

Securing Education for Syrian Refugees in Jordan

MONA CHRISTOPHERSEN



Cover Photo: Jordanian volunteer teacher Mohammed Marahleh holds a physical education class for Syrian refugees in the Northern Shuneh area of Jordan Valley, north of Amman, Jordan, on February 20, 2014. AP Photo/Raad Adayleh.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

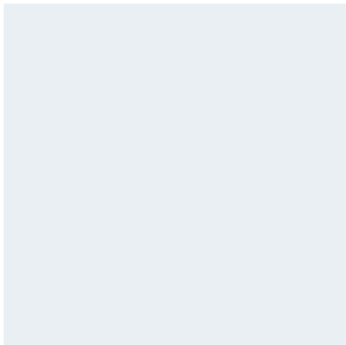
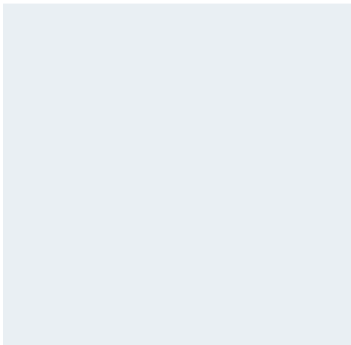
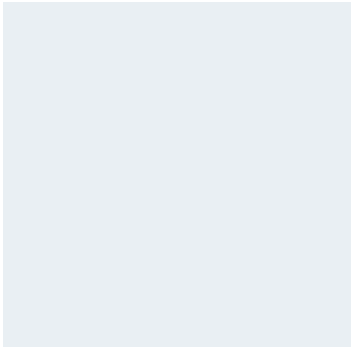
MONA CHRISTOPHERSEN is a researcher at the Fafo Research Foundation and a Senior Adviser at the International Peace Institute.

Email: christophersen@ipinst.org

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Executive Summary

The Syrian refugee crisis is the largest and most complex humanitarian emergency in recent times. What started out as a need for short-term humanitarian assistance in response to escalating unrest has turned into the displacement of almost 12 million people as the war has entered its fifth year. Without a solution to the conflict on the horizon, there is a need to reorient the humanitarian response by bridging short-term humanitarian assistance with longer-term development goals, including health and education. This report addresses education for Syrian refugees, with a particular focus on the situation in Jordan.

Despite the Jordanian government's generous efforts to provide education for the Syrian refugees the country is hosting, approximately 40 percent of school-age Syrian children in Jordan—more than 80,000 refugees—are not receiving formal education. War tends to have a severe impact on education, and reconstruction processes are more complicated when a society's younger generations lack education. Indeed, research shows that education is fundamental to development, economic growth, and poverty reduction. Beyond macroeconomic outputs, the impact for the individual is significant: education is not only essential for individuals' ability to grow and reach their potential, there is also a correlation between the number of years of education a person has received and his or her level of income. In conflict-affected communities, education can contribute to individuals' rehabilitation. Indicators for health, reduced fertility, adaption to new technologies, and the ability to cope with economic shocks all improve with higher levels of education.

With so many positive benefits for society and the individual, why are so many Syrian refugee children and youth not enrolled in education programs? There are five main impediments: economic barriers in the education system and in Syrian refugee households, educational divides between Syrian and Jordanian students, legal and regulatory obstacles to school enrollment, social tensions in schools, and competing priorities for refugee households.

Among these challenges, the most evident barrier to Syrian refugees' education in Jordan is the education system's lack of capacity to meet the increased demand for education in the country. Yet access to education has two sides: supply and demand. While supply is directly linked to the capacity and availability of education facilities, demand is more complex and often relates to each household's evaluation of its situation. A household assesses its opportunities based on access to schools, economic considerations, access to the labor market, and other factors. If the opportunities outweigh the barriers, most parents will send their children to school.

This situation suggests a number of innovative entry points for improving Syrian refugees' education in Jordan. Beyond bolstering the capacity of the education system itself, improving livelihoods and employment opportunities for heads of Syrian refugee households would create the conditions at home that enable children to be sent to school. This could include granting Syrian refugees limited permits to work in certain jobs where they would not necessarily compete with the Jordanian labor force. Implementing a predictable and consistent method of certifying students' results in school could help to bridge the gap in education requirements between the Jordanian and Syrian systems. Easing refugees' registration requirements could facilitate more regular access to education, or refugees could be issued an international document that grants them access to essential aid and services, including education, regardless of their formal status and registration. Finally, social tensions in schools could be reduced by implementing anti-bullying programs to promote social cohesion and creating joint classes between the two daily shifts that otherwise divide Syrian and Jordanian students.

Improved education for Syrian refugees is not just an end in itself; it would also contribute to stability and development in Jordan more broadly. It would promote social cohesion and reduce internal tensions at a time when Jordan seeks to avoid being dragged into the larger conflicts in its region. Better education will also produce refugees with knowledge and experience that they can bring home when their country is ready for a peacebuilding and reconstruction process.

Introduction

The Syrian refugee crisis is the largest and most complex refugee situation in recent times, according to UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres.¹ The war has caused extensive physical destruction, and the Syrian economy and social service systems have broken down. As a result, more than half of Syria's population has been displaced: 7.6 million have been uprooted within Syria and 4 million have registered as refugees in other countries.² Given the track record of peace initiatives to solve the multifaceted conflict, there is little reason to think that the situation will improve in the near term.

Against this backdrop, humanitarian actors have acknowledged the need to reorient the humanitarian response to the crisis, which initially focused on short-term and life-saving assistance such as food distribution and temporary shelter, in order to address refugees' medium- and long-term needs. This shift in approach is evident in the sixth inter-agency regional response plan for Syria, launched by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) at the end of 2013, which seeks to provide humanitarian and development assistance to the refugees and vulnerable host populations in the five neighboring countries hosting Syrian refugees—Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey. The strategy prioritizes two areas: first, the protection of refugees and, second, the cost and impact of Syrian displacement in host countries. The latter primarily focuses on the socioeconomic impact of these large refugee populations, particularly on health and education services. In parallel, the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan launched at the end of 2014 created a country-driven and regionally coherent process that seeks to strengthen national resilience in host countries.³

This report considers the challenge of securing

education for Syrian refugees, with a particular focus on the situation in Jordan. It is documented that refugee youth want an education and see it as a strategy to improve their current destitute situation.⁴ Despite this desire and generous efforts by the Jordanian host authorities to provide education for Syrian refugees, about 40 percent of Syrian refugees of school-going age in Jordan are not receiving formal education.⁵ This report provides an overview of the education system in Syria and Jordan before the crisis and examines measures taken to provide education for Syrian refugees. It further investigates barriers preventing Syrian students from returning to school and explores Syrians' perceptions of opportunities for continued education. It is a desk study based on secondary data sources. The aim is to present a systematic assessment and identify challenges and opportunities for improving Syrian refugees' access to education in Jordan.

Although there have been some independent analyses of this situation, many of the reports assessing needs in the education sector for Syrian refugees are the work of agencies and organizations operating in the field. While extensive experience from field operations gives valuable insights, this might also circumscribe the analytical significance of the reports. Many of the reports recycle previous findings, and only a few studies are based on new primary data. Moreover, when primary data collection is implemented, it is often done using "rapid" survey and assessment methods, rather than more rigorous research that can create solid evidence to inform planning. The latter is often a much more expensive process, but as the conflict has entered its fifth year some findings in the rapid reports suggest that more solid data is needed to develop better planning tools for a medium- to long-term response to the Syrian refugee problem, particularly in the field of education. This report is

1 UN Refugee Agency, "Needs Soar as Number of Syrian Refugees Tops 3 Million," August 29, 2014, available at www.unhcr.org/53ff76c99.html.

2 As of April 2015, 3,977,538 Syrians had registered as refugees in neighboring countries and North Africa according to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR). More than 200,000 have sought asylum in Europe. The latest figures are available at <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>. Figures on internally displaced Syrians are from December 2014, see Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, "Syria IDP Figures Analysis," available at <http://www.internal-displacement.org/middle-east-and-north-africa/syria/figures-analysis>.

3 Documentation on the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan, or 3RP, is available at [http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/documents.php?page=1&view=grid&Language\[\]=1&Type\[\]=13](http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/documents.php?page=1&view=grid&Language[]=1&Type[]=13).

4 Hashem Ahmadzadeh et al., "Ensuring Quality Education for Young Refugees from Syria (12-25 years). A Mapping Exercise," Refugee Studies Centre, Oxford Department of International Development, University of Oxford, September 2014.

5 Education Sector Working Group, "Access to Education for Syrian Refugee Children and Youth in Jordan Host Communities," UNICEF, March 2015; Education Sector Working Group, "Access to Education for Syrian Refugee Children in Za'atari Camp, Jordan: Joint Education Needs Assessment Report," UNICEF, REACH, September 2014.

designed to serve as a background paper for further research on challenges related to providing education for Syrian refugees in Jordan. This fits well with the post-2015 development agenda calling for a “data revolution” as a tool for mainstreaming robust and high quality data to measure and monitor progress in sustainable development and improve accountability.

Jordan as a Host Country for Refugees

Jordan is already host to more than 2 million Palestinian refugees registered by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). These refugees came in waves following surges in the Israeli-Palestinian conflicts, with peaks during the Arab-Israeli wars in 1948 and 1967. The Iraq wars, particularly the one beginning in 2003, produced a new group of Iraqi refugees in the Hashemite Kingdom. Although Jordan has never signed the 1951 *Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, or the 1967 protocol that followed, the country has offered generous humanitarian hospitality and temporary protection to refugees coming to Jordan. Nevertheless, the lack of formal recognition makes many refugees’ status ambiguous in the kingdom.

All Palestinian refugees residing in Jordan between December 20, 1949, and February 16, 1954, were granted Jordanian citizenship.⁶ This generosity also included Palestinians living in the West Bank, which was annexed by Jordan at the time. Later waves of refugees did not receive the same rights. For example, Palestinian refugees fleeing from Gaza after Egypt lost the Gaza Strip in the 1967 war still have limited rights in Jordan after almost fifty years. Although basic services are provided by UNRWA, lack of access to work, health insurance, and not least higher education

has set this group apart from the rest of the Palestinian refugees in Jordan. They are not only poor according to the main poverty indicators, they are also three times more likely to be found among the destitute poor, living on less than \$1.25 a day.⁷

Iraqi refugees from 2003 were never acknowledged as refugees in Jordan. Seeing them as an economic and security issue rather than a humanitarian concern, Jordan defined them as “guests” and gave them temporary protection with clear aims to send them back. Their legal status remained ambiguous, and under a 1998 agreement between the Jordanian government and UNHCR they got temporary protection in Jordan for six months. Since a resettlement process was intended beyond this deadline, Iraqi refugees did not formally get rights to residency, employment, education, or health care; they needed a residence permit, which was difficult to obtain, to acquire these rights. In addition, a number of professions in Jordan are legally reserved for Jordanian citizens and exclude foreigners and refugees.⁸ Iraqi refugees continue to enter Jordan as recent surges in the conflicts inside Iraq have forced more to seek protection. Like the Syrian refugees, this group needs humanitarian support as well as more long-term assistance, including education.⁹

As of April 2015, Jordan hosted close to 630,000 registered Syrian refugees, which is equivalent to about 10 percent of Jordan’s population.¹⁰ (The total number of Syrian refugees in the country and in need of assistance is likely higher, as it is known that not all refugees register with authorities.) More than 500,000 Syrian refugees—about 80 percent of all Syrian refugees in Jordan—are living in Jordanian communities outside of refugee camps, with the largest numbers in the northern governorates. The governorates of Amman, Irbid, and Mafraq host about 76 percent of the total Syrian refugee population in Jordan.¹¹ A study of

6 Law No. 6 of 1954 on Nationality (last amended 1987), Article 3, *Al-Jarida Al-Rasmiyya* [Official Gazette], January 1, 1954, available at <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b4ea13.html>.

7 Åge A. Tiltnes and Huafeng Zhang, “The Socio-Economic Conditions of Jordan’s Palestinian Camp Refugees: Summary of Findings from Two Surveys, 2011,” Oslo: Fafo Research Foundation, 2014, Fafo-report 2014:47, available at www.faforkiv.no/ais/middeast/jordan/refugees/living-cond-palestinian-refugees.html.

8 George Sadek, “Legal Status of Refugees: Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Iraq,” The Law Library of Congress, Global Legal Research Center, December 2013, available at www.loc.gov/law/help/refugees/2014-010156%20RPT.pdf.

9 “Amid Syrian Crisis, Iraqi Refugees in Jordan Forgotten,” *Irin News*, June 6, 2013, available at www.irinnews.org/report/98180/amid-syrian-crisis-iraqi-refugees-in-jordan-forgotten. Laila Azzeh, “100-150 Iraqi Refugees Arrive in Jordan Every Day—Caritas,” *Jordan Times*, available at <http://jordantimes.com/100-150-iraqi-refugees-arrive-in-jordan-every-day---caritas>.

10 UNHCR, “Syrian Refugees: Inter-Agency Regional Update,” April 26, 2015, available at <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>. The population of Jordan in 2013 (excluding refugees) was 6.46 million according to the World Bank, see <http://data.worldbank.org/country/Jordan>.

11 Svein Erik Stave and Solveig Hillesund, “Impact of Syrian Refugees on the Jordanian Labour Market: Findings from the Governorates of Amman, Irbid and Mafraq,” International Labour Organization (ILO) and Fafo Research Foundation, 2015.



Syrian refugees make their way at Azraq refugee camp, Jordan. The camp opened in 2014 and is still in the process of being populated—as of spring 2015 it hosts close to 18,000 refugees. One school was opened in the camp for the 2014–2015 academic year. (AP Photo/Raad Adayleh)

the implications of the Syrian influx for Jordan’s labor market, conducted by the Norwegian Fafo Research Foundation, found that Syrian refugees in Jordan are younger, on average, than the Jordanian population.¹²

Education in Syria and Jordan

ADVANCES IN EDUCATION REVERSED IN SYRIA

Before the current conflict, Syria was a middle-income country with a well-developed education system. When the Ba’ath Party took control of the country in the 1960s, it made education one of its priorities. The aim was to combat illiteracy, stimulate development, and promote Ba’athist ideology and loyalty among citizens. The country’s education initiatives produced some of the highest enrollment rates and lowest illiteracy rates in the

Middle East, although some rural areas fell far below the national average.¹³ In 2010, more than 90 percent of men and women in Syria were literate.¹⁴ The enrollment rate was 97 percent for primary school and 67 percent for secondary school. Schools and universities are administrated by the Ministry of Education, which determines the curricula and organizes official exams for students in the ninth and twelfth grades. Primary school is compulsory in Syria and students enroll at the age of six. It runs from first to ninth grade, with the national exams in the final grade determining access to secondary school. Secondary education runs from tenth to twelfth grade and can prepare the students for tertiary education or a vocational track.

The significant achievements in Syria’s education system have been dramatically reversed as Syria has entered its fifth year of war. About half of all school-age children in Syria are no longer attending school.¹⁵ There are various reasons for

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Thomas Collelo, ed., *Syria: A Country Study* (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1987), available at <http://countrystudies.us/syria/>; Karim Ménacère, “Education in Syria,” The Open University, February 2010, available at www.open.edu/openlearn/society/international-development/international-studies/education-syria; Classbase, “Education System in Syria,” available at www.classbase.com/Countries/Syria/Education-System.

¹⁴ UNICEF, World Vision, UNHCR, and Save the Children, “Syria Crisis: Education Interrupted,” December 2013, available at <http://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/syria-crisis-education-interrupted-global-action-rescue-schooling>.

¹⁵ Syrian Centre for Policy Research, “Syria: Alienation and Violence,” UNRWA, UNDP, March 2015; Save the Children, “The Cost of War: Calculating the Impact of the Collapse of Syria’s Education System on the Country’s Future,” March 2015.

this, the most obvious is displacement because of the conflict. There are now more than 7.6 million internally displaced people in Syria.¹⁶ Families frequently relocate from place to place due to unstable conditions and fluctuating access to shelters and accommodation. This nomadic experience can last for years, and it easily disrupts education for school-age children. In addition, about 4,000 schools are reported to be damaged or used as shelters for internally displaced people, and thus unfit for educational purposes.¹⁷ The remaining schools are not equipped to accommodate the additional displaced students and are now overcrowded, with insufficient supplies and facilities. Some schools are also temporarily affected by intensified conflict in their area, which might deter parents from sending children to school for shorter or longer periods of time, fearing for their safety.

There is some evidence that the Syrian education system was under pressure already before the war. *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman has reported on how severe drought affected Syria between 2006 and 2010.¹⁸ Local UN representatives warned that the drought had severely impacted 15,000 small-holding farmers who had to give up farming and migrate to urban areas in search of employment. As these farmers left wives and children at home, the UN feared that children would be forced out of school and into child labor.¹⁹ However, this affected a relatively small number of children (perhaps 40,000) in a population of 22 million people.²⁰

Despite this deterioration, the Fafo Research Foundation's household survey data from before the conflict found that poverty had been declining.²¹ Today, Syrian children are nevertheless facing mounting challenges to achieve education

both inside Syria and in host communities elsewhere.

PROGRESS IN JORDAN'S EDUCATION SYSTEM THREATENED BY A YOUTH BULGE

As in many other parts of the Middle East, formal education in Jordan was initiated by religious groups. At first, access to education was limited, usually to those from the political and economic elite. After the country gained its independence in 1946, a new emphasis was placed on education for the population at large. The geographic areas constituting the new state of Jordan had not been previously unified with a shared national identity. The new state therefore needed to expand and consolidate its power through new state institutions and to develop loyal citizens with a shared understanding of Jordan as a nation. Schools and education played a major role in this respect. Jordan's leaders aimed to transform the country from a traditional tribal society to a modern national state, and education was central for this modernization project. As a country poor in natural resources, much hope was placed in education as a tool for both realizing individual economic aspirations and advancing the country's socioeconomic development.²² Today, Jordan aims to become a "knowledge economy," and education has become even more important as the country recognizes the need for highly skilled students with problem-solving, communication, and teamwork skills centered on information and communications technologies.²³

There has been a series of education reforms to both improve curriculum and expand access to schools throughout Jordan. The result is shrinking illiteracy rates and one of the highest enrollment

16 International Displacement Monitoring Centre, "Syria IDP Figures Analysis," December 2014, available at www.internal-displacement.org/middle-east-and-north-africa/syria/figures-analysis.

17 Thomas L. Friedman, "Without Water, Revolution," *New York Times*, May 18, 2013, available at www.nytimes.com/2013/05/19/opinion/sunday/friedman-without-water-revolution.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.

18 Ibid. A variety of scholars have also explored this topic. See, for example, Colin P. Kelley, Mark A. Cane, Richard Seager, Shahrzad Mohtadi and Yochanan Kushnir, "Research Further Links Syria's Political Upheaval and Climate Change," *The Global Observatory*, March 25, 2015.

19 Thomas L. Friedman, "WikiLeaks, Drought and Syria," *New York Times*, January 21, 2014, available at www.nytimes.com/2014/01/22/opinion/friedman-wikileaks-drought-and-syria.html.

20 If 15,000 households were affected and each household had three children, on average, this means that about 40,000 children were affected.

21 Unpublished data from the last household income and expenditure survey carried out in Syria prior to the civil war, 2008–2010, Fafo Research Foundation, in author's possession.

22 Frida Adely, *Gendered Paradoxes: Educating Jordanian Women in Nation, Faith and Progress* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

23 See, for example, Mohammad Ghazal, "Future of Education Lies in ICT—Workshop Participants," *Jordan Times*, November 4, 2014, available at <http://jordantimes.com/future-of-education-lies-in-ict---workshop-participants>.

rates in the region for basic education.²⁴ The Ministry of Education is responsible for preschools and primary and secondary education, while the Ministry of Higher Education is responsible for tertiary education. Preschool is not mandatory, but recommended for two years. Preschools are operated by private institutions, and parents usually pay a fee for these services. Primary education, which serves children from five to fifteen years of age, is compulsory and free of charge in public schools. About 30 percent of primary school students attend private schools, where fees can vary from \$1,000 a year to more than \$7,000 a year. Secondary school is a two-year program in which students can choose between an academic track and vocational training. The majority of primary school graduates enroll in secondary school, but there is a high drop-out rate at this level. The academic track leads to the national exam, *Tawjihi*, which determines access to university and other institutions of higher education. The vocational courses are concluded with an apprenticeship giving the student a certificate in his or her vocation.²⁵

For Jordan's 2 million registered Palestinian refugees, primary education is provided by UNRWA. The UNRWA schools are known to be overcrowded due to strained budgets, and they often have to run double shifts. As such, one-third of the refugee children attend Jordanian public schools instead, particularly if they live far from UNRWA school locations. Some Palestinian children also attend private schools.

Although Jordan has accomplished much in its efforts to provide quality education with access for all, particularly with regard to enrollment in higher

education, there are still many challenges for education in Jordan, and the most significant is Jordan's youth bulge.

Jordan is a middle-income country, but it has one of the youngest populations among countries in the same income category, with an estimated 63 percent of the population under the age of 30.²⁶ The country's population has been growing at a rate higher than the regional average over the past two decades, and its population nearly tripled in size between 1980 and 2010.²⁷ Today, the fertility rate is 3.5 children per woman, and Jordan's rapidly growing population is exerting significant pressure on the education system—to expand and build new schools and classrooms to accommodate the new cohorts of students entering the system. International development agencies have been helping Jordan to meet these demands by supporting construction of new schools, training teachers, and supplying classrooms.²⁸

Despite improved indicators for education, there is a continual need for new schools and teachers to accommodate the growing number of students. The challenge of improving the quality of education and delivering more competitive results has been further strained by the influx of more than 200,000 Syrian refugees of school-going age (six to seventeen), 101,000 of whom were enrolled in Jordanian schools in the 2013–2014 academic year. The number enrolled increased somewhat in 2014–2015, but 38 percent of school-age refugees in host communities are still not enrolled in formal schools.²⁹ There are simply not enough classrooms and teachers to meet the increased demand. Double-shift schools are being used as one tool to address this challenge (more on this below). But as

24 UNESCO, "Education in Jordan. Progress Towards the Six Education for All Goals in Jordan, the Arab States and the World," Education for All Global Monitoring Report, Fact Sheet, February 2012, available at www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/ED/pdf/Jordan_fact_sheet.pdf; The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, "Education in Jordan: A Commitment to Excellence," available at www.kinghussein.gov.jo/resources3.html; Jon Hanssen-Bauer, Jon Pedersen, and Åge A. Tiltnes, eds., "Jordanian Society: Living Conditions in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan," Oslo: Fafo Research Foundation, 1998, Fafo-report 253, chapter 4, available at <http://www.fafarkiv.no/pub/rapp/253/253.pdf>.

25 Tore Kjeilen, "Jordan: Education," *LookLex Encyclopaedia*, available at <http://i-cias.com/e.o/jordan.education.htm>.

26 Although it is often claimed that 70 percent of the Jordanian population is under the age of thirty, a recent study by the Fafo Research Foundation indicates a lower estimate of 63 percent, on a par with United Nations estimates from 2012. See Stave and Hillesund, "Impact of Syrian Refugees." See also Population Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *World Population Prospects: The 2012 Revision* (New York: United Nations, 2013), available at <http://esa.un.org/wpp/>.

27 Jordan had an average annual population growth rate of 3.5 percent between 1980 and 2012 compared to 2.4 percent for the total Arab population. See UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), "The Demographic Profile of the Arab Countries," December 2013, available at www.escwa.un.org/information/publications/edit/upload/E_ESCWA_SDD_13_TP-14_E.pdf. See also, ESCWA, "The Demographic Profile of Jordan," available at www.escwa.un.org/popin/members/Jordan.pdf.

28 While covering the election of the new independent teachers' union in 2012, the author visited one of these new schools funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

29 Education Sector Working Group, "Access to Education for Syrian Refugee Children."

demand outpaces supply, creating a barrier to education for Syrian refugees, Jordanian authorities are repeatedly voicing the need for international support to provide assistance to the Syrian refugees.³⁰

EDUCATION LEVELS VARY AMONG JORDANIANS AND SYRIAN REFUGEES

Jordanians are generally better educated than Syrians, particularly in terms of achieving higher levels of education. A sample survey of local Jordanians and Syrian refugees in three Jordanian governorates conducted by the Fafo Research Foundation in February and March 2014 found that 42 percent of Jordanians older than fifteen years of age have completed secondary education or more, compared to 15 percent of surveyed Syrians.³¹ Jordanians are also four times more likely than Syrian refugees to have pursued some post-secondary education. Furthermore, as many as 60 percent of Syrian refugees in Jordan have never completed primary education, compared to 25 percent among the Jordanians.

These differences are most likely a result of better education outcomes overall in Jordan compared to Syria, rather than particularly poorly educated Syrians having moved to Jordan. When compared to Syrian education statistics before the crisis, the results of the sample survey referred to above show that Syrian refugees in Jordan are on a par with or slightly better off than the national Syrian average before the crisis.

The Fafo survey also found notable regional variations. Refugees living among the general population hold higher qualifications than those living in the largest refugee camp, Zaatari camp. The findings further revealed that refugees in Jordan's capital Amman have better qualifications than refugees in the governorates of Irbid and Mafraq (refugees in Mafraq were at the bottom of this scale). Similar variation is found in the Jordanian host population, indicating that

education is likely of higher quality, more accessible, and more highly prioritized in central urban areas such as Amman than in peripheral areas and towns like Mafraq.

The Importance of Education for Syrian Refugees

Despite the protracted nature of the Syrian crisis, Syrian refugee children and youth are part of Syria's future and will likely be central to the country's recovery and reconstruction. The economic and social devastation in Syria has reversed years of positive developments in education. It will take years or even decades to rebuild infrastructure and economic production capacity, and this process will be more complicated if the younger generations of Syrians lack education. The general level of education in the population, and not least among the new generation that will carry much responsibility for reconstruction and development, will have significant consequences for Syria and its people's future.

EDUCATION FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Education is fundamental for society's development and individuals' ability to grow and reach their potential. It was declared a human right in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* in 1948³² and again in the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* in 1989.³³

When analyzed through an economic lens, education constitutes an investment in the future that increases productivity and generates economic development over the long term. International institutions such as the World Bank have shown that education is fundamental to development, economic growth, and poverty reduction.³⁴ The impact for the individual is also significant since

30 Rochelle Davis and Abbie Tylor, "Syrian Refugees in Jordan and Lebanon: A Snapshot from Summer 2013," Center for Contemporary Arab Studies (CCAS), Georgetown University, January 20, 2014, available at <https://refugeearchives.wordpress.com/2014/01/20/new-publications-syrian-refugees-in-lebanon-a-snapshot-from-summer-2013/>; Gaelle Sundelin, "Syrian Children's Education a Constant Concern," *Jordan Times*, July 30, 2013, available at <http://jordantimes.com/syrian-childrens-education-a-constant-concern-for-govt-ngos>.

31 Amman, Irbid, and Mafraq. See Stave and Hillesund, "Impact of Syrian Refugees."

32 United Nations General Assembly, *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, December 10, 1948, Article 26.

33 United Nations General Assembly, *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, September 2, 1990, Articles 29 and 30.

34 World Bank, *Education: Year in Review 2012* (Washington, DC, 2012), available at <http://go.worldbank.org/K3SEZ6EOK0>; World Bank, *Learning for All, Investing in People's Knowledge and Skills to Promote Development — World Bank Group Education Strategy 2020* (Washington, DC, 2011), available at http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EDUCATION/Resources/ESSU/Education_Strategy_4_12_2011.pdf.

people with higher levels of education tend to earn higher incomes, and education can thus function as a strategy out of poverty.³⁵

However, the benefits of education go beyond economic outputs. Indicators for health, reduced fertility, adaption to new technology, and ability to cope with economic shocks all improve with a population's increased levels of education.³⁶ Indeed, a recent study by the Fafo Research Foundation on living conditions among Palestinian refugees living in camps in Jordan showed that significant positive developments in all major indicators among the camp populations are related to improved levels of education.³⁷ Educated people know more about nutrition, hygiene, and vaccination programs, which improve their health. This knowledge also makes their children healthier; and reduced child mortality tends to reduce fertility rates, which further improves health for both mother and children.

EDUCATION'S PARTICULAR VALUE IN CONFLICT SETTINGS

A cross-national review of education in conflict settings confirms that war has a severe impact on education. And although education infrastructure and enrollment levels may return to normal within a few years after a peace agreement, those that missed out on education during conflict have difficulties regaining what they lost.³⁸

In addition to all the general benefits of education for the individual and society, there are special benefits for children going through crisis and dramatic change. The civil war in Syria has made millions of Syrian children extremely vulnerable. They do not only miss out on education; they are also exposed to violence, separation from kin, and various forms of exploitation, including child

labor, early marriage, and recruitment as child soldiers by armed groups.

Bringing children and youth back to school can also be an important strategy for healing after the emotional stress many of them have been exposed to during the war. Going to school can establish an element of normality in shattered and disrupted lives. Having a daily schedule and starting the process of learning can lead young minds away from trauma and devastation, and toward the kinds of challenges young people are supposed to be confronted with. Getting children back to school will therefore be a core element in the rehabilitation process for young Syrians.

Indeed, education generates more engaged citizens, often with a better defined purpose in life. Such purpose can have a stabilizing effect, whereas a lack of meaning in life is often thought to lead vulnerable youth into extremism. Education's stabilizing attribute is particularly salient for Jordan, which aims to be a stable country in an unstable region.

In response to all these challenges and knowing the short- and long-term benefits of education, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), UNHCR, Save the Children, World Vision, and other partners initiated the "No Lost Generation" strategy in January 2014.³⁹ The strategy aims to help children and youth affected by the conflict to build a more stable and secure future by providing safe education; protection from exploitation, abuse, and violence; and psychological care and support.⁴⁰ Schools can offer a safe environment for learning and rehabilitation not only for the individual child but also for Syria as a society, if education is equally distributed and of good quality.⁴¹

35 Jeni Klugman, *Human Development Report 2010: The Real Wealth of Nations* (New York: United Nations Development Programme, 2010), available at http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/reports/270/hdr_2010_en_complete_reprint.pdf.

36 World Bank, *Learning for All*.

37 Tiltnes and Zhang, "The Socio-Economic Conditions"; Åge A. Tiltnes and Huafeng Zhang, "Progress, Challenges, Diversity: Insights into the Socio-Economic Conditions of Palestinian Refugees in Jordan," Oslo: Fafo Research Foundation, 2013, Fafo-report 2013:42, available at www.fafarkiv.no/pub/rapp/20332/index.html.

38 Solveig Hillesund, Tewodros Aragie Kebede, and Jon Pedersen: "The Role of Education in the Transition from Relief to Development: A Review of Existing Knowledge and Suggested Way Forward," Brussels: Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED), Institute of Health and Society, Université Catholique de Louvain, November 27, 2014, p. 3.

39 UNICEF, "Global Champions and \$1 Billion Investment Needed to Prevent a Lost Generation of Syrian Children," press release, New York, January 7, 2014, available at www.unicef.org/media/media_71701.html.

40 UNICEF, "No Lost Generation: Protecting the futures of children affected by the crisis in Syria," January 2014, available at www.unicef.org/appeals/files/No_Lost_Generation_Strategic_Overview_January_2014.pdf.

41 Hillesund, Aragie Kebede, and Pedersen, "The Role of Education."

School Attendance Among Syrian Refugees in Jordan

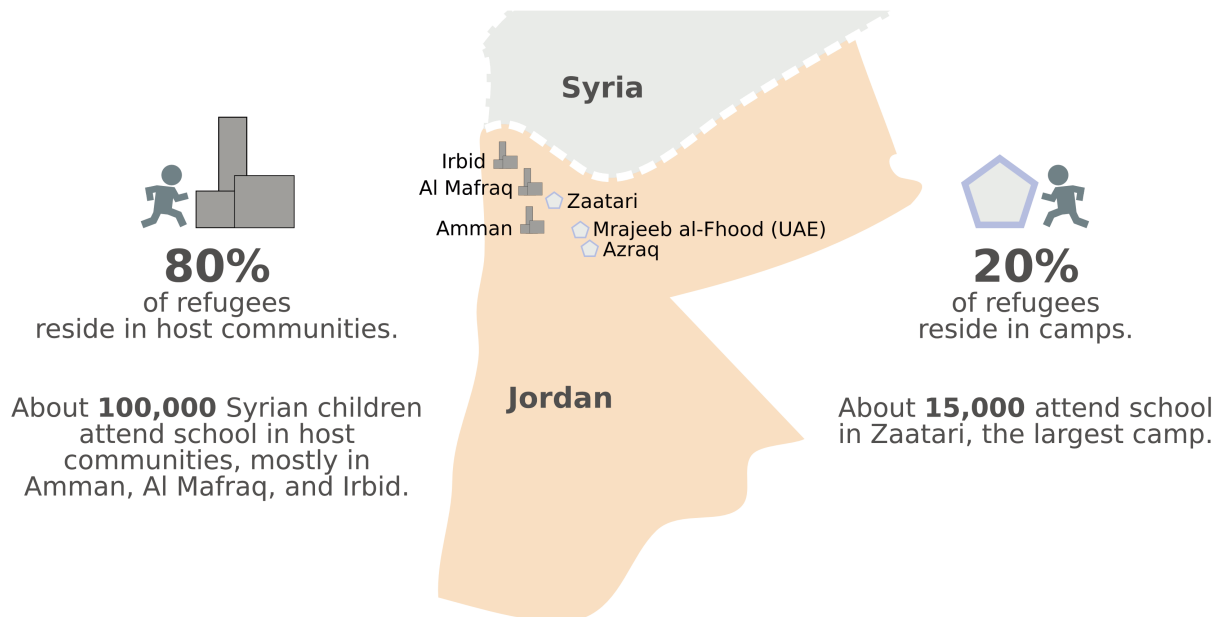
Based on the most recent available data, it can be estimated that approximately 40 percent of school-age Syrian refugees in Jordan—more than 80,000 children—are not attending school. About 32 percent of Syrian refugees in Jordan, or approximately 201,600 children and youth, are of school-going age.⁴² Of these, 30,000 reside in the largest refugee camp, Zaatari, where 48 percent of school-age children do not attend formal school.⁴³ The number of school-age children in other refugee camps in Jordan is relatively small. Far more Syrian refugee children live in Jordanian host communities outside of camps, where it is known that about 38 percent of school-age refugees are not attending school.⁴⁴ Boys aged twelve to seventeen are the least likely cohort to attend school, whether in camps or host communities.⁴⁵

EDUCATION IN REFUGEE CAMPS

Refugee camps are often established to offer comprehensive and organized aid to a refugee community. Distribution of food and non-food items is generally effective in these settings, and services for health and education can be planned and managed for the registered refugee populations. Three refugee camps for Syrians have been established in Jordan to date: the Zaatari, Azraq, and Mrajeeb al-Fhood camps, the latter of which was established by the United Arab Emirates. Two more camps, or rather refugee settlements, are Cyber City—established for Palestinian refugees coming from Syria—and King Abdullah Park.

Zaatari refugee camp is close to the city of Mafraq in northern Jordan, not far from the Syrian border. The camp was built to accommodate 85,000 refugees but has at times hosted more than 120,000 people, which has sometimes compromised security for refugees in need of protection.

Where do Syrian refugees reside and get educated in Jordan?



Sources: UNHCR, Education Sector Working Group

42 Education Sector Working Group, "Access to Education for Syrian Refugee Children," p. 23; UNHCR, "Syrian Refugees: Inter-Agency Regional Update," April 26, 2015.

43 Education Sector Working Group, "Access to Education for Syrian Refugee Children in Zaatari Camp, Jordan: Joint Education Needs Assessment Report," UNICEF, REACH, September 2014; UNHCR, "Syria Regional Refugee Response: Za'atari Camp," available at <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/settlement.php?id=176&country=107®ion=77>.

44 Education Sector Working Group, "Access to Education for Syrian Refugee Children."

45 Education Sector Working Group, "Access to Education for Syrian Refugee Children," and Education Sector Working Group, "Access to Education for Syrian Refugee Children in Zaatari Camp."

Azraq refugee camp is located in the Zarqa region about 100 kilometers west of the Jordanian capital Amman. It opened in 2014 to accommodate 130,000 more refugees.⁴⁶ This new camp is still in the process of being populated and hosted close to 18,000 refugees as of spring 2015.⁴⁷ The smaller but more controversial Cyber City refugee camp is located near the city of Ramtha. It is often described as a detention center rather than a refugee camp, as a place designated for Palestinian refugees from Syria and “single men of military age.” This group of Syrian refugees is restricted from entering Jordan for fear of creating instability due to historic events such as the conflict between Palestinian militias and the Jordanian army, known as Black September, in the 1970s. As such, refugees in Cyber City often face the bleak choice of remaining in this prison-like camp or being deported back to Syria.⁴⁸ Cyber City hosts approximately 3,000 people. Mrajeeb al-Fhood, known as the Emirati camp, hosts about 6,000 people, and King Abdullah Park hosts about 4,000 people.

As the two larger refugee camps, Zaatari and Azraq also have more young people of school-going age. In Zaatari camp, there are three schools with more than 15,000 students.⁴⁹ Nonetheless, in September 2014 it was estimated that 48 percent of school-age Syrian refugees in Zaatari—nearly 15,000 children and youth—were not attending the formal schools at the camp and 39 percent were not attending any form of education service, whether formal or informal.⁵⁰ In the more recently established Azraq camp there were no schools in the 2013–2014 school year, but a new school opened for 2014–2015. At the end of 2014, there were 1,390 Syrian refugee children attending

school in Azraq.⁵¹ Before the start of the new academic year, the Norwegian Refugee Council provided summer school with catch-up classes to prepare the children to re-enter school.⁵¹ Jordanian regulations allow students that have been out of school for up to three years to re-enroll in schools; however, students that have missed three or more years are not permitted to enroll again, according to current regulations.⁵³

EDUCATION IN HOST COMMUNITIES

Despite the construction of refugee camps for Syrian refugees, most of the refugees are settling outside of these camps. About 80 percent of the Syrian refugees in Jordan are estimated to have settled in urban and semi-urban areas across Jordan, with a majority in the northern regions. The capital Amman has attracted about 28 percent of the Syrian refugees in Jordan, while about 26 percent live in the governorate of Mafraq and 23 percent in the governorate of Irbid. In the two latter governorates, Syrian refugees now represent about two-thirds of the population.⁵⁴ Refugees that have settled outside camps have more varied places of origin in Syria than those in camps. They are also less likely to come from a rural background: 87 percent of the refugees living in Zaatari camp, for example, have rural origins, whereas only 58 percent of the refugees living outside camps have a rural background.⁵⁵

The majority of Syrian refugees are children under the age of eighteen, and more than 200,000 children and youth registered by UNHCR are of school-going age, between six and seventeen years old.⁵⁶ Jordan is generously granting Syrian children in host communities access to primary and secondary education in public schools, free of

46 Diaa Hadid and Omar Akour, “Azraq Refugee Camp Opens for 130,000 Syrians Fleeing War,” *Huffington Post*, June 30, 2014, available at www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/04/30/syrian-refugees-azraq_n_5239130.html?utm_hp_ref=world.

47 Up-to-date figures are available at <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/settlement.php?id=251&country=107®ion=73>.

48 Human Rights Watch, “Jordan: Palestinians Escaping Syria Turned Away,” August 7, 2014, available at www.hrw.org/news/2014/08/07/jordan-palestinians-escaping-syria-turned-away.

49 UNICEF, “Syrian Children Graduate at Za’atari Refugee Camp Schools,” UNICEF News Story, June 23, 2014, available at <http://childrenofsyria.info/2014/06/23/syrian-children-graduate-at-zaatari-refugee-camp-schools/>; A World at School, “10,000 Syrian Children in Refugee Camp Complete Their School Year,” July 2, 2014, available at www.aeworldatschool.org/news/entry/10000-syrian-refugee-camp-children-complete-their-school-year.

50 Education Sector Working Group, “Access to Education for Syrian Refugee Children in Zaatari Camp”; UNHCR, “Syria Regional Refugee Response: Za’atari Camp.”

51 Inter-Agency Task Force, “Jordan Inter-Sector Working Group Update,” December 2014.

52 Norwegian Refugee Council, “NRC Provides First Learning Opportunities in Azraq Camp,” June 4, 2014, available at www.nrc.no/?did=9178328.

53 UNESCO, “Syrian Refugees Education.”

54 Ahmadzadeh et al., “Ensuring Quality Education.” Cf. Stave and Hillesund’s cumulative figure of 76 percent of refugees settling in Amman, Mafraq, and Irbid in their report “Impact of Syrian Refugees,” cited above.

55 Stave and Hillesund, “Impact of Syrian Refugees.”

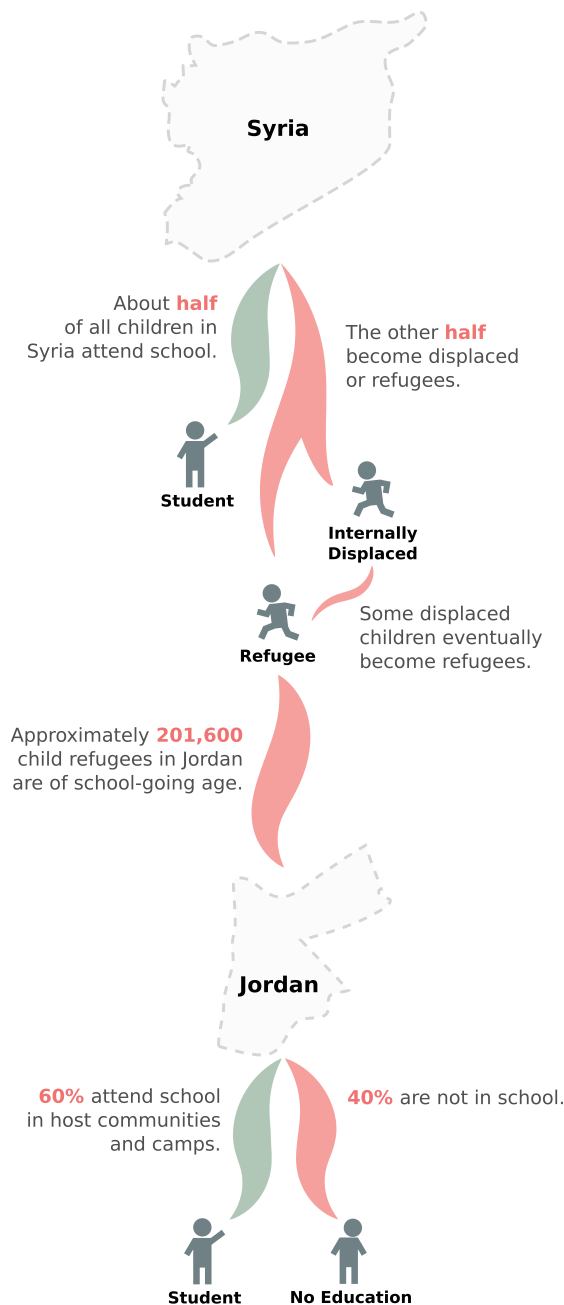
56 UNHCR, “Registered Syrians in Jordan,” May 2, 2015, available at <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107>.

charge. The influx of Syrian refugees has thus added to the existing pressure and overcrowding in many Jordanian schools. In an effort to improve the quality of education, Jordan had a policy to dismantle double-shift schools prior to the Syrian crisis; even so, 22 percent of the schools were reported to be operating with double shifts in 2010 and 2011.⁵⁷

In the wake of the refugee influx, several steps were taken to improve capacity to educate Syrian children in Jordanian public schools. Twenty-eight schools were provided with additional prefabricated classrooms, and thirty-five schools were upgraded through small-scale renovations. As of 2015, close to 100 schools are reported to be operating in double shifts to accommodate more students, despite the previous policy to abandon this model.⁵⁸ Both Jordanian and Syrian students are now eligible to take the national exam (*Tawjihi*) upon completion of the twelfth grade; however, they must provide official documentation of previous schooling. In the 2012–2013 school year about 30,000 Syrian children were enrolled in schools in host communities, according to the Jordanian Ministry of Education.⁵⁹ In the 2013–2014 school year this number rose to approximately 100,000 Syrian children.

Following their reintroduction, double-shift schools have become the main tool for providing education to Syrian children and youth. These schools are serving Jordanian students in the morning and Syrian students in the afternoon.⁶⁰ Both shifts follow the Jordanian curricula using Arabic as the language of instruction. Teachers are concerned that reduced teaching time in the double-shift system is compromising the quality of Jordanian education.⁶¹ Despite their negative impacts on quality, double shifts are more effective in terms of quantity, offering education to more students. Yet an estimated 38 percent of school-age Syrian children—approximately 65,000 refugees—

A Syrian child's uncertain path to school in Jordan



Sources: Save the Children, UNHCR, Education Sector Working Group

57 Author’s communications with experts on education and Syrian refugees in Jordan, April 2015.
 58 UNESCO, “Syrian Refugees Education”; The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, “Needs Assessment: Review of the Impact of the Syrian Crisis on Jordan,” Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, November 2013, Executive Summary, available at http://static.squarespace.com/static/522c2552e4b0d3c39ccd1e00/t/52d56af6e4b0b3e32a8fbc7c/1389718262821/Needs%20Assessment%20Review_Jordan.pdf.
 59 Education Sector Working Group, “Joint Education Needs Assessment: Za’atari Refugee Camp – Jordan,” April 2013, available at <http://reliefweb.int/report/jordan/joint-education-needs-assessment-za%E2%80%99atari-refugee-camp-jordan-april-2013>.
 60 The first shift operates from 8:00am–12:00pm. The afternoon shift runs from 12:30pm–4:00pm and the periods are decreased from 45 to 35 minutes. In previous arrangements of double-shift schools, a six-day school week was implemented to compensate for the reduced classroom time. The Jordanian Ministry of Education now lacks funding to extend the school week in double-shift schools. See Mark Tran “Syrian Refugees Put Strain on Jordan Schools amid Fears for ‘Lost Generation,’” *The Guardian*, December 2, 2013, available at www.theguardian.com/global-development/2013/dec/02/syrian-refugees-strain-on-jordan-schools.
 61 Laila Azzeh, “Teachers Dismayed at New Hours for Two-Shift Schools,” *Jordan Times*, October 30, 2012, available at <http://jordantimes.com/teachers-dismayed-at-new-hours-for-two-shift-schools>.

do not have access to education in Jordanian host communities today.⁶²

NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL EDUCATION

In addition to formal education for Syrian refugees, a number of international and local NGOs, led by Save the Children Jordan, offer intensive catch-up programs for students that have been out of schools for one or two years.⁶³ In Jordan programs aimed at reintegrating students in formal learning are referred to as non-formal education. All other learning programs are referred to as informal education. Many organizations also offer informal education for students who are no longer eligible to re-enroll in schools or no longer interested in formal education. Vocational training and life-skills programs are offered to refugees inside and outside of camps. Although focus groups and consultations with the target groups have informed the design of these programs, some have criticized the programming for being stereotyped along gender lines. Young women typically attend beautician, hairstyling, or sewing courses, while young men learn carpentry, welding, or cell phone repair.⁶⁴ There is a limit to how many hairdressers a community needs, and Jordan has had only partial success with similar vocational training programs in other contexts. Nonetheless, there is a notion among education workers that the informal education courses achieve better results than formal education, particularly those related to information technology; further research is needed to confirm such assertions.

Obstacles to Education for Syrian Refugees

ECONOMIC BARRIERS IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM AND AT HOME

The main barrier to education for Syrian refugees in Jordan is the education system's capacity. Public schools in the areas hosting the most refugees are overburdened and unable to absorb all school-age refugee students, despite scaling up to double-shift

schools. The increased demand for education puts pressure not only on budgets for new classrooms and schools but also on the demand for skilled and educated teachers. Because of Jordanian employment regulations, only Jordanian teachers can be employed in schools. When this is combined with a lack of funding to meet the current demand for teachers, the result is a lack of qualified teachers. Jordan has made it clear that its policy is to provide quality education for Syrian refugee children and youth, but it claims that given the constraints and challenges, this is beyond the country's fiscal capacity—it cannot do so without increased and more predictable international funding.

The education system's capacity deficit is not only prolonging the time refugee children and youth spend outside of formal education, it is also raising the bar for those seeking to return to school and creating a risk that many Syrian youths will drop out of formal education all together.

A second barrier to education relates to household economics. The deficit between aid and available income on the one hand and household expenses on the other limits a family's ability to incur additional costs. This is particularly true outside of camps, where refugees have to pay rent for their accommodation. Although public schools, in principle, are free in Jordan, households still have to pay for transportation, uniforms, and school supplies. Most children will also need some pocket money for a snack during the school day. Of these expenses, transportation often is the most challenging as refugees tend to settle in the outskirts of urban or semi-urban areas, which are often far away from local schools. Transportation thus becomes a practical necessity to go to school. These expenses may not seem significant, but they are beyond what many impoverished refugee households can afford.

The discrepancy between aid and Syrian refugees' needs has been documented in other contexts.⁶⁵ The need for additional income is often noted as a factor that contributes to keeping children out of school. In Jordan, Syrian refugees

62 Education Sector Working Group, "Access to Education for Syrian Refugee Children."

63 Education Sector Working Group, "Joint Education Needs Assessment: Za'atari."

64 Women's Refugee Commission, "Unpacking Gender: The Humanitarian Response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis in Jordan," New York, March 2014, available at <http://womensrefugeecommission.org/resources/gender-issues/985-unpacking-gender-the-humanitarian-response-to-the-syrian-refugee-crisis-in-jordan>.

65 Mona Christophersen, Cathrine Moe Thorleifsson, and Åge A. Tiltnes, "Ambivalent Hospitality: Coping Strategies and Local Responses to Syrian Refugees in Lebanon," Fafo, 2013, Fafo-report 2013:28, available at www.fafokiv.no/pub/rapp/20338/index.html.

are not granted work permits and are not eligible to seek formal employment. Several reports raise concerns that an increasing number of children are not attending school because they have to work.⁶⁶ It is claimed that it is sometimes easier for children to find informal work than it is for their parents, and that the ramifications will be less severe if they are caught. Many households that send children to work have typically lost their breadwinner, physical or psychological injury has rendered him unable to work, or he has stayed behind in Syria (the majority of Syrian breadwinners are men).

In Jordan it is estimated that more than 50,000 Syrian refugee households are headed by women, either because the husband is dead or because he is in Syria.⁶⁷ For female-headed households, it is sometimes considered culturally unacceptable for mothers to work outside the home, while it is more appropriate to send a child to work.⁶⁸ However, in female-headed households with small children too young for the labor market, mothers will break such cultural taboos to secure the well-being of their family.⁶⁹

In Jordan the labor law defines the minimum working age as sixteen years old. Youths between sixteen and eighteen years of age are permitted to work as long as the working conditions are not considered hazardous, as defined by the law.⁷⁰ The Jordanian department of statistics defines child labor as (1) all work conducted by children under the age of twelve, (2) more than fourteen hours of work per week by children aged between twelve and fifteen years, or (3) hazardous work undertaken by youth below the age of eighteen.⁷¹ Some studies suggest that as many as 50 percent of Syrian refugee children are working in Jordan.⁷² However, an assessment by UNICEF and Save the Children in the north of the Jordan valley and in

the city of Irbid found that the prevalence of child labor varied from 42 percent in the Jordan Valley, where children had easy access to agricultural work, to as low as 0.1 percent in Irbid.⁷³ Jordan's Ministry of Labor lacks figures on child labor among Syrian refugees, but it has suggested that around 60,000 Syrian children work across the country, or about 25 percent of the Syrian school-age population.

A study by the Fafo Research Foundation in three governorates, Amman, Irbid, and Mafraq, found that the prevalence of both economic activity and employment was higher among boys in the Syrian refugee communities than among the Jordanians in the host communities. It also found that it was substantially higher for boys between fifteen and eighteen years old than for younger boys aged nine to fourteen. A comparison to the situation before the Syrian crisis started in 2011, however, suggests that Syrian boys used to be more economically active than Jordanian boys and have brought this practice with them to Jordan. Fafo found that among Syrians aged nine to fourteen, an estimated 3 percent outside of refugee camps and 0.8 percent in Zaatari camp are employed, compared to 0.5 percent of Jordanians in the same age group.⁷⁴ The findings suggest that, although young Syrian boys say they are looking for work more frequently than Jordanian boys, they find it difficult to actually find a job.⁷⁵

The older boys, for whom school attendance is no longer compulsory, engage in a much higher rate of economic activity and employment. The prevalence of economic activity (any income-generating activity) is 37 percent and 36 percent among the fifteen to seventeen year olds outside refugee camps and in Zaatari camp, respectively. In contrast, economic activity stands at 17 percent

66 Gaelle Sundelin, "60–70% of Working Children in Jordan Are Syrians—Ministry," *Jordan Times*, November 30, 2013, available at <http://jordantimes.com/60-70-of-working-children-in-jordan-are-syrians---ministry>.

67 UNHCR, "Syrian Refugees Living Outside Camps in Jordan: Home Visit Data Findings," Amman, 2013, available at https://s3.amazonaws.com/unhcrsharedmedia/urban-refugees-in-jordan/HVreport_09MarCS6_smallsize.pdf.

68 UNHCR, "The Future of Syria: Refugee Children in Crisis," November 2013, p. 39, available at www.unhcr.org/media-futureofsyria/.

69 Christophersen, Moe Thorleifsson, and Tiltne, "Ambivalent Hospitality."

70 Law No. 8 for the year 1996, *The Jordanian Labor Law*, Articles 73–75.

71 Meltem Dayioglu, "Working Children in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan: Results of the 2007 Child Labour Survey," Geneva: Department of Statistics of Jordan and International Labour Organization, 2009.

72 Ahmadzadeh et al., "Ensuring Quality Education," p. 18.

73 Kholoud Abu Zaid, "Comprehensive Outreach Assessment on Education Needs of Syrians in Ghor and Irbid," UNICEF and Save the Children Jordan, April 18, 2013, available at <https://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=3486>.

74 Fafo findings further indicate that "economic activity" (as opposed to employment) stands at 6.8 percent among nine to fourteen year olds in Zaatari camp and at 8.1 percent in the same age group outside the camp, compared to 1.6 percent for Jordanian children.

75 Stave and Hillesund, "Impact of Syrian Refugees."

among Jordanian boys of the same age. When it comes to employment in particular, a different picture emerges: 13 percent of Syrians in this age group are employed compared to 8 percent of Jordanian boys. In Zaatari camp, however, only 3 percent are employed, suggesting that refugees inside the camp experience difficulties in finding employment.⁷⁶

The essence of Fafó's findings is that child labor is less frequent than often reported by other investigations. Since Fafó's findings are based on scientific survey methods while other studies often employ "rapid" methods, the discrepancy points to a need for more thorough data based on comprehensive surveys to inform planning and medium- to long-term programming for Syrian refugees.

Girls rarely work outside the home in Syrian refugee households. If they are not attending school, they are often assisting with domestic chores. More attention has been drawn to the risks associated with early marriage for girls, including health risks associated with early pregnancies, domestic violence, and denial of access to further

education. To verify assumptions relating to early marriage and its implication for girls' education, more thorough data is needed.

EDUCATIONAL DIVIDES BETWEEN SYRIAN AND JORDANIAN STUDENTS

When Syrian students enter school in Jordan, they have to follow the Jordanian curriculum, which is different from what they were used to in Syria but not as different as the curriculum in Lebanon, for example, which uses English or French as the teaching language for math and science in higher grades. In Jordan all subjects are taught in Arabic, English is only used for language classes.

The difference in curriculum often becomes more challenging for secondary school students and particularly in preparations for final exams. When Jordanians complete twelfth grade they take the national exam, *Tawjihi*, through which students gain access to higher education. The Syrians have a similar exam, called the baccalaureate, but its requirements and the necessary preparations are different. The Syrian students are thus poorly trained for the Jordanian exam, and



Syrian refugee children attend catch-up classes in the town of Azraq in eastern Jordan. Local Jordanian charities set up the classes in portacabins, as the majority of Syrian children living outside the nearby Azraq refugee camp were unable to attend local schools due to lack of spaces. March 30, 2015. (Rex Features via AP Images)

failure precludes future access to higher education. In 2014 only 45 Syrian students took the exam, whereas about 500 took the Syrian exam organized by Jordan's Ministry of Education and the Syria Alliance.⁷⁷ In Syria admission to university is based on broader high school results and not solely on the final exam. High schools in Jordan see high drop-out rates among Syrian students, which might be related to students' expectations that they will fail the final exam. Other explanations might be found in economic factors and the need for additional income, or in cultural and social reasons, such as early marriage, recruitment to armed groups, bullying, and social tensions. Another explanation could be that the curriculum is too demanding.

Having experienced months or years as refugees on the move, many young Syrians feel that they have forgotten how to learn and find themselves behind compared to their peers' achievements in school. This often discourages refugees from returning to education. For those in school, differences in the curriculum and uncertainties surrounding the value of their achievements can function as disincentives to continuing in the education system. In the end, the Syrian students are expected to return to Syria one day, and they do not always feel confident that the education they receive in the host country and the effort they put into it will be transferable in postconflict Syria, whether for further studies or employment. All these challenges are directly related to the experience of being a refugee and should be included in planning and programming for longer-term education strategies for Syrian refugees.

LEGAL AND REGULATORY OBSTACLES TO SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

Although Syrian refugees only have temporary status in Jordan for six months at a time, they have been granted the right to attend public schools. This right is easily disrupted, however, if the student's family fails to re-register with the Jordanian authorities or UNHCR every six months. Without valid registration, Syrian refugees lose the right to aid and other benefits such as access to health facilities and education.

On a more systemic level, one Jordanian regula-

tion in particular creates significant obstacles for Syrian students wanting to re-enroll in schools, known as the three-year rule. It restricts enrollment to those that have been enrolled—or can document enrollment—in formal education in the three previous years.

This regulation makes Syrian students particularly vulnerable, since they often have a history of displacement inside Syria before becoming refugees. When conflict hits a new area in Syria, families typically move to relatives in calmer parts of the country. Such stays are perceived to be temporary visits, and families hope to soon return to their homes and normal daily schedules. Since the visits are seen as temporary, parents are not motivated to settle their children in schools. In addition, schools in the temporary location may be destroyed or too full to accommodate new students. Internally displaced families will also often move from place to place to lessen the burden of each household they stay with. Or, as the conflict ebbs and flows, families will move back and forth between areas that are considered safer. Another factor contributing to this internal migration is search for work and income, which can also fluctuate with the intensity of the conflict in different areas.⁷⁸ When a household finally decides to leave Syria and its members become refugees, education is not always at the top of the agenda and might be postponed further. After more than four years of conflict in Syria, many families realize that their children have not been in school for a long time. However, in Jordan there is no exception from the three-year regulation and these children are no longer eligible to enroll in any Jordanian schools.

The three-year rule is not always well known among Syrian refugees, despite being in place for a long time. Some suggest the law is merely enforced during refugee crises to lessen the burden on the government to provide education for the refugees. With mounting pressure on the education system in Jordan and widespread fear that the quality of education is at risk, there have been few incentives for the Jordanian government to abandon the regulation in an effort to give more Syrian refugees

77 UNICEF and Save the Children, "RRP6 Monthly Update - June 2014 (Education)," June 2014, available at <http://reliefweb.int/report/jordan/jordan-rrp6-monthly-update-june-2014-education>.

78 Stave and Hillesund, "Impact of Syrian Refugees."

access to education.⁷⁹ To estimate how many Syrian students are affected by the three-year rule, particularly as the war continues, more research is needed.

SOCIAL TENSIONS AT SCHOOL

The massive influx of Syrian refugees, which brings visible demographic changes in many Jordanian neighborhoods, is creating fertile grounds for prejudice against the newcomers. Although many Jordanians feel compassion for the plight of the Syrian refugees, who they often refer to as their brothers in need, competition for limited resources also creates tensions between the two groups. When Jordanians experience the negative impact of the Syrians' presence, it is easy to direct the blame at the Syrians. Social tensions have become a daily affair. According to UNHCR home-visit data, many Syrian parents experience harassment and discrimination.⁸⁰ Similar experiences in schools, and fear thereof, discourage parents from sending their children to school. Although Jordanians and Syrian students often are separated into two shifts, tensions occur in the short break between the two shifts and on the way to and from school.⁸¹

Violence in schools, sometimes perpetrated by teachers, is described as one of the main reasons not only for not enrolling in school but also for dropping out among already enrolled students, particularly among boys.⁸² The drop-out rates among Syrian refugees are twice the national average in both Lebanon and Jordan, according to the World Bank.⁸³ The high levels of aggression and violence in schools are often related to distress among the students, due to violence they have witnessed during the war in Syria and inadequate psychosocial support. The latter extends to a need for mental health rehabilitation among larger parts of the Syrian refugee population. It is often argued that schools and education are essential to starting a healing process for traumatized Syrian children and youth by providing both a sense of normality

and a distraction from former traumas. However, if bullying and violence in schools persist unattended, the school environment can become counterproductive for such positive intentions.

We have seen how legal status and economic factors can prevent Syrian students from re-entering formal education. Combined with a sense of discrimination and negative experiences in school, all these factors are often interwoven and comprise a complex challenge in securing quality education for Syrian refugee children and youth.

REFUGEES' COMPETING PRIORITIES

Finally, refugees often believe their stay is temporary and resist settling too much into their new environment. Many families cannot grasp that this situation will last for a long time. A 2013 assessment of educational needs among Syrian refugees in Zaatari camp found that 20 percent of surveyed parents expected to return to Syria soon and used this as an explanation for not sending their children to school.⁸⁴ Another 22 percent of the parents said they were not interested in school. There are different reasons why parents may not be interested in sending their children to school, whether economic, structural, or social, all of which may be driven by hopes to return to their homeland and move on from a dislocated life.

Focus group discussions with children not attending school revealed a different perspective. All of the primary-school-age children and a majority of the secondary-school-age children who participated said they wanted to go to school and wished to return to education. While this study from Zaatari camp is not representative of all Syrian refugees in Jordan, it points to the ways refugee families are thinking and how they prioritize their decisions. They often focus on securing basic needs and looking for a way out of the refugee situation.⁸⁵ Focus groups with children indicated that their parents did not want them to go to school in the camp but hoped they could get this opportu-

79 Kelly Kirk, "Late Registration: Problems Affecting the Access to Education for Syrian Refugees in Amman, Jordan," University of Oregon, 2014, available at <http://intldept.uoregon.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Kelly-Kirk-Thesis-INTL-2014.pdf>.

80 UNHCR, "Syrian Refugees Living Outside Camps."

81 "Teachers Halt Classes Over Scuffles with Refugees," *Ammon News*, July 30, 2013, available at <http://en.ammonnews.net/article.aspx?articleno=22558#.VNPny74Z2A>.

82 Education Sector Working Group, "Joint Education Needs Assessment: Za'atari."

83 UNHCR, "The Future of Syria"; World Bank, "Lebanon: Economic and Social Impact Assessment of the Syrian Conflict," Lebanon, September 20, 2013, Report No. 81098-LB, p. 78, available at <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/2013/09/18292074/lebanon-economic-social-impact-assessment-syrian-conflict>.

84 Education Sector Working Group, "Joint Education Needs Assessment: Za'atari."

85 Kirk "Late Registration."

nity if they managed to leave the camp.⁸⁶

One interview with a Syrian refugee who was working in an Amman hotel exposed a similar mindset. He was living with his wife and children at the hotel where he worked: “The children are not in school, they did not attend school for eighteen months. I will send them to school when we have found a new apartment closer to the hotel.”⁸⁷ He had other priorities before he wanted to send his children to school. He wanted to settle the family in an apartment and then search for a school when he knew where they would end up living.

In sum, access to education has two sides: supply and demand. Supply is directly linked to the capacity and availability of education facilities. Demand is more complex and often relates to each household’s evaluation of its situation—a household assesses its opportunities based on access to schools, economic considerations, levels of knowledge and skill sets, possibilities for normalizing disrupted lives, access to the labor market, market demands, and so forth. If the opportunities outweigh the barriers discussed above, parents will send their children to school.

Conclusion: Time for an Innovative Response

Education contributes significantly to stability and development. It promotes social cohesion by increasing knowledge about society and democratic principles for government and citizenship. Schools also give young people an arena to develop social skills. The list of benefits can go on, but securing education for Syrian refugees remains a challenge as the crisis continues in its fifth year. Recent studies suggest that school participation depends more on access and reduced cost than on the quality of education. Indirect costs such as transportation, uniforms, and school supplies are often noted as significant barriers to continued education.⁸⁸ As the response to the Syrian crisis shifts its focus from humanitarian assistance to

medium- and long-term development, new tools are needed.

Effective planning is not possible without good information and data. A good place to start is thus to conduct better and more comprehensive surveys to more accurately capture the situation for the Syrian refugees in Jordan and across the region. Current data is often based on refugees registered by UNHCR, despite common knowledge that many refugees are not registered either out of fear of repercussions or because they are not in need of that particular kind of assistance or aid.

Formal refugee status is essential for access to aid and social services in Jordan. Currently registration certificates grant short-term protection for refugees as they are valid for a limited duration—registration with UNHCR has to be renewed every six months. This regular renewal process can be interrupted for several reasons, such as difficulties in accessing the registration center or parents’ belief that the family soon will be able to go home. Failure to register or renew can also stem from fear of the consequences—for example, fear that a refugee’s name or other details will make it back to the Syrian authorities. Lastly there is an economic cost to the re-registration process, that some may not be able to afford. Among other consequences, failure to register or renew registration with UNHCR prevents access to education. By easing these registration requirements and emphasizing that education is a right for all children regardless of their legal status, more Syrian children could get more regular access to education. An alternative would be for the United Nations to issue Syrian refugees with a kind of “Nansen passport” that goes beyond travel permissions—an international document that would grant access to essential aid and service regardless of formal status and registration.⁸⁹

With 38 percent of Syrian children and youth currently not participating in formal education for a variety of reasons, improving livelihoods and employment opportunities for heads of households

86 Education Sector Working Group, “Joint Education Needs Assessment: Za’atari”; David Becker, “The Past, Present and Future of Transitional Conflict in Jordan: A Study of Syrian Refugees in the Hashemite Kingdom,” Capstone Projects – Politics and Government, Illinois State University, 2013, p. 33.

87 Fafo interview in Amman, January 2013.

88 Hillesund, Aragie Kebede, and Pedersen, “The Role of Education,” p. 18.

89 In 1922 the League of Nations issued Nansen passports as travel documents for Russians who became stateless when Lenin revoked citizenship for all Russian expatriates in 1921. Today the UN issues travel documents for stateless refugees. The idea of Nansen passports can be broadened beyond travel documents to include basic rights for refugees who, for various reasons, do not register as refugees with host-country authorities.

seems to be essential to creating the conditions at home that enable children to be sent to school. Without work permits, Syrians in Jordan are forced to work informal jobs. The informal sector in Jordan is large and characterized by low levels of productivity. Greater formalization of this sector would benefit both Jordanians and Syrians working in it. For example, by granting Syrians formal permits to work in parts of this sector where they are not necessarily competing with Jordanian labor, Syrian refugees could get more predictable and better paid employment. Improving livelihoods would also be an effective way to combat child labor and to give Syrian refugee households the stability they need to send their children to school. At the moment, Jordanian authorities are not very supportive of these kinds of arrangements, fearing that they could incentivize Syrian refugees to settle in Jordan more permanently than the state would want. The authorities further fear that this would undermine their policies to combat domestic unemployment by reducing labor migration into Jordan from the Middle East region and replacing these migrant workers with Jordanian workers.

Moreover, the government fears that continued high unemployment rates could lead to protests and instability. Jordan has experienced waves of protests and unrest related to unemployment, low wages, and cuts in subsidies that negatively impact on living conditions. By accommodating Syrian refugees' needs and failing to meet domestic demands, the authorities fear tensions will rise and this will lead to destabilization. However, by not being attentive to refugees' needs, tensions can rise from a different source. If growing numbers of Syrians are without access to work and education, growing frustrations and idleness could also fire up tensions and undermine security in the kingdom. Improving the situation for the refugees can reduce such tensions. One way to address this would be to focus on development projects in the host communities—for example, infrastructure development and other public projects. These projects can be designed to be labor intensive in order to create jobs for both Syrian refugees and Jordanians. In addition to building social cohesion, such projects would also bring important, visible improvements to the host communities.

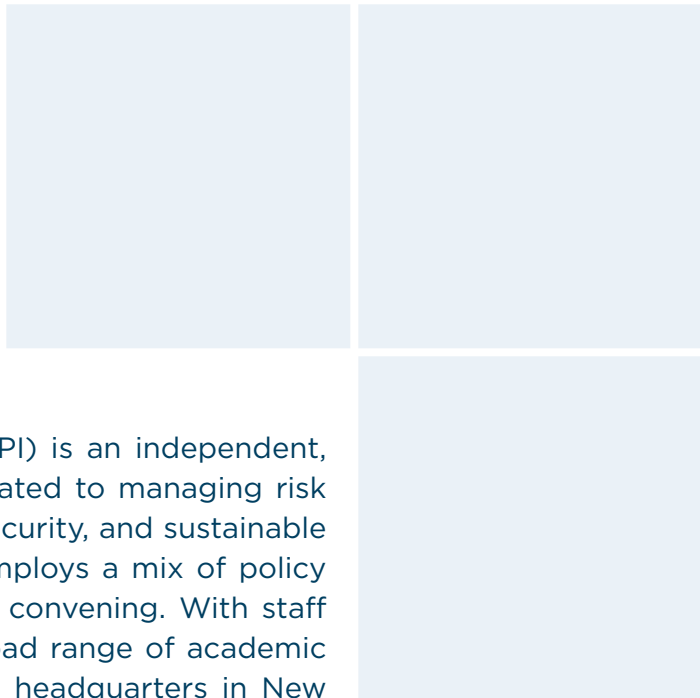
The need for social cohesion is also evident in the education sector itself. Many reports have described bullying and discrimination experienced by Syrian students. Today the double-shift system is implemented with a morning shift for Jordanian students and an afternoon shift for Syrian students. While the afternoon shift is generally criticized for being of lower quality, with less experienced or more tired teachers, dividing Jordanian and Syrian students in two shifts may also undermine social cohesion. There may be obstacles to integrating students in both shifts, but social cohesion could be improved by implementing some joint classes between the shifts. The curriculum for double-shift systems often excludes sports and creative classes. By offering such classes jointly between the shifts, Syrian and Jordanian students would have an organized space to interact and get to know each other. In this way, respect and understanding between the groups could be improved, particularly if this is combined with improving students' awareness about respect, human rights, and democratic principles.

Lastly, a predictable and consistent method of certifying students' results in school is important to bring Syrian refugees back to school. They need to perceive education as useful for their future in order to be motivated to pursue this education.

In sum, education is essential for the further development of Jordan as a country and all those who are living there. With a population increasingly dominated by refugees, it is important to include these groups in the country's education and development strategies. This is particularly true as Jordan attempts to remain stable in an unstable and unpredictable region today. Even if refugees are supposed to return home some day, it is only by including the refugee populations in Jordan's development aspirations that the country will be able to build social cohesion, reduce internal tensions, and avoid being dragged into the larger conflicts in the region. Beyond the national interests of stability and prosperity, improving access to education will also produce refugees with knowledge and experience that they can bring home when their country is ready for a peacebuilding and reconstruction process. Since capacity is one of the main barriers to including more Syrian refugees in Jordanian education facili-

ties, this kind of strategy will also need support from the international donor community, not least through initiatives such as the “No Lost Generation” strategy. It is important to emphasize that Syrian refugees who previously experienced a quality education system will not be satisfied with a

program that only addresses primary education. Strategies for secondary and post-secondary education are also needed, both to realize education’s stabilizing effects and to build the capacity that Syria will need in the future.



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777 United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017-3521
USA
TEL +1-212-687-4300
FAX +1-212-983-8246

Freyung 3
1010 Vienna
Austria
TEL +43-1-533-8881
FAX +43-1-533-881-11

51-52 Harbour House
Bahrain Financial Harbour
P.O. Box 1467
Manama, Bahrain
TEL +973-1721-1344