

STAND and DELIVER

Urgent action needed on commitments
made at the London Conference one year on



Signed by:

NGO Platforms

Jordan INGO Forum (JIF)
Lebanon Humanitarian INGO Forum (LHIF)
Syria INGO Regional Forum (SIRF)

Individual Agencies

ABAAD Organisation
ALEF (Act for Human Rights)
Amel Association International
Basmeh and Zeitooneh
CAFOD
CARE International
Christian Aid
Danish Refugee Council (DRC)
Diakonia
Dorcas
Finn Church Aid
HelpAge International
International Rescue Committee (IRC)
Lutheran World Federation
Médecins du Monde – France
Mercy Corps
Oxfam
Phenix Center for Economic and Informatics Studies
Première Urgence - Aide Médicale Internationale
Save the Children
SAWA for Development and Aid
SAWA Foundation
Secours Islamique France
Solidarites
Terre des Hommes Italia
Trócaire
Violet International
World Vision International

Cover photo: Syrian refugee child in Qushtapa refugee camp, Kurdish Region of Iraq. Photo by: Klaus Bo Christensen / Danish Refugee Council

I. INTRODUCTION

On 4 February 2016, the international community agreed on a ‘comprehensive new approach’ to address the protracted Syria crisis at the “Supporting Syria and the Region” Conference in London. Donors, and neighbouring countries, which host the vast majority of those who have fled Syria, committed to significant financial pledges and policy changes to improve the lives of refugees and host communities.

As the one-year mark of the conference approaches

3 NGO platforms and
28 organisations

have reviewed whether donors and host governments have fulfilled their commitments, and whether their actions have led to an improvement in the situation for refugees and host communities in the region.¹

Important steps have been taken to improve the provision of education and livelihoods in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. Donors have performed well in terms of aid disbursed and committed for the current financial year, and some host governments have made significant policy changes. Much more remains unaccomplished, however. Without technical assistance and further efforts to implement the wide-reaching policy framework agreed in London, there is a risk that the funding disbursed will fail to have a measurable and sustainable impact on people’s lives. Importantly, a continued lack of legal status and documentation means many refugees cannot access work and education. Moreover, the conflict in Syria continues unabated and without a tangible increase in international support for Syria’s neighbours, including by sharing the responsibility for hosting refugees more equitably.

Almost 5 million refugees from Syria, including an entire generation of children, currently face an uncertain future. If the international community fails to remain engaged and share responsibility for refugees, the consequences could be disastrous for refugee families and countries in the region.

Fully implementing the ‘new approach’ of the London Conference will require sustained political will, as well as sufficient funding and technical capacity. Neighbouring countries and donors must urgently reaffirm, consolidate and build on the commitments made at the Conference, and place the rights of refugees and the communities that host them at the forefront of the international agenda.

¹

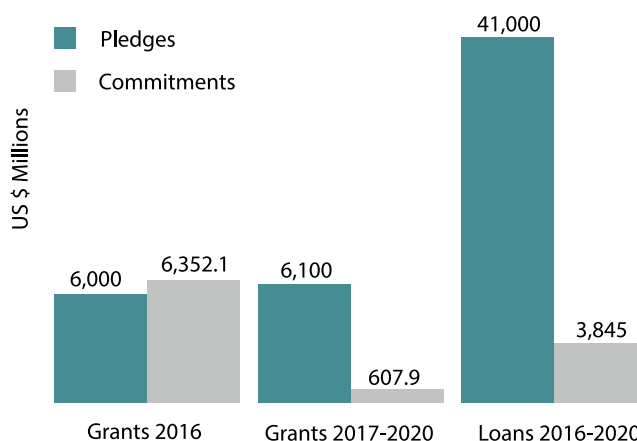
This report is a follow-up to the joint agency publication “From Words to Action”.
https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file_attachments/bp-from-words-to-action-syria-refugees-070916-en.pdf

Financial commitments

At the London Conference, donors pledged \$6 billion for 2016 and a further \$6.1 billion for 2017-20.² By September 2016, over \$6.3 billion had been committed in grants for 2016, exceeding pledges by 5%.³ We welcome that the international community went the extra mile in surpassing the grants pledged for 2016. However, at the end of the year, the UN reported that appeals for the refugee response and the humanitarian response inside Syria were 60% and 49% funded, respectively.⁴

There is still room for progress. One of the aspirations of the London Conference was to generate long-term funding commitments. While \$6.1 billion was pledged for 2017-2020, currently only \$607.9 million has been committed.⁵ This significant shortfall in long-term, committed funding presents substantial challenges in planning an efficient and cost-effective aid response to this increasingly protracted crisis. Longer-term funding is essential for development responses aimed at improving the self-reliance and resilience of refugee and host communities.

In addition, donors pledged to make loans available to national governments for 2016-2020 to the amount of \$41 billion. Only 9%, or \$3.8 billion, of this total amount pledged at the London Conference has been made available.⁶ This area, important for economic recovery, job creation, and support for strained services such as education and health in host countries, requires urgent attention.



Global responsibility sharing for refugees

One of the successes of the London Conference was the recognition that funding humanitarian appeals alone is not an adequate response to both the massive crisis inside Syria and the huge strains placed on refugee hosting countries. Commitments to long term development financing and other forms of bilateral support were welcomed by host governments and there was a recognition that national level policy change to facilitate inclusive access to livelihoods and education is a critical factor. Follow up action between the EU and Jordan and Lebanon, and by the World Bank's Concessional Financing Facility, in particular show some promise.

Responsibility sharing, however, must also extend to offering international protection to those seeking asylum, fulfilling obligations to resettle vulnerable refugees and upholding the principle of non-refoulement. In Europe and the US, an increasingly restrictive environment for refugees has emerged since the London Conference. While any meaningful progress towards predictable and equitable responsibility sharing by the international community has been limited, neighbouring countries have largely sealed their borders. In addition, although very limited information on refoulement is available, there is anecdotal evidence of individual Syrian refugees being detained and deported back to Syria.

Despite three major international conferences focused on responsibility sharing for refugees during the last year, wealthy countries have collectively failed to offer significantly more resettlement and other forms of admission to refugees from Syria. Currently, less than 3% of the Syrian refugee population has been resettled.⁷

Less than

3%

of the Syrian refugee population has currently been resettled

2 Development Initiatives. *Supporting Syria and the region: Post-London conference financial tracking – Report One*, 2016.
 3 Ibid.
 4 UNOCHA. *Financial Tracking Service*. FTSARCHIVE.UNOCHA.org. <https://ftsarchive.unocha.org/> (Accessed January 16, 2017).
 5 Ibid.
 6 Ibid.
 7 Oxfam. *Where there's a will, there's a way: safe havens needed for refugees from Syria*, 2017.

Key recommendations

Although the political and socio-economic situation in the neighbouring countries is varied, refugees face similar challenges in the pursuit of leading a dignified life. The international community and neighbouring countries must support educational and economic opportunities for refugees and protect their rights in this regard. A third area, that of refugee protection and the right to legal stay, underpins these two aspects. Addressing these three areas jointly is central to following through on the new approach outlined at the London Conference.

In addition, we urge the international community to ensure that the generous commitments made at the London Conference mark a new era of collaboration, solidarity and responsibility sharing to respond to the needs of Syrian refugees, internally displaced and host communities.

One year on from the “Syria and the Region” Conference, we therefore recommend:

1. **Governments take action to ensure refugees from Syria have the right to legal stay, education and to inclusive access to decent work and economic opportunities**
 - I. **Host countries, with the support of donors, should introduce necessary far-reaching domestic policy changes** that guarantee the right to legal stay, education and livelihoods to refugees, to ensure the realisation of the commitments made in London.
 - II. **All countries must strengthen refugees’ access to protection** by setting up clear, accessible and affordable procedures to obtain and maintain valid documentation, residency and registration. Legal protection is a prerequisite to improving access to livelihoods, education and other basic services. These legal protections should be equally extended to Palestine Refugees from Syria.
 - III. **All countries must remove barriers preventing adult refugees from accessing decent work opportunities** by addressing exploitation in the workplace, removing restrictions on legal stay and freedom of movement, scale-up efforts to support the development of micro, small and medium sized Syrian-owned enterprises, and expanding initiatives to create jobs for both refugees and host communities.
 - IV. **Donors and host countries should avoid creating a lost generation by ensuring that every last girl and boy benefits from quality education** by continuing to open new places in public schools, placing more emphasis on ensuring retention and learning outcomes, addressing the worst forms of child labour, and providing sufficient opportunities for certified non-formal education with civil society support.
2. **Governments share responsibility**
 - I. **Donors should follow through on multi-year aid funding** at the same level as 2016 and as foreseen in the commitments made at London.
 - II. **Donors must continue to extend and expand bilateral and multilateral support** to Syria’s neighbouring countries to encourage necessary policy changes are introduced.
 - III. **Wealthy countries must increase resettlement to at least 10 percent of the refugee population** from Syria by the end of 2017, in addition to scaling up safe and regular routes through other forms of admission, including family reunification, scholarships and labour-based schemes.
3. **Governments respect the rights of those seeking asylum**
 - I. **All countries must allow entry to asylum seekers fleeing violence and seeking international protection**, and ensure that full individual case assessments are afforded for any and all cases, as a minimum where there is risk of deportation. This includes countries neighbouring Syria, in Europe and beyond.

II. JORDAN

Jordan hosts 655,833 registered Syrian refugees, which amounts to between 6.9-13.2% of its total population.⁸ The Government of Jordan has made some progress in education and livelihoods for Syrians in the last year, with many more Syrian children enrolled in schools now, and more Syrians in Jordan have access to work permits than at the beginning of 2016.

The recently adopted EU-Jordan Compact provides an opportunity to fulfil shared priorities for refugees and host communities in the area of peace, prosperity and stability, and must be followed up on.⁹ Despite these positive developments, there is still much more to be done; the vast majority of Syrians in Jordan continue to be highly vulnerable with 87% living below the national poverty line.¹⁰ The average debt load for refugee households outside the camps rose to 715 JOD (\$1000) in 2016. 26% of households reported being dependent on income from family members holding socially degrading, exploitative, high risk or illegal temporary jobs in order to meet their

basic food needs.¹¹ A recent survey in the urban areas of Amman, Irbid and Mafraq found that 10% of Syrian refugee families surveyed had removed children from school to save educational expenses, 6% put their children to work and 3% married off their daughters at a young age to cope with economic pressures and protection concerns.¹² Food security currently remains below the 2014 level¹³ despite the World Food Programme (WFP) securing funding in 2016 to provide 20 JOD (\$28) cash-based transfer for food per month to 220,926 extremely vulnerable Syrians in camps and 10 JOD (\$14) to 202,744 vulnerable Syrian refugees in host communities.¹⁴



Dana attended kindergarten in Za'tari Refugee Camp in Jordan. The teachers helped her to overcome the trauma she was having to deal with after witnessing and experiencing years of violence as a toddler in Syria. She is now enrolled in primary school and performing well in her studies. Photo by: Simine Alam/Save the Children

8 *Jordan Response Plan for the Syria crisis, 2017-2019*, 2016.
 9 Council of the European Union. *Joint Proposal for a COUNCIL DECISION*, 2016.
<http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-12384-2016-ADD-1/en/pdf>
 10 *Vulnerability Assessment Framework Baseline Survey*, 2015.
 11 *Jordan Response Plan for the Syria Crisis, 2017-2019*, 2016.
 12 CARE. *FACTSHEET: Care Jordan – Syria refugee and Jordanian host households*, 2016.
 13 WFP, REACH. *Comprehensive Food Security Monitoring Exercise (CFSME)*, 2016.
 14 WFP. *Jordan Country Brief*, 2016.

Right to asylum

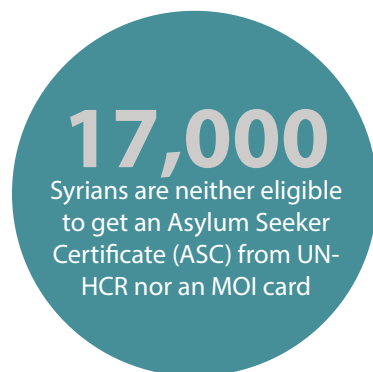
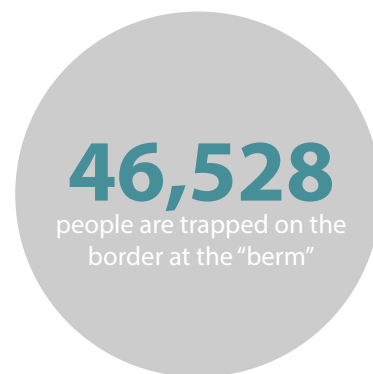
Since 2013, Jordan has increasingly restricted access to its territory for asylum seekers. For a brief period in April-June 2016, Jordan did provide access to Azraq refugee camp for about 20,000 asylum seekers from the “berm”.¹⁵ However, since June 2016, there has been no access and limited humanitarian aid for the approximately 46,528 people trapped on the border at the “berm” in increasingly desperate conditions.

Right to legal stay

The Jordanian authorities require all refugees to register with the Ministry of Interior (MoI) and be issued a service card. This card is required to access subsidised public health care, work permits and government-run education services in host communities. While nearly 363,000 UNHCR registered refugees have obtained new MoI cards since early 2015, around 152,000 have not.¹⁶ In addition, Syrian refugees can register with UNHCR and are issued either a ‘proof of registration’ in formal camps or an ‘asylum seeker certificate’ (ASC) if they reside in host communities. Without updated registration, Syrian refugees are not able to legally stay in their current places of residence, access public services and humanitarian assistance or register births, deaths and marriages. They are at risk of involuntary relocation to the camps or refoulement if they cannot demonstrate that they formally left the camp through formal ‘bail-out’ procedures.¹⁷ There are currently at least 17,000 Syrians in this situation, neither eligible to get an Asylum Seeker Certificate (ASC) from UNHCR nor an MOI card.¹⁸

Right to education

As a result of an increase in school places opened for Syrian refugees and relaxed barriers to registration, approximately 170,000 Syrian refugee children are enrolled in the school year 2016-2017. Despite a commendable commitment to bring all children to school, almost 91,000 Syrian children registered with UNHCR remain out of formal education.¹⁹ In addressing the needs of out-of-school Syrians, the MoE’s action plan set out a strategy for opening 102 additional double shift public schools (in addition to an existing 98 double shift schools) to accommodate for 50,000 new spaces for Syrian refugee children in the 2016–2017 school year in host communities. Shifts in these particular schools are separated by nationality, with Syrians attending school in the afternoon.²⁰ The plan also called for a ‘Catch-Up Programme’ to be developed to offer Non-Formal Education (NFE) to 25,000 Syrian refugee children aged 8–12 years, to be delivered only in public schools and by MoE teachers.²¹ One thousand Syrian volunteers will support as classroom assistants in double shift schools.²² As of December 2016, less than half of the places created were taken up, with only 20,000 Syrian children enrolled. According to UNICEF, 1,000 Syrian children have enrolled in catch-up classes and 200 double-shift schools are now established and functioning.



“ When we first came I worked in the fields, then I worked on a wheelbarrow. But I decided to quit that job because it caused me a lot of back pain and I was not able to focus on my studies at all. I was tired all the time. I love math, I love numbers and I am really good at it, but I don’t like English.”

Mahmun, 14 years old, lives in Za’atari Refugee Camp and was able to go back to school after initially having to work to support his family in Jordan

15 The “berm” is the border area between Jordan and Syria.
 16 NRC, IHRC. *Securing Status – Syrian refugees and the documentation of legal status, identity, and family relationships in Jordan*, 2016.
 17 Until January 2015, Syrian refugees in formal camps had to apply to the Syrian Refugee Affairs Directorate (SRAD) if they wanted to leave the camp and live in host communities. Various criteria were imposed to receive a “bail out”, including having a Jordanian sponsor over the age of 35 years who is a direct relative.
 18 NRC, IHRC. *Securing Status – Syrian refugees and the documentation of legal status, identity, and family relationships in Jordan*, 2016.
 19 Jordan Response Plan for the Syria crisis, 2017-2019, 2016.
 20 Jordan Ministry of Education. *Impact of Syria Crisis on Education in Jordan and Accelerating Access to Quality Formal Education for Syrian Refugee Children*, 2016.
 21 Ibid.
 22 Jordan Response Plan for the Syria crisis, 2017-2019, 2016.

“It is safe here, far away from the bombs and explosions, but it is difficult to make a living.”

Um Ahmad, 55-year-old Syrian refugee in Jordan

While efforts were made to improve access to education, the low enrolment rate in newly created school spaces shows that more needs to be done to get the most vulnerable and marginalized Syrian refugee children in school and learning. UNICEF is doing a nation-wide survey into the enduring barriers for the remaining 28,000 Syrian children to go to school. Financial constraints, lack of necessary documentation, lack of infrastructure and long distances are likely to be some of the main barriers to ensuring every child is in education, along with exposure to violence and bullying. Looking forward, the MoE and donors should focus on quality education and prioritize strengthening the education system and the retention of students by investing in enhanced school management, better monitoring of attendance, remedial education, developing a system-wide strategy to address violence in and around schools, and improving pre-service training for Jordanian teachers and counselors and ensuring that they receive continuous professional support to deliver education in emergencies.

Right to work

The Government of Jordan pledged to create 200,000 work permits for Syrians and has been issuing these free of charge to date. However, only 37,325 work permits have been issued as of early January according to the ILO, and some assessments have revealed a continued lack of clarity on the process to obtain a work permit

and its benefits. There is a need to better understand why people are not taking advantage of this offer, including identifying most urgent barriers, as well as seeking clarification from UNHCR on what services refugees may no longer receive once they obtain a work permit in order to allay their fears. One major barrier is the requirement to have an updated Mol card. There is also a need to address gender inequality as currently 99% of Syrians work permit holders are male, and fewer than 500 Syrian refugee women are in formal employment situations.

A large portion of Syrian refugees – particularly women – generates income through small, home-based enterprises, and 80% of new jobs in Jordan are created by Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs). Currently, the legal framework and relevant legal statutes date from the 1950s and are vague and inconsistently enforced. There is a need to clarify and standardize rules regarding self-employment and home-based employment for refugees and establish more favourable conditions to support SMEs for a longer period of time. This could include easing some of the obstacles in the guidance from taxation to employment regulations or having a tax-exemption scheme for home-based enterprises in the first two years. Skilled professionals (e.g. teachers and doctors) remain unable to work in their fields despite the pressure on public services.

Key recommendations

- I. **Reduce protection threats by ensuring legal stay for refugees in host communities** to improve freedom of movement and the retention of civil documentation. Streamline the process for obtaining a work permit, including by easing the process of urban verification so that refugees can re-register and obtain an updated Mol card.
- II. **Remove restrictions on specific sectors of employment, in particular on Syrian-owned businesses and support for the development of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs).** Increase donor funding for income generation, employment creation and social protection schemes, including cash assistance, cash for work and small business opportunities prioritizing investment in critical infrastructure.
- III. **Implement measures to reach and enrol the most vulnerable and marginalized refugee children who are still out of education,** address issues around drop-outs for Syrian children in schools, and ensure that quality and learning outcomes are the measure of success in education in both shifts.

III. LEBANON

Lebanon hosts as many as 1.5 million refugees from Syria, in addition to an estimated 280,000 Palestinian refugees who are already living in Lebanon. This amounts to 5-10% of the total global refugee population. One in four people living in Lebanon is a refugee from Syria – the largest concentration of refugees per capita worldwide.

In a context of limited livelihoods opportunities, humanitarian assistance provided to refugees is not nearly enough to meet the minimum cost of living, leading refugees to increasingly rely upon emergency and crisis coping mechanisms, such as child labour, child marriage, begging and withdrawing children from school.

The average debt for Syrian refugee households increased from \$674 in 2014²³ to \$857 in 2016.²⁴ 71% of Syrian refugee households are living below the poverty line and 53% are living below the extreme poverty line.²⁵ 10% of Lebanese also live below the extreme poverty line. In addition, 66% of Palestine Refugees in Lebanon (PRL) and 89% of Palestine refugees from Syria (PRS) in Lebanon live in poverty.²⁶

The adoption of the EU-Lebanon Compact, which foresees an EU allocation of at least €400million in 2016-17, in addition to bilateral assistance of more than €80million, was announced on 15 November 2016. In addition to financial commitments, the EU has also committed to increase support to private sector development in Lebanon, provide assistance to help Lebanese businesses take advantage of existing market access to the EU, and seek to reduce existing non-tariff barriers to goods and services.



Mother and her boy in an ITS in Zahle, Lebanon. January 2017. Photo by: Mais Salman / DRC

23 UNHCR. *Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees (VASyR)*, 2015.

24 UNHCR. *Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees (VASyR)*, 2016.

25 UNHCR. *Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees (VASyR)*, 2016.

26 Chaaban, J., Salti, N., Ghattas, H., Irani, A., Ismail, T., Batlouni, L. The American University of Beirut (AUB) and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). *Survey on the Socioeconomic Status of Palestine Refugees in Lebanon 2015*. 2016.

Right to asylum

A key tenet of the Government of Lebanon's (GoL) refugee policy since October 2014 has been to reduce the number of refugees from Syria on its territory, including through controlling access at its borders. In January 2015, the government introduced seven new entry categories for Syrians, which do not include entry on the basis of fleeing violence and persecution. There is an extremely restrictive 'humanitarian exception' provision but it is unclear and has reportedly been applied to less than 300 cases in the over 18 months that the criteria have been in operation.

Right to legal stay

The \$200 fee for Syrian refugees to obtain or renew residency has not been lifted, and continues to be a major barrier to maintaining legal stay. Meeting the complex and difficult documentation requirements for a residence permit costs approximately an additional \$75. In June 2016, Government of Lebanon (GoL) announced the replacement of the 'pledge not to work' with a 'pledge to abide by Lebanese law' as part of the documentation requirements for refugees who are registered with UNHCR to obtain or renew residency.²⁷ UNHCR has reported that the replacement pledge is being accepted – at least in some cases – by 88% of General Security Offices across Lebanon. However, the impact on protection and livelihoods for refugees has been minimal as many refugees continue to be pushed towards sponsorship. It is unclear how legally or administratively different the two pledges are, and monitoring by UNHCR and partners indicates that the majority of General Security Offices routinely reject refugees' UNHCR registration certificates as a basis for obtaining residency, requiring even Syrians who are registered with UNHCR (especially men of working age) to find a Lebanese sponsor. Refugees who are forced to obtain a sponsor are unable to switch to other residency categories (such as residency based

on UNHCR registration) or change their sponsor without leaving and attempting to re-enter the country. In addition, discussions around an 'identification document' or 'attestation,' proposed by the Ministry of Social Affairs in mid-2016, have not progressed beyond the drafting phase and there is a lack of clarity about the potential protection that such a document may create.²⁸ Up to 70% of Syrian refugees in Lebanon lack legal stay.²⁹ In some areas, the proportion of refugee adults lacking legal stay is over 90%.³⁰

Right to education

Almost 200,000 Syrian children between the ages of 3 and 17 are enrolled in Lebanese schools for the 2016-17 academic year³¹, a 30% increase from the beginning of the last academic year. However, this accounts for less than 50% of Syrian refugee children registered with UNHCR in Lebanon.³² Syrian children continue to face numerous barriers to accessing formal education, including transportation and associated costs, distance to schools, lack of familiarity with the curriculum or language of instruction, lack of documentation, and lack of adequate psychosocial support or support for special needs. Poverty also forces many parents to send children to work, which prevents them from attending school. Initial data indicates around 10% of children who enrolled for the 2016-17 academic year were no longer attending school as of 1 December 2016.³³ The longer term trend of drop-outs has been attributed in part to discrimination, bullying and violence, among other issues.³⁴

While the 2016 'back to school' campaign successfully increased enrolment, many children have been enrolled in the wrong grades³⁵ and as such are unable to adequately engage in class and achieve learning outcomes. After years out of school, many Syrian children are in need of accelerated learning programs and additional learning

Up to 70% of Syrian refugees in Lebanon lack legal stay

“ I had a plan for my future. I wanted to become a doctor. Today, as a refugee in Lebanon, I live in some sort of confinement. I cannot work and provide for my family. My dreams are becoming more farfetched. ”

Tariq, 19-year-old Syrian refugee living in Beqaa Valley in Lebanon

27 Refugees registered with UNHCR are also required to pay a \$200 fee to obtain or renew residency. Registration stopped in March 2015 at the bequest of the GoL and has been unavailable since. Refugees who are not registered with UNHCR (and are now unable to do so) in addition to the \$200 fee must also obtain a Lebanese sponsor, which incurs informal costs (as much as \$1000), and can increase vulnerability to exploitation. In practice many working age men who are registered with UNHCR are also required to obtain a Lebanese Sponsor to obtain residency, as UNHCR registration certificates are routinely rejected by General Security Offices throughout the country.

28 It is still unclear what benefits this proposal would provide, as it would not remove the need for refugees to have valid residence in order to be compliant with Lebanese law, and concerns remain that the mechanism could result in new protection risks for refugees.

29 Université Saint-Joseph Institut des Sciences Politiques, *Survey on Perceptions of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (V.1.0)*, 2015.

30 UNHCR, *Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees (VASyR)*, 2016.

31 Of the 1.017 million Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR, 487,212 were aged between 3-18 years old according to the Education Sector Response Plan, *Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2017-2020*, 2017.

The number of unregistered refugees who are aged between 3-18 years old is not known, so the proportion of refugee children out of school is likely to be higher.

32 Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) enrolment figures, 2016.

33 Université Saint-Joseph Institut des Sciences Politiques, *Survey on Perceptions of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (V.1.0)*, 2015.

34 Education Sector Response Plan, *Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2017-2020*, 2017.

35 The remedial education program of a LHIF member found that 500 children out of 3,000 did not have the necessary language proficiency for the grade in which they were enrolled.

“The worst feeling a mother could experience is being unable to provide comfort for her children.”

Foza, Syrian refugee mother from Idlib living in Lebanon's Beqaa Valley

support in order to address education gaps and integrate at grade level. However, in order to adequately support Syrian children's learning, the Accelerated Learning Program run by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) must be improved and expanded.

In addition, there is little reliable data on or effective measurement of education quality. This information is needed so that education programs can be adapted based on achievements or gaps. Without ensuring that children attending school are receiving a good quality education, the number of children dropping out is likely to increase as many parents lose hope that their children will achieve learning outcomes.

Finally, formal education through the public school system cannot be the only option for Syrian refugee children to access education in Lebanon. Non-formal education opportunities, which serve as a bridge to formal education as well as an alternative for those who may never be able to go to school, are essential. However, despite being announced in January 2016, the Non-Formal Education (NFE) Framework has still not been fully operationalized with content and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), and NGOs are still not fully engaged as partners in meeting education targets.

Right to work

Syrians are still prevented from working in all but three sectors (agriculture, construction and cleaning), procedures for obtaining work permits for formal access to those sectors remain challenging and infrequently used, and progress on job creation has so far been limited. Four out of five

livelihood interventions supporting micro-businesses have tended to result in maintaining existing jobs as opposed to creating new ones³⁶, and labour intensive public work has remained limited to 1,000 beneficiaries in 2016³⁷. Syrian women and men working informally are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse (especially if they lack valid residency or obtained residency via sponsorship from their employer), and they have limited means of legal redress. There is extremely limited capacity for enforcement of labour standards. However, some progress has been made in terms of longer-term development programs. The World Bank Concessional Financing Facility, launched in April 2016, is preparing to go forward with a \$200m multi-year labour-intensive road rehabilitation and rural access program³⁸ with the GoL, which should provide employment opportunities for both Syrian refugees and Lebanese.

The UK Department for International Development (DFID) has also launched a request for proposals to begin the implementation of the Subsidized Temporary Employment Programme (STEP), which was outlined in the GoL's Statement of Intent in London. Clear details on the benefits for refugees remain limited, however, and the proposed compulsory savings accounts that become accessible to refugees participating in the programme only after their departure from Lebanon has generated some concerns. As part of the 2017-2020 response planning process, an inclusive Livelihoods Sector Steering Committee comprised of government ministries, UN agencies, international and national NGOs, donors (UK & Germany) and the World Bank was formed. This is an important step towards coordinated engagement in livelihoods and high-level guidance on the issue.

Key recommendations

- I. **Ensure that refugees from Syria are able to obtain and maintain valid residency, regardless of their UNHCR registration status**, through a simple and consistently applied administrative process that does not incur any cost or require refugees to obtain a Lebanese sponsor. Any mechanisms created to alleviate the effects of lack of valid residence should not lead to new, additional protection risks for refugees.
- II. **Expand decent employment opportunities for refugees and vulnerable Lebanese alike** by implementing labour-intensive public infrastructure programs that include adequate monitoring and enforcement of labour safeguards.
- III. **Ensure all children have access to quality learning opportunities by fully operationalizing the NFE Framework with approved content and standard operating procedures, and implementing an independent and transparent monitoring system** to enable the Reaching All Children with Education (RACE II) strategy to be adjusted as needed to address existing and emerging gaps in access to and quality of education.

36
37
38

Inter-Agency Coordination: *Livelihoods Quarter 3 Dashboard*, 2016.
Ibid.

Also referred to as "Rural Roads and Employment Program", World Bank Group. *Lebanon Country Partnership Strategy*, 2016.

IV. TURKEY

As of December 2016, there were 2,814,631 Syrians living under temporary protection in Turkey³⁹ with more than 90% of those living outside the 26 state-run refugee camps.⁴⁰ Thus, Turkey continues to host more refugees than any other country in the world.

In addition to grants committed by London conference donors, the €3bn Facility for Refugees in Turkey, established as part of the EU-Turkey joint action plan on supporting Syrian refugees and host communities in Turkey, is an important vehicle for funding to Turkey. Totalling €3bn for 2016 and 2017, this joint coordination mechanism is designed to ensure that the needs of refugees and host communities in the areas of humanitarian assistance, education, migration management, health, municipal infrastructure and socio-economic support are addressed in a comprehensive manner. As of January 2017, 37 projects have been

contracted worth €1.45bn, of which €748m has already been disbursed. Overall, €2.2bn has been allocated for implementation on humanitarian and non-humanitarian actions.⁴¹

In comparison to the funds pledged and or committed to Turkey at the London Conference and through the EU-initiated Facility for Refugees in Turkey, Turkey has spent approximately \$25bn of its own fiscal resources on the refugee response.⁴²



Syrian refugee working in Istanbul, Turkey. January 2017. Photo by: Amjad Yamin / DRC

39 UNHCR. *Inter-agency information sharing portal*. UNHCR.org. <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=224> (Accessed January 19, 2017).

40 IOM. *Migrant presence monitoring: Situation report*, 2016.

41 European Commission. *Facility for Refugees in Turkey*. [EC.EUROPA.eu. https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/news_corner/migration_en](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/news_corner/migration_en) (Accessed January 19, 2017).

42 Presidency of the the Republic of Turkey. *Tüm Dünyanın Temsil Edilmediği Bir BM Güvenlik Konseyi Adaleti Tesis Edemez*. TCCB.gov.tr. <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/52356/tum-dunyanin-temsil-edilmediği-bir-bm-guvenlik-konseyi-adaleti-tesis-edemez.html>. (Accessed January 19, 2017). Note that this figure includes contributions from the central government, municipalities and Turkish NGOs.

Right to asylum

Having welcomed over 2.8m Syrians, Turkey has generally continued, at least as a political principle, to maintain an open-door policy and to abide by the principle of non-refoulement. However, growing tensions along sections of the 900km-long Syrian-Turkish border, including multiple terror attacks, have resulted in a near-closure of the border since March 2015, of all but the critically-wounded.⁴³ The UN estimates that there are approximately 100,000 Syrians on the Syrian side of Turkey's borders who would seek asylum in Turkey if they could cross the border.⁴⁴ There has also been a rise in the number of reported incidents in which the Turkish military fired on refugees seeking to cross into Turkey without prior authorization.⁴⁵ Pushbacks of Syrians attempting to cross into Turkey have and continue to be alleged.⁴⁶ However, human-rights observers have suggested an increase in the frequency of these incidents following EU pressure to curb irregular border crossings.⁴⁷

Right to legal stay

Despite Turkey's geographical limitation to the Refugee Convention, through which it officially assumes full legal responsibility only for refugees originating in European countries, almost all Syrians in Turkey are now registered under the Temporary Protection regime.⁴⁸ This effectively guarantees Syrians' right to stay in Turkey until safe return conditions are established in Syria, and guarantees access to health and education systems and other essential social services, and gives Syrians the right to apply for work permits.

Although the Temporary Protection system improves refugees' immediate material conditions it does not aim to provide a long-term solution. It does not provide a path to long-term residency or citizenship. Access to basic services and employment opportunities remain at the discretion of the government. This means that local integration as a durable solution for non-European refugees in Turkey continues to lack a firm legal basis.⁴⁹

However, despite this, recent developments in 2016 indicate a potential shift in policy making that would allow for Syrians to remain in Turkey on a more durable basis. A law introduced in August 2016 allowed the possibility for workers with legal residency in Turkey to become permanent residents. In addition, recent political statements by Turkish authorities suggest that Syrians may be given the option to naturalise in the future.⁵⁰

Right to education

The major commitments made by the government of Turkey and its international partners with regard to access to education were to prioritise education within the EU-Turkey Action

Plan, to enrol 460,000 Syrian children by the end of the 2015/16 academic year and to provide education to every Syrian refugee child by the end of the 2016/17 academic year.

In terms of international funding for the educational needs of Syrian refugees in Turkey, as of the beginning of January 2017, slightly more than €500m has been committed and contracted on education projects for Syrian refugees and host communities within the remit of the EU Facility for Refugee in Turkey – representing just over 25% of all allocated funds from the Refugee Facility for Turkey.⁵¹ As of June 2016, the educational funding requirements for the Turkey section of the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan was only one-third funded (USD 46m out of a total USD 137m).⁵² Based on the latest available data, it appears that there has been no increase in international funding to education interventions in Turkey since September 2016.

Approximately 325,000 Syrian children were enrolled at the end of the 2015/16 school year, a remarkable 50% compared with the 2014/15 school year, but short of the Government of Turkey's (GoT) target of 460,000. According to statements from the Ministry of National Education (MoNE), as of December 2016 there were 836,000 school aged Syrian children in Turkey, aged between 6 and 18 years old. Of these, 538,000, or 64%, are enrolled in some form of education. This includes 172,000 children enrolled in Turkish public schools that follow the national curriculum; 326,000 enrolled in Temporary Education Centres that teach a modified version of the Syrian curriculum in Arabic; and an additional 30,000 who are currently unregistered but receiving some form of education.⁵³

Recognising the risks in the long-term of creating a parallel education system, with challenges to students' integration and their progression to higher education or employment in Turkey, GoT plans to absorb Syrian children into the national structure by phasing out Temporary Education Centres (TECs) in the next three years. Syrian parents are concerned about their children not developing proficiency in their mother tongue and having trouble reintegrating into the Syrian school system if they return after the war. The MoNE is therefore currently working on ways to enable the children to maintain their Arabic language with elective and extra-curricular classes in public schools.

The main barrier keeping children out of school is poverty, with parents either unable to pay school-related fees such as transportation costs, or depending on their children to earn an income rather than go to school. There are increased drop-out rates when children reach secondary and upper secondary level, as many families want their children to earn

43 Weise, Zia. *Turkey's new border wall to stop Syrian refugees*. POLITICO.eu

<http://www.politico.eu/article/turkeys-new-border-wall-will-stop-syrian-refugees-immigration-istanbul/> (Accessed January 19, 2017).

44 OCHA. *Syria: Humanitarian Needs Overview*, 2016. http://hno-syria.org/flip/img/2017_Syria_hno_161201_6.pdf (Accessed January 19, 2017).

45 Kingsley, P. *Turkish border guards kill eight Syrian refugees – reports*, 2016. THEGUARDIAN.com <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jun/19/turkish-border-guards-kill-eight-syrian-refugees-reports> (Accessed January 19, 2017).

46 Human Rights Watch. *Turkey: Syrians Pushed Back at the Border* HRW.org. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/11/23/turkey-syrians-pushed-back-border> (Accessed January 19, 2017)

47 Transatlantic Council on Migration. *The Evolving Approach to Refugee Protection in Turkey*, 2016.

48 Government of Turkey. *Temporary protection regulations*, 2013.

49 Transatlantic Council on Migration. *The Evolving Approach to Refugee Protection in Turkey*.

50 Ibid.

51 European Commission. *Facility for Refugees in Turkey*. EC.EUROPA.eu. https://ec.europa.eu/neighborhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20170109-facility_table.pdf (Accessed January 19, 2017).

52 Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan 2017-2018 in Response to the Syria Crisis. *Mid Year Report*, 2016.

53 Hurriyet. *Suriyeli öğrenciler için açık lise çalışması sürüyor*. HURRIYET.com <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/suriyeli-ogrenciler-icin-acik-lise-calismasi-suruyor-40322011> (Accessed January 19, 2017).

income for the household. Many school-aged Syrians illegally do low-skilled labour, mostly in construction, manufacturing and textiles, to help support families. The Emergency Social Safety Network (ESSN) for basic needs that was agreed in September 2016 as part of the EU-established Facility for Refugees in Turkey is expected to help begin to address this problem for the most vulnerable Syrian refugee families.

Beginning in the first months of 2017, monthly cash transfers and electronic debit cards will be given to some one million refugees following an application and needs-based selection process. Work is also in progress for an additional conditional “education cash grant” to encourage families to send their children to school.

Right to work

Within the Facility for Refugees in Turkey, as of January 2017, just over €100m appears to have been committed to projects with a socio-economic support component.⁵⁴ This suggests that there has been no increase in funding allocated to socio-economic support since September. According to the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan quarterly update in September 2016, the social cohesion and livelihoods sector was the least funded of all, having received just 13% of estimated funding needs.⁵⁵

In 2016 the GoT took further steps to enable more Syrian refugees to access the labour market, following the January 2016 legal change granting Syrian refugees who had been in Turkey for over six months the right to apply for work

permits. It is estimated that out of an estimated 1.6 million Syrians of working age in Turkey, 300,000 are presently employed informally.⁵⁶ However, since January 2016 a total of 8,690 Syrians have obtained work permits.⁵⁷ Although this total only represents a fraction of the total working-age population, it is an increase of 3,188 since September.

Despite this progress, numerous challenges remain in accessing formal work opportunities. For example, university certificate holders, specifically lawyers, doctors and pharmacists, whose certificates are not recognised by the GoT and who therefore cannot practice their professions. In addition, recent focus group discussions conducted in five provinces of Turkey revealed that 80% of Syrians were not aware of the existence of work permits and their right to obtain one.⁵⁸

Furthermore, although legislation on work permits was issued at the beginning of 2016, there is some evidence to suggest that employers are de-incentivised to process work permits for Syrians by the need to make social security contributions.⁵⁹ The lack of strict and consistent monitoring by the Government of Turkey (GoT) of the employers’ compliance with the labour law and regulations may reinforce the negative incentive.

The entry of millions of working age Syrians into the labour market has, inevitably, exacerbated existing structural problems in the economy, including a large informal economy, structural unemployment and relatively high incidence of child labour.⁶⁰

Key recommendations

- I. **Harmonize the implementation of legislative arrangements to ease and clarify the procedure to access formal job opportunities**, remove or reduce the ratio on the number of Syrians who can be employed, expand start-up capital and microcredits available to Syrians for establishing SMEs and expand access to both vocational training and Turkish language courses.
- II. **Increase donor funding and technical support for the implementation of the GoT’s ambitious plans, including scaling up of the MoNE plans to expand school enrolment, broadening of the ESSN and supporting the periodic review of policy implementation.** and adapting plans accordingly, as well as ensuring that all provinces and public schools comply with the national regulation guaranteeing Syrian children’s access to the public school system.
- III. **Address language barriers by investing further in Turkish language training opportunities for all Syrians**, in order to support increased enrolment in state schools, as well as providing extracurricular opportunities for refugee children in public schools to learn their mother-tongue. **Put provisions in place to ensure the most vulnerable and marginalised children benefit from education policy initiatives**, such as improving existing monitoring mechanisms to track school drop-outs and encourage attendance, providing accurate information and specific support to refugees in harder to reach areas about school registration, and increasing alternative quality learning opportunities catering to the needs of refugees.

54 European Commission. *Facility for Refugees in Turkey*. [EC.EUROPA.eu](http://ec.europa.eu). https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20170109-facility_table.pdf (Accessed January 19, 2017).

55 Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan 2017-2018 in Response to the Syria Crisis. *Regional Quarterly Updates, 3RP Achievements September 2016*, 2016.

56 According to a survey conducted jointly by the Turkish Confederation of Employers’ Associations and Hacettepe University

57 ILO; this figure includes both Syrians registered under Temporary Protection (TP), and Syrians who came to Turkey with a national passport and who did not register under TP.

58 Conducted by the Danish Refugee Council.

59 International Crisis Group. *Turkey’s Refugee Crisis: The Politics of Permanence*, 2016.

60 Fair Wear Foundation. *Turkey: Country Study*, 2015.

