

## RESEARCH ARTICLES

# Educational Needs and Educational Deprivation of Syrian Refugee Children in Jordanian 'Random Camps': 'It's Hard to Think about the Future of Tomorrow, if We Don't Have Enough to Eat Today'<sup>1</sup>

Christine Huth Hildebrandt<sup>2</sup>, Ali Al'Ali<sup>3</sup> and Bader Al-Madi<sup>4</sup>

### Abstract

*When thousands of Syrian families seeking help fled to Jordan at the beginning of the Syrian Crisis in March 2011, the Jordanian government set up camps to accommodate the displaced people. Some of the Syrian refugees are supported by humanitarian organizations, some have since received work permits. On the other hand, others are trying to find work in the informal sector, particularly in agriculture. Thus, numerous settlements, so-called random camps, have sprung up on the outskirts of the farms in rural Jordan, where Syrian families are housed during the harvest season (Perosino, 2023). The following article deals with such settlements. More specifically, it deals with the following: school dropouts from Syrian agricultural worker families, the needs and problems of the school-age children living there, gaps in the Jordanian education system, and answers as to how these children can continue to be enabled to attend school regularly.*

*Thus, an ethnographic study was conducted in rural areas. Focus group discussions were held with parents from two irregular settlements, and qualitative interviews were conducted with experts from the Ministry of Education and Humanitarian Organizations. The study concludes that school dropouts among Syrian children of agricultural workers cannot be explained solely by poverty and child labor, but must be considered through the rural school and educational system that does not correspond to the mobile way of life of the Syrian agricultural worker families. This inevitably leads to the exclusion of children from school attendance.*

---

<sup>1</sup> This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License and was accepted for publication on 14/6/2024.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Christine Huth-Hildebrandt is a full professor in the Department of Social Work at the German Jordanian University, Amman, Jordan.

<sup>3</sup> Ali Al'Ali holds a master's degree in Social Work from the German Jordanian University, Amman, Jordan and works in several projects.

<sup>4</sup> Dr. Bader Al-Madi is an associate professor and head of the Department of Social Work at the German Jordanian University, Amman, Jordan.

## **Key Words:**

*Syrian refugees' families, Jordan, agricultural areas, random camps, education, school dropouts*

## **1 Introduction**

Since the beginning of the violent clashes in Syria, a total of 6.5 million people left the country and hundreds of thousands have fled to safety in neighboring Jordan. Many came from the Idlib District or the south of the country, where the uprising began in mid-March 2011. As the war spread, people also fled from other parts of the country: from the area around the capital Damascus, the area around the cities of Homs and Hama and from Aleppo (Bank, 2016). Upon their arrival in Jordan, not everyone was registered as a refugee in Jordan, and the number of people formally recognized as refugees by UNHCR is surprisingly low. In March 2023, almost 90% of the 740,000 people registered as refugees in Jordan came from Syria (UNHCR, 2023), although the government officially assumes that there are more than 1.3 million Syrian refugees in Jordan (Hamarnah, 2021). The number of people who have entered the country is therefore presumably much higher, as around 700,000 people who are said to have entered Jordan do not even appear in the refugee statistics (Turner, 2023).

The Jordanian government has made great efforts to accommodate the Syrian refugees' arrival, and at the same time, alleviate the burden on the Jordanian local population in the communities. Jordan is not a wealthy country and has only been able to cope with hosting such large number of refugees with the help of international organizations, which continue to provide much of the humanitarian aid to this day (Potocky & Naseh, 2020). Camps have been set up in the north of the country to accommodate those arrivals. However, most of the Syrian population now lives outside these camps. It is estimated that around 85% of the families have settled in various parts of Jordan, including the districts of Amman, Irbid, Mafraq and Zarqa (Alzouabi et al., 2021). Due to cross-border family ties between Jordan and Syria, many families were taken in by their relatives, especially in the north of the country. Still, illegal camps were set up on the outskirts of the major cities and in rural areas.

The article focuses on Syrian families in such illegal camps, who are barely registered and barely visible. As they have no permanent residence, they pitch their tents in so-called random camps on the outskirts of farms and move from one harvest season to the next through the agricultural regions of the country. As a consequence, they are leaving their children with limited opportunities for continuous schooling.

A study group of future social workers at the German Jordanian University (GJU) in Amman looked at the living conditions of these school-age children to find out in more detail what additional measures might need to be established to better counter school dropout in these rural regions. After providing insights into the development of the school situation from the beginning of the displacement and flight from Syria, an overview of the development of the random camps in the rural regions of the country is presented, along with the empirical results of the study project. This is done with a particular focus on the socio-spatial observation of such camps, in order to identify the special conditions that prevent school-age children from reintegrating into the official school system.

## 2 School Development in Jordan

Refugees who are forced to live outside their home country for years or even decades are referred to as experiencing 'protracted displacement' (Zetter, 2011). In Jordan, this applies to 8% of Syrian refugees who have been in the country for ten years or longer. As it is mainly families who have entered the country, the number of children and young people among the displaced is high and steadily increasing. They now make up around 48% of the total number of Syrian refugees in Jordan (Children of Jordan, 2021).

A comparison with neighboring countries shows that Jordan has responded very quickly to the educational needs of children from arriving Syrian families. This has enabled them to be fully integrated into the school system (Khater, 2023).

**Table 1: Children out of school in Jordan, Lebanon & Turkey**

Syrian children in and out of school in Jordan, Lebanon & Turkey, December 2014			
School-age Children	Jordan	Lebanon	Turkey
Registered	213,432	383,898	531,071
In formal education	127,857	8,043	187,000
In non-formal education	54,301	109,503	26,140
Out of school	31,274	266,352	317,931

Source: Beste 2015, own compilation

However, Jordan also faced challenges regarding educational integration, as schools were already overloaded before the start of the crisis in Syria due to the rapidly growing Jordanian local population. Nevertheless, Jordan decided to include all Syrian children in the state school system. Since April 2012, they have been offered primary and secondary education free of charge. Whenever the available places were not sufficient, double shifts were set up, and UNICEF established its own educational infrastructure in the official refugee camps (Culbertson, 2015, 2016). However, all these measures are still inadequate today, although the retention rate of children in Jordanian schools appears to be comparable to or even higher than in Syrian schools prior to the conflict (Krafft et al., 2022). In addition, more than 215,000 refugee children have been born in Jordan since 2011 and are now entitled to be integrated into the school system when they are old enough to attend (Kabir et al., 2020).

## 3 Complementary Non-formal Education Programs

Despite all the efforts of the Jordanian school authorities, Syrian children dropping out of school remains a particular challenge to this day. According to a national survey by the International Labour Organization (ILO) (International Labour Organization, 2017), Syrian refugee children still had the lowest school attendance rate in Jordan in 2016. Compared to the 95% school attendance rate of Jordanian children aged 5 to 17, the proportion of Syrian children in this age group was 72.5%, and more than 60% of Syrian children aged 15 to 17 were not attending school at that time (International Labour Organization, 2017).

Due to Jordan's regulations, dropouts who have not attended school for more than a year cannot simply return to formal education programs. If they have then exceeded the average age, it is no longer possible for them to be integrated into public schools (UNESCO, 2023). The Jordanian Ministry of Education has therefore developed extracurricular programs together with NGOs to enable children to reintegrate as quickly as possible. This is also to prevent further dropouts (Khater, 2023), such as through UNICEF's dropout or

catch-up programs (UNICEF 2020, 2022). These initiatives are certified and officially accredited. They have been integrated into the existing school structures or focus their services on the official camps and community centers in the country's regions (Majthoub, 2021).

#### **4 School Integration Assistance in Agricultural Areas**

Poverty is seen as one of the main reasons for Syrian children dropping out of school. 83% of Syrian refugees outside the official camps live below the poverty line (NRC, 2023), and 90% of refugee families must reduce spending on their daily needs. This is not without consequences for the education of school-age children. Many heads of household try to improve their families' income through child labor, or they marry off their daughters very early in the hopes that this will provide them with better care (ACAPS, 2023).

Child labor is considered a particularly central problem in Jordanian agriculture and has increased significantly in recent years. According to Insaf Nizam, ILO consultant on child labor in Jordan,

*"We know that many children do not go to school ... and so we are looking at ways to improve services to support children and their families to get children out of the fields and back into the classroom"* (International Labour Organization, 2018).

To this end, the ILO has established local committees and centers and conducts awareness-raising campaigns in rural areas, working closely with agricultural workers' families. It also addresses the problem from a legal perspective, focusing on laws and regulations to reduce child labor in agriculture and reporting known cases to the relevant authorities, as Jordan is a signatory to both ILO conventions No. 138 and No. 182 against child labor. This dual mandate of assistance and monitoring fulfills both the mandate to focus on the well-being and reality of families with children, and to act on behalf of society to ensure compliance with child labor laws.

The ILO has achieved initial successes through this work. In Mafraq and the Jordan Valley, for example, 450 children were assisted in giving up their work in agriculture, and return to school, by enabling them to access the local education centers. They were accompanied by a case management service and received psychosocial support along with their families. Many children have not only lost years of schooling due to displacement but are also traumatized and struggle with mental health issues. This means that attending school alone is not enough to simply continue as well as successfully complete their education (Human Rights Watch 2016, 2020).

Looking at the real numbers of school dropouts in rural areas, there is still a long way to go before this concept can show success across the board. In a joint report by the Jordanian Ministry of Education and UNICEF, it was estimated that more than 50,640 Syrian children were out of school in 2020 (UNICEF, 2020). Cooperation between international humanitarian organizations, and the Jordanian government in the registration of school-age children is therefore still of great importance in order to reduce the number of school dropouts in rural areas and to encourage their return to school (Turner, 2023).

## 5 Social Space Exploration for School Dropouts in Random Camps

Spatial models are an important instrument for recording the Syrian population engaged in agricultural work. In such instances, the mobilities caused by harvest times become visible throughout the year (Harvey, 2005). Since developments in a society and space as a social space cannot be separated from one another, they also open a view of the differences between random camps in agricultural regions that are close to the city, and those that are more inaccessible.

A group of prospective social workers from the German Jordanian University (GJU) examined the living conditions of school-age children in rural areas as part of their ethnographic studies. General observations were made and following the exemplary construction of the area in the sense of an agricultural mapping, an in-depth analysis was carried out based on two randomly selected camps. The presentation was qualitatively supplemented by focus group discussions with parents from these camps and with the help of expert interviews. Finally, the geographical and social dimensions were correlated in order to gain a better understanding of the social processes that lead to numerous school dropouts in rural regions (cf. Macher, 2007).

### 5.1 Random Camps

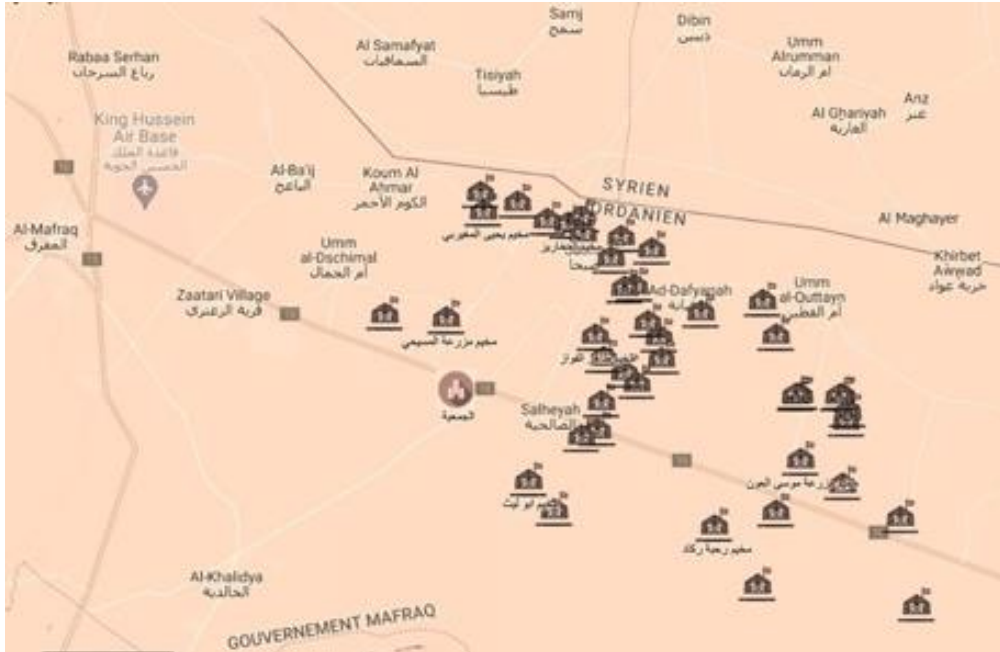
Random camps, also known as 'vulnerable out-of-reach communities', are informal tent settlements in Jordan. These camps are unorganized, mostly spontaneously planned and unstable shelters. UNHCR officially classifies these as 'makeshift camps', set up to provide temporary accommodation. They are particularly common in cultivated regions (Perosino, 2023), and serve as accommodation for Syrian agricultural worker families who are employed in harvesting, irrigation, or other agricultural and livestock activities.

The term 'random camps' is not an accurate description of these camps, as UN-Habitat defines randoms as unplanned settlements that do not comply with building regulations (Moor, 2001; Elfouly, 2017). The camps in Jordan are characterized less by their unstable construction than by their mobility, as these camps frequently change their location, and the residents move with them in search of new job opportunities to secure their families' livelihoods. Due to the informal and temporary nature of the camps, there are also no legal regulations to protect their residents. They are excluded from most state services and receive hardly any support from the municipalities. There is a lack of water, electricity, and basic sanitary facilities. Consequently, people are dependent on neighborly help and volunteers. Though some camps are permanent, others are set up depending on the harvest seasons in the specific regions. These camps always take in new Syrian families when they look for work elsewhere at the end of a season. As the families move together from one camp to the next, numerous children of all ages living in these shelters, have little opportunity to integrate into the normal daily routine of a school year due to the constant mobility.

Following agreements with most farmers and plantation owners, the camps are grouped around a central person who has taken on the role of mediator between the owners of the farms and the Syrian families. The accommodations usually house 20 to 50 families. Occasionally, up to 100 families live in one of these camps. They are settled in the Jordan Valley, in the regions around the cities of Irbid and Mafraq, as well as in other agricultural areas in northern and central Jordan. Here is an example of the distribution of such camps

in Mafraq governorate, north of the country and east of Za'atari Camp, along the border with Syria.

**Figure 1: Camps in Mafraq area**



Source: Courtesy of 2022 Child Care Charity Association, created in 2022.

During the period studied by the Child Charity Association in 2022, 1,593 households were counted, in which 7,911 people lived. These were comprised of 2,141 boys and 2,022 girls under the age of 18, meaning more than half of the children living in these camps were under the age of 18.

Random camps are not only scattered and found in all agricultural regions, but their numbers are also steadily increasing. They have become a default option for those Syrian refugee families who do not live in official camps and cannot afford regular solutions in host communities (Tiltnes et al., 2019). These are the most vulnerable and impoverished Syrian households in Jordan. They have little access to mainstream refugee assistance, since relief efforts are mainly focused on those living in official camps or host communities and are difficult to register due to their mobility. Families living in these unofficial camps not only struggle to make a living, but also face numerous obstacles in enabling their children to attend school.

As part of the ethnographic field research, a study group visited these irregular camps that had pitched their tents on the outskirts of farms. The camps housed 20-30 families with children of all ages, depending on harvest requirements, and the size of the associated plantations.

**Figure 2: Tents of the families with 'green houses' of the plantation in the background.**



Source: Christine Huth-Hildebrandt

Some of the agricultural camps in or near urban areas could be reached by car and are therefore easily accessible for school buses. It was more difficult to visit the more hidden settlements in the Jordan Valley, some of which could only be visited with the help of staff from the International Labour Organization (ILO), since they could not be reached without special knowledge of their location (Zuhair, 2022).

## 5.2 A-Lubban and Al-Jama'an Al-Aoun Camp

Two of these camps are described below, in which focus group discussions were held with parents of the children living there. Al-Lubban camp is in Amman governorate, the most urbanized governorate in Jordan, close to the capital. In this camp, the residents only experience a short period of stability. Due to the agricultural production conditions, which are mostly organized in huge greenhouse farms, and due to the differentiated cultivation with different harvest times, these residents must keep changing camps from one harvest season time to another.

**Figures 3, 4 & 5: Construction of 'green houses' at planting time - during the growing season with rainwater storage**



Source: Christine Huth-Hildebrandt

The second camp, Al-Jama'an Al-Aoun, is in the governorate of Mafraq, a very sparsely populated region in the north. Compared to the Amman governorate, this camp is stable. Not only are vegetables grown in Mafraq, but the region is also the largest livestock farm in the country. A constant need for labor explains the stability of the camp.

**Figures 6 & 7: Livestock market**



Source: Christine Huth-Hildebrandt

### 5.2.1 A-Lubban Camp

The Al-Lubban Camp is located near the small town of Al-Lubban, east-south of the capital Amman. The residents of the camp, around 50 people in 30 tents, left Syria between 2012 and 2013. They mainly come from the surrounding areas of Homs and Hama. Since then, they have moved around and worked in many agricultural areas from the north to the south of Jordan.

Their tents are placed close together and form a living unit. Some of them have been replaced by traditional tents made from cattle hair, made by the women of the camp themselves, to provide better protection from the heat or cold.

**Figure 8: Residential unit**



Source: Ali Al'Ali



A space was kept free in the middle to create a round village.

**Figure 9: Free space**



Source: Ali Al'Ali

Most basic necessities are lacking. Although the camp is supplied with water by the farm owners, drinking water must be bought by the residents in the surrounding villages. There is no permanent access to electricity. The people obtain their electricity informally by tapping into the lines of nearby electricity pylons, or they get it from the farm owner's generators, which are powered by solar panels.

**Figure 10: Tapped power line**



Source: Ali Al'Ali

**Figure 11: Solar systems on the farm**



Source: Ali Al'Ali

The proximity of the tents to the workplaces on the surrounding farms is important for the residents. Daily working hours can be better optimized as they are paid by the hour and wages are very low.

**Figure 12: Plantation with camp in the background**



Source: Ali Al'Ali

The livelihood must be earned day by day, so the families do not have a stable income. It fluctuates from week to week, and from season to season, depending on the needs of the farm owners. During harvest time, everyone must help, including the women and children to save some money for the winter. There are few work opportunities for them during this time. All this has consequences for the children's education. On the one hand, it is hardly possible to attend a public school from the camp if no transport is organized and provided

by NGOs. On the other hand, children are required to work full-time to generate a minimum level of food security for their families (International Labour Organization, 2014).

### 5.2.2 *Al-Jama'an Al-Aoun Camp*

The Al-Jama'an Al-Aoun Camp is in the Mafraq governorate in the north of the country, south of the village of Al-Dafianah. The region is 60% rural and has the highest poverty rate. The camp is surrounded by a large farm. Summer and winter crops are grown there, and livestock farming is practiced. This has allowed the families to develop relative stability, as they are not only needed for one harvest season a year.

The camp is considered one of the largest refugee camps in Jordan. Around 100 Syrian families from different regions of Syria currently live there. The income of the people in this camp is also difficult to determine, as it varies depending on the number of family members, their daily working hours and agricultural yields. According to the residents, it is barely enough for them, so more than half of the households in this camp receive state food aid.

**Figure 13: Camp view**



Source: Ali Al'Ali

Here, too, the row of tents forms a circular unit. Roses entwine everywhere around the tents and refer to a geographical location of planned permanent presence. "It's these roses that remind me of Syria and what I left behind there," said one of the farm workers, explaining their plantings.

**Figure 14: Camp view**



Source: Ali Al'Ali

Some families have been living in this camp for several years, especially those who care for the elderly and have school-age children. They are tired of moving around and have settled in this place, where they make do with the bare necessities of life. The inhabitants have brought their dialect, religion, their customs, and their social norms with them and hold on to these traditions. Their permanent settlement has enabled them to build relationships with their neighbors, and good communication has developed within the local communities. With the help of donations, the residents were able to set up a small school equipped with the most necessary school materials. From time to time, educational programs are offered by volunteers, but without continuity.

## **6 The Camp Residents and their Children**

Focus group discussions were held with the residents from both camps, Al-Lubban and Al-Jama'an Al-Aoun Camp. Most of the residents in both camps had experience in agriculture and livestock farming, with few also working in other professions. They came from Hama, Aleppo, Homs, Dair Al Zour and Al-Hasakah. Their length of stay in these camps varied. Most of them had been living in different camps since 2012. For each group, 10 parents with children between the ages of 6 and 17 were approached, presented with the background to the study and given permission to use the results of the interviews. One group consisted of parents with children who had gone to school but had dropped out. Two further group interviews were conducted with parents whose children were not enrolled in any school. The family composition in these groups varied, with most of the children being between 6 and 15 years old at the time of the survey.

### **6.1 Mobility and Dropping out of School**

Specifically, 15 of the 30 participants stated that their children did not participate in any formal or informal education program. 12 parents mentioned that their children had attended school in the past but had then dropped out. The reasons for dropping out of school or deciding not to attend school at all were similar in both camps. Parents cited their frequent moves as the reason for dropping out of school. As harvest times do not coincide with the school year cycle, the amount of time missed per move – which in some

cases had to take place several times a year - was often so great that it could not be made up without help. In addition, children in Jordan are only admitted at the beginning of the school year. As a result, there were always new absences and delays, which led to frustration and often to children dropping out of school altogether.

## **6.2 Accessibility of Public Schools**

According to parents, attending school for the children is difficult, even if they have settled permanently in a camp. The distances from the camp to the schools are too great. They cannot be reached on foot and there is usually no or only expensive transportation for the children. One participant explained: "There is no school in the camp itself and we cannot afford to send our children to schools outside the camp." The transportation costs alone make school attendance unaffordable if a family has several school-age children. "I have five children for whom I need 70 JOD per month for transportation. I am the only breadwinner in my family. It is impossible to send them all to a state school," is how one father describes his situation.

## **6.3 Supplementary Educational Opportunities outside the Camps**

According to parents, the educational opportunities offered to children outside the camps are of poor quality and completely inadequate. "My children used to go to school, but they dropped out because the lessons were not good and the teacher was often absent, so they went for nothing", complained another father.

There would only be a two-hour afternoon school for the children, which the families felt was a waste of time because of the travel involved, and the family income was reduced by this loss of time, as the children were absent as workers at this time. In addition, the children were left alone to do the after-work. This meant that only children who were particularly keen to learn made progress. The parents themselves did not find the time to supervise their children's schoolwork after fieldwork. Or they did not feel able to do so due to their own educational deficits.

## **6.4 Child Labor**

In many families, there is an urgent need for the children to work to secure the family income. "My son used to go to school, but he dropped out. He must work to support our family", is how one father describes his family situation. In some cases, the children's work was even the only source of income, as the head of the family was unable to work himself. Most children over the age of twelve worked together with their families, but younger children also helped in the fields. This work takes priority over education and, according to one of the participants, "education can only be important once basic needs have been met. Bread has priority over education."

## **6.5 Bullying and Violence**

Some parents expressed concern about the well-being and safety of their children, as they were repeatedly exposed to violence and bullying in schools. One participant explained: "What happened in Syria is still a terrible nightmare for all members of my family." They would not expose their children, who had fled the violence, to a situation in which they would be frightened or discriminated against again. One father described how his son "was exposed to many embarrassing situations when he attended remedial classes. He was ashamed because he was much older than his classmates at school." According to

most of the panelists, for them it would be easier to teach the children the basics in the camp than in the overcrowded state schools.

## **6.6 Educational Offerings in the Camps**

In the opinion of the parents, the camps need their own offerings. The different levels of education in small groups within the camp could also be better considered in this way.

"In the remedial classes, no distinction is made between school dropouts and non-school dropouts, so six-year-olds have to learn together with thirteen-year-olds, which leads to tensions. There is a reason why this is not possible in public schools. And then suddenly this is supposed to work in afternoon classes?"

According to the parents, this is a double standard that is illogical from a learning perspective and is only to be understood from a quantitative perspective to include all camp children in the learning programs.

## **6.7 Self-help and Parents' Initiatives**

Not all parents have come to terms with the lack of educational prospects for their children and have tried to contribute to providing their children with a minimum level of education. So far, this has been done on a completely uncoordinated and voluntary basis in both camps. There have been some initiatives by parents, such as setting up an education tent or hiring a trained person to teach the children. Some parents try to teach their children to read and write themselves. Others hired teachers. "We parents funded a teacher for the camp to teach our children, but that didn't work for long." However, such projects always encounter difficulties, "as there is a lack of funding and support to cover the basic needs for such activities."

## **6.8 Future Prospects for Camp Children**

Some parents from both camps emphasized their generally negative attitude towards educational opportunities for their children in Jordan. Some even rejected any outside interference and initiative, fearing that they could get into trouble without a work permit if the NGOs passed on information from the camps to official authorities.

The parents did not believe that schooling would improve their children's prospects, as the regulations meant that they would have no chance of vocational training after leaving school and could therefore only expect employment opportunities as agricultural workers or unskilled laborers in the future.

Facing an uncertain future and being aware of the fact that they are likely to remain displaced from Syria, schooling is considered a waste of time and money for some, so they will make no effort to improve their children's educational situation. Under the current circumstances, it is unfortunately enough to learn reading, writing and arithmetic in the camp itself. But even this cannot be guaranteed to the children due to their mobile lifestyle.

## **7 Assessments from the Expert Panel**

Following the discussions with the parents, expert panels were held with ministerial education experts and representatives of humanitarian organizations who are familiar with the situation of Syrian refugee children in general, and specifically with the situation in the rural refugee camps. All participants equally emphasized that the situation of

children in the camps remains a major challenge and requires far more interventions to reach all children in the agricultural regions in the first place.

One participant on the panel explained that the educational initiatives offered by humanitarian organizations have so far covered at most 30-40% of the needs in the random camps. Additionally, these initiatives are more likely to be accepted by children living in the urban environment or in the official camps (UNICEF, 2021). Some of the initiatives therefore work with education platforms such as Microsoft Teams to ensure that the services also reach children in the informal camps. Nevertheless, it is admitted that "a large number of children of all ages in the camps are still completely out of school", according to a representative of the ministry. Nevertheless, there are concepts and initiatives for voluntary work. These educational initiatives are predominantly informal, without opportunities for the children to acquire formal qualifications for school-leaving certificates, and therefore do not represent lasting solutions. In addition, many initiatives exist side by side in an uncoordinated manner and it is rather random which children are reached by these offers.

The way in which teaching can take place in the camps is also a problem. One of the providers said:

"Our program is aimed specifically at students who attend public school. They are taught online and assigned a tutor outside of public schools who monitors their progress and teaches them."

However, this is only possible if the children attend an official school and stay in the same camp permanently. If they move away, contact with them is lost. Although some organizations have tried to develop holistic education concepts for the camps, these have failed due to the mobility of the families. Due to the influx and outflow of people, permeable and flexible concepts are therefore required so that no new gaps in education arise for the children during a school year. However, the providers have so far been unable to cope with this and have not developed or planned any mobile concepts.

The representatives of the Jordanian authorities agreed to a statement of a spokesperson for the Ministry of Education who outlined,

"there is an urgent need to first identify the need for educational programs for the random children and assess the results of the existing educational provision in some areas to determine whether the work can be done on a larger scale, more comprehensively and more accurately."

Strategies to comprehensively reach the individual camps where tens of thousands of children are currently growing up to provide them with education and special qualifications in a non-formal way have not yet been developed. This is due to the situation of family mobility described above, and thus it should not be so much of a conceptual challenge for the providers, but rather a logistical one.

## **8 Mobile School Concepts for Random Camps**

Jordan is not the only country where families are not settled, and considerations have had to be made to ensure that their children receive an education. There are models for children whose families move, who are forced to work due to poverty or for whom there is no public school nearby.

Corresponding concepts have been developed in some African countries, India, Pakistan and Iran (Schaller & Würzle, 2020). The 'Moving School Unit' in Berhampur, in the Indian

state of Orissa, offers children a flexible education. Instead of placing them in an institutional setting, the project works in the children's own environment. A team of teachers travels with the teaching materials to the slums, but also to factories and train stations, where small groups of children can take part in learning activities. In Senegal, mobile schools have been built as well. When the herders leave a place, the school follows them. The teacher thus becomes a "nomad teacher", has a "nomad classroom" and teaches in a "nomad school". Additionally, such mobile schools can be found in Mali. They can be set up, dismantled and transported at any time and thus correspond exactly to the living habits of the nomads. In other words: in these models, the school system is adapted to the needs of the target group and not the target group to the school system.

Strategies for children in the random camps may be developed from these concepts. However, determining the current support needs of the children in the flexible camps is no easy task, as it must be constantly updated depending on the region, and harvest time so that the children of the families are not overlooked, and the activities do not come to nothing.

This all seems to be less a question of money, and more a question of developing a concept for a mobile school system. It is initially a logistical challenge to develop and install a system that considers the flexibility of the families – a system that 'moves' with the families' children and thus considers the changing needs in the individual camps.

This would mean registering the camps and their inhabitants with the school needs of their children in the agricultural regions, and subsequently working with them to install a system that documents the onward migration and passes on the changes in needs in the individual camps to the education providers so that no child is left alone. At the same time, a mobile school concept may be developed, like the one-class schools, the so-called 'dwarf schools', in which children of different age groups are taught by one teacher at the same time, with the aim of achieving as many school-leaving qualifications as possible.

Such an overall concept is certainly a challenge. On the one hand it is challenging to develop the logistics of overall schooling in the irregular camps, and on the other hand it is difficult to set up a model of flexible classrooms and develop a training concept for teachers who are willing to set off to teach as flexible teachers in a mobile 'dwarf school' in the respective random camps.

Given today's technical possibilities and logistical capabilities in a country that has a well-developed mobile network, where concepts for non-formal education have already been developed and where concepts and plans for online education have been in place since COVID-19, mobile schools would be a rewarding task, as materials for all classes have been produced for online schooling, so that basic material exists and can be integrated in an logistic concept for the mobile schools. Although complicated, it does not seem unfeasible through concerted action. Jordan could thus play a pioneering role in the development of educational concepts for mobile families in the region, by taking a further step towards 'education for all', regardless of where the children and their families are currently located.

## 9 Results and Conclusion

Progress in the education of children of mobile Syrian agricultural worker families in state schools can only be achieved across the board if the education system is structured more



flexibly in the future. One needs to rethink some of its rigid regulations, for example by allowing lateral entrants to take part in lessons during the school year after a transfer.

On the other hand, extracurricular education providers should develop holistic concepts that enable children, regardless of where they live during the harvest period, so that they can start individually at the level of education they have achieved and take the next step from there.

Mobile schools and a standardized education concept in the form of an online modular system with flexible, individualized examination options could help motivate parents and school dropouts to not refuse schooling altogether.

## References

- Alzouabi, L. T. & Nashwan, A. J. (2021). The living conditions of Syrian asylum seekers in Jordan's governorates outside camps and the motives to immigrate to Europe. *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Studies*, 3(11), 84-96. <https://doi.org/10.32996/jhsss.2021.3.11.7>
- Bank, A. (2016). Syrian refugees in Jordan: Between protection and marginalization. *Giga Focus Middle East*, 3, 1-10.
- Battram, T. (2002). *Ein 300-Seelendorf auf der Schwabebischen Alb Schulhaus einer Einklassenschule*. [A 300-soul village in the Swabian Alb. Schoolhouse of a one-class school]. University of Ulm. <https://www.wikidata.de-de.nina.az/Einklassenschule.html>
- Beste, A. (2015). *Education provision for Syrian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey: Preventing a "lost generation"*. The United Nations University Institute on Globalization, Culture and Mobility. <https://i.unu.edu/media/gcm.unu.edu/publication/2352/AliceBestePolicyReport2015EducationRefugeesFinal.pdf>
- Children of Jordan (2021). *Children of Jordan: An Overview*. <https://www.childrenofjordan.org/en/children-of-jordan-an-overview/>
- Culbertson, S., & Constant, L. (2015). *Education of Syrian Refugee Children: Managing the Crisis in Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan*. RAND Corporation. [http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research\\_reports/RR800/RR859/RAND\\_RR859.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR800/RR859/RAND_RR859.pdf)
- Culbertson, S., Ling, T., Henham, M.-L., Corbett, J., Karam, R. T., Pankowska, P., Saunders, C. L., Bellasio, J., & Baruch, B. (2016). *Evaluation of the Emergency Education Response for Syrian Refugee Children and Host Communities in Jordan*. RAND Corporation. [https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research\\_reports/RR1200/RR1203/RAND\\_RR1203.pdf](https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR1200/RR1203/RAND_RR1203.pdf)
- Elfouly, H. A. (2017). Adapting a composite street connectivity index as a spatial tool for approaching informal settlements in Egypt; Applied to Giza City. *International Journal of Development and Sustainability*, 6(8), 712-727.
- Hamarnah, M. (2021). *Jordan Response Plan: for the Syria crisis 2021*. The Jordan Response Platform. <https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/NewNarrat.pdf>
- Harvey, D. (2005). *Spaces of Neoliberalization: Towards a theory of uneven geographical development*. Franz Steiner.
- Human Rights Watch (2016, August 16). "We're afraid for their future:" Barriers to education for Syrian refugee children in Jordan. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/08/16/were-afraid-their-future/barriers-education-syrian-refugee-children-jordan>
- Human Rights Watch (2020). Jordan: Syrian children denied education. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/01/22/jordan-syrian-children-denied-education>
- International Labour Organization (2014). *Report of the rapid assessment on: Child labor in the urban informal sector in three governorates of Jordan (Amman, Mafraq, and Irbid)*. [https://www.ilo.org/beirut/publications/WCMS\\_246207/lang-en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/beirut/publications/WCMS_246207/lang-en/index.htm)

- International Labour Organization (2017). Jordan National Child Labour Survey 2016 – Analytical Report. [https://www.ilo.org/all-publications-for-country?field\\_topics\\_target\\_id=5661&field\\_document\\_type\\_target\\_id=All&field\\_ilo\\_local\\_classification\\_target\\_id=All&cf0=936](https://www.ilo.org/all-publications-for-country?field_topics_target_id=5661&field_document_type_target_id=All&field_ilo_local_classification_target_id=All&cf0=936)
- International Labour Organization (2018). *Decent Work Country Programme: The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (2018-2022)*. <https://www.ilo.org/resource/jordan-decent-work-country-programme-2018-2022>
- Kabir, R., Al-Mamun, M. A., & Islam, M. M. (2020). Challenges to education access for Syrian refugee children in Jordan. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 33(1), 130-148.
- Khater, M. (2023). *Refugee children's right to education: Education of Syrian refugee children in Jordan – Reality and prospects*. Access to Justice in Eastern Europe. [https://ajee-journal.com/upload/attaches/att\\_1687496717.pdf](https://ajee-journal.com/upload/attaches/att_1687496717.pdf)
- Krafft, C., Sieverding, M., Berri, N., Keo, C., & Sharpless, M. (2022). Education interrupted: Enrollment, attainment, and dropout of Syrian refugees in Jordan. *The Journal of Development Studies*, 58(9), 1874-1892. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220388.2022.2075734>
- Macher, H.-J. (2007). *Methodische Perspektiven auf Theorien des Sozialen Raumes: Zu Henri Levebvre, Pierre Bourdieu und David Harvey*. Verein zur Förderung der sozialpolitischen Arbeit.
- Majthoub, O. (2021). Education provision for Syrian refugee children in Jordan. *Kosice Security Revue*, 11(1), 53-69.
- Moor, J. (2001). Cities at risk. *UN-Habitat*, 7(4), 1-5.
- NRC (2023). *NRC's operations in Jordan*. [https://www.nrc.no/globalassets/pdf/fact-sheets/2023/factsheet\\_jordan\\_may2023.pdf](https://www.nrc.no/globalassets/pdf/fact-sheets/2023/factsheet_jordan_may2023.pdf)
- Perosino, L. (2023). Comprehensive overview of the agricultural sector in Jordan. *Technical Reports*, 72, 1-32
- Potocky, M., & Naseh, M. (2020). *Best Practices for Social Work with Refugees and Immigrants*. Columbia University Press.
- Schaller, T., & Würzle, R. (2020). *Mobile schools: Pastoralism, ladders of learning, teacher Education*. Barbara Budrich Publishing.
- Tiltnes, Å. A., Zhang, H., & Pedersen, J. (2019). *The living conditions of Syrian refugees in Jordan: Results from the 2017-2018 survey of Syrian refugees inside and outside camps*. Fafo. <https://www.faf.no/images/pub/2019/20701.pdf>
- Turner, L. (2023). Who is a refugee in Jordan? Hierarchies and exclusions in the refugee recognition regime. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 36(4), 877-896. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fead083>
- UNESCO (2023, March 3). *Education Sector Working Group organized by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education*. <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/education-sector-working-group-organized-ministry-education-and-higher-education>.
- UNHCR (2023, April 6). *Registered refugees and asylum seekers in Jordan (as of March 2023)*. Reliefweb. <https://reliefweb.int/report/jordan/registered-refugees-and-asylum-seekers-jordan-31-march-2023>
- UNICEF (2015). *Curriculum, accreditation and certification for Syrian children in Syria, Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt: Regional Study*. Education4Resilience. <https://education4resilience.iiep.unesco.org/fr/resources/2015/curriculum-accreditation-and-certification-syrian-children-syria-turkey-lebanon>.
- UNICEF (2020). *Jordan country report on out-of-school children*. <https://www.unicef.org/jordan/reports/jordan-country-report-out-of-school-children>
- UNICEF (2021). *Baseline socio-economic assessment of households with children and youth living in informal tented settlements in Jordan*. <https://www.unicef.org/jordan/media/7581/file/ITS%20Baseline%20Report.pdf>.
- UNICEF (2022). *Summative impact evaluation of the UNICEF Jordan Makani Program*. <https://www.unicef.org/jordan/media/11671/file/Makani%20summative%20impact%20evaluation%20English.pdf>
- Zetter, R. (2011). Unlocking the protracted displacement of refugees and internally displaced persons: An overview. *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, 30(4), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1093/rsq/hdr015>

Zuhair, S. (2022). The impact of Jordan's informal agriculture sector on women in Deir Alla.  
Unpublished MA Thesis.

### ***Legal Materials***

ILO Convention No. 138 [https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed\\_norm/@normes/documents/normativeinstrument/wcms\\_c138\\_de.htm](https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_norm/@normes/documents/normativeinstrument/wcms_c138_de.htm)

ILO Convention No. 182 [https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed\\_norm/@normes/documents/normativeinstrument/wcms\\_c182\\_de.htm](https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_norm/@normes/documents/normativeinstrument/wcms_c182_de.htm)