Madhu Singh

# PATHWAYS TO EMPOWERMENT

## Recognizing the competences of Syrian refugees in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey

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**Beirut Office**

The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) undertakes research, capacity-building, networking and publication on lifelong learning with a focus on adult and continuing education, literacy and non-formal basic education. Its publications are a valuable resource for education researchers, planners, policy-makers and practitioners.

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The recognition, validation and accreditation (RVA) of non-formal and informal learning outcomes is not a privilege or a luxury. For refugees of the Syria crisis, it can be a transformative, life-changing mechanism. It provides them with an alternative route to a qualification, fosters a commitment to lifelong learning, and can help individuals to enter the labour market or get a better job. Crucially, too, it gives refugees an opportunity to participate in their host society, helping promote social inclusion and build more sustainable, cohesive communities. This publication is intended to provide insight and guidance to policy-makers who wish to make a difference in these areas, and offer Syrian refugees genuine 'pathways to empowerment'.

This publication is the result of close collaboration between the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), in Hamburg, Germany, and the UNESCO Beirut Office and Regional Bureau for Education in the Arab States. The idea of studying and analysing the best current international practice emerged from an international meeting of experts – *Towards a policy framework for securing the recognition, regularization and certification of non-formal education: Creating synergies between formal and non-formal settings in the Arab region* – held in Beirut in January 2016. Since then, the issue has risen further up the policy agenda, as the effects of this protracted conflict continue to be felt far beyond Syria's borders.

This publication maps and analyses how the non-formal and informal learning and competences of Syrian refugee youth and young adults living in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey can be recognized, validated and accredited. The aim is to provide national and sectoral stakeholders in these countries with critical guidance in establishing national policies and building robust recognition mechanisms to ensure that refugees who have dropped out of school, interrupted their education, or lost their qualification documents, are able to enter or re-enter education and training or integrate into the world of work.

While policy-makers in the region have prioritized the issue of recognizing and validating non-formal learning, it remains a major challenge to develop systems that do this effectively. The aim of this publication,

therefore, is to lay some of the essential groundwork for setting up such a recognition system, enhancing understanding of RVA mechanisms to provide a basis for concrete solutions that can be implemented by national and sectoral stakeholders.

UNESCO has been actively involved in developing and promoting RVA mechanisms since 2005. It understands that the creation of procedures for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning is one of the key strategies to make visible and give value to the hidden competences that individuals have attained in various settings, and to promote lifelong learning. In 2012, the *UNESCO Guidelines for the Recognition, Validation and Accreditation of the Outcomes of Non-formal and Informal Learning* (UIL, 2012) were published. They made a clear case for RVA of the outcomes of non-formal and informal learning as 'a key lever in making lifelong learning a reality'. UNESCO's strategic objectives and the Sustainable Development Goal 4 targets echo this vision by calling for programmes for young people and adults that are of high quality and inclusive, and feature effective learning pathways leading to a qualification, including pathways based on recognition of the outcomes of non-formal and informal learning.

The recommendations presented in this publication highlight the importance of comprehensive national strategies – rather than fragmented and ad hoc projects – for creating synergies between formal, non-formal and informal learning at all levels of the education and training system and across all sectors. The report argues that recognition of the non-formal learning outcomes and competences of Syrian refugees cannot be the sole responsibility of education and training authorities. It must involve a broad group of stakeholders, including employers, trade unions, industry, and education and training institutions, as well as civil society organizations. It also contends that the establishment of a recognition system for Syrian refugees should be seen not as a stand-alone measure, but as part of the host countries' ongoing education and training reforms and qualifications framework developments. Recognition gives everybody the possibility to have their learning and competences made visible and accepted within agreed-upon assessment standards. In this way, the establishment of recognition systems promotes more socially inclusive and cohesive societies and fosters peace.

These recommendations are intended to contribute to dialogue between national authorities and social partners at national and regional levels, and to guide policy actions and RVA practices adapted to the challenges facing countries in the region. Many of the lessons of this study have relevance to countries in other parts of the world, where the recognition of refugees' learning outcomes is also a critical issue.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides a comprehensive framework to develop and promote policy responses conducive to life-long learning for all. This publication demonstrates the value of RVA as a powerful mechanism for opening up pathways to further education, learning, recognition and, ultimately, empowerment for some of the most vulnerable, marginalized and disadvantaged people in today's world.

**David Atchoarena**
Director, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning
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# ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| **AFAD** | Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency of Turkey |
| **ALP** | Alternative learning pathways |
| **CAQA** | Centre for Accreditation and Quality Assurance (Jordan) |
| **CEDEFOP** | European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training |
| **CoHE** | Council of Higher Education (Turkey) |
| **CVET** | Continuing vocational education and training |
| **DGMM** | Directorate General of Migration Management (Ministry of Interior, Turkey) |
| **ECCE** | Early childhood care and education |
| **ESWG** | Education Sector Working Group (Turkey) |
| **ETF** | European Training Foundation |
| **EU** | European Union |
| **ICT** | Information and communications technology |
| **IDMC** | Internal Displacement Management Centre (Turkey) |
| **IDP** | Internally displaced person |
| **IFRC** | International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies |
| **ILO** | International Labour Organization |
| **INEE** | Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies |
| **IOM** | International Organization for Migration |
| **IPA** | The Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (Turkey) |
| **IVET** | Initial vocational education and training |
| **JRP** | Jordan Response Plan |
| **JRPSC** | Jordan Response Platform for the Syrian Crisis |
| **KRG** | Kurdistan Regional Government |
| **KRI** | Kurdistan Region of Iraq |
| **LNQF** | Lebanese National Qualifications Framework |
| **MEHE** | Ministry of Education and Higher Education (Lebanon) |
| **MENA** | Middle East and North Africa |
| **MoE** | Ministry of education |
| **MoNE** | Ministry of National Education (Turkey) |
| **MOOC** | Massive open online course |
| **MoPIC** | Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (Jordan) |
| **NAQAAE** | National Authority for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Education (Egypt) |

| | |
|---|---|
| **NFE** | Non-formal education |
| **NGO** | Non-governmental organization |
| **NOS** | National Occupational Standards (Turkey) |
| **NQF** | National qualifications framework |
| **NRC** | Norwegian Refugee Council |
| **ODI** | Overseas Development Institute |
| **OECD** | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| **RACE** | Reaching All Children with Education (Lebanon) |
| **RPL** | Recognition of prior learning |
| **RVA** | Recognition, validation and accreditation |
| **SDGS** | Sustainable Development Goals |
| **TEC** | Temporary education centre (Turkey) |
| **TQF** | Turkish Qualifications Framework |
| **TVET** | Technical and vocational education and training |
| **TVQF** | Technical and Vocational Qualifications Framework |
| **UDHR** | Universal Declaration of Human Rights |
| **UIL** | UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning |
| **UN** | United Nations |
| **UNCSR** | United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees |
| **UNDP** | United Nations Development Programme |
| **UNESCO** | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| **UNFPA** | United Nations Population Fund |
| **UNHCR** | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees |
| **UNICEF** | United Nations Children's Fund |
| **UNOCHA** | United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs |
| **UNRWA** | United Nations Relief and Works Agency |
| **USAID** | United States Agency for International Development |
| **VET** | Vocational education and training |
| **VQA** | Vocational Qualifications Authority (Turkey) |
| **VTC** | Vocational Training Corporation (Jordan) |
| **WBL** | Work-based learning |
| **YEP** | Youth Education Pack |
| **YFJ** | European Youth Forum |
| **YÖBIS** | Educational Management Information System (Turkey) |
| **YTB** | Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities |

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Introduction

Since 2011, millions of Syrians have fled brutal conflict in their homeland to seek refuge in other countries. Millions more remain internally displaced. More than 5.7 million children and youth are in need of educational assistance as a result of this bloody and protracted war (OCHA, 2015) and, with no political solution in sight, it seems likely that the refugee crisis will continue to have a profound impact on neighbouring countries and their education systems. This study examines the issue of valuing and recognizing the non-formal learning and individual competences of Syrian refugee youths (adolescents) and young adults as a means of empowering them, for example to gain a qualification, to enter employment or to escape poverty and social exclusion. Such pathways to empowerment, of course, depend on a range of other factors, such as the prevailing social and economic arrangements and the acknowledgement of political and civic rights, as well as opportunities for education and training at all levels and across all sectors of society: at work, in formal education and in the community. The recognition, validation and accreditation (RVA) of non-formal and informal learning outcomes is key to realizing these opportunities.

This study focuses on five countries – Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey – that share much of the burden of educating refugee children, youth and young adults. Figures for June 2017 indicated that, in Turkey, there are some 3,049,879 Syrian refugees registered, while Lebanon hosts 1,011,366 and Jordan 660,785. In Iraq, most of the refugees are settled in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), with 241,406 Syrian refugees registered. Egypt, meanwhile, has taken 122,228 refugees from Syria (UNHCR, 2017*b*).[1]

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[1] http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php

## Refugee education is limited and uneven

The social and economic impact of this influx of people has been enormous. Public systems of education are overburdened in these countries, which have limited capacity to support new populations and find it difficult to sustain education in protracted refugee situations; demand for education often outstrips supply. This study identified the following educational challenges: children and young people account for approximately half the Syrian refugee population; access to public schools remains low; adapting to a curriculum in a different language is hugely challenging; the school drop-out rate is higher among children outside the camps; there are negative repercussions when previous certificates and diplomas are not recognized; the number of out-of-school children at primary and secondary school age is increasing;[2] teachers lack training; and many adolescents prioritize paid work to support the family over learning.

The limited and uneven nature of the educational opportunities available to Syrian refugees has a significant negative impact on the lives of refugee children, adolescents and young adults in terms of the basic capabilities they are able to develop and the freedoms they enjoy. Lack of education is not only a cause of poverty and low-paid work in the informal sector, but results in basic deprivations leading to social exclusion. This can take the form of a lack of engagement in community life, a lack of motivation to work, low skills and self-confidence, increases in ill-health and morbidity, disruption to family relations and social life, and an accentuation of racial tensions and gender asymmetries. Many Syrian refugee young people and adults take to begging or street peddling (UNESCO, 2013a). The risks of radicalization and self-harm are also high.

[2]  UNHCR estimates that, worldwide, 50 per cent of refugee children at primary school level and 75 per cent of adolescent refugees at secondary education level are out of school (UNHCR, 2017a).

## Forced displacement reinforces the marginalization of adolescents and young adults

Article 22 of the 1951 *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* describes the rights of refugee children to a public education and to certification of their learning achievements. This study, however, deals most essentially with recognition of the learning of those youths and young adults whose schooling has been interrupted for such long periods that they are no longer eligible for formal education. It is most likely that, for young people with few or no qualifications, learning occurs in non-formal and informal settings. In such circumstances, the focus of recognition processes in non-formal learning programmes should be on recognizing and valuing the experience, knowledge and competences of Syrian refugees regardless of how they were acquired. The learning of refugee youth and adults needs to be valued and respected, wherever it was gained, and formal and non-formal learning opportunities should be made available for their re-entry into the education and training system.

Focus group discussions cited in research by the Refugee Studies Centre (Wahby et al., 2014) showed that refugee youth are determined to succeed via education and that they 'highly value and desire education, whether to continue interrupted school, progress to higher education or attain more skills for the labour market' (ibid., p. 14). However, the study also shows that, for many refugee youth and adults, the road to harvesting such major benefits needs to be preceded by a number of smaller intermediary steps. Recognition processes are essential building blocks in the development of adults' motivation, interest, self-esteem and self-confidence.

## Broader understanding of the benefits of recognition processes

The benefits of recognition should be understood not just in terms of access to the labour market or to education and training; the recognition process itself can also potentially increase an individual's capacity to learn and build up their confidence, self-esteem and courage to take up lifelong learning. Recognition involves both the processes that foster empowerment, choice and individual agency, and the creation

of opportunities that refugee youth and adults can exploit, given their personal and social circumstances. Helping realize the potential of Syrian refugees must involve the cultivation of individual agency and motivation to learn and the provision of meaningful opportunities. Both processes and opportunities are important in their own right and each is highly relevant to understanding recognition as a route to empowerment and as a means of enhancing individual capabilities and competences.

## Understanding the learning settings of Syrian refugees

Many activities for refugee children, adolescents and young adults take place in non-formal learning settings. These take different forms:

1.  Some non-formal learning activities are semi-organized, such as state-led second-chance and remedial education, including apprenticeships. These activities often take place alongside formal education programmes and lead to a recognized award, certificate or diploma. They are usually complementary, adjusted to the realities of life as a refugee, and are meant to be equivalent to formal education.
2.  Other kinds of non-formal learning are out-of-school programmes, often run by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations, which can lead to a non-formal certificate – though, in some cases, they lead to none at all. Such programmes could include youth and adult literacy; workplace skills training and continuing vocational training; out-of-school life skills programmes such as health and hygiene, family planning and environmental consciousness; and social and cultural development programmes such as sports, arts and crafts.
3.  Finally, there are informal learning programmes that do not lead to an award. These include self-directed, family-directed and socially directed learning in the workplace, family and local community, and learning that takes place as a result of the interests and activities of individuals (such as through reading newspapers, listening to the radio, visiting museums, using computer media, and so on). There are additional organized activities that provide opportunities for informal learning, such as coaching, mentoring, job rotation,

shadowing, trial and error, and so on. Informal learning can also occur in refugee settings, such as at religious or cultural events, or in youth programmes or online courses. However, different informal learning settings offer different opportunities for learning.

## Non-formal learning programmes in the host countries

Host governments and other stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other international agencies, have promoted non-formal and informal learning opportunities as a crucial way of removing one of the major barriers to empowering refugees: providing refugee children, youth and young adults with the right to education and skills they need.

Non-formal learning programmes already exist for the host countries' own settled inhabitants. With some adaptations, these programmes have, in some cases, been extended to Syrian refugees who may have missed out on a year or more of school or who may have never enrolled in school and are unprepared for formal education.

Certified accelerated second-chance programmes are a key way to allow older children and adolescents to access condensed primary education. They can also maximise opportunities for students to continue on to formal secondary education. However, reintegration into formal education is not an easy task and can be costly (Shah, 2015).

The diversity in types of non-formal education is a key issue in provision for refugees. Rather than pushing individuals into a one-size-fits-all course of study, successful programmes serve all marginalized communities by matching learning to learners' needs.

## Inclusive national strategies to create synergies between formal, non-formal and informal learning in host countries

However, while there are some good examples of non-formal learning programmes in the host countries, the study found that a large number of these programmes remain under-resourced and marginalized; they are not part of a comprehensive national strategy for integrating formal, non-formal and informal learning. Often, there are no overall frameworks for accreditation, neither in terms of quality of programmes nor

in terms of pathways into recognized qualifications. Non-formal learning programmes are mostly limited to elementary and lower-secondary levels and there is a notable neglect of vocational education and training and higher education opportunities for youth and adults. Not only does non-formal learning remain uncertified and unregulated by host governments, it often lacks harmony and coordination among providers.

## Lack of recognition hinders human capital development

Many refugees possess prior learning and knowledge, skills and competences from work and life. However, there are no coherent systems in place to make the competences and experiential learning of refugees visible, and no mechanisms to validate individual skills and competences based on what they know, can do or demonstrate, irrespective of whether they acquired these competences formally, non-formally or informally.

In the absence of mechanisms and procedures for the certification and accreditation of non-formal learning programmes and the recognition of an individual's competences and qualifications, refugees face severe disadvantages in finding decent jobs, migrating to other regions, accessing further education or re-entering education. This hinders the development of human capital and results in the under-utilization of talent.

## Shared norms among stakeholders on the recognition of non-formal learning and competences are needed

A broad and inclusive approach permits simultaneous appreciation of the vital roles many different institutions, including refugee agencies, formal and non-formal educational and training institutions, employers' associations, market-related organizations, national and local government, political parties and other civic institutions, play in the process of recognition, as well as in creating opportunities for open dialogue and debate. Such an approach allows us to acknowledge the important social values that can influence the options available to refugee youth and adults and encourage them to make use of them. Shared norms and approaches among all stakeholders concerning the recognition of the non-formal learning and competences of refugee youth and adults can influence thinking about the role of economic, social

and political freedoms in enhancing and enriching the lives that Syrian refugee youth and adults lead.

## Recognition is an integral part of education systems at all levels

This study clarifies concepts and definitions of recognition of non-formal and informal learning and demonstrates their relevance for Syrian refugee youth and young adults. It goes beyond non-formal education at the elementary and lower-secondary level to emphasize the importance of the formal, non-formal and informal learning of refugees at all levels of the education and training system.

It points to the necessity of developing inclusive and integrated national strategies for formal, non-formal and informal learning, and of making the recognition of non-formal learning programmes and individual competences an integral part of national education systems. In this way, recognized pathways are not only developed for refugee youth and young adults but also for host countries' own vulnerable populations. Given the protracted nature of the crisis, which is generating many thousands of new learners and potential learners, developing recognition systems can be a strong driver for positive change in education systems.

The study maintains that it is time for countries to move beyond individual projects towards a coherent, integrated national lifelong learning strategy in which recognition of prior learning, competences and experience from work and life has a central place. Such a strategy is described in the *UNESCO Guidelines for the Recognition, Validation and Accreditation of the Outcomes of Non-formal and Informal Learning* (UIL, 2012). Operationalizing an inclusive framework for recognizing all forms of learning means developing strategies and actions that take into account the following essential elements: policy and legal foundations involving of all stakeholders; standards and qualifications frameworks, procedures and processes; the professional development of staff engaged in non-formal and informal learning; and recognition of the prior competences and life experience of Syrian refugees. A recognition policy that fosters human capabilities and substantive freedoms requires the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities and their connection to other types of opportunity related to refugees' rights to decent jobs and education, and their political and civic freedoms.

## Key recommendations

The following key recommendations emerged from the study. They are organized to reflect the key components of a national strategy that integrates formal, non-formal and informal learning and includes recognition of past skills and competences.

### Recognition

- Develop a system to recognize Syrian refugees' previous certificates and diplomas as well as the learning and competences that they have acquired non-formally or informally.
- Focus on making visible the abilities and skills of Syrian youth and young adults in order to raise their self-esteem and motivate them to become agents of their own personal, social and economic well-being.
- Ensure that the recognition of non-formal learning programmes and individual competences applies not only to Syrian refugees but also to the settled inhabitants of host countries.

### Progression

- Develop non-formal bridging, supplementary and preparatory courses for Syrian refugees as recognized pathways of progression into further education and training and the world of work.
- Integrate several sources of support, including psychosocial guidance and counselling, into non-formal learning so that refugees can continue onto recognized further education and training pathways or into the world of work.
- Provide more workplace training (including voluntary and community work) at all levels.

### Policies and standards

- Develop a coherent policy framework to create synergies between the formal, non-formal and informal learning of Syrian refugees.

- Establish a legal framework for recognizing the learning undertaken by refugees outside the formal system, with clear and consensually defined stakeholder roles and responsibilities as well as accreditation of recognition providers.
- Provide national arrangements for the recognition of competences and learning outcomes from all learning settings.
- Ensure better coordination and harmonization among non-formal education providers.
- Make recognition practice an integral part of the formal education and training system and of national qualifications frameworks in host countries.
- Specify learning outcomes and competences in order to make the recognition of relevant skills and knowledge more achievable.
- Foster dialogue between stakeholders from different sectors and provide a framework for cross-sector cooperation and mutual understanding.
- Measure the impact of skills recognition on key stakeholders: individuals, employers, training providers and governments.

### Assessment

- Provide both formative and certificate-based assessment.
- Ensure consensus among stakeholders and agencies on the nature of standards based on learning outcomes for the purposes of summative assessment. This is necessary if the results of assessment are to have currency in the education, training and employment system.
- Design competence assessments in partnership with labour market stakeholders to help refugee youth and adults match their existing skills to those in the labour market.

### Staff

- Involve different kinds of practitioners from outside the formal system to support the recognition of learning for Syrian refugees (including facilitators/teachers, advisers and counsellors, assessors, coordinators and managers).

- Provide professional development opportunities so that practitioners:
  - broaden their understanding of assessment and evaluation;
  - increase knowledge of recognition processes;
  - develop the skills to use a variety of assessment methods and tools;
  - review non-formal learning programmes and courses for continuous improvement.
- Promote national and regional networks for recognition, validation and accreditation staff to address the above matters and enhance discussions around recognition.

Syrian refugee students taking part in a course in the Zaatari refugee camp in Northern Jordan.
© UNHCR/Tímea Fauszt

## SECTION  A

# The socio-economic context of current non-formal learning for Syrian refugees

# CHAPTER 1
# CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND, RATIONALE AND METHODOLOGY

## 1.1 Respecting the right to education for refugees

'The right of everyone to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country' (Article 13) was a milestone pronouncement of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948), which originated in the mass movement of refugees after World War II, as did the role of UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

The legal definition of a 'refugee' was set out in the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (UNCSR). It concerns individuals fleeing persecution and is the basis of international refugee law. A refugee is a person who:

> owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.
>
> *Article 1 (A) (2), UNCSR, 1951*

Even though the right to movement comes before the right to education in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), education is considered to be of critical importance. Article 26 states:

> Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall

further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace. Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

*UN, 1948*

Furthermore, in Article 22 of the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, the right to education is considered to be of central importance to the status of refugees.

The Contracting States shall accord to refugees the same treatment as is accorded to nationals with respect to elementary education. The Contracting States shall accord to refugees treatment as favourable as possible, and, in any event, not less favourable than that accorded to aliens generally in the same circumstances, with respect to education other than elementary education and, in particular, as regards access to studies, the recognition of foreign school certificates, diplomas and degrees, the remission of fees and charges and the award of scholarships.

*UNCSR, 1951*

UNESCO's Fifth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA V) in 1997 extended the notion of the right to education to adults. It considered the rights of migrants and refugees to education and adult learning to have a vital role in transferring basic skills for integration and survival (UIE, 1997). However, the conference report lamented that these conventions were some way from being fully applied. Migrants and refugees[3] often become a source of conflict and provoke negative reactions within national populations and host governments (ibid.). These public concerns are usually based on labour competition due to a scarcity of jobs and employment. The presence of refugees is seen as a problem, with anxieties stoked by political slogans, media scare stories that promote fear and perceived injustice, and claims that 'the boat is full'. Such divisive rhetoric plays on popular fears about

[3]  It is important to make the distinction between refugees and migrants clear. Refugees flee their countries involuntarily to save their lives or preserve their freedom, while migrants choose to move in order to improve their future prospects or those of their families.

host communities losing their national identities. They can result in the scapegoating of 'outsiders' who are made to carry the blame for the internal socio-economic problems faced by the host society (ibid.).

While the term 'refugees' confers an important legal status, people often use it to signify the negative or problematic status of a person. Thus, in education, for example, an influx of refugees is often blamed for the 'overcrowding' of public schools and for 'overburdening' the formal education system. Both policy and social discourses represent refugees as problematic and a source of social problems. Such discourses are often 'symbolical constructs' (Bourdieu, 1977, 1998) that serve to promote a sense of inferiority among refugees as well as division between the host country citizens and refugees. Studies highlight the fear, persecution, social exclusion, loss and separation experienced by refugees, though they also show that refugees are usually positive about change and are grateful to be recognized as refugees in the host countries. On arriving in these countries, they enter the refugee system, often living in camps, an arrangement which, from the beginning, constructs and positions refugees as having temporary status in these countries. However, many refugees prefer to live within host communities, often in cities, because cities, unlike camps, allow them to live anonymously, make money and build a better future. But cities also present risks and dangers.

According to UNHCR (2017*a*, pp. 1–2), refugees outside camps are more exposed to exploitation, arrest or detention. They must also, often, compete with local communities for limited resources or, in some cases, for the worst jobs. In large and anonymous cities, it can be a challenge to ensure that refugees and displaced persons find and receive the vital support they need. UNHCR believes that camps should be an exceptional and temporary measure for refugees. Of late, UNHCR's alternative strategy is to work 'to maximize the skills, productivity and experience that displaced populations bring to urban areas … This, in turn, helps to stimulate economic growth and development within host communities, while enhancing universal access to human rights' (ibid., p. 2). According to UNHCR estimates (ibid.), more than 60 per cent of the world's 19.5 million refugees and 80 per cent of 34 million internally displaced persons live in urban environments.

## 1.2 Why recognizing the non-formal learning and competences of Syrian refugees matters

The Syrian crisis has resulted in 1.4 million Syrian refugee children and youth aged between 5 and 17 years arriving in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey (UNHCR, 2017*b*). Given that around 50 per cent of these children do not go to school, host governments and other stakeholders see alternative non-formal learning programmes as a crucial mechanism to provide them with the knowledge and skills they need to survive and thrive following displacement. They also consider education to be an important contributor to peace and security and to lessening the suffering of refugee families. Formal education for refugees takes place in schools in the camps or in double-shift schools in host communities and is accredited by ministries of education. Often, refugee families take it upon themselves to organize non-formal learning programmes, although NGOs, host governments and international agencies also deliver non-formal programmes.

Recognition of non-formal learning is necessary if it is to overcome its marginal position in society. Aside from second-chance education, non-formal learning programmes include youth and adult literacy programmes, skills development programmes, and out-of-school life skills and psychosocial support programmes. These non-formal learning programmes are often under-resourced and lack fully developed curricula. Many also lack an overall framework that would make learning outcomes explicit or build bridges to further learning and qualifications. As well as being uncertified and unrecognized by host governments, non-formal learning programmes often lack hamornized standards or coordination among providers.

In addition to recognizing non-formal learning, it is equally important to recognize individual competences. Many refugees have prior learning and qualifications, as well as work and life experience, but they are usually not able to provide documentation that would either confirm their life experience or certify their level of education, skills or job experience. There are no mechanisms in place to make their competences visible or to certify qualifications based on what they know, can do or demonstrate, irrespective of whether they have attended formal or non-formal education.

In the absence of the accreditation of non-formal learning and recognized competences and qualifications, refugees face severe disadvantages in finding decent jobs, migrating to other regions or accessing further education. This not only hinders the development of human capital and results in the underutilization of talent, but it also limits the agency of people and their individual freedoms. In his book *Development as Freedom*, Amartya Sen notes: 'What people can positively achieve is influenced by economic opportunities and the enabling conditions of health and education. The institutional arrangements for these opportunities are also influenced by the extent to which people have the freedom and the liberty to participate in social choice and in the making of decisions that affect their well-being. That impels the progress of these opportunities' (Sen, 2000, p. 5). Refugees and displaced persons face special challenges in respect of access to further education, training and employment, which, in turn, have negative repercussions for their capacity to determine their future options in life.

To prevent Syrian refugees from losing out on education and training opportunities and being deprived of the foundational capabilities necessary to exercise agency and choice, national authorities and sectoral stakeholders in the five countries have sought the support of UNESCO to develop comprehensive policy frameworks and coordinated measures for promoting non-formal learning programmes. In doing so, they hope to identify innovative approaches to non-formal learning and to put in place mechanisms for the recognition, validation and accreditation (RVA) of refugees' previous learning and competences. Frameworks and mechanisms need to be developed and implemented jointly by national authorities and sectoral stakeholders, with support from UN agencies, civil society and NGOs. It is therefore important that all stakeholders, including project stakeholders, are aware that both general education and vocational education and training (VET) opportunities are fundamental for reducing poverty and are priorities, in terms of human development and individual agency, for both refugee students and youth in emergencies (Nicolai and Magee, 2016).

While there is considerable information on non-formal education, there is very little or no information on RVA in these countries, and non-formal learning remains a fragmented and marginalized field. Although the literature does deal with the issue of recognition and

validation of migrants (mostly in Europe) (Souto-Otero and Villalba-Garcia, 2015), there are few studies on the recognition of non-formal learning for refugees or involuntarily displaced persons.

To generate debate and policy recommendations for educational authorities, ministries, sectoral stakeholders, public and private sectors, UN agencies, and local and international NGOs and donors, this study seeks to (1) investigate current policy and practice in the RVA of non-formal learning in the five host countries and (2) describe how the core elements of a national strategy for creating synergies between formal, non-formal and informal learning can be implemented.

Discussions on improving the quality of non-formal learning are opportune. The Overseas Development Institute's study, *Education Cannot Wait: Proposing a Fund for Education in Emergencies*, recognizes 'the need for developing an array of innovative education interventions to support the most vulnerable crisis-affected children and youth, with additional efforts made to support non-formal education' (Nicolai and Magee, 2016).

## 1.3  Context and objectives of the study

This study supports the global Education 2030 agenda summarized in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4: 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all'. It also reflects UNESCO's recent publication, *Bridging Learning Gaps for Youth: UNESCO Education Response to the Syria Crisis (2015–2016)* (UNESCO, 2015*d*). Furthermore, it builds on the *UNESCO Guidelines for the Recognition, Validation and Accreditation of the Outcomes of Non-formal and Informal Learning* (UIL, 2012), which aim to guide policy-makers in developing effective, equitable policies and a system of recognition that is context-specific.

The study also conforms to UNESCO's strategy on education in emergencies and conflict. The *Medium-Term Strategy for 2014–2021 (37 C/4)* states that UNESCO will support countries in their education reform, paying particular attention to aiding the reconstruction of education systems in countries affected by conflict and natural disaster. The *UNESCO Education Strategy 2014–2021* indicates that the Organization has been 'called upon to play a greater role, alongside other UN

organizations, in responding to emergency situations and contributing to the reconstruction of education systems following natural disasters or armed conflicts'.

The strategic focus of SDG 4 is on strengthening policies, plans, legislation and systems; emphasizing equality, inclusion and gender equality; quality learning; promoting lifelong learning; and addressing education in emergency situations. Associated targets relevant to refugee youth and young adults are:

> Target 4.3, which calls for 'equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university'.
> Target 4.4, which urges a substantial increase in 'the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship'.
> Target 4.5, which enjoins Member States to 'eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous persons and children in vulnerable situations'.
> Target 4.6, which calls on countries to 'ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy'.
> Target 4.7, which calls for all learners to 'acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development', noting the role of education in the 'promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity'.
>
> *UNESCO, 2015c, pp. 20–21*

Contrary to existing non-formal education programmes in host countries that focus primarily on basic education, these targets emphasize post-primary and post-secondary technical and vocational training, and tertiary education. The SDG targets also place emphasis on the promotion of skills for employment, decent work and entrepreneurship, as well as on skills for citizenship in an inter-connected world.

However, these carefully formulated goals and targets, while valuable, remain a distant aspiration considering the daily reality of supporting refugees to participate fully in host societies, enabling them to achieve their potential, and building on their individual and transnational social resources and living spaces.

Recognizing the challenging context in which the SDG goals and targets, as they apply to refugees, must be pursued, the first World Humanitarian Summit in May 2016 set out to build a more inclusive humanitarian system, with people's safety, dignity and freedom at its heart. One outcome of the summit is expected to be a proposal to bridge the shortfall in the financing of good-quality education for forcibly displaced persons.

## 1.4 Recognizing refugees' non-formal learning: A stimulus for reform in the host countries

This study analyses current practice and policy for recognizing and regularizing non-formal learning and introducing recognition and validation procedures into the education and training systems of host countries. The protracted nature of the refugee crisis, and the resulting influx of thousands of new learners into the education system, while extremely challenging, has the potential to act as a stimulus to reform, driving changes in education and training. This can take the form, for example, of creating greater synergies between formal, non-formal and informal learning, more flexible learning pathways or more inclusive education, as well as promoting work-oriented curricula, better use of e-learning and a greater emphasis on languages (Bardak, 2016, p. 71). In fact, four of the host countries, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, are in the process of developing national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) with a view to recognizing qualifications based on learning outcomes and competences acquired in all settings: formal, non-formal and informal. NQF standards based on learning outcomes can act as a reference point for formulating outcomes at the level of non-formal learning programmes, including learning objectives and assessment criteria. Learning outcomes of these programmes also include teaching and learning approaches that focus on learning achievement, i.e. what an individual knows, can do and demonstrate, rather than on rank or

on rote learning. The main policy objectives of NQFs in the context of these countries' education reforms are to: (1) strengthen articulation and pathways between the different education sub-systems (general, higher and vocational education); (2) establish recognition mechanisms for qualifications gained outside the formal system; (3) improve the coordination of non-formal education and training outside the school curriculum; and (4) develop the quality of qualifications so as to address the growing need for internationally competitive skilled labour in growth sectors (CEDEFOP, ETF, UNESCO and UIL, 2017).

Qualifications frameworks have the potential to improve structured links between the labour market and the education and training system. This, in turn, ensures youth and adults are equipped with qualifications valued by employers and strengthens the involvement of social partners and civil society organizations in the design of non-formal continuing education and training, especially for vulnerable groups. All the countries in the study have a high percentage of the population working overseas and the number is steadily increasing. Providing individuals (high-skilled or low-skilled emigrants and migrants) with proof of the skills and competences they have acquired could foster mobility for both high-skilled and low-skilled individuals. Qualifications frameworks also promote lifelong learning because they promote horizontal and vertical linkages between the education and training sub-systems, as well as across sectors.

Recognition of non-formal learning outcomes and competences linked to occupational standards based on learning outcomes in NQFs can help unemployed citizens match their existing skills with those required by the labour market. Modernized qualifications frameworks with qualifications based on learning-outcomes approaches can ensure that new jobs are created with proper occupational standards and with the participation of sectoral agencies; and that training standards include both academic and vocational elements. Participants at the Syria Donors Conference, held in London on 4 February 2016, pledged to encourage the creation of more than 1.1 million job opportunities by 2018 and to develop more quality education provision (Syria Donors Conference, 2016).

Recognition of non-formal learning and competences can also directly benefit the host countries' own education and training

institutions by helping eliminate duplication of courses. In addition, it has the potential to increase student retention in education institutions by motivating students to build on what they already know, can do and can demonstrate, as well as to increase recruitment by clarifying and making transparent the requirements of a study programme.

Recognition of prior learning and competences also allows for appropriate placement of learners in programmes and helps meet the needs of a wider range of learners, e.g. those who are not familiar with formal education. It can also expand learning options to include more tailor-made modular and accessible non-formal learning approaches, and provide important services for linking business, industry and communities. It can enhance the image of non-formal learning programmes in the community. In other words, recognition of non-formal learning and competences will benefit not only refugees but also the host countries themselves in terms of the professional and educational advancement of citizens and improving the transparency, relevance and quality of their qualifications and assessment systems.

## 1.5 Key concepts and definitions: Clarifying recognition processes

One of the key challenges we face in our work is developing a common understanding of terms and concepts that refer to a specific form of programmes that we call 'non-formal learning'. Non-formal includes both non-formal education (NFE) programmes at the basic level and out-of-school programmes offered in the workplace, in communities and through social, cultural and programmes.

While host countries undertake some activities to improve the accreditation of second-chance NFE programmes at basic education levels, they encounter difficulties when it comes to providing programmes for Syrian youth and young adults at higher levels of education and vocational training. Another difficulty is the lack of mechanisms to make visible, validate and recognize the prior learning of Syrian refugees and the occupational knowledge and competences derived from their experience at work, of participation in the community or of supporting families. Recognition of these competences is particularly relevant for those refugee youth and young adults who are out of school or low qualified. If refugees are to be successfully integrated,

their prior/current competences must be made visible, learning and skill gaps compensated through continuing education and training, and certificates awarded that qualify them to proceed to further education or take up a job. It is equally important that host countries review the possibilities of granting equivalence between refugee educational and vocational qualifications and the degrees, diplomas and certificates they award. This section therefore aims to clarify concepts and methods related to accrediting and certifying non-formal learning outcomes as well as to recognizing the prior learning, competences and work experience of refugee youth and young adults. Recognition, validation and accreditation, together with non-formal learning programmes, should be a recognized pathway into formal education and training and the world of work.

### 1.5.1 Formal and non-formal learning

Most Syrian refugees in the host countries have the opportunity to learn either in formal public schools, which are structured and organized according to prevailing educational and training arrangements, or through non-formal learning programmes, which are more flexible, open, have entry and exit points at varying stages, and promote broader capabilities. Non-formal education is education that is institutionalized, intentional and planned by an education provider. It could include accelerated learning programmes, remedial education, self and home-based schooling, structured programmes of basic literacy and numeracy, life skills, and vocational education. This form of non-formal education is often provided alongside formal education, as in the case of double-shift schools in Lebanon. However, such non-formal education is only one dimension of an enlarged understanding of non-formal learning, which includes learning in community-based settings and the workplace, as well as the activities of civil society organizations.

### 1.5.2 Informal learning

Another neglected area of learning in relation to the needs of Syrian refugees is informal learning. Some studies suggest that migrants and refugees rely particularly on informal learning: for example, the social

networks that refugees build up during their stay in their host countries play an important role. By definition, informal learning is incidental and unintentional, but it can also have an element of 'directedness'. Informal learning can be self-directed, family-directed, socially directed or culturally directed (visiting museums, reading newspapers, using social media).

Some authors believe that the processes of critical reflection are central to the informal learning of refugees, as it helps them to 'reframe' their problems so that they realize that a particular situation can be defined and solved in many different ways, which is fundamental to gaining confidence and building self-esteem (Mezirow, 1990). The process of guided reflection about negative life experiences, such as those common among refugees, is critical in developing the confidence and self-esteem gained by being able to demonstrate what has been learned and/or achieved in the past. Webb (2015) found that, in order to further their employment goals, refugees needed to engage in lifelong learning (i.e. non-formal learning in the work context) before presenting themselves to employers and educational authorities.

Even if refugees have the requisite qualifications and skills for professional work, they need to be able to demonstrate what they know and can do and how they can apply these skills and knowledge in a new context (Webb, 2015). Once a contract is made in the work organization, that organization can recommend further work. In Webb's study, migrants recognized the importance of 'learning through work' and 'learning in the paid work learning community'. Furthermore, the study found that many employers tended to prioritize experience over learning. Another capability that employers tended to privilege was learning to live together and display cultural competences and intercultural knowledge.

### 1.5.3   Situating the non-formal and informal learning of refugees in socio-cultural contexts

While RVA of non-formal and informal learning of refugees is based on the premise that some of the most effective learning comes from what refugees have experienced and practised informally, several studies draw attention to the socio-cultural experiences that also shape

learning. Morrice (2013) cautions that not all of these experiences are positive and may not always benefit refugees in terms of personal growth and adaptation (Morrice, 2013). Taylor (2007) points to the need, therefore, to include the potential for a more negative identity and conception of self. Mojab and Carpenter (2011) stress the need for learning and education programmes to recognize the living conditions and everyday struggles of migrants and refugees. They reject the notion that learning can be theorized as an abstract cognitive experience without attenuating socio-cultural processes. A study by Crea (2016) examined the perspectives of youth and young adults from three refugee camps in Sudan, Jordan and Kenya with regard to the socio-cultural challenges they face. It found serious social and cultural limitations to refugees' experiences of higher education that were related to work restrictions in the camps, difficulties in balancing life and study, and the experience of social isolation.

From this review of relevant studies, it is clear that we need to take into account the socio-cultural contexts of refugees' non-formal and informal learning. However, as Jarvis (2006, p. 16) points out, regardless of any possible negative experiences refugees may have, the fact remains that there are things that they need to know and to be able to do. This can be an important motivating factor for refugees in continuing to learn. RVA processes should, therefore, include not only counselling and guidance, but also the promotion of a positive perspective that focuses firmly on the future and on the strengths of Syrian refugees.

### 1.5.4 RVA processes require a common definition of set of skills, knowledge and competences to serve as a framework of all learning

Non-formal learning and informal learning are often underestimated and considered to exist outside mainstream education and training frameworks, unconnected to the formal education system. However, it is important to note that the concepts of 'formal', 'non-formal' and 'informal' are heuristic, continuous and overlapping terms that are difficult to separate. Through RVA processes, non-formal and informal learning can lead to formal education and qualifications, given that a certain common definition of a set of skills, knowledge and competences serves as a reference framework for all learning.

The shift in many countries to national qualifications frameworks based on learning outcomes and competences has important implications for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. It therefore might be useful to examine the subtle variations in the use of the notions of 'learning outcomes' and 'competences':

- 'Learning outcomes' include a combination of knowledge, skills and competences an individual has acquired and/or is able to demonstrate after completion of a given learning programme.
- 'Competence' is the ability to apply learning outcomes adequately in a defined context. Learning outcomes are validated by their relationship to competences (CEDEFOP, 2012, p. 35).

Both concepts – learning outcomes and competences – should be regarded as holistic and contextualized entities. According to Hoskins and Deakin Crick (2010, p. 122):

> [C]ompetence is a complex combination of knowledge, skills, understandings, values, attitudes and desires which lead to effective, embodied human action in the work in a particular domain. One's achievement at work, in personal relationships or in civil society are not based simply on the accumulation of knowledge stored as data, but as a combination of this knowledge with skills, values, attitudes, desires and motivation and its application in a particular human setting at a particular point in trajectory in time. Competence implies a sense of agency, action and value.

Unfortunately, there has been a tendency to reduce the term 'competence' to behaviouristic competence-based approaches that are measurable and allow for reliable methods of testing. This narrow notion affects learning outcomes, which are expected to be quantifiable and measurable, resulting in the development of narrow, task-related skills. It is important that outcome orientation – at the policy level, in qualifications frameworks or as learning objectives in educational programmes – is not reduced to a narrowly technical concept that refers only to 'skills'.

Bohlinger (2008) cautions against pitting outcomes-based approaches against the wide, character-forming processes supported by

lifelong and life-wide learning. Allias (2011) asserts that an outcomes-based approach should not neglect the importance of knowledge as well as curricular and pedagogical inputs. Reference frameworks that are holistic, diverse and include broader learning abilities are more likely to integrate refugees and other vulnerable citizens.

### 1.5.5   Recognition of non-formal learning: A matter of definition

In the literature on RVA, there is a tendency to use both of the following terms: 'recognition of outcomes of non-formal learning' and 'recognition of non-formal learning'. While the term 'recognition', used in both cases, denotes acknowledgement of learning outcomes and competences, there is a slight difference between the two usages.

In the case of 'recognition of outcomes of non-formal learning', the focus tends to be on *recognizing the person* whose knowledge and skills have been validated. Here, recognition means both 'official' recognition as well as recognition of the person. Recognition, when it results in, for example, being accepted into an educational institution or recruited for a job, is important for building self-confidence. 'Validation', then, is confirmation by an officially approved body that the learning competences acquired by an individual meet the standards set out in a predefined assessment methodology (UIL, 2012).

'Recognition of non-formal learning' focuses more on *the extent to which non-formal learning can be integrated into education and training contexts*. In some countries, such as Germany, non-formal and informal learning are an integral part of education and training, particularly within the dual vocational education and training system. In Australia, 'workplace learning' includes formal, non-formal and informal learning (Arthur, 2009). In both cases, non-formal learning must usually undergo some form of accreditation process in order for it to meet the same quality requirements of and be equivalent to formal education and training. This is important in the context of grants to units, etc.

In common parlance, 'recognition of non-formal learning' means 'recognizing [the] competences and learning outcomes of the individual' acquired in non-formal learning settings such as the workplace, community or in non-formal education or skills development programmes. There is an increasing tendency to use such umbrella terms when the entire

process of recognition, validation and accreditation of non-formal and informal learning is implied. It is therefore important to define the context and purpose of the recognition process; for example, is it to attain credits? Is it for skills recognition? In addition to it being used to recognize individual competences and learning outcomes, integration into formal education and training is an important purpose of RVA in the Arab region.

### 1.5.6  The distinction between education and learning

Most countries featured in the study tend to use the term 'education' to refer to non-formal programmes. However, the term 'learning' reflects a broader understanding of 'non-formal'. It is therefore necessary to understand the difference between 'non-formal-education' and 'non-formal learning'. While the former tends to put greater emphasis on organized programmes for children, adolescents and young adults, the latter refers to all forms of learning – in the family, at work and in civil society. It also places greater emphasis on the needs of the learner and individual choice.

According to the *Framework for Action for the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4* (UNESCO, 2015c), in order to achieve 'inclusive education' and thus support the achievement of SDG 4.5 – which calls on Member States to 'eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable' – polices should 'aim to transform education systems so they can better respond to learners'. This is key to ensuring the right to education for all and is related not only to access, but also to the participation and achievement of all learners, particularly those who are excluded, vulnerable or at risk of being marginalized. 'Learning' describes active processes of acquiring knowledge, skills, competences and attitudes. It enables people to act on their abilities, skills, knowledge, motives or emotional dispositions and concerns action at the 'micro level' (the socio-culturally shaped external environment), which can lead to durable change in an individual's internal condition (Straka, 2005).

### 1.5.7 Determining competences in a valid manner: Recognition procedures and tools and national qualifications frameworks

Competences and learning outcomes from non-formal and informal learning are often undocumented or not officially recognized. However, many refugee youth and young adults have had their school education interrupted and have therefore acquired competences informally. Clarification of what they can do and demonstrate is important for their integration into education, the labour market and society.

Identifying and documenting the competences and prior learning of refugees requires nationally coherent procedures and tools such as national qualifications frameworks and mechanisms for the recognition, validation and accreditation of non-formal and informal learning. Most Syrian refugees have had some schooling, but relatively few have a university education. In Lebanon, for example, 80 per cent of unemployed Syrian refugees have had a school education, while only 11 per cent have a university education (UNFPA et al., 2014).

Evaluating 'subject knowledge' through examinations and tests is necessary, as is appraising the wider range of competences acquired through experiential learning. This can be done by combining aptitude tests, exams, workplace observations, practical demonstration of skills in simulation scenarios, reviews of work samples and so on. Identifying and documenting refugees' foreign qualifications, skills and work experience can be done using skills audits or portfolios.

Not only have refugees, in very many cases, lost most of their documents, but the qualifications they bring with them are often not compatible with those of their host countries. Another problem with qualifications is that they rarely describe what the owner knows and can do in a specific field. Many qualifications have a generally low value in the labour market and in the formal education and training system.

Currently, reforms are underway across the world to base qualifications on learning outcomes to a greater extent. Approaches based on learning outcomes make it easier to render competences visible to the outside world and to stakeholders. One of the aims of Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, and, most recently, Iraq, in developing outcomes-based national qualifications frameworks is to improve the transparency of qualifications as well as their comparability with those of

other countries. Basing qualifications standards on learning outcomes makes it easier to integrate outcomes from formal, non-formal and informal learning and, hence, to increase participation and attainment rates in education, with more people obtaining qualifications of value for personal, educational and career development. Unfortunately, the European Training Foundation (ETF) has had to suspend all preparations in relation to new bilateral cooperation programmes and ongoing bilateral programmes related to the development of the Syrian national qualifications framework. The ETF will define its work programme in line with the EU position and priorities once the EU resumes its bilateral cooperation with the country.

Wherever learning outcomes and competences are used to describe standards in a qualification, the descriptions and criteria in learning outcomes can help individuals to know beforehand what the requirements of a certain qualification are, and what is expected from a certain learning programme. The descriptors of learning outcomes help to determine how well the skills, knowledge and abilities of individuals match the expected standards. The learning attainments and competences need to be validated or confirmed by an officially approved body which can ascertain whether the learning outcomes or competences acquired by an individual have been assessed against reference points or standards through pre-defined assessment methodologies.

### 1.5.8 Guidance and counselling

Many refugee youth and young adults have significant difficulty providing valid evidence to support the identification and documentation of their formal, non-formal and informal learning against some reference point or document, which may be a curriculum, an occupational standard or standards in a qualifications framework. Refugees would generally need to receive strong and overt support from education institutions, the workplace and refugee agencies in order to have their prior learning, skills and experience recorded. It is important that refugees have access to guidance which can help them to understand the different education and training options/opportunities available to them. Guidance and counselling must take into account the diverse backgrounds of refugees in order to determine their learning needs

according to age, gender, education and skills, work experience, family situation, wealth and resources, rural or urban background, and their conditions in the host countries. All these background factors are important in order to match educational opportunities with learning needs and existing competences.

### 1.5.9 Complementing existing refugee competences and qualifications with formal and non-formal programmes

Syrian refugee youth and young adults must have access to quality education and training – both formal and non-formal learning – to complement existing skills and qualifications and to adapt to the specific requirements of the host country.

Given the fact that not all refugee children/youth will be accommodated in the formal education system, host governments, local and international agencies, and local refugee communities need to take the initiative to provide non-formal learning programmes to children, youth and young adults. Many youths have missed so much school that they are no longer eligible for formal education.

It will be important to ensure the quality of non-formal learning programmes against standards in the education and training system or qualifications frameworks. Non-formal learning programmes need to be certified by an officially approved body in the education system.

### 1.5.10 Providing proof of learning attainments: Certification and accreditation

Another challenge for Syrian refugee learners is to acquire proof of their learning achievements during their stay in the host country. This is critical in order to seek employment or continue with further studies in higher education. Certification or accreditation are essential when addressing the educational needs of refugee populations. It could also be an opportunity to develop cross-border examination entities that help refugees reintegrate in their home countries (Kirk, 2009). Certification/accreditation is a process by which an officially approved body, on the basis of assessment of learning outcomes and/or competences of individuals according to different purposes and

methods, awards qualifications (certificates, diplomas or titles), grants equivalences, credit units or exemptions, or issues documents such as portfolios of competences (UIL, 2012).

Certification, however, should not be the sole aim of recognizing non-formal and informal learning. This is because recognition is a process that includes other processes before the end process of certification, such as access to further learning, information and career guidance. In the case of Syrian refugees, recognition needs to take account of learning outcomes dealing with the social, economic and psychological needs of refugees. It should ensure motivation to continue to learn, especially among female students, and it should protect them from negative coping measures such as child labour (See Fean and Marshall, 2016). However, the importance of certification is evident from the fact that a large proportion even of structured and organized non-formal learning is not certified. This is problematic for refugees who want to continue into further learning.

## 1.6 Ensuring effective recognition processes that foster benefits for refugee youth and young adults

While Article 22 of the 1951 Refugee Convention refers to the right of refugee children to a public education and to certification of their learning achievements, this study deals most importantly with the recognition of learning of those youth and young adults whose education has been interrupted for such long periods that they are no longer eligible for formal schooling. Refugee youth and adults who have few qualifications will largely learn in informal settings. In such circumstances, the focus of non-formal learning recognition processes should be on recognizing and valuing the experience, knowledge and competences of Syrian refugees, regardless of the path that led to their acquisition. All the learning that refugees have undertaken should be valued and respected, and formal and non-formal learning opportunities should be made available in order to facilitate refugees' re-entry into the education and training system.

### 1.6.1   Building the motivation to learn

Results from focus group discussions cited in research by the Refugee Studies Centre (Wahby et al., 2014)[4] show that refugee youth are determined to succeed via education and that they 'highly value and desire education,' irrespective of how or where they pursue it (ibid., p. 14). However, for many refugee youth and adults, success in school, higher education or the workplace depends on the achievement of a number of smaller intermediate steps. Recognition processes are an important part of this, supporting the initial development of adults' motivation, interest, self-esteem and self-confidence. The benefits of recognition should not, therefore, be defined purely in terms of access to the labour market or to education and training. Rather, the recognition process itself should be seen as having the potential to contribute successfully to increasing people's own capacity to learn and to build their courage and confidence to take up lifelong learning.

According to Kirk (2009), recognition of refugees' prior learning and competences gives them hope, increases their motivation to continue education, reinforces resilience and self-reliance, and contributes to individual, family and community well-being. Through recognition, validation and accreditation, refugee youth and young adults are able to demonstrate what they already know and are able to do, clarify their future education goals, avoid duplication of education and training, and gain academic credits. The participation of refugee youth and adults in a recognition process can therefore be seen as a learning process itself rather than as something separate from learning. Recognition processes and learning are intertwined in the sense that by participating in recognition processes an individual develops an awareness of prior learning and of the requirements of the recognition process and the methods of presenting knowledge to gain recognition (see Andersson, 2010). Proper recognition, validation and accreditation procedures for non-formal learning and competences would increase the economic and social

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[4]   The study uses the terms 'youth' and 'young people' interchangeably. The same study cites Cahill et al. (2010, cited in Wahby, 2014) on the difficulties of getting separate data for youth and young adults.

contributions these youth and young adults make to their respective communities (Kirk, 2009, pp. 41–42).

### 1.6.2   The benefits of cross-border mobility for refugees

Refugees want to be able to study and use their acquired skills in multiple locations. However, for RVA procedures to benefit the cross-border mobility of refugee youth and young adults, mutual acknowledgement of the validity and reliability of refugees' validation results, as well as acceptance across courses, programmes and institutions, is important. The establishment of regional qualifications frameworks is one possible response to such demands (CEDEFOP, ETF, UNESCO and UIL, 2017).

### 1.6.3   Assuring refugees of the benefits of recognition processes

Effective recognition processes also require that agencies serving refugees put in place transparent mechanisms and procedures, and establish comfortable, safe environments. Recognition procedures for refugees should include adequate information, counselling and appreciative communication. Refugee agencies should be able to assure refugee youth and adults that recognition processes will lead to a second chance and a possibility for lifelong learning through new learning pathways. Applicants must be met with openness and respect, and they should have access to help to ensure they understand the options available to them. Transparency is a key requirement in recognition procedures.

### 1.6.4   Documentation and identification phases benefit assessment and certification

For refugees with few qualifications or without documentation of their competences, the role of practitioners is crucial. Recognition staff must be careful not to narrow the breadth of an individual's competences too early. Specialized methods and tools should be used to examine the broad range of experience and knowledge, skills and competences that a learner holds. These can then be narrowed down according to the more specific aim of assessment. The documentation and identification phases of the recognition process are beneficial to the assessment and

certification phases. Putting in place mechanisms for recognizing the individual competences of refugees can help the community practitioner to think of creative ways in which to engage refugee students, youth and young adults in the community in activities that support their learning. For some refugees, these sorts of activities represent a way of putting themselves on an equal footing with different cultural communities. They also help community practitioners to widen the horizons of refugees and create awareness and intercultural understanding (Webb, 2015). The support from refugee-focused voluntary organizations and networks can be crucial in helping new refugee learners to discover everyday skills related to how things work in their host country.

### 1.6.5   Facilitating first-entry jobs in the host country

Refugees can become active learners when placed in workplaces or in voluntary work. Therefore, new ways of recognizing, validating and assessing refugees' learning should be embedded in these everyday learning communities and their practices. Informal learning through social encounters with others in the workplace or in voluntary organizations reinforces the idea that learning is socially situated (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Participation of refugees in active labour market measures, in particular providing training in enterprises and through work-based learning opportunities, will facilitate their first entry into a job in the host countries, while entrepreneurial learning and support can help better-off refugees to start businesses. This is a challenge for governments that are used to directing lifelong learning policy at those they can more easily influence – that is, national education and training authorities rather than employers and labour market organizations. Learning through paid or voluntary work also increases the visibility of refugees to recruiters. In such cases, it is necessary for refugees to validate their informal learning by volunteering or through paid or unpaid work.

### 1.6.6   The importance of both process and opportunity

Recognition involves both the *processes* that allow freedom of action, choice and individual agency, and the *opportunities* that refugee youth and adults have, given their personal and social circumstances. The

disadvantages and deprivations that Syrian refugee youth and young adults face must be tackled on two fronts: at the level of individual agency and motivation and at the level of actual opportunity. Both processes and opportunities have importance in their own right, and each aspect relates to seeing recognition as enhancing the freedom and basic capabilities that are foundational in empowering refugees to determine their own further education and training and integration into the world of work.

## 1.7 Placing the outcomes of non-formal and informal learning on an equal footing with those of formal learning

Diversity in types of education has been an important quality issue in the provision of education opportunities for Syrian refugee children, youth and adults. Rather than pushing individuals into a one-size-fits-all programme, non-formal learning approaches incorporate diversity using all types of programmes, matching learning to context.

However, one could argue that, up to now, countries have tended to view diversity in education in a non-integrative and non-inclusive way, separating formal learning from non-formal and informal learning. If, however, as in a lifelong learning approach, opportunities to learn outside the formal system are to be placed on an equal footing with those occurring within, then an important condition for this is that such learning is properly identified, documented, assessed and certified. The focus should be on assessment and certification of outcomes from non-formal and informal learning. The assessment and validation of non-formal and informal learning should usually be a quality-assured process as it results in the recognition of individuals' knowledge and skills. The underlying principles of recognition, validation and accreditation, according to the UNESCO *Guidelines*, include: equity; the equal value of outcomes from all learning; and quality in assessment and validation through procedures that are reliable, fair, transparent and relevant (UIL, 2012). Key outcomes of these processes include assessment for qualification purposes, skills assessment for training, credit recognition, credit transfer leading to an award and personal development.

International best practice shows that countries highlight a series of distinctive criteria for ensuring the equal value of outcomes of all forms of learning.

First, in collecting evidence of learning, more attention needs to be paid to assessing the validity and authencity of the learning. Individual competences should be recognized irrespective of where and how they were acquired, but without compromising the quality/standard of education and training. Thus, while, on the one hand, flexibility, individualization and judgement are central concepts, on the other, standardization, reliability and measurement are significant. This is important where the results have to be comparable, for example, as a basis for fair selection processes in relation to higher education or recruitment for a position in the labour market

Second, assessment and validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes concern the standards to which the evidence of learning outcomes and competences is compared. These standards should be directly comparable, preferably identical, to the standards applied in formal settings for the qualification. Care needs to be taken in ensuring these standards have been fairly interpreted. In France, assessment procedures help candidates organize learning outcomes in a way that suits the standards of the relevant qualification, enabling candidates to prepare appropriately.

Third, processes for assessing learning outside the formal sector should take account of the candidates' circumstances and their need to access reliable information, advice and guidance throughout the assessment process. The standards they must meet, the ways in which their learning is evidenced, the assessment process and the way assessed evidence is validated must all be clear to the candidate if the outcome of the process is to be fair and trusted.

Fourth, assessment of non-formal learning outcomes needs to be seen in relation to outcomes-based qualifications and curriculum. The use of learning outcomes enables learners to be assessed differently according to their learning pathways – formal, non-formal or informal. For example, an increasing number of learners undertake adult education, online or through work-based learning, to acquire the competences needed to gain a qualification, and these routes require different assessment methods and tools. These need to depart from the traditional

final exam to encompass new forms of assessment that include practice-based assessment tasks requiring observation within a simulated or real context, evidence-accumulation (portfolio), evaluation of real-life practice, and so on. Furthermore, because these more varied assessment methods are now being used in relation to outcomes-based qualifications, more attention is being paid to assessment standards – including assessment criteria, procedures, guidelines and minimum requirements – in order to ensure the validity and reliability of assessments.

Fifth, the result of the assessment should be documented with a full qualification (or a certificate of education) or a part-qualification (or credits or a certificate of competence). Assessment can be used to help participants who need a certificate of competence to gain entry to a job or access to an education programme. Only in this way can standards be assured.

Sixth, different kinds of expertise and resources will be needed to develop an effective assessment and recognition system. Recognition practitioners include individuals delivering information, guidance and counselling; those who carry out assessments; the teachers and managers of education providers; workplace instructors; employers; and a range of other stakeholders with important but less direct roles in the recognition process. Guides/facilitators are those who offer information, guidance and counselling services to refugees with the aim of clarifying procedures for the assessment so that individuals become more aware of their own competences and are more motivated to learn further and to have their learning outcomes recognized.

The whole point of building recognition mechanisms is to give equal status and parity of esteem to competences attained outside the formal system and include them in the classification system of qualifications. Addressing the issue of equal status for non-formal and informal competences starts with the process of making competences visible through RVA mechanisms. Making competences visible entails judging the achievements of Syrian refugees in terms of their own values and objectives, whether or not they are assessed against some external criteria as well.

The issue of parity of esteem between non-formal learning outcomes and formal learning outcomes is relevant to refugees whose qualifications are not recognized, either because they only had access to non-formal learning and no opportunity to access the formal learning

system, or because they left school early. Given the current status of non-formal learning (limited to the level of basic education) in these countries, there is very little likelihood that recognition mechanisms will be introduced without a qualifications framework. Recognition of non-formal learning outcomes and competences is a broader concept that goes beyond the recognition of second-chance non-formal education programmes at the basic level.

## 1.8  Creating awareness, consensus and acceptance of the value of non-formal learning

This study has been undertaken to inform national and sectoral stakeholders, and international and local NGOs, of the importance of securing policy frameworks for creating synergies between formal, non-formal and informal learning. It takes into account the stakeholder perspectives that emerged from an international meeting of experts in Beirut in January 2016,[5] at which stakeholders involved in the provision of non-formal learning (governmental, non-governmental and transnational organizations) from across the Middle East, and including Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, discussed the importance of establishing national strategies for creating synergies between the formal, non-formal and informal learning of refugees.

The countries that attended the meeting agreed that quality, safe non-formal learning is a basic right, and prioritized access to education for the most vulnerable groups. Stakeholders from participating countries also acknowledged the contribution non-formal education (NFE) makes to society. For example, Syria noted the contribution NFE makes to a knowledge society, acknowledging that it opens up opportunities for work and competitiveness. For Jordan, NFE builds citizens' capacities, knowledge and skills, thereby enabling them to become productive members of society. In the context of economic crisis, large-scale displacement of people and migration, Egypt focused on the

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[5]  Towards Policy Framework for Securing the Recognition, Regularization, and Certification of Non-Formal Education: Creating Synergies between Formal and Non-Formal Settings in the Arab Region, organized by the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in the Arab States, Beirut, in collaboration with UIL, 27–29 January 2016.

importance of ICTs, recognition mechanisms and NQFs that define and recognize individual competences.

Parity of formal and non-formal learning was also an important issue in the policy dialogue between various stakeholders at the meeting. Although accredited NFE programmes conducted under the respective ministries of education (MoEs) are integrated into the formal education system, NFE is currently only equivalent to formal primary and lower secondary education and does not act as a bridge to education and training at higher levels or into the world of work.

Most stakeholders recognized the central role of MoEs in coordinating non-formal learning. The MoE in Syria is the main coordinating body for non-formal learning programmes, for example, and it implements these in cooperation with local and international organizations. In Lebanon, education authorities devise different types of non-formal learning services. In terms of the next steps for developing a national policy for non-formal education, Egypt, Iraq and Jordan want to see policy developed that takes into account the relationship between non-formal and formal education. This would include the development of certificated outcomes and recognition procedures. Egypt and Jordan also called for the recognition, validation and accreditation (RVA) of learning outcomes to be part of their national strategies for lifelong learning.

In terms of advocacy, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria suggested a national dialogue on NFE, and expressed a desire to share best practice and coordinate a joint taskforce for the planning and coordination of NFE. With regard to governance and stakeholder involvement, Lebanon would like to see its Ministry of Education and Higher Education act as coordinating body for RVA mechanisms. Syria would like RVA to be used as an alternative route to formal education under the supervision of the MoE and providers that specialize in education and are approved by the MoE. Iraq, meanwhile, asks that the private sector commit its support to NFE programmes, the expected advantage being that it will promote the validation of competences needed in the labour market of this still war-torn country. Ministries of labour are often in a better position than MoEs to ascertain what certificates have a greater currency in the jobs market. However, these same certificates may not have currency in the formal learning system. There is currently a lack

of collaboration between the ministries of education and labour in the relevant countries. To address this, Egypt suggested the creation of a national committee for RVA, consisting of stakeholders from all sectors.

With regards to standards and frameworks, Jordan suggests the development of specific criteria and certified agencies for the accreditation of NFE programmes. Syria would like NFE to follow the national curricula at the basic level, while Iraq suggests that independent groups define a framework of competences for the recognition of NFE that includes both education and vocational training. Examination and certification systems should define the level of the outcomes attained, which should be equivalent to levels in the formal system.

With regard to RVA procedures and assessment in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon one of the most-used summative assessment tools for NFE programmes is a written examination. This is primarily the case for second-chance non-formal learning programmes where proof of high-school certification is required before higher education can be accessed. Tests are also developed in order to determine the educational level at which the student has to be placed in non-formal or formal education. Assessment of the curriculum rather than of learning outcomes and competences is still commonplace, and may not accurately reflect students' comprehension of the course.

The only country that has introduced summative assessments in the context of recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning is Turkey. Most of these assessment practices follow the European Qualifications Framework. This is because there is a strong political will in Turkey to join the European Union, which provides the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance funding mechanism to assist and develop cooperation between the EU and candidate countries such as Turkey.

It is hoped that this study will help create greater awareness, consensus and acceptance among key actors in these countries and enable them to ground the design of education and training programmes in a better understanding of the needs of refugees, taking into account their existing and prior learning, competences and knowledge, whether acquired at work, in communities or in families, and making sure that their non-formal learning and competences are valued within the formal education and training system and in the labour market.

The approval of stakeholders and international and local NGOs is important for ensuring flexible and diverse links between formal and informal sectors, which are sensitive to the educational and occupational trajectories of underprivileged Syrian refugee youth and young adults. Stakeholder interest in and acceptance of recognition of non-formal learning is important, therefore, for social cohesion and the stability of the wider social and political domain.

Lack of stakeholder interest and a reluctance to accept non-formal learning outcomes and competences within formal education can have dire consequences for social inclusion and individual freedoms, as well as for the stability and cohesion of wider society and the political domain. Greater recognition and individual freedom enhances the ability of people to help themselves and also to influence the world, and these matters are central to the process of recognition. The legislative and policy environment, standards and frameworks regulating the formal education and training system of the host countries therefore need to create a favourable environment for the valuing of outcomes and competences from non-formal learning.

## 1.9   Methodology and sources of the study

This publication is an outcome of a one-year study to map the non-formal learning of students, youth and young adults in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. It is based on an analysis of published research on non-formal learning programmes for refugee youth and young adults from Syria. The sources for the study were literature reviews, statistics, articles and internet searches. Information on international best practice was taken from recent UNESCO and other publications as well as from journal articles. The report on the *International Meeting of Experts: Towards Policy Framework for Securing the Recognition, Regularization and Certification of Non-Formal Education*, held in Lebanon in January 2016 (UNESCO Beirut Office, 2016), was another useful source.

The study promotes learning from international best practice. There are many good practices across the world, in different sectors (labour market, vocational, secondary and higher education sectors), and there are good examples of the uses of learning outcomes, and of

the linkages between recognition and NQFs. These will be elaborated on and their applicability in the context of the recognition of Syrian refugees highlighted.

The study was based on four key research questions:

- What are the contextual realities and current practice in the formal, non-formal and informal learning of Syrian refugees?
- How do the stakeholders perceive the importance of valuing and recognizing the non-formal and informal learning of Syrian refugees at all levels of the education and training system?
- How can the core elements of a comprehensive national strategy for creating synergies between formal, non-formal and informal learning be implemented for Syrian refugees?
- What policy recommendations emerge from the study?

The main body of the study is divided into three sections (A, B and C) *Chapter 2* of *Section A* summarizes current policy and practice in formal and non-formal education and training, in the context of the socio-economic realities of Syrian refugee youth and young adults in the five host countries. While there is information on non-formal education (NFE) and learning at the basic level, there is limited information on the recognition of the outcomes of non-formal education and learning in these countries or on the recognition and validation of individuals' prior learning and competences from work and life. For that reason, the information will be dealt with thematically rather than by country. *Chapter 3* considers recognition in the context of establishing flexible pathways into work and the education system at all levels.

*Section B*, which consists of chapters 4–6, refers to the core elements of a comprehensive national strategy for creating synergies between formal, non-formal and informal learning: policy and legislative frameworks; standards and national qualifications frameworks; procedures, processes and mechanisms for recognizing, accrediting and certifying non-formal learning and education; and the professional development of recognition personnel.

*Section C* draws conclusions from the exercise and sets out policy recommendations for the five host countries.

# FORMAL AND NON-FORMAL LEARNING
# OF SYRIAN REFUGEES: SOCIO-CULTURAL REALITIES

## 2.1 The refugee crisis and its impact on education

The crisis in Syria has been a long and protracted one. Now in its seventh year, the conflict has left more than 7.6 million people internally displaced and around 13.5 million in need of educational assistance (UNHCR, 2017b). UNHCR estimates for the Middle East, updated in 2017,[6] show that Egypt, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey accommodate the largest number of refugees, with approximately 4.8 million Syrian people seeking sanctuary in these five countries. Lebanon is the highest per capita recipient of refugees in the world: it is host to more than 1 million registered Syrian refugees, which is approximately 24 per cent of its population, as well as a large number of non-registered refugees. The Lebanese Government estimates that the overall number of refugees in the country has reached 1.5 million. Turkey hosts 2,992,567 Syrian refugees, which is approximately 2.5 per cent of its population, in addition to the 214,795 refugees and asylum seekers it has taken in from Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan and Somalia. Estimates for Jordan show that it currently hosts 660,315 Syrian refugees (UNHCR, 2017b), constituting 10 per cent of its population (MoPIC, 2015). Although Egypt and Syria do not share a land border, the Egyptian Government has allowed Syrian refugees into the country. Around 122,228 Syrian refugees are currently registered with UNHCR, although it is estimated that an equal number of unregistered refugees are also in the country. The KRI had registered 239,639 Syrian refugees.

This chapter examines the role of formal and non-formal learning in the education response to the refugee crisis in these countries, recognizing the exceptional circumstances and the huge challenges posed. It begins with an analysis of the socio-economic and cultural realities which affect the education and learning of Syrian refugees in

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[6]  http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php

the host countries. The overall aim is to learn what works and what is not working, with a view to supporting Member States in investing in processes and mechanisms that are better able to improve the accessibility, quality and relevance of education in the region.

### 2.1.1   Children and young people make up half the refugee population

According to the Global Trends Study for 2015 (UNHCR, 2015*a*), more than 50 per cent of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees are children and young people. More than three-quarters (79 per cent) of these children and young people are considered to be living in poverty. They come from different social and economic backgrounds with varying exposure to war, and are now living inside formal and non-formal camps or outdoors.

### 2.1.2   Rise in the number of refugees living outside camps

Syria has produced the largest population of refugees in the twenty-first century, constituting approximately 5 million persons as of 2016. Given the continuing rise in refugee numbers and the limited available space within camps, focus has shifted to self-settlement, with the majority of refugees who are studying no longer camp-based (UNESCO, 2013*a*; Save the Children, 2013; UNESCO, 2013*c*).

In the case of Turkey, where 85 per cent of refugee students are self-settled, access to education for camp-based children remains noticeably better than for those living in rural and urban host communities. Additionally, for those provinces that border Syria, such as Hatay, Gaziantep and Sanliurfa, which together accommodate 900,000 Syrian refugees, tensions are growing due to competition for work and the rising cost of accommodation and retail goods (UNHCR, 2015*b*).

In Lebanon, 100 per cent of refugee students live outside camps. These self-settled, non-camp-based refugees live in more than 1,400 different localities across the deprived northern and Bekaa regions, where the informality of the labour market and low-quality jobs affect the employment of one in five young people. Tensions within these communities are rising as competition for livelihood, resources and opportunities increases.

In Jordan, 70 per cent of refugee students live outside camps. The total number of self-settled refugees is 650,000; of these, 27.7 per cent live in

Amman, 23.3 per cent in Irbi, and 12.4 per cent in Mafraq governorates (MoPIC, 2014), where they are cut off from their networks and opportunities to access work, education and social services. The remainder live in one of the three refugee camps based in Mafraq, which hosts approximately 120,000 refugees and has the largest refugee camp in Jordan and the second largest in the world (Rawlings, 2014).

In Iraq, where most self-settled refugees are in the KRI, 70 per cent of refugee students are not camp-based. According to the UNHCR, 215,000 Syrian refugees are registered in the country (2014), with around 32,709 in formal education, 1,560 in non-formal education, 205 in vocational education, and 295 in early childhood care and education (ECCE). The curriculum for Iraqi children is taught in Kurdish, English and Arabic; however, for Syrian children, all lessons are in Arabic.

### 2.1.3   Access to public schools

Syrian children aged 12–18 and young adults aged 19–25 need access to the formal education and training system, which includes primary, secondary and post-secondary education; technical and vocational education and training (TVET); non-formal education and training; and other educational and psychosocial services. Camp-based or double-shift schools accredited by ministries of education in host communities provide formal education for refugees. However, as of February 2014, the estimated number of children (aged 5–7) not in school ranged from 2.1 million to 2.4 million (UNICEF, 2015*a*, p. 5).

Syrian students were previously required to have a residence permit in order to access public schools in Turkey; however, to overcome some of the administrative barriers to education, the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) lifted this requirement in September 2014.[7] Since then, the enrolment rate has risen from 110,000 in 2013 to 226,944 in 2015 (MoNE, 2015).

To promote equitable access to education in Lebanon, the government and its partners developed the Reaching All Children with Education (RACE) programme. Educational assistance (including in double-shift

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[7]   Circular 2014/21, issued in September 2014 by the Ministry of National Education.

public schools) and alternative learning programmes have since reached close to 50 per cent of those of basic education age. However, around 90 per cent of young people in the 15–24 age group are still largely excluded from learning institutions (UNFPA et al., 2016).

The Government of Jordan's open-door policy for refugee children resulted in high enrolment rates of Syrian children in public schools across the country, with about 73 per cent attending Ministry of Education-accredited schools in camps and 86 per cent attending schools in host communities (UNICEF, 2015*a*). Efforts have also been made to accommodate children in double-shift schools, particularly in the six governorates that house the largest population of Syrian refugees. Afternoon second-shift classes for Syrian children are 45 minutes shorter than Jordanians' classes. Currently, 98 schools operate on double shifts in approximately 140 schools across the country (MoPIC, 2015).

In Egypt, Syrian refugee children have unreserved access to school, where they follow the national Egyptian curriculum. They require nothing more than a document indicating the stage and class of education reached; those without documents sit an aptitude test before being placed in an appropriate class. Schools across the seven governorates accept and enrol all applicants.

## 2.2  Non-formal learning programmes in host countries

Non-formal learning programmes already exist for the countries' own settled inhabitants. With some adaptations, these programmes have been extended to Syrian refugees who may have missed out on a year or more of school, never enrolled in school or who are unprepared for formal education. The aims of non-formal learning programmes are to provide:

- second-chance education, i.e. access to school for those who drop out early;
- literacy, basic skills and language instruction for youth and adults;
- youth and adult education and vocational training programmes;
- life-skills programmes, including psychosocial support, health and hygiene, family planning and environmental education;
- social and cultural programmes, such as sports, arts and crafts.

Informal learning includes self-directed and socially directed learning, learning in the family and in daily life, in the workplace, in communities, and through activities such as reading newspapers, listening to the radio, visiting museums and engaging with digital media. Informal learning is mostly voluntary and often mediated within a social context (Shohel, 2016).

Only some non-formal learning programmes will lead to a certificate, however; others lead to a non-formal certificate or no certificate at all. Additionally, many non-formal learning activities do not have the frameworks that allow them to be integrated into the formal education and training system. *Table 1* (overleaf) categorises the different types of non-formal programme according to whether they lead to formal certification, on the one hand, or to some kind of non-formal certification or to no certificate at all, on the other.

### 2.2.1   Non-formal learning leading to a certificate equivalent to basic education level

Non-formal learning in Egypt takes the form of literacy programmes for children aged 6–11, school leavers aged 11–14, and adults aged 15–45. To overcome issues related to overcrowded and under-resourced schools, children enrol in a public school but attend classes in double-shift schools or community centres run by NGOs. Children are thus registered in the formal system and have the opportunity to sit end-of-year and school-leaving exams and have their learning certified (UNESCO Beirut Office, 2016).

In Iraq, non-formal learning leading to a basic education certificate is supported through the following initiatives: *literacy centres*, which assist people aged 15–45 to receive elementary Grade 4 equivalent literacy certificates, enabling them to then join age-appropriate education pathways; and *the accelerated schooling project*, which provides elementary-equivalent learning in double-shift schools.

Jordan has established three non-formal learning programmes (UNESCO Beirut Office, 2016):

1. *Second-chance general education*, which provides: adult literacy for those aged 15 and over; support programmes for school leavers aged 12 and over; an irregular learners' programme; home-based learning for those aged 12 and over; and learning in double-shift schools, a summer school programme and evening study programmes for 6–18 year olds.

# Table 1: Types of non-formal learning programmes

## Second-chance basic education programmes mostly certified by ministries of education

| EGYPT | IRAQ | JORDAN | LEBANON | TURKEY |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| • Community education<br>• Second-chance schools | • Literacy centres:<br>– equivalent to elementary 4, for people aged 15–45 years<br>• Accelerated schooling<br>– equivalent to elementary | • General education programmes:<br>– for school drop-outs<br>– for irregular learners<br>– for home-based learning, 12 and above<br>– for regular students in double-shift schools<br>– summer school<br>– evening study<br>• TVET programmes:<br>– vocational training to catch up with applied secondary education | • Accelerated learning<br>• Basic literacy and numeracy<br>• Bridging programmes<br>• TVET<br>• Retention support | • Temporary education centres (TECs) in refugee camps and in host communities<br>• Some TECs are not certified |

## Youth and adult literacy programmes, mostly run by ministries of education

| EGYPT | IRAQ | JORDAN | LEBANON | TURKEY |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| • Literacy programmes for young and old | • Youth and adult literacy<br>• Community centres for literacy and life skills for girls | • Adult literacy above 15 years | • Functional basic literacy and numeracy for youth 15–19 (Grade 9–12) | • Public education centres offers free certified Turkish language courses |

*Source:* Compiled by the author

2. *Second-chance vocational training*, which provides opportunities for students to catch up with applied secondary education. The option to join community colleges, certain university colleges or training courses designed to upgrade vocational and technical skills is also available.

3. *A drop-out education programme* is supported by the MoE and is for those children who have missed out on school and/or come from disadvantaged backgrounds.

In Lebanon, *accelerated education* is taught by way of flexible programmes that reduce the timeframe needed for disadvantaged groups to return to school or for those groups whose education pathways were interrupted because of poverty, conflict or violence. Certified competences equivalent to those in the formal system can be achieved. In addition, psychosocial support and life skills help learners transit to formal schooling or complete primary education. UNICEF, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, and the Centre for Educational Research and Development have developed an accelerated curriculum for all programmes (UNICEF, 2015*a*, p. 9). An additional *second-chance community-based programme* is for Syrian refugee children aged 6–14 who have completed more than one year of school. It follows the Lebanese public school curriculum and also provides remedial education for students who have been out of school for more than two years. *Second-chance secondary education* is for Syrian girls aged 14–18 and consists of general education subjects, vocational training and nutrition, and promotes psychosocial skills, self-defence and resilience. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education has identified the various non-formal learning pathways, from early childhood education to Grade 12 (see *Figure 1*).

Second-chance education takes place in temporary education centres (TECs) in Turkey. Unlike in Lebanon and Jordan, where the double-shift system is an extension of the public school system, in Turkey the second shift takes place in TECs, which have been established and certified by the MoNE and operate both within and outside refugee camps. The MoNE has also established public education centres, where refugees receive free certified Turkish language courses. These centres are primarily in cities (Dorman, 2014) and offer vocational courses for youth and adults. The

**Figure 1: Non-formal pathways for re-entry into formal basic education in Lebanon**



| CHILD PROFILE | NFE PROGRAMME AS PATHWAY | ENTRY POINT | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **3–5 years** (KG) | ECE | | |
| **Prior learning** 7–17 years (G1–9) | ALP – BASIC | FORMAL GRADES 1–9 | RETENTION SUPPORT |
| **No prior learning** 6–17 years (G1–9) | BLN – BASIC | | |
| **15–18 years** (G9–12) | BRIDGING PROGRAMME | FORMAL G (1–9) OR VTEC | |
| | BLN – YOUTH | FURTHER LEARNING | |
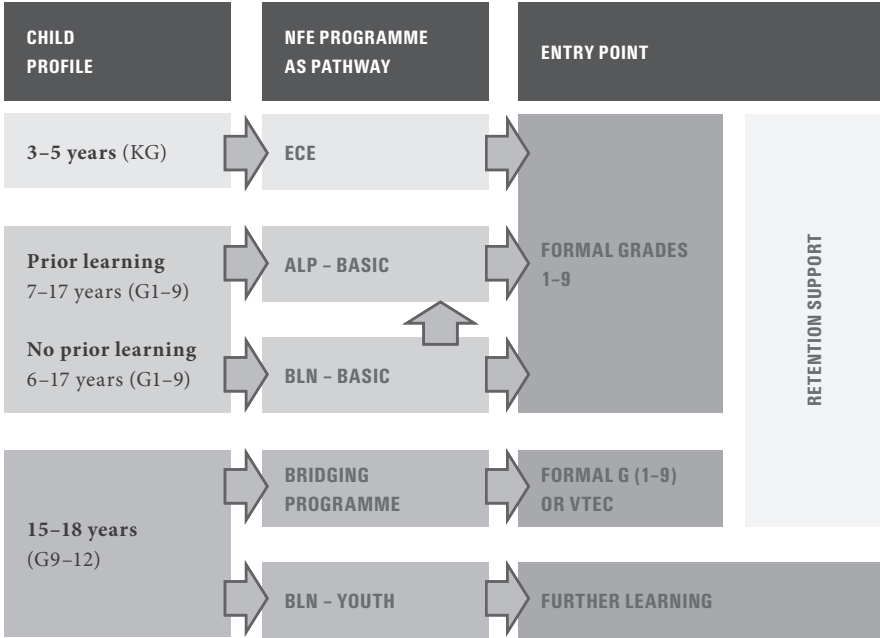
*Source:* MEHE, 2016

humanitarian organization Turkish Red Crescent provides services to over 40,000 Syrians (children and adults), including psychosocial support, children's activities, vocational training courses and programmes to promote social integration within host communities (IFRC, 2015).

It is worth noting that in Syria, where non-formal learning programmes are seen as an alternative to formal education, the Ministry of Education approved the following five approaches to learning (UNESCO Beirut Office, 2016):

1. Condensed education for children aged 8–17 who have not been in school for two or more years. Learners advance through grades 1–8 in only four years in order to facilitate their return to formal education.
2. Compensatory and remedial classes for learners who are late in enrolling by between two months and a term because of the prevailing conflict. Lessons take place in schools outside regular teaching hours to compensate for missed lessons.

3. Self-directed learning programmes designed to help children who have left school or were unable to attend school for various reasons, such as living in an unsafe zone or being forced to work because of poverty. Elements of the formal curriculum syllabus have been developed into self-learning activities, which are gradually implemented by the learner in the absence of a teacher. An assessment test is then organized by the education directorates to ascertain when these students are ready to go back to formal school.

4. The Syrian Electronic School for basic and higher secondary education, designed for children and young people living in areas controlled by armed groups. It allows millions of Syrian students to access formal education that is accredited by the MoE for both basic and secondary levels.

5. Mobile education for nomadic communities providing basic education to nomadic youth. In 2011/12, 44 mobile schools set up in tents or temporary structures to serve 832 boys and girls.

### 2.2.2  Non-formal learning leading to a non-formal certificate or to no certificate at all

In Egypt, vocational training programmes aimed at girls are offered by different civil society organizations and vocational education and training institutions.

Iraq, meanwhile, has UNESCO-supported community centres that provide literacy and life-skills programmes for women aged 15 years and over. Jordan features around 250 'alternative learning centres'. These centres, called *Makani* (My Space), are part of an initiative by the United Nation Children's Fund (UNICEF), and offer both informal and non-formal programmes (UNHCR, 2015*c*). Children enrolled in the formal education system learn remedial numeracy, literacy, English and science, and receive counselling, psychosocial support and life skills (UNICEF, 2015*a*).

In Lebanon, UNICEF's virtual school programme, *Sahabati* (My Cloud), provides curriculum in Arabic, English, maths and science, as well as online assessments, testing and certification for grades 9 and 12. The Kayany Foundation has also established mobile schools for camp-based Syrian refugee children, which are approved by Lebanon's Ministry of Social Affairs. The informal learning activities at these schools benefits

both refugee and host communities, and act as information hubs where community meetings are held and training centres for Syrian teachers, who learn how to deliver remedial and active learning methods.

In Turkey, Syrian refugees are expected to register with the authorities on arrival. The government extends temporary protection to all Syrian people as well as stateless persons and Palestinian refugees living in Syria. Temporary protection legislation was passed in October 2014 (UNICEF, 2015*b*, p. 40). Following this, Turkey began to adopt a more non-formal approach to educating refugee children. Many temporary education centres (TECs) are now unaccredited by the government and, in many cases, offer no examinations, leaving students with no recognized certificates at the end of the school year (Jalbout, 2015*a*). TECs still play an essential role in their students' lives, however, because they are operated by fellow displaced Syrians. According to Kaoru Yamamoto (2016), students and teachers of TECs share a good rapport, feel they now have the freedom to express opinions openly, and have a shared hope that education will lead to repatriation and reconciliation. 'These Syrian schools in Turkey provide refugees with not only the sustainable educational opportunities but the particular supplements and motivations which no other supporters are able to do' (Yamamoto, 2016, p. 135). Despite Syrians' preference for enrolling their children in these centres, where they can maintain their culture and language, significant challenges, such as high transportation costs, exist.

In Syria, there are non-formal learning courses such as vocational training courses that lead to non-formal certificates. These course target adults aged 20–30 who never finished their education and prepare them for the labour market.

## 2.3 Role of the state in regulating curriculum, language of instruction, and examination

A wide range of state institutions, international and local NGOs, and community-based organizations provide education and training to refugees. Ministries of education play a key role in shaping learning programmes, however, and are responsible for regulating curriculum, and developing an examination system and mechanisms for formal accreditation

(UNICEF, 2015*a*, p. 74). *Table 2* and *Table 3* show the curricula, language of instruction and various examination and assessment systems in the region's public and second-chance non-formal schools.

In Lebanon, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) is committed to addressing the right to education for refugees. MEHE has led the education emergency response of the Lebanese Government with the Reaching All Children with Education (RACE) strategy, a multi-stakeholder, nationally coherent response plan within the framework of the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan. RACE promotes quality education opportunities in Lebanon to all children affected by the Syria crisis and has progressively ensured the mainstreaming of displaced people into the national education system. In 2015/16, for example, MEHE succeeded in having school fees for Syrian refugee children enrolled in Lebanese primary public schools waived, and increased the number of available school spaces for refugee children by initiating second-shift schools. MEHE has also taken significant steps to improve national policies that affect education for refugees. In 2016, the Lebanese Cabinet announced that

**Table 2: Curriculum and language of instruction in public schools and second-chance non-formal schools for Syrian refugees**

| PUBLIC SCHOOLS | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **EGYPT** | **IRAQ** | **JORDAN** | **LEBANON** | **TURKEY** |
| • Syrian children learn the Egyptian curriculum in Arabic in public schools. | • Not enough public schools in urban areas using Arabic as the medium of instruction to accommodate all out-of-school Syrian children. | • Syrian children are taught the Jordanian curriculum. Adapting to this is easier as the language of instruction is the same as in Syria. | • Syrian children learn mathematics and science in French or English. This is a learning barrier for those used to Arabic as the medium of instruction. | • In 2011/12, schools in temporary education centres taught the Turkish curriculum in the Turkish language. |

**Table 2: Curriculum and language of instruction in public schools and second-chance non-formal schools for Syrian refugees**

| SECOND-CHANCE NON-FORMAL LEARNING | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **EGYPT** | **IRAQ** | **JORDAN** | **LEBANON** | **TURKEY** |
| • Syrian pupils learn the Egyptian curriculum in an NGO-run or community setting in a culturally familiar environment with Syrian teachers who speak a familiar dialect. Although<br>• Arabic is the main language of instruction, the delivery of lessons in the Egyptian dialect was cited as a challenge. | • Since 2013, a revised Syrian curriculum developed by the Syrian Education Commission has been used in camps. | • Jordan's Ministry of Education established schooling in the refugee camps with fully accredited status. Students receive formal certificates at the end of the year.<br>• Curriculum is condensed, accelerated, flexible, relevant and accommodates the needs of excluded children.<br>• Courses in various technical areas are available but are not recognized by the Ministry of Education. | • The accelerated learning curriculum is a condensed basic education curriculum from grades 1–9, intended for out-of-school children who have missed school for more than two years.<br>• Schools that have established double shifts to accommodate Syrian children provide a condensed Arabic-Lebanese curriculum with a focus on core subjects, not including arts, physical education and other extracurricular activities related to the delay in starting the academic year. | • In 2012/13, the unabated influx of refugees led to the emergence of an education system for Syrian children that adopted a revised Syrian curriculum in Arabic. |

*Source:* Compiled by the author

**Table 3: Examination and assessment system for Syrian refugees in the host countries**

| EGYPT | IRAQ | JORDAN | LEBANON | TURKEY |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| • To overcome issues related to overcrowded and under-resourced schools, children enrol in a public school but attend classes in schools run by NGOs or in community centres.<br>• They are thus registered in the formal system and have the opportunity to sit end-of-year and school-leaving exams and have their learning certified. | • Syrian students who reach their graduation year and who submitted the required school records, may sit the final national examination. They receive the same certificates as Iraqi students.<br>• However, the success rate for those who registered for the exam was low. | • In Jordan, those refugees who pass the Tawjihi (Grade 12 examination) are entitled to enter higher education.<br>• The Tawjihi is recognized and accredited regardless of a student's nationality.<br>• Students must complete up to at least grades 11 and 12 in the Jordanian curriculum to sit the Tawjihi. | • Syrian students may sit an end-of-year official school-leaving examination as long as they provide proof of identity. | • In Turkey, refugees follow the country's learning assessment system, which includes four exams each school year, including a mid-term and an end-of-term exam.<br>• At the end of Grade 8, students sit an examination and receive a primary diploma.<br>• The only school-leaving examination is at the end of secondary school, at Grade 12. |

*Source:* Compiled by the author

non-Lebanese children who do not have adequate documentation would be allowed to sit official exams, thereby paving the way for Syrian children to receive certificates of completion and to move to the next level of education (MEHE, 2016).

Educating Syrian children is a high priority in Turkey. Camp-based schools at the provincial level operate under the MoNE with support from the Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD). Provincial education commissions, along with NGOs and civil society, recommend the establishment of schools or TECs, and determine the educational needs and facilitate the enrolment of refugees. Only TECs under MoNE

authority are accredited, however, and the monitoring and evaluation of the revised Syrian curriculum have proved to be a challenge.

There is also an informal working group on education in each province that reports to the central Education Sector Working Group (ESWG) in Ankara. AFAD, UNICEF, UNHCR, the Directorate General of Migration Management and the Turkish Red Crescent support these working groups.

With the assistance of UNICEF, MoNE developed the YÖBIS data-base, which registers Syrian students, monitors their educational attain-ment and grants certifications. This, in turn, ensures Syrian children receive the same services as their Turkish counterparts. In future, YÖBIS will manage the education data of all foreign children in Turkey.

Post-secondary and higher education are not easily accessible for Syrian refugees. However, the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB) provides scholarships for Syrians enrolling in public or private universities in Turkey. Since its launch in 2013, YTB has funded more than 2,000 students and has provided refugees with language training. The UNHCR also provides smaller scholarships (Jalbout, 2015*a*).

Syrian refugees follow Turkey's learning assessment system, which includes four exams each school year, including a mid-term and an end-of-term exam. At the end of Grade 8, students sit an examination and receive a primary diploma. Syrian students sit an official school-leaving examination at the end of secondary school, Grade 12.

The Government of Jordan has a generous policy to provide free access to education for refugees of the Syrian crisis. The Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MoPIC) played a leading role in this by establishing the Jordan Response Platform for the Syrian Crisis (JRPSC) in 2014. The JRPSC, which comprises the MoE, the UN, donor agencies and other partners, develops mechanisms in response to the impact of the Syrian crisis on Jordan (MoPIC, 2015). An ESWG aligns the activities of the various donor agencies with the government, which in turn develops non-formal education programmes together with NGOs; for example, the Norwegian Refugee Council manages the vocational training pro-grammes for Syrians aged 16–24 in the Zaatari refugee camp.

Students must complete at least Grade 11 and Grade 12 in the Jordanian curriculum to sit the *Tawjihi* (Grade 12 examination). Refugees who pass the Tawjihi are entitled to a diploma that is recognized and accredited

regardless of their nationality. In the case of Syrian students, those who reach their graduation year and submit the required school records may sit for Tawjihi; the first to do so were in the academic year 2013/14.

Syrians in Iraq receive the same certificates as Iraqi students, although the success rate of refugee students in exams has been low. One of the major issues in the KRI was the certification of a revised Syrian curriculum; however, in March 2014, the Kurdistan Regional Government rectified this problem by certifying all children regardless of the curriculum used.

Various stakeholders manage the education of Syrian refugees in Egypt: the MoE is responsible for community education and second-chance schools; the adult education department of the MoE handles literacy programmes; technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions provide students with hands-on instruction; and civil society organizations oversee targeted programmes for groups including girls and women, and school drop-outs (UNICEF, 2015*a*).

Refugee children enrol in Egyptian public schools but attend classes in NGO-run or community centres. They are therefore included in the formal system and have the opportunity to sit end-of-year and school-leaving exams and have their learning certified (ibid.).

## 2.4  Challenges faced by Syrian refugees in formal and non-formal learning settings

Although governments and other stakeholders have made advances in providing quality formal and non-formal learning programmes, major challenges remain. Based on previous studies, this chapter looks at the challenges faced by Syrian refugees in the five host countries. In doing so, it also draws contrasts, wherever possible, with the formal and non-formal learning situation in Syria.

### 2.4.1  Access to public schools remains low

Despite the best efforts of MoEs in host countries, overall enrolment rates for Syrian refugees remain low. In most cases, only 30 per cent of Syrian children have access to public schools, leaving more than 70 per cent of school-aged children and adolescents without access to formal

education (UNESCO, 2015*d*). Access to local public schools is severely limited, especially for those children and young refugees living outside camp settings.

The double-shift system in Lebanon and Jordan has come under criticism for reducing learning time, separating refugee and host community students, eliminating arts and sport activities, and employing less-experienced teachers. These factors affect the quality of education and are some of the reasons behind the high drop-out rate. The two-shift system is seen as inadequate for preparing students for the Tawjihi; thus, many students drop out fearing they will be unable to get certification or accreditation for their years of study (UNESCO, 2013*a*, in Wahby et al., 2014; Chatty, 2016, pp. 132–133).

Many regions populated by self-settled refugees in Iraq are devoid of formal schools. Most of the young people in these areas are therefore out of school and it is difficult to keep track of them.

In Turkey, a lack of information on enrolment procedures and economic factors has prevented the majority of refugee children from enrolling in school, with only around 7,500 Syrian children attending Turkish schools as of May 2014 despite there being room for at least 20,000 (UNICEF, 2015*b*, p. 6).

In Lebanon, Syrian children compete with vulnerable Lebanese children in accessing the often poorly resourced public schools that accommodate 30 per cent of the Lebanese student population. In Jordan, too, formal schools attended by Syrian children are generally overcrowded.

It is worth noting that the situation Syrian refugee children face in the host countries is in complete contrast to the situation in pre-war Syria (i.e. before 2011), which had achieved universal primary education and nearly universal lower-secondary education. Ninety-one per cent of primary school-aged children were enrolled in classes in 2011 – a figure that had plummeted to 38 per cent by the end of the 2013/14 school year (UNESCO, 2015*d*). At secondary school level, 67 per cent of both male and female students were enrolled in 2011, yet less than 50 per cent managed to attend in the 2013/14 school year. This was due to the emergence of enormous physical risks, unsafe learning spaces and the ever-decreasing number of teachers who were under severe risk and pressure, if not in need of psychosocial support themselves.

### 2.4.2   Adapting to a curriculum in a different language is challenging

Turkish is the medium of instruction in government schools in Turkey. Syrian children must therefore master the language before they can enrol in school. Meanwhile, in Lebanon, Syrian children learn mathematics and science in either French or English – another barrier. In Jordan, however, the language of instruction is the same as it is in Syria. If refugee students do not have a certificate from the last grade they attended in Syria, they sit exams in certain subjects before being placed in the relevant grade. However, few Syrian students enrol in secondary school, because they are required to have completed two full years of study beforehand (Fean and Marshall, 2016, p. 138). Of those students who do enrol in secondary school, only a few of them sit the high school examination (the Tawjihi), believing that, even if they pass, the high costs of higher education opportunities would be prohibitive (higher education is generally expensive for Jordanian nationals as well). For Syrian children in Iraq, the national Kurdish curriculum is taught in Arabic. However, since 2014, the Kurdistan Regional Government has not received budgeted allocations for teachers, which has disrupted classes. Finally, in Egypt, lessons are taught in the Egyptian dialect, which can be difficult for refugees.

### 2.4.3   The school drop-out rate is high

The vast majority of Syrian refugee children do not attend school or drop out. The social and economic impacts of this are far-reaching: it leads to chronic and long-lasting impoverishment and alienation between local populations and refugees. In Jordan, around 60 per cent of Syrian children living in host communities attend primary school; however, of these only 51 per cent go on to attend secondary school, with the rate dropping to 47.5 per cent among boys (REACH, 2014).

In contrast to the situation in Jordan, the national average attendance rate in Syria is 73 per cent. However, this figure varies from governorate to governorate because they operate under different authorities (UNICEF, 2015, p. 5). In relatively safe areas that have experienced a large influx of internally displaced persons, many children do not attend school. The reasons for their low attendance are lack of learning spaces, lack of motivated teachers, and lack of official documents.

### 2.4.4  Repercussions when certificates and diplomas are not recognized

A large proportion of refugees are unable to use the qualifications and school records they received at home in order to advance in education or to obtain employment in their host countries. MoEs do not always recognize refugees' credentials; therefore, difficult negotiations take place on a case-to-case basis (Kirk, 2009, p. 39). In Jordan, for example, refugee children who have missed three or more years of formal schooling are no longer eligible for formal education. Therefore, although up to 60 per cent of Syrian children in Jordan are in school, the remainder have missed too much to be able to catch up without specifically designed programmes. Furthermore, most formal education systems lack the flexibility to allow students to register throughout the school year. Because of this, vulnerable students who relocate in the middle of the school year (because their families found new accommodation, for example) are unable to register at another school and must wait for the following year.

Even where there is a willingness to recognize qualifications, issues remain with regard to equivalency. These include:

- difficulty in matching grade levels with their equivalent in host countries;
- an inability to place and/or integrate students who change school mid-year;
- a lack of 'bridging' courses, which would make the transition from a students' former school system to that of the host country easier.

### 2.4.5  Out-of-school and unenrolled children and adolescents

Children and adolescents have paid a heavy price for the Syrian conflict. In Turkey, according to the Ministry of National Education, approximately 279,000 Syrian children were enrolled in education in November 2015 – a 30 per cent increase on the number of students enrolled in June 2015, at the end of the previous school year. Nevertheless, in the same period, more than 450,000 school-aged Syrian boys and girls were estimated to be out of school (UNICEF, 2015*b*, pp. 2–3). Most of these young people live in host communities

rather than in camps, where the rate of enrolment is 90 per cent compared to 26.3 per cent in host communities. Most out-of-school children live in the provinces, where refugees reside in substandard shelter conditions. Currently, less than 15 per cent of the refugees live in the country's 25 camps, while some 2 million are located across Turkey's 19 provinces (Erdogan, 2014). In Syria alone, 3 million young people are not enrolled in school, reversing the country's prior achievement of almost-universal primary and secondary enrolment. In Jordan, figures for 2014 (ESWG, 2014) show that despite the success of the government in placing approximately 130,000 Syrian children in formal education, 90,000 remain outside the system, both in and outside the camps. The reasons for this include limited school spaces, lack of financial resources to cover the costs of uniforms and transportation, difficulties in integrating children who have missed several years of schooling, lack of transport, and the prevalence of child labour.

The numbers of out-of-school children are highest in Jordan's host communities, such as Tafilah, Madaba and Balqa, where half of all refugee children do not go to school (ESWG, 2014). A similar proportion of children are out of school in the Zaatari refugee camp, but numbers are significantly lower in the other two camps, Mrajeeb Al-Fhood and Azraq. An assessment of out-of-school children in Zaatari found that the most vulnerable group were 12- to 17-year-old Syrian boys (ESWG, 2014). According to a UNICEF study, 33.2 per cent attend formal education, but over 50 per cent have never had any form of education (UNICEF, 2015*b*).

In Lebanon, where the national education system is under the greatest pressure, 500,000 Syrian refugee children are not enrolled in school. In fact, only 19 per cent of school-aged refugee children and adolescents access formal education. A large proportion have not registered for school fearing that Syrian internal security forces could access their personal data. Lack of registration prevents students from accessing education and sitting official examinations (Chatty, 2016, p. 132). According to a situation analysis of refugees in Lebanon (UNFPA et al., 2014), three challenges were highlighted with regard to education. The first of these is financial, and includes fees and transportation costs, as well as the pressure put on young refugees to work and contribute to the family income. The second is the need to develop officially recognized

certifications of learning outcomes. The final challenge pertains to difficulties with regard to curriculum and the language of instruction.

UNESCO's Global Monitoring Study Policy Brief (UIS, 2015) highlights this issue of out-of-school children, reporting that half of all 33.78 million out-of-school children and adolescents in conflict-affected countries can be found in sub-Saharan Africa, followed by South Asia (6.6 million) and West Asia, with 6.2 million in the Arab States. Of this group, 70 per cent live in countries in protracted crisis.

### 2.4.6   Teachers lack training

The influx of Syrian students into Jordan has resulted in overcrowded classrooms, limited school resources and overworked teachers, all of which lowers the quality of education (MoPIC, 2015). Pop and McLean (2016, pp. 78–79) found that teachers of refugee students often have little subject matter or pedagogical training, with many lacking even the 10 days of instruction that would classify them as 'trained' according to the international definition for teachers of refugees. In addition, class sizes often reach well over 100 students, and engagement is low: children rarely take part in group work, ask questions or engage in exploration. Furthermore, Pop and McLean highlight evidence that suggests that assigning refugee children to schools that lack support leads to low educational outcomes, which, in turn, negatively affects social and economic inclusion and integration, thereby increasing the risk of marginalization and radicalization.

### 2.4.7   Few opportunities in secondary and higher education and TVET

A 2015 UNESCO study found that there were 'enormous support gaps for post-primary education. There are very few secondary schools [or] technical and vocational schools for IDPs [internally displaced persons] and refugees in host communities [and] in camps' (UNESCO, 2015*d*, p. 14); yet a huge demand for secondary education for refugees and IDPs exists, particularly in Iraq and Syria. According to the UNESCO report, available evidence shows that quality secondary education, especially for women and those in vulnerable groups, is vital in solidifying their foundational skills and in enabling them to acquire the necessary skills

for life and work. Such skills are also crucial in empowering young people in conditions of crisis (ibid., p. 15).

The report also highlights the importance of tailor-made educational provisions suited to learners' diverse needs. Adding to and supplementing such needs flexibly and reliably provides a clear pathway to formal education, and promotes peace and social cohesion. Educational opportunities provided in the host countries to date rarely concern secondary or higher education, TVET or the acquisition of skills necessary for a productive life. Learning opportunities for adolescents in general – and secondary education in particular – remain marginal in terms of both response and funding (UNFPA et al., 2014). For those who do not complete their secondary education, still fewer opportunities to continue to tertiary levels are available.

In Turkey, secondary school-aged children make up the majority of the out-of-school Syrian refugee population. This is due to missed years of schooling because of the conflict and a high rate of young people leaving school to find work (Jalbout, 2015*a*). In Jordan, secondary school-aged adolescents have the option of enrolling in non-formal education programmes; however, these are often under-resourced and of poor quality. Statistics for 2014, from the Jordanian Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, showed that for the 100,000 adolescents living in the camps only 3,000 benefitted from post-basic and higher education opportunities (MoPIC, 2015). Overall, Syrian refugees in Jordan find themselves at a dead-end due to the limited pathways to quality alternative secondary, vocational and post-secondary education. Limited awareness surrounding TVET – believed to be under-resourced, in low demand from employers, and a lower-status alternative to higher education – compounds the problem (UNDP, 2014).

Legal restrictions on access to higher education and certain forms of employment in Lebanon have resulted in few opportunities for refugees to find gainful employment.

The above-mentioned studies also highlight the fact that lack of further education opportunities puts the refugee population at risk. Uneducated young people are more likely to remain unemployed, disenfranchised and may be more easily radicalized (Jalbout, 2015b). Lack of higher education opportunities could also lead to increased vulnerabilities, exploitation and disenfranchisement of young people (UNDP, 2014).

### 2.4.8  Adolescents obliged to take on poorly paid and low-skilled work

Young refugees – particularly young men – increasingly engage in work to compensate for their family's lack of income and rising debt (BRIC, 2013; UNFPA et al., 2014; Mercy Corps, 2014; Save the Children, 2013). Studies in Jordan found that 50 per cent of refugee children and adolescents work in the informal sector, largely in agriculture, and engage in street peddling and begging (UNESCO, 2013*a*). In Turkey, the struggle faced by many refugees to cover basic living costs has meant that young people often drop out of school to work in the informal sector to provide financial assistance to their families. Seventeen per cent of urban refugee children cite working as a primary reason for not being in school (UNICEF, 2015*b*).

In Lebanon, young refugees do not have the legal right to work. These refugees therefore find themselves in low-skilled, menial jobs that are poorly paid and have the potential to be exploitative. Financial concerns can lead to negative coping measures, such as child labour, as well as insecure tenure and inadequate housing outside of camp contexts (Fean and Marshall, 2016).

Since there is no policy delineating the rights and regulations related to refugees working in Jordan's formal sector, young Syrians are competing with Jordanians for jobs in the informal sector, which accounts for 44 per cent of total employment in the country (ILO, 2014). According to Jalbout (2015*b*), this 'places the most vulnerable Jordanians at a disadvantage and raises the country's already high unemployment rates' (ILO, 2014). In August 2017, however, Jordan became the first Arab country to issue Syrian refugees with a new type of work permit that opens up jobs in certain sectors such as agriculture, textiles and the growing construction sector. Before August 2017, work permits for refugees used to be tied to specific employers who applied on behalf of workers to fill specific positions. Now, refugees can apply themselves to come in and take available roles in the named sectors, especially the building industry (Dunemore, 2016).

Several studies from different parts of the world have drawn attention to the effects low-skilled work has on the social status and financial independence of refugees (Morrice, 2013, p. 263). Ng and Shan (2010) found the non-recognition of foreign education and credentials of refugees to be one of the

reasons for unemployment or underemployment in many countries. With the increasing number of refugees throughout the world, opportunities for them to find gainful employment are becoming scarce. Yet, a World Bank study (2013) found that accepting accountability for refugees actually benefits host governments: these new members of society can increase the host country's economic development by bringing in new skills and resources, and increasing production capacity and consumption demands. Failure to educate refugee children has a detrimental effect on society as a whole. A UNICEF study, *Economic Loss from School Dropout Due to the Syria Crisis* (Mizunoya, 2016), found that wages vary depending on an employee's educational background. Children who drop out of school due to crises are therefore likely to see a negative impact on their future income. The study concluded that, assuming these children do not return to school, the estimated economic loss as a result of drop-out due to the ongoing crisis in Syria would be US $10.7 billion, or 17.7 per cent of the Syrian gross domestic product in 2010 (Mizunoya, 2016, p. 141). Education is therefore not only a moral imperative, but also a critical economic consideration.

### 2.4.9  Fragmented nature of governance of non-formal education programmes

NFE programmes lack a special body or authority comprising relevant stakeholders that can plan, develop and deliver programmes in a coordinated way. There is also a lack of sufficiently up-to-date and credible data on the different kinds of non-formal programmes, which is critical for policy decisions and reforms, and monitoring interventions.

  National experts attending UNESCO's international meeting, *Towards a Policy Framework for Securing the Recognition, Regularization and Certification of Non-Formal Education*, in Lebanon in 2016, drew attention to the impact this fragmented approach to governance was having on the quality of programmes. Concerns regarding the quality of NFE include overcrowded classrooms, new and poorly trained teachers, and limited learning materials and resources. Very little thought is being given to the design and implementation of quality NFE, with most programmes in the MENA region lacking much-needed additional psychosocial support services for refugees. Often, different cultural expectations of refugees and host societies lead local governments to assume that non-formal programmes could pose a threat to the values and educational principles of formal schooling.

Representative stakeholders at the meeting identified some of the challenges faced by non-formal learning programmes. In Iraq, for example, there is an increase in the number of illiterate persons and drop-outs, no mandatory literacy law, a multiplicity of literacy curricula, and a failure to unite the different non-formal programmes under one government department or to facilitate recognized pathways to formal education. This results in a lack of motivation among learners, as well as a lack of psychological support and educational guidance for them (UNESCO Beirut Office, 2016). In Egypt, the fragmented nature of governance of diverse non-formal programmes was problematic, while, in Lebanon, non-formal programmes were found to be ineffective in increasing access to formal education or the world of work (UNFPA et al., 2014).

Some sort of flexible certification policy that would allow young refugees to enter the formal education system would remedy the issue in Lebanon. It must allow them to sit official examinations even if satisfactory documentation is not available. All stakeholders, including the ministries of education and higher education in both Lebanon and Syria, as well as across the rest of the Middle-Eastern region, should be involved in addressing this particular issue of curricula and certification, as it may provide a low-cost window to solve problems related to young refugees' entry into formal education and training (UNESCO Beirut Office, 2016).

### 2.4.10 There is little RVA of non-formal and informal learning

Assessment of learning and competences – a key concept associated with validation and recognition – does not exist outside the public formal learning system or the MoE-accredited second-chance non-formal education programmes in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon or Turkey. And while some scattered cases of assessment exist (for example, to ascertain the appropriate grade level of prospective students), many non-formal certificates carry little weight across sectors or have little transferability value.

Nevertheless, as discussed previously in this chapter, non-formal and informal learning is taking place across the region, primarily under the auspices of several non-governmental organizations, donor agencies and civil society organizations. However, there is no assessment or recognition of learning and competences as an alternative route to a qualification, nor credits awarded at the end of a learning

period. This is because there is no central agency that registers these training episodes and their outcomes. In the learning outcomes approach, what matters is what people know or can do, and not how they have acquired those competences. There is still too much reliance on the input models of teaching rather than on the development of outcomes-based approaches.

## 2.5  Conclusions and lessons learned

This chapter has shown that public initiatives have been crucially important in creating social opportunities for the education of Syrian refugee children, youth and adults. The development of double-shift schools alongside formal school provision and the adoption of a modified curriculum adapted to the learning needs of refugee pupils and young people have been significant steps. A wide range of state institutions, international and local NGOs, and community-based organizations provide education and training to refugees. The ministries of education play a key role in shaping learning programmes. They are responsible for regulating curriculum, and developing an examination system and mechanisms for formal accreditation in public and second-chance non-formal schools.

Non-formal learning programmes already exist for the countries' own settled inhabitants. With some adaptations, these programmes have also been extended to Syrian refugees who may have missed out on a year or more of school, never enrolled in school or are unprepared for formal education. Non-formal education programmes can contribute constructively to the lives of marginalized out-of-school refugee children, youth and adults. They tend to be more direct and explicit in their targeting of disadvantages and deprivations and are framed in terms of social justice, social opportunities and enhancing individual freedoms.

Non-formal learning programmes are of different types and have different aims. Second-chance education, provided, for example, through accelerated or condensed programmes, enables children and adolescents who drop out of school early or have interrupted schooling to re-enter formal education. Literacy, basic skills and language instruction for youth and adults increase further learning opportunities. In many countries, literacy programmes are equivalent to primary school and adult basic education. Vocational training programmes are mostly run by NGOs and donor

agencies and create opportunities for entry into the labour market. Life-skills programmes, including psychosocial support, health and hygiene, family planning and environmental education as well as social and cultural programmes, such as sports, arts and crafts, are an integral part of several non-formal programmes in host countries. Life-skills and social and cultural programmes target socio-cultural inequalities and poverty directly.

This chapter has highlighted good examples of different kinds of programmes for Syrian refugee children, youth and adults. However, barriers to the integration of refugee children and adolescents into formal and non-formal education still exist. Beyond curriculum and language barriers, a combination of poor communication of enrolment procedures and economic disadvantage prevents refugees from becoming students. Other challenges relate to the under-resourcing of public schools and double-shift education provision; the high rate of drop-out in schools in host communities, particularly outside camps; and difficulty in accessing education due to the lack of recognition of previous certificates and diplomas. Non-formal learning programmes exist mostly at elementary level.

In addition to educational challenges, economic issues affect a huge number of out-of-school adolescents who are compelled to take up paid work in the informal sector in order to support their families rather than enrol in secondary school. There are also few opportunities for them to continue into post-secondary vocational or tertiary education. This is unfortunate, given that youth and young adults work worldwide and such experience can provide positive non-formal learning opportunities.

In terms of non-formal learning, there are only some non-formal learning programmes that lead to a certificate, others lead to a non-formal certificate or no certificate at all. In the absence of recognition mechanisms, the learning and competences of Syrian refugees remain unrecognized and devalued.

The absence of recognition of non-formal learning and competences leads to income deprivation and low-paid work in the informal economy. However, it is not only 'economic poverty' that is at stake but also 'capabilities poverty', which, as Amartya Sen puts it, has far-reaching and debilitating effects on individual empowerment, initiative and skills, undermining the self-reliance, self-confidence and psychological and physical health of Syrian refugee youth and adults (Sen, 2002, p. 21).

A young Syrian refugee taking part in a textiles workshop. © UNHCR/Gordon Welters

CHAPTER 3
# WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE: ESTABLISHING FLEXIBLE PROGRESSION PATHWAYS

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, conflict has resulted in 65.3 million displaced persons worldwide, of which 15 million are refugees (UNHCR, 2015*a*). In 2015, Syrians accounted for 4.5 million of these refugees, 50 per cent of whom were under 18. The number has continued to grow. The right to education for displaced persons is in crisis: 48 per cent of children in the Middle East are out of school, as are some 700,000 Syrian students aged between 5 and 17 in the five host countries. While UNHCR calls for access to formal education for all school-aged children and adolescents, it provides varied approaches to non-formal education (NFE) in situations of migration and displacement. Although it is important to create synergies between formal, non-formal and informal learning, formal education, in a sense, is failing Syrian refugees: it does not cater to their learning needs nor is it an attractive option for Syrian youth. Current non-formal provision is also under-resourced and based on short-term development aid projects; it fails to serve refugee children and adolescents who are not in school. Moreover, socio-economic circumstances compel Syrian youth to work to support their families rather than enrol in school.

Given this situation, and taking into account the importance of refugee education as a right, this chapter focuses on the importance of 'alternative transition routes' or 'flexible progression pathways' into further education and training that provide second-chance opportunities for youth and young adults with low educational and marginalized backgrounds to enter the educational system and the world of work. Alternative or flexible pathways entail removing academic success as a determining factor of entry into further education and training and instead recognizing learning and competences that refugees have acquired through non-formal training or work experience. The utilization of agreed standards in alternative pathways is an important feature of recognition of prior learning routes and credit transfers leading to education and training and qualifications. These standards exist either as formal curricula, as learning outcomes-based standards

within a national qualifications system/framework, or as occupational standards, and they serve as reference points for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes and competences.

Recognition, validation and accreditation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes and competences is an area for reform in many countries worldwide seeking to provide alternative and flexible routes in relation to social inclusion. RVA as an alternative pathway is also a core issue in national lifelong learning strategies, demanding linkages between various learning settings and recognition of the need for greater permeability between education and training. It points to the necessity of filling a number of gaps within the system – for example, introducing work-related courses in the compulsory stages, designing modular systems and creating diversified paths to higher education. However, alternative transitions through RVA and credit transfer and accumulation need the commitment and involvement of stakeholders in order to create the institutional and structural conditions to make these flexible pathways happen on a sustainable basis.

Mechanisms for the recognition of non-formal learning outcomes need to be an integral part of progression routes to further education and training for Syrian refugee youth and young adults. While Syrian refugees bring with them knowledge, skills and qualifications which need to be recognized, many RVA candidates have knowledge, skills, and competences which are still in the process of being developed. All RVA processes should therefore be assessed in terms of the extent to which they motivate participation in further education and training programmes. Recognition needs to be conducted in such a way that it forms part of education and training programmes or preparatory courses that are attractive and relevant for refugee youth and young adults. It is important that, when education and training programmes are put in place, the state, together with other stakeholders, focuses particularly on progression. State bodies should ensure that the learning processes result in an assessment of knowledge, skills and competences that is then recognized and certified according to agreed procedures.

Recognized progression pathways are important for ensuring the quality of non-formal learning programmes. The Education for All *Global Monitoring Report 2011* (UNESCO, 2011) found that limited or

low-quality formal and non-formal provision leads to unemployment and poverty, that a growing youth population creates an urgent need to develop pathways from education to employment, and that unequal access to education generates grievances and a sense of injustice.

On the issue of quality of education for Syrian youth, Chatty (2016) argues that 'without a concerted effort to create viable quality education for Syria's youth in the region, there will be a lost generation. Many families are now looking to send their youth to Europe, sometimes unaccompanied, in order to give them a future' (p. 132). Participants at the *Supporting Syria and the Region* conference,[8] held in London, England, on 4 February 2016, committed to reshaping short- and long-term plans in addressing the needs of Syrian refugees. The pledges targeted two key objectives: ensuring all Syrian refugee children and adults have access to quality education by the end of academic year 2016/17 and facilitating the creation of over 1.1 million job opportunities by 2018.

Developing synergies between formal, non-formal and informal learning needs to take place at all levels of the education system, including secondary, vocational education and training, and post-secondary tertiary levels, thereby providing adolescent refugees with pathways for progression into further education and training and the world of work. Formal, non-formal and informal learning programmes should also help to promote personal development and integration into society through psychosocial guidance and counselling.

UNESCO's 2015–16 education response to the Syria crisis (UNESCO, 2015*d*) and relevant study exercises (Jalbout, 2015*a*; Jalbout, 2015*b*; Wahby et al., 2014) have provided us with some responses to the current situation by advocating the right to education and the need to create synergies between formal, non-formal and informal learning. Accordingly, alternative learning pathways, such as non-formal programmes and alternative learning programmes (ALPs), need to be linked to formal education through the expansion of certified non-formal education, equivalence and other accredited learning programmes (UNESCO, 2015*d*, p. 19). Similarly, a study by UK charity Theirworld recommends linking

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[8]  http://www.supportingsyria2016.com

non-formal and informal learning opportunities for young people to formal education: 'there is a need to increase support to alternative education centres [and to] establish clearer links between alternative learning pathway programmes and formal education that allow children and youth to re-engage in the formal system' (Jalbout, 2015*b*, p. 2).

Building on these ideas, this chapter highlights the education and training needs of Syrian refugee children and adolescents. It also draws on international best practice in different sectors of education and training and their applicability to the issue of recognizing the non-formal learning and competences of Syrian refugees. These are not isolated needs, but are connected to several targets defined in the Education 2030 Framework for Action for Sustainable Development Goal 4, which calls on countries to 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all' (UNESCO, 2015*c*).

## 3.1 Pathways to post-primary education and TVET

Studies highlight the need for clear pathways to formal general education and TVET. UNESCO has aligned with the Jordan Response Plan (JRP) to establish partnerships with the MoE and other sectoral agencies to support alternative learning pathways for out-of-school refugee youth. This has included the establishment of schools and annexes to existing formal schools to increase capacity, and the provision of textbooks and learning materials (UNESCO, 2015*d*). In Iraq, UNESCO has concentrated on building infrastructure as well as the capacity of education authorities in the field of secondary education. A situation analysis of Syrian refugees in Lebanon (UNFPA et al., 2014) found that available formal and non-formal learning opportunities or programmes for youth remain ineffective in increasing access to formal education. In fact, catch-up programmes that could facilitate the reintegration of refugee youth aged 15–18 into the formal education system are almost non-existent at present. Yet, the study found, it is precisely this age group for which capacity exists: Lebanese secondary schools could take on additional students at minimal additional expense.

Recommendations from a situation analysis of Syrian refugees in Lebanon (UNFPA et al., 2014) highlighted the importance of: (1) including the provision of learning opportunities that support reintegration

into formal education at the secondary and higher education levels – these programmes need to be relevant, age-specific, gender-sensitive and targeted at adolescents, whose needs greatly differ to those of children; (2) developing more permissive policies vis-à-vis certifications to allow refugee youth entry into formal education and to partake in official examinations even if satisfactory documentation is not available; and (3) involving all stakeholders, including the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, from across the region, in addressing the issue of curricula and certification.

With regard to refugees in Jordan, Ackerman (2014) argues that non-formal programmes can provide a bridge to the formal education system. Non-formal learning would prepare students who lack a government-endorsed Grade 11 school certificate to sit Grade 12 examinations. Previously, those who did not possess the Grade 11 certificate had to travel back to Syria at great risk to their personal safety in order to sit the high-school graduation examination (ibid.).

### 3.1.1 Learning from international best practice on post-primary pathways to TVET

Given the importance of pathways to post-primary basic education for Syrian refugees, it may be helpful to present some examples from countries that are seeking solutions to deal with the high proportion of adolescents who have low levels of basic education and leave the school system during or before upper secondary school. In Nepal, for example, horizontal routes between primary and post-primary education and TVET have been established to promote transitions between education and work for early school-leavers. Since the first major exit point from the general education system is after primary education, the starting point for the TVET certification system is designed accordingly at the post-primary level (SDC, 2013). The National Skills Testing Board (NSTB) has developed a certification system in the TVET sector that is intended to help these transitions run smoothly. *Table 4* shows the entry and exit points from the general education system to the TVET system in Nepal. The two most critical points for transition to the TVET system are on completion of primary education and on completion of lower secondary education.

**Table 4:  Entry and exit points from the general education system to TVET in Nepal**

| EDUCATIONAL LEVEL | SCHOOL COMPLETION RATE OF THE LEARNER | NATIONAL SKILLS TESTING CERTIFICATE SYSTEM | NON-FORMAL LEARNING |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Tertiary | | 4 | Lifelong learning, skills training livelihood support training |
| Higher secondary | | 3 | |
| Secondary | 45% | 2 | |
| Lower secondary | 65% | 1 | Non-formal education adult literacy |
| Primary | 90% | Basic level | |

*Source:* SDC, 2013

Moreover, training under the National Skills Testing Certificate System may be delivered in a variety of ways, including long-term residential courses, modular short courses and flexible morning, evening or weekend classes. Providers may offer any possible combination of centre- and work-based learning, including on-the-job training, internships and apprenticeships in public and private enterprises, outreach programmes, real-life projects, etc. The reforms in the TVET system also cover non-formal education and adult literacy programmes, particularly those that play an important role in improving individuals' work performance and employability and promoting lifelong learning (SDC, 2013).

Such a system could also be useful for Syrian refugees in the host countries. It would allow primary and lower secondary school leavers to acquire TVET certificates at each level. At the same time, it would make the TVET pathway more attractive to young people by embracing all forms of training: formal, non-formal and informal (SDC, 2013).

Another country example worthy of mention is from Bangladesh. Many Bangladeshis leave school before completing Grade 8 of general education and, as a result, are not able to enrol in formal vocational training programmes. In order to overcome this barrier, the government works with stakeholders from the private sector. It has introduced reforms to remove the Grade 8 prerequisite from formal courses and replace it with course-specific entry requirements and tests wherein workers are challenged to demonstrate what they say they know with

respect to the courses into which they expect to be admitted. These challenge tests help to determine the level of the qualification the early school leavers are expected to acquire and the courses into which they gain entry. In this way, the TVET system allows those with limited education to undertake formal courses leading to nationally recognized certificates (Arthur, 2009).

Thus, students who fail the academic component of the senior secondary school certificate (vocational) may still be assessed as competent in the national skills certificate of the technical and vocational education and training system.

Migrants and refugees must be exposed to work-oriented non-formal learning with social partners and labour market stakeholders in order to have an opportunity to integrate into the formal vocational education system and transition into the workforce. At the same, vocational educational standards should acknowledge assessment-oriented, experience-oriented and work-related training.

An example of how to recognize refugees' prior knowledge and competences by integrating a high school level vocational curriculum with competences acquired in the workplaces can be found in Sweden, where an upper secondary school-level healthcare curriculum was developed by education providers and a healthcare funder (a municipality) for refugees working as healthcare assistants (HCAs). Through group discussions and under the supervision of a teacher, an HCA's prior learning is recognized in terms of the curriculum. These HCAs are then able to obtain an upper secondary school diploma in a much shorter period than would otherwise have been the case (Andersson and Fejes, 2010).

While it is recommended that Syrian refugees be exposed to work-oriented non-formal education in enterprises, it is important for this learning to link to formal education curricula. The above example shows that designing curricula for non-formal learning in enterprises ought not to take place as a separate activity but rather in the context of a national education curriculum related to training within the enterprise. Non-formal learning in enterprises should include an assessment of refugees' prior competences and knowledge as well as of their work and life experiences. Non-formal learning should complement rather than replicate formal education. This is not to say that standards should be lowered, however: recognition of vocational competences in the workplace should

correspond to elements of a curriculum, thereby shortening the period required to obtain certification. Finally, when appraising refugees' prior learning, one should assess their language skills in parallel.

The example from Sweden, where migrants and refugees are given an opportunity to attain a qualification or part-qualification, is particularly significant for the developed countries of Europe, where refugees' lack of formal qualifications is a major barrier to labour market integration. However, in a globalized and interconnected world, this model could be equally important for Syrian refugees in the host countries.

The Swedish example also illustrates the importance of conducting assessments through partnerships between labour market and TVET stakeholders, between those who define the standards of performance or competences individuals must achieve when carrying out the functions of an occupation (plumber, driver, etc.) and those within educational institutions who set qualification standards focusing on how and what people need to learn, as well as how it will be assessed.

## 3.2  Post-secondary pathways to tertiary education and the recognition of higher education qualifications

For Syrian refugee youth and adults, competences acquired in all aspects of life are essential parts of the overall learning experience. Frameworks and processes need to be established for the recognition of learning in higher education institutions and there needs to be a general understanding of what constitutes recognition of non-formal learning and competences in the absence of a commonly agreed definition.

The previous chapter showed that aid education programmes for Syrian refugees have tended to focus on formal and non-formal programmes at the basic level. However, the skills and experiences of these refugees must also be recognized (Thanh, 2016; see also *Chapter 1* and *Table 1* of this study) and linked to higher education qualifications and university courses leading to degrees, diplomas and certificates in line with SDG 4 (UNESCO, 2015*c*, p. 10).

UNESCO's education response to the Syria crisis calls for opportunities for 'ensuring the continuation of learning for employment and livelihood' (UNESCO, 2015*d*, p. 17). UNESCO therefore encourages refugee youth and IDP enrolment in universities and vocational education

and training programmes and the provision of scholarship support (ibid.). The 'Theirworld' study on Jordan (Jalbout, 2015*b*) highlights the importance of 'post-secondary education for youth that would offer … better employment prospects and would produce a more educated and productive workforce' (Jalbout, 2015*b*). Creating a coordinated group of diverse non-formal pathways to TVET and tertiary education, it says, would increase the employability of young Syrians.

One possible way forward suggested by the education response is to diversify learning materials for those living in resource-poor environments. Satellite television, telecommunications, mobile networks and massive open online courses (MOOCs) provide 'enhanced' non-formal and informal learning opportunities and allow for the rapid expansion of quality higher education opportunities for refugees, especially for those living in under-resourced environments (UNESCO, 2015*d*, p. 20). However, what is often neglected in these programmes is the willingness, on the part of higher education institutions, to recognize this learning or to formally offer credit for it through validation processes. It is necessary, therefore, that appropriate value be given to all these contexts, including work-based learning.

### 3.2.1 Learning from international practice: Approaches to creating pathways between vocational training and higher education

It may be useful to consider the approaches Germany has adopted in creating pathways between work-related learning and higher education courses. The Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) launched the ANKOM initiative (a German language acronym for 'Credit transfer of occupational competences to higher education courses') in 2005 (Wiesner, 2015). ANKOM's objectives are to (1) evaluate qualifications and competences acquired in vocational training, professional practice and continuing education and training; (2) identify these competences as equivalent academic credits transferable to relevant higher education courses; and (3) develop corresponding transfer models and concrete practical processes to increase the permeability between the vocational and higher education sectors.

The recognition procedure includes information on higher education courses for target groups and online preparatory modules to interpret

previously acquired competences. Meanwhile, flexible online courses enable students to work and develop their social circle while studing for a degree (ibid.).

### 3.2.2   Recognition of higher education qualifications

The recognition of higher education qualifications is another topic of importance. As discussed in the previous chapter, refugees and displaced persons face special challenges in accessing higher education, one of which is the assessment and recognition of qualifications where documentation is missing or incomplete.

To address issues of recognition in higher education, UNESCO, which is the only United Nations organization with a mandate in higher education, elaborated the *Global Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications*. This text will facilitate academic mobility, improve the quality of higher education, and enhance international cooperation. The progress report on the preparation of the draft *Global Convention* was submitted to the 39th session of the UNESCO General Conference in November 2017. Article VII of the report, titled 'Recognition of Partial Studies and Qualifications Held by Refugees, Displaced Persons and Persons in a Refugee-Like Situation', recommended that 'each Party … take all necessary and feasible steps … to develop procedures designed to assess fairly and expeditiously whether refugees, displaced persons and persons in a refugee-like situation fulfil the relevant requirements for access to higher education … or to employment opportunities, including in cases where the partial studies of qualifications obtained in one of the Parties cannot be proven through documentary evidence' (UNESCO, 2017, p. 6).

The recognition of 'partial studies' is an important aspect of Article VII in that it gives refugees the opportunity to access higher education even on the basis of a 'homogenous part of a higher education programme which has been evaluated and, while not a complete programme in itself, represents a significant acquisition of knowledge, skills, and competence' (ibid. p. 3).

Although the *Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in the Arab States 1978* came into force on 7 August 1981 (UNESCO, 1978), Lebanon was not a signatory.

Egypt, Iraq and Jordan did, however, sign the convention, and Turkey signed both the European and the Asia and the Pacific conventions. The seventh meeting of the Committee of the *Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region 1997*, known as the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC), also addressed issues of recognition. It was held at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris on 29 February 2016. Those present called for full implementation of the provisions set out in the Convention's *Statement on the Recognition of Qualifications held by Refugees, Displaced Persons and Persons in a Refugee-like Situation*.

## 3.3 Skills development pathways

Refugees who have had limited access to general education and TVET are more likely to be unemployed or underemployed, have low qualifications or be at risk; they therefore deserve special attention. It is not necessarily the case that young refugees lack skills or are unskilled: many have qualifications and abilities that simply need to be adapted to the host country. Workers subject to widespread informality and in low-quality jobs also have useful and important competences that need to be identified, documented, validated and recognized. Such recognition pathways to education, training, qualifications and, subsequently, work are essential to a twenty-first century knowledge society, and contribute to peace-building and the creation of cohesive and inclusive communities.

A mapping exercise by the Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford (Wahby et al., 2014), highlighted the need for skilled training providers, both public and private, to develop skills development pathways that complement refugees' existing skills and experience and match them to the demands of the labour market. Such skills development (non-formal learning programmes) should equip refugee youth and young adults with new and transferable skills to help them access 'decent work' (ibid.). Decent work can lift whole communities out of poverty, underpins human security and social peace, and is a key driver of sustainable development. The Arab Knowledge Report stresses also the importance of knowledge and skills in counteracting violence, criminality and extremism (UNDP, 2013), while skills development is

emphasized in SDG 4.4: 'By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent work and entrepreneurship' (UNESCO, 2015*c*, p. 20).

The Norwegian Refugee Council developed the Youth Education Pack (YEP) initiative to meet the learning needs of war- and conflict-affected youth who, through displacement and lack of opportunity, have had little or no schooling. YEP is a one-year programme that addresses literacy and numeracy, life skills and basic-level vocational skills training. Its objective is to provide learners with basic skills to benefit their communities and to increase their chances of finding apprenticeships or other paid work work or of accessing further professional training.

Some studies, however, have pointed to the serious shortcomings of the skills development and vocational training programmes available to refugees. Storen (2016) suggests that skills development programmes – particularly for camp-based refugees – should focus on trades such as agriculture, carpentry or midwifery and the basic necessities of camp life, such as shelter, food and healthcare. Non-formal skills development programmes should also offer further supplementary classes in English, and computer and financial literacy. Not only would such skills development programmes improve the lives of all those living in the camps, but their acquisition would make refugees more employable, independent and empowered.

Elsayed (2016), while acknowledging the importance of quality education for children and young people, adds that refugees also need alternative non-formal programmes beyond the primary stage that build on and complement their existing skills and qualifications. Non-formal programmes promote both general education and vocational education and training. Given the limited funding, non-formal learning programmes could focus on technical areas such as electrical engineering and solar energy construction. This would not only help refugees earn a living in their host countries, but would prepare the required human resources for the post-conflict building phase.

## 3.4  Life skills and social and cultural development programmes

Recreational activities, arts and sports provide safe informal learning environments through which refugee youth and children can acquire

social skills and healthy attitudes towards life. They also provide opportunities to deal with psychosocial issues such as increased levels of depression and anxiety. Life-skills programmes can address chronic conditions, impairments and injuries sustained by refugees (Wahby et al., 2014), while programmes targeting youth at risk of joining armed opposition groups can prevent vulnerable young people from being radicalized (Human Rights Watch, 2014). The UNESCO Beirut Office therefore plans to provide Syrian refugees in host countries with 'psychosocial-based education programmes which include sports, cultural activities, recovery techniques and an interactive theatre. [It will also] make available curricular and co-curricular learning kits that are designed to promote life skills [and] youth community engagement' (UNESCO, 2015*d*, p. 21). Recent findings of the Benefits of Lifelong Learning project (BeLL) (European Commission, 2014)[9] show that non-formal learning undertaken for pleasure or personal development yields multiple benefits, including many that are work or career related. The recognition of skills and competences from such non-formal learning activities needs to find a central place in the recognition policies of host countries.

It is equally important for the formal education system to recognize non-formal life skills programmes comprising agricultural extension, citizenship education, health, family planning, civic education and mass media. These subjects are an important part of personal development and provide a positive alternative route to learning. For groups that are not part of the formal system, such as people with disabilities and minority groups, they are crucial.

Furthermore, these programmes address SDG 4.5: 'By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations' (UNESCO, 2015*c*, p. 21). They also address SDG 4.7, which calls for all learners to 'acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development', noting the role of education in the 'promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity' (ibid.).

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[9]  http:www.bell-project.eu/. BeLL ran from November 2011 to January 2014.

## 3.5 Recognizing the learning achievements of youth and adults in the context of volunteer work

Employers and voluntary organizations must develop mechanisms for recognizing individual competences to allow refugees to learn while they work. Studies in Australia (Webb, 2015) have shown that participation of refugees in active labour market measures such as work-based learning opportunities can benefit both entry-level workers and entrepreneurs who are looking to start a business.

### 3.5.1 Recognizing volunteer work: Some good examples

There is a great deal to learn from international best practice in the field of developing mechanisms for recognizing the learning achievements of young adults in the context of volunteer work. In Japan, for example, the Social Education Act of 1949 (amended in 2006) called on the government to recognize learning achieved through volunteer activities (MEXT, 2008), with some learners receiving a certificate to acknowledge their new skills and competences.

New Zealand, meanwhile, has established non-formal adult and community education frameworks for recognizing literacy and adult community programmes. One of the frameworks relates to the recognition of adults who have the necessary capacities and personal skills to work as community practitioners and to facilitate civil society initiatives (MoE, 2008).

The European Youth Forum (YFJ) is also developing a quality assurance framework for its non-formal programmes, many of which foster active citizenship, human rights and freedoms, democracy, respect, diversity, peace and prosperity, sustainable development, social justice, solidarity and gender equality. Non-formal learning providers compare learning outcomes with objectives agreed to by all stakeholders; learners are also encouraged to evaluate through reflection and self-assessment whether they have met their own learning objectives. Youth organizations need to be aware of how individual learners perceive their learning experience. The YFJ sees peer feedback and the establishment of indicators as a good starting point for building confidence in the quality of non-formal education and enhancing its parity with formal education (YFJ, 2008).

The International Women's Centre (IVC) in Den Helder, the Netherlands, offers support to refugee and immigrant women to enable them to integrate into society while maintaining their own culture (Swart, 2017). The IVC sees recognition in terms of progression along a participation ladder – from isolation to volunteer work, and then finally to paid work. The centre helps women find volunteer work, for both the IVC and its partner organizations, and develops projects that enable refugees and immigrants to earn a small income. The IVC also offers guidance to women who are looking for work or starting their own business, including help with creating portfolios that can be used for job interviews (Swart, 2015).

## 3.6  Conclusions and lessons learned

This chapter has highlighted the importance of building flexible progression pathways for Syrian refugee youth and adults that go beyond basic education and include post-secondary vocational education and training and tertiary education, as demanded by SDG 4. In addition to the emphasis on further education and training for refugees, and the provision of qualifications, importance should also be attached to skills development for employment, decent work and entrepreneurship, as well as for global citizenship and a culture of peace and non-violence.

Progression pathways need to ensure that synergies are developed between formal, non-formal and informal learning at all levels of the education system. Non-formal learning should be seen as a bridge and a stepping-stone, giving refugee youth and young adults the possibility of progression and transition into the world of work.

Flexible pathways and alternative transition routes should also help to promote personal development and integration in society through psychosocial guidance and counselling, embedded in formal and non-formal provision. It is crucial to consider the importance of socio-cultural goals, as reflected in a number of initiatives. At the same time, it is important to improve the capacity of providers of educational, cultural and sports services to improve the quality of individual lives with respect to mental and physical well-being. These goals should be part of the shift towards lifelong and life-wide learning policies.

Progression routes should not neglect the importance of non-formal workplace learning that leads to formal education at higher levels. Work-based non-formal learning has the potential to make a significant contribution to the development of appropriate workplace skills, robust employability, and enhanced collaboration between education providers and employers. There has traditionally been a reluctance on the part of higher education institutions to recognize this learning or to formally offer credit for it through some validation process. It is necessary therefore that appropriate value should be given to all these contexts, including work-based learning.

Progression routes, including workplace learning, are important in the context of volunteer work. Volunteering can contribute to people's personal development and is a crucial stepping stone to a paid job. By volunteering, people can develop transferable skills and competences, such as working in teams, conflict resolution, communication skills, helping others, adaptability, negotiating skills, etc. Volunteer work can also lead to specific job skills such as skills related to work processes. Volunteer work in non-formal learning contexts should provide opportunities for recognition of learning outcomes and competences, and it should be seen as a bridge or progression route to formal education and training and qualifications or paid work.

This chapter has also shown that while policy-makers in the region have prioritized the issue of recognizing and validating non-formal learning, it remains a major challenge to develop systems that do this effectively. There is still a need for greater awareness and understanding of RVA; particularly with regard to: (1) establishing a comprehensive national strategy commanding a high level of acceptance from all stakeholders, including those from social partners and civil society, who need to be involved in framing the policy and legislation; (2) the quality of non-formal learning, which must be assured through the assessment of learning outcomes-based standards in qualifications frameworks and national curricula; (3) building RVA mechanisms for the recognition of non-formal learning at all levels and sectors of the education and training system; and (4) the different types of personnel needing to be trained in RVA.

The subsequent chapters will elaborate on these core components of a national RVA strategy.

A Syrian refugee student studies at home in the Jordanian town of Irbid.
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# Establishing a national strategy to create synergies between formal, non-formal and informal learning

# CHAPTER 4
# POLICIES, STANDARDS AND FRAMEWORKS

The primary aim of this study is to identify ways in which to recognize the non-formal learning outcomes and competences of Syrian refugees, especially of youth and young adults who are not in formal education. This overarching aim relates to other dimensions of an RVA system, such as the importance of making RVA a part of national lifelong learning strategies; establishing legislation to deal with the participation of stakeholders beyond national education authorities; and putting in place active labour market programmes for Syrian refugees. With the exception of Turkey, which has a lifelong learning strategy, the other host countries – Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon – do not currently have uniform lifelong learning strategies, or relevant legislation or regulations governing their formal education and training systems, that enable institutions to develop mechanisms and arrangements for recognizing, validating and accrediting non-formal and informal learning outcomes and individual competences. Neither are there mechanisms or official systems at any level in their education and training systems for recognizing non-formal certificates. This section, therefore, analyses some of the framework conditions for RVA. It elaborates on lifelong learning policies, legislation, national references and standards for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning and competences in host countries. Education systems, including validation and certification, remain within the domain of the sovereign state, which means that the issue of education of refugees needs to be tackled at the national policy level.

The chapter alludes to the UNESCO *Guidelines*, in which it is suggested that Member States:

- develop a national lifelong learning strategy, with recognition, validation and accreditation of outcomes of non-formal and informal learning acknowledged as a key pillar and as a means of improving personal fulfilment and access to and mobility within education and in the labour market;
- facilitate the development of national references or standards that integrate the outcomes of non-formal and informal learning, and,

based on the national context, establish a national qualifications framework (NQF);

- develop equivalencies between the outcomes of formal, non-formal and informal learning in the national references, standards or NQFs through a shared understanding of learning outcomes. (UIL, 2012, p. 4)

## 4.1  Why is a lifelong learning strategy important for Syrian refugees?

There is a trend in an increasing number of countries to move lifelong learning much higher up the political agenda and to define the key elements of a lifelong learning strategy. In Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, there is growing awareness of the importance of developing a lifelong learning strategy and making it an important part of the political agenda. Elements of a lifelong learning strategy that relate to the recognition of non-formal learning in the context of the named countries include:

a) institutionalizing non-formal learning programmes alongside formal education at all levels;
b) recognizing learning outcomes and competences irrespective of the setting in which they are acquired;
c) moving from inputs to competences and learning outcomes-based approaches in national curricula;
d) establishing mechanisms for the recognition, validation and accreditation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, and national qualifications frameworks that use learning outcomes as reference points for recognition;
e) building bridges between different types of education (general, vocational, higher and continuing);
f) making available a variety of non-formal continuing education and training provisions fitting the learning needs of Syrian refugees.

There are many reasons why lifelong learning is becoming a necessity rather than just an option for Syrian refugee youth and young adults in the named countries. Their involuntary displacement has forced them to search for job opportunities, to acquire new skills or to change job

roles. Furthermore, many refugees depend on information and communication technologies both in searching for jobs and in accessing knowledge more generally, making engagement in learning essential. In such circumstances, it is important that the competences that a refugee attains be recognized, irrespective of the setting in which the learning took place. The trend towards recognizing such competences dates back to the beginning of this century, as witnessed by the adoption of NQFs and competency-based frameworks that influence curriculum design, assessment criteria for validating non-formal and informal learning, and even teaching and learning strategies.

In many countries, lifelong learning policies are backed by legislation that reinforces efforts to value and recognize non-formal and informal learning. Legislation of this kind not only helps non-formal learning programmes to become a second-chance route to a qualification or entry to the labour market, but also garners support from stakeholders other than those that operate in the formal learning system. This effect is most pronounced in the political sphere, including in ministries other than education, but it also extends to social partners. A law will always receive wider acceptance if it corresponds to a consensus among key stakeholders. Strong legal foundations for recognizing non-formal learning require stakeholders to have clearly defined roles and responsibilities in the development of a coordinated national structure to design, implement and carry out quality assurance of the RVA system.

Increasingly, social partners such as chambers of commerce and industry and professional associations are advancing the case for recognition through the enactment of resolutions, such as the one taken on 9 July 2016 by the General Assembly of the Hamburg Chambers of Skilled Crafts. This resolution recognized an obligation to support efforts to integrate refugees – as well as the negative social consequences of failing to do so – and supported measures, including through non-formal learning, to offer opportunities for qualifying and employing refugees. It is important that such resolutions state clearly that non-formal learning programmes are a second-chance route to a qualification.

Social partners and professional associations, as well as civil society organizations engaged in voluntary work, need to be represented at the right levels, so that lifelong learning policies and RVA can deal effectively with the entry of Syrian refugees into the labour market, and

with access to career guidance, continuing education and training, and the obtaining of professional qualifications. It also needs to be noted that young people and young adults are not necessarily interested in enrolling in the kind of formal education programme that has failed them before or that erected barriers to their access in the first place. In many cases, they are interested in taking short continuing education programmes, including an assessment of their prior competences, that lead to a full qualification, or a partial qualification based on job profiles in the context of an occupational standard. Assessing individuals before they start a continuing education course might cut the cost of their education. Moreover, successful adult learners may be motivated to engage in further continuing education or in upskilling programmes. This raises their self-esteem and sense of agency and can, in turn, promote peace, social cohesion and a more inclusive society.

## 4.2  Standardizing non-formal learning and education

One of the aims of this study is to put forward possible systemic solutions to stakeholders in the host countries on ways in which to make the recognition/certification of non-formal learning outcomes and individual competences an alternative route to a qualification. For this to happen, there must be confidence that certification acquired through the recognition of non-formal education learning is based on the same or equivalent standards as that obtained through attending formal education. Certification procedures will be undermined if they only create 'type A' or 'type B' certifications with different acceptance/currency in many countries. Hence, it is important for stakeholders to develop competence frameworks and to formulate rules for the recognition and accreditation of non-formal learning and informal learning. They must strive to ensure: confidence in the processes of recognition and accreditation of non-formal and informal learning through transparency and equity of effective quality mechanisms; equitable valuation of the learning outcomes of formal, non-formal and informal learning; and credibility based on legal principles and legislation arrived at through the involvement of all stakeholders.

It is important to highlight here three contrasting approaches or reference criteria for standardizing non-formal learning:

1. Non-formal learning outcomes standardized or defined in compre-hensive national qualifications frameworks or sectoral frameworks based on occupational standards.
2. Non-formal learning outcomes standardized or defined in an educa-tion and training curriculum.
3. Acceptance of workplace-specific competences necessary to per-form specific tasks, such as operating certain machines or serving customers.

The next section elaborates on the different ways in which non-formal education and learning can be standardized within an integrated and holistic understanding of education and training from a lifelong learning perspective.

## 4.3  Linking recognition with national qualifications frameworks

Four of the host countries, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, are currently in the process of developing national qualifications frame-works with a view to recognizing qualifications based on learning out-comes and competences acquired in all settings – formal, non-formal and informal. The objectives of NQFs are to recognize every individual's learning outcomes according to standards based on specific learning out-comes; to connect learning outcomes to required skills or professional competences and criteria agreed upon with industries and economic sectors; and to develop a framework for the recognition, validation and accreditation of non-formal and informal learning.

Linking RVA and NQFs can be useful for Syrian refugee youth and young adults in many ways. NQFs not only reflect expected learning outcomes, but are designed to inspire curriculum design and assessment criteria as well as active teaching and training methods. If learning out-comes are found only at the level of the NQF, its impact on validation might be limited. It is crucial that stakeholders understand and buy into the issue of validation/assessment.

The relationship established between the non-formal learning programme and the qualification level can help a refugee student to progress to further levels of formal education. Outcomes-based learning approaches help to establish the achievements that should be included

in qualifications, which can be meaningful both for refugees' further education or training and for labour market progression.

Qualifications frameworks can promote the social inclusion of Syrian refugees by fostering the incorporation of qualifications achieved outside formal pathways. An NQF gives everybody the chance of having his or her learning outcomes accepted.

The purpose of RVA in relation to NQFs is to help make the competences and experiences of Syrian refugees visible even though they may have been acquired outside the formal education and training system of the host countries, and to create alternative non-formal and informal routes to qualifications in parallel with formal learning pathways.

While Lebanon is still in the initial stages of development of a national qualifications framework (the LNQF), a first technical paper presenting a draft NQF matrix was produced in 2011 and further defined in 2012. It includes the following components: a framework of eight levels, each level defined by knowledge, skills and competences; a set of principles or guidelines for quality assurance of the institutions and authorities in charge of designing and delivering qualifications; and a set of methods and procedures to align qualifications to the LNQF and to register them in a national registry of qualifications (CEDEFOP, ETF UNESCO and UIL, 2017). The LNQF will make it possible to classify all qualifications and certificates issued by every sector of the education and training system. In particular, the LNQF recognizes qualifications based on well-defined competences, irrespective of whether they have been acquired through formal, non-formal or informal learning. It also promotes mobility between different sectors of the education and training system and coherence with the qualifications frameworks of other countries. Given that the LNQF is still in its intial stages, no implementation arrangements for recognition, validation and accreditation have yet been defined. The lack of learning pathways using mechanisms of recognition, validation and accreditation appears to be one of the main hindrances to both vertical and horizontal mobility of not just Syrian refugees, but also of host countries' indigenous populations.

The Egyptian NQF comprises eight levels, and has broadly defined learning outcomes, similar to those of the European Qualifications Framework. It identifies its main objective as the fostering of lifelong learning by establishing progression pathways that enable increased

mobility – both vertical progression from one level to another, and international mobility in education systems and labour markets. Another key aim is to facilitate the recognition of prior learning by providing accreditation rules that include reference standards for qualification levels based on learning outcomes. Egypt's National Authority for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Education (NAQAAE) is responsible for the implementation of its NQF. Egypt is also cooperating with seven Euro-Mediterranean countries in producing a set of common standards for occupations in the tourism and construction sectors.

While the NAQAAE has been the main body in charge of implementing the Egyptian NQF, the Ministry of Manpower and Migration has led the process of developing it. In 2014, the Prime Minister set up a national technical and vocational education and training (TVET) authority, comprising two executive committees, one for initial vocational education and training (IVET) and the other for continuing vocational education and training (CVET). The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Manpower, respectively, coordinate these committees. In addition, 27 regional committees were established to secure a clear link between the TVET system and local TVET needs.

A law is to be introduced to make it possible to earmark the necessary budgets and make the education sector more outcomes-based in relation to occupational standards and the requirements of the labour market. This is expected to help in establishing and implementing rules for the accreditation of prior learning in the NQF (CEDEFOP, ETF, UNESCO and UIL, 2017).

A European Union-supported project has assisted Jordan in developing a technical and vocational qualifications framework, which is expected to be transformed into a national lifelong learning qualifications framework including all educational sectors and levels. The initial framework, developed by the Vocational Training Corporation (VTC), comprises four levels, but its transformation into a lifelong learning framework is planned to increase this number to eight (CEDEFOP, ETF, UNESCO and UIL, 2017). The Employment, Technical and Vocational Education Training (E-TVET) Council is a key stakeholder in TVET. It is in charge of national TVET policy and comprises stakeholders from ministries, public and private sectors and trade unions. Another key stakeholder is the Centre for Accreditation and Quality Assurance

(CAQA), which, under the direction of the Ministry of Labour, is responsible for accrediting providers, conducting occupational tests for those involved in technical and vocational work, and granting occupational licences (ibid.).

Progression between the different sub-sectors of the Jordanian education system is currently limited. The TVET qualifications framework is only applicable to students in VTC institutions; furthermore, these qualifications do not enable students to progress to university. Secondary education VET students, on the other hand, are able to take the Jordanian baccalaureate (Tawjihi), which allows them to access community colleges, from which they can enter university. While Jordan has no system for the recognition of skills and recognition of non-formal and informal learning, CAQA currently conducts occupational tests for those involved in technical and vocational work and grants occupational licences. This opens up the option to validate skills acquired in the workplace or through other forms of non-formal and informal learning – although, in practice, this rarely happens.

In Turkey, Law 5544, enacted in 2006, was the cornerstone for the establishment of the Vocational Qualifications Authority (VQA), a tripartite body responsible for the implementation of the National Vocational Qualifications System based on National Occupational Standards. The Council of Higher Education is responsible for the development and implementation of a qualifications framework for higher education (CEDEFOP, ETF, UNESCO and UIL, 2017).

Recognition of non-formal and informal learning is implemented under the supervision of the VQA through accredited certification bodies, which include sectoral organizations, some universities, chamber-affiliated centres and private companies. The accreditation of the bodies for each qualification certification by the Turkish Accreditation Agency, and authorization by the VQA, are based on the ISO-17024 standard for personnel certification.

Turkey's Regulation on Vocational Qualification, Testing and Certification[10] controls the stages of the validation process. Any individual wishing to certify their qualifications, competences and

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[10] http:www.bell-project.eu/. BeLL ran from November 2011 to January 2014.

prior learning can apply to an authorized certification body, which will pass the applicant's relevant documents to the VQA to decide on eligibility for recognition. Individuals can apply to certify their competences based on single units as well as for full qualifications. The assessors and certifiers are practitioners with experience of their respective industry sectors.

Accredited and authorized certification bodies empower individual providers to assess and certify workers based on occupational standards that inform national vocational qualifications. However, the VQA alone is responsible for the verification of the vocational qualification certificates once workers have obtained them. Awarded certificates are not considered equivalent to those acquired in formal education and do not provide access to the formal education system. They are, however, recognized in the labour market.

In addition to the VQA and the accreditation bodies, the Turkish Ministry of National Education coordinates and supervises non-formal learning activities, initiatives and projects through the Lifelong Learning Directorate General (LLDG). Between 2011 and 2013, EU support was given, through the LLDG, to improve the recognition of formal, non-formal and informal prior learning. The primary aim was to support individuals in acquiring qualification certificates for their prior learning in order to improve their access to the labour market.

The Ministry of National Education (MoNE) has initiated a process of curriculum reform in secondary education for both general and vocational/technical schools. Vocational curricula are modularized, and MoNE holds a database of more than 4,000 modules that can be used for the certification of adult learning. In addition, there are plans to establish a national credit system for VET. One reason why Turkey is more advanced than other host countries in setting up a system of recognition is that it has aspirations to join the European Union, and validation of non-formal and informal learning is high on the EU policy agenda. However, other countries are also benefitting from EU programmes, via the European Training Foundation, that have supported the implementation of qualifications frameworks in Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon.

### 4.3.1   The shift to approaches based on learning outcomes

The shift towards qualifications based on learning outcomes and competences in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, and, more recently, in Iraq, has important implications for the recognition and assessment of outcomes from non-formal education. *Table 5* shows generic learning outcome descriptors in Turkey's qualifications framework. The great advantage of learning outcomes-based NQFs is that they could provide a reference point for Syrian refugees' non-formally and informally acquired competences and learning outcomes that otherwise would remain difficult to anchor in an existing recognized education system. However, standards based on learning outcomes need to be designed in such a way that they are easy to understand. The descriptions and criteria in learning outcomes should help Syrian refugees understand beforehand what the requirements are in a particular qualification area, and what is to be expected from a certain

**Table 5: Turkish Qualifications Framework level descriptors**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **LEVEL 1** | KNOWLEDGE | • Possess basic knowledge to perform simple activities in line with instructions in familiar environments of learning or work. |
| | SKILL | • Perform routine activities in line with instructions using basic knowledge in familiar environments of learning or work. |
| | COMPETENCE | • Take limited responsibility to perform routine activities under guidance and supervision. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **LEVEL 2** | KNOWLEDGE | • Possess basic theoretical and practical knowledge related to the standard tools, instruments and methods required to perform clearly defined activities related to an area of work or learning. |
| | SKILL | • Utilize knowledge required to perform clearly defined activities related to an area of work or learning and to work out solutions for foreseen problems. |
| | COMPETENCE | • Take responsibility in the performance of clearly defined activities under guidance and/or supervision, and determine needs and goals of learning under guidance. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **LEVEL 3** | KNOWLEDGE | • Possess theoretical and practical knowledge required to perform uncomplicated activities in different environments related to an area of work or learning. |
| | SKILL | • Interpret data, evaluate results, select appropriate standard tasks and methods and apply them systematically; provide solutions to unforeseen problems related to uncomplicated activities in an area of work or learning. |
| | COMPETENCE | • Take responsibility in performing uncomplicated activities under limited guidance and/or supervision; determine needs and goals of learning under guidance, when guidance is required. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **LEVEL 4** | KNOWLEDGE | • Possess theoretical and practical knowledge required to perform complicated activities in different environments related to an area of work or learning. |
| | SKILL | • Analyse data, interpret results, select appropriate tasks and methods and apply them systematically; provide solutions to unique and/or **unforeseen problems** related to **complicated** activities in an area of work or learning; transfer knowledge and skills to others when required. |
| | COMPETENCE | • Take responsibility in performing **complicated** activities in standard settings; undertake **supervision and limited audit** over activities which are performed by others under one's responsibility; satisfy needs of learning and set future goals of learning. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **LEVEL 5** | KNOWLEDGE | • Possess theoretical and practical knowledge required for **expertise** in an area of work or learning. |
| | SKILL | • Analyse data that belong to **complicated and interrelated activities** in an area of work or learning; evaluate results with an interrogative approach, draw conclusions, define appropriate tasks and methods and apply them or have them applied systematically; develop evidence-based solutions to unique and/or **unforeseen problems encountered for the first time**; transfer knowledge and skills to others. |
| | COMPETENCE | • Take **limited** responsibility in performing **complicated** activities in environments where **unforeseen** changes take place; undertake **supervision and audit** over activities which are performed by others under one's responsibility; satisfy learning needs in line with learning goals; guide people under one's responsibility related to the determination of their learning needs and development of their performance. |

Table continued overleaf

# Table 5: Turkish Qualifications Framework level descriptors

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **LEVEL 6** | KNOWLEDGE | • Possess **advanced** theoretical and practical knowledge required for expertise in an area of work or learning. |
| | SKILL | • **Analyse** approaches, methods and tasks related to activities in an area of work or learning with a **holistic perspective**; evaluate results critically; suggest improvements based on research and evidence; **predict likely problems** in new practices and suggest preventive action; inform others about improvements and solutions developed. |
| | COMPETENCE | • Take responsibility as an individual or a team member in performing **complicated** activities in environments where **unforeseen** changes take place; conduct an advanced assignment or project **partially independently**; plan and manage activities for the project based development of others **under one's responsibility**; plan and manage activities to develop **self-performance and performance of others** under one's responsibility in line with goals of learning. |
| **LEVEL 7** | KNOWLEDGE | • Possess **advanced** theoretical and practical knowledge which provide a basis for the development of **original ideas** in an area of work or learning; comprehend interdisciplinary interactions related to the area. |
| | SKILL | • **Interpret** knowledge one has gained in an area of work or learning through **integrating** it with knowledge in other disciplines; formulate new knowledge, methods and approaches; solve **complicated unforeseen** problems in one's area through the use of research methods; transfer **newly formulated knowledge**, methods, approaches and suggested solutions to others. |
| | COMPETENCE | • Take responsibility as an individual or a team member in performing **complicated** activities in environments where **unforeseen** and complicated changes exist and under conditions requiring new strategic approaches; conduct an advanced assignment or project **independently; lead** studies in one's area; evaluate the strategic performance of **persons and groups under one's responsibility** and manage improvement. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **LEVEL 8** | **KNOWLEDGE** | • Possess **highly advanced** knowledge in development of **original** thoughts, approaches, design, method and techniques in area of work or learning; relate these to multidisciplines. |
| | **SKILL** | • Develop an **innovative** thought, method, approach, design and/or application in an area of work or learning or adapt an already recognized thought, method, approach, design and/or applications to another area; conduct research on, comprehend, design and apply an original theme; solve **emerging complicated** problems in one's area using approaches and methods of different disciplines; transfer research and applications results to others. |
| | **COMPETENCE** | • **Take responsibility** as an individual or a team member or **take leadership** in themes requiring **innovation and creativity**; conduct an advanced original assignment or project **independently**; encourage **continuous learning** through activities within and outside of one's area, contribute to the sustainable development of society. |

*Source:* VQA, 2013.

learning programme. The descriptors of learning outcomes should help them to determine how well their skills, knowledge and abilities match expected standards, and to identify gaps.

As already elaborated in *1.5.4*, learning outcomes comprising the categories of knowledge, skills and broader competences all need to be seen and appraised in an integrative sense. Outcomes-based processes need to be complemented by inputs, such as continuing education programmes, necessary for a refugee seeking to move beyond his or her existing performance level.

In summary, NQF development in the four host countries is still in the initial stages. Host countries have yet to develop comprehensive NQFs consisting of different sub-frameworks relating to TVET and occupational standards, higher education, and continuing and adult education. The trend in all four countries up to now has been to align non-formal learning qualifications to TVET and occupational standards rather than to academic standards. Generally speaking, recognizing labour competences is more easily facilitated in parallel occupational systems, as equivalents often do not (yet) exist within the formal system of education and training (Singh, 2015, p. 34).

## 4.4 Non-formal learning standardized/made equivalent to a curriculum based on learning outcomes

Non-formal learning programmes for Syrian refugees can be institutionalized more easily and successfully when they are based on the same curriculum standards as formal qualifications and can, accordingly, be recognized as equivalent. However, in order to take account of the socio-economic circumstances and individual needs of Syrian refugees, formal curriculum standards must be more flexible and appropriate adjustments must be made to learning programmes. UNESCO's *Guidelines* for RVA therefore emphasize the importance of creating awareness and acceptance in formal education and training systems of learning outcomes gained in non-traditional settings, of building bridges between different education and training sectors and of promoting the integration of the outcomes of non-formal and informal learning. They also recommend the development of 'approaches to increase interaction between educational institutions, enterprises and voluntary organizations to translate learning outcomes from working and life experiences into credits and/or qualifications' (UIL, 2012, p. 5).

For Turkey, Jalbout (2015*a*) suggests that curriculum formats for non-formal and formal education should take into account learning needs beyond secondary education by including vocational training. The Turkish government has already taken important steps to ensure that those who have completed secondary education in Syria or are completing it in Turkey, are able to sit exams and receive certification. By 2015, approximately 8,000 Syrian youth had registered for and sat the school-leaving examination administered by MoNE based on the Syrian curriculum (UNHCR, 2015*b*). However, it should be noted that examinations are not always the best way to make visible the competences acquired through wider learning in the context of the labour market or community. Hence, it is critically important to integrate Syrian refugees into systems of recognition, validation and accreditation of skills and experience (Tran Thanh, 2016, pp. 147–148).

In all this standardization discussion, it is critical to treat the relevance of curricula based on learning outcomes as an important factor in appraising the quality of educational services provided to refugees through non-formal programmes. One of the norms set by the

Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE, 2010) is the cultural, social and linguistic relevance of formal and non-formal programmes. In other words, content needs to target issues specific to displacement and trauma; to democratic citizenship and human rights; and to personal growth, imagination and creativity. These issues must be central features of education, integrated into national systems and accompanied by specific, relevant pedagogical methods. Although the INEE norms refer to basic schooling, they are applicable at all levels of the education and training system.

### 4.4.1  Key competences and employability skills

In a situation of protracted emergency, when educational strategies and learning environments are exposed to exceptional pressures or even destruction, it is all the more important to nurture and maintain diversity in learning processes and the acquisition of competences necessary for the twenty-first century. In 2016, as noted above, an expert meeting on recognition, certification and regularization of non-formal learning was held in Beirut. During the meeting, key competences focusing on relevant knowledge, meaningful learning, a holistic approach to the learner, the development of high-level thinking skills, avoiding repetition and fatigue, and learning how to live, work and learn were discussed. This concept of key competences is the opposite of a curriculum based on textbooks and rote learning (UNESCO Beirut Office, 2016). From country examples presented during this meeting, it became clear that a common understanding of key competences already exists. In Singapore, for example, key competences include communication skills, character development, self-management, social and cooperative skills, thinking and creativity, information skills and knowledge-application skills. Similar skills were identified in New Zealand. They include communication, numeracy and information skills, as well as problem-solving, self-management and competitive skills, social cooperation skills, physical skills, and work and study skills. One key competency promoted through the European Training Foundation (ETF) programme in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey is entrepreneurship.

Twenty-first century key competences are particularly important for displaced persons returning to Syria, where there will be a need

for highly qualified human resources at various levels. Syrian refugees need to be given opportunities to take part in long-term programmes that go beyond foundational skills (literacy and numeracy) and competences at the basic level. Refugees should not be treated as provisional citizens, and nor should the educational services aimed at them be the sole responsibility of international agencies and educational aid programmes.

Key competences can be used as a reference tool for the design of curricula in formal and non-formal learning programmes or to establish a bridge between the worlds of education and work. One example, from Nova Scotia, Canada, shows how the establishment of employability skills frameworks can help learners develop a personal plan for securing employment or further training.[11] It is a good example of a recognition framework for valuing the breadth of learning and experience of low-qualified individuals, as well as acknowledging the importance of employability skills. A Record of Achievement (RoA) provides support in assessing this broader learning against the Core Employability Skills Framework. This framework was developed to include critical twenty-first century skills. Certified assessors use a variety of tools to provide a snapshot of where a person is in relation to the framework. The assessment results in a credential issued by the Department of Labour and Advanced Education and signed by the minister. The RoA is a living document that changes as the learner increases his/her knowledge and skills. It offers the employer a validation of skills and learning that can be measured against occupational requirements. Personnel working in non-formal learning programmes for refugees with no or low qualifications need to be given, and be obliged to apply, guidelines on criteria for assessing learning outcomes against the above described frameworks. Stakeholders responsible for such competence assessments in non-formal learning contexts ought to develop assessment techniques, such as practice-based assessments, in order to recognize broader competences and learning that are portable across industry and sectors.

[11] UIL Global Observatory:
http://uil.unesco.org/lifelong-learning/recognition-validation-accreditation

### 4.4.2  Preparatory non-formal learning programmes for entry into tertiary education

Young people who were in universities in Syria need scaled-up efforts to facilitate access to higher education. Many refugee students, youth and young adults have had personal experiences that have made, and may still make, studying difficult, including negative school experiences, single parenthood and mental health issues. Thus, non-formal programmes should be more in the nature of preparatory programmes that integrate several sources of support, including tutorials, mentoring and counselling for refugee students who do not speak the host-country language or dialect. Andrewartha and Harvey (2014) describe several types of tertiary enabling programmes (TEPs) for refugee students at La Trobe University: (1) those providing a distinct recognized pathway to higher education; (2) remedial enabling programmes which help students who have qualified for entry but are academically underprepared; and (3) enabling programmes that maintain an academic standard below diploma level, are free for participating students, have a clear equity focus and aim to equip a diverse cohort of students with necessary academic confidence and abilities. La Trobe's success depended on the curriculum, the teaching, the effective benchmarking and the expansion of these pathways. The success of similar programmes will require collaborative learning between TEPs and universities, especially in relation to the clarification of the skills and capabilities required for university entry.

The 'credit bank system' from the Republic of Korea provides an example of recognition pathways into tertiary education. It currently gives credits to learning outcomes and competences in relation to degree-level education and training curricula, which are deposited in a 'credit bank'. The country is developing a Korean Skills Qualifications Framework to make certification easier through the application of standards based on outcomes. This means that the expected learning outcomes in a national qualifications framework can be used as the learning objectives of non-formal learning programmes. These objectives can be related to inputs, have a clearer pedagogical purpose and lead to a qualification in the national framework.

## 4.5 Competence assessment in enterprises and work-oriented training

Other models of competence assessment are also being developed in which the reference points for competence assessment are not standards in a vocational education and training curriculum, but rather the ISO-quality management system and the requirements within companies for job roles and activities based on industry standards. These alternative models are considered more appropriate for refugees, particularly for those with few qualifications or incomplete formal education. Such industry-based in-company competence assessment processes have the advantage of avoiding bottlenecks in the education systems where faculty may not have full knowledge of the workplace learning standards in each industry. The other advantage is the acknowledgement that skills gained through work experience in one particular industry can be recognized across different industries and sectors. Instead of shortening the educational pathway, this model focuses on shortening periods of unemployment. By making competences acquired in the workplace more visible, the competence assessment model seeks to create greater mobility and flexibility for individuals in the labour market.

Company-based quality management systems or core skills frameworks can also provide an accreditation reference point for the recognition of the non-formal learning and competences of low-qualified youth and adults. In Germany, vocational competences are assessed against standards in a range of non-regulated occupations, such as carpentry, welding, plumbing, etc. The competence assessment is oriented to real working and business processes in enterprises. The assessment does not aim for a formal recognition of qualifications; rather, it provides employers with practice-oriented competence profiles and reflects the training and qualification needs of the clients. The test is compatible with the German Vocational Education and Training System and is integrated into the placement process of public employment agencies (Noack, 2017).

Many refugees work in micro enterprises within the informal economy. They may be underemployed, but they are nevertheless skilled. Governments and other stakeholders have therefore begun to put in place upskilling and certification programmes. However, very often, these programmes are designed without taking into account workers' previous

learning and experiences. Doing so would provide more insight into the actual buy-in from the workforce. Understanding whether entry-level jobs in a particular industry and in a specific geographical area are desirable to the workforce is the first step in the RVA process.

## 4.6 Conclusions and lessons learned

This chapter has dealt with the second condition for setting up a system for the recognition and regularization of non-formal and informal learning: the development of national references or standards in national qualifications frameworks that integrate the outcomes of non-formal and informal learning. Qualifications frameworks develop equivalencies between the outcomes of formal, non-formal and informal learning through an understanding of learning outcomes.

This chapter has also highlighted the importance of three approaches to reference points for standardizing or institutionalizing non-formal learning. All host countries should seek to recognize non-formal and informal learning outcomes against national curricula or standards based on learning outcomes in their national qualifications frameworks or against industry-based occupational standards.

Recognition of prior learning and competences, when linked to vocational and occupational standards in a national qualifications framework, can result in the award of qualifications, and these can help Syrian refugees to enter an occupation or retain their jobs without additional formal education. Qualifications are also important for companies because they may need a certain proportion of individuals with qualifications in order to qualify for government contracts. Qualifications also increase the visibility of competences and can shorten formal education and training periods for adults. Refugee youth and young adults are very interested in being qualified for a job or gaining entry into a continuing education programme.

This chapter has highlighted significant developments in the establishment of national qualifications frameworks in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, all of which are currently in the process of implementing their NQFs. Establishing the legal foundations of a comprehensive recognition strategy linked to national qualifications frameworks is extremely important. All stakeholders, including social partners, need

to have clearly defined roles and responsibilities in developing the legal system and in defining a coherent, coordinated national structure to oversee the design, implementation and quality assurance of a recognition system for non-formal and informal learning.

A crucial element in the development of the NQFs is the involvement of stakeholders from different sectors (formal education institutions, industry and enterprise, social partners, education and training providers and voluntary organizations). Recognition of non-formal learning linked to national qualifications frameworks depends on their commitment.

Given the situation of protracted emergency in their home country, Syrian refugees must acquire the key competences necessary for the twenty-first century. Twenty-first century key competences are particularly important in the event of the displaced population going back to Syria, where there will be a need for highly qualified human resources at various levels.

Since refugees usually find it difficult to access tertiary education, it is important that competence assessment of Syrian refugee youth and adults be complemented by non-formal programmes, to be used as a stepping-stone, a preparatory platform, and an entrance to formal tertiary education. Such non-formal preparatory or enabling programmes should integrate several sources of support to refugees, including tutorials, mentoring and counselling, that take into account prior learning attainments and preparedness for entry to tertiary education. Mechanisms such as RVA are only useful when they are made an integral part of the education and training and qualifications systems. RVA is equally important for the labour market – as we have seen in Jordan and Turkey, where institutions such as the E-TVET Council (Jordan) and the VQA (Turkey) are responsible for RVA.

Young Syrian refugee students return to the classroom.  © UNHCR/Benjamin Loyseau

# CHAPTER 5
## PROCEDURES AND PROCESSES

Since many refugee youth and young adults have not attended school for many years, and have acquired competences informally or as a result of courses outside the formal education system, clarification and demonstration of what they can do will be important for their integration into education and training and employment. Identifying and documenting refugees' competences and prior learning calls for coherent national procedures and tools such as national qualifications frameworks and mechanisms for the recognition, validation and accreditation of non-formal and informal learning. Such mechanisms could help early school-leavers as well as underemployed or unemployed refugees and citizens to match their existing skills to those sought in the labour market, and foster mobility by providing them with proofs of their acquired skills and competences. RVA mechanisms can be helpful in preparing tailor-made non-formal continuing education and training programmes that meet the learning needs of a wider range of learners.

Moving on from discussion of some of the framework conditions for the regularization and standardization of non-formal education and learning, this chapter turns to the development of procedures and processes for recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning, competences and experience from work and life. These mechanisms need to be available and accessible to all, particularly to refugee students, youth and young adults as well to vulnerable communities in the host countries.

The UNESCO *Guidelines* propose that Member States:

develop procedures that identity, document, assess, validate and accredit learning outcomes, giving due consideration to those from experiential learning, self-directed learning and other forms of learning outside of formal education and training institutions; make use of both formative assessment (which draws more attention to identification, and documentation of learning progress and givens feedback to learners) and

summative assessment (which aims explicitly to validate and recognize learning outcomes, leading to qualification).

*UIL, 2012, p. 5*

The Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies' *Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, Chronic Crises and Early Reconstruction* calls for the recognition of learner achievement and credits or course-completion documents (INEE, 2004, Standard 4, pp. 54–55). The *UNHCR Education Programme Guidance on Assessment and Examinations* calls for discussions to be held with education authorities in home and host countries regarding the recognition of studies and examinations. Government institutions should ensure that qualifications are recognized.

RVA mechanisms can be helpful to Syrian refugee students, youth and young adults in two respects: (1) recognition of qualifications or evaluation of credentials and qualifications, whereby refugees' credentials and qualifications are compared with the credentials and qualifications of the host countries; (2) recognition of previous learning outcomes and competences that are not already recognized in a qualification or in credits.

Assessment of prior learning, competences and work experience of Syrian refugees is important for integration into the labour market or access to a higher education institution. In Turkey, there is a strong emphasis on recognition oriented to the labour market. This is also true of Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon, where national vocational qualifications frameworks include the recognition of the learning outcomes from non-formal and informal learning.

## 5.1 Formative and summative assessment

Mechanisms for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning can be *formative* or *summative*. Formative assessment is used to inform, guide and counsel an individual in order to identify interests and goals, clarify strengths and weaknesses, determine future education and work goals, guide personal development, and promote an active role in professional and voluntary work and further learning in general. Formative assessment might be used by support agencies to help refugees determine their

education and training needs. It could also be used to help them clarify their skills and knowledge by matching their prior learning to the standards associated with a particular curriculum level, qualification or job. It can also help them to prepare for interviews or assessments. Tangan (2009) highlights the use of formative assessment in order to determine students' learning backgrounds or learning and development needs. Without this type of assessment, refugee youth who have a learning disability may not be identified, for example (Tangan, 2009).

Summative assessment is used to test a learners' suitability for a qualification, such as an upper-secondary certificate, a craft certificate or a degree or diploma. Summative assessment requires the involvement of stakeholders and agencies such as workplaces, employment agencies, qualification bodies, sector skills councils and curriculum bodies, as well as professionals involved in identifying documents, giving information and guidance to refugees, as well as assessors and certifiers of learning outcomes.

Olesen (2016) looks at formative and summative recognition in terms of 'competence development'. For him, competence development is not only instrumental for income, career and status, but also – and most importantly – for identity development, i.e. psychosocial integration and human capability entangled in life experience in its broadest sense. Competency assessment of Syrian refugee youth and adults should be seen as a mapping and prognostic procedure through which refugees can – using reflection and guidance – assess the extent to which and in which direction they can mobilize resources to develop their potential (Olesen, 2016).

### 5.1.1  Service centres must be set up to obtain reliable information on refugees' qualifications and competences

The first crucial step for host countries is to set up a specialized institution for the clarification of learning requirements for integration into the labour market or access to higher education. Here, information can be gathered on refugees' qualifications, and refugees can be provided with individual assessments of obtained learning outcomes or competences they have acquired through paid or unpaid work, in-service training, continuing education or leisure activities, in addition to their documented competences from basic education and training.

Youth and adults should be able to apply for an assessment of prior experiential learning both when seeking admission to higher education and when seeking recognition of education to qualify them to take an apprenticeship examination for a craft certificate. The host countries could also ensure that services are available in universities to administer and regulate admission to all undergraduate studies and that these services are open to candidates applying on the basis of prior experiential learning. This would allow all refugees aged 25 or over who do not have higher education entrance qualifications to request that their prior experiential learning be accredited for a particular course of study at one institution.

### 5.1.2   Labour agencies and workplaces need to support the assessment of vocational competences

Should a refugee youth or adult have vocational competences or a vocational certificate and be registered as a refugee, they should be eligible for an assessment of prior experiential learning. An overview of specific aspects of the profession in which the refugee claims vocational competence should be available. Labour agencies should  provide the curricula against which a refugee's competences are assessed. These vocational competences should be placed at different levels of the education and training system, particularly at the upper secondary school level, as it is the attainment of this level that is crucial for gaining access to employment. Most administrative departments or public employment agencies ought to be able to assess foreign vocational competences. These arrangements would give refugees the opportunity to have their vocational competence assessed against the national curricula of the named countries.

Where refugees have a foreign craft or journeyman's certificate, they may be offered an assessment of prior experiential learning and possible further vocational training (shortened and adapted) to acquire a craft certificate against a certain occupational standard. Documentation could consist of certificates or diplomas of completed education and training, which show the length and level of a refugee's education, theory and practical training. Work experience abroad or in the host country may be an advantage or a requirement. If education and qualifications are not adequately documented, or not considered to be on a par with a host country's standards or qualifications (vocational or academic), again, it ought

to be possible to carry out an assessment of a candidate's prior experiential learning. In this way, adults can get credit for long experience and can be accepted into a shorter, adapted vocational training programme, with the aim of acquiring a craft certificate.

One example of a competence assessment of Syrian refugees is that conducted as part of a vocational training programme leading to a qualification by the Hamburg Chambers of Skilled Crafts. During a refugee 'Action Week', a competence assessment is carried out, giving refugees an opportunity to demonstrate their skills in welding, soldering and brazing, and in the use of tools. The aim of the Action Week is to find out where refugees' strengths lie and which future qualifications they could be trained for in order gain a foothold in the labour market. Further aims are to enable them to become acquainted with potential employers, some of them present at the assessment, and to offer them appropriate guidance and counselling, leading to their integration into the workforce.[12]

In another example from Germany, the Bertelsmann Stiftung has developed a computer-based instrument compatible with standards in the German vocational education and training system. It has tests in 30 occupations which are oriented to working and business processes in enterprises. The tests do not lead to formal recognition of qualifications. Rather, they provide employers with a practice-oriented competence profile and identify further training needs. The test is also integrated into the placement process of the German Federal Employment Agency. The pilot phase started in December 2016. Implementation began in 2017 (Noack, 2017).

## 5.2  Formalized and less formalized methods of assessment

Combining traditional methods and tests with other methods, such as practical demonstration, enables relatively flexible assessment procedures. It is important to match the assessment tool to the purpose of the assessment, and, in some cases, to the nature of the learner and his or her learning needs. In some cases, for example, requiring individual refugees to create large portfolios will prove inappropriate; practical

[12] For further information, see www.missionzukunft.elbcampus.de and www.nobi-nord.de

demonstration and/or oral questioning might be preferable. Language can be an impediment to successful completion of examinations or portfolios. Online self-assessment is useful in enabling individuals to gauge the likely outcome of applications to non-formal learning courses that lead to qualifications.

### 5.2.1 Written tests

In Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, one of the most common summative assessment tools for recognizing non-formal learning is a written examination. Written exams are most often used when people have been through second-chance non-formal learning programmes but need proof of high school certification in order to access a higher education institution such as a university. Other tests are developed in order to determine the educational level at which a student has to be placed in non-formal or formal education. This is evidence of assessment after some non-formal learning. However, the assessment is mostly traditional – assessment against the curriculum rather than assessment of competences, not seeking to discover whether students have understood the course. Furthermore, some organizations provide certified training up to certain levels only – to the primary and lower secondary level – or for certain courses only.

In Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, those who pass the education placement test at the basic education level are recognized as primary or high school graduates.

However, there are no mechanisms available for the RVA of workplace competences of Syrian refugees accepted against TVET standards and levels, even though this could promote the productivity, global competitiveness and quality of the Syrian refugee middle-level workers. Countries use traditional examinations for assessment in the basic education sector, as certification at these levels is a requirement for admission to programmes leading to baccalaureate and higher education qualifications. However, less formalized methods are more appropriate in the case of recognition, validation and recognition of individuals whose education has suffered disruption for a long period and who have no chance of re-entering the education system, or for people with prior vocational competences who need to demonstrate their competences.

These methods will usually be useful in drawing out the full range of competences of Syrian refugee youth and young adults.

Less formalized methods include:

**Interviews.** A dialogue-based method that includes discussions between assessors and learners, often supported by computerized or manual tools and combined with portfolio assessment, self-assessment and testing.

**Evidence collection.** A process whereby information and documentary evidence is collected on completed formal education, uncompleted education and training programmes, as well as competences acquired during working life, through voluntary activities, or through non-formal and informal education. This process usually generates and draws on a 'competence folder'.

**Self-assessment.** Many countries have developed instruments to record the training, learning and work biographies of individuals. The central task for users is to complete their own biography, and it is recommended that they receive professional, expert guidance in this. Self-assessment should place emphasis on empowering individuals by helping them to improve their self-esteem and self-confidence, rather than undertaking an exact measurement of abilities. Advisors in specialized centres might guide learners on how to document competences.

**Preparation of individual plans.** Individualized preparatory training support is important for refugees to prepare for the competence test that may lead to a qualification. The qualifications, for example, could be set at the upper secondary level or at different levels of the technical and vocational certification system. The preparation of individual plans could include details of parts of a qualification or its modules; where and how the test will be taken, or whether the candidate's knowledge skills need to be supplemented before the qualification can be obtained. These methods could also be called skills gap training or bridge courses.

**Evaluation of credentials and qualifications.** Refugees' credentials and qualifications compared with the credentials and qualifications of the host countries.

**Observation/demonstration.** Individuals are evaluated against assessment criteria as they perform tasks. They are observed in either a real-life setting, e.g. at work or in the community, or in a simulated situation.

**Participatory rapid appraisal.** A process undertaken before starting a non-formal learning programme at the basic level to better understand young people's learning needs. In Jordan's 'Dropouts' non-formal programme, a participatory rapid appraisal is conducted to understand why students drop out of school and to identify their needs and interests. It has been found that one major reason for dropping out is fear of sitting an examination. Hence, the programme has introduced other assessment methods to reduce reliance on exams. Participation and interaction in courses now generate 50 per cent of the total mark. Presence in courses and activities outside the classroom counts for 10 per cent of the total mark. Tests and exams generate only 40 per cent of the total mark (Al Nasser, 2013). Facilitators are trained to observe students' behaviour, consider students' abilities and provide frequent feedback.

**Diagnostic tests.** Recognition of non-formal and informal learning in basic education begins with a series of diagnostic tests which enable individuals to discover how their knowledge, skills and wider competences align to basic education and school certification. These tests result either in the issuing of a primary or secondary certificate, or the applicant's referral to the appropriate level of participation in basic education. In primary and secondary education, successful assessment can result in the award of credits or certification through the recognition of skills relevant to a competency framework in which modules are organized around everyday life skills and oriented towards the development of competences.

**Competence cards.** These cards are becoming a popular tool to assess the skills and social abilities of immigrants coming to Europe. They are used to assess social and personal competences as well as professional and methodological skills. There are also cards that take into account interests and hobbies of immigrants. Migration counsellors use such cards in order to get to know clients faster and better. They are used as guides for profiling in public employment agencies. Counsellors in youth services, trainers in integration courses, and agencies responsible for recognizing foreign degrees also find competence cards useful (Noack, 2017).

**The situation game.** The situation game starts from the assumption that different factors (persons, activities, contexts, etc.) might have

influenced an individual's development in a formal or informal way. This method tries to make explicit some of these factors. The game focuses on any situation from one's life experience on which one looks back with pride. The focus is on personal qualities, such as social skills and competences; organizational skills and competences; technical skills and competences; computer skills and competences; artistic sills and competences; and learning skills and competences. By making transparent 'one's situation' to others (employer, learning providers, macro-level facilitators such as authorities, social partners) through documentation, it is possible to build a customized learning path (see Rickabaugh, 2017).

## 5.3 Ensuring the quality of non-formal learning programmes

Accreditation of non-formal learning programmes becomes a challenge when one is working with hundreds of thousands of refugees with no or few qualifications, who have a different culture and need to be accommodated in different kinds of non-formal programmes. Such programmes are not yet aligned to national vocational qualifications frameworks, but are conducted in the context of community learning centres run by NGOs and donor agencies. Often, these learning centres are governed by different entry requirements and have widely differing levels of resource. In many cases, NGOs' curricula are not accredited and placement tests are not systematically implemented.

Accreditation processes will be important in ensuring the quality of non-formal learning programmes. Basically, states can assure the quality of non-formal learning programmes when non-formal certificates are brought into the framework of a formal education curriculum, or subsumed under a national qualifications framework, and so submitted to a common quality assurance regime.

Where NQFs provide the environment for accreditation, qualifications and standards from non-formal learning programmes must be accredited and registered in the NQF, which could also include unit standards and modules. If the outcomes of informal and non-formal learning are registered in this way, they are recognized. With the establishment of the Turkish Qualifications Framework and its assumption of quality assurance functions, the Vocational Qualifications Authority

(VQA) will start authorizing the training of accreditation bodies, giving individual providers the accreditation needed to assess and certify workers based on occupational standards that inform national vocational qualifications. However, the VQA alone will be responsible for the verification of workers' vocational qualification certificates (CEDEFOP, 2014).

## 5.4  Conclusions and lessons learned

Since many refugee youth and young adults have suffered interruptions to their formal education, often for many years, and acquired competences informally or as a result of courses outside the formal education system, clarification of what they can do and demonstrate is important for their integration into the education and training and employment system.

Identifying and documenting competencies and prior learning of refugees requires coherent national procedures and tools such as national qualifications frameworks and mechanisms for the RVA of non-formal and informal learning. Such mechanisms may help unemployed refugees and citizens to match their existing skills with the demands of the labour market. These processes tend to foster mobility by providing individuals (high-skilled or low-skilled migrants) with proofs of their acquired skills and competences. They also help non-formal learning programmes to prepare tailor-made programmes that meet the learning needs of a wide range of learners and enable the appropriate placement of learners in formal and non-formal learning programmes.

Formalized and less formalized methods of assessment need to be combined. And there should be continuity from formative assessment to summative assessment. Formative assessment should be used to identify learning-outcome equivalencies and to understand refugees' prior learning and learning needs in relation to the learning outcomes of the qualifications that a refugee is aspiring to achieve. Each step must be defined and described from the initial stage, offering information and guidance, through to study of competences, to assessment and certification.

Formative assessment is crucial for refugees as it helps develop personal growth and empowerment of young refugees. In addition, they generally need strong and overt support both from educational

institutions and in the workplace, and from refugee centres, if they are to have their prior learning, skills and experience accurately recorded. Many refugees have great difficulty providing valid evidence to support recognition of their learning and competences.

Summative assessment requires the involvement of stakeholders and agencies such as workplaces, employment agencies, qualification bodies, sector skills councils and curriculum bodies, as well as professionals involved with identifying, documenting, giving information and guidance to refugees, and assessors and certifiers of learning outcomes.

Assessment based on learning outcomes has become an important quality issue in non-formal education. The purpose of assessment is not to select the best, but rather to provide an opportunity for learners to show what they are able to do.

Countries can assure the quality of non-formal education either by bringing non-formal education into the framework of the formal education curricula and certification or by subsuming it under a national qualifications framework where it is submitted to a common quality assurance regime. Quality assurance can focus on improving processes of accreditation of non-formal programmes prior to their delivery, before they are brought into a fixed relationship to national curricular or qualifications frameworks.

It is to the professionals and practitioners who implement procedures and mechanisms for recognizing and certifying non-formal learning, therefore, that the next chapter turns.

Homework club for Syrian schoolchildren in a makeshift school in the coastal city of Saida, Lebanon. © UNHCR/Diego Ibarra Sánchez

# CHAPTER 6
# STAFF WORKING IN NON-FORMAL LEARNING AND THE RECOGNITION OF COMPETENCES

This chapter deals with the different kinds of practitioners working with Syrian refugees in the field of non-formal learning and the recognition of Syrian refugees' individual competences. Non-formal learning and recognition practitioners include individuals delivering information, guidance and counselling; those who carry out assessments; teachers and managers of educational institutions; workplace instructors; employers; and a range of other stakeholders with important but less direct roles in the recognition process. Non-formal learning and recognition practitioners might also be those who offer different kinds of special support services and flexible arrangements to early school-leavers, adults with special learning needs, Syrian refugee workers with low levels of education, and those excluded from the labour market.

According to the UNESCO *Guidelines*, 'the roles of facilitators, advisors and assessors need to be clearly defined and contextualised. The ongoing and continuous training of non-formal learning personnel ensures reliability and trust in recognition processes' (UIL, 2012, p. 5). UNESCO recommends that Member States:

> ensure appropriate qualifications, skills and competences of RVA personnel, allowing them to manage and conduct the assessment and validating processes in their specific socio-economic contexts; establish a system for the training of RVA personnel, and facilitate networks for mutual learning at local and national levels, and across countries, to enhance their competences and to develop best practice (ibid., p. 6.).

In a similar vein, the UNESCO education response to the Syrian crisis has defined the quality of non-formal and informal education in terms of diversifying teacher competences with innovative content and training modalities (UNESCO, 2015*d*).

## 6.1 Teachers addressing learning needs in formal and non-formal learning

In a context of growing numbers of refugees, awareness is increasing of the importance of the school environment and its integration into the community in the promotion of successful social inclusion of Syrian refugee youth and young adults. Yet, schools may be poorly equipped to recognize and respond to the multiple challenges faced by youth and young adults who must learn a new language or a new dialect while grappling with unfamiliar education and social systems. Refugee students often have minimal or significantly disrupted formal education prior to arrival in their new country. Young people, and sometimes their families, may lack literacy in their first language, and many are coping with the impacts of trauma associated with forced displacement. Evidence of effective interventions in schools that promote an inclusive learning environment is sparse.

One way to deal with these difficulties and failures is to promote networks linking schools and agencies in a region. An evaluation of the School Support Programme operating in schools in Victoria, Australia, shows that promoting networking between schools in a region facilitates the establishment of successful partnerships between schools and agencies and provides a model for a whole-school approach focused on the learning, social and emotional needs of refugee students (Block, Cross, Rigs and Gibbs, 2014). The programme also highlighted the need for more opportunities and stronger encouragement, as well as for pre-service teachers to examine their own attitudes towards diversity and intercultural relationships.

Another example is from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which strives to foster community-based strengths and is committed to building relevant interaction across the education system and communities towards the protection, well-being and learning of students in such challenging contexts. Two important lessons can be drawn from the UNRWA education programme: (1) learning must be supported by many actors, including teachers, students, peers, family members and the community; and (2) teachers require explicit standards regarding what students must know and be able to do while receiving curricular,

pedagogical and didactic support on how to achieve these standards. The programme also encourages school staff to model a positive identity and adopt strategies for the well-being of students. It is committed to developing relations with students and to supporting students' holistic competences through academic guidance and socio-emotional support (World Bank, 2015).

### 6.1.1   Language teachers

One of the preconditions for successful integration is the improvement of refugees' knowledge of their host-country's language. Teachers in non-formal learning programmes need to make language (or dialect) learning a part of the integration of refugee students.

A number of projects in Europe are exploring ways of training teachers to teach migrants and refugees through non-formal learning programmes. One such programme, called Early Integration of Migrants (EIM), operates in Slovenia, offering 60-hour and 120-hour courses to provide migrants with sufficient information to help them find or retain work and become integrated in society (European Commission, 2015). EIM offers teachers a 24-hour training programme focusing on preparing lessons and developing intercultural competences. They are acquainted with the characteristics of the refugees, including those refugees who are also in their group of teachers. The programme comprises 10 modules prepared by the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education: introduction to education; personal identity; family and home; labour market and the workplace; health and social security; lifelong learning; public life; economics; environment and place; and Slovenian society, history, culture and constitution.

Other EU projects emphasize the development of new distance-learning pedagogical tools to teach languages to help refugees to integrate into the community and the work/commercial environment. Some of these projects look at other informal settings such as storytelling or cookery classes as tools for language learning (European Commission, 2015). Furthermore, language learning for refugees in European countries is often linked to work and employability, or taught in the context of short programmes for different professions (for instance, physiotherapy, catering or the tourism and hospitality sector).

According to Dooley (2009), teachers have to learn to be flexible and extend their pedagogical repertoires. Writing in the context of English teaching practices in New Zealand for refugee students with little or seriously interrupted schooling, she highlights the importance of subject area teachers also providing language and literacy lessons, or high school teachers providing what may be thought of as elements of the primary school curriculum. Dooley argues that teachers must engage with the conceptual knowledge of students who arrive with content area backgrounds different from others in their class. Everyday life experiences prior to and after resettlement in the host countries are rich with potential in this regard. In addition, and crucially, basic skills programmes in language, critical thinking and basic writing and reading skills are essential (ibid.).

Nassar (2013) highlights good practice examples from Jordan, where the role of teachers in non-formal education programmes for dropouts is to act as facilitators of discussions and learning processes rather than as teachers in the traditional sense. They are mostly from public schools, and receive additional training in participatory and active learning methods following a curriculum designed by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with Questscope, an NGO. Almost all are still teachers in conventional schools and receive a stipend for providing drop-out classes outside school hours.

## 6.2 Advisors and facilitators

Guidance and counselling personnel are essential in building bridges between non-formal, informal and formal learning, including the implementation of recognition and validation for competences, learning and experience.

Guides and facilitators offer information, guidance and counselling services to refugees with the aim of clarifying procedures for assessment so that individuals become more aware of their own competences and are more motivated to learn further and to have their learning outcomes recognized. Guides/facilitators in advisory positions in public and private, formal and non-formal agencies have to enable Syrian refugee students, youth and young adults to express their understandings appropriately and to see and locate their own competences in relation to the

requirements of a qualification, or units and modules of a qualification. They must take a holistic approach to ensure that all of a refugee's understandings are valued, explored and expressed. Facilitation can be either on an individual basis or in group work. Expert facilitators need to be employed to measure and validate informal learning against learning outcomes listed in standards of qualifications.

It is important to highlight the importance of embedding recognition processes in career counselling services. Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey have taken steps to upgrade their career counselling services (Sultana and Watts, 2007). Given that these countries already have such centres, they could be used to apply recognition of learning and competences as a career guidance tool to connect Syrian refugees to appropriate employers and training providers. This would give refugee youth and young adults an education, and a training and employment perspective. In Turkey, career guidance provision is available in the public employment service, and career-counselling services have a legal status. In Egypt, a career guidance department within public employment services trains employment counsellors in the use of tests to guide job-seekers. In Jordan, the national Centre for Human Resources Development, through the Al-Manar project, provides labour market information and career guidance services. In Lebanon, a law has been passed to develop a career guidance department within the national employment office, and job centres have been established to provide career information services and broker job applications. Also in Lebanon, the Rafik Al-Hariri Foundation offers career-counselling services to school students and publishes career information. Training levy systems are currently being established in Jordan and Egypt. Some trade unions have an interest in training, such as the syndicate of engineers in Lebanon. In Turkey, a number of organizations provide consultancy services on career development to large and medium-sized enterprises.

The above-mentioned career guidance services, especially those within host country national employment offices, need to work with training providers of continuing education as well as national qualifications authorities to ensure that Syrian refugees are helped to attain a partial or full qualification.

## 6.3  Coordinators and managers of regional service centres

Organizational and coordination mechanisms should be an important component of a national system for the recognition, validation and accreditation of non-formal learning. Capable staff will be needed in regional service centres, where youth and adults can obtain information and guidance and have their experience and prior learning validated. The centres might also be responsible for the quality of the recognition, validation and accreditation process and for training assessors.

Service centres should exist in every administrative district of a host country – they could be situated in existing structures such as schools, vocational training centres and universities. And, of course, regional service centres will need managers.

To offer opportunities to job-seekers who wish to have their competences validated, there need to be projects to improve cooperation between the education system and the public employment and welfare administration. Employers' bodies and trade unions are important stakeholders at national and regional level, as well as drivers in the realization of policy goals and practice (for instance, by offering apprenticeships and other training schemes in local enterprises, thus supporting adults in VET schemes).

## 6.4  Assessors: Quality and training

Local authorities should be responsible for ensuring the quality and training of assessors, which is ideally carried out in regional assessment centres. There ought to be annual courses and seminars for assessors, and mentoring services for inexperienced assessors.

Assessors should have a professional background in the trade or area of education in question (for VET), or both, and trained assessors should be registered on lists maintained by regional assessment centres.

Whereas facilitators and guides follow a developmental principle, which takes into account the individual's experience as a whole, assessors and examiners weigh an individual's experience more narrowly against the standards and references of a qualification. Assessors play a critical role in maintaining rigour in the recognition process. Therefore, they need to be trained to review the portfolio of the applicant; compare

the evidence provided with performance criteria; and make judgements as to whether the applicant wholly or partially meets requirements. They must check whether evidence submitted conforms to the following recognition principles: validity (is the evidence relevant?); sufficiency (is there enough?); authenticity (is it a true reflection of the candidate?); and currency (is it reliable within the context?). It is necessary to develop and apply a clear and easy-to-follow process of assessment: identifying what the learner knows and can do; matching the learner's skills, knowledge and experience against standards; assessing the learner; acknowledging the learner's competences; crediting the learner for skills, knowledge and experience already acquired; and issuing a record of learning/qualification. Validation results must be consistent irrespective of where recognition, validation and accreditation (RVA) is undertaken. RVA processes must be clearly described and the necessary competences defined.

## 6.5  Training providers in non-formal learning and vocational and technical skills centres

Training providers should be treated as important actors in the validation of competences and prior learning of refugees. They need to have their own practical arrangements for recruiting assessors and for assessment, and should be aware of the benefits of establishing systems for recognizing and validating outcomes of non-formal and informal learning. They should seek to minimize refugees' opportunity costs and ensure the currency of the qualification that refugees achieve, while maintaining fruitful but equitable relations with donors, the private sector and international agencies.

Assessors may be local master craftspersons (in both rural and urban areas) or resource persons from NGOs or technical training centres and technical skills centres. They need to be trained to collect evidence, design assessment instruments, plan and organize assessment, assess competences, carry out reasonable adjustments, validate assessment instruments and carry out appeal processes. The latter requirements are essential to promote transparency and enhance the integrity of the recognition system by laying the basis for a culture in which assessment decisions can be questioned and appealed against. All this means

that training opportunities for the role of assessor should be oriented towards individuals already qualified in workplace assessment just as much as those requiring foundational training.

Social inclusiveness is an important consideration in the RVA system. Since a majority of Syrian refugees in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey are employed in the informal economy, there have to be support mechanisms in place to enable the disadvantaged, including socially marginalized groups in the informal sector, to access recognition, validation and accreditation mechanisms. Public/private partnerships will be needed here. Costs, location and literacy issues have to be addressed, and an acceptance of reasonable adjustment criteria will be required. Since RVA is already an integral component of the new NQFs in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, efforts should be made to set up pilot projects to promote links between RVA and NQFs.

## 6.6  Community practitioners in non-accredited out-of-school skills programmes

Adult educators and community practitioners working in community education programmes for Syrian refugees must learn to attend to the social context in which non-formal and informal learning take place (Taylor, 2007), and not regard such learning as a solely cognitive process. With the assistance of trained adult educators and community practitioners working in community-based organizations and NGOs, Syrian refugees can come to understand the importance of the ways in which their own experience and actions, and their relations with others, shape their identities.

Recognition processes, in fact, enhance refugees' self-knowledge and self-esteem. Community practitioners working with Syrian refugees need to co-ordinate with local government officials to draw up a profile of the community and its education programme objectives. This information should then be disseminated through town meetings. On the basis of these overall programme objectives, community learning centres and non-formal education programmes should be able to develop specific learning objectives for non-formal education and informal learning programmes. In line with their commitment to the learner's holistic development, community-based organizations and

NGOs must also have assessment tools for non-accredited out-of-school life skills programmes on topics such as leadership, community organization, environmental competences and enterprise development. They must apply an array of assessment methods – small-group discussions, peer assessment, life-story workshops and narratives – as well as assessment of entrepreneurship knowledge and skills.

## 6.7 Professionalizing staff working in non-formal learning and the recognition of competences

Developing certificated courses for practitioners working in non-formal learning and the recognition of individual competences could help to improve the quality of teaching, guidance and counselling as well as helping managers to coordinate non-formal learning and recognition processes. These certificates need to be positioned at the appropriate level of the qualifications framework, and modules can be prepared for a formal diploma programme to be offered in colleges or university continuing education departments. The module might be entitled 'Recognition, validation and accreditation of prior learning and competences of refugees' and would target employees in education institutions who work with recognition mechanisms (counsellors, teachers, coordinators and managers). Admission requirements could include a minimum of two years' relevant vocational experience with refugees. Although many practitioners in the field of RVA also fulfil other tasks, it should be widely acknowledged that the professionalization of RVA practitioners working with Syrian refugees is essential to ensure quality and build trust in the validation process.

Similarly, offering a qualification for youth work would enhance its recognition as a profession, creating quality standards and training courses at the further and higher education levels leading to respected qualifications for youth workers. The development of accreditation mechanisms for these courses could include the carrying forward of non-formal learning principles (active learning, voluntary nature of participation, socially inclusive approaches) onto courses for youth workers working in non-formal learning programmes.

## 6.8 Conclusions and lessons learned

This chapter has shown that implementing quality non-formal learning programmes, and the recognition, validation and accreditation of the competences and skills of Syrian refugees, demands a variety of practitioners working in the field of non-formal learning and the recognition of individual competences acquired in all settings.

Teachers in non-formal and informal learning programmes must learn to communicate explicit standards as to what Syrian refugee students, youth and young adults must know and be able to do, as well as providing curricular, pedagogical and didactic support and guidance on how to achieve these standards. They should be a positive role model, adopting strategies for the well-being of students and supporting their holistic competences by means of academic guidance and socio-emotional support.

Language teachers working with Syrian refugee students, youth and young adults have to be flexible and capable of combining language teaching with literacy and subject area teaching. They should be willing and able to use new pedagogical tools to teach language that integrate refugees simultaneously into the community and the work/commerce environment, perhaps at times looking at other informal activities, such as storytelling or cookery classes, as settings for language learning.

Guiders/facilitators in advisory positions in public and private, formal and non-formal agencies must enable Syrian refugee students, youth and young adults to express their understandings appropriately and to see their own competences in relation to the requirements of a qualification or modules in a qualification. They should also take account of the aspirations of youth and young adults.

Recognition of prior learning needs to be linked to continued counselling and career guidance that encourages learners, builds their self-confidence and creates a more comprehensive understanding of their competences. Existing career guidance centres within public employment agencies need to apply recognition of learning and competences to connect refugees with appropriate employers and training providers.

Regional service centres should exist in all administrative districts of the host countries – places where Syrian refugee youth and adults can have their experience and prior learning validated. Capable service centre coordinators and managers will be needed. Cooperation between

the education system and the public employment and welfare administration is essential. Employer bodies and trade unions are also important stakeholders and drivers in the realization of the practice of recognizing non-formal learning and competences. By offering apprenticeships and other training schemes in local enterprises, they support Syrian refugee youth and young adults in VET schemes.

National authorities and relevant stakeholders need to take responsibility for the quality and training of staff. Assessors working with Syrian refugees must possess expertise relevant to the conduct of assessments. They must clearly define and describe recognition, validation and assessment processes.

Training providers should have their own practical arrangements for assessment, recruiting and training assessors. Training opportunities for assessors should be oriented towards both individuals already qualified in workplace assessment and those requiring foundational training. NGOs and other public/private partnerships should be used to extend and expand the provision of RVA to socially marginalized groups in the informal sector.

Community practitioners working in community and adult education programmes need to coordinate with local government officials to draw up a profile of the community and its education programme objectives. Recognition processes should enhance refugees' self-knowledge and self-esteem.

The quality of teaching, guidance and counselling would be improved by the initiation of certificated courses for RVA personnel in non-formal learning and the recognition of individual competences. Such courses might well help managers learn how to better coordinate non-formal learning and recognition processes.

To sum up, international best practice has shown that different kinds of expert practitioners are necessary to drive the realization of policy goals and practice for quality non-formal learning and the recognition of competences of refugees. This expertise deals with:

1. furthering the development of teaching practices;
2. broadening understanding of assessment and evaluation;
3. increasing knowledge of recognition processes through professional development opportunities;

4. being able to apply a variety of assessment methods and tools;
5. reviewing non-formal learning programmes and courses for continuous improvement.

In the end, all professionals in non-formal learning programmes should be working to tap into students' prior knowledge, background and related experiences as a means of scaffolding learning. They have to highlight the strengths of the refugee students, given that marginalized refugee youth often go through traumatic life events and homesickness. Deficit thinking should be avoided in formative assessment as it might be detrimental to the identity and achievement of a student refugee, bearing in mind that refugees often have experienced years of interruption to their formal education and now a way forward needs to be found for them.

Syrian refugee studying at Al-Albayt University in Jordan  © UNHCR/Antoine Tardy

# SECTION C

# Conclusions, recommendations and actions

# CHAPTER 7
# CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

This study grew out of a concern expressed by national policy-makers and sectoral stakeholders in the Middle East to develop a unified strategy to coordinate opportunities for non-formal and informal learning in relation to their formal systems. However, many questions remained to be answered before a proposal could be formulated. For example, how do non-formal and informal learning and their recognition operate in the countries in question? How do stakeholders perceive the value of non-formal education and learning? Do mechanisms for their accreditation or certification exist? How can a comprehensive strategy that creates synergies between formal, non-formal and informal education be implemented?

It is critical that answers to these questions are found, as concrete solutions for putting non-formal learning on an equal footing with formal learning are now being considered in the region. The aim of ensuring good-quality learning outcomes regardless of the settings in which they are required is slowly becoming the norm, driving national commitments and the activities of governments and international agencies alike.

Finding answers to these questions is particularly salient for Syrian refugees given that non-formal learning opportunities provide a crucial support system for development after or instead of attendance at school, creating opportunities to learn skills and gain experience relevant to domestic and global labour market needs.

The study shows that, currently, there are huge barriers to the integration of refugee children and young people into formal and non-formal learning and education. These barriers include: curricular and language issues; the under-resourcing of public schools and double-shift education provision; economic and social conditions in the host communities resulting in many youth leaving formal and non-formal education and electing, or being forced, to take up jobs in the informal sector; laws in some countries preventing Syrian refugees from working in certain domains; and the lack of recognition of previous certificates and diplomas.

Without a concerted effort to create viable, high-quality non-formal learning opportunities and pathways into further education

and learning, there is likely to be a lost generation. Refugee youth and young adults must be given possibilities of progression into formal education and training, and transition into the world of work. Formal, non-formal and informal learning programmes should help to promote personal development and integration into society through psychosocial guidance and counselling. Clearer links between alternative learning pathway programmes and formal education should allow students and youth to re-engage in the formal system and gain qualifications. Furthermore, competence assessment could help unemployed refugees and citizens to match their existing skills with the demands of the labour market. This connects with the strategic focus of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, SDG 4: 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all'. These aspirations go beyond basic education to include post-secondary vocational education and training and tertiary education. They place emphasis both on education and training and on skills for employment, decent work and entrepreneurship.

This study has therefore elaborated the core components of a coherent system for the recognition, validation and accreditation of non-formal learning: policy and legislation; RVA mechanisms; and resources and expertise in recognition of non-formal learning and competences.

Despite the challenges and the huge barriers that exist, there are also examples of good practice to build on.

## Policy recommendations

The recommendations are presented under five priority areas: recognition, validation and accreditation; progression; policy and standards; assessment; and staff.

### Recognition, validation and accreditation

Host governments, together with all relevant stakeholders, should:

- Develop a system to recognize Syrian refugees' previous certificates and diplomas, as well as the learning that individuals have acquired non-formally or informally.

- Focus on the abilities and skills of Syrian youth and young adults in order to raise their self-esteem and motivation to become agents capable of steering their own personal, social and economic well-being.
- Ensure that the recognition of non-formal learning programmes and individual competences applies not only to Syrian refugees, but also to the host countries' wider populations.

**Progression**

Refugee youth and young adults should be provided with non-formal learning opportunities that offer progression into further education and training and transition into the world of work. Host governments should:

- Develop recognized learning pathways to gain access to education and qualifications to meet the diverse needs of Syrian refugee youth and young adults.
- Develop non-formal bridge, supplementary and preparatory courses for Syrian refugees as recognized pathways of progression into further education and training and into the world of work.
- Integrate several sources of support, including tutorials, psychosocial guidance, mentoring and counselling, into non-formal learning so that refugees can continue onto recognized further education and training pathways or into the world of work.
- Provide more workplace training (including voluntary and community work) at all levels.

**Policy and standards**

Policy measures to integrate formal, non-formal and informal learning should be part of a comprehensive national strategy rather than project-based activities. Host governments should:

- Develop a vision that acknowledges recognition processes as a key tool to promote the lifelong learning of refugee youth and adults, to ensure more flexible learning pathways, to encourage refugee learners, to build their self-confidence and to create a more comprehensive understanding of competences.

- Develop a coherent policy framework to create synergies between Syrian refugees' formal, non-formal and informal learning.
- Establish a legal basis for recognizing learning outside the formal system for refugees, with clear, consensually defined stakeholder roles and responsibilities.
- Avoid fragmentation of recognition by putting in place coherent administrative arrangements at the national, regional and local levels, supported by adequate financial resources, and guidance and training for validation professions.
- Make recognition practice an integral part of the formal education and training system and of national qualifications frameworks in the host countries.
- Strengthen the integration and inclusion of refugees through awareness-raising activities, outreach and accessibility strategies at national and institutional levels and availability of guidance and counselling for refugee youth and adults.
- Ensure that Syrian refugees' learning attainments and competences are validated or confirmed by an officially approved body against reference points or standards through predefined assessment methodologies.
- Introduce approaches to curricula based on learning outcomes in order to make the recognition of relevant skills and knowledge more achievable.
- Include vocational competences acquired in the workplace and linked to basic skills such as literacy and language training in their non-formal learning curricula.
- Provide youth and young adults with opportunities to take part in long-term projects and to develop high-level skills through public and private institutions, rather than the current diet of short-term projects delivered by international agencies, mostly at the basic level. The protracted nature of the crisis makes this essential.

**Assessment**

Host governments should:

- Set up a structured and transparent assessment process that benefits all candidates.
- Combine both formalized and less formalized or formative assessment to clarify all the prior learning and competences that refugee youth and adults bring with them in relation to what refugees are aspiring to achieve.
- Ensure that standards against which evidence of learning is compared are comparable to the standards applied in the formal settings for a qualification.
- Arrive at a consensus with all stakeholders and agencies such as national authorities, workplaces, employment agencies, qualification bodies and sector skills agencies on the nature of the standards for summative assessment. This is necessary if the results of the assessment are to have currency in the education, training and employment system.
- Design competence assessments to help unemployed refugee youth and adults match their existing skills with those required in the labour market.

**Staff**

Host governments should:

- Involve different kinds of practitioners for the recognition of learning Syrian refugees have undertaken outside the formal system (teachers, guides and counsellors, assessors, coordinators and managers).
- Provide professional development opportunities so that practitioners:
    - broaden their understanding of assessment and evaluation;
    - increase their knowledge of recognition processes;
    - are able to use a variety of assessment methods and tools;
    - review non-formal learning programmes and courses for continuous improvement.
- Promote national and regional networks for RVA staff to address the above-mentioned matters and enhance RVA.

# CHAPTER 8
# IMMEDIATE ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN WITH THE SUPPORT OF ALL ACTORS

Recognition, validation and accreditation (RVA) of non-formal learning outcomes from formal, non-formal and informal learning for Syrian refugee youth and young adults should be embedded in policy and practice and funding from the outset.

**Relevant authorities to take responsibility for planning**

Nominate or set up a relevant authority to take responsibility for planning. Such a process should be undertaken in collaboration with other key stakeholders, such as government, industry, NGOs and social partners, to ensure a whole-sector approach.

**Setting specific priorities of the RVA system together with local stakeholders**

Specify priorities of the RVA system in host countries not only from a recognition policy perspective, but also by taking into account the roles of those involved: learners, employers, employees, training providers, enterprises, educational institutions, NGOs, public and private organizations, youth organizations, etc.

The starting point for validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes is identifying target groups among Syrian refugees. Priority target groups need to be identified. These include early school-leavers in the formal and non-formal education sectors, the large number of competent youth and young adult refugees without certification currently working in the informal sector, those who are unable to re-enter the formal school system because of long years of interrupted school, and those with a good chance of entering formal skills training programmes. Access through RVA would enable these youth and young adults to gain entry or admission to a particular top-up course.

Classification of target groups could be according not only to literacy and education levels, but also to skills levels. This would apply to skilled workers with and without qualifications, workers with formal

qualifications or non-formal certificates, those living in poverty or working in the informal sector of the economy, or at-risk-groups that require special attention. Understanding the challenges faced by each group would help ensure appropriate guidance and counselling, progression and upskilling pathways.

The second requirement is for labour market and employment agencies to survey labour market needs, i.e. discover what competences Syrian refugees possess and find ways in which these can be matched to labour-market demand. This will help to develop tailor-made non-formal learning programmes that match the competences of Syrian refugees with the labour market. Industry needs could be related to a few major industries or service sectors, such as construction, health and engineering, but could also include informal horticulture and environmental protection. Industry and labour market needs can be identified through close collaboration between social partners and national qualifications authorities.

**Introduce standards based on competence and learning outcomes**

Conditions should be improved for the acceptance of RVA by working with the responsible stakeholders to introduce systems based on competence and learning outcomes, integrated into national curricula and national qualifications systems.

**Recognition mechanisms and expertise**

Assessment methods should be developed that are not exclusively based on centrally set examinations. However, centrally set tests can be used for moderation purposes to maintain the integrity of the system in its infancy.

A portfolio system (a competency log book) should be introduced to document evidence of the competences of Syrian refugee youth and adults.

**Undertake initial training of assessors**

Develop RVA mechanisms with clear and agreed pathways for Syrian refugee youth and adults, from recognition to further education and training, qualifications and entry to the world of work.

**Resources and time**

Necessary resources include rooms and assessment centres; the dissemination of information; guidance and counselling; identification and documentation of evidence; target group-specific tools and materials; and appropriately trained RVA staff.

Training providers and training institutions need to be equipped to initiate the RVA exercise and offer opportunities to potential candidates. Competent assessors must be trained to carry out a diverse range of assessment methods to compare a learner's existing competences with unit standards in the frameworks.

Donors should be called upon to: (a) pay the fees for the evaluation of a qualification or certificate held by a refugee; and (b) pay the administrative fees for the assessment of prior learning, competences and work experience, i.e. in collaboration with those responsible for course assessment and ensuring that entry requirements are met.

**Awareness campaigns highlighting benefits for end users**

There should be awareness campaigns and consultative meetings among stakeholders and the public to highlight the benefits of recognizing the non-formal learning and individual competences of Syrian refugee youth and young adults. All RVA processes should centre on diagnosing refugees' prior learning and competences in terms of the extent to which they motivate participation of refugees in a further education and training programme. State bodies should ensure that learning processes end in an assessment of knowledge and skills according to agreed criteria. This is the only way to ensure transparency of the standards achieved by refugees' participation in RVA. The certification should ensure transitions into the labour market for individuals and groups of individuals who are not yet integrated into the employment system, as well as access to general education.

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For Syrian refugees living in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, recognition is a transformative mechanism that can help them enter or re-enter education, integrate into the world of work and participate fully in their host communities. However, while policy-makers in the region have prioritized the recognition, validation and accreditation of non-formal and informal learning, it remains a major challenge to develop systems that do this effectively. *Pathways to Empowerment* lays the essential groundwork for such a system, urging governments to develop comprehensive national strategies rather than ad hoc projects to recognize the competences of Syrian refugees. Its recommendations will contribute to dialogue between national authorities and social partners, and guide policy actions and RVA practices both in the region and in other parts of the world where recognition of refugees' learning is a critical issue.