THE REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON HIGHER EDUCATION IN CRISIS SITUATIONS.

"Higher Education in Crisis Situations: Synergizing Policies and Promising Practices to enhance Access, Equity and Quality in the Arab Region"

Sharm El-Sheikh – Egypt, 28 - 29 March 2017

Conference Report

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Preface

The crisis in Syria, Iraq, Yemen and other countries has caused enormous suffering and destruction in the countries and triggered a massive displacement of people within and to neighboring countries. More than 4 million people have sought refuge in neighboring countries: half of them are children and half of them are youth in school age (5-24 years). The children of Syria and those in vulnerable host communities are exceedingly bearing the brunt of the conflict. Many of them have been deprived of their childhood along with their right to education. Receiving and continuing education in times of conflict is of crucial importance. In the face of enormous challenges relating to access, language barriers, dropout, and quality, Syrian refugee students and youth express a steady eagerness to learn, and children and families place a special value in education (IDP).

More than 80 participants and stakeholders engaged in higher education, in particular in emergency as well as protracted situations in the Arab Region – government representatives, universities and other higher education institutions, international organizations, aid and cooperation agencies, civil society organizations, and the private sector, came together from 28-29 March 2017 in Sharm-Sheikh, Egypt, with the objective to engage national authorities and stakeholders in promoting higher education for those affected by conflict, including refugees, and internally displaced persons.

This conference is jointly organized by UNESCO's Regional Bureau for Education in the Arab States and UNHCR's Office for the Director for the Middle East and North Africa Bureau. This is first-Ever Arab Regional Conference on Higher Education in Crisis Situations.

The Conference was in full alignment with the commitments made by Member States to SDG4, which includes the provision of higher education and vulnerable populations.

Higher Education can play a critical role in reducing conflict and its effects on individuals and societies. Across the spectrum – from early childhood development to upper secondary and higher education – education must be an integral part of humanitarian responses as it serves as a channel to address other basic needs. The Syria crisis as example, in its unprecedented magnitude, has called for a shift of paradigms. Not only should education have a prominent role in the humanitarian response, but the crisis should also be seen as an opportunity to review education policies and strategies to support students, address disparities in access and quality in the sub-region, and thus make the transition from humanitarian aid to human development. Looking ahead, challenges do not solely rest in expanding access to education but also in providing quality education to equip students and youth with the necessary skills, knowledge and competences, including the values of citizenship; they need to stop the cycle of violence, reconstruct their country, and become agents of change and reconciliation. Vital to this, are the discussions around the recognition of certificates, diplomas and actions that need to be taken for clear frameworks to be established.

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Plennary Sessions

Working group session

Abbreviations and acronyms

3 RP	Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan
DAAD	German Academic Exchange Service
DAFI	Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative
EU	European Union
HOPES	Higher and Further Education Opportunities and Perspectives for Syrians
IBE	International Bureau of Education
IDMC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government
KRI	Kurdish Region of Iraq
MHE	Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
UN	United Nations
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
US	United States
USD	United States Dollar
HEIC	Higher Education in Crises

Introduction

During the last few years, many Arab countries have witnessed internal conflicts that have resulted in the displacement of millions of people both internally and across borders. The conflict in Syria which in March 2017 enters its seventh year, has led to one of the worst humanitarian crises in recent decades with unpreceded impact. In the region, over 6.1[1]million people have been internally displaced within Syria and nearly 4.8[1] million Syrians have sought refuge in the Arab Republic of Egypt, the Republic of Iraq, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Lebanese Republic and the Republic of Turkey, severely affecting the livelihoods of those both inside Syria and in refugee host countries, with children and youth, constituting the majority of those who are displaced. Inside Syria, some 5.4 million children and youth (both in and out of school and inclusive of 44,500 Palestine refugees) and 0.3 million education personnel are in need of education assistance. Within this, an estimated 2.1 million children (40 per cent) of the school-age population (aged 5-17 years) are out of school. In the five Syrian refugee host countries, there are 1.65 million registered school-age Syrian refugee children, with 861,000 (52 per cent) of them out of school and in need of educational assistance.[2]

Despite profound strains on their resources and capacity, host governments in the region have demonstrated unparalleled generosity and responsibility sharing towards refugees and other forcibly displaced individuals and families. Host governments continue to embrace strategic shifts advocated in policy, access and quality to effectively respond to the challenges resulting from the crisis including integrating Syrian refugees into their national education systems. The Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP), launched by the United Nations in 2014, formalizes the link between humanitarian and development efforts to address the Syrian crisis. The refugee protection and humanitarian component of the 3RP addresses the protection and assistance needs of refugees and strengthens community-based protection mechanisms. The resilience based component, on the other hand, strengthens the ability of host governments to lead the crisis response and builds the capacities of national and subnational service delivery systems, including education. Concurrently, humanitarians and donors have launched the No Lost Generation (NLG) initiative as a framework for action to support children and youth affected by the Syria and Iraq crises. At the "Supporting Syria and the Region Conference"[3] held in London in 2016, the international community committed to providing Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey with financial and technical support to stimulate their economies. They also pledged to help with policy reform and better mechanisms to cope with the crisis, including fully funding the aid response, providing increased development and concessional funding, and facilitating access to external markets[4]

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[1] UNHCR, 3RP Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan 2017 – 2018. http://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/the-3rp/
    (Accessed 03 March 2017)
[2] No Lost Generation (NLG), Syria Crisis Education Strategic Paper London Progress Report, September 2016
[3] GOV.UK, Joint announcement from the United Kingdom, Germany, Norway, Kuwait and the United Nations on the Syria Donors Conference 2016. https://www.gov.uk/government/news/syria-donors-conference-2016-joint-announcement (Accessed 03 March 2017)
[4] FROM WORDS TO ACTION: Reviewing the commitments made at the 'Supporting Syria and the Region' Conference six months on, September 2016

1. The Conference Scope and Themes

The Conference brought together participants and stakeholders engaged in higher education, in particular in emergency as well as protracted situations in the Arab Region – government representatives, universities and other higher education institutions, international organizations, aid and cooperation agencies, civil society organizations, and the private sector.

1.1 Conference Scope

The main specific achieved objectives of the Conference were:

Stock Taking
- To build and make available data and research on the status of higher education in emergencies and humanitarian contexts taking stock of existing initiatives, achievements and challenges and contribute to informed policies and actions for response to refugee and displaced higher education needs in the Arab region;
- To explore mechanisms for the refinement and further improvement of data collection, processing and clearance house methodologies;
- To promote and improve data and knowledge management systems for refugees as an important driver for policy dialogue, good policy planning, coordination and implementation of higher education programmes. Advocating that young refugees should be visible and better accounted for in data and monitoring.

Exploring Possible Common Ground
Participants at the conference had explored possible common ground on higher education in emergencies and humanitarian contexts in the Arab Region.

Exploring Preconditions of Coordination
Coordination between all stakeholders and actors involved in higher education for refugees and internally displaced persons, including the proper and efficient exchange of information is a necessity, especially given the complexities and challenges around refugees, internally displaced, asylum seekers and stateless groups in the region, advocating for the differentiation and targeting of policy responses.

Identifying Major Lines of Action
To identify major lines of action in higher education policy in emergencies and humanitarian contexts, namely:
1. Legal and policy frameworks and practical guidelines for formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of higher education for refugees and displaced populations.
2. Refined framework and practical guidelines for recognition, equivalence of studies, qualifications and accreditation for refugees and internally displaced persons higher education provisions, including opportunities provided through connected learning.

In the lead up to the conference, case studies and thematic papers have been developed by UNESCO and UNHCR. **Five** *case studies* provided the context and challenges in the provision of higher education to refugees in the Syria refugee hosting countries. A working session on *Policy and Legal Context* explored the provision of tertiary education within existing international and national frameworks on refugees. An other working session on *Connected and Online Learning* debated and shared practices and challenges of innovative and scalable strategies that assure continuity of education during and after conflict. The working session on **D***iploma, Certificate, Degree Equivalence and Recognition Guidelines and Practices* presented global and regional comparative practices. Finally, it was delivered a presentation on *Data* **Management** that focused on the clearing-house methodologies, sources and mechanisms. As such, the first part of the Conference has been devoted to the presentation of the country's reports and the second part constituted working sessions along the conference thematic areas.

1.2 Conference Themes

The themes of the conference were structured around the following five sub-thematic areas:

Policy Contexts and Legal Frameworks

The legal frameworks and practiced policies regarding provision of higher education to refugee and internally displaced persons at international, regional, national and local levels in the Arab region has been addressed.

Case Studies of Higher Education Policies and Practices in Syria and Host Countries

The following topics and issues has been identified and beeing addressed: The national context (provision, funding, programmes, challenges facing Syrian refugees and other displaced higher education students and those seeking enrolment in Syria, and in the five host countries (Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Iraq and Turkey). Other cases from Yemen, Iraq, Jordan, Saudi-Arabia, Morocco, Lebanon, Libya and Tunisia has been presented and discussed during the plenary session.

Access and Equity (including Recognition and Equivalency of Qualifications)

International, regional and national policies and practices for diploma, certificate and degree recognition, accreditation and equivalency for refugees and displaced higher education students, including opportunities provided through connected learning. Application of UNESCO Regional Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications and other existing international, regional and national.

Monitoring and Evaluation (i.e. Including Promising Practices of Synergizing and Coordination Among Donors/Stakeholders/Higher Education Institutions)

Policies and practices of the different organizations and bodies involved in the funding, planning, administering and providing higher education opportunities for refugees and internally displaced higher education students, will be examined and addressed.

Research on Higher Education in Emergencies (i.e. Including Clearinghouses and Online Platforms)

Knowledge management systems for refugees as an important driver of policy dialogue, good policy planning, coordination and implementation of higher education programmes, provisions for refugees and internally displaced higher education students. Terms of reference framework for data sources, collection, processing and clearance house modalities and methodologies had been highlighted and addressed.

2. Higher Education in Crises Situations

Several studies[5] over the last two years have recognized the need of enhancing support to Syrian refugee children and youth to pursue their education in the context of the Syria crisis. While children and adolescents in primary and (lower) secondary education have benefited from international support in a more substantive and consistent way, it is widely recognized that support is equally needed for youth at higher levels.

These studies indicated that, without significantly enhancing educational support for Syrian refugees to pursue Higher Education, both Syria and the Region will be deprived of skilled human resource in the long term and more young people will increasingly be at risk of child labour, exploitation, sexual or physical violence and discrimination, recruitment into armed forces or groups and early marriage. Higher Education also plays a major role in providing hope, promoting the values of peace and mutual understanding with the view to contributing to the development of competencies for living together peacefully and for sustainable development.

In addition, there is an increasing awareness by international bodies and agencies (UNESCO, UNHCR, OECD, World Bank, bilateral development agencies, NGOs, etc.) and countries themselves that higher education is critical in fostering socio-economic and cultural development at national, sub-national levels, and within regions.

2.1 Access to Higher Education

A large number of Syrians of university age (18-24)[6] have either been displaced inside Syria or fled as refugees to the neighboring countries, with the majority hosted in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan. As already referenced, some 5.4 million children and youth (both in and out of school and inclusive of 44,500 Palestine refugees) and 0.3 million education personnel inside Syria are in need of education assistance. Within this, an estimated 2.1 million children (40 per cent) of the school-age population (aged 5-17 years) are out of school. In the five Syrian refugee host countries, there are 1.65 million registered school-age Syrian refugee children, with 861,000 (52 per cent) of them out of school and in need of educational assistance. Low access rates to post-basic education is a matter of grave concern. In Turkey for example, the percentage of refugee children enrolled in formal education was over 85% in camp settings but only 30% in urban areas. Overall, enrolment rates were 7% in pre- primary education, 52% in primary education, 31% in lower secondary education, and 10% in upper secondary education[7]. In Lebanon, 2 per cent of Syrian refugee youth (aged 15-18 years) were enrolled in upper secondary education in the 2014/15 school year[8]. As for the 18-24 years' old, an estimated 72% inside Syria and 83% [9]in the region are not enrolled in education. Not only are their participation rates in tertiary and higher education lower than those of their peers in the host countries, they also face a significant drop in participation compared to their access rates in Syria prior to the conflict in 2011. Yet it is widely recognised that higher education is integral part to the protection and quest for solutions for refugees[10]. Displaced youth with higher education skills contribute to the promotion of peace, social cohesion and development among communities in exile and the host community. University graduates from these communities serve as role models and encourage children who enrol in school to remain and complete the primary and secondary cycle, helping prevent or minimise negative coping

mechanisms such as early marriage and child labour. Returnees with higher education qualifications are key drivers of post-conflict peace-building and reconstruction in their countries of origin. Even though Article 26 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights specifies that higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit, in conflict-affected countries and among displaced populations, access to education, particularly to higher education, is often seriously affected. Positively, Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) acknowledges the contributions of higher education to lifelong learning.

2.2 Challenges

The demand for higher education among refugees continues to far outweigh current supply. At the global level, access to higher education for refugees is estimated at only at 1% of the number of eligible refugees. The increasing numbers of refugees worldwide and the growing secondary school completion rates among refugee learners account to this increasing demand[11]

At the onset of the Syria crisis, many refugees fled without their official education credential documents or other official documents needed for registration at higher education institutions. Others lack the financial resources to cover tuitions fees and the living expenses in the event they are admitted to study programs. Many do not get their previous studies or qualifications recognized and many face language barriers as language of instruction at higher education institutions in the host countries are different, as is the case in Turkey, the Kurdistan region in Iraq, and in many private universities in Lebanon. In addition, legal and administrative procedures are not clear or inconsistently applied or interpreted by the higher education authorities or institutions in the host countries. The overall lack of effective Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) impacts the capacity to monitor progress achieved, which in turn affects planning and budgeting of the crisis response. There are inadequate regulatory frameworks restricting the possibilities for refugee higher education and hindering the accreditation, recognition and equivalence of the refugee student' studies and qualifications of alternative learning modalities, such as blended learning approaches. For example, despite countries in the Region having signed the UNESCO Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees concerning Higher Education in the Arab States, adopted in Paris on 22 December 1978 (UN Treaty Series No. 20367), Syrian refugee students also face major challenges with regard to the recognition of their previous studies and/or equivalence of diplomas. Without sources of economic support, most are exposed to negative coping mechanisms such as informal labour and early marriage. Furthermore, for those refugees studying in third countries outside the region, the legal context currently in the region does not permit re-entry to their first country of asylum unless they meet the normal immigration criteria.

2.3 Opportunities

The strong partnerships existing between host governments and humanitarian and development actors within the current humanitarian response architecture for Syria and Iraq provide an opportunity to create the enabling policy and implementation environments for action on higher education.

UNESCO in early 2015 launched its regional education response plan for the Syria crisis entitled 'Bridging Learning Gaps for Youth', which aims at filling urgent learning gaps for youth in provision of

post basic education through access, quality improvement and system strengthening. With the newly received grant from the State of Kuwait, UNESCO is scaling up its response through its new programme "Quality universal education for Syrian students and Teachers" (QUESST) by focusing on three components: (1) Bridging Access Gaps in Higher Education; (2) Improving Quality of Education in Syria through Second Chance Education and Capacity Development; and (3) Empowering the National Education System in Jordan through the expansion of Open Education Management Information System (EMIS) for Syria Refugees within the framework of the Gap programme.

Scholarships are a key tool to increase access in tertiary education[12]. UNHCR, through its DAFI (Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative) scholarship programme offers protection sensitive and sustainable access to higher education for refugees. The programme plays a central role in enabling young refugees to continue studies beyond primary and secondary education and to build careers in competitive fields of employment. In response to the Syria crisis, UNHCR is working in coordination with other organization supporting higher education including DAAD, British Council, and SPARK to harmonize approaches and harness synergies. UNHCR also contributes its refugee protection expertise to global and national efforts of governments, partners and scholarship providers, including those that offer scholarships in third countries. It is paramount that third country scholarships are facilitated in a protection-sensitive way and in full respect of the principle of non-refoulement. This means that refugee students should not find themselves in a situation of refoulement or at risk of statelessness once their studies have ended.

Distance and e-learning opportunities are also increasingly used and blended with on-site tutoring, providing students with certification from an accredited institution[13]. In the context of the MENA region, the Connected Learning Consortium (CLC) for Higher Education for Refugees that was founded by UNHCR, unites universities, organizations, and donors to promote and coordinate the provision of quality higher education in contexts of conflict, crisis and displacement through connected learning (CL). Since 2004, these partners have provided certified programs for over 5000 students in nine countries. Education in emergencies and crises is also the theme of Mobile Learning Week 2017. The event, co-organized by UNHCR and UNESCO gather experts and policy makers to explore best practice and the policies needed to harness the potential of innovative and scalable strategies to preserve the continuity of education during and after conflict. Connected learning helps mitigate some of the obstacles refugees face when seeking access to tertiary education, including lack of resources, lack of opportunities, geographic isolation and restricted mobility.

The Arab Regional Conference on Higher Education in Crises Situations co-hosted by UNESCO and UNHCR, had draw attention to the crucial role played by higher education in the humanitarian response by building knowledge and skills base for self-reliance and resilience, strengthening community-based protection mechanisms, contributing to peace and security and helping mitigate factors that led to conflict and displacement. It advocated that host countries and their humanitarian and development partners ensure that young refugees are included in national education planning processes and are better accounted for in data and monitoring. The Conference highlighted the urgent need to reflect further on the key issues and challenges facing the formulation, planning and execution of higher education provision and access for refugees and displaced persons. The Conference was set

to reposition higher education in the context of education in emergencies and crisis, recognizing much more support and visibility has been given to date to mainly primary and secondary education and advocating for a more holistic education response that addresses all levels of education (basic, post basic and tertiary) within a lifelong framework including increased access to education the blended learning programmes. Finally, it also highlighted that with the complexities and challenges around refugees, internally displaced, asylum seekers and Stateless groups in the region, policy responses ought to be differentiated and targeted.

The Conference was convened at technical and expert level by the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in the Arab States and UNCHR MENA Regional Bureau on 28-29 March, 2017, explored higher education in the context of crisis underlining its role as a mechanism for development of qualified human resources crucial for post conflict reconstruction of Syria and enabler for sustainable peace and stability in the region in the long term.

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[5] Keith David Watenpaugh, Adrienne L. Fricke with Tara Siegel, Uncounted and Unacknowledged: Syria's Refugee University Students and Academic in Jordan, UC Davis Human Rights Initiative and the Institute of International Education, May 2013, UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in the Arab States, Centre for Lebanese Studies, UNHCR, and UNICEF MENA Regional Office, Scaling Up Quality Education Provision for Syrian Children in Vulnerable Host Communities, Report of the Sub-Regional Conference, 17-19 June 2014, Amman, Jordan, Keith David Watenpaugh, Adrienne L. Fricke and James R. King, The war follow them: Syrian University Students and Scholars in Lebanon, UC Davis Human Rights Initiative and the Institute of International Education, June 2014, Keith David Watenpaugh, Adrienne L. Fricke and James R. King, We will stop here and go no further: Syrian University Students and Scholars in Turkey, UC Davis Human Rights Initiative and the Institute of International Education, October 2014, and also UNHCR, Higher Education Considerations for Refugees in Countries Affected by the Syria and Iraq Crises, UNHCR, Geneva, July 2015.

[6] Because many refugee students have had their studies interrupted, the 18 -24 age range may not be applicable. The DAFI scholarship programme considers an 18 – 30 age range.

[7] Turkey Ministry of Education, 2016 as cited in UNHCR and UNESCO "No more excuses: Provide education to all forcibly displaced people", POLICY PAPER 26, May 2016

[8] No Lost Generation (NLG), Syria Crisis Education Strategic Paper London Progress Report, September 2016

[9] Infographics UNESCO prepared for the 2016 London Conference on Syria

[10] UNHCR, DAFI Annual Report 2014 11 UNHCR and UNESCO "No more excuses: Provide education to all forcibly displaced people", POLICY PAPER 26, May 2016. 12 UNHCR and UNESCO "No more excuses: Provide education to all forcibly displaced people", POLICY PAPER 26, May 2016

3. Higher Education and Syrian Refugee Students

As the Syrian crisis continues into its sixth year, the future of Syria and its people hangs in the balance. Over four million Syrians are now refugees that have been forced out of their homes, and the majority of them are residing in neighboring countries in the region. A general estimate places the total participation from Syrians aged 18-24 in tertiary education at 20% before the war and less than 5% in 2016 (EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis, 2016). As the protracted crisis continues, refugee youth are facing barriers to access tertiary education in their host countries. The continued disruption of Syrians' tertiary education poses a great threat to the financial status and quality of life for these refugees in both their host country and upon their return to post-war Syria. Moreover, an uneducated "Lost Generation" will not be equipped to rebuild the economic, political, educational, and health infrastructures in post-war Syria. Increasing access to tertiary education for Syrian refugees is of paramount importance if these refugees are to avoid becoming a Lost Generation. As a result, it is important to understand the current status of access to tertiary education for Syrian refugees. Iraq is one of the main host countries of Syrian refugees, providing a relatively safe refuge with cultural and geographic connections for Syrians. Therefore, this study aims to identify policies, practices, and perspectives relative to accessing tertiary education for Syrian refugees in Iraq with the goal of understanding the challenges and opportunities during this protracted crisis. The study will provide key policy recommendations for governments, international organizations, and local institutions for improving tertiary education for Syrian refugees.

3.1 Analysis and Concluding Remarks: The Case of Iraq

Academic level
Following are recommendations at the academic level:
1. Provide sufficient financial support for Syrian refugee students which would be enough for them to complete their studies. The current financial support from the SPARK organization and the regional government is only available during the academic year. Many students report that they are forced to leave these scholarships as they seek employment to support their families. Long term funding may be provided to students seeking tertiary education which in turn covers transportation and accommodation in on campus housing year round as these students are refugees who are in many cases alone and without their families, and when they are asked to leave the on campus housing they don't have any other place to stay.
2. Provide scholarships to refugees to study at private universities from international organizations or Western and European governments to prepare students for the post-war era. This initiative should come from the local government in the Kurdistan region in cooperation with private universities in order to enable refugee students to access tertiary education. For example, private universities may have social initiatives. In exchange for classroom seats, universities may receive some incentives from the Ministry of Higher Education or they may receive honors for social responsibility.
3. International organizations can provide support to the Ministry of Higher Education in order to expand the role of university institutions by increasing the quota dedicated for Syrian refugee students. Without this support, the quota for refugee students will remain limited.

The local government has not been able recently to fulfil the demands of the universities to expand their capacities to take on more students, due to the severe financial crisis that the government and the private sector are going through.

4. Increase the international support through international organizations and increasing the number of programs that support university students, through both scholarships and stipends.

5. Provide English language classes to Syrian students in addition to teaching them how to read and write in Kurdish (Badini and Syriac). Education in Syria is exclusively in Arabic, however, in order for refugee students to cope with the new culture and new academic requirements at local universities, as well as manage to integrate within the local labor market after graduation, they need to learn both languages, English and Kurdish. Language development will help the refugee students continue their study and become further qualified for employability given their language fluency in languages recognized in the Kurdistan region. It will also help them better adapt with reality and society in the future.

6. Utilize Syrian academics who are competent Syrian teachers who hold Master's and PhD Degrees in universities so that they can help the refugee students as they adapt to the new environment. Such communication allows institutions to identify the areas of difficulty facing students.

7. Explore the establishment of a special unit within the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research to facilitate and expedite the procedures of processing the papers and documents of the refugee students. Furthermore, this unit would address issues beyond technical issues, such as counseling and career guidance. This is important because a lot of students don't know what to do when they face academic, social, political or even economic problems during their studies at the university. This unit would ease the pressure on Syrian students.

8. Develop local universities into multi-dimensional institutions that add to the traditional curricula and traditional teaching modalities that go beyond on-campus offerings. These changes should also include the introduction of dynamic pedagogical practices where the focus is no longer on the professor but rather on the needs of the learner through active, interactive and experiential learning modalities, where students learn on their own or from peers. Such practices are particularly important in the context of refugee tertiary education, as the students are not typical students. It is critical for institutions to evolve and be creative in *what* they have to offer and *how* they offer it. For example, new skills and competencies may be introduced within the curriculum that is offered to Syrian refugee students not only because of their specific needs as learners, but also because of the prospects of employment that would enable them to change their realities of being a refugee. Such competencies include information analysis, critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, and communication. In addition, developing students' character to encourage their curiosity, sense of initiative, persistence, adaptability, ethical awareness and reasoning are equally essential for refugees. Obviously, emphasizing such traits will strengthen *all* students.

Policy Level

Following are recommendations at the policy level:

1. Encourage mechanisms of coordination between the Syrian government and the government in the Kurdistan region to facilitate procedures for the recognition of academic qualifications for Syrian refugee students. This may be achieved by appointing a commission from the Syrian Ministry of Education in the region to provide all the necessary requirements. This coordination should take place among international organizations, especially the United Nations.

2. Increase the quota for Syrian refugee students in the central admission policy in the Kurdistan region from 3 percent to 10 percent, since there are a lot of Syrian refugee students who cannot pursue their tertiary education studies due to this quota. Furthermore, competition should be limited among the Syrian refugee students themselves and not between them and more than 100 thousand local students from the region.

3. Establish a special unit for all public universities which takes care of student affairs. It can provide counseling for students' problems in public universities given the difference in the curriculum, language and culture from which refugee students come, and which can cause problems for Syrian students in the region's universities.

4. For students who wish to continue their studies in Syria, programs such as SPARK, DAFI and HOPES can provide scholarships, whereas students who wish to continue their studies in the region after they finish high school, they can enter the competition through the central admission. This will provide more opportunities for Syrians when they are separated from the rest of the students.

5. Facilitate transfer procedures from one university to another. For example, if a student is admitted to the University of Erbil but they reside in Duhok, this will create transportation problems because it's difficult for students to live away from their families knowing that these students are refugees. According to the regulations from the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, students cannot transfer to another university except in two situations, which are illness and marriage. This inability to transfer has led many students to drop out or postpone their university studies.

6. Facilitate the recognition of qualifications of students transferring from a Syrian university to one of the universities in the Kurdistan region. There should be dedicated committees in the concerned Ministries which look into the subjects already completed in Syria, based on the student grades. There are many instances where students had to go back to the preliminary stages of their studies because of the name of the topic or curriculum.

7. Provide a legal framework that recognizes refugees as special students instead of international students. This distinction is important as refugees do not have access to the documents necessary for admission as do international students, which presents a challenge when applying to admission at the tertiary education level. This may entail the need to develop a national pedagogic assessment for refugees that does not undermine the education certification quality within the country. Such an assessment would replace the need to present certain documents that would allow the refugees to enter into local universities.

8. Develop and ratify the "Arab Convention on Regulating the Refugee Situation in the Arab region" and its adoption. This includes the introduction of a specific provision on the right of education in the current text of the Arab Convention.

9. Ensure that refugee youth are systematically included in national higher education plans and programs and quality data is collected to monitor their participation and educational attainment.

10. Develop policies and legislation that mainstream crisis response in national higher education planning and policy and allow for the inclusion of those affected by crises in higher education institutions in an equitable manner, through policy responses pertaining to language, needed documentation, recognition and accreditation.

11. Expand access to high quality secondary, tertiary, vocational and technical education for refugees, recognizing that post-primary education in all its forms can support transition to work, sustainable livelihoods and durable solutions for displaced persons.

12. Provide work opportunities and jobs in both the government and public sectors, as well as other formal employment sectors. The regional government can pave the way to providing equal opportunities as the presence of Syrian refugees has become a status quo in the Kurdistan region.

13. Develop a Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS) to track students' progress and drop out in light of youth mobility. Such a system would include nationals as well as refugees.

14. Provide Syrians with temporary documentation to facilitate work and study.

15. At the beginning of the school year, universities can make an effort to assist Syrian refugee students adapt to the university life, particularly to the language and dialect used locally, in addition to other matters related to study habits. Special care should be given to refugees as they are not local students from the Kurdistan region. Their difficult situation should be taken into account and administrative procedures should be facilitated at the universities.

16. Facilitate procedures for students in the Residency Department, as they are treated like regular foreigners and the procedures take a very long time with no exceptions for refugees, knowing that having the official residency is an essential requirement for applying to universities and has to be presented along with the application. It serves to verify the status of the student from a security perspective.

17. Accept sealed copies of certificates instead of the original ones from Syrian students. As this will bring thousands of students back into private and public universities. In many cases, students have sealed copies of their certificates but they don't have the original copy. They cannot go back to the war and conflict zones inside Syria to obtain such documents, either.

18. Open the doors for studying in Master's and PhD programs by providing scholarships and not just focusing on Bachelor's Degrees.

19. Facilitate procedures for university graduates when they try to get their certificates recognized or when they take the competency test in fields that are studied in English in the Kurdistan region and in Arabic in Syrian universities. For example, university graduates who have a degree in medicine and wish to work in this field have to take a competency test before they can do so. They also have to join the Doctors Syndicate. Passing this test is difficult because of the language barrier.

20. Facilitate procedures for applications to recognize certificates and host transfer students, because it's very difficult to obtain the necessary documentation, such as the grades affidavit, from Syria given the ongoing civil war there. It would be impossible to obtain the necessary documentation from inside Syria.

21. Universities should provide preparatory courses for Kurdish or English depending on the students' needs. Then student can start their studies in the following year. The first year should be for preparation through the establishment of language learning centers in all universities or a center in each province.

Social Level

Following are recommendations at the social level:

1. Facilitate work policies in the government sector to provide job opportunities for Syrians after they graduate from the host country.

2. Hold cultural and social courses for refugees and students in particular to raise their awareness of the risks of committing criminal acts and advising them to stay away from armed groups and organized crime.

3. Conduct English and Syriac courses for students, in addition to providing training and preparing students to enter the university. The legal and administrative system in universities in the Kurdistan region should be explained to students before they enter the university. This can be done in coordination with Syrian youth organizations and support from international organizations.

4. Conduct cultural, social and legal courses to raise awareness about how to deal with society, while analyzing the educational system and the regional government's handling of students and curricula, in addition to explaining the differences and how to adapt with all these matters from preparatory school all the way to university.

5. Assign an employee in each university to work as a social consultant to work out the needs of Syrian students. This person can serve as a reference in case Syrian students face obstacles or problems while communicating with others or in the language of study.

6. Place Syrian students according to their residence areas in the provinces because refugee students cannot stay away from their families. They will suffer from a social standpoint because the student is a refugee him/herself and studying in a place far from home. The economic situation is also a serious problem for students who study in distant provinces because expenses increase and students cannot afford them. There are many cases like this among students.

7. Provide permanent housing or internal departments for Syrian students in universities because there are many instances where refugees don't have families or a place to stay. In this case students will be without shelter. Therefore, permanent housing inside universities should be provided for students who wish to stay in the university even on official holidays.

3.2 The Case of Jordan

Engaging the Jordanian local community is important since many Jordanian youth are also in need of help as poverty is high in the country. Hence, Syrians refugees are not the only population in need of support for accessing education in Jordan. There are two overriding recommendations that should be

considered by the various stakeholders involved in enhancing the Jordanian tertiary education response to the Syrian crisis. First, efforts should be placed on providing opportunities for Jordanian youth to pursue tertiary education, particularly in domains that are in demand within the local labor market. Second, stakeholders need to form a national consortium to jointly engage in dialogue with the Jordanian government, preferably at the Jordanian Cabinet Ministers' level. With these overriding recommendations in mind, the following sub recommendations should be considered.

The first step towards increasing Syrian students' access to tertiary education is improving access and retention within primary and secondary education in Jordan, taking into account delivering good quality instruction. Special attention to English language instruction is also needed at school level to increase students' pass rate in the *Tawjihi* exam, which would in turn increase the ratio of Syrian students being accepted to a wider range of courses in Jordanian tertiary education institutes that have English instruction. This recommendation is within the scope of expanding access to high quality secondary education as a path towards tertiary, vocational and technical education for refugees, recognizing that post-primary education in all its forms can support transition to work, sustainable livelihoods and durable solutions for displaced persons.

Second, as tertiary education enrollment is currently very low (4.5 percent) among the Syrian age group 18-24 years, scholarship providers should not limit scholarships to those who are considered legal refugees. Instead, financial background and academic merits should be the criteria applied to Syrian students who reside in Jordan. There are discrepancies among scholarship providers on what actually constitutes a refugee, affecting the eligibility of some Syrian students applying for scholarships.

Third, it should be taken into account by policy makers that the legal and regulatory frameworks in Jordan, from an access to tertiary education point of view, hinder Syrian students from accessing tertiary education institutions. As previously mentioned, authentication of documents via the formal route could result in great danger to students or those who try to help them. Hence, the Jordanian government, in cooperation with international organizations and scholarships providers, should consider other methods, such as placement tests or offering a foundation year to better prepare Syrian refugee students. As such, it is recommended that the government provides a legal framework that recognizes refugees as special students instead of international students. This distinction is important as refugees do not have access to the documents necessary for admission as do international students, which presents a challenge when applying to admission at the tertiary education level. This may entail the need to develop a national pedagogic assessment for refugees that does not undermine the education certification quality within the country. Such an assessment would replace the need to present certain documents that would allow the refugees to enter into local universities. The Jordanian government is also encouraged to develop policies and legislation that mainstream crisis response in national higher education planning and policy and allow for the inclusion of those affected by crises in higher education institutions in an equitable manner, through policy responses pertaining to language, needed documentation, recognition and accreditation.

Fourth, as Jordanian tertiary education institutions are autonomous, there should consistently be direct dialogue with donors, scholarship providers, and international organizations. As Jordanian tertiary education institutions have the capacity to accommodate many more students than they currently have, especially in southern and private universities, and in community colleges, cooperation between all parties involved could ensure the enrollment of a larger number of Syrian students.

Fifth, better coordination between scholarship providers could limit competition and duplication of scholarships between them as well as affecting the specificity of the programs that universities offer.

Sixth, in order to better plan for Syrian refugees' access to tertiary education in Jordan, a more coherent understanding of the Syrian refugee population is needed. Also, reliable surveys on the Syrian's refugee population characteristics should be conducted to identify their needs in the tertiary education sector, as well as skills courses for Syrian graduates in their specializations, to ensure they are up-to-date, since it is unlikely they will be employed immediately after graduation.

Seventh, more funds by NGOs, international organizations, donors and scholarships providers are critical in order to ensure more Syrians are joining Jordanian tertiary education institutions. These scholarships should also target vulnerable Jordanians. Moreover, diversity of the programs offered by scholarships providers should be employed, taking into consideration the option of vocational programs, undergraduate and postgraduate programs, skills development after graduation, and online education. English language courses for Syrian refugee students should be maintained and enlarged to all levels of education, as English language is not only a requirement for tertiary education in Jordan, but also within the labor market.

Eighth, better awareness of scholarships and scholarship application training should be provided as Syrian students face difficulties during this process. Hence, simplifying the application for scholarships is also important.

Ninth, employability of Syrians who graduate from tertiary education has not been fully addressed by the various stakeholders in Jordan, particularly the government. According to the Jordanian Department of Statistics, the overall rate of unemployment in Jordan in the last quarter of the year 2016 was 13.8 percent for males and 25.2 percent for females. Unemployment was even higher among university degree graduates, reaching 26.4 percent for males and 79.4 percent for females, in the last quarter of the year 2016 (DOS website, 2016). With such figures in mind, it is hard to assume that industries in Jordan are in a position to offer jobs for Syrian graduates, particularly within the formal sector. Tertiary education institutions in Jordan, especially universities, seem to be disengaged from market needs. Much more focus by universities is needed on producing entrepreneurs instead of job seekers, helping both Jordanian and Syrian graduates alike. Moreover, incentive initiatives by the international community could produce jobs for unemployed Jordanians alongside Syrian graduates.

Tenth, while international and regional efforts in addressing Syrian youth tertiary education are vital and should be maintained, Jordan's engagement with the various stakeholders is of steep importance

as other countries in the region differ in their legal framework, needs and backgrounds. Understanding country specificity could result in much faster solutions to Syrian tertiary education in host countries.

Eleventh, the target group for Syrian tertiary education should be extended to the age of 30, due to the interrupted studies of some young Syrians. Some scholarship providers have already addressed this issue.

Twelfth, develop local universities into multi-dimensional institutions that add to the traditional curricula and traditional teaching modalities that go beyond on-campus offerings. These changes should also include the introduction of dynamic pedagogical practices where the focus is no longer on the professor but rather on the needs of the learner through active, interactive and experiential learning modalities, where students learn on their own or from peers. Such practices are particularly important in the context of refugee tertiary education, as the students are not typical students. It is critical for institutions to evolve and be creative in *what* they have to offer and *how* they offer it. For example, new skills and competencies may be introduced within the curriculum that is offered to Syrian refugee students not only because of their specific needs as learners, but also because of the prospects of employment that would enable them to change their realities of being a refugee. Such competencies include information analysis, critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, and communication. In addition, developing students' character to encourage their curiosity, sense of initiative, persistence, adaptability, ethical awareness and reasoning are equally essential for refugees. Obviously, emphasizing such traits will strengthen *all* students.

Thirteenth, Develop and ratify the "Arab Convention on Regulating the Refugee Situation in the Arab region" and its adoption. This includes the introduction of a specific provision on the right of education in the current text of the Arab Convention.

Fourteenth, ensure that refugee youth are systematically included in national higher education plans and programs and quality data is collected to monitor their participation and educational attainment. In addition, develop policies and legislation that mainstream crisis response in national higher education planning and policy and allow for the inclusion of those affected by crises in higher education institutions in an equitable manner, through policy responses pertaining to language, needed documentation, recognition and accreditation.

Fifteenth, develop a Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS) to track students' progress and drop out in light of youth mobility. Such a system would include nationals as well as refugees.

3.3 The Case of Lebanon

In this report, the goal was to examine the educational needs and challenges of displaced Syrian students in Lebanon and to identify programming opportunities to facilitate their access to tertiary education. Based on interviews, literature review and analysis, we propose a set of recommendations on the policy considerations to the international and Lebanese communities to guide further practice and research. In highlighting the need for tertiary education in protracted refugee situations, this

report should not fail to emphasize that it is primarily the political causes of conflict and forced displacement that need to be addressed by the international community.

Recommendations for the International Communities

1. *Tertiary Education as 'a fundamental right'.* Governments, international organizations, and donors should consider tertiary education as an undeniable fundamental right of refugees and an essential part of the humanitarian response and future development efforts. Actors should maximize their support to Syrian refugees' post-secondary education and equip the 'Lost Generation' to rebuild Syria's economic, political, educational, and health infrastructures post-war. Education must not be inextricably tied up with the politics of how long the Syrians will remain in these countries. The challenge remains to keep a focus on immediate needs while looking toward the future.

2. *Collaboration among actors.* There is a need for enhanced collaboration in order to tackle the enormous challenges to creating opportunities for tertiary education for refugees. Governmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, and educational institutions should analyze the scope of barriers to access tertiary education, coordinate their activities, and develop plans to address them. Scholarship programs should not be ad hoc; processes and outcomes should be documented; and efforts should be harmonized.

3. *Outreach*. Scholarship programs should reach the highest number of refugees without risks of duplication. There is a need for an online joint common clear protected and friendly platform to cater for the needs of Syrian refugees and vulnerable young local students and help them find educational opportunities at tertiary level: (1) Vocational and technical education (VTE) and (2) tertiary education. The platform can serve as a means for dissemination of relevant information to those that are either seeking or providing tertiary education opportunities. UNESCO is currently working on expanding the Jami3ti platform in Jordan to cover Lebanon with the hope of addressing this determined need. The current Jami3ti system states: "Registered members in the platform are able to visualize a set of openings matching their profiles and afterwards apply to those opportunities. Conversely, registered donor institutions can access data briefs including student profiles and regional outlooks" (UNESCO, Jami3ti). Other platforms also exist such as RAIS by UNHCR and others by EU and SPARK

4. *A variety of options.* The international community, practitioners and organizations should expand opportunities for refugees to participate in tertiary education. Hence, actors should offer a variety of options for quality learning tailored to cater to the needs of these groups of young students in an equitable way. For example, through developing (1) additional vocational programs at a post-secondary level to improve effectiveness and efficiency of the refugee education response with creative use of technology; (2) useful certified short courses designed for Syrian refugees [similar to what SPARK is doing in collaboration with AUB]; (3) Teaching Diploma programs [similar what LASeR is doing in collaboration with the LIU]; (4) centers providing opportunities for skills development and language [similar to what JUSOOR and LASeR are doing]; or (5) certified quality distance education programs providing online diplomas. Scholars should consider quality, reliable access, options for accreditation, and a linkage to rebuilding quality tertiary education in countries of origin. Online and blended learning are not among the recommended alternative options for providing Syrian refugees

access to tertiary education, as such pedagogical procedures require needs such as electricity and internet, which are in most cases not easily accessible for the refugees, particularly for those in camps.

5. *Academic and career counseling.* Scholarship programs should provide supplemental academic and career counseling based on legal restrictions, a labor market analysis and a goal to connect enrolled and recently graduated Syrian students with opportunities to work with refugees, particularly in the areas of primary and secondary education.

6. *The Lebanese issue.* The national and the international communities should consider the long-term impact of the presence of refugees in Lebanon. Any solution that exacerbates tensions between the Lebanese and Syrian communities is not an appropriate solution. Programs should aim to benefit Lebanese students and institutions as well, many of whom are also facing the effects of political instability and poverty.

Recommendations for the Lebanese Community

1. **Tertiary education as a human and legal right.** There is need for continued recognition by all actors of the right to education during all phases of displacement and education as an enabling human right

2. **Developing tertiary education institutions in Lebanon.** Develop local universities into multi-dimensional institutions that add to the traditional curricula and traditional teaching modalities that go beyond on-campus offerings. These changes should also include the introduction of dynamic pedagogical practices where the focus is no longer on the professor but rather on the needs of the learner through active, interactive and experiential learning modalities, where students learn on their own or from peers. Such practices are particularly important in the context of refugee tertiary education, as the students are not typical students. It is critical for institutions to evolve and be creative in *what* they have to offer and *how* they offer it. For example, new skills and competencies may be introduced within the curriculum that is offered to Syrian refugee students not only because of their specific needs as learners, but also because of the prospects of employment that would enable them to change their realities of being a refugee. Such competencies include information analysis, critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, and communication. In addition, developing students' character to encourage their curiosity, sense of initiative, persistence, adaptability, ethical awareness and reasoning are equally essential for refugees. Obviously, emphasizing such traits will strengthen *all* students. This crisis brings funding to the local institutions to further develop the programs and the capacity of the universities in order to address issues that are inherent within the sector such as these related to quality assurance, governance and sustainable financing.

3. **Host community's right to scholarship programs.** There is need for the scholarship providers and the national system to integrate host communities in scholarship programmes. The Lebanese government should require by law, as Jordan does, that a certain percentage of scholarship programs address the financial needs of the host community. This will help to address social tensions between refugee and host communities and respect the education needs of host country nationals.

4. **Certificate qualifications proof**. The Lebanese government should develop a customized bridging exam that can serve as an alternative to certificate qualifications. [For example,

Turkey successfully implemented a placement test. Last year, the Jordanian government accepted to pilot the "placement test" approach, which allows Syrian students to determine whether or not they can enter university and which major and which level, etc. It is currently a discussion in Kurdistan Iraq.] This system allows the refugees to overcome the documents barrier when seeking access to tertiary education (a representative from an NGO, September 9, 2016). This might also be an alternative for those who have the interim exam too. Within the scope of recognizing the qualifications and academic credentials of refugees, Lebanon is encouraged to develop and ratify the "Arab Convention on Regulating the Refugee Situation in the Arab region" and its adoption. This includes the introduction of a specific provision on the right of education in the current text of the Arab Convention.

For some students, a proof that they have finished their Baccalaureate exam with passing grades is all they need. As a facilitation procedure, the Lebanese government should consider the *online verification* process through website of the Ministry of Education in Syria. The student ID number given for the exam will show the information of the student including the grades and can serve as proof [For example, SPARK is doing this (A representative from SPARK, August 2016)]. Hence, a copy will be authenticated at the Ministry of Education.

A third alternative is an example of the *"Qualifications Passport"* for refugees developed in Norway. Norway established a clear policy and procedures regarding recognition of academic qualifications for refugees lacking required documentation in the early 2000s (NOKUT, 2016). Faced with a flood of refugees, Norway has tested a new fast-track procedure to evaluate the qualifications of those who arrive in the country without proper documentation of their academic degrees or professional certificates. This process should allow them to begin studying or working much sooner than has been possible up to now. The aim is to avoid months or years of forced inactivity for such asylum seekers and speed their integration into Norwegian society (Bollag, September 2016).

5. **Legal framework and national higher education planning.** Provide a legal framework that recognizes refugees as special students instead of international students. This distinction is important as refugees do not have access to the documents necessary for admission as do international students, which presents a challenge when applying to admission at the tertiary education level. This may entail the need to develop a national pedagogic assessment for refugees that does not undermine the education certification quality within the country. Such an assessment would replace the need to present certain documents that would allow the refugees to enter into local universities. The Lebanese government is also encouraged to develop policies and legislation that mainstream crisis response in national higher education planning and policy and allow for the inclusion of those affected by crises in higher education institutions in an equitable manner, through policy responses pertaining to language, needed documentation, recognition and accreditation.

6. **Preparatory program.** Lebanese government and educational scholars should improve access to tertiary education for refugees beginning in the high schools. All Lebanese universities should include a 'preparatory program' as a transition program from high school to university. This program offers students with limited proficiency, literacy and language in French or

English instruction in core subjects such as math, science, history, and social studies to help ensure that students are prepared to pursue regular university classes [Some Lebanese universities have already launched a preparatory program].

7. **Academic and career counseling.** All Lebanese educational institutions and organizations working with refugees need to provide adequate academic and career counseling for Syrian refugee students who lack of information about tertiary education, university admissions and labor market opportunities in the host country and/or abroad.

8. **Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS).** Develop a Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS) to track students' progress and drop out in light of youth mobility. Such a system would include nationals as well as refugees.

9. **Ministry of Education and Higher Education Capacity Building. T**here is need to increase the capacity of the Directorate General for HE at MEHE to enhance EMIS. This has been mitigated within areas of quality assurance through the establishment of professional committees staffed by faculty members from local universities and funded by international organizations such as the European Union. These local committees provide support to the Ministry through organizing local events for professional development and capacity building of local institutions to address issues within tertiary education in the country. Establishing such a committee to assist the Ministry in regulating issues related to refugees in higher education in the country is essential. Such a committee would also be responsible for managing data and generating recommendations to overcome some of the challenges that are encountered within the scope of providing access and retention within tertiary education for refugees in Lebanon.

10. **Undoing the collapsing pipeline of education of refugees.** Expand access to high quality secondary, in order to bridge the path to tertiary, vocational and technical education for refugees, recognizing that post-primary education in all its forms can support transition to work, sustainable livelihoods and durable solutions for displaced persons.

Recommendations for Further Research

Because the provision for tertiary education for refugee students remains a field less researched and in which a knowledge base is still being developed, further empirical research studies are necessary. Clearly, managing refugee education and implementing new initiatives is no easy task, particularly for such a rapidly growing population. While this study serves as a broad overview of the needs, challenges, and ideas for the way forward, further studies are needed to assess both feasibility and implementation.

Future investigations might focus on the long journey of refugee students to access tertiary educational, drawing on their experiences: 'pre-access', 'during enrollment' and 'after graduation'.

3.4 The Case of Turkey

The policy recommendations will be proposed along the following dimensions:
- Bureaucracy/information dissemination
- Language proficiency
- Economic reasons hindering access
- International cooperation
- Lack of clear future prospects

Short Term Policy Recommendations

1) The bureaucracy surrounding the certification of previous degrees and admission to colleges is an issue of major concern for those interviewed for this study. The first aspect of this relates to the implementation of MEB directives on equivalence by provincial offices. This requires better information dissemination both across the institutions and from institutions to individual refugee applicants.

Among these implementation challenges, a common/central system for ranking and potentially placing students is an issue raised by both academic advisors and students.

From the academic advisors' perspectives, this would allow better-ranked students to be placed in better institutions and less variation among refugee students in a university. From the perspective of international organizations, standards are necessary while respecting the autonomy of the universities. This could be achieved by centrally disseminating the varying requirements of universities along with their Syrian and other foreign student quotas and exam dates. Additionally, a more centralized system can be set up where students submit their application files and are then placed by YÖK, which is partly done at the moment –within the Syrian quota. Nevertheless, students tend to be willing to explore all potential options in order to be placed at their most desired program. In a more strict sense, Syrians can take an Arabic placement test for ranking and placement like their Turkish counterparts, however this would mean inserting a new process and potential hurdle for students to overcome. Also, it could pose some threats at the implementation stage. Currently, students who live in Syria can apply for undergraduate programs in Turkey without coming to Turkey. If there is a test, it could be hard to implement geographically. Either way, a centralized structure should ensure better information dissemination about changes in the policy area and clear road maps for students.

2) Students' educational standards need to be better harmonized across institutions when they begin their studies at a local university through the TÖMER courses offered. These include but not limited to the following:

- Students may be placed in TÖMER based on level of language proficiency at different language levels.
- Setting a quota for the number of students for TÖMER programs across universities.
- TÖMER programs constitute a major cost for Syrian students. Some subsidization could allow lower prices comparable to courses outside the university or the number of scholarship to covering only TÖMER costs could be offered like DAFI scholarships.

3) Students who attend the courses at universities do not seem to have major performance problems. Nevertheless, some catch-up courses or boot camps could be offered to help the students re-integrate when they drop out of the system. Academically, better tracking and preventive response mechanisms are needed in order to address non-attendance and drop out of students. Information on Syrian refugee student dropouts from higher education is still not available for a more informed plan to address this challenge.

The financial situation of many of the students also leads them to drop out of universities. The scholarships offered for continuing students is an important step. An increase in the number of

scholarships offered would definitely ease the students' suffering and increase the number of students who are qualified and interested in pursuing higher education. Improving students' financial situation may also be accomplished through offering these students opportunities for work and study. Many of the study participants showed interest in formally working on or off campus in order to provide financial support to themselves and their families beyond higher education costs. A regulation to this effect would allow them to support themselves while being gainfully employed at higher wages.

4) Raising awareness of the importance of higher education for refugees both locally and globally and facilitating better collaboration channels/methods with and among INGOs/ NGOs is essential.

5) Expand access to high quality secondary education as a path towards tertiary, vocational and technical education for refugees, recognizing that post-primary education in all its forms can support transition to work, sustainable livelihoods and durable solutions for displaced persons.

6) Develop a Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS) to track students' progress and drop out in light of youth mobility. Such a system would include nationals as well as refugees

Long Term Policy Recommendations

1) Improving the socio-economic status of Syrian refugees: Addressing the financial constraints faced by the Syrian refugee population in Turkey is an issue beyond higher education students. One of the study participants explained:

> *It is because child labor, and child labor is because of a lack of a widespread right of legal employment. If the fathers could work in decent jobs where they are paid official wage –even if it is minimum wage, their children would not have to go to work, and would go to school and then college.*
>
> *(Sanliurfa Focus Group Participant Number 7)*

Many of the Syrian refugees who are of higher education age are also responsible to provide for their families. Therefore, they are burdened with the responsibility of not only managing the cost of education and language learning, but also making sure their families are able to survive. From a long-term perspective, a holistic approach is necessary to address the underlying reasons for potential of exclusion from higher education. Experts and students alike named economic issues as an important direct and indirect reason for exclusion. Scholarships can only temporarily address these issues, while raising the living standards of the refugees or better yet allowing them to raise their own living standards could increase their educational integration in a more sustainable way.

The January 2015 law enabling the refugees to apply for work permits represents one of the initiatives put forth by the Turkish government was an important step. However, certain restrictions present the employers with difficulties in employing Syrian refugees. More progressive steps need to be taken in integrating adult, working age refugees in the labor market with a joint approach to control the informal economy so that children and youth can transition to higher education following their primary education.

The scholarships provided for Syrian refugees by YTB, INGOs and NGOs are very critical. Nevertheless, it should be noted that these scholarships are a short-term remedy with high financial and socio-political costs contributing to resentment from the public. In the long run, legal employment opportunities could offer a more permanent solution to economic difficulties and would enable students to support themselves during their studies by part time work.

2) It is highly recommended that better information dissemination procedures are sought on issues such as the amount of scholarships, selection criteria, documents required from Syrians for their placement or any other issue related to Syrian refugees that could potentially put the students and the entire community as a target.

For students, this could be achieved with an emphasis on a rights based approach. If issues are framed as protection for a vulnerable population, based on obligations stemming from international refugee law and human rights law, some of the popular reaction by the host society could be mediated.

As such, it is important that the Turkish government ensures that refugee youth are systematically included in national higher education plans and programs and quality data is collected to monitor their participation and educational attainment. The government is also encouraged to develop policies and legislation that mainstream crisis response in national higher education planning and policy and allow for the inclusion of those affected by crises in higher education institutions in an equitable manner, through policy responses pertaining to language, needed documentation, recognition and accreditation.

3) Develop local universities into multi-dimensional institutions that add to the traditional curricula and traditional teaching modalities that go beyond on-campus offerings. These changes should also include the introduction of dynamic pedagogical practices where the focus is no longer on the professor but rather on the needs of the learner through active, interactive and experiential learning modalities, where students learn on their own or from peers. Such practices are particularly important in the context of refugee tertiary education, as the students are not typical students. It is critical for institutions to evolve and be creative in *what* they have to offer and *how* they offer it. For example, new skills and competencies may be introduced within the curriculum that is offered to Syrian refugee students not only because of their specific needs as learners, but also because of the prospects of employment that would enable them to change their realities of being a refugee. Such competencies include information analysis, critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, and communication. In addition, developing students' character to encourage their curiosity, sense of initiative, persistence, adaptability, ethical awareness and reasoning are equally essential for refugees. Obviously, emphasizing such traits will strengthen *all* students.

4. Thematic Challenges and Recommendations

Issues	Challenges	Recommendations
Policy Barriers & Coordination	• Legal status of students • Accessing authenticated academic documentation • Accessing accurate information • Limitation of accessible majors for refugees • Lack of regulated access to tertiary education • Requirements for valid secondary school certificates to access Higher Education • Lack of mechanisms for recognition and accreditation studies obtained online • Policies requiring vulnerable refugees to pay fees at foreign students rates • Complexities of securing third country scholarship opportunities. • High costs of higher education • Insufficient attention to the needs of all refugee groups	• Higher Education enrollment policies and criteria should be clearly communicated . • Ministries should differentiate between foreign and refugee students. This should take into consideration the legal status of refugees. • Enhanced coordination and collaboration for information sharing • Promote policy responses for skill development and transitions to work and livelihoods for refugees where applicable • Address barriers related to registration and documentation required for university registration • Support capacity building of local higher education institutions that are increasingly absorbing refugee students • Promote social cohesion through scholarships and opportunities that also target vulnerable host community youth • Recognise and accredit studies obtained online by refugee students • Include refugees and displaced youth in national higher education planning processes • Address challenges inherent in language of instruction at tertiary level • Develop sustainable mechanisms to finance higher education for displaced in crisis contexts
Recognition of Prior Learning	• Authenticity of documentations • Transferability of credits • Language barriers • Lack of qualification frameworks • Differentiation of the various purposes of recognition	• Develop a common criteria and procedures for the recognition of foreign qualifications and studies • Develop flexible/alternative methods for the assessment of undocumented learning • Revise of the UNESCO Arab Recognition Convention
Alternative Pathways to Higher Education: Connect Learning Programmes	• How does connected learning fit into national framework policy? • Poor internet and connectivity • Students don't always have the skills to manage this kind training	• Acknowledge that connected learning programmes offer an innovative alternative for broadening access to tertiary education and meeting the specific

• Capacity of trainers and students needs to be improved	protection requirements of displaced students
• Logistics and infrastructure that is required	• Develop and adopt or adapt regional and/or frameworks, based on the quality recommendation of the Consortium for Connected Learning, to accredit connected learning programmes and higher education programmes that incorporated connected learning pedagogy
• Students lack trust the type of learning	
• Lack of recognition of online certificates	
• Connected learning not well understood by policy makers, parents and students	
• Perceived safety issues be recipients on online users on information	
• Ensuring the motivation of students and retention	
• Lack of stipends to cover cost	

Issues	Challenges	Recommendations
Data Management Systems	• Unlike primary education, limited desegregated data or comparative data. Most of data is estimated. • Dynamic data within governments (if exists) and UNHCR (due to population mobility). • Higher education systems do not differentiate between foreign/ international and refugee students.	• Ensure the coordination between donors on the provision of support. • Capture sharable data with technical references and definitions (Consider International Classification- e.g. INEE or UNESCO definition) • Develop a Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS) to track students progress and drop out in light of youth mobility (nationals and refugees) • Systematically report data capturing the 18-24 or 18-29 tertiary education age cohort. • Obtain the students' consent before sharing the personal data.
Capacity Building	• Multiple protected crisis in Arab Region • Lack of systematic regulations and mechanisms to deal with the needs of higher education in times of crisis • Lack of resources can mean that the limited amount of resources available need to be optimized efficiently	• Establish a body to advise on the legislative, legal and regulatory framework on the management of higher education in crisis • Support the development of clear policies governing higher education in emergencies • Facilitate the exchange of experiences, knowledge and skills in providing higher education opportunities in times of crisis

Sharm El Sheikh Statement
on Higher Education in Crisis Situations in the Arab States

Higher Education in Crisis Situations: Synergizing Policies and Promising Practices to enhance Access, Equity, and Quality in the Arab Region – Sharm El Sheikh- Egypt, 28-29 March 2017

Preamble

We, the participants in the Arab Regional Conference on Higher Education in Crisis Situations, held in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, from 28-29 March 2017, co-convened by the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), under the auspices of H.E. Dr. Khaled El Ghaffar, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research in the Arab Republic of Egypt, herby

1. Recall the terms of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, the 1992 Declaration on the Protection of Refugees and Displaced Persons in the Arab World and the 1994 Arab Convention on Regulating the Status of Refugees in the Arab Countries,

2. Evoke Article 26 of the Declaration of Human Rights, which stipulates that everyone has a right to education, and that higher education shall be accessible to all on the basis of merit,

3. Take into consideration the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 4, which aims to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning for all", in particular target 4.3 which states that "By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocation and tertiary education, including university",

4. Take note of the increasing research by international bodies and agencies that higher education is critical in fostering socio-economic and cultural development, at the national and regional levels, and that it plays a major role in providing hope and promoting the values of peace and mutual understanding and develops competencies for living together peacefully for sustainable development,

5. Cognizant of the exceptional circumstances that some Arab States are going through and that the most significant challenge to progress in education is conflict, which exacerbates inequality, poverty, exclusion and marginalization,

Issues and Challenges

6. Highly appreciate the efforts exerted by host countries and international bodies and organizations to respond to the refugee crisis challenges. We call upon the international community to play its role in this joint responsibility towards those displaced persons,

7. Acknowledge that the demand for higher education among those displaced by crisis continues to far outweigh current supply,

8. Note that without significantly enhancing tertiary education support for those affected by crisis in the Arab Region, their countries and the Region in general will be deprived of

skilled human resources in the long term and youth will be increasingly at risk of harmful practices,

9. Recognize that those affected by crisis who wish to pursue their higher education are faced with a number of challenges, namely the recognition of their prior learning, availability of valid documentation needed to enroll in higher education, the need for residency permits when in a host country, learning difficulties when curriculum or language differ from their country of origin, the need for psychosocial-support, and the high cost of higher education.

Recommendations

Based on the principles, issues and challenges reviewed in the Statement on Higher Education in Crisis Situations in the Arab States, "Higher Education in Crisis Situations: Synergizing Policies and Promising Practices to enhance Access, Equity, and Quality in the Arab Region", as adopted by the Conference, and in view of the need for higher education to be prioritized in times of crisis, the Conference has adopted the following recommendations for the Arab States:

Policies, Legal Framework & Coordination

10. To develop policies and legislation that mainstream crisis in national higher education planning and policy and allow for the integration of those affected by crisis in higher education institutions in an equitable manner, through policy responses pertaining to learning language, needed documentation, recognition and accreditation,

11. To enhance coordination and collaboration between all relevant stakeholders to facilitate the provision of higher education for those affected by crisis, including sufficient exchange of information between relevant stakeholders,

12. To facilitate recognition of studies and qualifications and to encourage the use of modern technology means in education and learning,

Data Management

13. To enhance data collection and management as an important driver for policy dialogue and programme planning and implementation,

Regional Cooperation & Institutional Capacity Building

14. To encourage regional cooperation for emergency response preparedness and to build institutional capacities for emergency response preparedness in higher education interventions during times of crisis,

15. To develop a national contingency plan to prepare for and face various emergency and crisis situations in order to ensure access to equitable higher education opportunities to all learners.

Sharm El-Sheikh, 29 March 2017

بيان شرم الشيخ بشأن التعليم العالي في أوضاع الأزمات بالدول العربية

التعليم العالي في أوضاع الأزمات: سياسات التآزر والممارسات الواعدة لتعزيز الإتاحة والإنصاف والجودة في المنطقة العربية"- شرم الشيخ، مصر، 28-29 آذار/ مارس 2017

الديباجة

نحن المشاركين في المؤتمر العربي الإقليمي بشأن التعليم العالي في أوضاع الأزمات المنعقد في شرم الشيخ، مصر، من 28 إلى 29 آذار/ مارس 2017 بتنظيم مشترك من منظّمة الأمم المتحدة للتربية والعلوم والثقافة (اليونسكو) ومفوّضية الأمم المتحدة لشؤون اللاجئين، برعاية معالي الدكتور خالد عبد الغفار وزير التعليم العالي والبحث العلمي بجمهورية مصر العربية،

1. نذكّر بالاتفاقية الخاصة بوضع اللاجئين لعام 1951، والبروتوكول الخاص بوضع اللاجئين لعام 1967، والإعلان حول حماية اللاجئين والنازحين في العالم العربي لعام 1992، والاتفاقية العربية لتنظيم أوضاع اللاجئين في الدول العربية لعام 1994،

2. نشير إلى المادة 26 من الإعلان العالمي لحقوق الإنسان التي تنصّ على أن لكلّ شخص الحقّ في التعلّم وأن القبول بالتعليم العالي يتمّ على قدم المساواة التامة للجميع وعلى أساس الكفاءة،

3. نأخذ بالاعتبار أهداف التنمية المستدامة، لا سيّما الهدف الرابع الذي يرنو إلى "ضمان التعليم الجيد المُنصف والشامل وتعزيز فرص التعلّم مدى الحياة للجميع"، وبالأخصّ الغاية 4-3 التي تنصّ على "ضمان تكافؤ فرص جميع النساء والرجال في الحصول على التعليم التقني والمهني والتعليم العالي الجيّد والميسور التكلفة، بحلول عام 2030"،

4. نحيط علماً بالأبحاث المتزايدة التي تعدّها الهيئات والوكالات الدولية والتي تفيد بأن التعليم العالي أساسيّ لتعزيز التنمية الاقتصادية والاجتماعية والثقافية، على المستويَين الوطني والإقليمي، وأنه يؤدي دوراً رئيساً في توفير الأمل والترويج لقيم التضامن والتآزر والتفاهم المتبادل، وأنه يطوّر الكفايات من أجل العيش معاً بسلام بغية تحقيق التنمية المستدامة،

5. إدراكاً منّا للظروف الاستثنائية التي تمرّ بها بعض البلدان العربية ولواقع النزاع الذي يشكّل التحدّي الأكبر للتقدّم في حقل التعليم، ذلك أنه يزيد من حدّة انعدام المساواة والفقر والإقصاء والتهميش،

المسائل والتحديات

6. نثمن المجهودات المبذولة من قبل الدول المستضيفة والمانحة والهيئات والمنظمات الدولية والمجتمع المدني للاستجابة لتحديات أزمة النازحين. وندعو المجتمع الدولي إلى القيام بدوره في إطار المسؤولية المشتركة تجاه هؤلاء النازحين،

7. نقرّ بأن الطلب على التعليم العالي في أوساط النازحين بسبب الأزمات يستمرّ في تجاوز العرض الحالي بصورة كبيرة،

8. نلفت إلى أنه بدون تعزيز الدعم المؤمّن للتعليم الجامعي للأشخاص المتأثرين بالأزمات في المنطقة العربية، ستُحرم بلدانهم خاصة والمنطقة عامة من موارد بشرية ماهرة على المدى الطويل وسيواجه الشباب خطر الممارسات الضارة بصورة كبيرة،

9. نعترف بأن الأشخاص المتأثّرين بالأزمات والراغبين في متابعة دراساتهم العليا يواجهون مجموعةً من التحديات، لا سيّما الاعتراف بتعلّمهم السابق، وتوفّر الوثائق الصحيحة التي يحتاجون إليها للالتحاق بالتعليم العالي، وضرورة الحصول على إقامة خلال تواجدهم في بلد مضيف، وصعوبات تعلّمية متى كانت المناهج أو اللغة مختلفة عما هو متوفّر في بلدهم الأم، والحاجة إلى دعم نفسي واجتماعي، فضلا عن الكلفة المرتفعة للتعليم العالي.

التوصيات

في ضوء المبادئ والمسائل والتحديات التي ذُكرت أعلاه، كما أقرها المؤتمر، ونظراً إلى أهمية التعليم العالي في أوقات الأزمات، وضرورة إيلائه الأولوية وما يستحقه من اهتمام ومعالجة فقد تبنى المؤتمر التوصيات التالية للدول العربية:

أ. السياسات وإطار العمل القانوني والتنسيق

1. تطوير سياسات وتشريعات تدمج المسائل الناجمة عن الأزمة في الخطط والسياسات الوطنية الخاصة بالتعليم العالي وتتيح المجال أمام دمج الأشخاص المتأثّرين بالأزمات في مؤسّسات التعليم العالي بصورة منصفة، من خلال الاستجابات الخاصة بالسياسات التي تتمحور حول لغة التعلم، الوثائق اللازمة، والاعتراف بها والمصادقة عليها،

2. تعزيز التنسيق والتعاون بين كل الجهات المعنية ذات الصلة من أجل تسهيل عملية توفير التعليم العالي للأشخاص المتأثّرين بالأزمات، بما في ذلك التبادل الكافي للمعلومات بين الجهات المعنية ذات الصلة،

3. تيسير الاعتراف بالدراسات والمؤهّلات وتشجيع استخدام الوسائل التكنولوجية الحديثة في التعليم والتعلم

ب. إدارة البيانات

تعزيز عملية جمع البيانات وإدارتها بصفتها محرّكاً رئيسياً للحوار بشأن السياسات والتخطيط للبرامج وتنفيذها،

ج. التعاون الإقليمي وبناء القدرات المؤسسية

1. تشجيع التعاون الإقليمي، وضرورة بناء القدرات المؤسّسية، استعدادا للاستجابة لحالات الطوارئ في التدخّلات الخاصة بالتعليم العالي،

2. تطوير خطط طوارئ وطنية لمواجهة الأزمات المختلفة والاستعداد لها من أجل ضمان وصول كلّ المتعلّمين إلى فرص متساوية في التعليم العالي.

شرم الشيخ، 29 آذار/ مارس 2017

List of Participants

Regional Conference on Higher Education in Emergencies
(28 -29 March 2017)

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Egypt	Palestine	UNESCO (Paris, Lebanon - Regional, Iraq, Palestine, Jordan)	AUB
Iraq	Qatar		Terre des Hommes Italy
Jordan	Saudi Arabia		HOPES
Kuwait	Tunisia	UNHCR (HQ, Regional, Jordan, Turkey, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon)	British Council
Lebanon	Libya		JWL
Mauritania	Yemen	Al Fanar Media	InZone
Morocco	Turkey	LASER	Jesuit Worldwide
Oman		NOKUT	Learning
			DAFI scholars

Annex IV: Press Release (UNESCO)

**The Arab Regional Conference on Higher Education in Crisis Situations:
A commitment to collective action**

Under the auspices of His Excellency Dr. Khaled Abdel Ghaffar, Minister of Higher Education in the Arab Republic of Egypt, UNESCO and UNHCR organized on 28 and 29 March 2017 the first-ever Arab Regional Conference on Higher Education in Crisis Situations, under the theme "Synergizing Policies and Promising Practices to Enhance Access, Equity and Quality in the Arab Region.' The Regional Conference was attended by over 80 participants, including high level officials from Ministries and government agencies responsible for Higher Education from 15 Arab Member States and Turkey. Regional organizations, civil society organizations and academic institutions also took active part in the Conference.

The objective of the Conference, was to engage national authorities and stakeholders in promoting higher education for those affected by conflict, including refugees, and internally displaced persons, and to draw attention to the urgent need for higher education in times of crisis. The Conference was also in full alignment with the commitments made by Member States to the Sustainable Development Agenda, more specifically Goal 4, also known as Education 2030, which includes the provision of higher education and vulnerable populations.

Commending Member States' tremendous efforts made by the refugee hosting governments and communities to accommodate and provide for those in need, including higher education opportunities, UNESCO expressed concern about the detrimental impact that the multiple and often protracted crises in the region will have on the lives and livelihoods of the millions of affected peoples, paying particular attention to the urgent need of enhancing knowledge and skills for youth. Furthermore, it was highlighted that while basic education in times of crisis enjoyed significant support, more attention was needed for post-basic education, in particular higher education.

In his opening remarks, Dr. Ezzeldeen Abousteit, representative from the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Egypt, acknowledged the immense needs to cater for the learning needs of refugee and displaced youth and reminded the participants that they gathered to open the window of opportunities for refugee and displaced youth's safe passage to higher education.

During the Conference, participants highlighted the challenges in the provision of higher education in crisis situations. These issues included policy barriers, coordination, recognition of prior learning, data management systems and capacity building.

Discussion around alternative pathways to higher education that could broaden access in a cost-effective way, such as Connected Learning Programmes, were also discussed.

After two days of fruitful, forward looking deliberations from the perspectives of Member States as well as those of participating organizations, the Meeting culminated in the adoption of the **"Sharm El Sheikh Statement on Higher Education in Crisis Situations in the Arab States"** which sets out recommendations by participants to be undertaken to improve access

to higher education for those affected by crisis and overcome the main barriers. More specifically, participants endorsed the idea that there is a need to mainstream crisis in national higher education planning and policy. In addition, the recognition of studies and qualifications should be facilitated. Furthermore, it was agreed that cooperation should be enhanced at both the national and regional level between all relevant stakeholders, and that data collection and management should be improved for policy dialogue, and programme planning and implementation.

With this adoption UNESCO and UNHCR reaffirms their commitment to accompany and support Member States to build resilience and mitigate the harmful effects of crisis.

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