities, schools and colleges and education professionals can take steps to help ensure these children receive timely and appropriate education.**

Despite statutory guidance that all looked-after children in England should be placed in education within 20 school days of their entry into care,<sup>1</sup> research from Refugee Support Network and UNICEF UK<sup>2</sup> shows that none of England's nine regions – nor those of Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland – has met this target for all unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) in local authority care.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, asylum-seeking children who arrive as part of families also often struggle to secure school places rapidly. The most significant delays occur in secondary and further education, where in one instance a quarter of children in one region have had to wait more than three months for a school or college place.

### Barriers to access

**At a systemic level,** access to education is delayed by: long waiting lists (particularly for those in Scotland aged 16 or over who require English for Speakers of Other Languages – ESOL – classes); complex online application processes that family members with low levels of literacy and information technology (IT) skills are unable to navigate; and the challenges of rapidly securing places for children who arrive in the middle of the academic year.

**At the school level,** entry into education is delayed primarily by three factors. First, there is a reluctance on the part of schools to enrol students at the upper-secondary

level due to fear of negatively influencing the school's overall performance in national examinations.<sup>4</sup> The majority of schools and education professionals consulted during the research were unaware that schools may apply to exclude from their results those pupils who speak English as a second language who have arrived in the course of the school years being examined. Second, there is a lack of readily available places for children with special educational needs (SEN), a lack which is particularly affecting those children with severe needs who have been resettled through the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme. The third factor creating this delay is specific to England, where local authorities must apply to the Secretary of State for Education to instruct an academy to accept a looked-after child. Given that as of January 2018 72% of secondary and 27% of primary schools in England were academies,<sup>5</sup> this requirement presents a significant challenge for many local authorities attempting to place such children.

**At the contextual level,** the research identifies three key barriers to access. First, significant numbers of children and families report remaining in temporary accommodation, where they are placed on arrival in the UK, for up to six months (meant to be a maximum of three weeks). During this time children typically are not enrolled in school in order to avoid disruption when they move, and they therefore miss a substantial part of their education. Second, a National Transfer Scheme has recently been introduced for unaccompanied children, dispersing them to areas of the UK with fewer unaccompanied minors. Although robust data on the impact

of this scheme on access to education are not available, children and social workers report delays, both because children are not placed in school while awaiting dispersal, and because dispersals take place without an education placement in the receiving locality being secured. Third, of the children interviewed for this study, those who had been subject to ongoing age assessments reported being kept out of school until their status as a minor was confirmed. Practices around age assessment vary – some local authorities treat children as being the age at which they present until it is proved otherwise; others treat those who may be adults as such until they are proved to be children. Just under a quarter of the UASC interviewed had to wait for a school or college place or were told they were not eligible as a result of an age assessment process. In all cases, this was ultimately overturned and the young person was admitted to school or college – but had typically missed several months of education.

The issue of age assessments is complex and teachers, social workers and practitioners repeatedly reported the challenge of balancing children's rights with the need for adequate safeguarding in schools.<sup>6</sup>

### Barriers to thriving in education

**At a systemic level,** refugee and asylum-seeker children's ability to thrive in education is negatively affected primarily by their placement in an academic context that does not facilitate appropriate progression. For many children, this means arriving in the UK at upper-secondary level and being placed on a national examination programme in a mainstream school where they are unable to achieve meaningful results because of their minimal language skills and interrupted



A resettled refugee receives additional IT support at the secondary school where she is a student.

UNHCR/Howard Davies

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educational history. For others it means arriving at the same age (14–16) but being placed on a part-time ESOL course and having little opportunity to achieve their full academic potential. Outstanding examples of good practice do exist: school-based provision of study towards a more limited number of national qualifications than would usually be taken, with fully integrated English language support, or college-based provision of full-time ESOL with integrated mathematics, IT and other subjects, offering clear progression routes. However, these are typically found only in large cities that have significant numbers of newly arriving refugee and asylum-seeker children.

**At the school level**, the ability of these children to remain and thrive in education is negatively affected by insufficient English as an Additional Language (EAL) support in some schools; challenges diagnosing and addressing SEN when combined with EAL needs; bullying and social issues; and a lack of awareness among some teachers and other staff of broader issues affecting refugee and asylum-seeker children. Broader contextual factors include mental health difficulties, particularly those associated with past experiences and those relating to the asylum process, which can lead to increased absences and exclusions; poverty, particularly linked to the ability to afford educational resources, participate in school trips, and travel to and from school; and living in precarious accommodation.

### Interim provision and improving access

Several local authorities have developed innovative interim education provision for UASC and resettled children who are awaiting a school place. The Virtual School<sup>7</sup> in Croydon local authority, for example, has established a programme of interim education for UASC. Based within a local secondary school, it offers three days of face-to-face learning per week, in a variety of subjects in addition to English language provision.

**At the systemic level**, using the additional payments schools receive to support

children in care innovatively can help in providing interim solutions. In Croydon, for example, Pupil Premium funds (a per-head allowance) were historically used to pay for individual language tutoring but have now been pooled to create more substantial, group-based provision. Our research also found that the level of engagement and dedication of individual local authority and school- or college-based staff makes a significant difference to individual children.

**At the school level**, the development of a school-wide ethos of welcome for refugee and asylum-seeker children was shown to increase the acceptance of their applications, and substantial liaison with voluntary sector advocates and support workers was a significant factor in helping overcome a variety of barriers to access. Several young people, for example, explained that their attempts to enrol in secondary school or further education had failed but that being accompanied to meetings with school or college staff members by an advocate or support worker had ultimately helped secure them a place.

### Thriving in education

The research found that the ability of refugee and asylum-seeker children to thrive in education is facilitated by six key factors:

- the presence of a committed, caring adult, who will support them over an extended period of time (which appears to be particularly important for unaccompanied children)
- the opportunity to participate in education programmes where content and curriculum have been appropriately adapted to meet their needs
- the availability of substantial pastoral care and mental health support within the school setting (particularly important given the long waiting lists and inaccessibility of many out-of-school counselling, therapy and mental health support services)
- partnerships between schools or colleges and specialist voluntary sector

organisations that can facilitate the provision of on-site advice, guidance and support

- creative approaches to peer support within the school or college, including buddy schemes and school-wide awareness raising about forced migration
- the provision of training on meeting the educational needs of refugee and asylum-seeker children for all teachers and other school or college staff as part of continuing professional development.

Our research gives rise to the following recommendations to UK central government policymakers:

- recognise that all children, including asylum-seeker children in temporary accommodation, should receive an education
- encourage the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OFSTED) – the government-run schools' inspector – to consider and make reference in their inspections to work undertaken by schools to accommodate the needs of refugee and asylum-seeker children
- review, and consider simplifying, the process by which the Secretary of State can require an academy to accept a pupil
- provide better and clearer information to schools on new EAL arrivals at the upper-secondary level, including ensuring that schools are aware of provisions enabling them to exclude these children from their results profiles
- increase the number of available funded ESOL hours for 16–18 year olds
- ensure that training provided to the prospective senior designated mental health leads in schools (posts that all schools are now encouraged to have) will include specific content on supporting refugee and asylum-seeker children.

Central government policymakers and local authorities should seek to build on and raise awareness of existing good practice across England, Scotland and

Wales by improving networking and information-sharing opportunities for professionals working in education for refugee and asylum-seeker children.

Additionally, local authorities should:

- develop initial guidance on appropriate curriculum and good practice for interim provision for UASC
- provide specialist training on the educational needs of UASC for key personnel (social workers, key workers and Leaving Care Personal Advisors) where expert UASC teams no longer exist.

Schools and colleges should:

- ensure teachers at all levels are trained, as a standard part of their continuing professional development, in the educational support needs of refugee and asylum-seeker children
- consider implementing interventions such as peer-support schemes and expert partnerships with external refugee youth charities.

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1. Department for Education (2014, updated 2018) *Promoting the education of looked-after children* [bit.ly/Looked-after-children-education-UK-2018](http://bit.ly/Looked-after-children-education-UK-2018)
2. UNICEF UK and Refugee Support Network (2018) *Education for Refugee and Asylum Seeking Children: Access and Equality in England, Scotland and Wales* [bit.ly/UNICEF-RNN-Access-to-Education-2018](http://bit.ly/UNICEF-RNN-Access-to-Education-2018)
3. In the UK, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are placed in the care of their local authority. A child who has been in the care of their local authority for more than 24 hours is known as a looked-after child. Looked-after children are also often referred to as children in care.
4. In the UK, pupils' attainment in national examinations is one of the factors used to rank schools in regularly published league tables.
5. National Audit Office (2018) *Converting maintained schools to academies* [bit.ly/NationalAuditOffice-academies-2018](http://bit.ly/NationalAuditOffice-academies-2018)
6. See Busler D (2016) 'Psychosocial age assessments in the UK', *Forced Migration Review* issue 52 [www.fmreview.org/solutions/busler](http://www.fmreview.org/solutions/busler)
7. 'Virtual School' is the term used by local authorities for their provision of education support to all looked-after children in their care.

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## Learning in resettlement

Marwa Belghazi

**Education is a central element of resettled families' lives, and providing support to parents and children to learn about and integrate into the education system is essential.**

When parents tell me and my colleagues – practitioners within a refugee resettlement support service – why they decided to bring their family to the UK, most say that it was for their children. We know that therefore some of the first questions asked by both parents and children from a newly resettled family will be about schools. Children will ask when school starts and which class they will be in; parents will want to know, for example, how far the school is from their new home and whether it contains any speakers of their mother tongue. Most children that we support have not had a supportive learning environment following their displacement. Accounts of bullying and cruelty towards Syrian pupils in Jordanian and Lebanese schools, for example, are very common; children and parents arrive, therefore, with assumptions about teachers and apprehensions about corporal punishment.

An admissions appointment – the first meeting between family and school representatives – is the foundation of a family's relationship with the education system in the UK. During this appointment they can ask all the questions they wish to ask and also share their concerns about potential challenges for their children. It is essential to have a bilingual practitioner present at this appointment to ensure that parents understand how the school operates. This includes the uniforms required and where to procure them, the types of curriculum that will be taught, drop-off and pick-up places and timings, school holidays, and the policies governing absences, anti-bullying and violence. The first meeting with the school should also introduce the small details that are important to the child's experience, such as through a guided tour of the school to show parents and child what the classrooms are like, where the canteen is and what types of food are offered.

Once a child puts on their uniform and enters school, they are like any other child. Many children and parents are therefore nervous about the possible 'othering' impact of differentiated provision where the child is extracted from the regular classroom to attend separate English as an Additional Language (EAL) classes. We have therefore set up meetings with parents to help them to understand the need to support the children through a transitional period catering to their additional needs so they will ultimately integrate with the other children. However, the acronyms and specialised vocabulary that are used by professionals in these discussions can seem alien and threatening. Organisations who provide support can help by providing clear explanations of these seemingly complicated terms and processes.

### Receiving praise and support

A question often asked by parents relates to how best to track their children's educational progress. Some parents are used to teachers in their home country setting homework on a daily basis and complain that teachers in the UK rarely set homework. Rewards and appraisal systems, however, can help parents to follow their children's progress from different angles; for example, teachers can issue stars and certificates to demonstrate that the child had been respectful, helpful and so forth.

In addition, parents' evenings, which children attend alongside their parents, can help parents gather feedback from teachers, especially at secondary level, as it is one of the few times parents get to see their children's exercise books and hear about their lessons. The child is praised in front of the parents and more details are given about their progress and how the parents can encourage this at home. Again, it is strongly advisable to ensure a bilingual practitioner attends



A recently resettled three-year-old from Aleppo, Syria, paints at the nursery school which he has just started attending in London.

those meetings. Additionally, as parents with very little understanding of English may struggle to understand their children's homework, these meetings with teachers can help a support worker to better understand the needs of the child and consider how to find appropriate ways to support them, such as through homework clubs, mentoring and other projects that may be offered by local and national organisations to support refugees and asylum seekers with their education.

### Giving children a voice

At admissions appointments and parents' evenings, children should also be given a chance to have their voices heard, to speak of their previous experiences of education and also to meet – early on – people who will be important in their day-to-day school life. Schools are also a good place in which to encourage host-community children to develop empathy towards their new classmates and to be involved in making school a caring, welcoming environment. Small things that can make a big difference include having a lunch partner or play buddy, and ideally introducing or identifying a staff member who speaks the same language to enable the child to communicate with his/her peers. This can also ensure parents feel confident that their child is capable of expressing themselves in times of crisis.

Among good practice shown by schools is providing children with a visual resource

pack to help them to express their emotions, and to equip the spaces of learning and socialising with rules set out in picture or symbol form. Allowing pupils to consult dictionaries or access tablets to use online translation tools or providing small whiteboards where they can draw or sketch answers (and correct them as they go without leaving a permanent trace of their errors) are other ways that can help children to convey meaning despite language difficulties.

We cannot stress enough the importance of children continuing to use and learn their mother tongue. This allows children to maintain the link with their heritage and their sense of identity, to link up with their previous years of learning and to ensure parents can maintain a clear channel of communication. We have noticed children refraining from speaking their mother tongue once they start school, or asking their parents not to address them in it. This has been linked to feelings of shame around an element of their identity that sets them apart from the rest of their classmates – or can simply be a reproduction of the rules inside the English-speaking classroom. We have supported parents to register their children in weekend classes where they are taught their mother tongue. When possible, teachers should encourage students to talk or write in their first language when planning and offering responses. If there is a bilingual teaching assistant or a pupil who speaks

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the same language, interpreting should be facilitated in order to enable the child to participate more fully in the conversation.

Southfields Academy in south-west London provides a good example of how a school can champion pupil diversity.<sup>1</sup> Its International Group comprises about 150 pupils who have arrived in the English school system from abroad, and includes migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and unaccompanied minors. Newly resettled children can share – as a group – their experience of transitioning into the learning environment. An entire area of the school is reserved for this group of children where they can feel part of the norm, not the exception. Each staff member who teaches them is made aware of the challenges these children face in terms of language and different experience of methods of learning. Volunteers serve as mentors to the students to help them with their English language learning but also with their learning outside school and with planning for the future in terms of career advice and higher education pathways.

### School as a wider source of empowerment

Learning spaces also have the potential to empower other family members, especially women. Since women are the primary care givers in the refugee families we support, they are fully involved in the practical preparations of getting to and from school and are very aware of what their children are learning, following up with children on their day at school, seeking feedback from teachers and attending meetings. This involvement is one of their major motivations to learn English. Children have young brains capable of absorbing more information and are immersed in an English-speaking environment, and they also enjoy acting as teachers for their elders.

Schools can have many further positive impacts on the family's life beyond the provision of education to their children. For example, morning coffee gatherings at school, held after parents have dropped off their children, can provide opportunities for parents to meet. This can help to ease the isolation some may experience,

create links between communities and offer parents the opportunity to share similar experiences and to get to know the school and its staff. Some schools also offer parents English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes. The learning space is already familiar and, as the parent is already known to the school, they do not have to go through a process of assessment and form-filling to prove their eligibility. Classes run by their children's school may also fit better with parents' schedules.

Finally, schools are a safe space in which women can explore new training and work opportunities. Organisations supporting parents can help them to see that the experience they have of providing patient, consistent care to their children is a sought-after skill in childcare and teaching. For example, Single Homeless Project has recently brokered school-based employment opportunities for two refugee women, one as a lunch supervisor in a primary school and another as a teaching assistant – the first paid role both women have obtained since settling.<sup>2</sup>

Parents in displacement focus much of their energy on the upbringing and education of their children but they may have experience of trauma, have had bad experiences with schooling, or may simply have fears and apprehensions about the education of their children in their country of settlement. Parents should be accompanied in the process of learning about the school system, and children's voices should remain at the centre of the process. As their journey through school helps children to blossom and develop meaningful bonds with their peers and the world around them, parents will also start considering their own learning and growth.

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1. [www.southfieldsacademy.com](http://www.southfieldsacademy.com)

2. See also Belghazi M (2018) 'Supporting recently resettled refugees in the UK' *Forced Migration Review* issue 58  
[www.fmreview.org/economies/belghazi](http://www.fmreview.org/economies/belghazi)

## Schooling gaps for Syrian refugees in Turkey

Melissa Hauber-Özer

**Turkey and the wider international community must address gaps in educational provision so that Syrian refugees can access appropriate opportunities to learn.**

When displaced Syrians began to cross Turkey's south-eastern border in 2011, Turkey had no cohesive migration or asylum framework. Since then, a number of policies have been devised to fill gaps in services for the ever-increasing number of Syrian refugees, who now number 3.6 million, but these policies have been open to misinterpretation and have also changed frequently. Turkey has been a generous host, first through an open border policy and later, from 2014 onwards, through the assigning of 'temporary protection' status to Syrians. However, Turkey's policy framework was based on the assumption that the majority of Syrians would soon return home and failed to account for the challenges of protracted displacement.

As a result, despite generous funding and concentrated attention from the Turkish government, and to a more limited extent from the international community, many of those with temporary protection status live precariously, and access to education

and employment are of particular concern. Although Turkey does not technically consider Syrians as refugees, it has clear obligations as a UN Member State and as a signatory to human rights legislation to provide accessible, high-quality schooling for those living under its protection. However, constantly shifting legislation and inconsistent implementation at the local level make accessing that provision extremely challenging in practice.

### Temporary education centres

Initially, temporary education centres (TECs) were established in the 25 refugee camps built along the Turkey-Syria border as well as in communities with large numbers of refugees. They provided schooling based on the Syrian national curriculum, taught in Arabic, which was supplemented by Turkish language and history lessons. Typically funded by non-governmental organisations, these TECs were staffed by volunteer Syrian teachers, only some of whom had professional qualifications, and who received small stipends.

A lack of teacher training, consistent funding, authority to issue diplomas and a broader lack of supervision of the TECs by any Turkish authority created concerns about the quality of education they offered and about pupils' future options. Over time the vast majority of Syrians moved into Turkish communities due to overcrowding and limited employment opportunities in the camps but there were insufficient numbers of TECs in the areas where they were



UNHCR/Emrah Gürel

Syrian refugee children in Turkey, doing their homework.

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most needed. These concerns, compounded by the continuing conflict in Syria and displacement of its citizens, prompted the Turkish government to announce in 2016 that TECs would gradually be closed or turned into integrated public schools, with the goal of moving all Syrian children into Turkish-medium schools by 2020.

Many Turkish schools had faced overcrowding and resource limitations even before the Syrian conflict and are now struggling to absorb the additional numbers of students. Only 60% of Syrian children in Turkey are currently enrolled in school – a significant improvement on previous years but dismal compared to the near-universal schooling rates of this generation in pre-war Syria and the rate among native-born Turkish children.<sup>1</sup> Many refugee families report school administrators refusing to enrol their children or demanding payment of enrolment fees. If children are successfully enrolled, parents typically must pay for transportation and must purchase uniforms and supplies including notebooks, stationery and even textbooks – an enormous hardship for families surviving on limited cash assistance and informal labour.

Adolescent students, many of whom have missed several years of school, face particular challenges and just 20% of pupils at upper secondary level are in school. Distinctly gendered coping mechanisms – the result of long-term displacement – drive down both boys' and girls' attendance. Many adolescent boys are compelled to work to help support their families, often in exploitative conditions with very low wages. Girls are either kept at home due to fears of gender-based violence or, to ease the family's financial burden, married off well below the legal minimum age of 18, often as additional wives through illegal religious marriage ceremonies that leave them vulnerable to abuse and devoid of legal spousal rights.

### **Accommodating diversity in the school system**

Until 2014, Turkey lacked a comprehensive immigration policy that clearly defined asylum eligibility and procedures;

determination and administration of asylum status were largely delegated to provincial governments, leaving room for inconsistent interpretation and implementation. In addition, historically repressive approaches towards minority groups have contributed to a schooling system that emphasises a national culture and language and generally takes a 'sink or swim' approach to absorbing newcomers. The system is also highly centralised, and schools and districts are not permitted to alter the curriculum. With the support of funding from UNICEF and assistance from Turkish language centres TÖMER and Yunus Emre Institute, the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) is developing curricula for students learning Turkish as a second language, and designing related teacher training. However, these initiatives will take time to reach all classrooms, and in the meantime children are not given the support they need. Even with appropriate instruction, immigrant children need several years to build up the social and academic language required to keep pace with their native-speaking peers.

Disconcertingly, MoNE's teacher competency framework and strategy report fail to even mention the presence of those learning Turkish as a second language in the school system or the need to foster their inclusion. In addition, my informal survey of teacher education curricula at several large universities in Turkey suggests that trainee teachers receive very limited instruction in second language pedagogy. Those Syrian students who do attend school receive very little support in acquiring Turkish, in catching up on missed material, and in coping with psychosocial challenges associated with conflict, displacement and cultural adjustment.<sup>2</sup> As a result, social integration and academic achievement are limited and dropout rates high. For example, one primary school principal told me that of the school's approximately 700 Syrian students, just 40 are receiving Turkish as a second language instruction. Seven Syrian 'translators' offer in-class support to the remaining children but four of them speak no Turkish.

According to the principal, the situation is similar in most schools in the region.

Many public school teachers openly express frustration at the challenges of teaching Syrian students. For example, large Facebook groups – designed for sharing pedagogical tools and job vacancies and to foster social interaction – are rife with complaints about refugee students' abilities and behaviour. Although many group members do defend Syrian students, there is clearly a concerning lack of understanding among teachers about the challenges faced by the students, indicating insufficient administrative support and knowledge about working with refugee children. A large-scale study examining what professional development, official guidance, curricular modifications or other support teachers have received and what challenges they encounter would be helpful in evaluating the current approach and drawing attention to needed improvements.

Addressing gaps in educational provision will require continued national efforts to design and implement comprehensive policies, including those relating to teachers' professional development and to curriculum design. This massive undertaking will require increased financial support and the sharing of expertise in multicultural and multilingual

education by the international community. Many common instructional models used elsewhere could be considered. For example, in Australia refugee children attend separate Intensive English Centres for up to four terms before transitioning to public schools, while in many parts of the US English language learners attend separate, designated lessons within public schools, supported by teachers trained to address their needs. Other options include an accelerated education model or a bridging programme, like those established in Sudan and Afghanistan, to help displaced children prepare for the linguistic, cognitive and psychosocial challenges of school. To prevent a 'lost generation' of Syrian youth and the persistence of social cohesion difficulties, Turkey must carefully choose and consistently implement an appropriate approach.

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2. See Aydin H and Kaya Y (2017) 'The Educational Needs of and Barriers Faced by Syrian Refugee Students in Turkey: A Qualitative Case Study', *Intercultural Education* 1–18 <https://doi.org/10.1080/14675986.2017.1336373>

## Educating unaccompanied children in US shelters

Kylie Diebold, Kerri Evans and Emily Hornung

**Educational services provided to unaccompanied children in government-funded shelters in the US must be examined more critically in order to better meet the children's varied needs – and federal standards for public education.**

Since 2014, more than 250,000 unaccompanied children have arrived at the south-western border of the United States (US) in search of protection.<sup>1</sup> Upon arrival, most unaccompanied children are placed in the custody of the US Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Refugee Resettlement (HHS/ORR), and transferred to government-funded shelter facilities. Shelter facilities are contracted by HHS/

ORR to provide unaccompanied children with services including medical and mental health care, case management, recreation and educational programming. Since unaccompanied children are not permitted to enrol directly in the public school system while living in shelters, children must be offered on-site schooling that provides them with the knowledge and skills necessary to transition into a local school<sup>2</sup> when they

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leave the shelter to enter the care of a vetted caregiver.

### Educational requirements in shelters

In the US, all children, regardless of their immigration status, are entitled to access free public primary and secondary education. There are specific guidelines setting out the minimum educational standards and services for unaccompanied children who are detained in shelters. These have been adapted by HHS/ORR into its Unaccompanied Children Program Policies and Procedures (herein referred to as ORR Guide).<sup>3</sup> According to the ORR Guide, permanent shelter facilities must provide:

- an initial educational assessment within 72 hours of a child's admission to determine the child's level of academic development, literacy and linguistic ability
- educational services with six hours of instruction per day, Monday to Friday, to take place in a structured classroom environment, throughout the calendar year
- instruction in basic academic subject areas including science, social studies, mathematics, reading, writing, physical education, and English language development
- academic reports and progress notes for every student
- educational and classroom materials that are reflective of the children's diversity and that are sensitive to differences
- materials in all native languages represented at the facility
- curricula that include remedial education, after-school tutoring, and opportunities for academic advancement, such as special projects, independent studies and preparation courses for the General Educational Development (GED) test which provides certification equivalent to the US high school diploma.

### Practices and challenges

HHS/ORR currently operates more than 100 permanent shelters across 17 states,

which vary in size from fewer than 30 children to over 400 children. While these shelters must comply with the minimum educational requirements established by the ORR Guide, various factors including the facility's physical size, staff expertise, lack of a standardised curriculum and degree of support from the local school district mean that educational programming differs across shelters. With limited assistance from HHS/ORR, many shelters struggle to find the time and resources that are required to adequately develop curricula and implement creative educational services.

Shelters are often limited in the physical space they have available and must make adaptations to provide education to all children. Some shelters navigate this issue by organising schooling into shifts; however, finding teachers for the extended day can be a struggle. Shelters may also increase student-teacher ratios to accommodate more students. Whether students are grouped by age or according to academic development and linguistic ability is a decision taken by the shelter teachers, and both options pose challenges for classroom instruction.

A qualified teacher may not always be available to complete the initial educational assessment, meaning that a lesser-trained staff member may step in. When there are vacant teaching positions, candidates who do not meet all the ideal criteria (bilingual, certified to teach English language learners, and with knowledge about unaccompanied children) may be offered positions to prevent a gap in educational services to children.

Developing curricula to meet the diverse educational needs of unaccompanied children in shelters is a constant challenge. According to the ORR Guide, curriculum content should be based on local educational standards, be consistent with that facility's average length of stay and be tailored to the specific level and ability of each child. However, classrooms host students of varying ages and educational backgrounds who enter and exit care at different times. These factors – combined with behavioural issues, fluctuating levels of interest in education, and trauma responses – often

restrict the teachers' ability to adequately prepare students for entering a local school system after release. Individual students' needs can easily go unaddressed. Students who remain in care for longer than the average length of stay may repeat the curriculum if shelter staff cannot arrange new learning opportunities for them, which puts some students at risk of becoming disengaged and missing out on educational advancement.

As federally contracted facilities which receive financial grants, shelters should comply with federal laws and standards designed to protect students with disabilities, special needs or limited English skills, and take into account other factors such as race, gender identity and age. Although most unaccompanied children arriving at the south-western border are Spanish-speaking, some speak indigenous Mayan languages, and others are from countries such as Guinea, Ghana, India and Bangladesh, leading to linguistically diverse classrooms. Locating interpreters and culturally relevant materials for less widely spoken languages can be difficult, which hinders students' access. Furthermore, although federal law protects the rights of individuals with disabilities, students in shelters may not be properly diagnosed due to limited access to qualified and certified assessors. Without an accurate diagnosis and access to necessary support services, students with disabilities may struggle to learn.

Lastly, because educational programmes in shelters typically do not receive state or local funding and are not legally required to adhere to state educational standards and guidelines, the state is not involved in monitoring these programmes. Instead, HHS/ORR conducts minimal monitoring. Students do not participate in national or state standardised assessments and no uniform learning criteria or benchmarks have been developed for these programmes.

Despite these challenges, we offer several recommendations and opportunities to encourage student success, both while in shelter schools and when they transition to local schools.

### Introduction to shelter school

Unaccompanied children come from a wide variety of educational backgrounds and most are unfamiliar with educational norms and practices in the US. The classroom environment may be unlike anything the student has ever experienced before, especially if they did not attend school regularly in the past or if their school in their home country had severely limited resources. Teachers in shelters should help students to understand the rules, norms, practices and expectations of US schools. Students who do not learn how to act appropriately may be labelled negatively and be removed from the classroom once they transition to a local school. It is therefore important to teach positive behaviours from the outset. Providing individual or small group classroom orientations led by a teacher's assistant or other support staff that take place outside the main classroom can be beneficial in welcoming new students and helping them adjust while avoiding the scenario in which, with arrivals of new children occurring many times per week, children receive the same orientation multiple times. We also recommend that teachers incorporate daily living skills and US social norms into their teaching, as the students may not have previously been exposed to this information.

### Assessment and learning

Assessments for a student in a shelter should focus on the strengths and abilities of the student in his/her native language, rather than highlight knowledge gaps or lack of English language skills. These assessments should be thoughtfully designed to capture all the necessary information. We recommend that assessments are administered by a qualified educator who has the resources and training to appropriately identify a student's needs. An interpreter may be necessary to properly assess some students. Furthermore, shelters should avoid offering self-guided instruction unless the student completes the shelter's standard curriculum or is academically advanced. In these cases, distance learning programmes that allow students to gain secondary school

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credits are recommended, provided the coursework is overseen by a shelter teacher. For students with limited English or literacy skills, online language learning platforms and audio learning tools can reinforce what they learn in the classroom.

### Partnerships

Some shelters have explored establishing partnerships with their local school districts to assist with the provision of educational services to unaccompanied children.<sup>4</sup> These partnerships can expand access to qualified teachers, special education services and experienced evaluators of educational needs and disabilities. Partnerships with school districts may also offer students who stay for an extended period in a shelter access to enhanced curricula and the opportunity to obtain credit for the classes they pass. This increases the likelihood that they will complete the secondary school course requirements before they reach the upper age limit to obtain a secondary school diploma (age 21 in most US states). Partnerships with local school districts may also increase general monitoring of educational programming in shelters and help to ensure that it aligns with state requirements. Given that local school districts are not obliged to educate students in shelters and do not receive state funding to do so, we recommend that HHS/ORR provides financial support to boost and sustain this collaboration.

### Local school districts

The full range of professionals who are involved in education for unaccompanied children should advocate for the quick and fair enrolment of students in local schools once they have left shelters. Once enrolled, we recommend that an orientation is provided and that the student is assessed in order to properly determine class placement and necessary support services. Shelter teachers can support these efforts by sending detailed educational records and recommendations for specific services or an Individualized Education Plan with children when they leave the shelter. Caregivers should be instructed to bring this paperwork both when

they enrol the child and for the teacher on the child's first day at school. Additionally, schools must adhere to guidance issued by the US Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights<sup>5</sup> and ensure that documents are translated and interpreters are offered for sponsoring guardians with limited English proficiency so that they can actively engage in their child's education. Lastly, we recommend that educators and other service providers continue to seek new strategies for successful outcomes and advocate for fair treatment for all unaccompanied children in their communities.

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The opinions expressed herein are those of the authors alone and do not necessarily represent the opinions or positions of the USCCB, Pennsylvania Counseling Services or Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service.

1. A child under the age of eighteen who arrives at the US border without lawful immigration status or a parent or legal guardian to provide care and physical custody is considered an unaccompanied child.
2. In the US, public schools are grouped into school districts, which are governed by school boards. Each district is an independent special-purpose government, which operates under the guidelines of the US federal government, each US state government, and its local school board.
3. Office of Refugee Resettlement (2015) *ORR Guide: Children Entering the United States Unaccompanied* [bit.ly/ORRguide-UAC-2015](http://bit.ly/ORRguide-UAC-2015)
4. Ho S (2018) 'US school districts weigh duty to youth migrant shelters' [bit.ly/BostonNews-US-schools-districts-shelters](http://bit.ly/BostonNews-US-schools-districts-shelters)
5. US Department of Education (2018) *Schools' Civil Rights Obligations to English Learner Students and Limited English Proficient Parents* [www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/ellresources](http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/ellresources)

## Teachers in displacement: learning from Dadaab

Mohamed Duale, Ochan Leomoi, Abdullahi Aden, Okello Oyat, Arte Dagane and Abdikadir Abikar

**Despite the challenges they face, refugee teachers believe in the potential of education to transform the lives of refugee learners and communities. Their voices and needs must inform refugee education provision in order to improve access and outcomes.**

The Dadaab refugee camps in north-east Kenya, which were opened in 1991 for refugees fleeing Somalia's civil war, currently host around 225,000 people. Fifty-eight per cent are under the age of 18 and are served by 35 preschool centres, 35 primary schools and six secondary schools in the camps, which are run by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or are privately run, in addition to community-operated Quranic schools.<sup>1</sup> The poor quality of schools run by NGOs has led in recent years to a growth in the number of private schools, which charge the equivalent of US \$15 per month to attend primary school and \$30 to attend secondary school. These fees are prohibitive for most refugee families in the Dadaab camps, who rely on humanitarian assistance.

### Teacher training and resources

Among the factors affecting the quality of NGO-run schools in particular is the lack of development available to refugee teachers (that is, teachers who are themselves refugees), who comprise the majority of primary and secondary school teachers in the Dadaab camps. Refugee teachers, 72% of whom have only secondary school qualifications, often have to depend on their own experience of schooling to inform their pedagogy and classroom management. They have few opportunities for training other than being briefed on the organisational policies of the NGO that is running the school. The NGOs cite inadequate funding as the reason why they do not organise formal training or employ a sufficient number of refugee teachers.

The most obvious consequence of having insufficiently trained teachers is that teachers rely heavily on memorisation and testing rather than inquiry-based learning, which undercuts creativity and critical thinking.

Learners who have gaps in knowledge, learning disabilities or behavioural issues (that may be based on underlying trauma) are not adequately supported and this contributes to absenteeism and dropouts. Teachers lack culturally relevant curricula and they also lack training on how to implement and modify curriculum resources and pedagogy. The resources that are available are often insufficient to support the numbers of learners and teachers, affecting both the quality of instruction and student achievement.

### Overcrowding

Classrooms in the Dadaab camps are all significantly overcrowded, hosting 80 to



Hormud primary school in Dadaab's Ifo camp hosts over 2,000 refugee students.

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100 learners. Large class sizes affect the ways in which teachers provide daily instruction through verbal and non-verbal communication and also reduce opportunities for teachers to provide differentiated instruction and to accommodate students with differing abilities. From our experience of teaching in the Dadaab camps, we know that overcrowded classrooms in which students compete for scarce seating room contributed to increased incidences of student conflict and misbehaviour. Teachers in Dadaab often spend a disproportionate amount of time settling disputes between students, which reduces teaching time. As a result, untrained teachers sometimes come to see corporal punishment as a way of maintaining discipline. One concerned refugee teacher explained that “here in Dadaab, the stick used for punishment is often referred to as the assistant teacher”.

The use of corporal punishment can have negative psychosocial consequences for learners, reproduce existing power structures

and inequalities and imply that problems can be solved by force and obedience to authority. Studies from around the world have linked physical punishment to student absenteeism and dropout as pupils come to see school as an unfriendly environment, and it can be particularly harmful for refugee students who will have experienced trauma or seen their family and friends traumatised.

### **Precarious working conditions**

Refugee teachers are often those who were near the top of their graduating class in secondary school, speak multiple languages, and work as a bridge between NGOs and refugee communities. However, they face numerous challenges, including a lack of coordination between education authorities and refugee registration authorities, obstacles to obtaining accreditation and employment as teachers, and hostility and exclusion from teachers’ unions.<sup>2</sup> Practical conditions are also very difficult, with refugee teachers sometimes commuting long distances within or outside of their camp, to work in large and insufficiently supported classrooms.

Most refugee teachers in Kenya are untrained and unlicensed. As refugees do not have the right to work in Kenya, refugee teachers are hired as so-called ‘incentive workers’ and paid a fixed low wage, typically a fraction of what a Kenyan national would be given for working in the same position<sup>3</sup> – and that remuneration remains the same irrespective of whether they obtain post-secondary qualifications. Refugee teachers are not permitted to earn more than the incentive wage and are penalised if they engage in additional paid work. The disparities between refugee and non-refugee teachers has made the vocation less attractive to educated refugee professionals, particularly women, who look for less stressful work given responsibilities of care at home. UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, negotiates the refugee teachers’ wage with the Kenyan government and refugee teachers are expected to make do with incentive pay as their refugee status entitles them to in-kind shelter and food assistance. Refugee teachers are thus much more vulnerable than Kenyan national



teachers to being dismissed during funding shortfalls, demotion, being over-looked in recruitment processes and to discrimination based on legal status and ethnicity. Elsewhere in Kenya, for example, refugee teachers and headteachers in the Kakuma refugee camp were recently suddenly replaced by Kenyan teachers, at the Kenyan authorities' request.<sup>4</sup>

Refugee teachers are not usually consulted on matters concerning teaching and learning in the school, employment terms and conditions or curriculum implementation. Such practices undermine the professionalism of refugee teachers in general and the authority of refugee headteachers in particular. Moreover, refugee teachers still face the social, economic and political challenges of being a refugee. They are at risk of violence and extortion from police and other armed officials. They may need time off work to attend to illness or death in the family, a frequent reality in refugee camps where outbreaks of fire, violence and communicable diseases are a regular occurrence. Nonetheless, they may find that the support that is more typically available to national and international staff is difficult to access.

### Towards reform

There is an inherent contradiction in organising education, which requires significant and sustained planning around an approach that stems from emergency thinking – an assumption that displacement will be short-term and temporary. To improve the quality and inclusiveness of refugee education, funders and humanitarian stakeholders should invest in the training of refugee teachers, reduce class sizes, and provide greater access to curriculum resources. NGOs should establish pay parity between nationals and highly qualified refugee teachers; this would help to both retain expertise and support the overall professional development of teachers in the camps, in particular by mentoring novice and untrained teachers.

Refugee teachers have long sought change,<sup>5</sup> and humanitarian actors have recognised the need to reform refugee education,<sup>6</sup> and our proposal for reform is

aligned with these perspectives. Regional systemic reviews should be carried out through consultation with key stakeholders – particularly refugee teachers, students, parents, community leaders, NGOs, donors, national educational authorities and academics – to consider long-term, fundamental reform of refugee education. Refugees, especially refugee educators, must have meaningful participation in the planning and provision of education for refugees since it is refugees, above all others, who have the most to gain from reform. Without reform, efforts to advance refugee education will ultimately be undermined by a lack of participation, reinforcing the notion of refugees as passive and governed by the humanitarian community, rather than as people with opinions about how their lives should be organised.

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## Child labour and school attendance in Turkey

Ozlem Erden

**Promoting self-sufficiency for displaced populations can have the unintended consequence of undermining efforts to provide education for all Syrian children.**

In Turkey, the concept of ‘self-sufficiency’ is an essential and widely accepted part of the country’s approach to accommodating Syrian refugees. Both locals and Syrians believe that anyone can build a new life through hard work or by establishing businesses. However, this self-sufficiency approach is risky because it trivialises education in comparison with work and fosters a belief among Syrian adults and children that education will not immediately improve their quality of life and is therefore less important than gaining skills for work.

The number of Syrian child workers is vastly underestimated. As parents cannot make sufficient money to cover their daily expenses, they look for options to increase their household income and one such option is to send children in the family out to work. This situation jeopardises schooling for boys because both Syrian and local communities have patriarchal structures and believe that the breadwinners should be male members of the family. Local employees and people are supportive of child labour because of the widely held belief that Syrian children will not be unemployed in the future if they begin working at a young age and gain skills. Interestingly, however, local people do not send their own boys to work because they fear enforcement of the Turkish Child Labour Law which forbids children under the age of 13 from working. How then can Syrian children be allowed to work?

### Realities and implications

I visited 15 public schools, 25 temporary education centres and a Syrian school during fieldwork in the Central Anatolian Region in the 2015–16 school year and met hundreds of Syrian children under the age of 13. Before starting my fieldwork, I obtained statistics on the number of Syrian refugees attending public schools. According to these

official statistics, there were only a few Syrian students in each school. In reality, however, public schools had more students than those recorded. For example, one of the schools I visited was recorded as having 39 Syrian students but actually had 134. By the end of the school year, though, this number had dropped to 95. Among these dropouts, only three students were officially transferred to another school; of the others, some began working in local shops or other workplaces in order to help their families and others became part-time apprentices.

A local employer with two young refugee employees sums up the beliefs held by the local and Syrian communities:

*“I have two Syrian apprentices. One is 11 years old, and the other is 12 years old. I liked Rahman, so I asked his family elders whether they have another boy as hardworking as Rahman. So, I got this little one... I do my best to help them by providing jobs. They do not go to school. I teach them some skills to earn a living in the future. Suppose they go to school: how many years do they need to go? Maybe, ten years. Then what? They will not have any job. These people need to know how to stand on their feet.”*

Syrian families make strategic decisions about which of their children should go to school and which of them should work. For example, Ahmad is a refugee student whose family has chosen that he should go to school – as his family needs a Turkish-speaking member to help them with matters such as hospital appointments and job applications – while his brother works with his father. Syrian parents make these decisions based on their children’s academic abilities and their gender. In this case, Ahmad goes to school because he shows more aptitude for learning Turkish than his brother. However, it is probable that he will drop out of school once his language skills have reached the required level to help

his family in social settings. And families' and the local community's focus on self-sufficiency shapes refugee students' own perceptions of the value of school and education. Although some refugee students told me that they think education helps them integrate and offers a better future, many of them do not believe that education can improve their lives.

### Refugee education policies

Teachers are strongly against child labour but do not know how to address these problems. They are aware of the underlying reasons such as poverty and local understandings of self-sufficiency and are therefore hesitant to criticise Syrian parents. One teacher discusses the dilemmas:

*"Children should not work when they are studying. But they need to support their family. ...Here, many of them are happy to learn Turkish. Parents are also happy because they think their children can find better jobs or help them get support when they need translators. Believe me, sometimes I feel guilty because when we teach Turkish, these children find jobs so quickly."*

School teachers and administrators associate the illegal labour of Syrian children with the shortcomings in Turkey's school enrolment and attendance policy. According to the policy, Syrian students without a temporary protection card can register with a school on condition that they apply for the identity card when they begin school. However, without a card, a student's details are not officially recorded and the authorities do not know if and when a student moves to another school or drops out completely. Many teachers record the Syrian children's names on the class register by hand. Additionally, Turkey's usual strict attendance rules do not apply to Syrian students. Schools are therefore having immense difficulty in tracking the attendance of Syrian children.

The principal of a public primary school discusses the problems:

*"We know that some children, particularly boys, leave school for work. Their parents enter them as apprentices in some workplaces. They need money, you know. I tried to convince parents to send their*

*kids to school. They seem convinced when I talk to them because they fear the authorities but, in the end, they do whatever they want. Recently, I saw one of the dropout Syrian students in a barbershop. Poor kid, he is only nine years old and is working. I asked his employer to send him at least to one of the shifts of the school. He said at first that "school is unnecessary for him, he needs to have skills." After talking for a while, he agreed to send the kid to the afternoon shift. If we could track these students [through the identity card system], their parents would not have an option other than sending their kids to school."*

Turkish educational authorities are working hard to reduce dropout rates by offering alternative vocational education but this approach actually serves to further legitimise the ongoing conversation about the greater importance of labour skills. And despite the occasional enforcement of the Child Labour Law, it seems that the problems will continue as long as influential people in local society support child labour in the cause of self-sufficiency.

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### The Global Education Cluster Toolkit

The Global Education Cluster (GEC) is an open formal forum, established under the IASC, for coordination and collaboration on education in humanitarian crises. It brings together NGOs, UN agencies, academics and other partners under the shared goal of ensuring predictable, well-coordinated and equitable provision of education for populations affected by humanitarian crises.

The GEC Toolkit provides templates, tools and guidance for Education Cluster coordination staff in the field. Although adaptable to different contexts, the tools and documents offer a way to standardise the work of the Education Cluster and issues that are common to many contexts. The Toolkit tools, guidance and resources are not general EiE documents but focus specifically on Cluster work and coordination issues.

The Toolkit is regularly updated in line with best practices and newly developed tools. Currently available in English; French and Arabic translations will follow. The GEC depends on country coordination teams' feedback to further develop the Toolkit. For more details: <http://bit.ly/GEC-Toolkit> or contact: [help.edcluster@humanitarianresponse.info](mailto:help.edcluster@humanitarianresponse.info).

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## Inter-sectoral cooperation for Afghan refugee education in Iran

Reem Shammout and Olivier Vandecasteele

**A recent decree in Iran removed a legal barrier to undocumented refugee children attending school but other barriers remain. One NGO discusses the successes and challenges of adopting an inter-sectoral approach to breaking down these barriers.**

Iran hosts over three and half million displaced Afghans. Some 951,000 Afghans have de facto refugee status through the *Amayesh* scheme,<sup>1</sup> which allows them to live and move within the province in which they are registered; 620,000 hold passports with temporary visas; and an additional 1.5 to 2 million undocumented Afghans live in Iran without legal status. The last group is the most vulnerable, having almost no legal access to essential services.

The Iranian government has always granted documented refugee children access to the public education system but children without documentation did not have the same privilege until recently. In May 2015, a new decree opened up school registration for all undocumented Afghan children. Their families can now apply for a 'blue card' – the education pass that facilitates school registration for their child. Blue card holders and their families are also protected from being sent back to Afghanistan as long as the child is attending school.

This change in policy is a real breakthrough for refugee education in Iran, and there has been a considerable surge in student enrolment numbers. However, the decree only removed the legal/documentation barriers to education. Other barriers remain.

The decree has put additional pressure on an already overstretched public education system, with over-crowded classrooms and a lack of educational materials and equipment. There has been little investment in school infrastructure and, according to media reports, 30% of schools are in poor repair and need rebuilding or refurbishing.<sup>2</sup>

There is an important financial barrier as well. Many families are unable to afford education-related costs (such as uniforms,

stationery and health checks). The situation is exacerbated if the school is distant and children require transportation. While recent research shows that education is a priority for Afghan parents, some simply cannot afford it. Many children work or have access only to informal education that is less costly but cannot provide formal certification that would allow children to continue their studies. The recent re-introduction of US sanctions against Iran is further exacerbating the financial challenges for the most vulnerable households.

Furthermore, while the decree has provided access to primary education, children find it hard to continue to secondary education. Those lucky enough to do so have few options. Higher education is only available for those who hold passports with visas; vocational training opportunities are limited; and entrepreneurship and small business ownership often operate in the informal economy.

And finally, many of the refugees are in hard-to-reach areas and/or lack documentation, making them harder to find. The education decree, however, provided an opportunity for humanitarian actors to identify and reach many of those families.

### A holistic response

It was clear from the beginning that it was not simply a case of supporting families to obtain a blue card and register their children in school. A more holistic response was needed. The assistance provided by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) therefore combined different practical, in-kind and training components. Most of the schools are mixed, attended by both Afghan and Iranian children. Our shelter teams assessed

the physical state of school buildings and made the necessary repairs, making the learning environments safer and more pleasant. The water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) teams refurbished or built facilities such as hand-washing points, latrines and drinking water fountains. WASH teams also delivered hygiene kits and hygiene promotion training to both Iranian and Afghan parents and children. Participating in this training brought the two communities together in an activity important to both. Our information, counselling and legal assistance unit (ICLA), meanwhile, provided information to any undocumented families they encountered about how to obtain the blue card. The ICLA team also provided cash assistance, which could be used to obtain documentation and therefore better access school or to directly pay for education-related costs. And the education teams assessed the schools' needs, providing equipment such as desks, libraries and educational supplies. The education team also supported the Directorate of Education to deliver life skills trainings to Afghan and Iranian parents and teachers.

We had also been collaborating with a government organisation, the Literacy Movement Organisation. Children who required accelerated education programmes – 'catch-up' classes – were enrolled in the organisation's literacy and numeracy classes (accompanied by life skills sessions) and then allowed to enter formal school at the age-appropriate level so that they could sit with children of the same age. This programme was now opened up to undocumented children as well.

Our aim is to apply a comprehensive, integrated approach that will address the family unit as a whole in order to make the home environment as conducive to learning and cognitive development as the school. An integrated approach means addressing the needs of the learning environment as a whole; basic services such as shelter, health, civil documentation and livelihoods are all part of the package – with protection at the core – in order to help families as much as possible to send their children to school and to stay in school. For example, helping a household

to secure a livelihood opportunity for one adult in the family may ensure that a child no longer has to work – and assisting a family to rectify its legal status in the country may mean that the adult has access to a higher number of professions. Additionally, a pilot project that we ran in 2016, in collaboration with UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, showed that involving parents in the literacy and numeracy classes along with their children meant that parents' appreciation for the value of education increased. For example, many fathers who had opposed sending their girls to school changed their views and attitudes towards girls' education.

### Key elements in this approach

A recent evaluation by an external consultant identified the following elements that contributed to the successes of this approach.<sup>3</sup>

#### **Decentralised organisational structure:**

Moving away from a very centralised way of working (where most decision making was based in the country office) by appointing senior programme managers, specialised programme teams for each core competency, and support teams in each geographical area office has allowed us to focus on high-quality provincial project implementation, including frequent field visits. This structure enables faster expansion, as necessary, to additional provinces where there are unmet education needs. Senior specialists for each core competency, based in Tehran, offer support to different area teams for project implementation. The programme specialists help to design projects, raise important policy-related and technical issues, and provide training for the implementation staff. The specialists are also responsible for the strategic direction and technical quality of the whole country programme.

#### **Concentration of efforts and resources in a limited number of geographical locations:**

Focusing from the very beginning on just two provinces – Qom and Kerman – enabled us to make a significant difference to the large Afghan populations living there. Making frequent visits to education

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stakeholders and the Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrant Affairs<sup>4</sup> (both at a central level in Tehran and at provincial levels in areas of operation) enabled effective relationship building. This concentration of efforts also made it easier to measure the impact of the pilot programme and to draw on lessons learned before expanding the programme geographically.

### Integrated inter-sectoral

**approach:** The technical teams (covering all core competencies and cross-cutting functions) are encouraged to work, as much as possible, as a single integrated team. The teams jointly undertake needs assessment, implementation and monitoring. Sharing of knowledge, experience, contacts and documents is also encouraged between the geographical area teams. This approach was identified as ‘inter-sectoral’ – with work taking place between and among technical sectors. This is distinct from a ‘multi-sectoral’ approach – which could imply separate programming and implementation.

### What could we do better?

The external evaluation of our programming indicated two main areas requiring attention. Firstly, meeting the pressing need for additional school spaces requires greater advocacy with donors and the international community to support the Ministry of Education in its endeavour to accommodate all children.

The second area related to the use of cash distributions to improve access to and retention in education. Monitoring of the cash distribution provides some evidence that families are using it towards education, yet the monitoring suggests that more evidence is needed to ascertain whether the money is being spent on education in the way that the integrated approach intended. We are



Afghan children in Iran participating in a ‘peace education through art’ class supported by NRC.

currently looking into the specific use of cash in education programming and discussing possible modalities. One such modality could be introducing some conditionality – such as breaking the payments into instalments with the second instalment given after proof of registration in school. Another modality under consideration is giving cash at registration points at schools and assisting families with the enrolment procedure. A pilot programme will be implemented to determine the most effective way forward.

### What challenges remain?

Many barriers remain unaddressed. This inter-sectoral approach may be more effective but, due to lack of funding, our ability to expand learning spaces is limited. The major challenge that the education sector is facing is the costs associated with expansion of schools or construction of new ones. Furthermore, families themselves still face financial barriers, with many relying on their children for income generation.

Although developments in policy can result in considerable change, they must be accompanied by a strategy for implementation. A change in policy does not immediately translate into results: it does not mean that families are suddenly fully informed of their rights and how to claim them. Education stakeholders must adopt a systematic and sustainable approach in order to ensure that major changes in policies are effectively implemented. This could be facilitated by the ability to undertake more in-depth mapping and analysis of mechanisms regarding school enrolment and registration in order to understand more precisely where the gaps lie and how to address them.

Despite significant efforts by the Government of Iran, the educational needs remain significant. Humanitarian assistance needs to be scaled up, and – in this protracted displacement situation – a longer-term, development approach is also needed, with funding to match. In the meantime, advances like those made in Iran should be showcased

in order to encourage other host countries to adopt similar policies that will help to guarantee the right to basic education for all.

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1. In 2003, Iran introduced a new system known as *Amayesh* (Persian for 'logistics' or 'preparation') to register all Afghan nationals then in Iran. The vast majority of Afghans arriving since then have not been registered for an *Amayesh* card. Those with *Amayesh* cards are granted protection largely in accordance with entitlements under the 1951 Convention but are required to renew their status every 12–18 months.
2. *Tehran Times* (26 July 2018) [bit.ly/TehranTimes-schools](http://bit.ly/TehranTimes-schools)
3. Talbot C (2018) *External Evaluation of NRC's Education Programme in Iran* (funded by European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations).
4. The main government entity in charge of refugee issues and the main partner of international non-governmental humanitarian organisations.

## 2019 Global Education Monitoring report

### *Migration, displacement and education: Building bridges, not walls*

Although addressing all types of population movements, the 2019 Global Education Monitoring report stresses that it is asylum seekers and refugees who are most at risk of losing out on education. In signing the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants in September 2016, countries committed to ensuring that all refugee children would be in school within three months of arrival in their host country; over the following two years, an estimated 1.5 billion refugee school days have been lost, while asylum-seeking children in detention centres in countries like Australia, Hungary, Indonesia, Malaysia and Mexico face partial or total exclusion from education opportunities.

The report calls on policymakers to fully include migrant and displaced children and youth in national education systems and to adapt these systems to new arrivals' needs. Accelerated learning programmes are needed to offset the effects of interruptions to education. Teachers need to be supported to address a wide range of challenges related not only to their students but also to their working conditions. And refugees' qualifications and prior learning must be recognised to avoid wasting potential.

The report profiles the encouraging efforts of countries – including those with limited resources – to bring refugees into national education systems. However, it shows too that only a third of the global cost of refugee education is currently covered and that host countries also require international financial support that permits them to bridge short-term humanitarian assistance and long-term development aid.

The report reminds policymakers of the power that education has to help societies manage the opportunities and challenges posed by migration and displacement: by challenging prejudices, by fostering social cohesion through curricula that respect past history and current diversity, by recognising the contributions made by migrants and refugees, by promoting openness to multiple perspectives and by encouraging critical approaches.

Access the full report and information about global launch events and discussions at <http://gem-report-2019.unesco.org/>.



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Connected learning makes use of digital technologies to connect learners to: topics and accredited courses of interest; their peers, both locally and around the globe; the internet and global discourse; and trained teachers, mentors and facilitators. It often involves blended learning, where students learn via electronic and online media but are also supported by face-to-face instruction.

The **Connected Learning in Crisis Consortium (CLCC)** is a 23-member organisation comprising universities, non-governmental organisations, international organisations and education providers, co-led by UNHCR (the UN Refugee Agency) and the University of Geneva's InZone centre. Its aim is to promote and support the provision of quality higher education in contexts of conflict, crisis and displacement through

connected learning. The CLCC focuses on sharing knowledge, experience and evidence; developing good practice; and ensuring accountability to students and their communities in order to foster self-reliance and resilience.

In 2017 the CLCC published a **Quality Guidelines Playbook**, which details promising practices and lessons learnt across four themes: Access to Higher Education, Learning Pathway Design, Connected Learning Pedagogies, and Academic Support. The *Playbook* examines each theme with regard to connected learning provision in emergencies and crises, giving concrete examples from CLCC members' programmes.

In late 2019, the CLCC will produce a **Digital Playbook**, which will have the added functionality of allowing organisations to upload content of their own.

Access the *Playbook* and other CLCC publications at [www.connectedlearning4refugees.org/publications](http://www.connectedlearning4refugees.org/publications).

## Connected learning: the future for higher education?

Hana Addam El-Ghali and Emma Ghosn

**Higher education institutions in Lebanon should consider how connected learning can improve access to higher education for young refugees and members of the host community.**

Lebanon hosts around 1.1 million Syrian refugees, many of whom are young people of university age who are struggling to continue their education in displacement.<sup>1</sup> Some young Syrians, however, are able to access higher education: 7,315 young people were enrolled in higher education institutions in the 2017–18 academic year in Lebanon, an increase of about 20% since 2014–15. This increase is due in part to a greater availability of scholarships but also to the availability of alternative modes of learning, among which is connected learning. 'Connected learning' refers to the teaching of students using information communication technology (ICT), which permits learning to be more flexible as it is not limited by time or geography, unlike traditional higher education.<sup>2</sup> This method enables learning to be more interactive and can provide access to education for a large number of students in different parts of the world at low cost.<sup>3</sup>

Lebanese universities already usually make use of web-facilitated learning in their courses but are beginning to move towards 'blended' learning (using a combination of

traditional and online teaching) to reach out to Syrian refugees and to students living in remote parts of Lebanon and overseas, with some even offering courses that are conducted entirely online. A recent mapping of connected learning in Lebanon showed that institutions of higher education usually use three types of connected learning: blended, fully online, and bridging (which focuses on language teaching).<sup>4</sup> The virtual teaching methods employed can involve real-time interaction between instructor and students, such as video-conferencing or live chats, or non-real time interactions, such as posting on discussion boards or learning from video-taped lectures. The use of social media and other internet platforms facilitates a more informal interaction between students and their peers and between students and their instructors, which complements their formal learning.

### Barriers to connected learning

Connected learning programmes are new to Lebanon and a number of structural,

pedagogical and technical barriers to their use have emerged.

Among the primary structural barriers is that there are as yet no policies recognising online learning in Lebanon. However, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education drafted a law in May 2016 which aims to determine the conditions and procedures of providing formal higher education programmes through non-traditional methods, including connected learning. This draft law reflects the Ministry's insistence on the need to maintain quality in online learning and lays down certain requirements – including a quality assurance team – for any organisation or institution wishing to provide non-traditional programmes.

A further structural barrier is the limited awareness and negative popular view of online learning. Lack of awareness often means people doubt the benefit and impact of connected learning programmes; many believe that technology can only be useful as a support tool for enhancing teaching and learning – not as a primary or exclusive means of delivery. Cultural resistance also extends to Syrian refugee communities; for example, Syrian female students refuse to appear on camera for video-conferencing as this practice is not culturally acceptable.

Pedagogical barriers have also emerged, including the challenges caused by institutional bureaucracy, which leads to delays in procuring resources as well as to limited autonomy to design and deliver connected learning programmes. Teaching staff have only limited skills in teaching connected learning courses and struggle to support students online. As a result, many faculty members still prefer face-to-face teaching rather than online courses. Although many (if not all) students have a smartphone, some lack the ICT skills needed to follow such courses. And assessment is a further barrier, with many institutions lacking validated means of assessing connected learning.

Finally, technical barriers such as slow internet connectivity, unreliable electricity supply and equipment shortages present significant frustrations for leaders,

faculty members and students engaged in connected learning programmes.

## Opportunities

Many programmes, particularly those offered through local, national and international non-governmental organisations, are free or offered at very low cost. Meanwhile, the skills supplied by educational institutions in Lebanon which offer more traditional programmes seem disconnected from the demands of today's labour market. One-size-fits-all provision ignores increasing use of technology and the growth of the digital economy. Consequently, there needs to be enhanced advocacy combined with greater international collaboration in order to work towards the creation of more flexible domestic education policies that can accommodate developments in the economy through advancements and adaptations in higher education. We suggest that the collaboration efforts should be led by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, with local and international higher education institutions and other international organisations with relevant experience. Connected learning opportunities are a means of offering students an opportunity to learn – particularly for those who struggle to access traditional education, whether refugees or youth from the local host community.

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## Connected learning: a refugee assessment

Moise Dushime, Eugenie Manirafasha and Kalenga Mbonyinshuti

**Connected learning offers the opportunity to expand access to higher education for refugees, benefiting both individuals and communities.**

Since 2013, non-governmental organisation Kepler and Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) have been providing a US-accredited undergraduate degree programme for refugees and Rwandan nationals. The first campus was opened in Kigali in 2013, followed in 2015 by a second campus in Kiziba refugee camp in western Rwanda. Students follow a 'blended' model that combines online learning from SNHU curricula with face-to-face instruction and academic support provided by Kepler.

For refugee students like us (who are SNHU graduates of the Kepler Kiziba programme), going to university is not just a pathway to hope and dignity; it can also have a positive impact for our communities. When someone gets a job, they support their families and others to be self-reliant. With current advances in technology there is a

great opportunity for humanitarian agencies to help expand access for refugees. Based on the Kepler/SNHU programme in Rwanda we offer the following recommendations:

### **Make higher education more inclusive:**

Programmes should demonstrate strong commitment to ensuring access for women and vulnerable people from both refugee and host communities. For example, at the Kiziba campus, a women's leadership programme offering preparatory classes supports female applicants to improve their skills and encourages them to apply to the degree programme. Interventions like this and an equity-based approach to admissions have achieved a 50:50 student gender balance on both campuses. Connected learning programmes have the opportunity to be more inclusive than more traditional



Students on the Kepler Kiziba programme, Rwanda.

scholarship programmes: for example, only 31% of UNHCR DAFI scholarship recipients in Rwanda in 2017 were female.<sup>1</sup>

**Offer accredited degrees:** Students who complete the Kepler/SNHU programme earn a fully US-accredited undergraduate degree. The US accreditation ensures the degree will be recognised in many countries and enables students to continue with further education. If programmes do not result in a degree, it is difficult for them to compete in both local and global job markets.

**Consider employment outcomes:** The programme focuses on skills for job readiness, in particular on the development of skills in using popular software and online professional tools. In the Kiziba programme, students are required to complete internships – either with companies in Rwanda or for international companies via remote working – in order to gain professional skills and experience. They thereby also gain specific professional competencies relating to communication, leadership and teamwork. A careers department team at Kepler builds relationships with local employers and helps

students to find and apply for vacancies. As a result, 90% of students find full-time employment within six months of graduation. Of course, refugee employment is more feasible in countries like Rwanda – where refugees have freedom of movement and the right to work in the formal sector – than in others. However, programmes in host countries where refugees do not have these rights should enable students to develop skills for self-employment (including online or remote-based employment) or that will enable them to find work in their countries of origin.

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<https://gem.snhu.edu/>

1. UNHCR's DAFI programme is one of two scholarship programmes in Rwanda specifically for refugees. See UNHCR (2018) *The Other One Per Cent – Refugee Students in Higher Education: DAFI Annual Report 2017*  
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## The importance of access and accreditation: learning from the Thailand–Myanmar border

Mary Purkey and Megan Irving

**The displaced community on the Thailand–Myanmar border has long provided for the basic educational needs of large numbers of children. Providing accredited education, however, remains a struggle.**

The area around Mae Sot in western Thailand is home to a large population of refugees and other migrants who have fled conflict, political oppression or economic hardship in Myanmar (but do not live in the refugee camps). In the 1990s, teachers among the displaced population began creating informal schools called Migrant Learning Centres (MLCs). For years the MLCs were under constant threat of closure by the Thai government. Then, in 2006, a new Education for All policy instituted by the government changed the

dynamic between educators and government. Education for All was intended to open the doors to Thai educational institutions for all children regardless of their legal status or lack of documentation. However, turning policy into practice has proved challenging, and the reality is that most migrant children do not attend Thai schools.

### Initiatives to provide accreditation

Over the years, constructive collaboration between the migrant education community

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and Thai government representatives has been built; the different actors involved also share a growing realisation of the need to provide children with accredited education, including transcripts that are transferrable to other education systems and that provide avenues to higher education. Since MLCs lack legal recognition as educational institutions and many teachers lack formal teaching credentials, accredited education is currently possible only through government systems (whether in Thailand or Myanmar) that few can access.

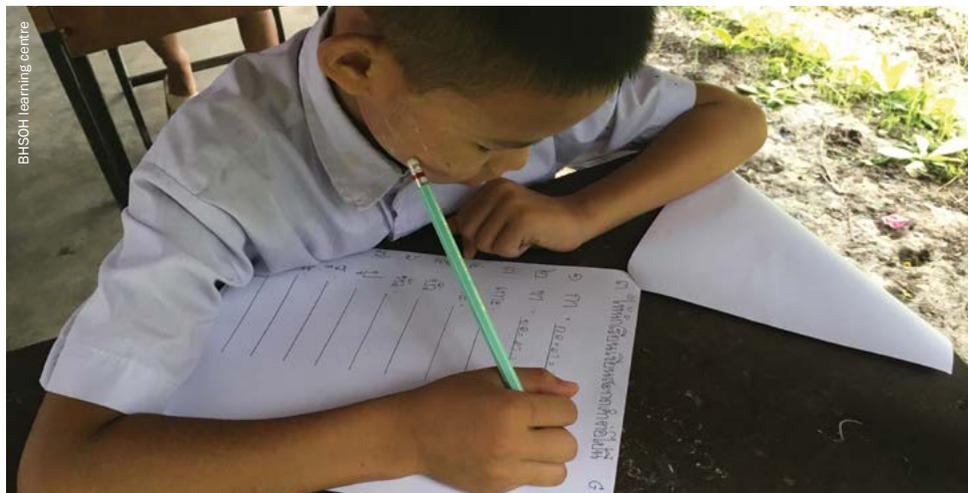
A number of initiatives are underway to remedy this situation. These include programmes to facilitate transfer of MLC students into Royal Thai Government schools or, alternatively, to formal education in Myanmar. With regard to the first option, all MLCs are now expected to teach the Thai language although implementing this is difficult given that schools are completely dependent on donors and receive no government funding. Students are also encouraged to enrol in a non-formal education programme called Kor Sor Nor (KSN), a three-year catch-up programme that was originally created for Thai students who had missed out on education but which is now open to migrant students to introduce them gradually to the Thai language and curriculum. Primary school-aged children take KSN classes in the MLCs, visit Thai KSN schools regularly and may eventually (if they complete the programme) make the transition to the formal Thai school system. Older students attend the KSN schools directly but need to develop their Thai language skills first.

In recent years, the Myanmar Ministry of Education has established a similar programme – the Non-Formal Primary Education programme (NFPE) – as part of its wider education reform. Migrant students are now able to take the Myanmar NFPE classes and exams at MLCs in Mae Sot. Students are also permitted to take Myanmar government school exams – for different school levels – at the MLCs. Both the Thai and Myanmar programmes offer a critical benefit: recognised records of achievement.

The migrant community has also taken independent initiatives to facilitate access to accredited education. For instance, MLCs and community-based organisations have collaborated to develop standardised exams for certain grades; these exams and the Myanmar government exams allow students to obtain certificates which allow transfer to Myanmar schools. In addition, in 2016 the community-based Burmese Migrant Workers Education Committee, World Education Thailand and other education stakeholders created the Education Quality Framework (EQF) as an assessment tool to help ensure some standardisation and quality of instruction in the diverse MLC network, thereby also bringing schools more in line with Thai pedagogical standards. While the Thai MOE would like MLCs to be unified under one umbrella organisation and to use the education assessment tools issued by the Thai government, it has nonetheless been open to both the diversity that exists among MLCs and their use of the EQF.

### Challenges

The Thai government approach demonstrates an understandable ambivalence toward the migrant education community. It withholds official school status from MLCs and does not allow MLC teachers the legal right to teach. However, the MOE has provided migrant teachers with identification cards and acted as an intermediary between them and immigration officials, protecting them from deportation. In addition, it works to inform parents about the option to send their children to Thai schools. Finally, even as MLCs increasingly use the Myanmar curriculum, the MOE has shown a willingness to engage with them and seems to have a positive view of the availability of Myanmar's NFPE and the potential for migrant students to enter Myanmar schools. MOE officials in Tak province have also mediated between the migrant education community and Thai immigration and security forces, and migrant children born in Thailand can now receive a 10-year identity card that ensures greater security for a longer period of time.



Sitting a Thai language test at BHSOH, a migrant learning centre which has an active KSN catch-up programme.

However, while the initiatives outlined above have created some new pathways for migrant youth to gain entry into one education system or the other, neither government provides funding support. The onus is on the MLCs to find the financial and human resources needed from benefactors and NGOs, an immense task in an environment in which finding funds simply to keep school doors open has become increasingly difficult.

A number of other challenges face the education community in Mae Sot. For cultural reasons or because their families often have to move for work, migrant children do not always integrate easily into formal education systems in host countries. The Thai government allows MLCs a degree of freedom to operate but little access to formal accreditation processes. The success of new initiatives is often hampered by bureaucratic, logistical and financial hurdles in a country where rules change often. If migrant parents are undocumented, they are often apprehensive about enrolling their children in Thai schools. Unemployment puts economic strain on the family unit, and many youth drop out of school to work illegally. Lastly, educators, parents and children from Myanmar do not all share the same goals, and there is therefore no

'one-size-fits-all' solution when it comes to creating pathways to accredited education.

### **A shift in thinking and practice?**

In spite of the obstacles, the experiences of the Mae Sot migrant education community show that opportunities exist for expanding access to accredited education. When governments work collaboratively with migrant education communities, both security and educational choices can be enhanced. Education for All created a huge shift in thinking and practice among Thai government officials. Although unable to provide accreditation, MLCs in Mae Sot have been allowed to provide basic education – as well as security and support for children – and a few go further, for example by preparing youth for Myanmar government exams or the internationally recognised General Education Diploma (GED) exam which allows, potentially at least, entry into universities. Through acceptance of the realities of the situation and through flexibility and collaboration between educators, NGOs and government, much has been accomplished.

More could be done, however. The Thai government could go further to create bridges between the migrant education community and the formal education system building on the positive achievements of the informal

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MLC system such as the EQF. In Southeast Asia, migration and forced displacement have regional implications and consequences; if the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) were to create an ASEAN-wide education framework to support legal status for MLCs, the transfer of academic records and certification of teacher expertise, this would serve the interests of those building the regional economy as well as those who are migrating or forcibly displaced. Civil society actors, in this case educators, could play a critical role in developing the standards and mechanisms for accomplishing these goals, including development of an ASEAN GED programme to replace the one currently used (which is the GED programme developed by the United States).

Finally, and critically, governments must provide funding if policies such as Education for All or cross-border initiatives are to be

effectively implemented – to avoid vital functions remaining financially dependent on international organisations. There has recently been a sharp downturn in funding for the Migrant Learning Centres on the border as NGOs and donor governments have cut funding, possibly due to the prioritisation of perceived greater needs inside Myanmar and elsewhere. The migrant education community in Mae Sot has felt deserted. Education for refugees and other migrants demands not only acknowledgment but also investment.

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## Improving learning environments in emergencies through community participation

Zeina Bali

**An education in emergencies toolkit developed by Save the Children looks at how learning environments can be improved through community participation. Piloting the project in Syria and Uganda has also shed light on some of the tensions and contradictions that underlie education provision in humanitarian settings.**

The Improving Learning Environments Together (ILET) toolkit<sup>1</sup> uses assessments to improve learning environments in humanitarian contexts through community participation. Its aim is to respond to the need for greater and better evidence of what works in education in emergencies (EiE). It puts Save the Children's Quality Learning Framework (QLF)<sup>2</sup> into practice by turning the five foundations it identifies as providing a basis for the well-being and learning of all children – emotional and psychosocial protection, physical protection, teaching and learning, parents and community, and school leadership and management – into measurable, quantifiable and actionable questions. These questions are put to students, teachers and parents to identify

ways to improve the learning environment. ILET's added value comes in providing school communities with evidence based on data and by supporting their advocacy efforts to improve the schools within a rights-based framework. In this way, Save the Children's role becomes, ideally, that of a facilitator or of catalyst for change.

Steps one and two of ILET's five-step process relate to programme design, proposal development, coordination and training, and are mostly carried out by programme staff. Step three is the start of engagement with the communities. This third step is about programme staff collecting data from five sources: teachers, parents, children, a head teacher or school checklist, and through a classroom observation. A web-

based data management platform offers real-time data collection, processing and storage and produces data visualisations and automated reports that summarise the strengths and weaknesses of the school or temporary learning space (TLS) in relation to the QLF. The fourth step is to share these simply presented, colour-coded results with communities in the form of school findings cards, where the school is scored on each of the QLF's five foundations. The fifth and final step includes electing a school improvement team comprising adults and children from the community to design a school improvement plan based on the assessment results, and to follow up on the implementation of the plan with the assistance of a small grant.

The toolkit was piloted between 2017 and 2018 in ten schools and TLS, five each in Adjumani district in Uganda and in north-west Syria, attended by – respectively – Ugandan and South Sudanese refugee children, and local and internally displaced Syrian children. Lessons learned throughout the process of implementing the pilots were used to inform the development of the ILET project and to transfer knowledge between the two countries.

Other interesting conclusions also emerged from the pilots, including the following:

**Accountability:** Implementing the same process in Uganda and Syria illustrated some surprising commonalities. For example, when programme staff returned to school communities to share results, it was clear that people in both Uganda and Syria had not believed they would come back. This is indicative of a broader trend in the aid sector, where the results of assessments are seldom fed back. Part of what contributed to successful results sharing in this case was the programme staff's enthusiasm about the data management platform's efficient production of automated and easy-to-understand findings cards. The feedback sessions also served as an important venue to validate the findings. In addition, owing to the diverse set of informants, the findings could not be attributed to just one group of

respondents. Finally, although data analysis is run by programme staff, the feedback session and framing of the results around the comprehensive QLF have fostered accountability as the school community takes an active role in holding Save the Children, alongside other education providers, to high standards, ensuring they provide a comprehensive quality learning environment.

**Mobilising local solutions:** Teachers and parents commonly voiced that what they often saw as the priority was to improve the school by building more infrastructure, providing fuel and increasing teachers' salaries. While acknowledging the importance of these needs, ILET aims to expand the discussion on quality learning environments to include 'soft' components – that is, activities which, within a limited budget, can improve children's and teacher's well-being and skills, or increase parents' engagement. As a result, participants went on to identify local, low-cost solutions that needed minimal or no support from Save the Children. In Uganda these included parents volunteering to clean the school compound



A teacher with teaching supplies for her primary school, Bidibidi refugee settlement, northern Uganda.

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and improving playground facilities to open up recreational activities to children.

**Investment of time:** Some questioned the suitability of ILET to emergency settings given the length of time it takes to implement the project in full – it can take at least two months until visible improvements start to emerge. That being said, the real-time analysis offered by the data management platform enables programme staff to immediately feed back the results to communities – a quick turnaround in comparison with the average time taken by other assessments, which can be up to a couple of weeks. However, others recognised that the delivery of quality education with community participation requires resources and time. One teacher in Uganda said: “This is not wasting time. This is engaging people in planning.”

**Sustainability:** Teachers in Uganda felt that the impact of ILET would last beyond the end of the project as it was grounded in community mobilisation and had introduced the QLF as a helpful theoretical framework, and having knowledge of this framework

was felt to be empowering. When asked how they would react if Save the Children were no longer able to provide support, teachers’ responses repeatedly emphasised their strong sense of ownership and willingness to mobilise parents and advocate with other actors. Their ability to organise themselves and advocate for children’s rights was already clear from the examples they gave of presenting demands to the district education office and improvising in times of scarcity.

### Broader dilemmas

The implementation of the two pilots also gave rise to several broader dilemmas inherent in the processes of aid and development that are certainly not unique to this project:

**Local to global:** ILET’s overarching focus is on local ownership and locally grounded solutions. Alongside that comes the implicit assumption that the QLF (on which the project is based) is applicable to every learning environment. The contradiction inherent in this becomes apparent when local solutions are at odds with the global framework and values upheld by Save the Children. This tension reflects common dilemmas that are recognised in literature on participatory development. Driven by operational and pragmatic considerations, humanitarian organisations often cooperate with actors whose values do not entirely align with theirs. Grappling with competing local and global identities,<sup>3</sup> international non-governmental organisations risk perpetuating discriminatory practices under the pretext of ‘cultural sensitivity’. Acknowledging that the organisation’s assumptions, own value systems and normative frameworks are neither neutral nor universal is the first step to addressing these potential local–global tensions.

**Managing expectations:** One of the cornerstones of ILET is the conviction that communities need to have access to open and easily understood information – real-time, reliable data – in order to be able to demand their rights, work collectively



UNHCR/David Azia

towards improving the learning environment and hold service providers accountable. However, participants point out areas in which knowledge can have disempowering effects. For example, one teacher reported that although increased knowledge had had a positive effect on his teaching practices, it had also left him feeling anxious: "I wonder if children should not enter the classroom because it is in a poor state. I will have failed if it is not improved. I have been made aware that there are a lot of things to do." It is crucial to manage expectations and to emphasise that the learning environment can be improved gradually in small steps.

**Child participation:** Findings from Uganda indicate that ILET programmes need to use more child-friendly language and information mechanisms to enhance child participation. For those children who did participate, there was a risk their participation might be co-opted to voice adults' or other children's

needs, reinforcing already existing unequal power and privilege structures. For example, when asked directly what they wanted to change in their school, several students in different schools mentioned the need to build a bigger, better-equipped room for teachers.

ILET aims to revive the potential that participatory development has to be transformative, providing support and evidence to local communities to enable them to assert their rights, to hold those in power – including Save the Children – to account, and to trigger wider social change, starting at school.

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1. [bit.ly/ILETpackage](http://bit.ly/ILETpackage)
2. For more information, see Save the Children's EiE framing document [bit.ly/SavetheChildren-EiE-Framing-2017](http://bit.ly/SavetheChildren-EiE-Framing-2017)
3. See Kloster M O (2018) 'Why it Hurts – Save the Children Norway and the Dilemmas of 'Going Global'', *Forum for Development Studies* Vol 46:1: 1–22 [bit.ly/Kloster-SCF-Going-Global-2018](http://bit.ly/Kloster-SCF-Going-Global-2018)

## Feasible measurement of learning in emergencies: lessons from Uganda

Nikhil D'Sa, Allyson Krupar and Clay Westrope

**A new assessment tool aims to provide a rapid, holistic understanding of displaced learners' needs.**

Education assessments in emergencies currently focus on access or aim to understand teachers' experience and qualifications rather than closely examine children's experiences and learning.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, many international and national assessments are lengthy and require highly trained data collectors, who are often unavailable in the immediate aftermath of displacement. The lack of assessments that are rigorous yet feasible to undertake in education in emergencies (EiE) programming means there is often limited information about gaps in children's learning and the impact of EiE programmes.

The Holistic Assessment of Learning and Development Outcomes (HALDO) is

designed to fill such knowledge gaps.<sup>2</sup> It enables practitioners to understand the needs of learners aged 4–12 across four domains: literacy, numeracy, social and emotional learning (SEL), and executive functioning.<sup>3</sup> HALDO also includes questions about demographic and household characteristics, socio-economic status, home learning environment, and disability.<sup>4</sup>

In 2018, HALDO was piloted in 32 education centres and schools managed by Save the Children and Windle International Uganda in the Rwamwanja and Kyangwali refugee settlements in western Uganda. Given the recent influx of refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to both settlements and

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their diverse language backgrounds (24 mother tongue languages were identified), schools have found accommodating learners particularly challenging.

### Challenges to implementation

We found that HALDO offered a reliable, valid measurement of the different domains of children's learning and development in these settlements. In this article we focus on three challenges experienced during the pilot which relate to its practical application.

**Language:** In discussion with community organisers, we identified English, Kiswahili and Kinyabusha/Kinyarwanda as the most appropriate languages for the assessment. This required a majority of assessors to speak all three languages fluently since schools were not separated by language. Additionally, assessors found that the Kiswahili translation did not use child-friendly language; rather than allowing the assessors to reword questions during the assessments, we needed instead to revise the wording for all items during the training, to ensure consistency and use of appropriate terminology. In recognition of language diversity, those undertaking future assessments should conduct a more comprehensive language mapping before translating the tool, create a sampling frame based on the languages spoken, engage assessors that speak the languages fluently, and recommend that translators work with community members to incorporate child-friendly language.

**Assessor training:** We piloted a 'rapid assessor training' model that can be used in EiE programmes that have limited time and resources. The pilot in Uganda highlighted the challenges with this model. Notably, the outcome of deploying such a training model can be to damage the reliability of assessors' scoring, since there may have been insufficient time for them to develop a harmonised understanding of the assessment and its use. The pilot helped us to identify specific questions with which assessors struggled – like timed tasks and deciding on appropriate and inappropriate responses

for SEL questions – allowing us to modify the rapid assessor training to better support assessors' understanding in relation to these areas and how responses should be scored.

**Facilitator feedback:** One aim of HALDO is to provide teachers and facilitators with aggregated information about the learning gaps of children with whom they are working, and the pilot underlined the importance of this. One way to support this provision of feedback is to connect the assessment results with tailored learning content to ensure that the learning and development needs that have been identified are accompanied by explicit instruction on the appropriate teaching materials required to address them.

Continuing refinement of HALDO includes creating guidance on how to better adapt and translate HALDO and improving assessor training so that the tool can be rapidly deployed in the early onset of displacement. Through further testing and analysis, we will use HALDO findings to inform our recommendations for teachers and facilitators working with children in situations of forced displacement to ensure that the education being provided meets the children's needs more effectively.

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1. For more on 'good learning' in displacement, see Krupar and Anselme in this issue.
2. For more information about HALDO, email [learningassessment@savechildren.org](mailto:learningassessment@savechildren.org).
3. Literacy measures vocabulary, letter identification, reading accuracy and reading comprehension. Numeracy measures counting, number identification, addition and subtraction, and word problems. SEL measures self-concept and empathy. Executive functioning measures short-term memory and working memory through questions about number sequences.
4. HALDO includes three questions about disability which draw on the Washington Group Short Set on Functioning [bit.ly/WG-SS-2017](http://bit.ly/WG-SS-2017)

## Evidence for education in emergencies: who decides and why it matters

Nadeen Alalami

**Analysis of educational research funding proposals submitted to Dubai Cares, a global education funder, indicates an alarming absence of input from local actors and end-users at all steps of the process.**

At the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in 2016, Dubai Cares<sup>1</sup> made a commitment to increase the share of its support to education in emergencies (EiE) programmes to 33% of its financial portfolio, with 10% of the increased share to be invested in generating evidence in EiE. Later that year we launched the Evidence for Education in Emergencies Research Envelope (E-Cubed). With a total value of US \$10 million, to be disbursed over a period of five years, this research fund is focused on generating evidence for effective preparedness and response strategies in EiE.

Throughout the process of setting up E-Cubed and in liaising with fellow funders of research, we have found ourselves reflecting on what it means to be a funder of evidence for EiE. What role can and should donors play as we engage in providing the necessary funding to address gaps in evidence for EiE? We would like to share our preliminary reflections, with the aim of sparking a conversation about what we can do together in order to generate evidence for the maximum benefit of the education of children and youth in crisis contexts.

Dubai Cares' commitment to funding evidence for EiE is in response to the fact that EiE continues to be underfunded by both governments and humanitarian actors alike. In order to improve the case for investing in EiE and to ensure that already limited resources are directed towards models that are grounded in a concrete understanding of what works in EiE, we need to invest in developing and disseminating a body of evidence that captures the efficacy of these models. However, the act of funding evidence for EiE is not enough on its own. We must ensure that the evidence we fund reaches

the right hands and that it is actively taken on and used by EiE actors at the right level of decision making. This means funding research that is freely accessible to, designed for and inclusive of the voices of those people and institutions who are on the ground in crisis-affected contexts. It means letting their needs and their questions guide our learning agendas, as opposed to setting the learning agendas from the global North.

In order to be able to reach those most aware of what evidence is missing, Dubai Cares partnered with the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) for the design and management of the fund. As a global network with over 15,000 individual members from UN agencies, non-governmental organisations, donors, governments, universities, schools and affected populations, working together to ensure all persons have the right and access to quality education in emergencies and post-crisis recovery, INEE is a natural home for the E-Cubed research envelope.

### **Lack of inclusion of local actors**

E-Cubed was established to generate global public goods<sup>2</sup> for the EiE sector at large. As such, neither Dubai Cares nor INEE have identified a thematic or geographical focus for each call for proposals, recognising that the gaps in evidence on the ground are best identified by those on the ground. The process of reviewing submissions for E-Cubed funding has shown, however, that the narrative of the 'what' and the 'how' is still largely not derived from local solutions. For example, while reviewing submissions from E-Cubed's second call for applications, we observed that the majority of research proposals were looking into Social and

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Emotional Learning (SEL) in emergency contexts.<sup>3</sup> When we analysed these proposals, we noticed that most of them were testing the implementation of branded – that is, agency-owned – SEL approaches that were developed by actors in high-income, non-emergency settings for actors working in emergency contexts. Too often, the input of the intended end-users was missing at every step of the research proposals: from choosing the model to be tested, to formulating research questions and the assumptions they are based on, to disseminating the outputs generated by the research. This observation is alarming, especially considering the great interest that research into SEL for EiE has attracted from both funders and researchers in recent years.

A strong body of evidence from high-income, non-emergency settings has indicated that SEL programmes can enhance children's academic, social, emotional and behavioural outcomes. Furthermore, emerging literature shows that SEL skills can be critical tools for building resilience among children and youth affected by crisis. Therefore, studying approaches to integrating SEL into EiE could be promising. But whose needs would be met through this line of inquiry if the intended end-user is nowhere to be seen in the research process? Whose questions are ultimately answered?

Research in EiE can provide crucial guidance for actors working in emergency contexts, enabling them to make the best use of resources and to design models that can improve the lives of crisis-affected children and youth. However, this cannot happen if we do not place the voices of local practitioners at the heart of the research process. Without the input of local actors, the research we fund loses its purpose. Instead of investigating what actually does work in EiE, we end up imposing our own ideas of

what we think should work in EiE. In order to support the generation of a body of evidence that aims to understand rather than impose, we need to take action in order to ensure that we support research approaches that explicitly empower and build the capacity of local actors to set the learning agenda.

Dubai Cares chose to partner with INEE for the design and management of E-Cubed specifically due to INEE's commitment to diversifying its membership and employing collaborative approaches with its members in order to ensure that all voices are included. Since it was created in 2000, INEE has become an essential resource for practitioners seeking tools and guidance on implementing EiE programming. Recognising INEE's mandate as a convener and neutral platform for the EiE sector, we believe that INEE has the potential to be at the core of all efforts to gather and curate evidence for the EiE sector and to bring together all stakeholders working towards this endeavour.

As funders of research for EiE we need to be aware of the power that we hold, and the influence that our own learning agendas and funding decisions could have on the EiE research landscape. We therefore need to ensure that our funding approaches come out of consultative, democratic processes that factor in all voices and that respond to the needs of the EiE sector at large.

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1. A philanthropic organisation working to improve children's access to quality education in developing countries.
2. A 'global public good' is a resource or commodity that is open source and available to everyone, and where use by one individual does not reduce availability to others.
3. SEL can be defined as "a process of acquiring social and emotional values, attitudes, competencies, knowledge, and skills that are essential for learning, being effective, well-being, and success in life". [bit.ly/INEE-PSS-SEL-2016](https://bit.ly/INEE-PSS-SEL-2016)

# INEE

The Inter-agency  
Network for Education  
in Emergencies (INEE)

provides a range of resources to inform and guide education providers, humanitarian workers and government officials working in the field of education in emergencies. The **INEE Minimum Standards** handbook sets out the minimum level of educational quality and access to be provided in emergencies, from preparedness and response through to

recovery, and is available in many languages.  
[www.ineesite.org/en/minimum-standards](http://www.ineesite.org/en/minimum-standards)

The multilingual **INEE website** contains a wide variety of practical, field-friendly tools and resources – including the EiE Toolkit, the EiE Glossary, a searchable database (to which members can upload resources), a blog, a jobs listing and interactive forums. [www.ineesite.org/en](http://www.ineesite.org/en)

## Localisation: we are frustrated, not stupid!

Listowell Efe Usen

**The Grand Bargain promises much but an inherent lack of trust in the international system is hampering local capacity building.**

I work for the Centre for Community Health and Development International (CHAD), a local non-governmental organisation in north-east Nigeria. I work closely with the international community, contributing to a range of local and global initiatives, and I am actively involved in protection and governance responses here in Nigeria (many of which are supported by international partners).

I have been following the localisation agenda and was encouraged by the launch of the Grand Bargain<sup>1</sup> and the commitments that donors made to support local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) like mine. I know the Grand Bargain recommends that 25% of global humanitarian funding would be allocated to organisations like CHAD and other local responders. But the more I have tried to engage with donors and the global community, the more I am made to feel stupid.

I, my colleagues and many other local actors alike are not stupid. We actually

know stuff. And guess what? We are capable of knowing more! We recognise that we are not perfect. Many of us were educated in a country lacking responsible leadership and without much access to information and opportunities. But I also know my community and I am working so hard to be a part of driving the change that we want to see in our society.

So I want you to imagine what it feels like to receive the following feedback – which we received from a donor this year:

*“While your strategies are promising, your capacity building needs are a huge concern to us, but thank you for responding to the call for proposals. Wish you luck in your future endeavours.”*

How ridiculous. That’s why I wrote to you in the first place.

This is not the first time that we have been knocked back on the basis that we asked for help with building our capacity at the same time as asking for project funds. Now we wonder if donors could possibly be suggesting that we should lie about our institutional weaknesses. Maybe that could get us through their doors.

Instead, our honesty means we continue to be forced to partner with the UN and with international NGOs who then make us go through due diligence checks to determine our ‘weak capacities’. But we already knew what they were (we told you in our proposal). We are then the recipients of elementary training in workshops which focus on topics that my young colleagues and I could



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easily have assimilated by reading a PDF document or online resource material. We don't get any mentoring. Or coaching. No long-term commitments. And then we have to spend days pulled away from our programmes in order to host people doing spot checks to tell us what we already know – that we still don't have the right capacities. But we aren't magicians. Without concrete support – people, flexible funding and capital investments (which, incidentally, you provided to the international NGOs instead) – we can't put the systems in place.

These endless due diligence checks (we have had three in the last 12 months alone) continue to portray us and other NGOs like us in a negative light, throwing the spotlight on our limited capacity as a justification for why funds should go to the international NGOs instead. Who is holding international partners accountable?

It is also confusing for us because the Grand Bargain appears to mean opening funding windows to both national and international partners and yet donors still act surprised when we ask for the

chance to manage our own capacity strengthening with the help of trusted and genuine third-party experts.

We urge you to be a little bit more trusting and a little bit less fixed in your approach to engaging effectively with local actors. A little bit smarter, a little less punitive of our inadequacies and a lot more attentive to what genuine and hardworking local actors like CHAD actually need.

I don't want to be part of a new wave of disillusioned young individuals. I want to continue to steer my community to a better future, to realise the potency in harnessing the goodwill of the international community, to fully embrace technological advancement. I – like other local actors – can be a powerful force for change. Use this power. It's untapped, it's fresh, it's hopeful and it's determined.

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1. [www.agendaforhumanity.org/initiatives/3861](http://www.agendaforhumanity.org/initiatives/3861)

## Implementing the Global Compacts: the importance of a whole-of-society approach

Tamara Domicelj and Carolina Gottardo

**The global community must now take incisive, coordinated action through a whole-of-society approach to push forward the effective implementation of the two Global Compacts.**

Both the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) espouse a 'whole-of-society approach'.<sup>1</sup> Such an approach presents important opportunities to embed the meaningful participation and leadership of refugees, migrants and host community members within the infrastructure developed for the Compacts' implementation, follow-up and review. This applies both to operational and to policy contexts in local, national, regional and global arenas.

Achieving this will require the engagement of all actors in creating enabling environments that are safe, inclusive and

sustainable. This will involve upholding all age-, gender- and diversity-related commitments and the adoption of measures that will support refugee- and migrant-led organisations (including those led by women, young people and others who may face significant barriers to participation) in planning and discussing policies and proposals without fear of discrimination, political interference, detention, deportation or jeopardising protection claims. Fostering conditions for enhanced self-reliance – such as access to work rights, decent work, labour markets and justice – will further support the amplification of refugees' and migrants'

voices, agency and leadership, particularly for those in vulnerable situations.

Pursuing a whole-of-society approach is in keeping with broader calls for improved engagement among UN and other actors. Strengthening collaboration and coordination between mandated leads and responsible agencies within the UN system and elsewhere will be crucial to the effective implementation of the Compacts and to ensuring that their respective processes are complementary.<sup>2</sup> A whole-of-society approach also envisages a 'whole-of-government' approach, which includes cities and municipal authorities in frontline roles.

Although welcome, precisely how this approach will be applied still requires clarification, as do the opportunities and challenges arising. It will be critical, for instance, to ensure that the humanitarian character and leadership of refugee protection are maintained when diverse actors – including those without a protection or humanitarian mandate – become involved. Ongoing engagement of migrants, refugees and other civil society actors in discussions regarding how the approach will be implemented is vital.

### Implementation, follow-up and review

**The Global Compact on Refugees:** The decisive adoption of the GCR is a clarion call for an improved response to refugee situations on the part of the entire global community, involving more equitable and predictable responsibility sharing among a broader range of actors. Although developed in response to the challenges of large-scale and protracted situations, the GCR is applicable to refugee situations more generally, and points to interconnections between different types of displacement and the factors that must be considered in order to ensure responses are well managed and strengthen protection. The GCR incorporates the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), which has been progressively rolled out in a range of country and sub-regional contexts.<sup>3</sup> The roll-outs have generated positive initiatives,

involving diverse actors, and these can inform the Compact's broader implementation. These include the adoption of sub-regional declarations with corresponding national action plans, involving countries of origin, transit and destination, supported by multi-year funding and technical assistance, and initiatives at the country level and within certain sectors, such as the passing of national refugee laws and the inclusion of refugee children and refugee teachers within national school systems. Some roll-outs have also pointed to areas requiring further development, such as ensuring the robust and consistent engagement of civil society actors. Since the adoption of the 2016 New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants there have also been significant financing developments, such as the World Bank's establishment of a US\$2 billion fund to support low-income, high refugee-hosting countries in making medium- to long-term investments to address the impacts of displacement on refugee and host communities. Eligibility depends on countries having an adequate refugee protection framework and corresponding action plan, potentially including policy reforms.

A Global Refugee Forum (GRF) will take place every four years, with mid-point interim ministerial-level review forums. The first GRF (December 2019) will focus on announcing pledges in support of all GCR objectives, encouraging multi-actor and paired initiatives, sharing positive practices to inform future pledges, and providing updates on the development of mechanisms such as those relating to impact measurement and indicators, the asylum capacity support group and the proposed GCR academic network. The first GRF must function as a 'proof of concept' for strengthened responsibility sharing and for a multi-actor partnership approach which places refugees at the centre – both of which are essential elements of the Compact's successful implementation. And although it appears that the GRF will be Geneva-based, implementation will need to be driven at local and national levels and have strong regional ownership. The development of national action plans and the creation of

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environments that enable multi-actor initiatives to flourish will be key to this.

**The Global Compact for Migration:** As the first global instrument to provide common frameworks and guiding principles that cover all dimensions of international migration, the adoption of the GCM is a pioneering achievement in international cooperation. The Compact restates a commitment to international law, reaffirming that the human rights of migrants must be upheld, irrespective of their status and location, and emphasises the importance of aligning Compact implementation with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda.

Its implementation is to be supported by, among other mechanisms, the newly created UN Network on Migration, which has an executive committee comprising several UN agencies and IOM as its secretariat. With the remit to “ensure effective, timely and coordinated system-wide support to Member States”, it will report every two years to the UN Secretary-General. Its ‘capacity-building mechanism’ will include a connection hub (facilitating connections between countries, implementing partners and funders), a start-up fund and a knowledge platform through which different stakeholders can contribute technical, financial and human resources. The Network appears to have significant potential but to be effective it needs to overcome key challenges such as securing adequate funding, combating mistrust between UN agencies, meaningfully involving other stakeholders (including migrants and civil society), and the need to go beyond the remit and outcomes of its predecessor, the Global Migration Group. Its achievements will depend on political commitment and the effectiveness of its structure. It is also essential that IOM, the Network’s secretariat, develops an effective and robust human rights-based approach.

States will lead the follow-up and review of the GCM through the International Migration Review Forum (IMRF). Consultations will be held in 2019 on its methods and processes and the forum will then be held every four years from 2022.

Such limited frequency is disappointing and could jeopardise momentum and affect commitments from States and other actors; encouragingly, however, UN-led interim regional reviews will also take place from 2020 (among others).<sup>4</sup> The degree to which GCM commitments filter to national and regional levels will be a key test of the success or otherwise of these mechanisms.

The GCM has created strong initial momentum in particular areas which have clear potential to change migrants’ lives. These include a specific recognition that climate change, disasters and environmental degradation can lead to displacement and the suggestion of new pathways and support for people affected by climate-induced displacement. Member States, UN agencies and civil society are already planning joint initiatives in this area. Other such areas relate to the commitment to pursue a human rights-based approach to detention of migrants and therefore to work to end the practice of child detention in the context of international immigration. Efforts to implement this commitment are already underway in Mexico, Thailand and Ecuador through government and civil society collaboration.<sup>5</sup> This includes the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding in January 2019 by the Royal Thai Government to stop holding children in immigration detention and to engage to explore alternatives to detention. The Compact also addresses migrants in vulnerable situations, making commitments that include reviewing related policies and practices, introducing specific measures for children in vulnerable situations, using a gender-responsive approach, promoting key policies and partnerships, and facilitating access to justice and to individual assessments.

Crucially, the GCM prompts States to build on or create national implementation plans. Some governments in Latin America, like that of Costa Rica, plan to review existing legislation in light of the GCM, while South Korea is producing a new manual analysing the shortcomings of its law and practice in relation to the GCM. Bangladesh is pursuing complementary

implementation of the two Compacts and is developing a draft national strategy to do so. In El Salvador, the government has linked GCM implementation to the formal implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and is working to pursue a whole-of-society approach. This promising progress needs to spread across national and continental boundaries.

The potential barriers to implementation of these and other promising initiatives include the lack of full complementarity between the two Compacts, the political will and extent of specific commitments made by Member States, and the effective operation of a whole-of-society approach.

### The Compacts in the Asia-Pacific region

Many Asia-Pacific States and civil society actors engaged consistently in both Compact preparation processes and there was near total adoption of both Compacts by Asia-Pacific States. The complementarity of the Compacts is of particular concern across the Asia-Pacific since the region consistently produces and hosts large numbers of refugees (including in significant protracted situations) and also has the largest number of international migrants (predominantly South–South) of any region. Mixed migration is prevalent, and refugees, asylum seekers and undocumented migrants often endure extremely precarious conditions and may face significant and common barriers to accessing their rights. Many Asia-Pacific States are not parties to the Refugee Convention, and there is no comprehensive regional refugee protection framework. The region is also highly affected by climate-induced disasters, environmental degradation and associated displacement.

Within this challenging context a number of promising multi-actor initiatives have emerged over recent years at local, national, sub-regional and regional levels. These include the development of domestic legal and policy infrastructure for refugee protection and alternatives to immigration detention in countries both party and non-party to the Refugee Convention, with sustained cross-sector collaboration, and the development of a sub-regional framework to combat trafficking

in persons, including through the creation of integrated national plans, with international cooperation. Civil society collaboration has also strengthened considerably with the emergence of the Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN), with over 350 members including refugee leaders, community-based organisations, national NGOs, faith-based organisations, advocates and researchers from 28 countries working to advance the rights of refugees and other displaced persons.

If implemented effectively, the Compacts could deliver sustainable benefits for refugees, migrants, their hosts and the global community at large, including by strengthening existing regional leadership and momentum, through provision of resources, new actors and improved responsibility sharing. Civil society, including refugees, migrants and host communities, bring vital expertise and experience and will have a critical role to play in the Asia-Pacific region, as elsewhere.

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<https://aprrn.info>

1. The GCR refers to a ‘multi-stakeholder and partnership approach’; we use the GCM term ‘whole-of-society approach’ since it is inherently fully inclusive. The underpinning concept derives from the New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants.
2. See for example UNHCR (2019) *Joint Letter from IOM and UNHCR on the Collaboration Between the two Organizations*, 25 January 2019 <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5c519a614.html>
3. The CRRF was annexed to the New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants, which was adopted in 2016. Operational updates can be found at [www.globalcrrf.org](http://www.globalcrrf.org).
4. To be conducted by the UN’s Regional Economic Commissions or Regional Consultative Processes and the IMRF in an alternating process that will take place every two years, beginning in 2020.
5. The International Detention Coalition is leading most of these efforts, as for example in Mexico, where it is working with the government on a roadmap to end child immigration detention. Cross-regional work is also taking place and a peer-learning platform is being established. <https://idcoalition.org>

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## Publications

The research brief 'Refugees as Providers of Protection and Assistance' by Alexander Betts, Kate Pincock and Evan Easton-Calabria describes a largely neglected story of how refugees themselves mobilise to create community-based organisations or informal networks that are providers of social protection (see also the mini-feature of six articles on this topic in FMR issue 58 [www.fmreview.org/economies](http://www.fmreview.org/economies)). A second research brief, 'Uganda's Self-Reliance Model: Does it Work?' by Alexander Betts, Imane Chaara, Naohiko Omata and Olivier Sterck, presents research (by the RSC's Refugee Economies Programme) into Uganda's self-reliance strategy for refugees, wherein refugees are given the right to work and freedom of movement. The brief accompanies a full report, Refugee Economies in Uganda: What Difference Does the Self-Reliance Model Make?.

A new working paper, 'Seeking informal asylum: the case of Central Americans in the United States' by Angela Remus (a graduate of the MSc programme in Refugee and Forced Migration Studies), uses the example of Central Americans from the Northern Triangle of Central America living in the US to illustrate the decisions made by refugees to forego formal asylum in favour of irregular status. It argues that, for many refugees, 'informal asylum' is preferable to entering the formal asylum system.

These and other RSC publications are available at [www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/publications](http://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/publications).

## Podcasts

Podcasts from the RSC's recent Public Seminar Series, on the themes of 1) Refugees in the UK and 2) Urban refugees, are available online. Listen at: [bit.ly/RSC-podcasts](http://bit.ly/RSC-podcasts)

They include:

- Transnationalism, return visits, home and belonging: second generation from refugee backgrounds  
Professor Alice Bloch (University of Manchester)
- Refugees and the UK labour market  
Dr Carlos Vargas-Silva and Dr Isabel Ruiz (University of Oxford)
- Building inclusive cities: emerging learning from a knowledge exchange with UK cities, Jacqueline Broadhead (University of Oxford)

## Events

### Annual Elizabeth Colson Lecture 2019 5 June 2019 17:00, Oxford Department of International Development

The RSC's Annual Elizabeth Colson Lecture, named after renowned anthropologist Professor Elizabeth Colson, will be given by Peter Redfield, Professor of Anthropology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. More details will be available at [www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/colson2019](http://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/colson2019).

To be notified of details of this and other RSC events, please subscribe to alerts: [www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/forms/general/connect](http://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/forms/general/connect)

### International Summer School in Forced Migration

7–19 July 2019, Oxford

The RSC's International Summer School fosters dialogue between academics, practitioners and policymakers working to improve the situation of refugees and other forced migrants. The course combines the very best of Oxford University's academic excellence with a stimulating and participatory method of critical learning and reflection. Details: [www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/summer-school](http://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/summer-school)

## FMR International Advisors

Advisors serve in an individual capacity and do not necessarily represent their institutions.

### Lina Abirafeh

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### Nina M Birkeland

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### Jeff Crisp

Independent consultant

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### Steven Muncy

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Services International

### Kathrine Starup

Danish Refugee Council

Emilie Wiinblad Mathez  
UNHCR

### Richard Williams

Independent consultant

# Editors' briefing: quick access to the feature theme

Last year FMR launched a new product – the **Editors' briefing**. This 4-page, A4 booklet provides a synthesis of an issue's feature theme articles (with relevant links). We hope that this will be of particular use for advocacy, briefing and raising awareness.

For the first time, each regular recipient of a print copy of FMR will also receive a copy of the **Editors' briefing**. If you would like additional print copies for meetings, briefings, workshops or partners, please get in touch – or print it off at [www.fmreview.org/education-displacement](http://www.fmreview.org/education-displacement).

An **Editors' briefing** is also available online for FMR 58 'Economies: rights and access to work' and FMR 59 'Twenty Years of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement'.



## Forthcoming feature themes

- **Ethics** – issue 61, due out June 2019 (submissions closed)
- **Return** – issue 62, due out October 2019 (see [www.fmreview.org/return](http://www.fmreview.org/return))

Please sign up to receive our occasional email alerts if you would like to be notified about new calls for articles and latest issues: [www.fmreview.org/request/alerts](http://www.fmreview.org/request/alerts).

▶ The Editors are considering the following themes for FMR issues from 2020 onwards:

- **Localisation**
- **Protection without ratification – non-signatories**
- **Trafficking and smuggling**
- **Urban displacement**
- **Refugee status determination**
- **Mental health and psychosocial support**
- **Gender**

We welcome feedback on these themes. We also invite agencies and donors who are particularly interested in one or more of these themes to consider whether financial support for an FMR issue might be possible, either directly to FMR or through collaboration on a wider project (or funding bid) in which FMR would enhance dissemination and impact.

Each issue of FMR costs approximately £84,000/US\$110,000 to produce in English, Arabic, Spanish and French including associated salary costs, and we welcome offers of full or part-funding.

Please contact the Editors to discuss. FMR is a collaboration – between we who produce it and you who write for it, share it, promote it, fund it. Please keep looking for ways to fund FMR to keep it going. Thank you!

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