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Barriers to Secondary Education for Syrian Refugee Children in Jordan

2017 Brian Stauffer for Human Rights Watch

As the Syria conflict continues into its tenth year, Syrian refugee children in Jordan are confronting obstacles to education that grow more acute as they progress into secondary education. Every child has the right to a quality primary and secondary education. But only a quarter of secondary-school-age Syrian refugee children in Jordan are enrolled in school.

As documented by Human Rights Watch in this report, the main causes of increasingly lower enrollment of Syrian refugees in Jordan are poverty, lack of affordable and safe transportation, the poor quality of education in schools for Syrian children, the low value of continuing education for Syrians given their limited professional opportunities in Jordan, administrative barriers to enrollment, and lack of accommodations for children with disabilities.

Failure to ensure secondary education for displaced children and adolescents robs them of the skills they need, closes off future economic opportunities, and risks undermining economic development. Schools can be protective and nurture hope, and children with secondary education are typically healthier and likelier to find work as adults and escape poverty. Children who drop out are at increased risk of child labor, child marriage, sexual violence, being trapped in poverty, and being recruited by extremist armed groups.

Human Rights Watch first reported on education for Syrian refugee children in Jordan during the 2015-2016 school year. Since then, Jordan has taken significant steps, with support from foreign donors and humanitarian organizations, to fulfill its pledge to ensure all Syrian refugee children can go to school. Jordans current education plan for refugee children states that almost 87 percent of Syrian children had enrolled in compulsory basic education in 2018-2019. Worldwide, just 63 percent of primary-school-age refugee children are enrolled.

But beginning at around age 12, Syrian childrens enrollment begins to drop, even though 10 years of basic education are compulsory in Jordan. Out of more than 27,000 Syrian refugee children ages 16-18 in Jordan, fewer than 7,000 are enrolled, a gross enrollment rate of 25 percent, according to humanitarian agencies. Jordans refugee-education plan states that the secondary enrollment rate for Syrian refugees was slightly higher, at 30 percent. A detailed survey conducted during the 2017-2018 school year of 18,000 Syrian refugee children in Jordan found that only 15 percent of Syrian 16-year-olds and 21 percent of 17-year-olds were enrolled in secondary school, as compared to more than 80 percent of Jordanian children of both ages.

This report, which is based on interviews with Syrian refugee families and children, staff at humanitarian agencies and NGOs, and officials of the Jordanian government and donor governments, finds that obstacles to education become more severe for secondary-school-age refugee children, but that humanitarian education planning has overlooked the needs of this vulnerable age-group. Foreign donors have given more than US\$356 million to education in Jordan since 2016 under UN-coordinated humanitarian response plans for the Syria crisis, but the plans do not set enrollment targets or other goals for refugee childrens secondary education.

Jordans success in boosting Syrian refugee childrens public-school enrollment at the primary level is undermined by the failure to keep them in school at the secondary level. For the majority of children who drop out, there is no way back to school; non-formal and informal education programs are reaching only a small fraction of secondary-school-age Syrian children.

Jordans challenges are not unique: worldwide, secondary school enrollment rates for refugee children are about 24 percent, and Syrian refugee childrens school enrollment rates are even lower in Lebanon than in Jordan. This report focuses on Jordan because of its history of collaboration with humanitarian agencies, progress on basic education for refugee children, support from donors, and stated policy goal of ensuring education for all children. These are reasons for optimism that Jordan can close the gaps that are depriving refugee children of secondary education.

Even before the coronavirus pandemic, 80 percent of Syrian refugees in Jordan were living in poverty. Only 2 percent had savings and nearly all were in debt. Most Syrian families in Jordan depend on financial support from humanitarian agencies for survival, but the amounts they receive have been cut or substantially reduced in recent years. In 2016, the UN refugee agency distributed \$85 million to 136,000 Syrian refugees in Jordan, an average of \$625 each; in 2019, it provided \$59.6 million to 126,000 Syrians, or an average of \$470, even as refugee poverty deepened. The World Food Programme provided aid to 536,000 Syrians in Jordan in 2016, but to only around 485,000 in 2019.

Seventeen-year-old Rukaya, a self-described nerd, is determined to learn. After once failing an English test, she taught herself English at home and now speaks fluently. She arrived in Jordan in 2012 and is now in class 12, the final year of secondary school. She dreams of going to university to study mathematics, and hopes that she will one day change things in the world. But her family cannot pay their rent, and in April 2019, they received an eviction notice. Four months later, the UN stopped providing support to help pay their rent, due to budget constraints. The family is surviving on income from Rukayas older siblings jobs and the monthly food coupons they still receive from the World Food Programme. Rukaya said she tries to focus on her education but I know that at any time, I could be stopped by the circumstances. Describing her familys situation brings her to tears. I want to continue to

study, but I know it could happen any day.

The most common coping mechanisms that Syrian refugee families in Jordan use to survive poverty are child labor to provide additional income and child marriage to decrease the number of dependents needing support. These practices displace education, and primarily affect children beginning from around class 7, which under international standards is the beginning of lower-secondary education. Marriage for girls under 18 is three times more prevalent among Syrian refugees in Jordan than it was in pre-war Syria up from 13 percent to 36 percent, according to data from UNICEF. In many cases, the practices violate Jordanian law, which sets 16 as the minimum working age and 18 as the minimum marriage age, although judges can approve marriages of individuals ages 15 to 17. Child marriage is also contrary to international human rights standards, which recommend 18 as the minimum age of marriage. Child marriage has lasting consequences for girls, including health risks from getting pregnant too young and too often, lack of education and economic independence, domestic violence, and marital rape.

To alleviate Syrian refugees poverty, in 2016, Jordan pledged to facilitate refugees access to employment by increasing their quotas in sectors where they were not seen to be in competition with Jordanians. The authorities issued work permits to Syrian refugees, while the EU pledged to give tariff-free market access to goods whose manufacture in Jordan included Syrian labor. Jordan temporarily waived work-permit application fees and loosened administrative requirements. By January 2020, Jordan had issued nearly 180,000 work permits for Syrian refugees. However, this figure includes permit-renewals and does not refer to the number of active work permits, which international agencies estimated at only 50,000 as of mid-2018, out of a working-age population of 300,000. Formal employment among Syrian refugees remains low in part because 13 professions are completely closed and 24 are restricted for non-nationals, who also cannot join professional syndicates where membership is a requirement to work in some professions. Even open fields have maximum quotas for non-nationals.

Jordan's education plans for Syrian refugee children and foreign donor funding both target basic education, but few programs focus specifically on the needs of secondary-school-age refugee children. The EU's Trust Fund in response to the Syria crisis and the US development agency, USAID, for example, support basic education for refugee children, but do not focus on secondary education. Jordanian officials are increasingly focusing resources on expanding access to pre-primary school.

With so many secondary-school-age children dropping out of school, the education ministry cannot do it alone, a humanitarian education expert said, but UN and NGO programs are reaching very few children with support for secondary education. Human Rights Watch identified INGO-run education programs for Syrian children ages 12 to 17 that helped support almost 6,500 children who were in-school in 2019. For children who were out of school, a certified program offers a pathway back to formal education for children ages 13 and older, and allows them to study toward a class 10 certificate. Only 3,200 Syrian children had enrolled in this program in 2019. If successful, the children can then home-study for the final secondary-school examinations, but they may not attend actual school classes. Limited data is available on success rates for children who transition back to formal education.

Refugee students' chances of continuing from basic education to secondary school has been undermined by donors' inconsistent funding for education programs. From 2015 to 2018, UNICEF supported 55,000 children registered in double-shift schools with cash grants to help them stay in school, but then slashed the program to just 10,000 children due to reduced donor funding. Children who received the grants were 25 percent more likely to plan on completing secondary school, but 1 in 4 of those whose support was cut dropped out of school altogether, UNICEF reported.

In Mafrq, a small NGO set up by a sheikh provided non-formal education to 300 Jordanian and Syrian children in 2016, but the INGO that had funded the school stopped doing so due to budget constraints in 2018. The sheikh took on personal debt to keep the school operating, but eventually had to close its doors. In 2016, Human Rights Watch met with six children who were taking classes at the NGO, and in 2020 followed up with the same children, who are now of secondary-school-age: just one is enrolled in formal education, but there is no community-based NGO school for the rest of them to turn to.

A lack of funding from donors similarly forced UNICEF to slash a free school-transportation program from 4,000 children in 2017-2018 to only 2,000 children the following year. Since there are fewer secondary schools than primary schools, the need for school transportation increases as children progress, but few refugee families can readily afford it, and there are no public school-busses. Safe and accessible transportation is crucial for children with disabilities who rely on transportation to access education, and important for girls, who can face sexual harassment on the way.

In Irbid, twin 16-year-old sisters had been in school since arriving in Jordan in 2013 and wanted to continue, but dropped out in 2019 because of daily harassment by a group of youths at a market near the school. A bus to the next-closest school would have cost 50 Jordanian Dinars (US\$70) each month, which the girls' family could not afford. The girls said they now stay home and help [their] mother with cooking and cleaning.

Jordan should permanently end its policy requiring as a condition of enrollment that refugee children have a service card issued by the interior ministry, which many families cannot obtain. The education ministry had previously waived this requirement, but it was re-introduced in 2019. Most refugee families now have the cards, but not all do, and many families move in search of work, but their cards are valid only in the district where they were issued. The education ministry has created work-arounds to another rule that prohibits children from enrolling in education if they have been out of school for three or more years, but it should abrogate the three-year rule completely.

Government officials and humanitarian staff said that Jordan is increasingly focused on building and renovating schools, and prefers donor funding to go to such tangible education infrastructure projects rather than soft interventions to reach out-of-school children. Jordan's school infrastructure needs international support more than two dozen schools are in rented buildings but vulnerable, secondary-school-age Syrian children cannot access or benefit from the public school system, and need precisely the kinds of projects that, interviewees suggested, may be denied approval. One education expert told Human Rights Watch that Jordanian authorities had refused to approve a project to support home-schooling for secondary-school-age refugee children, which a foreign donor had already agreed to fund, as part of this shift away from soft interventions. Humanitarian aid workers told Human Rights Watch about two other non-formal education programs that would have benefited secondary-school-age refugee children but that government officials did not approve them on similar grounds.

Syrian families frequently told us that the sacrifices required to keep children in school were difficult to justify because of the low quality of education and the minimal benefits that an education would bring. Jordan has opened second shifts at more than 200 schools in host communities to accommodate Syrian refugee students, around 65 of which are secondary schools. The positive impact of these steps is being undermined because teachers lack adequate training, students and parents said.

A 15-year-old boy living in Zaatari camp, said, It looks like our future is not going to be good because we can't read and write properly, and that he therefore spent most of his time working outside the camp to help earn an income for his family, rather than attending school in the camp. Another Syrian boy living in a Jordanian community contrasted the experienced teachers he benefited from when he was enrolled in a first-shift school, to the untrained, recent university graduates who taught in the second-shift school in which he later enrolled, who were not really teachers. Teachers described a high turnover rate among second-shift staff, who unlike regular school teachers were hired on temporary contracts without benefits or paid vacations. One girl said that her teachers were unmotivated and spent class time on their smartphones.

In schools in Jordanian communities that teach both Syrian and Jordanian students, 37,000 Syrian students were enrolled in 2019-2020, of whom 5,100 were in secondary school, according to UN data. In second-shift schools that teach only Syrian students, 63,000 Syrian students were enrolled, of whom only 568 were in secondary school.

Despite Syrian students' need for support, Syrian refugee teachers are a resource that has been largely untapped. In Jordan, only citizens are allowed to work as public-school teachers. A few hundred Syrian refugees are allowed to volunteer as classroom assistants and receive a stipend from the UN.

The inaccessibility of university programs, higher vocational training, and professional jobs also dissuade Syrian children from secondary education. Syrian refugees must enroll as foreign students at Jordanian universities, paying much higher tuition than Jordanian students, which few can afford; about 24 percent of Jordanian students but just 3 percent of Syrian refugee students enroll in higher education. The number of university scholarships paid for by donors is limited. Even for students who manage to enroll in a university program, graduates face hiring caps on foreign employees and closed or restricted professions. An education expert said that it was common for Syrians with university degrees to be unemployed or unable to find work except unskilled labor: People say, what are you going to do with education? [Some students] have no hope for the future. One Syrian woman said she wished to smuggle her family to Europe because there is no future for my children in Jordan.

Syrian refugees were enrolled in 76 of Jordans 1,175 secondary schools: 65 in host communities, and 11 secondary schools in the main refugee camps, Zaatari and Azraq, according to a Sussex University study of the most recent available data (from 2017-18). The amount of instruction students receive can differ by up to 34 percent, depending on the school. In the camp schools, lessons last for 30 to 35 minutes; in double-shift schools in Jordanian host communities, lessons last for 30 to 40 minutes; in almost all regular schools, lessons last for 45 minutes, based on a sampling of 100 schools with nearly 48,000 students, under an EU-funded program to improve the quality of education. Over the course of 10 years of basic education, the discrepancies between camp schools and regular schools amount to three years worth of instruction.

In the refugee camps, boys outnumber girls in every class level, and in second-shift schools in host communities, an average of 18 Syrian boys and just 14 girls were enrolled in class 10, according to the Sussex University study. In schools with both Jordanian and Syrian students, Syrian girls enrollment exceeds Syrian boys enrollment by class 10. More research is needed to determine the reasons for these striking disparities.

Syrian as well as Jordanian children with disabilities face severe obstacles to education, with few inclusive and accessible public schools. Jordan was the first Arab country to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and has passed a disability rights law that is broadly protective on paper, but its 10-year strategy to make education more inclusive seeks to enroll only 10 percent of the total number of school-age children with disabilities by 2031. Syrian children with disabilities are at severe risk of being excluded from secondary education, but insufficient data has been collected about this at-risk group.

Donors have invested heavily in education to avoid a lost generation of Syrian refugee children and to enable them to flourish and contribute to a better future for the region. The fact that only a tiny fraction of Syrian children in Jordan ever enroll in secondary school, and even fewer attain a high school diploma, undermines the goals of this investment and violates these childrens right to quality education without discrimination. Jordan, humanitarian actors, and foreign donors should set specific annual targets in education plans to ensure that secondary education is the norm rather than the exception for Syrian refugee children.

Jordan should continue to ease labor market restrictions that make it harder for Syrian refugees to escape from poverty which in turn discourages children from pursuing secondary education. Foreign donors to education, humanitarian agencies, and NGOs should do their utmost to maintain regular, consistent support for children, since reductions in cash transfers, transportation subsidies, and education programming lead to children dropping out. The near-certainty that child marriage, child labor, and school drop-out rates will increase due to the impact of Covid-19 on Jordans economy increases the urgency for donors, humanitarian agencies, and Jordanian authorities to develop clear plans and benchmarks that seek to close the vast education gap for secondary-school-age children.

Jordanian authorities, with technical and financial support from the UN and foreign donors, should regularly collect and publish disaggregated data on secondary school enrollment and attendance, and on indicators of the quality of secondary education for refugee and Jordanian children. Jordan should clarify its education plans and ensure that enrollment requirements like the service card are not re-introduced in the 2020-2021 school year. Jordan should work with NGOs to foster and support education projects that can reach secondary-school-age children in their challenging life circumstances.

Research for this report included interviews conducted by Human Rights Watch researchers with Syrian refugee families of about 45 secondary-school age children, ages 12 to 17, in October and November 2019, and in February 2020. (Under international standards, lower-secondary education begins at class seven, or around age 12.) Thirteen of the children were out of school, including four girls. Human Rights Watch also interviewed four teachers at schools in refugee camps and in host communities who teach secondary school classes or secondary-school-age refugee children.

The interviews were conducted in Amman, Mafrqa, and Irbid, areas with the largest numbers of Syrian refugees in Jordan. The majority of interviews were conducted with the help of an Arabic translator, except where children spoke English.

In all cases, interviewees provided researchers with oral informed consent, after researchers explained the reason for the interviews, that the results would be published, and that children and family members did not need to participate, would not receive any remuneration or other benefits from participating, and could end the interview at any time. All childrens names are changed to pseudonyms in this report.

Researchers wrote to and interviewed 18 staff at 8 international NGOs and UN humanitarian agencies, as well as staff at local charitable organizations in Jordan, with detailed questions in order to assess the scope and number of students participating in non-formal, informal or remedial education programs for secondary-school-age refugee children, in order to gauge whether the supply of such programs is adequate to the need.

In Amman, researchers interviewed the Minister of Planning and International Cooperation and with officials in his ministry responsible for the Jordan Response Plan for the Syria crisis. We met with or sent detailed questions with Ministry of Education officials, and representatives of foreign donor governments including the EU, US, Germany, UK, Canada, Norway, and Denmark.

Jordan, with 6.6 million citizens and 2.9 million non-Jordanians, is hosting 660,000 Syrians who are officially registered with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and as many as 1.3 million Syrians in total, based on estimates from the 2015 census.<sup>[1]</sup>

Under Jordanian law, children have the right to a full cycle of education, from pre-primary school through secondary education, and education is compulsory through class 10. Jordans Education Ministry has pledged to reach every child in the country with education and taken important steps to accommodate Syrian children, including allowing free public-school enrollment for Syrian children, opening second shifts to create more classroom spaces at existing schools, hiring new teachers, and opening new schools in refugee camps.<sup>[2]</sup> The two-shift system had existed in some schools in Jordan as a solution to overcrowded classes for many years and was being phased out before the Syria conflict, but expanded following the outbreak of the conflict.<sup>[3]</sup>

About 232,000 of the Syrians registered with the United Nations refugee agency in Jordan are school-aged children between 5-17 years old.<sup>[4]</sup> Around 136,000 Syrian refugees were enrolled in public schools in 2019, and nearly 13,000 in non-formal education. More than one-thirdnearly 84,000 school-age childrenwere not in any educational program.<sup>[5]</sup> Fewer than 7,000 Syrian refugees were in upper-secondary school (classes 11 and 12) out of 27,000 adolescents in that age range.<sup>[6]</sup>

The Jordanian education system includes both academic and practical formal education and allows humanitarian agencies and NGOs to provide a number of non-formal and informal education programs.

Jordans educational system is centralized, with the Ministry of Education in Amman playing a major role in many core functions at the school level, including the placement of teachers, and approval of each public schools budget.<sup>[7]</sup> Government officials at the ministry headquarters oversee 41 regional Directorates that administer education across the country.<sup>[8]</sup>

The United Nations Childrens Fund (UNICEF), present in Jordan since 1952,<sup>[9]</sup> is the main point of contact and coordination between the Government of

Jordan and NGOs, as the co-chair of the countrys Education Sector Working Group (ESWG), with more than 40 NGO and other partners working on education in emergencies. UNICEF funds other NGOs to implement education programs and manages much of the operation of public schools in Azraq and Zaatari camps.

In Jordan, education is compulsory from classes 1 through 10, or ages 6-16, and tuition free for those attending government schools from classes 1 through 12.<sup>[10]</sup> Classes 1-10 are considered basic education and classes 11 and 12 are called secondary school. International standards refer to education from class 7 and above as lower-secondary or secondary; this report therefore refers to children ages 12-17 as secondary-school-age.<sup>[11]</sup>

After completing basic education, usually around 15 years old, a child can choose one of three types of secondary school education. General or academic education leads to the *tawjihi* examinations at the end of class 12. *Tawjihi* is a high school maturity exam, and the students score on it largely determines what university tracks the student is eligible for. Vocational education provides two types of vocational training: vocational secondary school, which is considered formal education and lasts two years, with the student obtaining a certificate at the end which allows him or her to enroll in community college; and applied secondary school, which is considered formal education and lasts between 1 and 2 years, and combines schooling with work placements.<sup>[12]</sup>

As children progress in their education in Jordan, their schools are more likely to be segregated by gender: 55 percent of primary schools are mixed, but only 28 percent of secondary schools are; 28.5 percent of secondary schools are girls-only, versus 43.5 percent for boys.<sup>[13]</sup>

In total, the Ministry of Education has 3,792 public schools under its authority, of which 2,617 are basic (classes 1-10) and 1,175 are secondary (classes 11-12).<sup>[14]</sup>

The vast majority of secondary schools, 1,099, are regular public schools. According to a 2019 analysis of education ministry data from 2016-2017, few Syrian students are enrolled in these schools.<sup>[15]</sup>

Another 260 schools are integrated, meaning that the school is open to enrollment by Syrian students, though the majority of students are Jordanian. Of these, 39 are secondary schools. Most integrated schools hold classes in the mornings, in the same buildings where second shifts in the afternoon teach Syrian students only. There are roughly 200 second shift schools for Syrian students, of which 26 are secondary schools.

There are also 45 schools in the two main Syrian refugee camps, which generally operate on two shifts, including 6 secondary schools in Zaatari camp and 5 in Azraq camp.<sup>[16]</sup>

Different sources provide somewhat divergent data on enrollment rates, but a 2017-2018 survey of 18,000 Syrian children living inside and outside the refugee camps in Jordan found that 99 percent of children between the ages of 6 and 11 were enrolled, while UN figures noted a gross enrollment rate of around 25 percent for upper-secondary school, including Syrian youth who are older than the regular secondary-school-age range.<sup>[17]</sup> The net secondary-school enrollment rate is lower: just 15 percent of Syrian 16-year-olds and 21 percent of Syrian 17-year-olds are in Jordanian secondary school, according to the survey.<sup>[18]</sup>

Enrollment rates for Syrian children of secondary school age begin to diverge from those of Jordanian students at around the age of 12.<sup>[19]</sup> Secondary school enrollment rates for Jordanians were 88 percent in 2019, an EU assessment found.<sup>[20]</sup> According to a demographic study in Jordan for 2017-2018, net attendance ratios for Syrians were 10 percentage points lower than Jordanians at basic level, and 47 percentage points lower at secondary level.<sup>[21]</sup> Among all students, Jordans Education Strategic Plan reported a 77 percent gross enrollment rate in secondary schools in 2018, which the plan seeks to increase to 89 percent by 2022.<sup>[22]</sup>

Refugee childrens enrollment in secondary education differs substantially depending on whether they attend integrated or second shift schools in host communities, or schools in refugee camps. Based on data compiled by the UN in the last quarter of 2019, in the first or morning shift in host-community schools, nearly 32,000 Syrian students were enrolled in classes 1 through 10, and 5,122 Syrians enrolled in classes 11 and 12.<sup>[23]</sup> In schools in host communities that operate on an afternoon shift for Syrian children, about 62,500 Syrian students were enrolled in classes 1 through 10, and only 568 Syrian students were enrolled in classes 11 and 12. In the Zaatari and Azraq refugee camps, about 31,000 students were enrolled in classes 1 through 10, and about 1,250 students were enrolled in classes 11 and 12.

The different types of public schools also have different enrollment rates for girls at the secondary level. In first-shift schools with Jordanian and Syrian students, Syrian girls enrollment rates exceed boys by class 10 and continue to exceed boys enrollment through class 12.<sup>[24]</sup> In the Syrian-only second-shift schools, Syrian girls enrollment exceeds boys in early primary school but this trend reverses by lower-primary level, following which girls do not recover this lost ground; class 10 enrollment has an average of 18 Syrian boys and just 14 girls. In addition, in the refugee camp schools, boys outnumber girls from class 1 to class 10.<sup>[25]</sup>

Children receive a different amount of instruction depending on which type of school they attend. In order to accommodate two school shifts in one day, the education ministry initially reduced the number of daily hours of instruction for each shift.<sup>[26]</sup> First-shift students, primarily Jordanians, received fewer hours of instruction than their peers at single-shift schools.<sup>[27]</sup> In 2018, the education ministry instituted Saturday classes for Syrian children so as to reduce their hours of instruction during the week (Sunday to Thursday). This allowed a return to the normal number of hours of instruction for students in the first shift classes. However, the Saturday classes are too poorly attended to compensate for the reduced hours of instruction that Syrians receive on regular school-days.<sup>[28]</sup> While 87.5 percent of double shift schools offer lessons on Saturdays for Syrian students attending second-shift classes, half of those schools have attendance rates of less than 50 percent, according to an EU-funded assessment of 100 schools with 48,000 students in 2019.<sup>[29]</sup> Classes for children in refugee camp schools last only 30 to 35 minutes, on average, while almost all regular school classes last for 45 minutes.<sup>[30]</sup> As a result, children in refugee camp schools and in second shift classes in host community schools continue to receive significantly fewer hours of instruction than children in regular schools.

The education ministry has certified non-formal education programs that are meant to bring Jordanian and Syrian out-of-school children back into formal education. Children ages 9 to 12 may enroll in a catch-up program and enroll in basic education if they succeed.<sup>[31]</sup> A drop-out program allows boys ages 13-18 and girls ages 13-20 to obtain a class 10 certificate. Once a student has obtained that certificate, she or he can home-school for the upper-secondary-school *tawjihi* exam, but cannot attend school classes.<sup>[32]</sup> The program offers 4-5 hours of instruction per day, in three 8-month cycles, with an exam at the end of each cycle. Students who pass the third cycle are eligible to enroll back into formal education.

The programs, introduced in 2016, use accelerated curricula to provide two years of material in one year, and are taught at 120 centers around the country.<sup>[33]</sup> The programs are workarounds to the three-year rule, which pre-existed the influx of Syrian refugees and prohibits children who have been out of school for 3 or more years from enrolling directly in the formal system, unless they enroll in one of the certified non-formal programs.<sup>[34]</sup>

About 80 percent of Syrian refugees still live in poverty; just 2 percent of families have savings and nearly all are in debt.<sup>[35]</sup> The cost of living is high for the 81 percent of refugees who live outside of camps, with rents steadily rising in host communities and medical care becoming more costly after the Jordanian government dramatically reduced the previously generous healthcare subsidy provided to Syrian refugees.<sup>[36]</sup> The majority of Syrian refugee families in Jordan rely in part on humanitarian aid to scrape by.<sup>[37]</sup>

Jordan has taken steps to address widespread poverty by improving Syrian refugees chances to earn a livelihood, including by relaxing restrictive labor policies for Syrian refugees. Syrians are subject to Jordans rules which limit the sectors in which foreigners can work, and to additional quotas on Syrians within each of those sectors. Until 2016, Syrian refugees living in refugee camps were not allowed to apply for work permits, and for those outside the camps, the process involved identity document requirements, and high fees, often amounting to hundreds of dollars, in theory to be paid by the employer but



in practice usually borne by the refugee applicant.[38] As a result, by 2015, according to the International Labour Organization, only 1 percent of Syrian refugees had work permits, and most Syrian refugees working in Jordan were doing so informally,[39] and were vulnerable to exploitation including hazardous work and low, late, or unpaid wages.

Under the 2016 Jordan Compact, an agreement between Jordan and foreign governmental and multilateral donors, including the EU and World Bank, Jordan pledged to facilitate Syrian refugees access to employment and education.[40] The Jordan Compact promised to open up jobs to Syrians by increasing their quotas in sectors where they were not seen to be in competition with Jordanians and opening certain Special Economic Zones to produce export goods that the EU would import tariff-free, and by issuing up to 200,000 work permits to Syrian refugees. To incentivize permit applications, Jordan temporarily waived application fees[41] and loosened administrative requirements,[42] making the process more accessible. Between early 2016 and January 2020, 179,445 work permits and work-permit renewals had been issued to Syrian refugees, but the total number of valid, individual permits is unclear.[43] According to humanitarian agencies, as of July 2018 there were only around 50,000 valid permits for a working-age population of 300,000 Syrian refugees.[44]

The Jordan Compact has not led to a dramatic increase in formal employment contracts.[45] Formal employment among Syrian refugees in Jordan remains low because they have limited job opportunities and there are few, if any, incentives for employers to lawfully hire Syrians.[46] The unemployment rate of Syrians not engaged in formal or informal work remains high, at nearly 60 percent of working-age Syrian refugees, including women.[47]

Key programs that provide direct humanitarian assistance to Syrian refugees appear to have declined, in terms of the total number of people receiving assistance and the amount that each person received. In 2016, UNHCR distributed \$85 million in cash assistance to 136,000 Syrian refugees in Jordan, or \$625 each.[48] In 2019, it provided \$59.6 million to 126,000 Syrians, or \$470 each, even as refugee poverty rates worsened.[49] UNHCR's assessment of its cash grants program in 2017 and 2018 found that the grants increased school enrollment by offsetting costs like school transportation, refugee families said they would have to take their children out of school as a means of coping with food shortages or if their cash assistance was cut, and that the families living expenses were increasing.[50]

The number of Syrian refugees receiving food assistance from the UN World Food Programme has also declined, after recovering from a disastrous budget shortfall in 2015.[51] The agency provided food or vouchers to 573,195 Syrian refugees in 2015, 536,149 in 2016, 533,896 in 2017, 497,232 in 2018, and 484,960 as of November 2019.[52]

Overall, funding for the UN-coordinated humanitarian response plans in Jordan is in decline and is not commensurate with the stated needs: from US \$958.5 million total in 2013, down to \$663.5 million in 2019, even as the number of Syrian refugees in Jordan grew over the same period of time.[53]

The beginning of the school year was delayed from September 2019 for a month due to a nationwide public-school teachers strike demanding previously promised salary increases. In 2020, Jordan responded to the Covid-19 pandemic by closing schools on March 15, and provided students with distance learning for classes 1 to 12 online and on two television stations, to study at home.[54] The transition to distance learning put children from lower-income families at risk of being deprived of education: 16 percent of Jordan's students could not afford home internet, and among low-income households, fewer than 30 percent of students have a computer for schoolwork, and only 50 percent had internet access. Some 43 percent of 15-year-old students' schools had no online learning platforms, principals said.[55] Rates of access to computers, the internet and television were lower for Syrian refugees.

The education ministry responded to the Covid-19 pandemic with a UN-supported Education During Emergency Plan (EDEP), and UNESCO began to support the ministry to review and revise the Education Strategic Plan (ESP) accordingly. UNICEF provided technical support on teacher training and learning recovery for a crisis management unit in the ministry. Technical and vocational education centers and academies remained closed due to the pandemic as of June 7.[56]

In May, UNHCR began providing 18,000 families with one-time emergency payments, noting a recent survey that found more than 90 percent of refugees had less than 50 Jordanian Dinars (\$70) left.[57] Over a third of refugee daily workers had lost their jobs due to the pandemic, UNHCR's representative in Jordan stated.[58] There had been a target to resettle around 5,900 refugees from Jordan to third countries in 2019; in 2020, UNHCR had submitted 1,300 cases before resettlement was cancelled due to the pandemic.[59]

Barriers and obstacles that prevent or discourage Syrian children from going to school grow more acute as they get older, are interconnected, and are exacerbated by the conditions of poverty in which the vast majority of Syrian refugees in Jordan live. Many Syrian children who are now of secondary school age have dropped out of school due to administrative barriers. This chapter describes the barriers and obstacles that prevent enrollment and that cause drop-outs, and the following chapter describes the lack of support programs to keep children in school as well as the lack of non-formal or informal programs to reach out-of-school children with education so they can continue to learn and have the opportunity to re-enroll in public schools.

Roughly 80 percent of all Syrian refugees live below the poverty line in Jordan. The economic and social barriers faced by many of these families also exacerbate barriers to education, which become even more significant as children should progress in school.[60] About half of the Syrian refugee families Human Rights Watch interviewed mentioned financial barriers as a significant reason for dropping out of school or as having otherwise threatened to interrupt or limit their education.[61] Many of the refugees were receiving humanitarian aid in the form of food coupons and monthly cash assistance, but nearly all of those had seen the amounts they receive slashed in recent years.[62] as has been the case for Syrians across the country.[63] A Jordanian teacher told us that of the 20 Syrian students in his schools class 9, only 5 students' families were still receiving cash support from UNHCR (retina-scan support), and many dropped out before secondary school because their families could not afford for them to go to school instead of work.[64]

Sixteen-year-old Doaa dropped out for reasons not directly related to poverty, but then found financial circumstances limited her alternative educational pathways: she hoped to enroll in a vocational nursing course, but her family could not afford the 250 JD (US\$352) tuition fee.[65] Rima, 19, who fled to Jordan from Homs when she was 13 years old, managed to make it through all of lower and upper secondary school in Jordan, and even into university, against all odds.[66] The only Syrian in a class of 100 students at her university, Rima loved studying law, and still dreams of completing her education. But the tuition cost 400 JD (\$564) per semester, which she could not afford, and she was forced to stop studying after one semester. She told Human Rights Watch that if she could convey one message, it would be this: I wish that any student any person who has a goal to reach a certain point but couldn't because of a financial problem, will reach that goal.[67]

In several cases, Syrian children whom Human Rights Watch interviewed had dropped out in order to provide for their family, and were now engaged in child labor.[68] One 19-year-old living in Za'atari camp said, I was the head of my class in Syria. When I came [to Jordan], I studied for a bit, but left for financial reasons. Now I work in any jobs I can get construction, carpentry, anything.[69]

Children of secondary school age are more likely than younger children to be affected by coping mechanisms that many Syrian families resort to in order to survive, such as child labor and child marriage.[70] Jordanian policies restrict Syrians' ability to work legally in the country, and the belief that Syrian children face lower risks of prosecution for working without a permit compared to adults, may lead many impoverished families to send their children to work.[71] A 2015 inspection carried out by the Ministry of Labour found that the majority of child laborers in Jordan were Syrian refugee children, and that they often served as the sole breadwinner for their families.[72] A 2018 study by the Bureau of International Labor Affairs found although there had been improvements, child labor remained prevalent among Syrian children, with an estimated 10,800 working, primarily in agriculture and in the services industry.[73] Child marriage, especially for girls, is three times more prevalent among Syrian refugees in Jordan than it was in pre-war Syria up from 13 percent to 36 percent.[74] Jordanian law sets 18 as the minimum marriage age, but allows for Sharia court judges to make exceptions for children as young as 15 years old. In April 2019, Jordan's Parliament rejected a law to raise the exception from 15 to 16.[75] Child marriage violates a number of girls' human rights. Human Rights Watch has documented how child marriage has lasting effects and consequences well beyond adolescence as girls may struggle with the health effects of getting pregnant too young and too often, their lack of education and economic independence, domestic violence, and marital rape.[76]

Even for those who have managed to stay in school, poverty can present a constant struggle. The burden placed on children to work to support their families has a strong impact on childrens capacity to learn. Khalid, a 15-year-old boy living in Zaatari camp, described the near-impossibility of both continuing his education and working to support his family. He works every day from the morning until 2:30 p.m., delivering goods outside the camp on his bike. In addition, each Monday through Thursday, he manages to go to school for about one hour, from 3 until 4 p.m., excusing his late arrivals by telling the teacher, I have to work to make an income. Khalid likes school, but sees work as more relevant and explained how he and his peers feel: Before, we wanted to continue school, but now we just want to work. It looks like our future is not going to be good because we cant read and write properly.<sup>[77]</sup>

A study of teenage Syrian refugees living in Jordan found that the constant stress of living in poverty has an even worse impact on their ability to focus in school and retain information than post-traumatic stress from experiencing violence during the conflict.<sup>[78]</sup> One refugee described this stress as the struggle of having to survive, perhaps not having enough to eat; the stress of supporting the family in various ways begging, selling things, working odd jobs and ridiculous hours.<sup>[79]</sup> One secondary school teacher in Mafraq, which has a high concentration of Syrian families, told Human Rights Watch how he has noticed that those Syrian students in his school who have nothing to eat are unable to concentrate well after the first two lessons of the day, on average.<sup>[80]</sup>

Because secondary education is not effectively free, a familys income severely limits childrens ability to stay in secondary school. Education-related costs are higher for secondary-school-age children. In particular, because there are fewer secondary schools than primary schools, transportation costs are often much higher when a child transitions from primary to secondary school.

Children from the poorest families also experience problems with their concentration due to the associated stress of loss of income or possible interruptions to their education if their parents cannot afford to pay related costs. Seventeen-year-old Rukaya, a self-described nerd, loves school, but said she lives with the constant fear of being forced to drop out because of financial circumstances. Having arrived in Jordan at age 9 and now in class 12, she dreams of going to university to study math and conducting independent research in hopes that she will one day change things in the world. Her family supports her dreams, but as she recounted, they have been falling further and further into debt. In August 2019, they received a notice that they would no longer receive support from the UN just four months after the family of eight had received an eviction notice for being badly behind on rent. They currently owe 600 JD (US\$846) on back-rent; Rukayas father puts any money he gets towards postponing the eviction, and they survive on income from her older siblings jobs and on the food coupons (20 JD, or \$28, per person each month) they still receive from the World Food Programme.<sup>[81]</sup> Rukaya is such a determined student that after once failing an English test, she taught herself English at home, and spoke the language fluently during interviews with Human Rights Watch researchers. She tries to focus on her education but was brought to tears by her familys precarious financial situation: its hard, because I know that at any time, I could be stopped by circumstances. I want to continue to study, but I know it could happen any day.<sup>[82]</sup>

One of the key obstacles to education for Syrian refugee children in Jordan is the lack of affordable, safe, and accessible school transportation. The prohibitive cost of transportation is a significant factor for dropping out of school across all age groups of Syrian children,<sup>[83]</sup> but it can prove especially problematic for older children. Because there are fewer secondary than primary schools, children are less likely to be able to walk to their secondary school as compared to their primary school. A relative lack of facilities also impacts the availability of alternative, non-formal secondary education programs, outside regular public school classes.<sup>[84]</sup> In 2019, for one drop-out program, UNICEF had a target of 750 children, but attendance was just 400, in large part due to the lack of transportation, for which there is no funding.<sup>[85]</sup>

School transportation can be cost-prohibitive for children living in poverty, and, as noted, the majority of Syrian refugee children in Jordan are living in poverty. Transportation costs not only lead children to drop out of school, they can also restrict a childs ability to enroll in the first place. Samira escaped to Jordan from Aleppo in Syria, and initially settled in Madaba. After the family moved to Amman, she wanted her son Munir, 13, to continue his education in Amman, but had been unable to enroll him in a new school because of the cost of transportation.<sup>[86]</sup> Not only would Munirs school bus at the new school cost too much, but Samira could not afford to comply with bureaucratic enrollment rules that required her to travel to his old school in Madaba 40 kilometers away to collect documents proving that he had completed class 4 there, then travel to the new school in Amman, to present the documents and also to the Ministry of Education to complete his enrollment. All told, Samira estimated that it would cost her 50 Jordanian Dinars (US\$71) to complete these travels, which she could not afford, she told Human Rights Watch. Her family of six live on very little income, and their food coupons (a form of aid from the UN, on which many Syrian refugees depend for survival)<sup>[87]</sup> had recently been cut. They were now receiving just 15 JD (\$21) per person, for a total of 90 JD (\$126); their rent alone is 220 JD (\$310) per month.

In addition to costs, the lack of safe transportation to school has an especially harmful impact on access to education for groups including girls and children with disabilities.

For refugee girls, lack of safe transportation can mean increased exposure to sexual harassment on the way to school. Sexual harassment is a problem faced by Syrian and Jordanian girls alike.<sup>[88]</sup> However, Syrian refugee girls likely suffer disproportionately; Jordans Education Strategic Plan notes that while accurate statistics are not available, gender-based violence may be a particularly prevalent abuse faced by women and girls in refugee communities.<sup>[89]</sup> One reason for this may be that Syrian girls are seen as easy targets because Syrians are less likely to report harassment or to get justice when they do.<sup>[90]</sup>

For 14-year-old Yara, a Syrian girl living in Mafraq, lack of access to a bus exposed her to sexual harassment which eventually caused her to drop out. When I walk to school, cars follow me, and boys harass me. One time, I was walking to school and a boy followed me, all the way into the school. I hid between the girls so he wouldnt find me. One time on my way home, the boys even tried to take off my headscarf.<sup>[91]</sup> Yara knows of at least two girls, a 14-year-old neighbor and her younger sister, who dropped out of school for the same reasons. They now go to NGOs, but not to school. Yaras mother expressed hope that next year there might be buses to take her to school, but Yara no longer wants to return in part because of the harassment and in part because she feels teachers dont explain well saying, even if they had buses, I wouldnt go back.

Even when transportation is available, the prohibitive cost can pose a challenge. One family in Irbid told Human Rights Watch that their twin 16-year-old daughters, Afifa and Adira, had recently dropped out of school because of sexual harassment, and had felt powerless to stop it.<sup>[92]</sup> When the family came to Jordan from Daraa, Syria, in 2013, the boys began to work but the girls went to school. The twins continued their education from classes 6 through 10. For the last two years, a group of youths would congregate at a market near the school and harass them when they arrived at school in the morning, went out for lunch, and left for the day. As their father, Abdul Hamid, explained, he paid 10 JD (US\$14) per month for each of his daughters to get a bus so they would not have to walk to school, but men stood directly in front of the school building. The harassment was incessant. Several Syrian parents complained to the school principal, Abdul Hamid said, but nothing changed. The twins older brother went to talk to the men but they chased him away, threatening to burn and stab him. The girls parents looked into sending them to another school, but the bus for the next-closest school would cost 25 JD (\$35) per daughter each month, which the family could not afford. So Afifa and Adira dropped out. Their father estimated that a third of the families he knew had taken their daughters out of the school because of harassment.<sup>[93]</sup> Afifa and Adira now stay home and help their mother around the home with cooking and cleaning. They miss school, but the harassment was unacceptable, their father said.

Lack of access to affordable and accessible school transportation is especially problematic for children with disabilities. Children with physical disabilities, for example, may need to use a wheelchair, crutches, or other assistive devices.<sup>[94]</sup> Caregivers of Syrian refugee children with disabilities in Jordan cited the distance from school as one of their top concerns, according to a 2018 survey asking about barriers that could prevent children from continuing to go to school.<sup>[95]</sup> Other children with disabilities may be confronted by barriers in their built environments, like the risks of dangerous traffic and uneven or unpaved roads for children with visual disabilities. Children with any kind of disability are generally subject to harassment and bullying at higher rates than peers without disabilities, and bullying can happen at school or on the way to school.<sup>[96]</sup>

The government does not provide free transportation to public primary or secondary schools. UNICEF and some INGOs offered free school transportation or subsidies intended to offset families education related costs, mainly transportation, but these have been scaled back due to funding constraints. In February 2015, UNICEF began providing 55,000 children with cash grants to help them stay in school, but this program was slashed to only 10,000 children in 2018-

2019, while a school transportation subsidy was halved from 4,000 to 2,000 children from 2017 to 2018.<sup>[97]</sup> Follow-up analysis found that children who were cut from UNICEF's Hajati program cash assistance were 25 percent more likely to say they no longer planned to graduate from secondary school, as compared to children who continued to receive cash assistance, and that many of the children cut from the program dropped out of school.<sup>[98]</sup>

UNICEF also supports children with free transportation to school; this intervention, too, had to be reduced from 4,000 children in 2018 to just half that number, 2,000 children in 2019 because of funding shortages.

Data on children with disabilities in Jordan is limited, but only a small percentage of the total population of children with disabilities is enrolled in school.<sup>[99]</sup> Only 1.9 percent of the total number of students enrolled in Jordan are students with disabilities not more than 20,000 students according to Ministry of Education statistics.<sup>[100]</sup> A 2017 estimate found that more than half of all children with disabilities in Jordan both Syrian and Jordanian cannot access formal education because of the lack of inclusive approach and reasonable accommodations in schools.<sup>[101]</sup> A lack of inclusive basic infrastructure in Jordan has created widespread issues of accessibility for children with disabilities according to UNICEF.<sup>[102]</sup>

Accommodations can include basic physical accessibility in buildings; adequately trained teachers; and individualized approaches to children's education, including modifications and adjustments as necessary. Accommodations are part of an inclusive education approach, in which all students learn in the same schools in their communities regardless of whether they are disabled and non-disabled, girls and boys, children from majority and minority ethnic groups, refugees, and so on.<sup>[103]</sup> Inclusive education focuses on removing the barriers within the education system that exclude children and cause them to have negative experiences within school, and requires teachers and classrooms to adapt rather than for the child to change.

The lack of inclusion of children with disabilities in Jordan's education system affects Jordanian children as well as refugee children, but likely has a disproportionate impact on Syrian children given the higher number of Syrian people with disabilities in comparison to the host population. As compared to the 13 percent of the total Jordanian population with a disability, a study by Humanity & Inclusion found that 23 percent of Syrian refugees in Jordan have a disability.<sup>[104]</sup> Another study of Jordan's Syrian refugee camps found that 14 percent of the residents of the Azraq refugee camp have a disability, and 30 percent of those living in the Za'atari camp do.<sup>[105]</sup>

The lack of inclusive education and reasonable accommodations in schools makes it an increasingly difficult for children with disabilities to continue their education, with a sharp decline in enrollment after class 7, when the curriculum transitions to lower-secondary education. A 2018 study by rights group Humanity & Inclusion found that 88 percent of children with disabilities from ages 6-12 in Jordan were attending school regularly, but just 16 percent of those who were ages 13 and over had completed any secondary school.<sup>[106]</sup>

Outreach staff from Mercy Corps noted that caregivers may not send children with disabilities to school because they don't think they can manage, which may reflect the impact of the lack of accommodations for children with disabilities in schools.<sup>[107]</sup> UNICEF's most recent out-of-school study on Jordan affirmed that in addition to the issues of accessibility, poorly trained teachers, and poorly adapted curricula, parents' concerns over sending their children to school constituted a major barrier to enrollment for children with disabilities.<sup>[108]</sup>

Jordan has made efforts to improve outcomes for children with disabilities, including introducing a new law on the rights of persons with disabilities in 2017, which offers comprehensive protections for people with disabilities in all spheres of society and specifically guarantees the admission and enrollment of children with disabilities into educational institutions. The law also addresses children with disabilities' right to education with a commitment to provide reasonable accommodation and accessible formats in government schools and to make certain that they are available in private schools. The law provides examples of such reasonable accommodations as examination questions and answers thereto in simplified language for students with intellectual disabilities, and granting additional time in examinations and any other necessary facilitations.<sup>[109]</sup>

While the law is broadly protective on paper, implementation has fallen short in practice.<sup>[110]</sup> Two years on from its passage, Jordan had failed to set aside funding to carry out the law, and barriers to educational access for children with disabilities persist.<sup>[111]</sup> Poor school infrastructure, a widespread problem in Jordan, has a particularly negative impact on children with disabilities. Many school buildings in Jordan need renovation, and 21 percent of schools are rented meaning they are in buildings not meant to be schools, often with different sizes of classrooms, inappropriate designs for learning, limited outside space, and insufficient and inaccessible toilet facilities.<sup>[112]</sup> One secondary school teacher in Ma'raqa told Human Rights Watch that students with disabilities at his school face increased barriers due to lack of accessible infrastructure and accommodations. The school has 1,000 Jordanian and Syrian students in total between its first and second shifts, but only 4 bathrooms. He found a student who uses a wheelchair crying because he could not access a bathroom. The child had struggled mightily in coming down from the third floor where his classroom was but where there is no bathroom only to find the bathroom on the first floor too crowded for him to enter.<sup>[113]</sup>

There are myriad ways to make schools physically accessible to children with disabilities, including making doorways wider for children who use wheelchairs; building ramps; providing large print books for children who have visual disabilities; and hiring personnel who are trained to support and educate children with learning disabilities.<sup>[114]</sup>

Syrian families also emphasized the urgent need for teachers and other school personnel who are trained to work with children with disabilities, to ensure that their access to education goes beyond mere physical access to a classroom; It is imperative that children with disabilities are also effectively learning.

Farid, 11, in Ma'raqa, is registered in class 2, because he has been failed for four years in a row. He was no longer attending school in late 2019, when Human Rights Watch interviewed him, although he had not yet decided to drop out. Farid has a speech disability, and as he explained to us, it takes me longer to get out my words, and I often repeat words. Farid said that his teachers who do not understand his disability and get impatient with him, putting a large X on his paper and moving on to other students, declining to spend sufficient time explaining lessons to him. He said he wishes his teachers would take the time to help him, to teach me and explain more so that he could learn to read like his siblings.<sup>[115]</sup>

In Irbid, 14-year-old Saad had similar experiences in his school. Saad has a nerve condition which causes his hands to shake and makes it difficult for him to speak.<sup>[116]</sup> His mother, Inaam, explained that he enrolled in school when the family came to Jordan, but he was always failing [classes], getting zeros and it takes two years for him to finish a class year. Saad's school had no teachers who were trained to work with him, nor did he receive any accommodations to support him and ensure that he is learning. He eventually passed class 7, but dropped out during the 2018-2019 school year, because in his own words to his mother, I can't read or write, why should I go to school?

The lack of trained teachers and personnel may disproportionately affect Syrian refugee children with disabilities because the majority of those who are in school attend second-shift schools which are often under-resourced, and lack adequately trained teachers. For example, one double-shift school in Ma'raqa had just one teacher trained to support children with disabilities, who worked only in the first shift, according to another teacher who worked during both shifts. For Syrian children with disabilities in the afternoon shift, there's nothing, Karam told us.<sup>[117]</sup>

Given how many people within the Syrian refugee population have a disability and the disproportionate barriers they face to education, it is urgent that children with disabilities be given higher priority in the response to the Syria crisis by both the international community and the Jordanian government.<sup>[118]</sup> Jordan's 2017 law on people with disabilities and accompanying 10-year-strategy on inclusive education provide opportunities for improvements. The 10-year strategy lists a wide range of anticipated interventions, from reviewing legislation and running media awareness campaigns, to improving diagnoses and rendering school buildings physically accessible. For example, Mercy Corps, with funding from Relief International, helped the education ministry develop an application that allows teachers to assess needs and learning styles of students with disabilities, and then provides guidance accordingly on how to develop individualized teaching plans and what teaching styles would be most effective.<sup>[119]</sup> But the 10-year strategy's primary objective is underwhelming: by 2031, Jordan aims to enroll only 10 percent of the total number of school-age children with disabilities in mainstream schools.<sup>[120]</sup>



Syrian refugee children who surmount the challenges to get into school may drop out if the quality of education is low. Poor quality of teaching was cited as a reason for dropping out by 20 percent of Syrian children, in one survey.<sup>[121]</sup> Syrian refugee children report that they are learning little in class, and caregivers often perceive their childrens education as low quality. In addition, due to the lack of professional opportunities available to Syrian refugees in Jordan, children may feel that education has diminishing returns for them after gaining basic literacy, and consequently begin to drop out around age 12 to go to work.

Through interviews and a review of multiple reports Human Rights Watch found that children attending second shift schools in host communities often receive poor-quality education.<sup>[122]</sup> Nearly 70 percent of Syrian children attend double shift schools, and they usually attend the second (afternoon) shift of these schools. This exposes a disproportionate amount of Syrian refugee children to that poor quality education.<sup>[123]</sup> Some Jordanian teachers working in afternoon shifts have said that inadequate resources led to a lower quality of education, as crucial support services like school counselors are often not made available for the afternoon shift despite working the morning shift in the same school.<sup>[124]</sup> Other areas that suffer include non-core subjects like physical education, art, and theater, which are often reduced or cut entirely in second shift schools, and access to amenities such as laboratories for science class, libraries, and resource rooms, which may be available for morning shifts but not for afternoon shifts at a school.<sup>[125]</sup>

One teacher who works in a double shift school, and teaches five separate class levels, lamented that he was stretched too thin to be able to be the most effective teacher he could be, telling Human Rights Watch, Why do I have to teach both high and low class years? They should bring on another teacher to do lower classes so I can teach fewer classes and improve my quality of teaching.<sup>[126]</sup>

The teachers in single shift and morning shift schools, with mostly Jordanian students, are government employees. Second shift schools, which teach Syrian students, mostly employ first-time teachers on temporary contracts that do not include benefits such health insurance and paid vacations, leading to low job satisfaction and high turnover.<sup>[127]</sup> Qasim, 17, who attended classes 5-7 during the morning shift at a school in Irbid, recalled that his teachers were experienced, in their 40s and 50s, and registered with the MOE. Qasim subsequently went to an afternoon shift school in Irbid for classes 8-10, where he said the teachers were not even really teachers in his opinion, but young, inexperienced, recent college graduates. He noted that they were not registered with MOE, and are paid by UNICEF.<sup>[128]</sup> Salim, age 16, is attending a private school sponsored by a charitable orphanage where he lives, after having attended classes 7 and 8 at a second shift public school. He described the difference: In the private school, you can tell the teachers actually feel like teaching the class. In the public school, the teachers were tired and just wanted to go home, and often cut the day short by as much as two hours.<sup>[129]</sup>

Syrian caregivers consistently described concerns about low-quality education in second shift classrooms to Human Rights Watch. Hadia told us that at her daughter Amiras English class in Amman, the teachers dont correct [students] mistakes. For a lesson, they just write a word in English up on the board and then go sit on their [smart]phones.<sup>[130]</sup> Bassma described a similar situation for her 14-year-old son Ibrahim, and his 10-year-old brother Nabil, at a school in Irbid. In her opinion, teachers in the afternoon shift are not qualified, because they just stay on their phones, on WhatsApp. Her sons had briefly attended single shift classes before the school opened a second shift and officials transferred them to the afternoon shift.<sup>[131]</sup> The first semester in the single shift was like a private school in comparison to the afternoon shift.<sup>[132]</sup>

Syrian caregivers voiced concerns that schools were not monitoring and evaluating their childrens progress. One mother said, bluntly, teachers care only that the student is present, not about whether he learns.<sup>[133]</sup> A Syrian man living in Zaatari camp lamented that his daughter, who had completed class 4, cannot even really read Arabic. He went to her school and asked how did this happen, how could they have allowed her to pass to the next class level when she cant even read, and concluded that as long as they show up at school, theyll pass and graduate.<sup>[134]</sup> Studies have noted complaints by Syrian parents that their children could not read after a year or more in Jordanian schools.<sup>[135]</sup>

The concerns that parents and students shared with Human Rights Watch are consistent with those reported in previous studies, which found that few teachers in second shift schools are trained in important pedagogical skills like how to control overcrowded classrooms and work with children who have trauma.<sup>[136]</sup> Crucial support services like school counselors are not available for the afternoon shift at some schools, even though counselors work there during the morning shift.<sup>[137]</sup> Syrian parents surveyed in 2017 about their childrens education reported feeling that teachers were unable or unwilling to give Syrian children sufficient attention, especially children who were struggling after being out of school for a protracted period due to conflict and displacement. Because Jordan closed its border to most new refugee arrivals in 2015, this issue is now most acute among Syrian adolescents.<sup>[138]</sup> The concerns that parents shared in 2019 and 2020 resonate with those identified in a study from 2014, which reported that afternoon shift schools provided entertainment rather than academic teaching, and that most afternoon-shift teachers were inexperienced graduates who lacked the training needed to teach children experiencing trauma and depression.<sup>[139]</sup> Secondary-school-age Syrian children are most likely to have experienced the conflict in Syria and to have direct trauma as a result.

Syrian refugee children face additional obstacles to quality education. A striking area of discrepancy is hours of instruction. Children enrolled in the public schools in the Zaatari and Azraq refugee camps attend school for 22 percent fewer hours of instruction than children in double-shift schools in Jordanian host communities, and 34 percent less than children in single-shift schools.<sup>[140]</sup> Other areas that suffer include subjects like physical education, art, and theater, which are often reduced or cut in second shift schools, and access to laboratories for science classes, libraries, and resource rooms, which may be available for morning shift but not for afternoon shift.<sup>[141]</sup>

All teachers in public schoolswhether single, morning, or afternoon-shift schools in host communities or the schools in the refugee camps must be Jordanian citizens.<sup>[142]</sup> Syrians can be taken on as volunteer assistant teachers, receiving a small stipend and helping a Jordanian teacher in the classroom, but qualified and experienced Syrian teachers are barred from teaching as a profession. The lack of Syrian teachers may contribute to the perception, among Syrian students and parents with whom we spoke, that teachers subject Syrian children to xenophobic or discriminatory statements, neglect, or punishments.<sup>[143]</sup> Some parents told us they preferred Syrian assistant teachers because they felt they cared about their childrens education. Aya, a 16-year-old Syrian girl, has attended both morning and afternoon shifts and preferred the afternoon shift teachers for exactly that reason.<sup>[144]</sup> She said that although they were younger and less experienced as teachers, they gave Syrian students more attention and seemed to care more about them.

Syrian refugee children of secondary school age who dropped out of school cited, in interviews, their perception of the low value of the education available to them as a reason. Beginning at around the age of 12, refugee childrens desire for education is increasingly thwarted by the desperate need to earn income to support their families. If they or their parents feel that they are not learning, then working becomes their only other avenue.<sup>[145]</sup>

Mahdi, a 17-year-old Syrian boy living in Amman, expressed similar feelings about the education he was receiving, explaining that he stopped going to school after class 5, because he didnt understand the lessons: I didnt feel like I was really benefitting from school, so I left and started working.<sup>[146]</sup>

Syrian refugee children in Jordan reported in a qualitative 2017 survey that education is not a solution to their problems, as they saw educated and qualified members of their community with university degrees unemployed, while others with lower levels of education had jobs.<sup>[147]</sup> Dr. Ahmad Rababah, education director at Relief International in Jordan, an NGO that works with out-of-school Syrian children, noted that in some areas, there is no belief in the importance of education due to the lack of higher education scholarships for Syrians and the negative example of unemployed degree-holders. People say, what are you going to do with education? Dr. Rababah said. They have no hope for the future.<sup>[148]</sup>

As Syrian children progress through formal education, they become aware that their education pathways, and prospects for professions, are limited in Jordan. Many professions and jobs are closed to non-Jordanians, and in all sectors, Jordan imposes quotas on foreign employees.<sup>[149]</sup> Syrians who surmount countless obstacles and make it to higher vocational education or university may not be allowed to work in their field; 24 fields, such as engineering, work in schools, and in higher education, are restricted for non-Jordanians or need special permission, and 13 other professions including car repair, hair care, and electrician are completely closed.<sup>[150]</sup> Most Syrians are only allowed to work in jobs requiring little or no education; open sectors include agriculture, construction, and manufacturing.<sup>[151]</sup>



Khawla, a Syrian volunteer assistant teacher employed by UNICEF at a second-shift school in Mafraq, said that chronic student absenteeism and drop-out rates at her school both worsen as the class level increases.<sup>[152]</sup> When she asks students why they are not attending or dropped out, she said, they may give nonsense reasons, but what's really going on is that the older children feel that there's no point to school, since they know that at most, they will go through high school. They know there are not enough scholarships for Syrian kids, so they don't imagine they could go to college. For girls, Khawla says, they figure they're going to get married in a couple years, that there's no future, anyway, so they don't see the point in prioritizing school.<sup>[153]</sup> Khawla, who has a university degree from Syria, wondered aloud if more Syrian children would have more hope for the future if they saw more examples of employed graduates like her although she had to be patient until she found a job.<sup>[154]</sup>

Because of the lack of affordable, accessible places at university, and of open professional occupations, Syrian families told Human Rights Watch researchers that we have no future here, even [our children] have no future in Jordan. Some parents hoped their family would be chosen for official resettlement; one woman shared that she sometimes thinks about smuggling her family into Europe.<sup>[155]</sup>

Since the Syria conflict began in 2011, Jordan has imposed administrative restrictions that have prevented Syrian children from enrolling in school. These barriers to access are less prevalent now than previously but indicate the need for education programs to reach children who were prevented from going to school or dropped out as a result and are now of secondary-school age. Worryingly, during the 2019-2020 school year Jordan re-imposed documentation requirements it had previously waived, which risks undermining school access for vulnerable students.

Syrian students told us they had dropped out of school after being placed at an inappropriate class level, but that there were no non-formal programs available to bring them back into education. In the absence of documentation certifying the most recent class completed in Syria (which refugees can seldom bring when fleeing), the education ministry will place children according to their age or their perceived age, where they lack birth certificates. Incorrect class level placement creates frustration at difficult lessons, lack of personal instruction, and harassment by peers.<sup>[156]</sup> Several Syrian children told Human Rights Watch that they had been placed in the wrong class level in Jordan, and perceived the quality or value of education they were receiving as low enough that they considered dropping out; some did. Mahdi, 17, came to Jordan from Homs when he was 10 years old. Having missed a few years of school in Syria because of the war, he should have been in class two. But without documentation to prove it, Mahdi was placed according to his age, in class five. He made it through the year, but then dropped out, explaining, I felt I didn't understand well. I didn't feel like I was really benefitting from school, so I left and started working. He has participated in some informal education and life skills programs since dropping out of school, but mostly has been working.<sup>[157]</sup>

Bassma, a Syrian woman whose daughter has dropped out of school, recounted a similar story. Her daughter, Doaa, 16, missed two years of school between the war in Syria, fleeing to Jordan, and a period of time where the family thought their stay in Jordan would be temporary. By the time Doaa's mother brought her to be enrolled in school, she was placed in class four, even though she had only completed class one in Syria. Doaa struggled to understand the material, a problem which was compounded by a thyroid disease that affected her concentration and memory. Halfway through class seven, aged 12, she dropped out permanently. She has spent the last four years at home, uncertain about her future.<sup>[158]</sup>

The first Syrian refugee children to enter Jordan in 2011 and 2012 could enroll in school without restrictions. In 2013, the government restricted school enrollment to Syrian children whose parents had a service card issued by the Ministry of Interior (MOI).<sup>[159]</sup> Refugees may access public services including education and subsidized healthcare in the district where the card was issued.<sup>[160]</sup> The authorities sent Syrians to camps which they could legally leave only if they were bailed out by a Jordanian citizen who was a direct relative, male, married, age 35 or older, who agreed to act as a guarantor.<sup>[161]</sup> Syrians who left the camps without following this strict procedure were ineligible to obtain MOI cards or to enroll their children in school. In 2015 Jordan closed its border with Syria and suspended the bailout procedure altogether.

The education ministry waived the MOI card requirement for the first semester of the 2016-2017 school year.<sup>[162]</sup> Following a back-to-school campaign that disseminated the move, 1,411 out-of-school children enrolled in school.<sup>[163]</sup> The Prime Minister announced the waiver as governmental policy in 2017.<sup>[164]</sup> In 2018, Jordan carried out an urban verification exercise that included an amnesty for Syrians who had left the refugee camps irregularly, giving them an opportunity to obtain MOI cards.<sup>[165]</sup> Most Syrians in Jordan were then able to access MOI cards.<sup>[166]</sup>

However, some school directors continued to require the MOI card, in contravention of the education ministry directive.<sup>[167]</sup> Syrian parents continued to list the lack of an MOI card as a reason for non-enrollment in survey responses.<sup>[168]</sup> An INGO education officer said that incidents of schools requiring documentation for enrollment in violation of education ministry policy have been more common at the secondary school level.<sup>[169]</sup>

The education ministry once again began requiring MOI cards in the 2019-2020 school year.<sup>[170]</sup> The renewed MOI-card requirement may disproportionately impact the most vulnerable Syrian refugee children, whose precarious circumstances are both a cause and an effect of their inability to obtain the cards. A recent survey by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) of Syrian refugee families who called its legal resources hotline found that 34 percent of respondents did not have an MOI card.<sup>[171]</sup> Syrian families who move in Jordan may update their cards by registering with a local police station, but poor families that move repeatedly during the year in search of seasonal agricultural work may be unable to complete the procedures needed to gain a valid MOI card, or lack information about how to do so. The requirement may also bar children's education in future, as up to 30 percent of Syrian children born in Jordan were not registered at birth and are therefore ineligible to receive an MOI card.<sup>[172]</sup> Families may appeal for birth certificates in some cases, but the process is time-consuming.<sup>[173]</sup>

Obstacles and barriers to education, including the inability to pay for school-related costs like transportation, and pressures on children to drop-out to work or marry, as well as the low quality of education, lead to a collapse of enrollment rates for Syrian children that begins at around age 12 and accelerates as they should transition from basic to secondary education. This collapsing educational pipeline shows that much more is needed to keep children in school through the end of secondary education. Support for public secondary education is needed but is not sufficient to realize these children's rights, because many of them cannot access public schools.

Since the start of the Syria conflict and refugee inflows to neighboring countries, the UN and foreign donors have agreed with the Jordanian government on a series of regional humanitarian response plans, and since 2015, on multi-year Jordan Response Plans (JRP), which are coordinated between Jordan, the UN, and donor governments, and guide the humanitarian response and funding needs to address the needs of Syrian refugees.<sup>[174]</sup>

None of these plans set out specific targets for formal secondary education for refugee children in Jordan.<sup>[175]</sup> Typically they refer to overall school enrollment figures for children ages 5 to 17, or to the number of adolescents who participated in informal technical and vocational programs run by humanitarian organizations. Donors have complained that past JRP budgets included requests for higher education and youth projects that appeared to be unrelated to the refugee response.<sup>[176]</sup>

In March 2018, the government of Jordan introduced the Education Strategic Plan (ESP) as the guiding document that sets out its national policy and educational objectives for the next five years. The ESP had a stated overarching aim of improving the quality of education, the quality of outputs, and enhancing competitiveness.<sup>[177]</sup> The plan aims to increase access to education for girls and children with disabilities, increase the number of classrooms and schools, improve professional development for teachers, support non-formal alternatives, and enhance vocational training.<sup>[178]</sup>

The plan commits in cooperation with development partners to continuing to provide for the education of Syrian children, while focusing on strengthening the public education system as a whole. Prior to the introduction of the ESP, the education needs of refugees in Jordan were addressed solely through the JRPs chapter on education. Going forward, the JRP will continue to include a chapter on education, but should align with the ESP.<sup>[179]</sup> The ESP explicitly refers to refugees' education needs, but does not identify interventions for out-of-school, secondary-school-age refugee children.<sup>[180]</sup> The plan includes overall targets of increasing the total gross enrollment in secondary education to 89 percent by 2022, and aims to enroll 1,000 children per year in the certified, non-formal drop-out program, but does not specify secondary-school enrollment targets or non-formal targets for Syrian refugee children.<sup>[181]</sup>

Although implementing education programs that address the specific needs of adolescent refugee children ages 12-18 has been a priority for 3RP partnersthose involved in the UN-coordinated Regional Refugee and Resilience Response Plan to the Syria crisis since 2015,[182] there are no funding goals and hence no monitoring reports on funding for refugee secondary education.[183]

Based on annual reports about the regional humanitarian response framework, Jordans funding requests for education since 2013 amount to \$800 million. From 2016 to the end of 2019, donors have given \$356.4 million out of \$522.5 million requested for education in Jordan.[184] The JRP has a specific section on education plans for Syrian children and vulnerable Jordanian children, categories that are referred to as refugee and resilience components, and donors tended to fund a higher percentage of the refugee education budget request than the resilience component.[185]

In addition to funding reported under the JRP, some donors give direct aid to support the budget of the Jordanian education ministry, including 65.3 million of a six-year, 79.9 million grant from the UK to ensure access to education for all children under the Jordan Compact in 2016,[186] and the European Commission, which recently gave an additional 60 million in budget support in 2019-2020.[187] The education ministry spends an estimated 13.6 percent of its budget on secondary education, and 3 percent on vocational education.[188]

Human Rights Watch wrote to or met with the humanitarian donor agencies or foreign development ministries at the United States, the European Commission, the United Kingdom, Germany, Canada, and Norway, as key donors to education for Syrian refugee children, with specific questions about their funding for secondary education in Jordan. Collectively and individually, these donors have contributed significantly to improve access to education for Syrian refugee and Jordanian children, but few reported funding that explicitly target secondary education, and most provided funding for basic education.

Donors reported that they support the non-formal drop-out program that enables Syrian and Jordanian children ages 13 and older to complete class 10, and to home-study for upper secondary-school. Otherwise, these donors generally did not have identifiable programs that specifically aimed to increase Syrian childrens access to quality secondary education in Jordan. For example:

As the Syria crisis continues, Jordanian officials are pushing for a greater proportion of donor aid for education to be directed to school construction and rehabilitation, even as a shift in the management of donor education funding will give greater authority to government ministries rather than humanitarian education actors.

Under the Jordan Response Plan for the Syria crisis, donors agree to fund projects proposed by humanitarian agencies or NGOs, who then request approval from the Jordanian authorities by submitting the project to a system referred to as JORISS, operated by the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MOPIC). That ministry will consult with the relevant line ministry depending on the project. All education projects require approval from the education ministry.

Using this approval system, Jordanian officials have stated that donor funding should be allocated for projects that create tangible results, like building new classrooms, rehabilitating schools, or installing bathrooms, rather than soft NGO projects.[195] Interventions deemed soft include remedial education, nonformal education, psychosocial services, and a host of other projects, many of which are essential for many Syrian children, but take place outside of the formal school system. The MOPIC official in charge of the JRP explained to Human Rights Watch that some NGO programs appeared misplaced when compared to the need: We dont have enough spaces at school for students. We don't need soft extracurricular activities, and its not a small amount of money being spent on this. We dont need drama programs, we need more school buildings. We need sustainability from international funding.[196] An aid worker recalled meetings with education ministry officials in 2019 who were frustrated that funding flowed to education projects in which the ministry had no role, and decided that more JRP money should go to building or renovating school infrastructure, since it is easier to track how such money is spent.[197] This is likely to have an outsize impact on Syrian and other vulnerable children who are the main beneficiaries of such interventions.

An NGO education official recalled that education ministry officials refused to approve a home-schooling support program designed to fit within the JRP education strategy. It was a drop-out learning program that allowed secondary-school age students to obtain a class 10 certificate and study at home for their final *tawjihi* examinations. A donor had already allocated funding for the project, but the education ministry advised that such programs would not be approved in future due to a preference for infrastructure projects.[198]

Another NGO received funding from a foreign government for remedial classes in the host community. When the NGO having already secured the funding requested Jordanian approval, the project was rejected because remedial education in the host community was not a priority, and that the funding should be invested in early childhood education through opening new classrooms. The INGO then had to negotiate with the donor government about using the funding for an entirely different project.[199]

A humanitarian education official described concerns because of an overall lack of funding and focus on the out-of-school case load, which includes both Jordanian and Syrian children. National strategies now focus predominantly on system strengthening, which is great for those in the system but not so meaningful for those out of it, and thats a lot of the 13-18 [year-old] Syrians, she said.[200]

Donors and Jordanian authorities are shifting from an emergency, humanitarian approach where funding is short-term and targets only the most vulnerable populations, to a development approach which unlocks larger amounts of funding over longer periods and aims to strengthen the capacity of the national education system broadly.[201] A humanitarian education expert said these shifts can be positive but must be managed to prevent the risk that out-of-school refugee children would be left behind, particularly when Jordan has largely delegated responsibility for humanitarian interventions like second-shift and refugee-camp schools to UN agencies and NGOs.[202]

At least 80,000 Syrian refugee children in Jordan who should be in classes 1-12 are not enrolled in formal education, and most of them are of lower- or upper-secondary-school age.[203] To reach this large number of out of school children and prevent further dropouts, the Jordanian authorities should incorporate and expand on effective NGO and UN programs for secondary-school age children. Until it does so, the education programs run by UN agencies and large international NGOs are insufficient in scale to close the secondary education gap for Syrian refugee children.

According to the current version of the Jordan Response Plan for the Syria Crisis, which will guide the humanitarian education response for 2020 to 2022, some 6,600 Syrian students who were in-school benefited from remedial programs to support them academically, and 3,200 out-of-school Syrian students ages 13 and older were enrolled in an accredited, non-formal education program that would allow them to finish class 10 and do home-study for classes 11 and 12, during the 2018-2019 school year.[204]

Human Rights Watch contacted all major INGOs operating education programs in Jordan and key foreign donors to education in Jordan for information about the number of secondary-school-age children attending their education programs. This research identified NGO-run education programs that benefit Syrian children, ages 12 to 17, as described below: in 2019, these NGO programs helped almost 6,500 children ages who were in school, but fewer than 4,000 children who were out-of-school. Vocational training and life-skills programs run by NGOs also supported 2,800 adolescents.

In 2019, about 1,300 children, ages 12 to 17, were in public schools where the Norwegian Refugee Council provides teacher training and school rehabilitation.[205] Another 1,200 children in the refugee camps, ages 12 to 13, received support to do perform better in school[206] These programs improve students chances of continuing through secondary education.[207]

Mercy Corps works in public schools in the refugee camps as well as in 67 host community schools to support students with disabilities.[208] Mercy Corps developed an app that allows teachers to assess students disability needs and strengths in order to develop teaching plans accordingly.[209] Since 2013, the program has reached 4,695 Jordanian and Syrian children between the ages of 6 and 17, but a breakdown of Syrian secondary-school-age children is not available.

NGOs also target children who are in public schools but at risk of dropping out with remedial education including extra teaching, tutoring, or assistance with homework. Since 2013, Relief International has provided remedial education to Syrian refugee children in classes 7-12, mostly ages 13 to 18, who are at risk of dropping out of school in the Azraq and Zaatari refugee camps. There were 2,000 students in the program in 2019. In 2019 Relief International began to expand the remedial education program to 16 public schools in host communities, targeting 1,920 Syrian and Jordanian children in lower- and upper-secondary education in host communities.[\[210\]](#)

A non-formal drop-out curriculum, certified by the education ministry, enables out-of-school children ages 13 and older to continue their education through the compulsory 10<sup>th</sup> year of basic education.[\[211\]](#) In 2019, 3,300 students enrolled in the drop-out program at 120 centers across Jordan.[\[212\]](#) The target is to expand enrollment to 5,000 students.[\[213\]](#) The program is run by Questscope, the Middle East Childrens Institute (MECI), and Mercy Corps.[\[214\]](#) Limited data is available on the childrens rates of completion of formal or vocational education.[\[215\]](#)

In addition, UNICEF reported that as of 2019, a total of 5,000 children ages 9-12 had taken a catch-up program, certified by the education ministry, that also provides pathways back to formal education. Of these younger students, 1,700 children had reintegrated into formal education.[\[216\]](#)

The goal had been to enroll a total of 25,000 students in the catch-up and drop-out programs by the end of 2017.[\[217\]](#) The reasons why the programs have fallen short of the enrollment targets include lack of transportation to the learning centers where the program is taught and child labor.[\[218\]](#)

Relief International provides a non-accredited, non-formal education program for students in Azraq and Zaatari camps.[\[219\]](#) Students attend classes for 3.5 hours per day and receive pocket money and school transportation. Those who complete the program cannot re-enroll in public schools or vocational centers, but can study non-formally at Luminus Technical University Colleges two-year vocational community college. The program has 700 Syrian refugee students enrolled in the first cycle, which began in mid-2018 and will last through mid-2020.

NRCs Youth Programme provides children and youth ages 16-32 in the refugee camps with vocational training that is accredited by the Vocational and Technical Skills Development Commission of the Department of Labor. In 2019, 831 Syrians ages 16 to 18 participated in the Youth Programme in the camps.[\[220\]](#) Some graduates are able to apply these skills by opening small businesses, engaging in the cash for work in the camps, or working for UN agencies or other smaller NGOs. The program also provides life skills courses and internationally-accredited courses in English language and Informational and Communications Technology (ICT).[\[221\]](#)

In host communities, the Youth Programme does not offer vocational training, but does include the life skills training as well as internationally accredited ICT and English language courses. In 2019, the youth program had 1,961 students between the ages of 14 and 18.

Mercy Corps has a smaller vocational training program, in partnership with Jordan University of Science and Technology (JUST) and the Irbid Chamber of Commerce. Based on market demand, students are being trained in the maintenance and repair of hybrid cars.[\[222\]](#)

Save the Children carries out case management for children who have either high truancy rates or who have dropped out of school entirely, providing families with an action plan and referrals to resources, and provides 70 JD (US\$98) in cash assistance per month to offset school costs, in Zaatari camp and in host communities.[\[223\]](#)

All children have the right to quality education without discrimination. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights stipulates that access to education is a human right for all, including the most vulnerable groups, without discrimination, including on the basis of national origin.[\[224\]](#) The Convention on the Rights of the Child obliges States parties to ensure that refugee children enjoy all applicable rights, including the right to education.[\[225\]](#) These conventions oblige Jordan to make secondary education generally available and accessible to all, encourage regular attendance and reduce drop-out rates.[\[226\]](#)

Jordan is also a state party to the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education, which obliges it to give foreign nationals on its territory the same access to the education as is given to its own nationals, and to end any law, policy or practice that involves discrimination, including on the basis of national origin, in connection with education.[\[227\]](#) Jordan should ensure that the standards and quality of education are equivalent in all public educational institutions, and provide for the continuation of education for children who have not completed primary education.[\[228\]](#)

Jordan was among the first states to ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in 2008, which obliges countries to ensure access for all persons with disabilities to inclusive, quality, and free primary and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live.[\[229\]](#) Inclusion in education is rooted in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which provides that everyone has the right to education.[\[230\]](#) The concept of inclusive education is also contained implicitly in article 13, paragraph 1, of the ICESCR and articles 23 and 29 of the CRC.[\[231\]](#) According to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, inclusive education should be the goal for educating children with disabilities, and state parties should introduce the necessary measures to achieve inclusive education.[\[232\]](#)

The 2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, signed by 193 countries, committed to provide quality secondary education to all refugee children, as well as vocational training. At the Leaders Summit on the Global Refugee Crisis, held the day after the New York Declaration was adopted, Jordan pledged to ensure that with international assistance, all children in Jordan could attend school, as it had committed in the February 2016 Jordan Compact.

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child reiterated in 2008 that the responsibility to fulfill the right to education in emergency situations does not rest upon individual States alone. When a State lacks the capacity and/or requisite resources, the international community including other states, donor organizations and UN agencies should ensure that the right to education is universally fulfilled.[\[233\]](#)

The Convention on the Rights of the Child obliges all states to promote and encourage international cooperation in matters relating to education, including by facilitating access to scientific and technical knowledge and support for teaching, taking particular account of the needs of developing countries.[\[234\]](#)

The Committee called on all actors to apply a rights-based approach to education in emergencies that accounts for the right to non-discrimination, the best interests of the child, the right to life and development, and the right to be heard.[\[235\]](#) These actors should ensure that programs meet the Inter-Agency Network on Education in Emergencies (INEE) Minimum Standards for education in emergencies.[\[236\]](#) Accordingly, in line with international human rights obligations, all individuals should have equal access to quality and relevant education opportunities, from pre-primary through secondary and tertiary education, and can obtain recognition and certification of their education.[\[237\]](#)

In a July 2018 report focused on refugee education, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education recommended that States and other stakeholders address barriers to refugee education. The report recommended that governments provide work permits to allow refugee families to overcome poverty. It also called on governments to show flexibility in enrollment requirements, and to ensure that refugee girls have access to school at all levels. The Special Rapporteur called on donors, aid agencies, and international organizations to plan for and adequately finance the inclusion of refugees in education in a manner that takes full account of their right to education.[\[238\]](#)

Jordan has ratified key international conventions concerning child labor, including the International Labour Organizations (ILO) Minimum Age Convention (ILO C.138), the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (ILO C.182), the CRC, and the ICESCR.[\[239\]](#) Jordan specified a minimum age of 16 years, changed its labor laws in this regard in 1996, and had adopted a National Action Plan to eliminate the worst forms of child labor by 2013.[\[240\]](#)

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- [178] Education Strategic Plan 2018-2022, Foreword.
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- [181] Education Strategic Plan 2018-2022, pp. 133-4, annex 3, Key indicators 8, 9 and 11. The ESP includes other specific indicators for Syrian refugees, including the total number of teachers at different types of schools. Id., Annex 4, pp. 139-141.
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- [220] Phase I consists of four-hours of daily classes for 3 to 3.5 months. Phase II involves a 3-month apprenticeship where students apply their skills in projects within their communities, and earn a small stipend. In Phase III, students produce items for sale and earn the profit. Examples include school uniforms, UNICEF baby kits, and furniture for school disabilities resource rooms.
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- [222] Interview with Mercy Corps staff in Amman, October 2019.
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- [225] Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), adopted November 20, 1989, G.A. Res. 44/25, annex, 44 U.N. GAOR Supp. (No. 49) at 167, U.N. Doc. A/44/49 (1989), entered into force September 2, 1990, Articles 22, 28.
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Brussels Friends of Syria Conference Should Address Massive Dropouts

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