

# ARAB STATES

2019

## Migration, displacement and education:

BUILDING BRIDGES, NOT WALLS

KEY MESSAGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
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Sustainable  
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Goals



Global  
Education  
Monitoring  
Report

# KEY MESSAGES

Migration and displacement closely interact with education. This happens through intricate two-way relationships that affect those who move, those who stay behind or those who host migrants and refugees:

- Migration and displacement call on education systems to be prepared. Countries need to recognize migrants' and refugees' right to education in law and fulfil this right in practice.
- Education also profoundly affects migration and displacement – both their volume and how they are perceived.
- The world endorsed two global compacts on migrants and refugees in December 2018, which, among other, outline key commitments on education for the first time.

No part of the world is currently as much affected by migration and displacement as the Arab States. The region accounts for 5% of the global population but 32% of the global population of refugees and 38% of the global population of people internally displaced by conflict. Although migration offers opportunities, humanitarian crises have slowed down the pace of education development in the region relative to other regions, undermining the prospects of this and future generations. For instance, over the past two decades:

- The gap in the enrolment rate in primary education between the Arab States and sub-Saharan Africa has been more than halved.
- Central and Southern Asia has overtaken the Arab States in the enrolment rate in lower secondary education.
- The enrolment rate in upper secondary education in the Arab States exceeded the global average by 2.5 percentage points but is now falling short of it by 2.5 percentage points.

## INTERNAL MIGRATION

Internal migration accounts for the majority of population movements. Rural to urban migration, a particularly salient phenomenon in middle-income countries, and seasonal or circular flows tend to pose

the biggest challenges for education systems. But the pace of urbanization and internal migration intensity are lower in the Arab States than in other regions.

In **Tunisia**, the internal migration rate jumps from 2% among 15- to 19-year-olds to 7% among those in their 20s and more among females, with education of better quality in urban areas a key reason for migration. On average, 8% of Tunisians migrated for education purposes and over 20% from some governorates.

In **Egypt**, children of internal migrants have slightly lower dropout rates in primary and lower secondary education and are more likely to persist into secondary and post-secondary education.

In **Iraq**, 13% of the population lives in 3,700 slums where there are almost 2,200 uncompleted schools. In Sadr City, the largest slum in Baghdad, 9% of inhabitants cited education as a top-priority need. In a quarter of slums of Cairo, **Egypt**, general secondary schools were situated far outside the neighbourhood.

Field schools for nomadic and pastoralist communities in countries such as **Djibouti** focus on farming-related skills aimed at increasing livestock management efficiency and mitigating climate change effects.

## INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

Migration from and to the Arab States has historically had two main facets, while a third one is emerging.

First, Gulf Cooperation Council countries have the highest immigration rates in the world. In **Qatar** and the **United Arab Emirates**, immigrants are the majority both in the overall and in the student population.

- **Bahrain** is the only country in the group with open access to the public school system for migrants, which make up about half of public school students.
- But in line with an immigration policy that promotes segmentation, other countries in the group cater for migrants through a private education system, where access and quality are linked to ability to pay. Immigrants make up 73% of private school students in **Kuwait**, 81% in **Qatar** and 83% in the **United Arab Emirates**.

- Private schools represent a lucrative market in these countries, valued at some US\$13.2 billion in 2016/17 and expected to double to US\$26.2 billion by 2023. These private schools offer curricula mostly in line with the country of origin of the student body. The 194 private schools in Dubai, **United Arab Emirates**, offer 17 different curricula.
  - **Bahrain** and the **United Arab Emirates** have made efforts to ensure that all private school students learn Arabic to a good standard and are taught through a common social studies curriculum. The effectiveness of these initiatives has not been assessed, while two-thirds of Arab youth aged 18 to 24 reported speaking more English than standard Arabic in their daily lives in 2017.
  - In **Kuwait**, the stateless bidoon students can only attend fee-paying private schools (US\$860 to US\$1,550 per year) although the government subsidizes 70% of these fees.
  - An extraordinary expansion of tertiary education has taken place, particularly in the private sector, to meet increased demand from nationals and expatriate residents. In **Oman** there are 27 non-public universities and the number of tertiary education students increased from 16,000 in 1998 and 132,000 in 2016.
  - The Arab States display higher student mobility than the global average. The outbound mobility ratio increased from 3.1% in 2009 to 4.3% in 2017, while the inbound mobility ratio in the Arab States increased from 2.3% in 2006 to 3.2% in 2017, reaching 35% in **Qatar** and 49% in the **United Arab Emirates**.
  - Internationalization in higher education came with a switch from Arabic to English as a language of instruction. In **Bahrain**, the National Higher Education Strategy aims to produce global citizens able to communicate well in English. Royal decrees in **Saudi Arabia** introduced English at the pre-university level and various reforms. In the **United Arab Emirates** English is the language of instruction for sciences and mathematics.
  - Until recently, expatriate Arab, mostly Egyptian and Jordanian, teachers were making up about 87% of teachers in government schools in **Qatar** and 90% in government boys' schools in the **United Arab Emirates**. However, they are being replaced by English-speaking recruits, largely from high-income countries, who are hired under much more favourable terms.
- Second, regional emigration rates are above the global average of 3.4%, notably in **Lebanon** (12%) but also in the Maghreb countries of **Algeria**, **Tunisia** and especially **Morocco** (8%).
- The highest – and rising – shares of the total immigrant population from Arab States are found in France (37%; of which 95% from the Maghreb) and Sweden (18%; of which 75% from Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic). The share of 15-year-old students with migrant background is 26% in France and 31% in Sweden.
  - Remittances have a positive impact on household education expenditure. The countries receiving the most remittances are **Egypt** (US\$20 billion), in absolute terms, and **Palestine** (13% of GDP), in relative terms. The cost of remitting to the Arab States is 7.3%, close to the global average.
  - **Yemen** has the lowest adult financial literacy rate in the world, at 13%, while **Tunisia** had the highest among Arab States, at 45%. Financial education programmes for migrants can have a positive impact on financial decisions as a study of Indian migrants in **Qatar** has shown.
  - Immigrant students of Arab origin often leave education early or are streamed into vocational tracks. In Amsterdam, 9% of second-generation immigrant students from **Morocco** entered vocational tracks in lower secondary school at age 12, compared with 2% of natives.
  - Lack of language proficiency is an education disadvantage. In western Europe, participation of Moroccan immigrants in language courses in the first four years after immigration is associated with a positive and long-term impact on language skills and social contacts. But language training needs to be combined with content learning as early as possible.
  - Immigrant students from **Algeria**, **Morocco** and **Tunisia** do worse in France. For instance, 25% of them repeat a grade compared to 15% on average. But once their socioeconomic background is taken into account, their academic results do not differ from those of native French students.
  - Moreover, about 69% of native French parents and 76% of parents of Northern African background wish their children to attend higher education. The gap more than doubles when background factors are considered.

- **Lebanon** and **Morocco** have the largest highly skilled emigration rates, about one in four. The effect of the prospect for skilled migration on human capital accumulation can be positive in sending countries, reaching a maximum at 14%, a moderate rate of high-skilled migration.

A third emerging trend is that sub-Saharan African migrants increasingly settle in Northern Africa. In **Morocco**, the government is developing policies and a framework to guide their integration into the education system. About 5,500 immigrant children were enrolled in 2017/18.

**Libya** has become a gateway for sub-Saharan Africans heading for Europe. In 2018, an estimated 62,000 school-age refugee and migrant children were registered in Libya, of whom about 53,000 needed support for education access. No unaccompanied and separated children had access to education. Education is not free for many of these children. Learning opportunities for those who cannot gain access to formal schools are scarce, and non-formal education is nearly non-existent.

## INTERNATIONAL DISPLACEMENT

At the end of 2018, there were 25.9 million refugees, of whom 5.5 million were Palestinian. The **Syrian Arab Republic** (6.7 million) was the country from which the largest number of people had fled, while **Sudan** (0.7 million) was also in the top 10. Among the top ten countries hosting refugees were Sudan (1.1 million), Lebanon (1 million) and Jordan (0.7 million). In addition, **Lebanon** (0.5 million) and **Jordan** (2.2 million) hosted Palestinian refugees, making them the two top refugee hosting countries in the world as a share of their population.

Faced with crises, most governments used to provide parallel education systems for refugee populations. This is still the case with Malian refugees in **Mauritania**, where 5,300 out of 19,300 school age children attend schools that follow the Malian curriculum.

However, this is not a sustainable solution. Parallel systems lack qualified teachers, examinations are not certifiable and funding risks being cut at short notice. They therefore diminish the chance of refugees being included and leading meaningful lives especially if displacement is protracted. The objective is to include refugees fully in the national education system, studying in the same classrooms with natives after a short period of catch-up classes,

if necessary, to prepare them for entry at appropriate age-for-grade levels.

The 2017 Djibouti Declaration on Regional Refugee Education commits its signatories, including **Djibouti** and **Sudan**, to integrate education for refugees and returnees into their education sector plans by 2020 and proposes actions, such as establishing minimum learning standards or integrating refugees into the national education management information system.

Geography, history, resource availability and system capacity all affect the degree of refugee inclusion. In some cases, the move towards inclusion has been gradual, following developments on the ground and an increasing understanding of the potential benefits. In Turkey, the share of Syrian refugee children attending temporary education centres fell from 83% in 2014/15 to 37% in 2017/18. The government will include all Syrian refugee children in the national education system by 2020 and phase out separate provision.

Resources can be a key constraint. **Jordan** and **Lebanon** adopted double-shift systems. Natives attend in the morning and most Syrian refugees in the afternoon. While the only realistic solution in the short- to medium-term, it is not recommended in the long-term. It is necessary that governments strengthen their teacher and school administration professional development; donors link their short-term humanitarian response with long-term development system-strengthening interventions; non-formal education actors create programmes bringing native and refugee students together; and all actors prepare for eventually dismantling the second shift and addressing the consequences of including those who stay.

Refugees frequently lack documentation, such as birth certificates, school-leaving certificates and diplomas, which makes inclusion in national education systems more difficult. **Jordan** used to require refugees living outside camps to obtain service cards for access to schools but in 2016 the Ministry of Education began allowing public schools to enrol children without cards. In the Kurdistan region of **Iraq**, the Ministry of Education used to issue temporary equivalence recognition of students' secondary school certificates for access to university but it halted the process in 2018/19.

Fees and other education costs can be particularly high for refugees, especially when their freedom

of movement and right to work are constrained. The World Food Programme introduced the Emergency School Feeding programme in **Lebanon** in 2015/16. Its pilot cash-based modality was successful but could not be scaled up financially. Its food modality has expanded to 24,000 vulnerable native and refugee children in selected public primary schools in areas with high poverty and refugee density.

Recognizing and addressing children's trauma is complex. Teachers can provide solutions for less acute situations with routine education practices that focus on promoting growth and building individuals' skills. Yet, while they need continuous professional development, they lack mental health and psychosocial support training. In the **Syrian Arab Republic**, 73% of surveyed teachers had no such training.

Supportive social and emotional learning approaches can build skills related to self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship building and responsible decision-making, which can be damaged by the uncertainty and dangers of displacement. Examples include creative expression programmes and child-centred play therapy in Turkey, social support-building activities through sport in **Jordan**, and mind-body activities to manage stress and fear in **Palestine**.

Scalability, speed, mobility (the technology can reach displaced people) and portability (displaced people can carry the technology) make technology-based solutions popular for reaching anyone with a connected device, such as a smartphone or tablet. A survey of 144 non-state actors in education for Syrian refugees found that 49% were engaged in developing and distributing technological education innovations. But despite attempts to adapt content, compatibility with host national education systems is the exception.

Despite an overwhelming response in the five countries hosting Syrian refugees, 39% of school age children are still not in education. And many are still placed in parallel systems, which are mostly unsustainable in the long term, especially with diminishing international support.

Sahrawi refugees in **Algeria** have a separate education system and curriculum in Arabic and Spanish. While all children attend basic education, most of the over 2,200 lower secondary school graduates in 2017 had left for secondary schools in other cities, including those attending boarding schools several hundred kilometres away. In addition, there is a long-term decline in humanitarian aid.

UNRWA, in partnership with UNESCO, provides accredited free basic education to 526,000 **Palestine** refugee children in 711 schools. It closely cooperates with four host governments to ensure the smooth transition of students into their secondary education systems, including recognition and accreditation of their qualifications, curricula, examinations and timetabling.

UNRWA operates with four different curricula and sets of textbooks, a process with a clear rationale but also challenges. In 2011, it adopted a policy on education for human rights, conflict resolution and tolerance and in 2013 it introduced a framework to review host-country curricula to ensure compliance with its pedagogical standards. In about 4% of cases where curricular content was found non-compliant, UNRWA developed 'alternative' or 'complementary' enrichment materials for teachers.

As 44% of its schools were directly impacted by armed conflict and violence, UNRWA has embarked on a reform to protect and support refugees, strengthen staff capacity to deliver good-quality education, build a community of practice in the school and foster close links with parents and the community. It has to plan and budget for contingencies related to additional teacher salaries, transport costs, non-school-based learning activities, and refugees' reduced ability to pay for school-related costs, due to poverty.

An emphasis on children of compulsory education age, should not come at the expense of international commitments under SDG 4 to ensure lifelong learning opportunities for all. Early childhood education, technical and vocational education and training and tertiary education opportunities for refugees are receiving increasing attention. About 100,000 Syrian refugees are participating in TVET programmes in the five host countries in the region.

## INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT

While the Syrian Arab Republic has by far the highest percentage of internally displaced people (IDPs) as a share of the population (36%), Yemen (8%) and Iraq, Palestine and Sudan (each about 5%) are among the top 12 countries on this list.

In **Iraq**, internal displacement has declined from 3.4 million at the height of the conflict with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant in March 2016.

- There are 1.6 million IDPs. Of these, almost 700,000 live in the Kurdistan region and 90,000, or 5%, live in camps.
- A 2018 needs assessment indicated that 42% of IDP children and youth aged 6 to 17 living in camps attended formal education, compared with 60% of IDP children living in host communities and 73% of non-displaced children.
- Among the challenges is the small number of Arabic-language schools and uncertainty over whether qualifications from Kurdistan region schools will be recognized, as the curriculum is different. Schools for IDPs have been established to teach the official curriculum in Arabic. These are hosted in school buildings belonging to the Kurdistan regional Ministry of Education. Education directorates and school administrators in the region have adapted school schedules and activities to accommodate shifts for IDP students. However, schools may be far from home for IDPs living in host communities.
- The Federal Ministry of Education has developed an updated accelerated learning curriculum and materials for IDP students. But those aged 12 to 17 represent 68% of out-of-school children, while accelerated learning centres only cover primary school curriculum. There are no other structured and officially recognized opportunities for adolescents to develop academic skills.

In **Sudan**, conflict over the Blue Nile and South Kordofan states has resulted in periodic clashes and displacements but the main source of displacement is the conflict in the five Darfur states.

- As of 2019, there are an estimated 1.9 million IDPs, of whom 1.6 million live in camps. The precarious situation of IDPs and nomadic communities is exacerbated by food insecurity, economic hardship and protection concerns.
  - The Ministry of Education supports 360 primary schools in camps across the seven most affected states, serving about 260,000 children. Although most of these communities have been displaced for years or even decades, the government assumes IDPs will be resettled or return home and offers only temporary arrangements, including provision of supplies and construction. Camp communities therefore construct and annually reconstruct these temporary learning spaces. About 21% of schools in South Kordofan and 13% in West Darfur are unusable.
  - Teacher availability and qualifications constitute a major challenge in these states. Many teachers are volunteers, and around half are not trained as teachers. Training for the other half typically consists of a two week course at most. The Ministry of Education does not supervise, train or pay volunteer teachers. Schools and alternative learning centres recruit volunteer teachers, usually from the local community. Each school's parent-teacher association raises community funds to pay teachers.
- In the **Syrian Arab Republic**, there remain more than 6 million IDPs, of which 52% are children and 86% live in urban areas.
- In 2019, 76% of IDPs said they did not plan to resettle. About 5.9 million children needed education services, of whom at least 29% were internally displaced; 2.1 million children are out of school.
  - Until recently, there had been relative stability in five zones of political and military control. Most authorities used a variation of the government curriculum, but assessment, progression and placement are largely missing or in nascent stages of development or revision. Despite the Whole of Syria coordination function, political agendas and security constraints have limited cooperation.
  - Only government-affiliated schools provide widely recognized certification and displaced children in opposition-held areas seeking access to examinations in government-held schools face risks, including exposure of their families' names to government authorities, physical security threats at checkpoints and the insecurity of areas between zones of control.
  - Roughly one-third of schools, mostly in the north, where 60% of IDPs live, are unusable due to acts of war and the use of schools for purposes other than education.
  - A 2018 report found that 13% of children required specialized psychosocial support in the classroom to facilitate learning and well-being.
  - Internally displaced teachers often remain under home district management, leading to risk and administrative hurdles that make collecting salaries virtually impossible.

In **Yemen**, conflict has divided the country since 2015 into a northern part, ruled by the Houthis in Sana'a, and a southern part, ruled by the internationally recognized government in Aden.

- The presence of two ministries is a challenge for humanitarian actors. The Education Cluster leads education programme implementation, mostly through national NGOs due to security concerns.
- There are currently 2.3 million IDPs. There are 1,272 IDP-hosting sites sheltering 465,000 people. Most do not hold temporary classes unless the camp is more than 5 km from the nearest school. What temporary classes are available are only for grades 1 to 5.
- Overcrowding has worsened. Many schools are damaged, schools are the public buildings most frequently used to shelter IDPs, the number of children is growing, and classroom construction has stopped. IDPs are more likely to be discriminated because of their dialect or appearance.
- Like other civil servants in Houthi-controlled governorates, teachers have not received their salaries since 2016. The Houthis suspended many humanitarian programmes in 2017 to put pressure on them to pay teacher salaries. UNICEF started making incentive payments to teachers, equivalent to US\$50 per month but the first payment to 97,000 teachers due in September 2018 was delayed because the Aden-based ministry wanted the 2014 teacher list and claimed the list submitted by the Sana'a-based ministry included Houthi followers.
- The Sana'a-based government has struggled to print textbooks after donors withdrew funding following edits to the Arabic, religion, history and social studies textbooks.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

This report makes seven recommendations that support implementation of the two global compacts on migrants and refugees:

- Protect the right to education of migrants and displaced people
- Prepare teachers of migrants and refugees to address diversity and hardship
- Include migrants and displaced people in national education systems
- Harness the potential of migrants and displaced people
- Understand and plan for the education needs of migrants and displaced people
- Support education needs of migrants and displaced people in humanitarian and development aid.
- Represent migration and displacement histories in education accurately to challenge prejudices

# ARAB STATES

## Migration, displacement and education:

BUILDING BRIDGES, NOT WALLS

This first regional edition of the *Global Education Monitoring Report* examines the nexus of education, migration and displacement in the Arab States.

The Arab States have long been characterized by massive population movements: growth of megacities such as Baghdad, Cairo and Casablanca through internal migration, large-scale emigration from the Maghreb to western Europe, generations of Palestinian and Sudanese refugees. Oil-rich countries such as Bahrain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates experience the highest immigration rates in the world with the majority of their population being foreign.

As a result of the Syrian and Yemeni wars and with the Mediterranean having become a high-risk migration route, the Arab States are now the region most affected by migration and displacement. They account for 5% of the global population but for 32% of the global population of refugees and 38% of the global population of people internally displaced by conflict. Lebanon and Jordan have the highest percentage of refugees as a share of the population. Five countries in the region feature among the top 12 in the world in terms of the percentage of internally displaced people as a share of the population.

As the 2019 *Global Education Monitoring Report* showed, migration and displacement interact with education through intricate two-way relationships that affect those who move, those who stay, those who host migrants and refugees and those who may do so. Displacement due to conflict, in particular, deprives millions of children, adolescents and youth of an education, undermining the prospects of a generation. The humanitarian crises in the region have taken their toll on education development. For instance, the Arab States have been overtaken by Central and Southern Asia in terms of the enrolment rate at the lower secondary level and the gap is rapidly closing at the upper secondary level.

On the first anniversary of the two global compacts for migrants and refugees, this report reviews the layers of challenges migration and displacement pose to education systems and calls on governments in the Arab States to develop a plan for the fulfilment of their respective commitments.

*Education is a human right and a transformational force for poverty eradication, sustainability and peace. People on the move, whether for work or education, and whether voluntarily or forced, do not leave their right to education behind. The 2019 Global Education Monitoring Report underscores the huge potential and opportunities of ensuring that migrants and displaced persons have access to quality education.*

**António Guterres, United Nations Secretary-General**

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