



FUNDING, POLICY AND PROTECTION: delivering a quality education to children affected by conflict in Syria and the region

RESPONDING TO THE EDUCATIONAL DIMENSIONS OF THE HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN SYRIA

6 million children affected by the war in Syria are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance.¹ 1.4 million of these children are of school age and are living as refugees in neighbouring countries and more than half of them lack access to education.²

As Heads of State and Government arrive in London for 'Supporting Syria and the Region' on February 4th, just one month before the 5th year anniversary of the Syria conflict, they have an unprecedented opportunity to reverse this situation and to fix the humanitarian crisis for these children, including its educational dimensions.

Apart from the denial of the right of individual children to their education, the continued neglect of educational provision to children and young people affected by the Syrian conflict has serious, far-reaching consequences for societies and economies across the region, and the window of opportunity for getting back on track is closing fast.

As organisations working either inside Syria or across the region with Syrian refugees, we are calling on the participants in the London conference to commit to ensure all children and young people affected by the conflict have access to safe, quality, and relevant educational opportunities during the 2016/2017 academic year and on an ongoing basis.

In order to deliver on this commitment we know that a combination of additional funding, policy change and implementation, along with enhanced protection of education from attack are required.

The London conference has the opportunity to agree on solutions to all of these dimensions but the complex challenges of providing educational services both within Syria and the region won't be solved at one single event.

THE NEED FOR A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

With direct knowledge and experience of educational support and provision across the region, we call on conference participants to:

1. Close the education funding gap
2. Enact policies that guarantee access to quality education inside Syria and in host countries
3. Protect students, teachers and educational facilities from attack

The urgently needed additional funding which will be pledged in London must form part of a compact that also delivers changes at the national level designed to ensure that new resources can in fact be spent to scale up educational services. The national, regional and international policy and operating environment must be unequivocally committed to ensuring all children and young people enjoy the opportunity to learn and do so in safety.

The London conference must commit to these things and launch a process of plan development in which the commitments set out in the following pages are detailed and ultimately delivered.

¹ 2016 Humanitarian Needs Overview: Syrian Arab Republic, October 2015

² 2016 Humanitarian Needs Overview: Syrian Arab Republic, October 2015

I. CLOSE THE EDUCATION FUNDING GAP

- Donors must commit at least \$1.4bn annually to ensure that all children and young people affected by the conflict are in education and learning during the 2016/2017 academic year and on an ongoing basis.³
- This funding must go beyond short term humanitarian support, and provide multiyear investment in the provision of educational services. The funding should be used for:
 - Investing in education systems as a sustainable means to increase access to education and improve its quality. This should include system strengthening, school building, and training and paying teachers.
 - Scaling up funding and support for non-formal programmes to provide educational opportunities to children for whom the formal system is inaccessible. This funding must be flexible and allocated as needed to NGO partnerships to deliver quality non-formal education programmes.

³ The calculations are based on the HRP and 3RP processes and are provided by UNICEF. The figure includes 2.1 million out of school children within Syria at a cost per child of \$150 p.a. and a total cost p.a. of \$318 million, and 1.7 million Syrian refugee children and affected host community children in Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Egypt at a cost per child of \$625 p.a. for a total cost p.a. of \$1 billion.

Fatima, 6 years old, Syria
“I want to be a teacher”



2. ENACT POLICIES THAT GUARANTEE ACCESS TO QUALITY EDUCATION INSIDE SYRIA AND IN HOST COUNTRIES

- **Donors and host governments must work together to increase access to accredited quality education for children** living inside Syria and in host countries. A comprehensive strategy should be developed that includes:
 - **An inclusive and flexible registration and documentation** system that allows children from Syria to enrol in and attend formal education.
 - **Increasing the capacity of formal schools**, providing funding to ensure they have adequate facilities and utilities for all students which are gender sensitive and include those with disabilities.
 - **Ensuring all teachers, including refugee teachers, are paid liveable wages.**
 - **Enacting policies that allow and certify non-formal or informal learning opportunities that meet quality standards for out-of-school children**, such as community-based initiatives, vocational training, accelerated learning programmes and distance and e-learning programmes. These opportunities should be accredited or should have pathways into the accredited formal system so that children can transition as ready. Donors and host governments should recognize and support the vital role of NGOs as collaborative partners who can offer complementary non-formal education to reach all children, especially where the capacity of host governments to absorb refugee children into the formal system is constrained.
 - **Investing in actionable research** to generate and apply evidence of what works and how it works to reach Syrian children with safe, quality education.
- These formal and non-formal educational opportunities must be **protective, inclusive and deliver the opportunity for genuine learning outcomes. This must include:**
 - **Monitoring and regulating** education funding and service provision, as well as outcomes, to ensure transparency and accountability with where funding goes and with what results.
 - Providing greater **support and professional development opportunities for teachers**, with priority accorded to providing psychosocial support, training in second language learning, supporting students with disabilities, and helping children acquire both social-emotional and academic skills.
 - Ensuring school policies promote **child safety, well-being and inclusion**, reduce instances of school bullying and harassment, and foster social cohesion.
 - Catalysing private sector support to develop and provide **third party accreditation and certification of learning** that is recognised across the sub-region.
- **Secondary, tertiary, and vocational educational opportunities must also be expanded** in Syria and host countries with governments relaxing restrictions on NGOs to provide certified and recognised higher education and vocational training opportunities for refugee youth.

Children's access to education is a result of many factors, including the safety of their families and their parents' capacity to provide a dignified existence during displacement. Ensuring that Syrian refugees in all host countries feel sufficiently protected, have access to legal stay during their displacement, have freedom of movement and are in a position to meet the basic needs of their families is critical to ensuring meaningful access to formal or non-formal education. All of our calls for education sector reforms must consequently be underpinned by improvements to refugee protection and livelihoods.

3. PROTECT STUDENTS, TEACHERS AND EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES

- National governments and other stakeholders with influence over armed forces and armed groups inside Syria must call for **the immediate cessation of attacks against educational facilities, personnel, and students** as well as a stop to the military use of such infrastructures.
- Member states should encourage all parties to the conflict to immediately vacate the schools they are using, ensure that schools are safe for students to return, and issue orders to commanders not to use school buildings or school property in accordance to the **'Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict'**.
- The Syrian, Iraqi and other Governments should express a clear political commitment to protect students and teachers from attack and schools from military use by endorsing the **Safe Schools Declaration**.
- Donors should **support the training of teachers and school personnel in conflict-sensitive approaches to education**, including how to keep children safe while in school. All schools should have **contextualized emergency preparedness plans and safety and security procedures**, to ensure children's safety and protection.
- The international community should continue to urge all parties to the conflict to greater respect of international humanitarian law, to condemn the use of explosive weapons in populated areas in Syria acknowledging that civilians, and in particular children, must be protected, and to **push for a negotiated solution to the conflict** to ensure all children inside Syria are protected and their right to education fulfilled.

THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF CHILDREN AFFECTED BY CONFLICT IN IRAQ

These asks and the estimates of need are focussed on out of school children in Syria and Syrian refugee children and affected host community children in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt.

However, the spread of armed conflict across the central and northern governorates of Iraq has resulted in the large scale movement of people across central Iraq and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I).

There are now over 1 million internally displaced children in Iraq, 70% of whom have lost an entire year of school. In total, the conflict is affecting 3.2million school-aged children who are in need of educational assistance, as children in host communities also suffer from a severe lack of resources for the education sector. Education received only 15% of the funding required as part of the HRP and was the least funded sector of the appeal.

Whilst the focus of the London conference is the needs of Syrian children and their host communities, including in Iraq, we urge the international community to acknowledge that Iraq is at risk of losing an entire generation of children and resolve to address the funding gap and the barriers that are preventing children in Iraq from continuing their education.

These asks have been developed by international and local organisations working either in Syria or the region with Syrian refugees.



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