

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY FOR THE EDUCATION OF DISPLACED CHILDREN IN MENA

PROMISE, PROJECTS, PERILS OF ICT

Scale and significance of conflict-related education crisis in MENA

- More than 10 million school-age children have been forced out of school in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) due to armed conflict.
 - Iraq: 3 million out of school
 - Yemen: 2.9 million
 - Syria: 2.8 million (2.1m in Syria; 700K outside)
 - Libya: 2 million
 - Palestine: 500,000

Source: UNICEF, UNRWA

Not a temporary humanitarian issue, a development issue

- Average length of refugee status is 17 years
- Emergency education may be the one and only chance refugee children have for education
- Consequences of a generation of undereducated, dispossessed people are extremely serious—not only for individuals and families but for their home country, their country of refuge, the region and the world

What displacement looks like

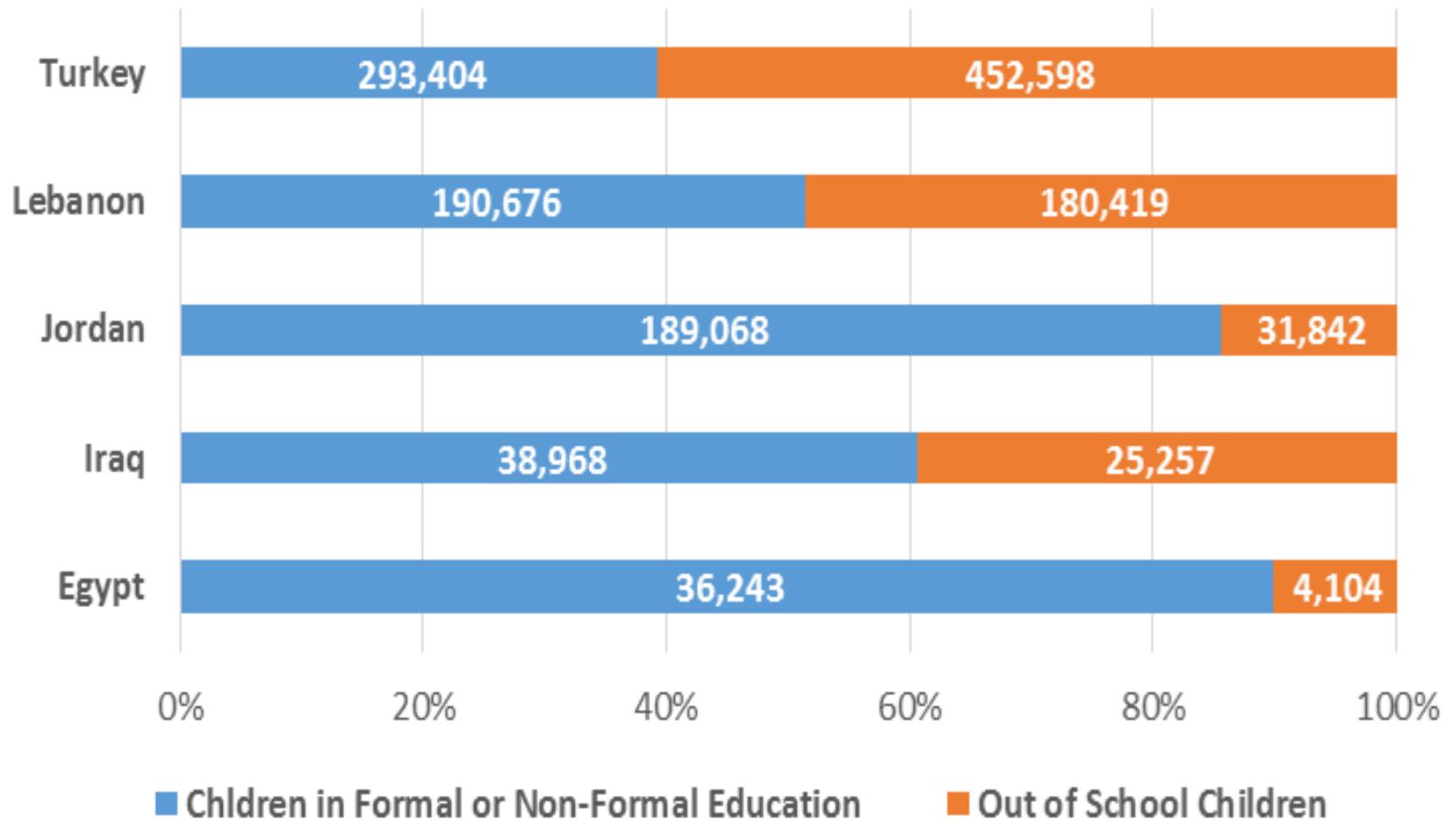
- Very wide range of situations—*all* affected by trauma
 - Children completely out of school
 - Children receiving nonformal education
 - Children enrolled in a foreign national system (language barriers, different curricula, trauma, etc.)
 - Children attempting to re-enter school after a prolonged disruption
 - Children without adequate safety and security
 - Children with or without access to trained teacher
 - Children with or without access Internet connectivity or dependable electricity

- What it usually does not look like: organized refugee camps (globally, almost half in urban areas rather than camps; 90% of Syrians)

Focus on Syria

- “Largest reversal of educational progress ever recorded” (DFID)
- 2.1 million out of school in Syria
- 1.6 million school-age Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR:
 - ▣ 38% in school; 9% nonformal learning; 53% out of school (UNICEF 2015)
- Refugees in every imaginable situation

Syrian Refugee Children - In and Out of School



Source: *No Lost Generation 2015 Syria crisis update*

Response to refugees' educational needs

- Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, and other countries have shown extraordinary generosity in hosting refugees
- In regard to education, the main response has been to allow refugee children into public schools
- But many barriers:
 - ▣ Space shortages
 - ▣ Language
 - ▣ Different curricula
 - ▣ Bureaucratic (e.g. registration requirements)
 - ▣ Costs, transportation
 - ▣ Psychosocial issues

What's in a refugee's bag?

Source of photos: International Rescue Committee

Mobile technology is part of refugees' survival kit



In Za'atari Refugee Camp in Jordan, 86% of youth own mobile handsets (mostly smartphones) and 83% own SIM cards

The context of the refugee crisis in MENA is highly complex

- This requires a response that recognizes that complexity and does not rely solely on traditional practices. With 90% of Syrian refugees living outside of organized refugee camps, it is very difficult for aid providers to reach families and children in need. To benefit displaced children and youth, ICT must be tailored to the specific needs and circumstances of specific groups of refugees.

The promise of ICT for education

- Adaptable and fast: can build on or adapt what already exists
- Low cost
- New ways and times to learn
 - ▣ Can stretch resources
 - ▣ Can meet more of the needs of adolescents
- Training for teachers too

Promise of ICT4E for displaced children

- Can be used to map displaced populations and their educational needs and match them to supply
- Records and materials can follow children
- Potentially psychosocial benefits (examples from IRC, Mercy Corps)

But there are many perils and pitfalls, many ways to fail:

- Technology must be integrated with pedagogy and appropriate to learner
- Technology must be appropriate to context
- Has to be more than equipment and software
- Intermediary (e.g. teacher) almost always needed

Swirl of activities

- Multitude of projects
- “Innovation labs” at UNHCR, UNICEF, USA for UNHCR, etc.



UNHCR
innovation

UNICEF Innovation



openIDEO



...a tech community
response to the European
refugee crisis.



TechFugees

- **Beginnings of coordination, e.g. frequent convenings:**
 - November 20, 2015: *The Brightest Hope: Education and Innovation in Emergencies* (NYU, the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies [INEE], Global Education First Initiative)
 - January 29, 2016: *Bridging the Education Gap for Syrian Refugee Children* (Stanford, U.S. Department of State, Google, World Affairs Council, Global Philanthropy Forum)
 - February 4, 2016: *Supporting Syria and the Region* (London pledging conference; education as one of four main themes)
 - February 9, 2016: *Techfugees NY Collaborative Conference* (The Hive, USA for UNHCR, Techfugees)
 - March 7-11, 2016: *Mobile Learning Week* (UNESCO; refugee education as a subtheme)

Digital learning resources

Producers in the region



Arabic-language materials produced outside region



Curated Arabic content for teachers



Open Education Resources (OERs) can add to learning in all contexts

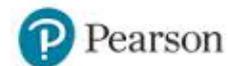
- **OERs** reside in the public domain or have been released under an intellectual property license that permits their free use and re-purposing by others. OERs include full courses, course materials, modules, textbooks, videos, tests, and any other tools, materials, or techniques used to support access to knowledge.

- Because OERs are available at little or no cost and may be freely adapted to all contexts:
 - OERs should be collected, curated, mapped to learning standards, and made easily available in a single website, such as the Whole of Syria Education Focal Point, OER Commons Arabic, and/or LearnCloud
 - Production of OERs by MENA educators should be encouraged
 - Teacher training should be provided
 - Translation of existing highest-quality materials should be explored
 - Other storehouses of teaching materials, such as UNRWA, may be adapted and licensed for open use

- Such materials can aid learning among refugees and non-refugees alike in a variety of formal, nonformal, and informal contexts.

Content delivery – mobile solutions for refugees

Mobile solutions for educating displaced persons in MENA are as yet in the planning or pilot stage



Content delivery – learning platforms



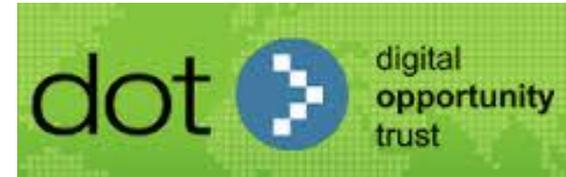
Web-based learning platforms already exist in the region but most are new and so far underutilized



Content delivery requires more than hardware and more than apps and other software

- Most ICT interventions will fail unless teachers and other adults are provided with training in how to use them
- The training of teachers, including adults who have not been previously trained as teachers, is critical to increasing the supply of adequate education to displaced children
- To reach displaced children and to understand their specific needs, the international community must work through on-the-ground NGOs, UN bodies, and other organizations that are in direct contact with communities in need
- To meet immediate needs, additional private provision should be explored, including “scripted schools”

Teacher training and mentoring



Technology-enabled training and mentoring for teachers of refugees is just beginning in MENA; better models exist in other regions



Facilitation of return to school

- *Carefully designed ICT interventions could also facilitate students' return to school after interruption:*
 - Language training
 - Reducing pressure on school facilities
 - Bridging for the return to school after an absence
 - Alternative forms of certification of learning?

What actions might the World Bank take in regard to ICT for refugee education?

- There is a plethora of projects and activities, but not well coordinated and of uneven quality and promise
- Can the Bank's convening power, influence, and expertise be applied here?
- This is fitting with the new MENA strategy: "The Bank's strengths include its ability to generate, curate and transfer knowledge; its convening power as a global institution; and its capacity to leverage its own financial resources and expertise to help meet global financing needs" (Devarajan, p. 4).

The Bank could take a leadership role in ICT for education of displaced

- ICT is not a “silver bullet” or complete solution to the conflict-related education crisis in MENA; however, it can be part of the solution in providing a short-term stopgap as well as in mid- and long-term system strengthening and facilitating children’s re-entry into schooling.
- The World Bank’s convening power and expertise in education could help mobilize resources and improve coordination in deploying ICT for the education of displaced children and adolescents.
- The Bank’s efforts would be valuable generally and perhaps especially in terms of exploring regional certification systems and making certain that lessons of ICT for refugee education are well documented with better data on learning and scaling.
- The Bank should also explore with partners specific interventions. Some of these seem to be “low-hanging fruit,” such as mobile technology for language learning, or making better use of underutilized capacity to make available and deliver digital content.
- Other critical interventions, such as teacher training and expanded mobile resources for older students would take greater effort.