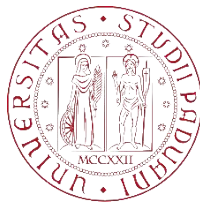


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INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

**Master's degree in
Human Rights and Multi-Level Governance**



Understanding Vulnerabilities:

**Teachers' Awareness and Role in the Educational
Experience of Refugee Children in Amman, Jordan**

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List of acronyms

ACHR – Arab Charter on Human Rights

CEDAW – Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women

CBO – Community-based Organisation

CRC – Convention on the Rights of the Child

Daesh – Al-dawla al-islamiya fi al-Iraq wa ash-Sham (the Islamic State in the Levant)

GCR – Global Compact on Refugees

ICESCR - International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

IDPs – Internally Displaced People

INGO – International Non-Governmental Organisation

ISIS – Islamic State of Iraq and Syria

JRP – Jordan Response Plan

LNOB – Leave No One Behind

MHPSS – Mental Health and Psycho-Social Support

MoE – Ministry of Education

MoHESR – Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research

MoU – Memorandum of Understanding

NGO – Non-Governmental Organisation

ORA – One-Refugee Approach

PE – Physical Education

SDGs – Sustainable Development Goals

UN – United Nations

UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees

UNICEF – United Nations Children's Fund

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNRWA – United Nations Relief and Work Agency

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Abstract

This thesis explores the experiences of refugee children in two governmental schools in Amman, Jordan, and teachers' role and awareness of these children's unique vulnerabilities on their education. A qualitative method based on semi-structured interviews was chosen to gather and analyse the participants' experiences, insights, and feelings. The study sample consisted of nineteen refugee students (Syrians, Iraqis and Yemenis) aged 9-16 and six school personnel. The three chapters of this research provide, respectively:

- 1) An overview of the refugee context in Jordan, the challenges faced by the refugee community, and the applicable human rights frameworks;
- 2) The findings from the interviews, including children's feelings at school; their relationship with their teachers; and teachers' awareness of their students' backgrounds and vulnerabilities;
- 3) A discussion of possible future steps to enhance refugee students' educational experience, including a focus on teachers' capacity building.

Children's insights underline the importance of a positive relationship with teachers in their educational experience, as well as the impact of the double shift system on their feelings at school. The study also highlights that despite efforts by civil society actors to improve capacity building opportunities for teachers, more needs to be done to render them available and accessible for all teachers, most importantly for those directly working with refugee children. Furthermore, raising institutional awareness of the specific needs and vulnerabilities of refugee students is crucial.

Key words: *Refugee children; Teacher training; Education; Jordan*

Author's positionality

I find it necessary to highlight the perspective that I was able to bring to this study. Between 2020 and 2022, I lived in Jordan and devoted time to both teaching languages and volunteering in humanitarian/development organisations. These experiences allowed me to observe closely the many gaps and limitations in the protection of children and their rights.

Coming back in 2023 as a Civil Peace Corps volunteer¹ and a human rights master's degree student with the goal to write my final dissertation on the right to education of refugee children, I have looked at the protection concerns of refugee children, and especially limitations and obstacles to their right to education, with renewed awareness and interest. Both my firsthand experiences as a teacher and a humanitarian volunteer and my educational background have prompted me to investigate a specific aspect that seems to have been overlooked in mainstreaming research: the preparedness and ability of teachers to work with refugee children. Through my experiences, I have discovered that, unfortunately, teachers are not always aware of the inherent intersectional vulnerabilities and challenges of refugee children, or if they are, they do not integrate these considerations into their interactions with them.

¹ Civil Peace Corps are young volunteers carrying out non-governmental peace actions in conflict and conflict-risk areas and in environmental emergency areas (DPG&SCU website). The Civil Peace Corps programme led in Jordan by Un Ponte Per (UPP), an Italian NGO, focusses on protection projects aimed at empowering women and girls, refugees, and people with disabilities in Amman and Russefah (Zarqa). My role was to support protection activities in a CBO in Russefah called Our Step Association, which provides mental health and psychosocial support to Jordanians and refugees, both adults and minors, affected by mental disabilities. UPP's programme started in September 2023 and ended in September 2024.

Introduction

This research was born out of the interest in looking into less investigated barriers to access education for refugee children in Jordan. The country, hosting one of the highest shares of refugees per capita in the world (ACAPS, 2023), offers breeding ground to study what solutions have been implemented to tackle the increasing need for education of the many refugee children in the country and what measures have been taken to ensure quality of education. The research is divided in three chapters, providing first an overview of the country and particularly its refugee population; second, analysing the findings of interviews carried out in two governmental schools with both refugee children and school personnel; and third, building on the interviews' findings to offer potential recommendations and avenues for future research.

The first chapter aims to provide an introductory overview of the study-country, Jordan, its refugee population, and the legal framework protecting the rights of refugees. The first section focusses on offering a brief description Jordan's history, and most thoroughly about its capital, Amman. Since the interviews led with refugee children and teachers were carried out in two governmental schools in East Amman (see chapter 2), it seemed logical to dedicate a sub-section of this chapter to illustrating the virtual division of the city in East and West Amman and its implications. The second section discusses some of the country's internal challenges and dynamics, with more attention focussed on the living circumstances of refugees. The harsh social and economic conditions of refugee families in the country determine challenges for children, including protection concerns such as malnutrition, child labour, early marriage, which can result in children being unable to access education or dropping out of school. In the third section, Jordan's attitude towards refugees is discussed and data is provided about the refugee population and its distribution in the country. Although studying the history of recent refugee movements toward Jordan is outside the scope of this research, the fourth section offers some general information to depict a better image of the circumstances of different refugee nationalities in the country. This thesis attempted to provide a more comprehensive picture of the refugee situation in Jordan by trying to include attention on non-Syrian refugees. As discussed in the section, the focus of both literature and international donors tends to fall on Syrian refugees, thus neglecting the needs of minorities who are equally vulnerable. This directly connects to the need of promoting the One-Refugee Approach (ORA), as

discussed in chapter 3. Following, the fifth section illustrates the legal framework protecting and promoting the rights of refugees. As explained, Jordan's lack of an ad hoc domestic legislation addressing the needs of refugees' human rights, determined by the country's refusal to access the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Optional Protocol, sets limitations to the protection of refugees' rights. To tackle this, a Memorandum of Understanding between the UN Agency for Refugees and the Government of Jordan was signed in 1998. Finally, as the focus of this research is the right to education of refugee children in the country, sections 6 and 7 are dedicated, respectively, to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and its provision of all children's right to education, including for refugees, and to the education system in Jordan.

The second chapter moves to analysing the findings of the interviews carried out in two governmental schools segregated by gender and located in two neighbourhoods of East Amman, Hashmi al-Shamali and Jabal Hussein. The interviews aimed at learning about the educational experience of refugee children, with focus on their feelings of safety and their relationship with teachers. Alongside this, teachers and school personnel were also interviewed to study their understanding and awareness of refugee children's backgrounds and vulnerabilities. The analysis is preceded by an overview of the methodology, research panel (including a disaggregation by gender and nationality of the interviewed children and school personnel) and setting to provide the reader with an understanding of the interviews' protocol, main challenges and limitations. Afterwards, the schools and their location are introduced and shortly described to illustrate the reasons that led to selecting them. The chapter is structured following the findings of the interviews. Therefore, after introducing the schools, the infrastructural issues of the schools are addressed. Second, the double shift system applied in both schools is analysed to provide context for students' feelings at school, in particular feelings of safety (or lack thereof) related to the effects of the separation from and interactions with Jordanian students. Then, the impact of the relationship with their teachers and how this affects the students' educational experience is discussed. Teachers' awareness of refugee children's vulnerabilities and backgrounds is taken into consideration, as well as the need to strengthen capacity building and training opportunities for teachers working directly with refugee children.

Finally, the third chapter builds on the findings of chapter 2 to reflect on opportunities and future avenues for research to improve the general educational experience of refugee students in the country.

The first section discusses the need to raise awareness of the needs of the refugee community at various levels of society, i.e., starting from the community and involving schools, within the refugee community itself, and up to the institutional level. Advocating for refugees' human rights and better living conditions in the country is the precondition to foster understanding, inclusion and tolerance within the Jordanian educational system. Efforts to raise awareness go hand in hand with the need to enhance cooperation and dialogue between schools and the refugee community, an interaction that would make needs and vulnerabilities of refugee students more evident and give a chance to refugee families to speak up for themselves, as well as potentially promoting constructive communication between schools and refugees. The second section highlights the importance of strengthening and systematising training and capacity building opportunities for teachers directly working with refugee students across the country. The disparity between the availability of training opportunities and teachers' awareness and ability to access them is a barrier to the improvement of teachers' capacities. Considerations are also included regarding the need to study the relation between teachers' low compensation, unstable working conditions and motivation, especially when it comes to teachers working in the afternoon shift. The last section reflects on the possibility to re-think the double shift school system to foster inclusion of refugees rather than segregation. The section proposes avenue for research to evaluate the impact of the double shift system on the educational experience of refugee children more thoroughly, including comparative analysis with schools that integrate refugee students.

Literature review

The research focusses on analysing the educational experience of refugee students, with a particular focus on the role of teachers' awareness in their experience in two schools in Amman, Jordan. Through semi-structured interviews with both refugee students and teachers, as well as some other school personnel, the importance of teachers' positive relationship with refugee children became clear. Given the breadth of the topic related barriers to education (and quality thereof) for refugee children, the existing literature

tends to focus on main protection concerns that hinder children's right to education, such as, *inter alia*, child labour and early marriage. These are important concerns that have been broadly discussed by UN agencies and (I)NGOs in Jordan. Alongside this, existing literature has identified teachers' lack of preparation or scarce awareness of refugee children's vulnerabilities as a further barrier to children's access to education. However, less has been said on the impact that this has on the overall educational experience of refugee children at school (including impact on well-being, attendance and performance) in Jordan. UNESCO, UNICEF and UNHCR agree that teachers' awareness and understanding of refugee children's background and vulnerabilities is important to ensure that their needs are identified and addressed, and a safe space for learning is established. In a study on the preparation of teachers in Turkey, Tumen et al. (2021) underline the importance of teachers' role in refugee educational integration, alongside the fact that this remains an understudied aspect. The authors highlight that teachers are key actors in facilitating refugee children's integration into the education systems of host countries. Studying the Greek context, Antoniadou et al. (2023) agree on this view and highlight key qualities that teachers working with refugee children should hold, including intercultural skills and the capacity to build her/his knowledge of students' backgrounds and circumstances. The authors believe that these qualities can lead to creating a welcoming, safe environment for refugee students.

The existing studies and reports on the availability of capacity building opportunities for teachers in Jordan do not investigate thoroughly on the positive impact that such trainings can have on children's experience, especially through involving refugee children of different nationalities in the evaluation of their educational life. Indeed, retrieving literature studying the learning experience of non-Syrian refugees in Jordan has been rather challenging. Therefore, the research attempted to spread light on the conditions of other refugee-nationalities in Amman and sought to address refugee children's experience and feelings at school by directly involving them, as well as teachers and personnel to investigate their preparedness on protection topics and understanding of their refugees' backgrounds and circumstances.

Research limitations and challenges

This research has been carried out in two governmental schools in Amman that host refugee children in the afternoon shift. Originally, the author wanted to propose a comparative study by carrying out interviews in schools in Amman and Russeiyfa, in the Zarqa Governorate, to analyse the findings of two rather different realities (the capital versus one of the most underprivileged cities in Jordan). However, this plan proved to be too demanding to execute within the timeframe envisioned for completing the research. Although the results of the study provided a starting point to understand the impact of teachers' awareness on their relationship with refugee children and their overall educational experience, it would be interesting to make this study scalable by further expanding it to other schools across the city and possibly the country. Scalability would make it possible to better understand whether the trends and results of this research found evidence through other interviews.

A relevant challenge faced has been determined by the lack of recent literature on non-Syrian refugees. This research aimed, as an initial goal, to shed light on the circumstances of refugees of different nationalities in the country. However, finding resources that are updated and relevant has been quite hard – as evident in sections from 4.2 to 4.4, they all date back to seven or eight years ago.

The difficulty in retrieving clear information on who has access to free education has also proven challenging. Most resources online, as well as the testimony of an MoE employee (see chapter 2), established that education is accessible for free to all refugee-nationalities. However, what emerged from interviews with both some civil society actors, children and school personnel interviewed proved that not all refugees can access school at no cost.

Finally, the interview protocol underwent some changes. As thoroughly detailed in chapter 2, the initial protocol had envisioned focus group discussions with teachers and longer interviews with children without having their teachers in the room. However, due to time limitations and unavailability of empty rooms to conduct the interviews, less teachers participated and children in the Abu Obaida School for Boys were interviewed while their teachers were in the room.

Chapter 1

The aim of this chapter is to provide an introductory overview of the study-country, Jordan, its refugee population, and the legal framework protecting the rights of refugees. The first section focusses on offering a brief description Jordan's history, and most thoroughly about its capital, Amman. Since the interviews led with refugee children and teachers were carried out in two governmental schools in East Amman (see chapter 2), it seemed necessary to dedicate a paragraph of this chapter to illustrating the virtual division of the city in East and West Amman. The second section discusses some of the country's internal challenges and dynamics, including unemployment rates and gender inequality. In the third section, the reasons behind Jordan's attitude towards refugees over decades are discussed and data is provided about the refugee population and its distribution in the country. Although studying the history of recent refugee movements towards Jordan is outside the scope of this research, the fourth section offers some general information to depict a better image of the circumstances of different refugee nationalities in the country. This thesis attempted to provide a more comprehensive picture of the refugee situation in Jordan by trying to include attention on non-Syrian refugees. As discussed in the section, the focus of both literature and international donors tends to fall on Syrian refugees, thus neglecting the needs of minorities who are just equally vulnerable. Following, the fifth section illustrates the legal framework protecting and promoting the rights of refugees. As will be explained, Jordan's lack of an ad hoc domestic legislation addressing the needs of refugees' human rights, and its refusal to access the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Optional Protocol set limitations to the protection of refugees. In order to tackle this, a Memorandum of Understanding between the UN Agency for Refugees and the Government of Jordan was signed in 1998. Finally, as the focus of this research is the right to education of refugee children in the country, sections 6 and 7 are dedicated, respectively, to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and its right to education, and to the education system in Jordan.

1. Jordan

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is a largely infertile country situated in the Middle East counting more than 11,000,000 people (DoS, 2023), with a significantly high number of citizens of refugee-origin, mainly Palestinian refugees under the mandate of the United

Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), comprising at least half the population (Gutkowski, 2022). The country is a constitutional monarchy, where the power is highly concentrated in the hands of its Monarch, King Abdullah II, who is at the same time the head of state, the chief executive, and the commander-in-chief of the Jordanian armed forces (USDoS (a), 2022). Constitutional amendments in 2022 have expanded and consolidated the King's powers. By enabling the Monarch to appoint high-profile public security and judicial officials, as well as the grand mufti and royal advisers and to establish a National Security Council in his control, King Abdullah now controls security, military, and judicial institutions in the country (Ersan, 2021; Ayes, 2022; Davis, 2022).

The vast majority of Jordan's inhabitants (97.1%) are Muslims, mostly Sunni (USDoS (b), 2022). The Jordanian Constitution, Art. 2, establishes Islam as the religion of the State, but guarantees at Art. 6 that all Jordanians are equal before the law and that "there shall be no discrimination between them as regards to their rights and duties on grounds of race, language or religion". Art. 14 of the Constitution further guarantees "the free exercise of all forms of worship and religious rites in accordance with the customs observed in the Kingdom, unless such is inconsistent with public order or morality". Jordan is also home to Christians, Druze, and a small Baha'i community (USDoS (b), 2022).

1.1 East and West Amman: A virtual division

Jordan's capital, Amman, hosts about 4,834,500 people according to 2023 data by the Department of Statistics. The considerable growth of its population was mainly determined by successive influxes of Palestinian refugees between the *nakba* (1948) and the *naksa* (1967)², Palestinian workforce of Jordanian nationality deported from the Gulf States in 1991, Iraqi refugees between 1991 and 2007, as well as Arab and Asian workers, and Syrians since 2011 (see section 4). Despite its challenges, Amman is an attractive option for refugees seeking stability. Residing in the capital, as opposed to other cities and rural areas where access to services and community is more limited, affords refugees

² *Nakba* means "catastrophe" in Arabic. The term is used to refer to the mass displacement and dispossession of Palestinians during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war (UN website, n.d.). The Arabic *naksa* can be translated literally as 'setback' or 'relapse'. This term refers to the second *nakba* experienced by the Palestinian people during the 1967 war, when Palestinians were expelled from West Bank, eastern Jerusalem and Gaza. The *naksa* also marks the tragic beginning of Israel's military occupation of these territories (UN (c), 2023).

a wider range of opportunities (Assad et al., 2019). Life in the city can facilitate finding employment opportunities, even though they may be informal and underpaid, and integration within the hosting community. This is even more evident when compared to the situation of refugees in camps (e.g., Zaatari and Azraq, see section 3), where their right to movement is hindered and directly impacts their access to work and education. Further, the proliferation of humanitarian and development organisations' operations in the country, and especially in Amman, also represents a factor encouraging refugees to settle in the capital (ibidem).

Capital cities such as Amman and major urban agglomerations generally tend to host the highest numbers of forcibly displaced people (World Bank, 2017). According to a report by the World Bank and the Feinstein International Centre, in 2017 Amman was hosting 32% of the then 1.4 million refugees living in Jordan, and 2020 UNHCR data estimates that registered refugees residing in Amman make up for 27% of its population (Ghanem and Hesham, 2021). Surely, the reasons for this partly lay in a perception that cities offer refugees better economic opportunities, increased security, a degree of anonymity, greater access to services, and proximity to markets (Dupire, 2017). Amman's "reputation of safety, political stability, decent basic services, and opportunities to make a living" (Haysom, 2013, as cited by Ghanem and Hesham, 2021) has prompted elevated numbers of refugees over the years to settle in the capital.



Figure 1, Amman seen from Jabal al-Qala'a, the city's Citadel (picture of the author – Amman, 11/09/2024)

When talking to locals, one can often hear that some neighbourhoods are located in West Amman (e.g., Abdoun, Deir Ghbar, Dabouq), while other in East Amman (e.g., Jabal al-Jofa, Jabal Hussein, Hashmi al-Shamali). This division between east and west has not been caused by conflicts, and it is rather a “superficial split dividing historic East Amman and modern West Amman” (Zinati, 2021), an economic segregation rather than an ethnic one. Indeed, different ethnicities reside in both parts of the city, and refugees too are scattered throughout different areas of the capital (Ghanem and Hesham, 2021), even though they tend to concentrate in specific areas, usually more underprivileged and less serviced neighbourhoods (World Bank, 2017) generally located in East rather than West Amman.

After the Gulf War in the 90s, many cultured, skilled Palestinians and Iraqis headed to Amman from Kuwait (ESCWA, 2005, as cited by Ghanm and Hesham, 2021). Thanks to the savings and skills they brought to the capital, they contributed to strengthening Amman's economy. This is when the distinction between East and West Amman started to get more visible: while East Amman was expanding and highly populated by vulnerable Palestinian refugees and Jordanians, West Amman saw the prosper of businesses and residential villas (Chatelard, 2010, as cited by Ghanem and Hesham, 2021). While these refugees determined an improvement in the Jordanian economy, importing wealth and luxurious lifestyles, the 2006 influx of refugees caused by the US invasion of Iraq was more vulnerable, and less individuals possessed professional skills that could lead them to better life conditions and employment opportunities in Amman (Ghanem and Hesham, 2021). Although the spatial separation between the two areas is not official and not as sharp³, slight differences in the physical structures of the neighbourhoods in these areas are easily observable.

East Amman is characterised by countless stairways, residential buildings and shops built one next to the other. The traditional old buildings look the same, sharing plain colours and architecture. Green spaces are not as common and are often littered and poorly looked after. East Amman seems to have no more available space: every corner of the area is built. It is important to highlight that it is in East Amman that the first influxes of Palestinian refugees entering the country after the *nakba* came to reside. They established informal settlements, thinking that they would soon return to their home country, and thus determined the expansion of the city and its new shape. As the situation that caused their displacement did not improve, and as a consequence of the 1967 *naksa*, more Palestinian refugees came to Jordan and the informal settlements expanded and stabilised, until they became real neighbourhoods.

³ Some neighbourhoods in East Amman resemble those in West Amman because they host malls and luxurious facilities. This is the case, for example, of the Abdali neighbourhood. Abdali hosts the Parliament, the Ministry of Education, private hospital, a large shopping centre and a boulevard.



Figures 2 and 3, A house in Hashmi al-Shamali (on the left) and houses and shops in Jabal Hussein (on the rights) (pictures of the author – East Amman, 13/09/2024)

West Amman, on the other hand, resembles a bubble of wealth and luxury. Neighbourhoods in West Amman present modern buildings imitating luxurious foreign design. Infrastructures are more taken care of, and better distributed, green spaces are more and better looked after. Although it is not exclusive of this area, West Amman hosts numerous embassies, government institutions and some of the wealthiest private schools in the country (Zinati, 2021) that are usually attended by children coming from wealthy families who often own businesses, work in the diplomatic or humanitarian field. Overall, West Amman is the “westernised” side of the capital and, although it is impossible to generalise, those living in these neighbourhoods have different lifestyles and access to high-quality services.

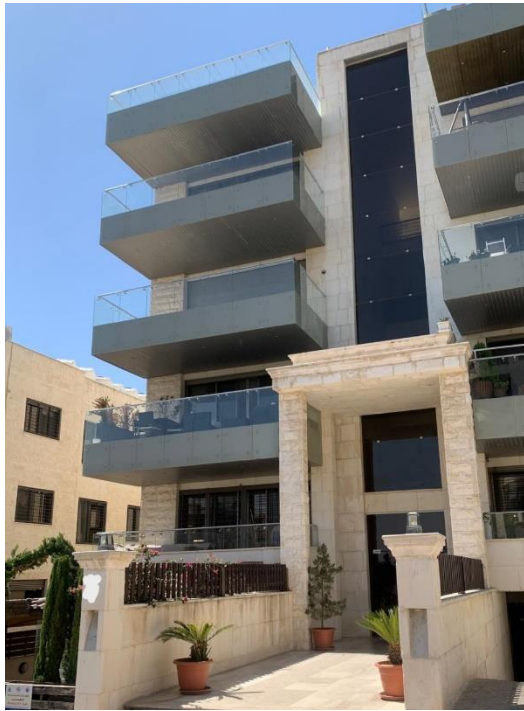


Figure 4 and 5, A house in Deir Ghbar (on the left) and one in Abdoun (on the right) (pictures of the author – West Amman, 13/09/2024)

2. Structural challenges and social dynamics in the country

Jordan's contemporary challenges are deeply rooted in its geopolitical history. Jordan is vulnerable due to its resource impoverishment and environmental challenges. Indeed, the Kingdom has limited agricultural land and no oil resources (WFP, 2024); it has been ranked among the most water-scarce countries in the world for years (UN (a), 2023), and it suffers from desertification due to soil degradation and loss of biodiversity, exacerbated by urban expansion at the cost of agricultural land and the scarcity of water resources (Ababsa, 2019). Food insecurity, especially among refugees, is another urgent challenge that has been addressed by a number of actors (FAO, 2021; NFSS, 2021; WFP, 2024). Significant dependence on foreign support, limited sources of internal revenue, and extreme population growth further hamper the country's stability and self-reliance. Additionally, high unemployment rates and a significant disparity between salaries and the cost of living contributes to hindering the population's wellbeing and satisfaction with their living conditions. According to Jordan News, in 2022 "the average monthly income of employees in Jordan amounts to \$599.53, which is approximately JD425.07". Numbers can be much lower and, nevertheless, not enough for a family to pay rent, utilities,

livelihoods and basic needs, especially in the capital, Amman. Officially, the minimum wage is set at JD260 for Jordanian workers, and JD230 for non-Jordanian workers (Ghaith, 2021), even though many people in the country would question the existence of a set minimum wage as some earn less than 260JD per month. According to the Department of Statistics' study on the unemployment rate in 2023, the level of unemployment reached 21.4% in the fourth quarter of 2023. Although there has been an improvement since 2021, when the rate skyrocketed to 25% due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the situation is still extremely challenging for most, and especially so for women (the unemployment rate for men reached 18.9% in the last quarter of 2023 against 29.8% for women). In this context, refugee households are even more affected as they face the intersecting challenges.

The harsh economic conditions that many people in the country face offer a breeding ground for protection-related consequences. The Jordanian society is strongly patriarchal – traditional norms, values, behaviour expectations and conservative definitions of masculinity and femininity leave little space for change and lead to stereotyped definitions of women's and men's role identity and roles in society. Male dominance is prevalent and deeply entrenched in societal norms and traditions, and the legal framework in Jordan contributes to intensifying gender discrimination and inequality as observed by the King Hussein Foundation's Information and Research Centre (Essaid et al., 2019) and by the 2017 Concluding Observations of the CEDAW's Committee (CEDAW, 2017). The Personal Status Law, derived from Islamic Shari'a, regulates the relationship between women and men in the private sphere and is applied in all personal status matters related to family: inheritance, child custody, mobility, marriage, and divorce. As a consequence, while men and boys are expected to be the breadwinners of the family, women and girls are mostly expected to take care of the household and children. When fathers struggle to provide for the family and make ends meet, male children are pressured to work.

Child labour is a common practice in various low-income countries in the region, and Jordan is no exception – this is especially true for refugee families, although not exclusively so. It is determined by factors such as poverty, migration, gender, and lack of access to education (GPRG, 2023). However, child labour is sometimes viewed not as a problematic practice but rather as a necessary step to ensure that boys become responsible

men and demonstrate their worth to their families (*ibidem*). Child labour is so diffused and so deeply embedded in society, that some consider it almost necessary factor for children's growth and for the development of their sense of responsibility, thus not understanding why people would want to eliminate it (Pawson, 2022). Nevertheless, in most cases, child labour violates children's human rights and dignity, and its elimination has been one of ILO's goals (ILO website, n.d.).

Girl children from under-privileged backgrounds also face protection concerns. Indeed, another highly negative coping mechanism that low-income families tend to resort to is early marriage for their children. Although boys are also involved in early marriage, the crushing majority of cases concerns girls (UNICEF, 2019). The reasons behind the households' decisions to marry off their children are manifold. Mainly, they are led by the belief that marriage could protect their daughters from harm and secure that they are taken care of when the family faces financial hardship. Second, social pressures surrounding the family to marry off daughters as quickly as possible has also been identified as a factor encouraging households to arrange marriage for their girl children. Finally, economic conditions, poverty, and school dropout determine an increased risk for girl children to be forced to get married before the age of 18 (Mrayan and Obeisat, 2021). Lack of awareness of the risks related to early marriage and the misbelief that daughters will be safer if married off early leads to increased risk of gender-based violence and mental health deterioration (UNICEF, 2019). Refugee status has also been reported as one of the underlying drivers to child labour and child marriage, as families resort to negative coping mechanisms in response to the harsh socio-economic conditions they face in the country and the impossibility to improve their situation (*ibidem*).

Gender discrimination and the ruling belief that men are superior to women, a thought shared by many women as well, is largely the reason why patriarchy has been endured for this long (Essaid et al., 2019). It is not rare to hear women and girls express gender-based prejudices, such as the fact that certain jobs are for men only, or that a woman's role is to stay home with the children, or that women and girls always need the support and presence of a man as they cannot fend for themselves alone. As highlighted by the CEDAW's Committee in its Concluding Observations (2017), "the persistence of deep-rooted discriminatory stereotypes concerning the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society [...] overemphasize the traditional role of women as

mothers and wives, thereby undermining women's social status, autonomy, educational opportunities and professional careers".

3. Jordan's attitude towards refugees

Despite the numerous difficulties that the country has long been facing (scarcity of resources, unemployment, high reliance on international support) (Al-Sabaileh, 2022), Jordan has been a safe shelter for over a million of refugees and asylum seekers in the region (ACAPS, 2023). For this reason, the Kingdom is renowned for its historical hospitality and has been commended for its capacity to welcome and host refugees: a world leader in receiving refugee, Jordan has continuously been recognised as one of the UNHCR's top ten refugee host countries, making the state a central player in the global distribution of refugees (Arar, 2017). In 2021, the United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Jordan Anders Pedersen called Jordan's level of hospitality "absolutely unprecedented", claiming that it could serve as a role model for countries all over the world (Ghaith, 2021).

Over the centuries, refugees and asylum seekers have chosen Jordan as their host country for several reasons. First and foremost, because of its geographical proximity. As mentioned, Jordan shares borders with conflict-affected countries, i.e., Syria, Iraq, and Palestine, and it has shown resilience and strength in the face of the surrounding crises, thus offering a safe shelter for people on the move. Secondly, shared cultural, religious, and linguistic ties with the local population can ease integration and cohesion of refugees and asylum seekers. Thirdly, humanitarian assistance and programmes aimed at supporting refugees are widely present in the country, led by international non-governmental organisations and other relevant civil society actors. Finally, although hardship and challenges at different levels in the country still exist, Jordan seems like the safest option for people fleeing violence and persecution.

Since 1948, Jordan faced the consequences of successive waves of humanitarian crises, starting with the mass displacement of Palestinians, then again in 1967 following Israel's occupation of the West Bank. The second Gulf War in 1991 triggered another influx of asylum seekers from Iraq, which intensified after the fall of Baghdad and the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. Later, the eruption of the Syrian conflict in 2011 further

exacerbated the already fragile social and economic situation in the country and led hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees to the country (Al-Qaralleh, 2022).

According to UNHCR data, Jordan hosts the second most refugees per capita worldwide: the UN Agency for Refugees estimates 717,466 active registered refugees and asylum-seekers. The actual numbers are likely much higher, potentially exceeding a million when accounting for those who have not applied through UNHCR. The country hosts refugees of more than fifty different nationalities (UNHCR, 2019), with a striking majority coming from Syria (624,499 – 90.1%) and Iraq (49,793 – 7.2%) (UNHCR ODP, 2024). About 337,279 (47%) are children (UNHCR, 2024). According to government sources, refugees in Jordan are distributed throughout the whole country with about 33% in the capital, Amman, followed by the Governorates of Irbid with 24%, Zarqa with 17% and Mafrqa 15% (Fanack, 2020).

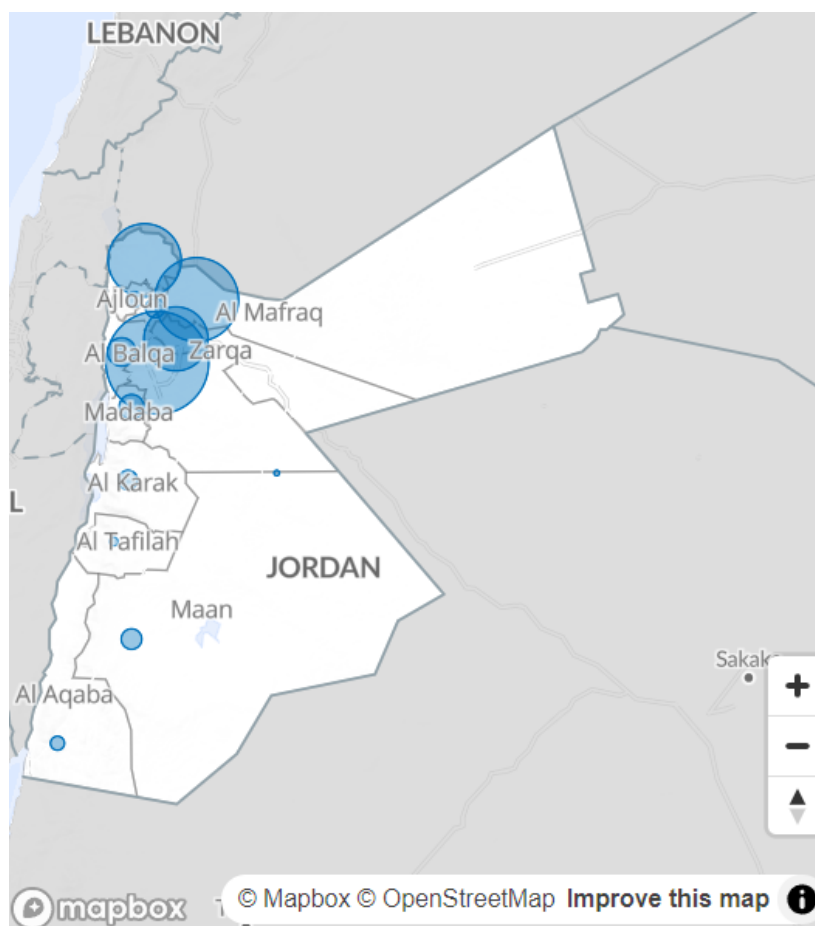


Figure 6, UNHCR's map showing the distribution of refugees and asylum seekers in Jordan . Source: UNHCR ODP (2024)

Although most refugees live in urban settings (621,775 – 83.5%), 16.5% reside in camps (UNHCR ODP, 2024). The largest camp in Jordan is Zaatari Camp, situated 10km east of the northern city of Mafraq, and hosting about 80,000 Syrian refugees. Zaatari Camp was built in 2012 to accommodate the great numbers of Syrians fleeing war and persecution, and soon became a symbol of the Syrian refugee crisis (Matz, 2023). The second largest is Azraq Camp, located near Azraq city, in the Zarqa Governorate. Azraq Camp was built in 2014 and currently hosts about 40,000 Syrian refugees (Malkawi, 2022). In 2022, UNHCR's Needs Assessment took in consideration the situation of refugees in camps, and found that, compared to the population out of camp, camp residents had more and better access in areas such as health and education. However, due to limitations to their freedom of movement and due to lack of employment opportunities, refugees in camps were more reliant on humanitarian aid (UNHCR (a), 2022). In both settings, the assessment's findings highlighted that having only one family member employed is not enough to make their ends meet (ibidem). This has also been observed during the interviews carried out with refugee students (see chapter 2). As mentioned in section 2 of this chapter, poverty can easily translate into protection-related risks for children, such as violence, neglect, child marriage, and child labour.

Other camps are scattered throughout the country, especially in the capital and in the northern region. A number of these camps were originally destined to Palestinian refugees: they were encampments that, with the passing of time and the worsening of the situation in Palestine, evolved into permanent structures, forming neighbourhoods within the cities⁴. It is easy to recognise what was once an encampment was because of the neighbourhoods' structure: they are densely constructed and inhabited, characterised by narrow streets and turns.

To this day, they remain predominantly, if not exclusively, inhabited by Palestinian families. A visit to the Hatteen Camp in Russeyfah, Zarqa, highlighted a number of challenges that people in the camp face. A Gazan man living and working there admitted having sometimes felt discriminated and stigmatised because of being a camp resident.

⁴ A clear example is the Baqa'a camp, situated in the northern section of Amman. The Baqa'a camp was one of the 'emergency' camps (together with Souf camp in Jerash, Husn camp at about 80 km north from Amman, and others) set up in 1968 to host Palestine refugees displaced from the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza Strip by the 1967 Arab-Israeli war (UNRWA website (b)).

He said that Palestinians in the Hatteen Camp face difficulties finding employment opportunities because they feel like they “have a label saying [that] we come from a camp”⁵.

One could wonder why Jordan has historically been open to welcome considerable numbers of people on the move despite its internal challenges and limited resources. Alongside the need to comply with International Refugee Law even despite Jordan’s abstention to the 1951 Convention on the Rights of Refugees and its 1967 Optional Protocol (see section 5.1), studies have discussed other reasons. Some argue that this is partly due to Arabs’ historical hospitality towards refugees and their disposition to welcome and protect foreign visitors, even though some may argue against this position due to recent negative developments in Jordan’s attitude towards minor refugee groups, e.g., Sudanese and Yemenis (see sections 4.2.2 and 4.3). Socially and religiously based duties to guests, strangers, or any person in need across the region push the country to grant them protection (Hilal, 2021). Acknowledged as virtues within Arab societies, providing refuge to neighbours and showcasing neighbourly graciousness emphasise the importance of offering refuge and extending hospitality to those in need. However, Jordan has historically been inconsistent in using the term “refugees”. Indeed, Iraqis fleeing to Jordan in the 2000s were referred to as “guests”, despite their eligibility to register with UNHCR: this terminology was skilfully preferred to emphasise the temporary quality of Iraqis’ stay in the country and Jordan’s hospitality (*ibidem*). It has been interesting to observe, during the interviews carried out at the schools (see chapter 2), how the word “refugee” was utilised mainly to talk about Syrians, not other nationalities.

A systematic challenge in hosting counties generally, one cannot ignore the negative sentiment of a significant portion of Jordanian nationals towards refugees. The high numbers of Syrians entering and settling in Jordan, in particular, triggered sentiments of frustration towards refugees. It is not rare to hear Jordanian complaining about the fact that Syrian refugees in the country receive better assistance and have access to more services than Jordanians themselves. However, the situation of refugees in the country is far from ideal, and the challenges they face are exacerbated by complicated bureaucratic requirements and lengthy procedures to apply for resettlement opportunities, as well as

⁵ Interview, 24/03/2024.

limitations to their rights imposed by the Jordanian Government. For instance, in January 2019, Jordan adopted a regulation that prevents UNHCR from recognising anyone but Syrians as refugees, which deprives many of humanitarian services and puts them at severe risk of deportation⁶ (HRW (b), 2021). According to 2022 UNHCR data, despite a slight overall improvement in refugees' living conditions, most still are on the brink of falling into poverty (UNHCR (a), 2022). In 2022, about 64% was living on less than 3 JOD a day (about 4 EUR according to InforEuro 2022), and 90% of refugee families reported adopting at least one negative coping strategy, such as reducing food intake or buying household goods on credit (UNHCR (a), 2022). This can directly impact children, for instance by causing malnutrition, pushing families to encourage their children to take up informal work such as selling goods or begging in the streets and taking them out of school. It must also be highlighted that, although many refugees hold work permits, most struggle to access employment opportunities and support their families (UNHCR (b), 2022). Further, access to the labour market is not granted to all refugees. Only Syrians are legally allowed to work in Jordan, although with limited access to employment opportunities (*ibidem*). Non-Syrian refugees, on the other hand, including from Iraq, Yemen, Sudan and Somalia, cannot apply for permits (*ibidem*). This sheds light on the discriminatory practices adopted in the country which seem to determine a hierarchy in the provision of services for refugees, and directly translates into a considerable need to advocate for the One-Refugee Approach, as discussed in chapter 3. These issues have a heavy toll on refugees' overall living conditions, mental health and well-being. Although efforts by civil society actors have increased in order to provide refugees with mental health psycho-social support services (MHPSS), scarcity of resources and funding, as well as international donors' interest in financing projects aimed at assisting Syrians over other nationalities of refugees, make access to equal services for all more and more difficult. Rising rates of depression among refugees, many of whom carry the trauma of war and prolonged displacement, paired with a critical lack of support, have translated into tragic consequences. This was painfully evident in the case of a young Iraqi refugee who took his life in November 2021, after enduring the scourge of forced displacement first from the US-occupied Iraq to Syria, and then to Jordan (Vidal, 2022).

⁶ As illustrated in section 4.3, this has been the case of some Yemeni asylum seekers in 2019.

4. Refugee nationalities in Jordan

As prefaced in the incipit of this chapter, a thorough analysis of the refugee movements to Jordan does not fall into the scope of this research. However, the following sections offer insight about some refugee groups, offering details regarding their history and present circumstances in Jordan.

4.1 Palestinian refugees

As mentioned in section 1, Jordan's population amounts to approximately 11,000,000 people. Of these, many have Palestinian origins, and more than 2 million are refugees registered with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA website (a), n.d.), scoring the largest number of Palestine refugees of all UNRWA fields. In addition, tens of thousands of Palestinian refugees displaced from Syria have sought assistance from UNRWA in Jordan. In Jordan, UNRWA manages 161 schools for almost 120,000 students and 25 health centres and provides food and cash assistance to about 60,000 of the most vulnerable Palestinian refugees, essential for those without Jordanian nationality (Davis, 2022).

The outbreak of the first Arab Israeli war in 1948, the *nakba*, led to the forced displacement of about 750,000 Palestinians, most of whom headed to Jordan (DoPA, n.d.). Then again, as a result of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967, another estimated 250,000 Palestinians were displaced and headed to neighbouring Jordan. In 1967, those who fled the Israeli-occupied West Bank were residents of Jordan, whereas those fleeing the Gaza Strip were not. Following Jordan's disengagement from the West Bank in 1988, Palestinians originally from the West Bank residing in Jordan's pre-1950 territories had full citizenship rights, whereas those from Gaza continued to be treated as foreigners (Davis, 2022).

Integration of Palestinians in Jordan has been easier than for other nationalities, mostly because of the many commonalities between the two peoples and strong ties, both social and familial (Fanack, 2020). Most Palestinians in Jordan have been granted Jordanian citizenship and all other citizenship rights, but Jordan fully recognises the right to return to their homeland. Having Jordanian citizenship means that Palestinians can access the labour market and public health and education services. However, a significant minority, mostly from the Gaza Strip as opposed to the West Bank, do not possess Jordanian

citizenship, and thus do not enjoy the same rights as Jordanians: even people born in Jordan but from Gazan descent see their life restricted in many respects, from work to the nationality of their children (Davis, 2022). In this case, they face numerous challenges and must apply for residence permits every year. Most Palestinians reside in cities and villages alongside Jordanians, but some live in camps as the ones mentioned in section 3.

4.2 Iraqi refugees

Jordan hosts a significant number of Iraqi refugees as a result of the many wars in the country and the US-led occupation in 2003. The First Gulf War in 1991 determined the first most significant influx of Iraqis into Jordan (Caritas Jordan, 2020). In 2006, a second large influx was determined by the eruption of strife between Sunnis and Shiites after the US invasion of Iraq and toppling the former regime in 2003: war and its continuing aftermath brought new influxes of Iraqis to Jordan. In 2014, thousands of Iraqi Christians left their country to escape from Daesh (al-Dawla al-Islamiya fil Iraq wa al-Sham, ISIS), which was forcing them to either leave, convert to Islam, or pay for protection in order to stay (ibidem).

Most Iraqis do not apply for refugee status through UNHCR for fear of being rejected and risking being deported back to Iraq, especially since it is common for Iraqi refugees to enter Jordan on temporary residence permits which they may later illegally overstay (Finaly (b), 2022). Many Iraqi refugees suffer restrictions and violations of their human rights. Many are either locked out of employment or work in underpaid sectors and rely largely on aid and community support. A great number of Iraqi refugees waits for resettlement to third country, even though most end up waiting for years and do not manage to access resettlement opportunities at all (Ansari, 2014), which are nevertheless diminishing (Caritas Jordan, 2020). Financial challenges for Iraqi refugees are countless and translate into Iraqi families not being able to enrol their children in schools, even though they have legal right to attend both public and private schools in Jordan. The burden of financial expenditures, which many families cannot face, prompts Iraqi parents to not send their children to school and to encourage them to work to support the family to pay for rent, bills, and basic necessities. Others are afraid that their children may be discriminated and bullied at schools. And finally, those who are residing in Jordan

illegally do not want to put their children in school and risk being caught by authorities (Finlay (b), 2022).

4.3 African groups: an invisible population

As explained at the beginning of the chapter, main literature on refugees in Jordan tends to focus on the major and largest refugee groups, namely Syrians, then Iraqis and Palestinians. As the international focus is on these groups, little attention is paid to investigating and promoting equal and progressive rights for all refugee groups (Abib, 2023). This is often the case of refugees coming from Africa (e.g., Eritrean, Somali, Sudanese, Kenyans). Although understandable (numbers of Syrian, Palestinian and Iraqi refugees are overwhelmingly higher compared to African groups in Jordan), it is important to also shed light on the situation of minor refugee groups in the country. Indeed, they are often overlooked and forgotten, thus contributing to further marginalisation and discrimination of minority refugee groups (ibidem). Size, race, protracted situations, and awareness have been identified as key elements determining a hierarchy of service provision to refugees of different nationalities by state authorities in several countries in the Middle East (ARDD-LA, 2015), which tend to address immediate, more numerous refugee groups while neglecting those smaller groups coming from situations of protracted displacement (Davis et al., 2016). As clarified, the first element, size, highlights the fact that larger movements of refugees (e.g., Syrian) tend to become the main receivers of funding and humanitarian programs, thus overshadowing the needs of refugees of different nationalities (ibidem). Secondly, race has a lot to play when it comes to assistance to and integration of African refugees. Race is tied to the negative stereotypes in the Middle East about civilizational underdevelopment and inferiority that accompany African refugees (ibidem). This has also been discussed and reinforced through an interview with an educator and advocate for refugees' rights in chapter 2. "Time" is another important factor in determining a hierarchy of response to refugees' needs, as the most recent influxes of refugees tend to obscure those who suffer the consequences of conflicts going back many decades and live in situations of protracted displacement (ibidem). Finally, the lack of awareness of most Jordanians regarding both the causes of displacement of these groups and the harsh living conditions they face in Jordan contribute to further ignorance and neglect of their rights, thus fostering a larger

system of ethnic-based discrimination that differentiate their experiences from major refugee groups (Abib, 2023; Davis et al., 2016).

4.3.1 Somali refugees

Since the 1991 civil war, Somalia has suffered political instability and violence. More recently, environmental phenomena, e.g., flash flooding and drought, led to food insecurity and famine and contributed to increasing numbers of internally and externally displaced (Frouws, 2017) to nearby countries, including Yemen, Kenya, Egypt, Syria and Jordan (Davis et al., 2016). Although the total number of Somalis is not regularly reported (MMC (a), 2017), a few thousands of Somali refugees' needs in Jordan are often overlooked and eclipsed by the huge numbers of Syrians and Iraqis who have entered the country in recent years (Finlay (a), 2022). As already mentioned, Somalis, and African refugees in general, face the additional challenges dictated by racial discrimination and lack of attention from major NGOs and civil society actors. Although Somali refugees are allowed to register for official refugee status with the UNHCR, many end up not applying. If they started the process and received a negative response on their application, they would become vulnerable to deportation. In addition to this, many families fear legal consequences as they may have illegally overstayed their visa in the country or are working without a valid work permit (Finlay (a), 2022). Finally, since the UN agency reviews each individual application separately, some family members may be granted refugee status while others are not, leading to traumatic separations (ibidem). Without UNHCR's refugee status, Somalis in Jordan are in a rather fragile position: finding employment opportunities is hard, and if they do, it is usually in sectors avoided by Jordanians, such as cleaning or construction, as they are often underpaid and exploited (ibidem). Racism and racial discrimination are another crucial aspect of Somalis' everyday life in Jordan: episodes of verbal harassment and physical abuse have been reported, which affect feelings of safety and integration within the community. Racism also impacts families' decisions to register their children in Jordan, as they fear for their safety and well-being (MMC (b), 2017; Finlay (a), 2022).

4.3.2 Sudanese refugees

Most Sudanese refugees are in Jordan as a result of the Darfur conflict in the 1990s, and continuous violence has determined an increase in arrivals between 2013 and 2014 (MMC

(a), 2017). Even though data is limited, the number of Sudanese asylum seekers and refugees registered in Jordan seem to have remained relatively stable, counting between 3,000 and 6,000 people (ibidem; HRW, 2022). The shocking deportations of Sudanese refugees at the hands of the Jordanian authorities between 2015 and 2016 affected the Sudanese population in Jordan: although the precise number is unknown, about 800 Sudanese nationals were deported to Khartoum after authorities cracked down on protesters calling for better living conditions in the country, better protection and assistance from UNHCR (Davis et al., 2016). The sit-in protest, held outside the office of the UN Agency for Refugees in Amman, which lasted for about a month, was aiming to obtain recognition of their rights as refugees and asylum seekers. This was not the first protest: in 2014, another demonstration was interrupted when the Jordanian police intimidated Sudanese to stop and leave (ibidem). In 2015, Jordanian authorities dismantled the camp in front of the UNHCR headquarters in Amman and transported almost a thousand protesters to a facility close to Queen Alia International Airport. In the following days, the Jordanian authorities, supported by Sudanese government representatives, deported most of them to Sudan, causing dramatic consequences for those who had fled the country to escape violence and persecution (HRW (a), 2016). Human Rights Watch (HRW (a), 2016) reported that all the detained and deported individuals had been previously registered with UNHCR as refugees and asylum seekers. This, together with the Jordanian authorities' failed attempts to justify their actions, have violated the MoU signed between the Government and UNHCR, thus breaching international law too (ACHRS, 2020). Such a horrific manoeuvre and abuse of power at the hands of the Jordanian government sent a clear message to all refugees: "to be quiet and accept what is on offer" (Davis et al., 2016). Just as Somalis, Sudanese refugees and asylum seekers face numerous obstacles in Jordan, too. Their lives are constantly challenged by barriers to the full access and enjoyment of their fundamental human rights in a country where discrimination is widespread.

4.4 Yemeni refugees

Yemeni refugees share similar conditions with Somali and Sudanese refugees. The escalation of the conflict in Yemen since 2015, since Saudi Arabia launched its military campaign against the Houthi movement causing nearly 4 million internally displaced, has resulted into around four million internally displaced persons (IDPs) and 600,000

displaced (Al-Majali, 2022). While prior to the conflict, in January 2015, only about 300 Yemeni asylum seekers and refugees were registered with UNHCR in Jordan, the number of asylum seekers in the country according to the UN Agency reached 13,727 in March 2021 (ibidem). Several Yemeni nationals who arrived in Jordan after the start of the war decided not to register with UNHCR for reasons similar as the case of Somali refugees. Expectations of success are low (only around 2.8% Yemenis who have registered with UNHCR have been granted refugee status), which, according to some, is partially due to the difficulty in supporting the claims of individual persecution (MMC (a), 2017). The time the process requires is another deterrent for Yemenis to apply and many thought the war would be temporary, so they would not need to apply through UNHCR (ibidem; Al-Majali, 2022). In addition, changes in legislation made Yemenis' conditions in the country even more difficult. In 2016, the Jordanian Government decided to consider Yemenis a restricted nationality, thus requiring Yemeni nationals to obtain a visa before entering Jordan and to be sponsored by a Jordanian citizen (ARDD, 2018). In 2019, Jordan urged the UNHCR to stop registering new asylum-seekers: therefore, Yemenis who arrived in Jordan after 2019 were unable to apply for asylum through UNHCR (Al-Majali, 2022). Just like Somali and Sudanese refugees, living conditions for Yemeni refugees in Jordan are harsh: many are reported to be working in informal jobs in cleaning services and in restaurants which are underpaid and exploited. Some Yemeni asylum seekers faced deportation at the hands of the Jordanian government in 2019 as a consequence of their attempts to apply for work permits and regularise their immigration status in the country (HRW, 2021).

Racism and discriminatory attitudes based on race have been reported by Yemenis (MMC (a), 2017), even though in lesser numbers than the Sudanese case. However, this situation may be changing as a result of the recent developments in the war in Gaza. Although living conditions for Yemeni refugees in the country remain harsh, the prospect of increased acceptance and integration could be possible. Indeed, since the breakout of the war in Gaza, many Jordanians have shared sentiments of gratitude and appreciation towards Yemenis, stemming from Yemen's stance and actions against the Israeli state.

4.5 Syrian refugees

The Arab Uprisings that started in Tunisia at the end of 2010 soon spread in other countries of the MENA region and resulted into different outcomes. The Tunisian uprisings led to free elections in October 2011 to form a new Constituent Assembly, ending half a century of manipulated elections and translating into a complete reconfiguration of the political landscape (Utterwulghe and Bouraui Khouja, 2021). In Egypt, President Hosni Mubarak was compelled to leave his office in February 2011, ending his thirty-year-long presidency and ceding power to a council of senior military officers (AlJazeera, 2020). It is understandable how such events led other countries within the Arab region to believe (and hope) that similar outcomes could be replicated elsewhere and initiate political, social, and economic changes that could make a difference in their fates. Many felt optimistic about the protests. However, the uprisings in Syria quickly led to a civil war, which caused around 14 million internally displaced people and refugees since the beginning of the conflict (Alkhalil et al., 2023), around 1.3 million of whom, both registered and unregistered, reside in Jordan (UFZ, 2021). According to 2022 data, of all the registered Syrian refugees, 19.5% live in camps (131,300), the majority of whom in the Zaatari Camp (81,000) and Azraq (43,934) (Karasapan, 2022). The remaining are distributed in Jordan's urban areas, concentrated in Amman (26%), Irbid (18%), and Al-Mafraq (12%) (ibidem). Jordan has set in place a response to the Syrian refugee crisis through implementing the Jordan Response Plan for the Syria Crisis⁷ (JRP, 2021). Thirteen years since the start of the civil war in Syria, living conditions for the nearly 1.3 million Syrian refugees in Jordan are still precarious: more than half lives in poverty, and one fifth are food insecure (ACAPS, 2023). In addition, as of January 2023, around 80% of refugees lived outside camps in poor housing, and shelters in camps remained inadequate and unsafe (ibidem). In the last three months of 2022, around 34% of refugee households had difficulty in paying rent, and 26% received eviction notices. Livelihood, food security, shelter, and protection assistance are some of the key priorities for Syrian refugees in Jordan (ibidem). What by many in Jordan and the wider region was perceived as a temporary emergency, the Syrian refugee situation has morphed into a protracted

⁷ The Jordan Response Plan (JRP), led by Government of Jordan, represent a strong model of cooperation between Jordan and the international community. The Plan addresses the needs of Syrian refugees first and foremost, to respond to the increasing necessities of over 600,000 registered refugees in the country (JRP, 2021).

crisis, and Syrian refugees are more and more seen as competitors rather than people in need for support and opportunities (see section 3).

5. Legal framework for the protection of refugees' human rights

Jordan has not enacted any domestic laws dealing with refugees. As mentioned in section 3, the Government refers to refugees and asylum seekers as “visitors” or “foreign guests” that the country receives while they await resettlement elsewhere or return to their home countries (Hilal, 2021). This directly impacts the legal and political rights of refugees and asylum seekers, who are then exposed to gross violations of their human rights and to protection concerns, including forced repatriation (this has been the case for a number of Sudanese and Yemeni refugees and asylum seekers who, as seen in sections 4.3.2 and 4.4 respectively, have been forcibly deported to their countries of origin by the Jordanian authorities between 2015 and 2020) (ACHRS, 2020). The lack of a comprehensive national legal framework setting out the rights owed to refugees with *ad hoc* implementation mechanisms (Arar, 2017) has translated into an overabundance of directives, policies and rules which are often subject to changes and that rarely address the protection concerns faced by refugee (Clutterbuck and Hussein, 2021). Indeed, refugees are handled according to the legislation governing the entry and residence of foreign nationals: in Jordan, Law No. 24 of 1973 on Residence and Foreigners' Affairs applies to all foreigners equally, thus including asylum seekers and refugees (Arar, 2017). The absence of a standardised domestic framework, replaced by a system built on directives, is weak and arbitrary and can erode basic rights. Furthermore, this creates issues in terms of transparency as well, and accessing relevant information can be hard for refugees themselves⁸, and directly translates into an unfair system that applies different rules to refugees from different contexts, such as non-Syrian refugees in Jordan, thereby generating parallel discriminatory systems offering greater protection to Syrian than non-Syrian refugees (Clutterbuck and Hussein, 2021). Indeed, non-Syrian refugees continue to face challenges with entry into and residence in Jordan, thus exacerbating feelings of frustration and uncertainty: many live irregularly in Jordan and are at risk of deportation (ibidem). These distinctions in treatment based on countries of origin under immigration and related laws determine differences in the access to fundamental human

⁸ This is an issue within the field of education, too. As discussed in chapter 3, section 1.3.1, it is challenging to retrieve clear information and directives as to who can access education for free.

rights and status between refugees from different countries, with those from countries other than Syria generally disadvantaged (Caritas Jordan, 2020). This directly connects to the need, discussed in chapter 3, to promote and adopt the One-Refugee Approach (ORA).

It is thus clear that main obstacles to a comprehensive and structured response to the needs and protection of refugees in Jordan are two. On the one hand, national legislation handling refugees and asylum seekers in the country is virtually non-existent; on the other, within the framework of International Refugee Law, Jordan has not yet ratified the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the status of refugees or its 1967 Optional Protocol (Hilal, 2021).

5.1 The 1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Optional Protocol

The 1951 Refugee Convention represents the cornerstone of the international refugee protection regime and a life-saving instrument for millions of people fleeing conflict and persecution to access safety and protection across borders (UNHCR (b), 2023). The value of the Convention is undeniable and ratification for those States who have not accessed it is still of primary importance. Since initially the Convention did not have a global appeal⁹ and the need to extend the geographical reach of the Convention and remove its temporal limitation became impellent, the 1967 Optional Protocol was established (Chaudhury, 2022).

Despite its relevance, the 1951 Convention has been pointed at as obsolete or limited by some for several reasons such as, *inter alia*, the lack of a precise definition of the term “persecution”; the grounds of persecution listed in the definition of refugee (race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group and political opinion), which are overlook additional factors such as economic, social, and cultural rights for the purpose of refugee status determination; and lack of consideration of gender-related concerns (ibidem). Nevertheless, the Convention and its Optional Protocol are, to this day, key

⁹ Drafted after the Second World War, the 1951 Convention was originally limited in scope both geographically and temporally to those individuals fleeing events occurring before 1 January 1951 and within Europe. Thanks to the 1967 Optional Protocol, such limitations were removed and granted the Convention universal coverage (Høvring, 2021).

instruments for ensuring the protection of refugees' rights and contribute to providing a structured response to their needs all over the world.

As other countries in the Middle East (e.g., Lebanon and Iraq), Jordan is not a signatory of the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Optional Protocol. Although precise reasons behind the unwillingness of some countries to ratify the Convention are unknown, some observations regarding countries in the Middle East have been advanced. In particular, the reticence of some Arab countries to access the Convention may be explained through the theory that they do not wish to offer permanent residence to refugees within the country, despite their willingness to host large numbers of refugees (Janmyr, 2021). Some argue that signing the Convention would put Jordan in a difficult position, as the treaty does not keep into consideration the countless internal challenges and lack of resources faced by the Kingdom and which make it hard for the country to access the Convention, follow through its provisions and be held accountable for them (Aldabbas et al., 2020). In addition, ratifying the instrument may represent the promotion of local integration, which could hurt demographic and socio-economic balance in the country (*ibidem*), and conflicting with the deep Jordanian conviction that Palestinians have the inherent right to return to their homeland (Al-Qaralleh, 2022).

It may be unrealistic to wish for Jordan's ratification of the 1951 Convention and its Optional Protocol at this stage. Nevertheless, encouraging the country to ratify the instrument is still meaningful, as urged by the 2016 New York Declaration and the 2018 Global Compact for Refugees. Jordan still has no national legal framework for protecting refugees and safeguarding their rights, and, as shown in section 4, it has many times showcased a differential attitude and treatment towards Syrian and non-Syrian refugees, leading to inconsistent levels of protection (Clutterbuck and Hussein, 2021). Jordan's unwillingness to ratify the 1951 Refugee Convention clearly hinders the achievement and implementation of a standardised, comprehensive response to the needs of refugees and the promotion of their fundamental human rights. Other international human rights instruments, national legislation, and a Memorandum of Understanding between the Government and the United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees contribute to tackle this challenge.

It is important to remark that Jordan has accessed and committed to both the 2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants and the 2018 Global Compact on Refugees. Despite being non-legally binding instruments, Jordan's commitment to both is remarkable and a promising sign of its will to reach a better, more comprehensive and more equal response to refugee needs. Furthermore, the Jordan Response Plan (JRP) represents the country's refugee response, which aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR). However, the JRP mainly focusses on the protection and support of Syrian refugees, while neglecting other nationalities. Limited access to asylum and services for non-Syrian individuals hinders the enjoyment of their rights for a significant portion of the refugee population. Although the Jordan Response Plan has represented a positive reaction to address the needs of Syrian refugees, the lack of a similar framework for non-Syrian nationals limits the ability of many refugees to enjoy their rights and access services (UNHCR, 2023).

5.2 The Memorandum of Understanding between UNHCR and Jordan

In order to compensate for Jordan's abstention from the Refugee Convention, in 1998 the country signed a specific cooperation agreement with the UNHCR in the form of a bilateral Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to set parameters for cooperation between the Agency and the Government of Jordan and to outline the major principles of international protection (Al-Qaralleh, 2022). Memorandum of Understandings are generally viewed as alternative protection regimes providing a legal framework to regulate the status of refugees in countries that have not ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention, such as in the case of Jordan (Clutterbuck and Hussein, 2021). Through the MoU, the parties set out both the terms of cooperation and core refugee protection principles and establish an important link between a non-signatory State and the Refugee Convention.

By signing the MoU, at its art. 1, Jordan has adopted a refugee definition which follows the 1951 Convention's (UNHCR, 2023), thus aligning the country with international standards of protection, including the principle of *non-refoulement* (Janmyr, 2021) to protect refugees in Jordan from being returned to a country where their life or freedom could be threatened because of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion. Jordan's MoU with UNHCR notes the Kingdom's

commitment to strengthening its asylum institution, treating asylum seekers and refugees in accordance with international standards, and confirms their rights to education, health, religious practice, and freedom of movement, as well as access to courts and the right to legal assistance (Clutterbuck and Hussein, 2021).

6. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child took a long time to be drafted and enter action. Indeed, its history starts in 1923, when the founder of Save the Children, Eglantyne Jebb, drafted the Declaration on the Rights of the Child. The Declaration collected five welfare-based rights for children, born out of the urge to consolidate international efforts to protect children from harm after the Second World War. The Declaration was adopted in 1924 by the League of Nations and promoted welfare approach with emphasis on the provision of assistance to children in need (WV, 2021; UNICEF website, n.d.). Civil and political rights were not yet elaborated for children. Later, in 1959, the United Nations General Assembly adopted an expanded version of the Declaration, containing ten principles instead of the original five. It was a step forward, but civil and political rights were still not present: the focus was still on children's welfare rather than their empowerment and participation. In 1978, the Polish Government submitted a draft of the Convention on the Rights of the Child which was finally adopted by the General Assembly in 1989, and then entered in force the following year (ibidem). The adoption of the Convention took a long time for a number of reasons, mainly because of disagreements over the definition of a child¹⁰ and, *inter alia*, discussions over children's freedom of expression and thought, conscience and religion, difficulties regarding the issue of adoption, not recognised in Islam and thus rejected by Islamic countries, as well as other provisions incompatible with Shari'a.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child represents one of the most visionary and universally accepted human rights agreements in history. Ratified by 196 States¹¹, the Convention was the first international human rights treaty to contain civil, political,

¹⁰ According to Art. 1 CRC, "a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier".

¹¹ The USA signed but did not ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Although the country generally supports the overall objectives of the Convention, it has had concerns and doubts as to whether the treaty is the best mechanism for addressing children's rights domestically and abroad (CRS, 2015).

economic, social, and cultural rights, thus being one of the most comprehensive human rights instruments existing. The rights in the Convention can be grouped in three main categories, namely rights to provision, protection, and participation. Respectively, these rights represent the inputs necessary for children's survival and development; the rights ensuring children are protected from exploitation or abuse; and the rights enabling children to have the means to engage in processes of change and become active members of society. The right to participation is innovative, as it implies that children should be involved in the realisation of their own rights and be prepared to play an active role in society (this is partially discussed in chapter 3, relating to children's role in advocating for their right to education). Indeed, part of the power of the 1989 Convention lays in its recognition that children are human beings with the same rights as adults. The instrument establishes a set of rights for all children without discrimination of any kind, "irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status" (CRC Art. 2(1)), thus including the protection of refugee and asylum-seeking children in its scope. The 'child' and 'refugee' labels identify a minority category – "refugee child", with a special basis for protection (Lawrence et al., 2019). Furthermore, some provisions explicitly address the rights of refugee children. For instance, Art. 22 claims that "States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure that a child who is seeking refugee status or who is considered a refugee in accordance with applicable international or domestic law and procedures shall, whether unaccompanied or accompanied by his or her parents or by any other person, receive appropriate protection and humanitarian assistance in the enjoyment of applicable rights set forth in the present Convention and in other international human rights or humanitarian instruments to which the said States are Parties". By some, Art. 22 CRC is seen as "the only provision in any human rights instruments that directly and expressly deals with circumstances of refugee children (Lawrence et al., 2019). This article makes clear the importance of providing refugee children with appropriate protection and assistance to ensure that they can enjoy the rights set out by the Convention just as much as national children of the hosting country.

Jordan was one of the first Middle Eastern countries to ratify the Convention in 1991 (ARDD, 2020; Gale, 2021), compliance with which requires adaptation to legislative,

administrative, and other measures (Jordan News, 2022). Alongside this, in the 2000, the country also ratified the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography. The Government of Jordan set three reservations to articles 14, 20 and 21¹² of the 1989 Convention as they are not in compliance with Islamic law. Even though unlikely, it would be encouraging if Jordan removed them, thus renewing and reinvigorating its commitment to protecting and promoting children's rights.

Protecting children from harm is part of the Government's priorities, at least officially. However, enforcement of policies and acts aimed at the protection and promotion of children's rights is hampered by social and cultural norms, as well as by economic factors. Suffices to consider harmful practices still widespread in the country such as corporal punishment, child labour and child marriage. Steps forward have been taken to translate the Convention on the Rights of the Child into domestic legislation. Nonetheless, as in prior cases¹³, ambitious policies and laws in Jordan have found little realisation in practice. This pertains, for example, to the 2022 Child Rights Law, which has been criticised as controversial and triggered negative reactions from public opinion. Some see the bill as an attempt to eradicate the Jordanian family head system and strip children of their families, while other said that the bill encourages children to leave their religion (Alajlouni, 2022). In reality, there is no mention of separation of children from their family, but Art. 8 grants and protects the right to privacy of the child. Others have welcomed the new bill and, despite some gaps and limitations, view it as a step forward towards a broader protection of children's rights because of its provisions related to health care, education, and entertainment, as well as protection from forced labour, beggary, and addiction (ibidem). The current national legal framework has shown some progress in terms of attempting to translate the Convention's provisions into national legislation, but issues related to the protection of children, such as corporal punishment, child labour and

¹² The articles concern, respectively, right of the child to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion (Art. 14 CRC); the right of a child removed from their family environment, either temporarily or permanently, or deemed unable to remain in it for their own welfare, to special protection and assistance from the State (Art. 20 CRC); and the question of adoption (Art. 21 CRC).

¹³ The exemplary case of the 2017 Law on the Rights of People with Disabilities is another ambitious and seemingly comprehensive legal document to protect and promote the rights of people with disabilities in the country. Despite the Law raised expectations and hope for a real change in the integration of people with disabilities and the elimination of stigma and discrimination, no effective efforts have been taken so far to ensure its implementation and reach meaningful results on the ground (HRW, 2019).

child marriage, are still widely present and depict a worrisome reality for minors in Jordan.

Although corporal punishment has been declared illegal in schools, alternative care settings and penal institutions, it still occurs in these settings and in homes, and it is socially and culturally accepted (Husseini, 2023). On paper, the Child Rights Law prohibits the corporal punishment of children inside schools in Jordan, but national legislation allows the beating of children by parents under the pretext of discipline, as stipulated in Art. 62 of the Jordanian Penal Code (ibidem). Art. 62(a) of the Penal Code states that the law permits “Forms of discipline exercised on children by their parents, as sanctioned by general custom”. This is reflected in the 2020 National Council for Family Affairs’ report, which indicated that around 74% of children in Jordan were subjected to physical violence as a disciplinary method (ibidem). Corporal punishment is forbidden by Art. 19 CRC, which states that States Parties need to take all necessary “legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child”. However, the full realisation of this article is hampered by cultural norms that perceive corporal punishment as a normal tool to raise children and instil a sense of discipline in them.

As a negative coping mechanism adopted by households to face economic hardship, many children are forced to take up adult-like roles and start working at a young age. Art. 32 CRC does not explicitly forbid child labour, but it has been interpreted by most as a provision to take all efforts and measures to eliminate child labour, especially the worst forms of child labour, and to ensure that children are protected from exploitation in the workforce. Nevertheless, statistics in Jordan report a worrisome reality. According to the 2016 National Child Labour Survey, over 75,000 children are engaged in economic activities, including nearly 45,000 children who are engaged in hazardous forms of labour. Poverty and lack of livelihood opportunities for the family are the main reasons why children work. As mentioned in section 2, child labour is so deeply rooted and embedded in the Jordanian fabric, as well as in many other countries in the areas facing similar and worse challenges as the Kingdom of Jordan, that the practice is seen as acceptable by most, and a necessary step towards the development of the child and their

sense of responsibility. Attempts have been made through the Child Rights Law (2022), whose Art. 21(a)(3) prohibits the exposure of children “to forms of economic exploitation, including forced labour or begging”, but tradition and cultural norms, alongside the dire need of poor, under-privileged families to increase their income, lead children to take up informal jobs.

Art. 16 CRC states the need for States to prevent the risk of child marriage by establishing that the minimum age to get married should be set at 18. However, statistics of the situation in the Jordan talk about more than one in four children being married before the age of 18, and nearly one in 10 married before the age of 15 (Abu Zaid, 2021). This pattern is very present among refugee children, and within the Syrian refugee community in particular. In 2018, one in three of the newly registered marriages of Syrians in Jordan involved a child under the age of 18, which suggests that Syrian refugees are increasingly relying on child marriage as a negative coping mechanism for families to secure the economic future of their children, while reducing the economic burden on their own households (ibidem). The 2022 Child Rights Law does not directly address the issue of child marriage, but it includes provisions regarding the need to protect children from sexual abuse (Art. 20 and Art. 21(2)).

6.1 The right to education in the Convention on the Rights of the Child

The right to education of all children, including refugee and asylum-seeking children, is established in Art. 28 and 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. With Art. 28(1), States Parties recognise the right of the child to education. To achieve this right, States Parties are encouraged to take several steps. First, primary education should be made compulsory, available and free to all (Art. 28(1)(a)) – this is an element on which Jordan has been scoring well, as per recent data by the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF). Thanks to the efforts of the Ministry of Education to ensure free and compulsory education from age 6 to 16 for all Jordanian students, more than 97% of children in the country are enrolled in primary education (UNICEF, 2020). Second, the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, shall be encourage by making them “available and accessible to every child”, and by taking “appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need” (Art. 28(1)(b)). Then, States

Parties shall “make higher education accessible to all on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means” (Art. 28(1)(c)) and “make educational and vocational information and guidance available and accessible to all children” (Art. 28(1)(d)). Finally, measures should be taken to encourage attendance at school and reduce drop-out rates (Art. 28(1)(e)). Art. 28(2) invites States Parties to “take all appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity and in conformity with the present Convention”.

Art. 29(1) illustrates what education should be directed to. First, to “the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential” (Art. 29(1)(a)); second, to “the development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations” (Art. 29(1)(b)); third, to “the development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own” (Art. 29(1)(c)); and lastly, to “the preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin” (Art. 29(1)(d)), in accordance with the principle of participation of the Convention, and to “the development of respect for the natural environment” (Art. 29(1)(e)). Finally, a further reference to the child’s right to education is made in Art. 32(1) as to which is declared that States Parties should take all necessary measures to ensure that a child is “protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education”. These articles apply to refugee and asylum-seeking children equally.

7. The Jordanian educational system and its structure

Overall, the education system in the Hashemite Kingdom has improved and been able to face the numerous challenges of years of protracted crises in the region. Jordan achieved the second Millennium Development Goal of universal primary education in 2005 and has near universal youth literacy according to a 2020 UNICEF Report on out-of-school children.

Education in the country is provided by various actors ranging from public schools under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, to private institutions, and UNRWA in the case of Palestinian refugees (UNICEF, 2020). Pre-primary, primary and secondary educational levels are managed by the Ministry of Education (MoE), while higher education is managed by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MoHESR). Education in Jordan is governed by the 1994 Education Act No. 3, which identifies the goals and policies of the education system, and the responsibilities and functions of national stakeholders: the main responsible for the execution of the Education Act is the Ministry of Education (UNICEF, 2020).

The school system is divided into pre-primary education, which lasts two years and is not compulsory; primary education, free of charge at governmental (public) schools and lasting ten years; secondary education, not compulsory and lasting two years. At the end of the secondary education cycle, students must undertake the *tawjihi*¹⁴, and those who pass it are eligible for higher education (universities and community colleges) (JordanEducation, n.d).

Kindergarten	Basic Education		Secondary Education
Grade 0 (KG-2)	Grades 1-6	Grades 7-10	Grades 11-12
Age 5	Age 6-11	Age 12-15	Age 16-17

Source: own elaboration based on UNICEF (2015a) and stakeholder consultations

Figure 7, Ages and corresponding grades in the Jordanian educational system. Source: UNICEF (2020)

According to UNICEF, Jordan is close to achieving its target of universal access to primary education, with 97% children in school, and has maintained gender parity in education. Jordan's commitment to free and compulsory basic education for all children seems clear in Art. 20 of the Constitution, stating that: "Basic education shall be compulsory for Jordanians and free of charge in government schools". Furthermore,

¹⁴ The *tawjihi* is the General Secondary Education Certification Examination in Jordan and determines which subjects Jordanian students can study in Jordanian universities. Passing the *tawjihi* with a minimum score of 40% allows students to be considered for local universities. Each student's individual score determines which higher education path they will take: for instance, only students with a 95 or higher score can study medicine. On the other hand, students who do not take the *tawjihi* are not allowed to compete for university admission alongside their students who took the exam (only about 5% of university seats are reserved for students who have not taken the *tawjihi*) (CRP, 2018).

Jordan has ratified a number of international human rights instruments reinforcing its commitment, namely: Art. 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR); Art. 4 of the Convention against Discrimination in Education, Art.10 of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); Art. 28 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC); Art.24 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; and Art.41 of the Arab Charter on Human Rights (ACHR) (Aldabbas et al., 2020). Art. 20 of the Jordanian Constitution and international human rights instruments that Jordan ratified provide a robust basis for the Government's dedication to the principles of compulsory and free basic education, given that the Constitution and international conventions supersede other applicable legislations in the Kingdom. Finally, Art. 15(a) of the 2022 Child Rights Law confirms children's entitlement to "receive education, which shall be compulsory and free according to the provisions of the Constitution".

However, the mere provision for such principles in the Constitution and international conventions is not enough to implement them properly and fully on the ground, as this requires the existence of national legislation, policies and strategies (Aldabbas et al., 2020). Not all children benefit equally from such principles, nor they have the same rights when it comes to access to education. Refugees are among the children who must be provided with compulsory and free basic education. Even though Jordan has not ratified it, it is worth mentioning that the 1951 Convention relating to the status of refugees provides that States Parties shall grant refugees the same treatment as is accorded to its nationals with respect to elementary education (*ibidem*). The Convention on the Rights of the Child fills this gap, as it highlights that all children without discrimination, thus including refugee children, are entitled to access to education, which shall be made compulsory and free at least at its basic level. The Jordanian Government has actively facilitated the enrolment of refugee students in public schools, whether Iraqi students in the last decade or Syrian students recently (Aldabbas et al., 2020). Nevertheless, refugee children remain among the vulnerable groups that do not enjoy the same rates of enrolment in schools. According to Human Rights Watch's 2023 Submission to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, refugee children are still facing barriers to education. The study found that although Jordan has been making efforts to provide education to hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugee children, including allowing free

public-school enrolment for Syrian children, organising double shifts to tackle the issue of overcrowded classrooms¹⁵, hiring new teachers, and opening new schools in refugee camps, many refugees have faced obstacles to accessing formal education. Such obstacles were most acute for children ages 12 and older and included protection concerns such as poverty-driven child labour and child marriage, as well as prohibitive costs of school transportation, government policies that limited access to education¹⁶, and the lack of inclusive education that kept children with disabilities out of school (HRW, 2023). The Ministry of Education (MoE) and its partners, e.g., UNHCR, UNICEF, UNESCO and donors have been making collective efforts to improve equitable access to quality inclusive education for all children, including refugee children. Tamara Bakez, UNHCR’s Focal Point for General Education¹⁷, has highlighted a series of challenges that need to be tackled to enhance the educational experience for all children, including refugees. First, she mentioned the problem of infrastructure. Classrooms in public schools are often neglected and poorly maintained, thus impacting the overall environment and motivation of children to go to school. Overcrowding in classrooms in urban areas is a major barrier to children’s schooling. Educational infrastructures are inadequate to welcome increasing numbers of students, thus requiring investments in both physical and human resources (USAID website, n.d.; UNICEF, 2020). This information was shared by school personnel interviewed at the two governmental schools selected for this research (see chapter 2). Secondly, curricula need to be more inclusive of students from different backgrounds so that all students benefit from their time at school and feel encouraged to keep attending¹⁸.

¹⁵ As broadly discussed in chapter 2, resorting to the double shift system is only partly effective. The Human Rights Watch Submission to the Committee on the Rights of the Child highlighted that children attending second shift schools often received poor-quality education. Not only double shift schools provide fewer hours of instruction than regular public schools, but also reduce time dedicated to physical education and art (HRW, 2023). Limiting time for classes dedicated to these activities hampers Art. 29(1)(a) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which claims that education should be directed to “the development of the child’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential”.

¹⁶ An example of government policies hampering access to education is the requirement that Syrian children must present a “service card” issued by the Interior Ministry to enrol in school, a requirement which has repeatedly been waived and re-established. Service cards are not easily accessible to all Syrian refugees unless they return to closed camps, and they are only valid in the district where they were issued. Therefore, if a Syrian refugee decides to move to a different district, the card will no longer be valid. Another instance is represented by the MoE’s workarounds to another rule prohibiting children from enrolling in education if they have been out of school for three or more years. The “three-year rule” represents a barrier to education for many refugee children who are forced to drop out of school because of lack of resources or to support their family and should thus be abrogated to guarantee equal and non-discriminatory access to education for all children (HRW, 2023).

¹⁷ Interview, 09/01/2024.

¹⁸ Ibidem.

The perception that school attainments may not actually significantly influence potential earnings in the future impacts households' decisions to invest in education (UNICEF, 2020). This is especially true for some refugees, e.g., for Syrian refugees whose lack of return is compounded by legal barriers to labour market entry. In addition, refugees in general may perceive investing in education as a waste of time as many believe that they will go back to their countries of origin, where Jordanian certificates and degrees may not be as meaningful (ibidem). Finally, she highlighted the need to foster a tolerant, inclusive environment at school, as well as community engagement between schools and the refugee community to reduce the gap between them. According to the UNHCR employee interviewed, refugee parents are overwhelmed with responsibilities: as 80% of refugees are living under the poverty line, the socio-economical and psychological conditions of parents make it almost impossible to prioritise their children's education¹⁹. Parents struggle to enrol their children in schools, and costs are so high that, even though they would like their children to go to school, they must encourage them to work to support family.

Violence is another barrier that UNICEF pointed out in its 2020 Report: as explained in section 6 although corporal punishment is outlawed in Jordan, and against Art. 19 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, students still report having encountered both physical and verbal abuse at school in different areas of the country. Economic barriers are another important challenge for many families in the country, both Jordanian and non-Jordanian. Such financial restraints force families to resort to negative coping strategies such as child labour and early marriage (UNICEF, 2020).

As per UNHCR's Focal Point for General Education²⁰, cooperation between UN agencies and other civil society actors with the Ministry of Education in Jordan has led to remarkable progress in fostering inclusion of refugee children in schools, especially since the start of the Syrian war in 2011. As thoroughly discussed in chapter 2 and 3, the UNHCR employee identified capacity building training for teachers as another pivotal factor to enhance understanding of mental health-related issues and protection-related concerns of refugee children, which can lead to positive outcomes for their experience in

¹⁹ Interview, 09/01/2024.

²⁰ Ibidem.

school. She claimed that such efforts have been implemented throughout different areas in the country as an invaluable tool to address and respond to the needs of refugee children and foster a positive, inclusive and tolerant educational environment. According to UNHCR, teachers and school principals and supervisors in both camp schools and urban do not always receive appropriate preparation to handle children with different vulnerabilities in a protection-conscious way. Therefore, the MoE and its partners focus on delivering capacity building training to provide school staff with the tools to become better instructional leaders and assisting the development of school improvement plans and self-evaluation for greater accountability. However, the lack of a monitoring and accountability mechanism to report on the progress and the long-term impact of such training has been identified as one of the obstacles that needs to be tackled²¹.

The Syrian crisis represented a significant burden on the public education sector. Nevertheless, the Jordanian Government stepped up efforts to respond to the large influx of refugees and asylum seekers and welcome them in its public schools. Jordan has been cooperating with civil society actors since the beginning of the Syrian crisis, in 2011, to provide Syrian refugees with free primary and secondary education by exempting them from tuition fees and the costs of books (UNHCR, 2024) in all public schools in the Kingdom, both in camps and urban settings. The MoE, in cooperation with its partners, organised a double shift system and remedial education programmes to leave no child behind (UNESCO, 2023). In addition, Jordan has also increased efforts to facilitate double shifts for more than 200 public schools across the country to accommodate for the large number of refugee students (UNHCR, 2024). The MoE's Education Strategic Plan 2018-2022, which the UNHCR Focal Point for General Education reported being extended until 2025, presented positive efforts to improve access to and quality of education for all. However, when it comes to refugee children, the focus still is on Syrian refugees more than other nationalities, thus perpetuating a hierarchy in services provision, exemplifying what stated in sections 4.2, 4.2.1, 4.2.2 and 4.3 about discriminatory practices towards different refugee nationalities. Available literature concerning the access to the right to education of non-Syrian refugees is scarce and highlights, once

²¹ Interview, 09/01/2024.

again, that the needs of minority refugee groups are overshadowed and neglected (see chapter 2 and 3).

Conclusions

Jordan is a country facing numerous challenges, such as water scarcity, food insecurity, high costs of living and steep unemployment rates. Jordan hosts one of the highest shares of refugees per capita in the world. As explained in the chapter, the refugee population in the country is composed of a variety of nationalities. However, international aid and existing literature tend to focus on and direct aid mainly to Syrian refugees, which has contributed to structuring a sort of hierarchy in providing support to vulnerable individuals within the refugee community. Although understandable, given the high numbers of Syrians in the country, minorities are equally in need of support and face relevant challenges, ranging from lack of access to employment opportunities to discrimination.

Jordan is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Optional Protocol, thus determining limitations and gaps in the protection and promotion of refugees' fundamental human rights. This gap has partially been filled by a Memorandum of Understanding signed by Jordan and UNHCR in 1988, which establishes the country's responsibilities towards the refugee population in the country, aligning to international standards of protection.

Alongside this, the UN CRC has been investigated to highlight its provisions concerning the right to education of all children, including refugees, without discrimination. Efforts by the MoE to render education accessible to all children have been investigated, including limitations, gaps and challenges in the current structure of the Jordanian educational system.

This broad overview should provide a solid basis to understand the Jordanian context and some of its main challenges and features. In addition, this chapter should be instrumental to move to the second, where the findings of interviews carried out in two governmental schools in Amman with students and school personnel help depicting a neater picture of the educational experience of refugee children.

Chapter 2

After having offered an introduction to the Jordanian context in chapter 1, the second chapter focusses on analysing the findings of the interviews conducted with children and teachers (and some other school personnel) in two schools in Amman. The analysis is preceded by an overview of the methodology, research panel (including a disaggregation by gender and nationality) and setting to provide the reader with an understanding of the interviews' protocol, main challenges and limitations. Afterwards, the schools and their location are introduced and shortly described to illustrate the reasons that led to selecting them (section 2).

The two schools are governmental schools, therefore divided by gender (see section 1.1) – carrying out interviews at a school for boys and a school for girls favoured interesting comparisons and highlighted similarities and differences in the students' experiences. Gender balance was ensured by interviewing about the same number of boys (9) and girls (10) and teachers and school personnel (three (3) men and three (3) women). The interviews were conducted in Arabic during the afternoon shift, which is dedicated to refugee students – the morning shift is attended by Jordanian children. The double shift system is studied in section 3 to provide some context to the findings of the interviews related to feelings, and in particular feelings of safety of refugee children at school (see section 3.1). Section 4 reflects on the relationship between teachers and students, and how it can positively impact the educational experience of refugee children. The following, section 5, analyses the capacity building component of teachers in school, considering the need for further preparation and training related to the awareness of refugee children's needs and vulnerabilities, and how this could further positively influence their relationship. This section includes the thoughts and insights of two employees at the Ministry of Education, one of whom preferred maintaining anonymity. Finally, the chapter offers some concluding observations on the findings, highlighting commonalities and differences in the experiences of students in the two schools, and paving the way to suggesting recommendations in the concluding chapter.

1. Methodology: setting, sample, protocol

1.1 Choice of the schools

Two schools were selected to carry out interviews with both children and school staff. As explained in section 1.1 chapter 1, some areas of Amman have become a hub for refugees. These tend to be in East Amman, which is more significantly impacted by economic disparities and lack of services and infrastructure, when compared to many communities in West Amman, even though some eastern neighbourhoods (e.g., Abdali and Jabal al-Lweibdeh) are the main destinations of business professionals and expatriates. In the Jordanian school system, most governmental schools separate boys and girls after grade 3. As confirmed both while visiting the schools and through the interviews with the personnel, female schools have only female teachers and principals and vice versa, while private and international schools tend to be mixed. Visiting a school for boys in Hashmi al-Shamali and a school for girls in Jabal Hussein offered a valuable opportunity to compare different aspects and students' insights. First, objective factors such as the appearance and conditions of the schools and the number of students in classes (section 2). Secondly, students' feelings and emotions, the relationship among students, including insights about the double shift system and consequent separation between Jordanian and refugee students (section 3). Third, the relationship between students and teachers is analysed, including reflections on how this can positively impact the educational experience of refugee children. This section leads to the fourth factor, namely the importance of teachers' experience with refugee students and preparation, knowledge and awareness of their inherent, unique vulnerabilities (section 4).

The first school is the Abu Obaida Basic School for Boys in the Hashmi al-Shamali neighbourhood, while the second is the Al-Hussein School for Girls in Jabal Hussein. The two schools were selected for three main reasons. First, because of their location in two neighbourhoods of East Amman that are notoriously populated by a vast number of refugees of different nationalities, mainly Syrians but also Iraqis, Yemenis, Palestinians, Sudanese and others. Second, because they host a double shift structure: a morning shift for Jordanian students only²², and an afternoon shift for refugee students (even though it

²² According to an MoE employee interviewed on 26th June 2024, "Jordanian nationals" are those children who have a Jordanian national number. Therefore, there may be Jordanians of Palestinian origin – as long as they possess the national number, they are Jordanians.

was highlighted during the interviews that some Jordanian students attend the afternoon shift because of overcrowded classes in the morning shift²³). Third, because of the schools' extensive experience with refugee students, as claimed by some Jordanian acquaintances who suggested to visit them.

1.2 Study sample

The study sample included nineteen (19) children aged 9 to 16 and six (6) school employees, including three (3) teachers, a counsellor, a librarian, and an administrative assistant volunteer working at the school for girls through UNICEF. Overall, fourteen (14) children were Syrian, one (1) Iraqi and four (4) Yemeni, while the interviewed personnel were Jordanian²⁴, except for the UNICEF worker, a Syrian refugee herself.

1.3 Interview protocol and changes

Before selecting the schools and starting the interviews, the author met with an employee of the Ministry of Education who informed her she would need written the approval of the Ministry to carry out her activities. Therefore, all questions for the semi-structured interviews were officially translated (see Annexes 2 and 3), and revised by the Research Department of the MoE, together with an official letter by the University of Padua testifying the goal of this research (see Annex 1). This step, although it did not translate in any edits to the interview questions, was mandatory for proceeding with the research. Once the Ministry approved the requested documents, the author proceeded to select the schools and ask permission from the principals to carry out the activities, which was granted without any issues.

The semi-structured interviews at the schools were conducted on two separate days, the 21st and the 26th of May, approximately ten days before the conclusion of the academic year. The proximity to the end of the term, with students preparing for or undertaking their final examinations, imposed constraints on both the number of

²³ The MoE employee (see previous footnote) explained that Jordanian parents can decide whether they prefer that their children in the morning shift attend the afternoon shift instead. This may be because classes in the morning are too overcrowded. Teachers and school personnel interviewed at both schools have confirmed that a number of Jordanian children attend the afternoon shift.

²⁴ According to the MoE employee (see above) and main literature on the educational system in Jordan (see, *inter alia*, UNESCO, 2021), all school personnel in governmental schools, including teachers, is Jordanian.

interviews and their setting. Indeed, because of the time at which the interviews were carried out, it was difficult to also ask some follow-up questions. Similarly, the availability of teachers for interviews was bounded due to their commitments. Nevertheless, the participants to the study, both children and adults, shared valuable insights and experiences, which have substantially contributed to the depth and quality of this research. The children who participated in the interviews were selected by their teachers due to previously mentioned time constraints that prevented the author from personally presenting the research project in various classes. This selection process is important to consider when addressing potential biases, as teachers may have chosen children based on their academic performance or personal preference. Nevertheless, the findings of the interviews remain relevant and valuable. The children were comfortable sharing both positive and negative insights about their overall experience at school, including views on their teachers.

The interviews with the children were conducted as follows. The author introduced herself and thoroughly explained the goal of the research in simple terms to ensure that all students understood. The children were reassured that the questions were not part of an exam or evaluation process, and they could share their opinions on the school, students and teachers freely, without fearing being judged. Furthermore, they were encouraged to ask questions if anything was unclear, and they were told that they did not have to answer any question they did not feel comfortable discussing. Once the students were ready to start, some personal information was asked: age, nationality, place of residence, number of people in the family, occupation of the parents and whether the child him/herself works, grade attended, and number of years in the Jordanian school system. After having gathered this information, the following questions aimed at learning about the students' experience and feelings at school, including their feelings related to their relationships with other kids and with their teachers. As many students mentioned issues with Jordanian children in the morning shifts, some questions were also asked relating to the double shift system. In addition, they were asked what they would change at school if they could do it, and if they felt anything should be improved (the list of questions is available in Annex 2).

At the Abu Obaida school, the interviews were carried out on the 21st of May 2024 with the support of a Jordanian interpreter²⁵. Nine boys aged 11 to 16, seven (7) Syrians, one (1) Iraqi and one (1) Yemeni, were gathered at the school library by their teachers. The author, assisted by a Jordanian interpreter, introduced herself and explained the structure and goal of the research. The children were asked if they were comfortable doing the interview in the same room or if they would prefer being alone with the author and her assistant – all claimed they were comfortable staying in the room with all the other kids. The author kindly requested the teachers and the librarian to leave the room, so that the children would feel more at ease. They left but came back after a few interviews. At this point, the children were asked multiple times if they preferred that the teachers left, but they mostly answered: “No, *‘adi*, it’s fine”. All interviews with the children at the Abu Obaida school were carried out in pairs, except for the last one which was conducted with a group of three students. This method was intentionally preferred by the author to make the interview more enjoyable for the children, who were asked whether they preferred to be interviewed with a friend or not. This process proved to be successful: the students seemed more comfortable to be sharing their thoughts and experiences together with a friend or classmate. This translated into the students backing each other up and joking, and the interviews almost turned into informal conversations where the prepared questions only served as a guiding thread. Almost all children were visibly excited to be asked questions and talk about their experiences, share their thoughts and opinions. Some were shyer and more nervous during the interview, while others seemed reluctant to discuss personal information, such as relating to their families. In these cases, the students were reassured that they did not have to answer any questions if he did not want to.

At the Al-Hussein school, the interviews were conducted on the 26th of May 2024. Ten (10) children aged 9 and 16 were interviewed, seven (7) Syrians and three (3) Yemenis. The first three students were interviewed in a small, empty class at the last floor of the school. The girls were at their ease and felt comfortable sharing their

²⁵ The interpreter was present because, after some discussions with Jordanian acquaintances and colleagues, it was suggested that it would be safer and more comfortable if the author was accompanied to the school for boys by a Jordanian person who could provide support if necessary.

views about the school, teachers and other students. Another girl was interviewed in an empty office, but she was interrupted by another six girls joining halfway through her interview. As she preferred to be alone and did not feel comfortable speaking in front of other children, her interview was shorter than the others. Then, the six girls were interviewed together because of time constraints²⁶, thus creating a sort of focus group in the office. The girls, one 9-year-old and two 10-year-old Yemenis, one 14-year-old and two 16-year-old Syrians, were at ease discussing the topics in focus. However, one of the youngest girls mainly stayed silent and backed her sister as she spoke. It was slightly more difficult than in the first school to find a quiet room to carry out the interviews, as it was the first day of exams and different staff and students kept coming in and out.

Although the original format of the interviews could not be carried out as planned, the author preferred taking advantage of the time at the school and conducting the interviews, nevertheless. Since that week final exams were taking place, it would have not been possible to reschedule time and meet the students on a different day.

After completing the interviews with the students, it was the teachers' turn. The set of questions prepared for the interviews with teachers (see Annex 3) were slightly changed for three main reasons. First, what was initially aimed to be a larger focus groups including only teachers, later turned into smaller groups or one-to-one interviews not only with teachers, but also with other school personnel. This was due first, as explained, to the fact that teachers were busy with either supervising their students during the exam sessions or getting them ready for the coming exams. Second, some other personnel were included in the sample as they were keen to attend the discussions and share their experiences. And third, most questions were aimed at evaluating the capacity building training available to teachers for better interacting with refugee children and addressing their needs. However, since none of the interviewed teachers were aware of such training opportunities, the questions were shaped towards trying to understand whether they considered such training valuable and necessary or not.

²⁶ This interview was carried out after the girls had finished their exams, at the end of the school day, so the time available for conducting the interview was limited.

At the Abu Obaida school, a 40-minute-long focus group discussion was conducted with three (3) staff: a Physical Education (PE) teacher, an Arabic teacher, and a librarian. Similarly to the interview with the children, the school personnel too was asked some personal information (age, nationality, years of experience teaching and with refugee children, subject taught). Afterwards, the questions shifted towards understanding whether they have thorough or general information on the background of their students and their understanding of their students' inherent vulnerabilities and challenges. The relationship between teachers and students was also investigated. After that, teachers' preparation was discussed to understand whether the teachers had received previous training on how to better deal with refugee students and whether they consider capacity building an important feature in their career or not. Finally, the teachers were given space to share their thoughts regarding their school and the school system in general, as well as what the main priorities and needs of their school are in their opinions.

At the school for girls, the focus group could not be implemented as most teachers were busy with supervising the students taking the exams. However, while sitting in the principal's office, the counsellor of the school and the UNICEF administrative assistant shared their views and opinions about the topics discussed in the research. The UNICEF employee, a Syrian refugee herself, was instrumental for highlighting a variety of needs and gaps in governmental schools. Later, a third-grade teacher showed interest and availability to answer the questions of the interview, which was carried out following the same steps as in the school for boys.

1.4 Analysis and systematisation of the findings

As far as the notetaking and systemisation of the interviews' findings are concerned, notes were taken and integrated on the same and following days. Whenever interviews were recorded, consent was asked before starting. During the first set of interviews at the school for boys, the interpreter was in charge of taking notes, which were then completed by the author. At the school for girls, as the author was alone and not assisted by the interpreter, the interviews were recorded upon consent and later transcribed. After organising all information collected during the interviews, the key topics that emerged were the following:

- a) The infrastructural issues of the schools and tangible needs to be addressed, e.g., improving the conditions of the bathrooms and modernising the buildings and classrooms;
- b) The students' feelings at school, in particular feelings of safety (or lack thereof) related to the separation from Jordanian students through the double shift system;
- c) The impact of the relationship with their teachers and how this affects the students' educational experience;
- d) Teachers' awareness of refugee children's vulnerabilities and backgrounds, and the need to strengthen capacity building and training opportunities.

These main themes shaped the structure of the chapter, which is thus organised as follows. First, the schools are introduced to provide the reader with an overview of their location, structure and composition, including information about the number of students and their nationality. Secondly, students' feelings are analysed, mainly in relation to the separation in shifts between Jordanian children and refugee children. Therefore, a brief elaboration is offered to the reader to have an overall understanding of the double shift system and the impact it has on the children attending the afternoon shift. Third, the relationship between teachers and students is analysed, including the positive effects that a relationship based on trust and understanding can have on the overall educational experience of students. And finally, the importance of teachers' preparation and awareness of refugees' vulnerabilities and background to better support them and respond to their needs is discussed.

2. Findings of the interviews at two schools in East Amman: Abu Obaida Basic School for Boys (Hashmi al-Shamali) and Al-Hussein Comprehensive Secondary School for Girls (Jabal Hussein)

2.1 The Abu Obaida Basic School for Boys in Hashmi al-Shamali

The first school, the Abu Obaida School for Boys, is located in the Hashmi al-Shamali neighbourhood. Hashmi al-Shamali is a low-income neighbourhood that has become one of the preferred locations for refugees to reside in thanks to "its low cost/high service access dynamic" (Perosa, 2018). The school was founded in the late eighties, and it started the *fatra el-masayyah*, the evening/afternoon shift, in 2016. The librarian explained that

the school became a *markaz swry*²⁷, a Syrian centre, in 2016, and since then it has been welcoming over a thousand of refugees. He also added that the Abu Obaida school is the only one hosting a “Syrian centre” for boys in the neighbourhood²⁸. If originally it was mainly receiving Syrian refugee children to respond to the crisis started in 2011, other refugee nationalities were soon welcomed as well, including Yemeni, Iraqi, Libyan, Sudanese, and others. Jordanian children attend the morning shift, although it may happen that, due to overcrowding in classrooms, some Jordanians end up attending classes in the afternoon. When asked about the composition of their classes, the teachers stated that the majority of children are Syrian refugees, but that they also have significant numbers of Iraqi and Yemeni children and a few other nationalities.



Figures 8 and 9, Entrance and exterior space of the Abu Obaida School for Boys in Hashmi al-Shamali
(picture of the author – 12/09/2024)

²⁷ During the interview on the 26th of May 2024, the MoE employee explained that the afternoon shift is indeed a *markaz swry*, a centre for Syrians. These centres were open primarily to welcome Syrian refugee students in afternoon shifts. The MoE, in cooperation with donors, i.e., UN agencies and INGOs, e.g., GIZ and USAID, decides to start an afternoon shift in a certain school. The decision over which neighbourhood will be hosting a centre for Syrians depends on statistics and numbers. According to the MoE employee, if a neighbourhood hosts 150 or more Syrian refugees, then an afternoon shift in a selected school is opened. When asked if he meant refugees in general or Syrians specifically, he explained that the focus is on Syrians because “this is what donors want”. Other nationalities are welcome, but first the criterion of 150 Syrian refugees must be met in order to start an afternoon shift and open the Syrian centre.

²⁸ Interview, 21/05/2024.

From the outside, the school looks like an old-fashioned building with thick beige/brown walls. Walking through the main gate (figure 10), students walk to reach their classrooms (figure 11), passing by a large courtyard where they can play. From the inside, the school is a big building made up of large corridors, numerous classes and bathrooms. The structure welcomes around 2300 students overall, with approximately 1200 in the morning shift and about 1130 in the afternoon shift, according to the librarian's statements²⁹. The school personnel talked of numbers ranging between 30 to 40 students per class in the morning shift, and between 20 to 40, sometimes more, in the afternoon shift. During the visit, both internal and external spaces seemed in decent conditions.



Figures 10 and 11, Corridors at the first and second floor of the Abu Obaida School for Boys in Hashmi al-Shamali (picture of the author – 12/09/2024)

According to the testimonies of teachers and students, the classes are quite crowded with students and even though numbers may vary from one grade to another, they talked of as many as 45 children per class. Despite the lack of elements to make the school more welcoming and warmer, the spaces seemed generally tidy and well-looked after. The hallways were clean, and at the end of the visit, at around 3:30 pm, some students were

²⁹ Interview, 21/05/2024.

cleaning them with water and a *gasshata*, a squeegee, supervised by a janitor. The space that the students complained the most about, backed by their teachers and the school staff interviewed, was the bathrooms. Most students claimed that, if they could change or improve anything at school, they would like the bathrooms to be cleaner and in better conditions overall. Among giggles and glances at each other, the students seemed put off while talking about them.

The staff shared that they sometimes feel bad for the afternoon-shift children because they end up finding the school in worse conditions than the students of the morning shift. When asked what they would change at school, if they could, or what they see as priorities within the premises, they all agreed that better allocation of and investment in resources is the main priority. They said that investing in more personnel to keep the spaces clean would not only make the school look better, but it would also have a positive impact on the students' mindset and mood. "*Haram*, it's a shame. These students come to school in the afternoon and find it in poor conditions because there are just not enough personnel to keep it clean. The morning shift ends around 12:30 and the afternoon one starts at about 12:45 – there is no time to clean, tidy up and refresh the classes. So, they come to school and feel like it's *musta'mal*, a 'used' environment"³⁰, said one of the employees. The teachers agreed with their colleague and shared the belief that more efforts must be channelled towards maintenance and improvements at the level of infrastructure, resources and preservation of the structure. Once they learnt that, during the interviews, the students complained about the toilets, they also agreed on the inadequate hygienic conditions of the bathrooms. Both the school staff and numerous Jordanian acquaintances

³⁰ Interview, 21/05/2024.

who attended public schools have consistently reported that the bathrooms are typically in very poor conditions.



Figures 12 and 13, Two classrooms in the Abu Obaida School for Boys in Hashmi al-Shamali (picture of the author – 12/09/2024)

Another issue that at least three Syrian kids complained about is that the *maqsaf*, the cafeteria, is closed during the afternoon shift. A Syrian boy said: “A problem we have at school is that the cafeteria is closed during our shift. It only works during the morning shift, so if you forget to bring food from home, you need to get it from somewhere outside the school, but once school starts, it is not allowed to go out to buy stuff”³¹. He added that some kids sneak out to buy food and drinks, but that is not allowed.

2.2 The Al-Hussein Comprehensive Secondary School for Girls in Jabal Hussein

The Al-Hussein Comprehensive Secondary School for Girls is located in Jabal Hussein, another neighbourhood in East Amman highly populated by refugees. Jabal Hussein is one of the areas where camps were established after the 1948 *nakba* to accommodate

³¹ Interview, 21/05/2024.

displaced Palestinian refugees (UNRWA, 2023). As it happened for other camps established to host Palestinian refugees, the Jabal Hussein Camp, founded in 1952 according to UNRWA data, slowly transitioned to concrete structures which replaced the tents. The significant presence of refugees in the area helps explain why the Al-Hussein School for Girls, established in 1957 as a school for Jordanian children, then transitioned to include refugee children in the afternoon shift in 2011.

Overall, the school personnel talked about 620 students in the morning shift and 470 in the afternoon shift, totalling more than 1000 students overall, with similar numbers of students per class as in the Abu Obaida school. As for the composition of the afternoon shift, it mirrored the school for boys: the majority of students are of Syrian origins, followed by Iraqis, Yemenis and other nationalities. As in the case of the school for boys, the principal's assistant also confirmed the presence of a number of Jordanian students, mostly due to the overcrowding in the morning shift. The structure is similar to the one for boys in Hashmi al-Shamali. Despite hosting fewer students, the school is quite large and spacious and, although quite bare of elements that could make it look and feel more welcoming and inviting, it appears to be well-maintained and cared for. Surrounded by high walls, the school is located next to another school for Jordanian children.



Figures 14 and 15, Entrance and exterior space of the Al-Hussein School for Girls in Jabal Hussein
(picture of the author – 12/09/2024)

From the inside, the walls are painted a shade of pink, giving the school a more fun and refreshing ambience. Most of the interviewed girls agreed that their school is beautiful and they like it. Nevertheless, some of the classes, including the one where the first interview was carried out, are not as clean and tidy: this classroom was rather small, with some trash accumulating in its corners, and the door was difficult to open. When asked if all classrooms in the school looked like that one, the girls said no, and that others are larger and tidier.

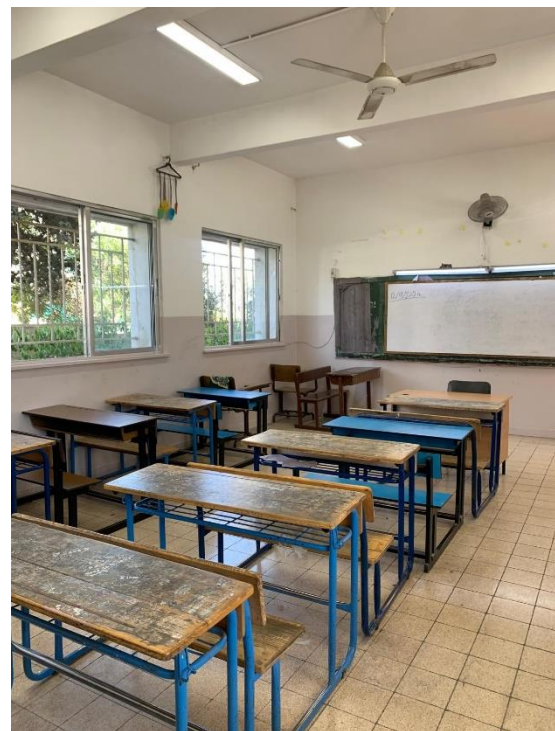


Figures 16, Corridors at the first and second floor of the Al-Hussein School for Girls in Jabal Hussein
(picture of the author – 12/09/2024)

While mentioning the overall conditions of the school and comparing them with the first school, some girls pointed out that even the bathrooms at their school are not adequate. A Syrian girl said that this is an issue, and that students play a role in this: “There should be more cooperation to keep them clean”. According to the girls, even if the toilets get cleaned two or more times a day “It goes *‘al fadi*, to nothing, because younger children are not careful and get them dirty all the time”³².

³² Interview, 26/05/2024.

When asked what they would change about their school, if they could, most students responded that they would like to make it look “more modern and better-looking”³³. In addition, some of them said they would like for “technology to be introduced in class, including whiteboards and screens”³⁴ to make learning more interactive and fun. This was echoed by one of the teachers, who also agreed that having access to technological devices would enhance the students’ learning experience. The teacher highlighted the need for more advanced technology to make lessons more enjoyable, interesting and captivating for the students overall, as well as to keep up with other schools and improve the quality of their teaching.



Figures 17 and 18, A classroom in the Al-Hussein School for Girls in Jabal Hussein (picture of the author – 12/09/2024)

3. The double shift system

As in other countries faced with hosting high numbers of refugees, e.g., Lebanon, Jordan has adopted some measures to make education more accessible for all children. One approach is the establishment of a second shift for refugee students. The double shift

³³ Interview, 26/05/2024.

³⁴ Ibidem.

system utilises the same school building for two shifts (Salem, 2020): the morning shift is destined to national children, while the afternoon shift hosts refugee students (first and foremost Syrian children, but also other nationalities such as Iraqis, Yemenis, Sudanese and others).

The double shift system in Jordanian schools is not a recent creation. The system was introduced in the sixties as a solution to the problem of overcrowded classrooms, caused by both industrialisation and the increasing numbers of refugees, especially from Palestine (Parker-Magyar, 2024; UNESCO, 2021). According to one of the employees at the Abu Obaida school, when schools were too crowded (with more than 40 students per class), then it could happen that afternoon shifts were organised. An MoE employee explained that there are double shift schools for Jordanian children only too, as a way to tackle overcrowding³⁵. In more recent times, more schools have adopted the double shift system to respond to the needs of greater influx of refugees over the years, especially after the beginning of the Syrian war in 2011. Indeed, according to a 2016 HRW report on the Barriers to Education for Syrian Refugee Children in Jordan, as early as 2013, the MoE resorted to implementing a double shift system in some schools in the attempt to accommodate the growing number of Syrian students in host communities. As a result, by the following year, 98 double shift schools were established in host communities (HRW (b), 2016). The double shift system has become the most viable way provide education not only to Syrian children, but also to other nationalities. According to UNESCO (2021), an estimated 340 of the 2,407 public schools offering basic education operated as double shift schools in 2016–2017. The 2022-2023 school year saw 72.2% out of 161,000 enrolled Syrians in Jordan attend a double shift school (Parker-Magyar, 2024).

The two schools where the interviews were carried out host an afternoon shift for refugee students. School personnel at the Abu Obaida school for boys referred to the afternoon shift as a *markaz swry*, a Syrian centre, highlighting the great number of Syrian students compared to other nationalities. However, classes in the afternoon shift are attended by children of different nationalities, including Iraqis, Yemenis, Palestinians, some Sudanese and Libyan children. The personnel interviewed in both schools explained that the

³⁵ Interview, 26/06/2024.

Ministry of Education, supported by and in cooperation with relevant UN agencies such as UNESCO, UNHCR and UNICEF, decides that these schools would host an afternoon shift once the Syrian crisis began and numbers of refugee children in the country started to increase significantly. The counsellor in the Al-Hussein school for girls claimed that, if at first rates of inclusion and integration between Jordanian and refugee children were higher, as numbers of students in classes kept increasing, the need to separate students in two shifts became undeniable³⁶. According to the counsellor, “[classes] stopped being beneficial for the students themselves because of overcrowding”³⁷. She did not express an opinion regarding whether such a decision was positive for the experience of students in the school, but she claimed that it was a necessary step to determine access to education for all children. The MoE employee interviewed shared the same opinion, saying that the double shift was the only solution to the Syrian emergency³⁸.

One of the teachers at the Abu Obaida school tried to explain that these are not proper “periods”, “It’s not like there is a first and a second period”³⁹, he said: these schools are “regular schools” in the morning, hosting national children, while they become “Syrian centres” in the afternoon. The interviewees agreed that the Abu Obaida school for boys was probably selected by the MoE to host the afternoon shift because of its location in a neighbourhood densely populated by refugees. They added that this move, although unpleasant for the students, was needed to tackle the issue of overcrowded classes.

While double shift schools help address the challenges of overcrowded classes and the need for education among refugee students, teachers, parents, and students in double shifted schools cite frequent concerns related to shortening the school day by one hour and trouble maintaining school cleanliness (Parker-Magyar, 2024), which has been a concern pointed out by many, especially at the Abu Obaida school in Hashmi al -Shamali.

Students in both schools agreed that the conditions at school are not optimal, especially when it comes to the bathrooms (see section 2). These are always quite dirty, according to all interviewed children. Therefore, there is a “[...] need to increase personnel in charge for cleaning. This would surely positively impact the students too: they would be feeling

³⁶ Interview, 26/05/2024

³⁷ Ibidem.

³⁸ Interview, 26/06/2024

³⁹ Interview, 21/05/2024.

better to come to school knowing that they are coming to a nice, clean environment”⁴⁰, said the librarian at the Abu Obaida school.

In addition, according to a 2016 HRW report, the Ministry of Education increased the hours of school attendance to thirty a week in the morning shift, while keeping it to twenty-one hours of instruction per week for afternoon-shift students. This, however, came at a cost: weekday classroom instruction for children in afternoon shifts was reduced, which is made up for by adding six hours of lessons on Saturdays (HRW (b), 2016; Salem, 2020). Some of the school personnel pointed at this as one of the factors determining students’ performance and drop-out rates: according to the interviewees, students are not motivated to keep attending school because, while they see Jordanian children going to school only five days a week and in the morning, they have to go to school in the afternoon and on Saturdays too. “It’s obvious that some children stop coming to school – how can you blame them? Conditions for the afternoon shift are worse, and then they also need to come to school at the weekend! Of course, they stop coming to school”⁴¹, one of the school staff said.

3.1 Students feelings at school

Analysing the double shift system is important as it provides context to understand refugee children’s feelings at school. Indeed, an important factor to consider is the impact that the double shift system can have on integration and inclusion. Literature on the effect of the double shift system on the educational experience of Syrian children in Jordan suggests that the separation of Jordanian and refugee children can hamper sentiments of belonging, stability and hope (Salem, 2020). While facilitating access to education and maximisation of resources, the double shift system limits *de facto* integration of refugee students (Parker-Magyar, 2024). Jordanian acquaintances in the humanitarian/development field have agreed that, however needed to be able to accommodate more students and increase access to school, this separation easily translates into segregation and lack of interaction between refugees and Jordanians. Syrian children in second shifts are “more visibly Syrian to the host community” (Parker-Magyar, 2024) and, according to Salem (2020), Syrian students feel easily targeted and

⁴⁰ Interview, 21/05/2024.

⁴¹ Ibidem.

face violence, bullying, and harassment both inside and outside of their schools. This aspect was shared not only by Syrian children, but also by Iraqi and Yemeni students interviewed for this research, who explained that they have been bullied, harassed and beaten up by students of the morning shift because of their nationality. Ricky, an advocate for refugees' rights and educator interviewed for this research reinforced this by sharing the experience of many African refugees in Jordan, highlighting that episodes of racism and harassment are even more frequent against them because of the colour of their skin and negative stereotypes⁴² (see section 4 and sub-section 4.3 of chapter 1).

Students at the Abu Obaida and at the Al-Hussein schools recounted some episodes of bullying, harassment and violence at the hands of the morning shift students, while they claimed that this happens more seldomly among students of the afternoon shift. A third-grade teacher interviewed at the school for girls said that she has not witnessed episodes of racism and discrimination. "I don't see that here, *alhamdulillah*, thanks God. Maybe it's because they are mostly of the same nationality"⁴³, she said, suggesting that less episodes linked to racism have been recorded in the afternoon shift. This was supported by the word of a 16-year-old Syrian girl, who explained that "Most of us are Syrians and we have been together [at school] for many years, so we know each other, and we get along well, even with other nationalities"⁴⁴. Backed by two other Syrian students, the girl stated that she and others have experienced feeling discriminated because of their nationality by the morning shift, attended by Jordanian students, but not in the afternoon shift. Two students at the Abu Obaida School for Boys in Hashmi al-Shamali said that they feel safe at school, but there are tensions with the morning shift students and sometimes there have been fights. They explained that, among them (in the afternoon shift), inclusion has not been an issue because they have been in school since the first grade. They complained about the lack of cooperation between the two shifts. They explained that the morning shift should contribute to tidying up and keeping the school clean before the afternoon shift arrives, but they don't. Therefore, the kids in the afternoon shift arrive and find the classes in worse conditions than they should be in. When asked about integration and inclusion with Jordanian students, one of the interviewed kids, a

⁴² Interview, 27/06/2024.

⁴³ Interview, 26/05/2024.

⁴⁴ Ibidem.

Syrian seventh grader, said that, since there are no Jordanians in his class, he did not have many thoughts about that. However, he reiterated the need for more cooperation with the morning shift, as far as cleaning and chores are concerned. “Cooperation is missing, and we need more support from this point of view, because in the afternoon shift everybody helps and supports each other”⁴⁵. His Syrian friend agreed and stated that they need more inclusion. His and other children’s words suggest that the double shift fosters a sharp separation between national and refugee students, limiting interaction and opportunities for constructive exchange and learning.

However, one Iraqi boy and a Yemeni girl, seemingly validated by the nods of her sister and another Yemeni child, reported episodes of bullying even within their shift. The Iraqi child, a seventh grader whose family’s main financial support comes from relatives living abroad, recounted that another Iraqi boy in the school beat him a few days before, and that he would have wanted to respond but did not because he was afraid of the consequences⁴⁶. The Yemeni girl, on the other hand, said that, although she generally feels safe and comfortable at school, sometimes there are problems. She spoke about issues with students in both the morning and the afternoon shifts. “Yesterday, some Syrian girls came to us and bullied us and said mean things about us and our nationality because we are Yemenis”, she said, “They cursed at us and said bad things. This is not the first time it happened; it has happened many times – they say these things because I’m from Yemen”⁴⁷. She also added that to solve this, she usually complains to the teachers, “But it doesn’t always help, and sometimes the girls [who attacked her] blame me”⁴⁸. Ricky, the educator previously mentioned, explained that there have been many instances of discrimination within the refugee community itself, especially by major refugee groups against some minorities, such as African groups⁴⁹ (see section 4 and sub-section 4.3 chapter 1). In his words, this creates divisions within the refugee community itself.

This raises questions relating to whether racism and discrimination may be felt more by non-Syrian refugees within the afternoon shift, as they tend to be minorities. A Syrian student shared her opinion saying that both in the morning and afternoon shifts there are

⁴⁵ Interview, 21/05/2024.

⁴⁶ Ibidem.

⁴⁷ Interview, 26/05/2024.

⁴⁸ Ibidem.

⁴⁹ Interview, 27/06/2024.

“Students who bully us [...], but in general the school is good”⁵⁰. She said that she did experience “bullying and racism because of my nationality from students of the morning shift, but then it didn’t happen again”⁵¹.

In summary, when asked about their feelings when coming to school and while at school, all interviewed children shared similar answers. While just one student said that “My feelings when I come to school are ‘*adi*, normal”, all the other children said that they are happy to come to school but that sometimes there are issues with the morning-shift students. All of them said that yes, they do feel safe, but sometimes there are tensions with Jordanian children. This seems to be an aspect that undermines the feeling of safety at school. Nevertheless, besides the issues raised by the students in relation to the lack of (positive) interaction with the morning shift students, the children shared positive feedback regarding their experience at school. Most of them used the word *momtazeh*, amazing, great, to describe their schools, and all explained that the things they prefer about going to school are their friends and their teachers. Two out of the eighteen children interviewed said that their school is like *beytak eth-thani*, your second house, and the others agreed with their statement.

4. The relationship between teachers and students

Alongside more immediate protection-concerns hampering access to quality education of refugee children, such as child labour, violence and poverty, other factors can affect their educational experience. This is the case of teachers’ awareness of refugee children’s vulnerabilities and needs, as well as the overall relationship between teachers and students. According to Ghada Abu al-Rous, Program Development Manager at Questscope, an international non-governmental, non-profit organization working with Syrian refugees, out of school youth, and marginalized communities, lack of adequate preparation of teachers is one of the barriers to access and consistent attendance to school for refugee children⁵². Lack of understanding and awareness thereof, as well as lack or near lack of knowledge of their backgrounds, can affect the quality education of refugee children. Consequently, a teaching approach that is culturally sensitive and aware of the unique needs and challenges that a refugee student may face will not only build a better

⁵⁰ Interview, 26/05/2024.

⁵¹ Ibidem.

⁵² Interview, 19/05/2024

relationship between teachers and students, but it will also actively translate into a more positive experience for refugee children (Antoniadou et al., 2023). Indeed, if refugee students feel understood and heard, they feel more positively about attending school – when asked about his thoughts about the Abu Obaida school, a Yemeni boy answered: “This school is like any other school, but I like the teachers here and I am happy to come”⁵³. This is particularly important considering that, in Jordan, these students attend classes in the afternoon and on Saturdays, which on itself could be a deterrent for school attendance. One of the teachers at the school for boys said that “Many students end up dropping out, and it’s not surprising. They already go through a lot, and not only they have to come to school in the afternoon, but they also have to come on Saturday. There are students [and their families] who ask themselves ‘Why should I do this?’ and they stop coming to school”⁵⁴. Considering this factor and how it can affect school attendance, it is even more important to ensure that school is a safe place where refugee students feel understood, heard and comfortable. Teachers are instrumental in achieving this goal.

The role teachers play is similar to that of a parent, a mentor and a protector, contributing to the positive psychological, emotional and physical development of children (Antoniadou et al., 2023). Alongside teaching school subjects, they also teach “rules and ways of living and behaving” (ibidem), support them psychologically and contribute to the formation of their personality. Some of the interviewed children complained that there are some “annoying students”, some who are noisy or are distracted in class, as well as some teachers they dislike. Nevertheless, in both schools, when asked what their favourite things about school are, all children answered their friends and teachers. Some emphasised that they enjoy the cooperation with their teachers the most; that they appreciate that the teachers explain many times if they do not understand the subject in class; and that if there is a problem, they can talk to them. When asked whether they feel comfortable to talk to their teachers, all children said that if they had any problem, they would confide in their teachers without hesitation. All students interviewed in both schools said that they generally feel supported by and comfortable with them. A 13-year-old Syrian girl confirmed: “I can talk to my teachers, and I feel understood and

⁵³ Interview, 21/05/2024

⁵⁴ Ibidem.

supported”⁵⁵; another one explained that “The teachers are very good, we do activities together, we talk together, sometimes they have children our age so they tell us about them”⁵⁶; and another said: “I really like the teachers, they understand us well and especially [the UNICEF administrative assistant volunteer] – if there is any problem, not only at school but also out of school, I’ll go and talk to her or my teachers. I know I can talk to them”⁵⁷.

At the Abu Obaida school, when asked whether they felt like the students were comfortable sharing thoughts and problems with them, the PE teacher smiled and said: “They definitely do. They love to vent to us, and they tell us everything – they talk a lot about anything that happens to them”⁵⁸. Talking about his relationship with the students at school, the PE teacher affirmed that their relationship is strong, that he knows his students well and that they trust him and talk to him often. The librarian explained that, if they do not want to talk to a teacher, they usually talk to the *morshed*, the school counsellor. Given the many, inherent vulnerabilities and challenges that refugee children often face, it is important that teachers have the tools to identify signs of distress or other negative emotions to properly and promptly address them (Antoniadou et al., 2023).

The interviewed teacher at the school for girls said that she is always available if the parents have questions or doubts. “We have WhatsApp groups where I send updates, pictures and homework, and they can message me privately if they need it”⁵⁹. During the interview with the Focal Point for General Education at UNHCR, she suggested that community and parental engagement must be enhanced and encouraged in the educational process⁶⁰. Clear and transparent communication with students and their parents, as well as with other teachers, is important to ensure that a constructive environment for all is fostered and promoted (Antoniadou et al., 2023). For most refugees, as discussed in chapter 1, section 3, either it is illegal to work or the range of professions they can practice is limited and poorly compensated. This emerged also from the interviews with the children. Ten among them reported that the father is the main

⁵⁵ Interview 26/05/2024.

⁵⁶ Ibidem.

⁵⁷ Ibidem.

⁵⁸ Interview, 21/05/2024

⁵⁹ Interview, 26/05/2024.

⁶⁰ Interview, 09/01/2024.

breadwinner in the family, even though in most cases they specified that their dads either do not have a lot of work, or their work is not regular; two sisters said that their dad has a job; four children reported that no one in their families works; one child preferred not to answer; and some added that they are supported through *kwbon*, vouchers, from UN agencies or NGOs. An Iraqi boy explained that no one in his family can work, and they receive financial support from a relative abroad (see section 4.2 chapter 1). A Yemeni boy explained that in his family, no one is allowed work because of their nationality (see section 4.4 chapter 1). About 78% of the registered refugees is living under the poverty line (Santamaria et al., 2022). Therefore, the UNHCR Focal Point for General Education explains, refugee parents' psychological and emotional capacity and mentality to focus on their children's education is limited. It is evident, then, that many factors hold back engagement from both sides. Education is a priority, but when families do not have the capacity, they will prioritise sending them to work to support the family⁶¹.

Among the school staff interviewed at the Al-Hussein School for Girls there was a Syrian refugee woman volunteering as an administrative assistant through a UNICEF-led project. The volunteered claimed that her main job is to observe and report whether “refugee students enjoy the same rights as Jordanian students”⁶². The UNICEF project involved 200 Syrian refugees have volunteered through this programme in numerous cities across the country (e.g., Karak, Mafraq, Amman, Irbid, Ramtha), but that it has not been renewed. She reported the importance of such a project to make refugee children feel understood, seen and supported by someone who has experienced a similar circumstance. She added that being able to recognise signs and behaviours in refugee children that may be indicating signs of distress or poor conditions at home. The volunteer explained that it is easier for her to identify them because of her own experience as a refugee in the country. “Because I am Syrian, I feel closer to the children, and I understand better the impact that war and displacement has on them. And I know that, because I am Syrian, the families themselves trust me more and come to me because they know that I understand their situation better than anyone else. On the other hand, Jordanian children and families tend to want to deal with Jordanian teachers more”⁶³, she explained. She

⁶¹ Interview, 09/01/2024.

⁶² Interview, 26/05/2024.

⁶³ Ibidem.

recounted that sometimes, there are girls who come to school looking extremely tired; sometimes, they show evidence of violence; or they look like they have not been eating properly. She spoke about a girl coming to school once wearing her *shahhata*, her flip-flops. Because wearing flip-flops is not appropriate at school, the girl was scolded and yelled at by a teacher, got very sad and started crying. “When I talked to the kid, she told me that she didn’t have proper shoes to wear”⁶⁴, she said. The employee proceeded to speak to the teacher and explain her that it was clear that the girl’s personal situation was not simple. “You see?”, she said, “There are always problems and it is better to talk to the children and understand them instead of getting angry. So, it is really important that teachers are aware of this, they must pay attention and be able to identify these signs”⁶⁵. Prepared teachers who can identify signs of distress, trauma and other negative emotions within the child’s behaviours at school are indispensable to ensure that refugee students’ needs and concerns are seen and addressed properly. Besides, if a child’s behaviour is connected to trauma and goes unnoticed, there is a risk that interacting with them without addressing it properly could lead to re-traumatisation (TCL, n.d.). The capacity of teachers to identify refugee children’s inherent, intersectional vulnerabilities⁶⁶ and shape their approach towards them in a sensitive and conscious way can determine the success or failure of a displaced child’s experience at school. The lack of knowledge, understanding and awareness of refugee children’s vulnerabilities and backgrounds has been identified by several sources as one of the barriers to children’s quality education, including impacting drop out and attendance rates (UNICEF, 2020; Tumen et al., 2021).

When asked about strategies to deal with children showing evidence of distress, anxiety, depression, loneliness or other negative feelings, the PE teacher interviewed at the school for boys recounted an episode occurred five years before. He noticed a Syrian child being alone all the time, especially during the break, and not interacting with other students. After some hesitation, the teacher decided to approach the boy, talk to him and try to understand what the problem was. “It was 2018, he was a Syrian boy. He said that back

⁶⁴ Interview, 26/05/2024.

⁶⁵ Ibidem.

⁶⁶ Mendola and Pera (2021) claim that refugees often face personal and context-related challenges, *inter alia*, institutional, economic, or environmental factors, both in their home and hosting countries. This can lead to harmful outcomes like social isolation, discrimination, poor health, or poverty, challenges that can worsen one another. This is referred as "intersectional vulnerability" (Mendola and Pera, 2021) and must be kept into consideration when discussing refugees’ experiences, vulnerabilities and circumstances.

in Syria he saw his father being murdered in front of his eyes. This is not the only episode, there are many, every day – the kids tell us so many things... Sometimes I forget, I can't remember everything. But this, I remember it perfectly"⁶⁷. This teacher explained that he had never received any training related to the inclusion of or the relationship with refugee students, and he claimed that "practice is better than any training". He explained that what he did was just approach the kid, ask questions and learn about his situation. After he understood what the problem was, the teacher said he committed to interacting more and more with the student every day, as well as encouraging other children to do the same. "The situation got much better! He started speaking with other students and made friends, and since then I saw him playing with them"⁶⁸. This episode demonstrates that knowledge and awareness of a refugee child's circumstances can shape the way a teacher's approach, making it more aware and leading them to interact with the child with increased sensitivity and consciousness.

According to a 2023 study on the challenges that teachers working with refugee children face in Greece, teachers are the ones fostering and promoting respect for the different, strengthening acceptance, tolerance and integration (Antoniadou et al., 2023). The authors highlight the importance of adopting an intercultural educational model to enhance the integration of refugees in local schools and foster equality among students of different backgrounds. On the same note, UNHCR's Focal Point for General Education reiterated the need, in Jordanian schools (mainly referring to public schools), to promote understanding, tolerance and respect of different cultures and backgrounds⁶⁹.

However, promotion of tolerance and interaction with children of different backgrounds can be hard to achieve when refugee and national children are separated in two shifts. Such segregation translates into a lack of contact and possibilities to get to know each other between refugee children and Jordanians.

Among the skills that the Antoniadou et al. (2023) highlight as fundamental for teachers dealing with refugee students, there are the knowledge of their students' socio-cultural background to better understand where they are coming from and be more aware of the

⁶⁷ Interview, 21/05/2024.

⁶⁸ Ibidem.

⁶⁹ Interview, 09/01/2024.

challenges they may be facing in the host country. Most school personnel and teachers interviewed said that they have a “general knowledge” of their students’ backgrounds, and that they are aware that many of them, and not only refugees, have difficult situations to deal with at home, including financial struggles, parents’ unemployment, and harsh episodes they have lived and witnessed in their countries of origin (as the episode mentioned by the PE teacher). Another skill that Antoniadou et al. (2023) mention is that teachers should be determined to break down stereotypes and create a welcoming environment for all students, organise activities that promote collaboration, teamwork and respect for the other (ibidem). This directly connects to the recommendations of UNHCR’s Focal Point for General Education on the need to foster tolerance, understanding and respect at school. Ricky, the advocate and educator interviewed for this research, also highlighted the importance to break down stereotypes surrounding the refugee community, mainly related to their lack of education and the thought of refugees as “receivers” (of aid, benefits and assistance) rather than “givers” (of skills, experiences and exchange)⁷⁰. What emerges from the 2023 study on the challenges that teachers working with refugee children face in Greece is the importance of having teachers and educators who are interculturally competent (Antoniadou et al., 2023). They should be mindful of their approaches to assessment and curriculum design, as well as being able to promote different points of views when they select teaching and learning materials (ibidem). In relation to the curricula, the UNHCR employee highlighted that although the Jordanian educational system has been working on them, more efforts need to be put towards enhancing inclusivity and accessibility through the curricula, especially for students from different backgrounds, including language. Support for students who are not Arabic native speakers or are dyslexic, must be provided⁷¹.

Another factor to keep in consideration is that some refugee children may have been out of school for years or have never attended school before at all. This can potentially translate into a lack of understanding of rules in class, thus making it difficult for them to adapt and for teachers to handle them without frustration or other negative feelings (Antoniadou et al., 2023). These factors can really set a challenge for teachers to interact and establish a connection with their students to ensure that the educational experience is

⁷⁰ Interview, 27/06/2024.

⁷¹ Interview, 09/01/2024.

just as positive, enriching and fulfilling as it should be for any other child. According to the authors, these obstacles could be overcome more easily if teachers were better prepared to teach refugee students (ibidem).

According to a 2020 UNICEF report on out-of-school children in Jordan, quality education needs to be improved through, *inter alia*, the advancement of policies on teachers' professional development and accreditation of teachers (UNICEF, 2020). In order to increase quality education, the use of professional standards to ensure greater accountability for teachers and schools needs to be systematically introduced and embedded to ensure educational reform; more resources must be invested in providing teachers with pre- and in-service training; capacity building training for school counsellors and teachers should be provided to improve the psycho-social well-being of students (ibidem).

5. Teachers' experience with refugees and their preparation, knowledge and awareness of students' inherent, unique vulnerabilities

As shown, it is evident that a class of refugee students requires that their teachers are equipped of solid experience and awareness of their vulnerabilities and challenges. Therefore, teachers' preparation and knowledge of the backgrounds of their students is fundamental to ensure that children feel not only understood and supported, but also cared for and valued. Undoubtedly, teachers can represent a glimpse of continuity in students' lives and can play a pivotal role in developing their social and emotional skills, as well as in protecting and supporting their scholastic success (UNESCO, 2023). In this environment, it is essential that teachers receive adequate training related to inclusion and integration of refugee children, how to handle them in a way that is trauma-conscious and culturally sensitive, and which does not discriminate them because of their backgrounds and past experiences. A prepared teacher aware of his or her students' circumstances is able to value diversity and make a difference in how those students experience school life.

It becomes clear that the availability of trained, trauma-aware and culturally sensitive teachers is vital for the positive educational experience of refugee children and for ensuring quality of education (UNESCO, 2019). Nevertheless, working conditions of teachers in refugee contexts are often challenging. Oftentimes, teachers lack the necessary

experience and skills for dealing with extraordinary conditions that are typical of classes including refugee students, such as crowded classrooms, intensive working hours, students speaking different languages, and social and cultural conflicts (ibidem). The three interviewed teachers in both schools affirmed that they had no previous experience working with refugee children and that they received no training before starting to work in the afternoon shifts. They agreed that overcrowded classes can make their job more difficult – they explained that the double shift system has only partially solved this problem, and that many classes are still overcrowded. Another issue that came up during the interviews is that sometimes it is hard to interact with students whose mother tongue is not Arabic or a “different” Arabic⁷². A teacher in the Al-Hussein School for Girls claimed that receiving training to have more information about the students’ backgrounds, including information about the language they speak and their culture, could make a difference in their educational experience and in the relationship between teachers and students, because “Sometimes it’s hard to understand them”⁷³. She explained that, since children may speak different Arabic dialects, “Sometimes there are words I don’t know, which can affect communication – we understand each other well, but there are just some words I don’t understand, and I need them to explain what they mean”⁷⁴.

UN agencies focussing on the right to education for children, i.e., UNESCO, UNICEF and UNHCR, agree that teacher training is vital for improving the quality of teaching and deliver learning content in a way that is trauma-sensitive and aware of the students’ socio-cultural backgrounds. According to a 2019 UNESCO’s report, the presence of “trained and motivated teachers is crucial for coping with the challenging conditions generated by displacement” (UNESCO, 2019). In this statement, the key word is “motivated” – teachers’ motivation in governmental schools is sometimes low. Salaries for teachers, especially in public schools, are generally low. It is hard to expect a teacher who may be

⁷² Although Arab countries share a common language, Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) or *Fusha*, each country has its own distinct dialect. For example, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine share the Levantine or *Shami* dialect, though there are slight differences in pronunciation and vocabulary across these countries (Accelingo, 2024). The variety of dialects spoken across the Arab world can create communication challenges among Arabs from different countries, often prompting them to use MSA to facilitate understanding. For refugee children, speaking a different dialect can hinder inclusion at school and foster feelings of non-belonging or shame, as well as representing an obstacle to communication with both students and teachers.

⁷³ Interview, 26/05/2024.

⁷⁴ Ibidem.

living in poor conditions and already has her own family to take care of, to go to school and be able to keep a positive, motivated attitude at all times. The relatively low compensation for teachers has frequently been identified, together with limited training and professional development support for all teachers and school leaders, as a factor negatively impacting the quality of education (UNICEF, 2020).

5.1 Capacity building and training opportunities for teachers

Kafa Akroush, responsible for the Gender and Equality Department of the Ministry of Education, explained in an interview that the MoE is responsible for preparing and delivering training for teachers in the Kingdom⁷⁵. These trainings cover several topics, ranging from inclusion of refugee children and children with disabilities to gender and equality. As claimed by Akroush, these trainings are delivered to all teachers in the country – a number of teachers in every district is selected to then train others. According to a 2021 UNESCO report, a range of actors, e.g., the MoE, Queen Rania Training Academy, UN agencies and NGOs, are in charge of providing in-service professional development programmes and training (UNESCO, 2021). Some focus on how to address the needs of refugee students, provide psychosocial support to all learners, and how to integrate them with Jordanian students. Teachers generally have a positive attitude towards these training opportunities. The study suggests that second-shift teachers can access professional development opportunities, sometimes even more than morning-shift employees (UNESCO, 2021). The Ministry seems to be making considerable efforts, together with relevant UN agencies, to render these trainings available and to target all schools in the different governorates so that potentially all areas across the country are provided with the same knowledge and tools to better deal with their students, and especially the most vulnerable, such as children with disabilities, girls, and refugees. At the burst of the Arab Springs and with the consequent influx of refugees from Syria into Jordan, teachers were not provided with much specific training on displaced children's vulnerabilities and trauma as the emergency required that they responded promptly to the increasing needs of Syrian refugees. They mostly learnt how to manage and respond to them through practical experience. Bakez, Focal Point for General Education at UNHCR, confirmed that since the start of the Syrian crisis in 2011, the situation in Jordan regarding

⁷⁵ Interview, 16/05/2024.

teachers' training and preparedness has developed significantly⁷⁶. Efforts have been made to enhance teachers' capacity and to integrate refugee children in schools, providing better support to national teachers for addressing students' unique needs. Bakez stated that the Ministry of Education, in cooperation with INGOs and UN agencies, has been actively involved in creating and implementing policies and strategies for addressing the needs of refugees in the field of education. Such efforts, she continued, include, *inter alia*, focus on sensitive education, capacity development, strategic planning of education. The role of civil society actors and UN agencies, such as UNICEF, UNHCR and UNCESCO, has been pivotal to enhance these aspects.

This topic was discussed with the teachers interviewed at the Al-Hussein and the Abu Obaida schools. The teachers were not aware of the availability of such training opportunities, and they claimed that they did not receive any. The Arabic teacher at the school for boys mentioned that the only training he received was "When we first start teaching, a sort of certification that says you are licensed to teach"⁷⁷. The PE teacher mentioned a training on gender equality⁷⁸, which was also brought up by Akroush, responsible for the Gender and Equality Department of the Ministry of Education, during the interview. The teacher at the school for girls, on the other hand, explained that she was aware of training opportunities on gender and on the inclusion and integration of children with disabilities at school, which she took, but not about any training regarding the inclusion of refugee children and their vulnerabilities⁷⁹. After explaining that the MoE and other civil society actors are responsible for providing and organising these across all governorates and directorates in the country, one of the teachers suggested that probably only a few teachers in each directorate are selected to undertake these capacity building opportunities, and they were not among those chosen teachers. While talking in principal's office of the Al-Hussein School for Girls with the school's counsellor, a janitor and two teachers, they were all surprised to hear about the availability of such trainings and asked who was providing them. Some suggested, as the teachers at the previous

⁷⁶ Interview, 09/01/2024.

⁷⁷ Interview, 21/05/2024.

⁷⁸ Ibidem.

⁷⁹ Interview, 26/05/2024.

school, that maybe only some teachers are chosen to attend these trainings, but that to their knowledge, no one in their school had taken them before.

After receiving such feedback from the teachers in the afternoon shifts, an interview was conducted with another employee at the Ministry of Education, who preferred remaining anonymous. Agreeing with Akroush, the employee explained that trainings are available throughout the country, but only to public employees. It is necessary to clarify this: according to the interviewee and the 2021 UNESCO study on teacher management in public schools in Jordan, public schools employ two types of teachers, not including substitute teachers, namely permanent teachers (who are civil servants on regular contracts, those defined by the MoE employee as “public employees”) and daily paid teachers (who do not have regular contracts and whose salary is based on number of days worked) (UNESCO, 2021), as also confirmed by a teacher interviewed in the school for girls. According to the MoE worker, “Investing in training these teachers wouldn’t be cost-effective because they are not stable, they may end up leaving or being fired after a short period of time since they are not public employees”⁸⁰. He explained that morning-shift teachers receive all kinds of training, even related to inclusion of refugee children. Although it is encouraging to think that public teachers contracted by the MoE are receiving valuable preparation on a number of sensitive themes, such as refugee inclusion, inclusion of children with disabilities, and gender, afternoon-shift teachers, who directly work with refugee children, must receive the same preparation, too. One of the interviewed teachers, when asked about challenges and differences she noticed working with refugee children and Jordanians, answered: “[...] I have noticed that [refugees] pay less attention to personal hygiene – for example they don’t keep their nails cut, they don’t wear socks under their shoes. There are some Jordanians who do this but not many, among Syrians it’s more”⁸¹. The teacher said this without linking it with any circumstances that may be putting the parents of those children in the position of not being able to prioritise their children’s personal hygiene. This suggested that although there is an overall awareness that refugee families in Jordan may have difficult backgrounds and face hard financial circumstances, this understanding remains superficial and does not explore the root causes of the refugee community’s struggles. When interrogated over the need for

⁸⁰ Interview, 26/06/2024.

⁸¹ Interview, 26/05/2024.

training for teachers, the employee at the MoE did not seem to think of it as a need. “There is no trauma now – this generation of refugees has no trauma”, he claimed, “This was true at the beginning [of the Syrian crisis] but not now”⁸². This statement may be hinting towards a scarce of understanding and awareness of refugees’ conditions in the country at the institutional level. The seemingly lack of understanding of the different layers and components of trauma that emerged from the conversation with the employee, including the reality and impact of trans-generational trauma, could potentially be an indicator that more awareness needs to be raised.

Conclusions

The interviews carried out in May 2024, at the Abu Obaida School for Boys and at the Al-Hussein School for Girls, located respectively in Hashmi al-Shamali and Jabal Hussein (East Amman), shed lights on a number of factors related to the experience of refugee children.

First of all, it is clear that the infrastructures could be improved to guarantee a better experience for children at school. The students have claimed that they would appreciate changes to make their schools look better and more modern – this was especially the opinion of the girls and teacher in Jabal Hussein, who also wished there were more technological tools to use in class. The boys in Hashmi al-Shamali shared similar views, though mostly directed towards the inadequate hygienic conditions of the bath rooms and the lack of a cafeteria for the afternoon-shift students to buy their food and drinks. Classrooms in both schools seem to be hosting about the same number of students: depending on the grade, some classes reach 45 students. Finally, more could be done to render the schools warmer and more welcoming for the students, including decorative elements and colour.

Secondly, the feelings and insights shared by students about their experience at school were similar, although the boys have reported more often than the girls that they have issues with Jordanian students from the morning shift. This raises important questions related to the impact of the double shift system on quality education, refugees’ mental health and their overall educational experience. Most students claimed that although they

⁸² Interview, 26/06/2024.

feel safe and happy at school, there are issues with Jordanian students from the morning shift. However, it is important to underline that some students have reported episodes of bullying among the afternoon shift itself, thus raising questions related to internal divisions among groups within the refugee community, as also suggested by Ricky, an advocate for refugees' rights.

Thirdly, the cooperation and relationship between students and teachers has been pointed at by children as one of the main factors that make them love going to school. All children reported that the relationship with their teachers is *montazeh*, amazing. They said that they trust their teachers, they feel supported and understood by them, and they feel comfortable speaking to them if they have any problems. This sheds light on the importance of a positive relationship between teachers (and school personnel in general) and students, and how it can influence the overall educational experience of refugee students.

Finally, the topic of capacity building for afternoon-shift teachers has been analysed, including opinion from employees of the Ministry of Education and civil society actors. Although there seem to be an availability of training opportunities, as pointed out by UNESCO and UNICEF, the teachers and school personnel interviewed were not aware of them. Some knew about training on inclusion of children with disabilities and gender, but not about inclusion of refugee students. This indicates a gap between the availability of capacity building opportunities and the actual awareness of such tools on the ground. In addition, the fact that the employee at the MoE disagreed with the need for increased preparation for teachers working with refugees could be hinting towards a lack of deep awareness and understanding of the needs and vulnerabilities not only of refugee children, but of the overall refugee community.

The findings of the interviews conducted at the schools with both children and teachers, and the meaningful insights shared by civil society actors, provide breeding ground to reflect on the necessary steps and provisions to ensure that refugee students can enjoy quality education and improve their educational experience (see chapter 3).

Chapter 3

By analysing the findings of the interviews carried out in two schools in the Amman governorate, chapter 2 provided breeding ground to reflect on opportunities and future avenues for research to improve the general educational experience of refugee students in the country.

It has been common opinion among the participants of this study that governmental schools need improvement on different levels. The need for better allocation of resources and improvement of school infrastructures was strongly reported by most interviewees. The students especially claimed that restrooms need to be better looked after and cleaner, that more technological devices would improve the quality of classes, and that, in general, modernising and decorating the spaces would make school more inviting, welcoming and attractive. Although urgent and deserving of attention and adequate response, this research does not focus on addressing infrastructural needs of governmental schools. In its limited space, the study rather aims at providing insights to move towards the realisation of a more inclusive, culturally sensitive educational environment for all children, including refugee children, and a more tolerant society overall.

First, section 1 discusses the need to raise awareness of the needs of the refugee community at various levels of society, i.e., starting from the community (section 1.1) and involving schools (section 1.1.1), within the refugee community itself (section 1.2), and up to the institutional level (1.3).

Section 2 emphasises the disparity between the availability of training opportunities and teachers' awareness and ability to access them. This section also suggests that teachers must be reminded of the crucial role they play in refugee children's educational and life experience overall. Regular training to refresh teachers' knowledge of refugee children's necessities and vulnerabilities; evaluate their understanding of protection concerns; and update them on relevant developments within policies directly affecting refugee families is important to ensure teachers adopt a culturally sensitive approach in their classes. Finally, considerations are also included regarding the need to study the relation between teachers' low compensation, unstable working conditions and motivation, especially when it comes to teachers working in the afternoon shift.

Third, section 3 reflects on the possibility to re-think the double shift school system to foster inclusion of refugees rather than segregation. Although the system has been a partially viable solution to tackle the problem of classrooms' overcrowding, as broadly discussed in chapter 2, it has also contributed to separating Jordanian children and refugees. Besides, the system seems to also have accentuated divisions among different refugee groups. Therefore, the section proposes avenue for research to evaluate the impact of the double shift system on the educational experience of refugee children more thoroughly, including comparative analysis with schools that integrate refugee students.

1. Raising awareness as a tool to foster tolerance and inclusion

It is impossible to improve enjoyment of refugee children's right to quality education without first channelling efforts into raising awareness of the broader community's challenges and vulnerabilities in Jordan. Awareness-raising initiatives and efforts seek to inform and educate people about a specific topic to influence their attitudes, behaviours and beliefs (SDG AH, 2019). In this case, raising awareness of refugees' rights and conditions in the country aims to inform as many people as possible about the reality of refugees' lives (JRS website, n.d.). Effective awareness-raising strategies could empower the Jordanian society to be better understanding and responding to the needs of the refugee community (UNHCR, 2023).

The interviews carried out throughout the research period, both in schools, institutions and with civil society actors, shed light on partial and in some cases superficial understanding of the refugee community's needs and vulnerabilities. The diverse and numerous needs of refugee learners, the context they live in Jordan, including levels of safety and provision of infrastructure, their prior learning and skills, their family situation (particularly financial resources and familial responsibilities), and aspects of their identities (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity, and other characteristics) are complex sets of interactions that must be acknowledged and kept into consideration (UN Agencies, 2023). To tackle the lack of or scarce understanding of the living circumstances and their intersectional vulnerabilities, advocacy efforts aimed at raising awareness of the overall refugee community's challenges, vulnerabilities and backgrounds, as well as their resourcefulness, skills and capacities, must be implemented at a variety of levels.

1.1 Raising awareness at the hosting community level

First, awareness must be raised at the host community level. It is common that people in hosting countries have feelings of mistrust and hostility against refugees (and people on the move in general). The misbelief that refugees have access to better rights, benefits and aid than national individuals strengthens aversion against refugee presence in the country. This sentiment is obviously not exclusive to Jordan or the Middle East, but widespread in Western countries as well, which have become increasingly hostile against people on the move, including refugees (Phillips, 2023; FRA, 2023). Although it is not the scope of this research to analyse this sentiment, its roots and causes, some explanation has been provided in section 3 of chapter 1. Suffices it to know that, in Jordan, many people hold negative stereotypes against refugees, especially Syrians: it is believed that refugees live a better life than Jordanians, that they receive more support by the international community and have access to more rights than locals do. While it is acknowledged that the displacement response in Jordan has prioritised Syrian refugees since the onset of the civil war in Syria (Meral et al., 2022) while neglecting others (e.g., Sudanese, Somalis and Yemenis), the situation of most refugees in the country remains far from ideal. As discussed in chapter 1 and as emerges from the interviews carried out with both students and school personnel in chapter 2, refugees face numerous challenges, ranging from discrimination and harassment to lack of access to employment opportunities and barriers to access to education. Therefore, it is necessary to channel efforts to raise awareness of the reality of refugees' lives in the country. This could be done through outreach and awareness campaigns promoted by (I)NGOs, as well as activities that encourage interaction and exchange between the two communities.

In chapter 2, an educator and advocate for refugees' rights highlighted the need to dismantle negative stereotypes and narratives surrounding the refugee community. He referred to this as the narrative of "refugees as receivers"⁸³: in his words, refugees are perceived by the host community as receivers of aid, support and benefit. Combating this perception, then, is the first step to move towards a more inclusive and tolerant society. Being part of the refugee community, an activist and advocate for refugees' rights, the educator emphasised the fact that the refugee community is very skilful and resourceful

⁸³ Interview, 27/06/2024

and could participate in and enrich advocacy efforts through sharing valuable insights and experiences. Raising awareness of refugees' skills and valuable role in society is also important to inform policymakers who may view refugees as too vulnerable and unskilled to influence important decisions that directly affect their lives, even though this is often so because of policies and politics that treat them as such (Ramazani, 2023). Adopting a participatory approach to raising awareness and designing advocacy strategies, which actively involves the refugee community from the beginning and fosters collaboration with the host community, is likely to yield more effective and long-lasting outcomes. Furthermore, through involving the refugee community into advocating for their own rights and better access to services (and better standards of living overall), bottom-up accountability and a sense of ownership of the strategy and its results would also be achieved. A participatory approach to advocacy is ideal to promote and raise awareness of refugees' rights. However, active participation in advocacy efforts can be risky for members of the community as such exposure could potentially bring them to the attention of the authorities. This threat can prevent refugees from getting exposed, especially when it comes to unregistered refugees, and is an element that must be taken into consideration when addressing awareness-raising needs.

1.1.1 Strengthen interaction and cooperation between schools and the refugee community

Including schools in the process of raising awareness of refugees' rights and challenges in Jordan can be instrumental to build a fairer, more equal society. By promoting an inclusive and tolerant educational environment based on dialogue, exchange and acceptance of diversity, the experience of refugee children at school would improve. This step directly connects with the suggestions made by UNHCR's Focal Point for General Education, who claimed that cooperation between the refugee community and schools must be enhanced to establish constructive communication based on mutual understanding of challenges from both sides⁸⁴. This interaction would increase schools' knowledge of the community's needs, vulnerabilities and obstacles, and it would make it possible for the community itself to speak up and propose solutions. Teachers' awareness of their students' living circumstances and challenges has proven to be a driver for a

⁸⁴ Interview, 09/01/2024.

positive, supportive relationship perceived by the students as one of the reasons they enjoy going to school (see section 4 chapter 2). Therefore, dialogue between schools and refugee families must be encouraged, as the latter often face unique challenges that school personnel is unaware or partially aware of.

Refugee students themselves can play an active role in advocacy efforts. As highlighted in chapter 1, section 6.1, Jordan ratified the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child. Including refugee children in the design of advocacy strategies will help ensure respect of their rights to participation and to be heard. Discussion sessions on inclusion and discrimination could be organised where refugee students' insights and experiences are collected. Then, with the support of their teachers and facilitated through child-friendly learning tools, the findings could be talked about during designated times for discussion with Jordanian children, families and school personnel. Civil society organisations focusing on protection and education could contribute by fostering refugee-child-led advocacy activities within their framework of operations and by implementing participatory awareness and advocacy campaigns that emphasise their rights to inclusion and quality education. According to Bakez⁸⁵, cooperation between schools and the refugee community is an important step in making education more accessible and inclusive for all children, including by adopting inclusive curricula and culturally sensitive teaching approaches at school.

The interview⁸⁶ with UNICEF's Administrative Assistant at the Al-Hussein school for girls also highlighted the importance of refugees' involvement in the educational process. The woman underlined how her experience as a Syrian refugee in Jordan makes her closer to the students and allows her to understand the need, challenges and vulnerabilities of the children and their families better. In turn, many of the interviewed girls reported that they feel safer and more comfortable sharing feelings, problems and experiences with her (see section 4 chapter 2). This is just one example of the importance of including members of the refugee community in the educational environment, and it is instrumental to understand how increased integration of refugees in schools and at the decision-making level could positively impact the experience of refugee students. First, refugee children

⁸⁵ Interview, 09/01/2024.

⁸⁶ Interview, 26/05/2024.

in school would probably feel more comfortable resorting to someone who comes from a similar background and who can more easily relate to their personal experiences. As shared by the UNICEF's representative⁸⁷, many refugee students, Syrian in particular, would refer to her rather than Jordanian personnel to discuss issues or look for advice. Second, they would feel more seen and understood. The woman insisted that her personal experience as a displaced individual allowed her to easily spot signs of poor living, physical and mental health conditions in the students at the school. By being more receptive and responsive to these signs, trauma can be more effectively addressed, reducing the risk of neglecting the child. The presence of personnel of refugee origins is an essential tool to properly identify and respond to the needs of refugee students. Refugee personnel could play a key role in training Jordanian teachers to recognise signs of distress, violence, and other protection concern, thus further strengthening support between the two communities and highlighting the invaluable contribution of refugees' experiences. Including refugees in the educational process could determine positive progress towards a more sensitive, tolerant school environment. This, however, would only be possible through enabling refugees to access to market of labour regularly and take up employment opportunities. As explained in chapter 1, section 3, refugees have either limited access to employment opportunities or no access at all, and are thus forced to resort to irregular, unsafe and undercompensated labour. Structural changes are needed to determine a difference and improvement of the living conditions of refugees in the Jordan. This reinforces once again the need for and importance of advocacy efforts to raise awareness of the limitations to access rights, as well as refugees' potential and value in society. Only by tackling the root causes of discrimination and negative stereotypes against the refugee community is it possible to foster systemic change, inclusivity and integration within the education field.

1.2 Raising awareness within the refugee community

Some of the students interviewed at the Abu Obaida school for boys and the Al-Hussein school for girls have reported episodes of bullying among the afternoon shift itself, thus raising questions related to internal divisions among groups of different nationalities, as also suggested by the educator interviewed for this research⁸⁸. Therefore, the second level

⁸⁷ Interview, 26/05/2024.

⁸⁸ Interview, 27/06/2024.

at which awareness efforts must be channelled should be within the refugee community itself.

In this sense, it is important to ensure that different groups within the refugee community are supportive of each other, tolerant and empathetic. Both the interviews led at the schools and with the educator shed light on the fact that discrimination and divisions exist within the refugee community itself. While a teacher at the school for girls claimed that discrimination and racism are probably less present in the afternoon shift because most students are Syrians, Yemeni students recounted episodes in which they were bullied by Syrians because of their nationality (see chapter 2, section 3.1). This may suggest that the majority group (Syrians) feels entitled to discriminate minority groups (e.g., Yemeni, Iraqis and others). The educator also reinforced this by sharing that, as far as African groups tend to be more discriminated by both locals and refugees because of how they look⁸⁹ (see chapter 1, section 4.3). To advance their demands and advocate for their rights, the refugee community must be unified and cooperate despite coming from different countries and backgrounds. At the school level, more could be done to foster tolerance and openness to diversity. As suggested by Bakez⁹⁰, UNHCR Focal Point for General Education, school culture overall must be improved to promote and enhance an environment of tolerance, understanding and inclusion. This would directly have an impact on the educational experience of refugee students and would probably reduce the feeling of unsafety discussed in section 3.1 of chapter 2. To achieve this goal, enhancing cooperation between the refugee community and schools could be, once again, an effective step to include the community into designing awareness efforts and addressing challenges within schools (see section 1.1). Engaging refugee families of different backgrounds and origin in discussion groups at school facilitated by teachers or representatives of civil society organisations could enhance interaction among diverse groups and reveal similarities and shared sentiments.

1.3 Raising awareness at the institutional level

Third, the institutional level also requires advocacy efforts to increase understanding of refugees' conditions in Jordan. As hinted in the previous sections, part of changing the

⁸⁹ Interview, 27/06/2024.

⁹⁰ Interview, 09/01/2024.

narrative surrounding the refugee community starts by focusing on the positive contributions they can make to society. Understanding and spreading awareness of how the refugee community can participate in and enrich the hosting community, rather than treating them as a burden, would determine a shift in perception of refugee presence in the country (Ramazani, 2023).

On paper, Jordan's commitment to inclusive and quality education for all is confirmed by the government's ratification of the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (see section 6 chapter 1), as well as the adoption and endorsement of the Jordan Declaration on Inclusion and Diversity in Education, dating June 2022⁹¹. The Declaration emphasises the country's commitment towards mainstreaming inclusion in schools and includes a list of children vulnerable to exclusion⁹² from and within education and a common definition of inclusion and diversity in education for Jordan (UN (b), 2023). The efforts are significant, and Jordan also commits to SDG 4 to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. In addition, as seen in chapter 2, the country has put efforts into cooperating with relevant civil society organisations to facilitate access to education and strengthen the educational system to make it more inclusive for all. Nevertheless, many systematic and structural challenges remain, as well as shortages in funding and capacity development needs at all levels to improve delivery of inclusive education (*ibidem*). In addition, as proved by the interview led with an employee of the MoE, existing gaps in knowledge and awareness of the challenges faced by refugee families suggest a need to channel more efforts towards building capacity at the institutional level. Better understanding of the refugee

⁹¹ Through this Declaration, Jordan commits to every child's right to a quality education and claims that inclusion and diversity must be the foundation to education (UN Jordan, 2022). The Declaration makes efforts to embrace the diversity of children's abilities and backgrounds in the schools in Jordan to ensure no learner will be left behind (*ibidem*). The document includes a definition of inclusion and diversity in education, as well as the ten most vulnerable groups of children. Alongside this, it also specifies nine areas to achieve greater inclusion and diversity in Jordan, i.e., through system strengthening; operationalized legal frameworks; better data collection and access; improved equitable funding and sustainable programming; systematic capacity and professional development; better and safer learning environments, coordinated advocacy and planning; removing barriers and mainstreaming inclusion; and better and more relevant learning.

⁹² According to the Declaration itself, these are: children affected by drugs and substance abuse; children experiencing gender inequality; children from ethnic, language and social minorities; children from income poor backgrounds; children suffering from neglect, abandonment and abuse, incl. orphans; children who are under-stimulated and disengaged; children with disabilities; institutionalized children and children without freedom of movement; out-of-school children; refugee, returnee, and unregistered children (JDIDE, 2022).

community's needs and vulnerabilities at the institutional level may actively translate into better national policy frameworks and effective implementation. As discussed by existing literature, full inclusion of refugee learners can be achieved through national policies that guarantee safe learning environments and quality of education (UN Agencies, 2023). Advocacy efforts and consequent actions must be accompanied by monitoring and evaluation tools that track the progress and challenges in enhancing inclusion: the lack of monitoring mechanisms is an important obstacle to data collection and analysis, as well as to understand the impact of initiatives aimed at making education more inclusive. As clarified by the UN, there are few impact assessments that focus on targeting the effectiveness of policies and initiatives to render education more inclusive for refugee children (ibidem).

Government employees need to receive capacity building to increase and strengthen their knowledge and understanding of the refugee community. Different aspects can be considered when drafting and implementing training opportunities. First, discussion on mental health concerns in the refugee community must be strengthened and deepened to clarify the community's intersectional and unique vulnerabilities and challenges. In particular, the existence of trauma, including trans- and inter-generational, has been questioned by one of the interviewees and would be worth of addressing. Further investigating the understanding of the effects of trauma on refugees at the institutional level could be significant for future avenues of research. Secondly, ministerial and institutional employees should be actively participating in capacity building and awareness sessions aimed at strengthening the understanding of refugees' living circumstances, challenges and obstacles in the country. It is necessary to address the misconceptions that refugees live a better life than Jordanians. Working on building the capacity of institutions to understand the development of the situation of most refugees in the country would be instrumental to address misconceptions and foster a more tolerant approach to refugees in Jordan. Further, increased awareness of the challenges, circumstances and backgrounds of refugees in Jordan would enable the institutional level to adopt an approach that is more informed and culturally sensitive when drafting policies that directly affect refugees and their rights, including their right to access quality education.

1.3.1 The One-Refugee Approach

As highlighted in chapter 1 section 4, it is evident that refugees of non-Syrian nationality face different levels of discriminations at the hands of a system that directs funding and donations mostly to Syrian refugees. The experiences of minority refugee groups in Jordan, including, *inter alia*, Sudanese, Iraqis, Yemenis, Somalis, Eritreans, and Ethiopians, tend to get lost in the enormity of the Syrian crisis (Goodwin, 2024). The Jordan Compact⁹³ reflects the skewed focus of the response, which is most clearly embodied in the structure of the document itself (Meral et al., 2022). The Compact does not include provisions for non-Syrian refugees and, as a consequence, non-Syrian refugees are especially vulnerable under several points of view, such as exploitation in informal labour markets due to differential access to the right to work envisioned in the Compact. This structure directly exacerbates exclusion of non-Syrian refugees from enjoying their rights (*ibidem*).

UNHCR Jordan, in cooperation with partners, have adopted and advocate for the promotion of the One-Refugee Approach (ORA). The ORA aims to support all refugees in need, Syrian and non-Syrian alike, in all sectors and services in Jordan (UNHCR, 2021). The goal of this approach is to reduce, and eventually eliminate, differences in the access of rights and services on the base of nationality. Although the ORA has been successful in community-based protection, seeing participation of both Jordanian nationals and refugees of different nationalities and promoting social cohesion between the two communities, the approach still needs to be enhanced (*ibidem*). UNHCR itself reported that areas such as livelihoods and access to the labour market are still weak, with existing mechanisms and resources being greater for Syrian refugees than for others (*ibidem*). In a 2024 report, the Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development (ARDD) highlighted that despite UNHCR's advocacy of the ORA, the needs of minority refugee groups are still significantly overlooked by the international aid community and Jordanian authorities, exacerbating their vulnerabilities (ARDD, 2024).

⁹³ The Jordan Compact is a set of commitments to address the Syrian crisis and support Jordan's growth and resilience (Govt. Jordan, 2016). It defines strategies to improve access to the market labour and education for Syrian refugees, as well as to encourage investment and economic growth in Jordan (IRC, 2017).

Within the field of education, the Jordanian government and the international community have been cooperating since the beginning of the Syrian war in 2011 to provide Syrian refugees with free primary and secondary education by waiving their tuition fees and covering the cost of books (UNHCR, 2024). According to the UN Agency, joint efforts to advocate for the promotion and implementation of the One-Refugee Approach resulted into the Ministry of Education expanding the policy in 2023 to cover refugees of all nationalities (ibidem). This has been supported by statements of the MoE employee interviewed for this research too, who stated all refugees have granted free access to school⁹⁴. However, although this may be true on paper, representatives of the refugee community and some of the school personnel interviewed do not agree with this. According to UNHCR (2021), non-Syrian refugees must still pay registration fees of 40 JOD (about 52 euros according to August 2024 Inforeuro rate) per child on enrolment, as well as associated school costs such as books. While discussing such information with the educator interviewed for this research, he claimed that access to education for the Sudanese community is hard precisely because of the inaccessible costs of education⁹⁵. Retrieving clear information about this policy and its practical application has been challenging in the context of the present research, with conflicting statements indicating that while all refugees should theoretically have free access to education, this is often not the case in practice. The difficulty in obtaining this information suggests that refugee families may face even greater challenges in accessing and understanding the eligibility criteria for free education.

The need to advocate for adoption and promotion of the ORA is pivotal to ensure a system that holistically embraces all services and rights of refugees. According to UNHCR (2021), efforts to raise awareness of the ORA have been made since 2018, and in 2020 the ORA Working Group Advocacy Committee increased engagement among civil society actors, both national and international, working closely with non-Syrian refugees to advocate for their full inclusion in Jordan's refugee response among donors, UN agencies, Jordanian government, and other INGOs. Efforts by and coordination among civil society actors are in place and Working Group meetings on the approach have been held in the country for civil society actors, both national and international, to discuss and

⁹⁴ Interview, 26/06/2024.

⁹⁵ Interview, 27/06/2024.

enable an action plan (ibidem). Systematically adopting the One-Refugee Approach, as well as creating a mechanism for monitoring and evaluating its implementation and results, are pivotal steps that must be taken to ensure equal rights and support to all refugees. Solid cooperation among local and international civil society to advocate for improved rights, including socioeconomic rights, would improve access to services, including education (HPG, 2022). Fostering, promoting and implementing the One-Refugee Approach is instrumental to achieve the “leave no one behind” (LNOB) principle, as it addresses and attempts to tackle persistent forms of discrimination embedded in society (UNDP, 2018).

1.4 Future steps for research

Future research should analyse the impact of systematisation and implementation of more consistent advocacy efforts to increase awareness of the rights of refugees. The role of civil society organisations, both national and international, with a particular focus on refugee-led initiatives to foster accountability of advocacy strategy, is important in drafting and implementing strategies and campaigns.

First, host community perceptions should be analysed to understand the root causes of negative stereotypes against refugees in Jordan, exploring how these perceptions have evolved over time and hinder social cohesion. Discussion groups could be organised in various neighbourhoods in Amman, and potentially in different cities across the country, to foster constructive communication and positive confrontation between the two communities, thus enhancing mutual understanding, social integration and tolerance.

Second, refugee involvement in advocacy must be fostered through studying and promoting the effectiveness of participatory approaches and enabling refugees to play active roles in shaping awareness campaigns and policy initiatives. A participatory approach would foster feelings of empowerment as well as ownership of the strategy and its results and would make it possible for refugees to directly advocate for their own rights.

Third, encouraging increased cooperation between schools and refugee communities and examining its impact on educational outcomes and social integration would make it possible for refugees to advocate for their needs in the field of education. This could be

achieved, for example, through organising regular meetings between refugee parents and/or caregivers where refugees could bring up concerns and challenges. It would be possible to shed lights on many of the issues that the interviewed children discussed during the interview in a more organised, unified manner. Children would play an active role in this, as they could be trained to advocate for their own rights and assess their situation at school through the support of local community-based organisations or non-governmental organisations. School committees could be organised to record and discuss the rights of refugee children at school. This would actively respect and implement children's rights to be heard and to participate as defined in the Convention on the rights of the Child and would empower refugee children to speak up and advocate for themselves.

Fourth, efforts should be made to explore and address internal divisions within refugee communities, particularly between majority and minority groups, and strategies to foster unity and mutual support. The existing divisions internal to the refugee community are detrimental to any advocacy strategies, thus it could be beneficial to organise discussion groups within the community itself, maybe starting from neighbourhood and with the support of NGOs with strong ties with the community (e.g., Collateral Repair Project⁹⁶) to facilitate these encounters. These would hopefully lead towards renewed empathy and understanding among different groups.

Fifth, the need for regular capacity building sessions for institutional personnel should be investigated and fostered. Such trainings should be accompanied by appropriate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track improvement in knowledge and understanding of protection-related concerns of refugees. This could determine a better response at the institutional level and impact policy drafting efforts to be more sensitive and equal to all refugees, notwithstanding their nationality.

⁹⁶ Collateral Repair Project (CRP) is an NGO founded in 2006 and operating in Amman, especially in the city's downtown and in the Hashmi al-Shamali neighbourhood. CRP serves the refugee community by providing livelihood programs, protection services and cash assistance. The NGO adopts implements a vulnerability-based approach wherein individuals are provided for based on their need and not their nationality, thus fully implementing and promoting the One-Refugee Approach. Today, CRP serves Jordanians, Sudanese, Somalis, Yemenis, Iraqis, Syrians, and Palestinians equally.

Sixth, promote the One-Refugee Approach through adopting a policy paper. By monitoring and evaluating the compliance with and impact of the ORA in ensuring equal access to services and rights for all refugee groups, regardless of nationality, refugees could have better access to their rights. An example of a policy framework that could enhance inclusion and impartiality, the ORA would take a vulnerability-based approach to designing interventions (Meral et al., 2022). Such a policy paper would be instrumental to define the expectations for aid actors in supporting inclusive humanitarian responses, and it should clearly define the concept and various implications of inclusion (ibidem).

2. Increased and Systematised Training for Teachers to Enhance the Relationship with Refugee Students

As illustrated in section 4 of chapter 2, lack of adequate preparation of teachers in terms of their understanding and awareness of refugee children's vulnerabilities, as well as lack or near lack of knowledge of their backgrounds, can affect the quality education of refugee children (Bengtsson et al., 2021). Therefore, a teaching approach that is culturally sensitive and aware of the unique needs and circumstances that a refugee student may face should be a teacher's leading approach in a classroom attended by refugees (Antoniadou et al., 2023). Regular capacity building and training of teachers aimed at increasing teachers' awareness of refugees' backgrounds has proved successful to increase students' attendance and performance at school. In Turkey, a programme focussed on language and communication; social integration, counselling, and guidance; and legislation and context, led to an improvement in refugee children's school attendance and learning outcomes (Tumen et al., 2023). A teacher's awareness of their students' circumstances can strengthen the relationship between the two, as well as contributing to the students' feeling seen, their experiences valued and understood.

The Jordanian MoE has been committed, in cooperation with UNESCO, to reform its education system in accordance with the Education Strategic Plan 2018-2025⁹⁷ and SDG 4 to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning

⁹⁷ On paper, the Plan aims to provide "equal opportunities for a high-quality education that provides learners with scientific, creative and critical thinking" and fosters values such as "teamwork, life-long education, provide values and skills to become active citizens, belonging to their homeland and contributing to the world with humanity and prestige. Substantive Values Freedom, justice, equality, good citizenship, belongingness, moderation, respect of opinion and the opinion of others, transparency, accountability, entrepreneurship and building of active partnerships.

opportunities for all (UN, 2020). The goal is to guarantee that all children and youth in Jordan have access to quality education, notwithstanding their background. Inclusion and diversity in education is a key priority and significant efforts have been made towards achieving it in Jordan. UNESCO, in collaboration with GIZ, has been committed to providing technical assistance to MoE and the Higher Council for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to foster inclusion in Jordanian schools, focussing especially on children belonging to vulnerable groups, such as children with disabilities and learning difficulties and refugees (UN, 2023). In this framework, 203 school personnel, including teachers, principals, counsellors, resource room teachers, officials, and planners from thirty schools in Ajloun, Marka, and Karak have received awareness and training sessions on mainstreaming inclusive practices and approaches in the schools and classrooms. The schools then proceeded to carry out cascade sessions within the communities reaching almost 5,000 teachers, school staff, parents, and students (ibidem). As a result, more than a thousand refugee students and about a thousand students with disabilities and learning difficulties enrolled in these 30 schools reported being positively impacted by these efforts (ibidem). The training clearly produced promising results, and reproducing it in different governorates, as well as targeting a higher number of schools and personnel, would increase its scope and reach. It would be interesting, then, to compare the findings from schools that receive the training against schools that did not, including the Abu Obaida Basic School for Boys in Hashmi al-Shamali and the Al-Hussein Comprehensive Secondary School for Girls in Jabal Hussein. Through developing and implementing monitoring and evaluation tools, it would be possible to observe the effectiveness and impact of such training experiment on refugee students' attendance and satisfaction. Further, such comparison would make it possible to analyse students' educational performance and attendance rates compared to the schools targeted in this research, thus allowing to understand the impact of such training on the educational experience of refugee students. The results of this comparison could pave the way for future research to investigate sustainability and scalability of capacity building opportunities for teachers.

Capacity building for teachers to be more aware of and responsive to the needs of refugee students is pivotal to strengthen their relationship and make school an environment where children feel safe, seen and understood. Many of the children interviewed for the present research have pointed at the relationship with their teachers as a positive element that

makes them enjoy attending school (see section 4 chapter 2). Therefore, a solid relationship between teachers (and school personnel directly interacting with children overall) and students is a driver for positive feelings towards school. A positive and supportive school environment can also influence the overall educational experience of refugee students, as well as attendance rates and performance. The interviewed children claimed that they trust their teachers, feel supported and understood by them, and they feel comfortable resorting to them if they had any issues they would like to discuss (see section 4 chapter 2). Such relationship can only be enhanced through regular formative opportunities for teachers, as this would keep teachers informed on relevant developments that directly affect the refugee population (e.g., increased access or restrictions to access to the market of labour for their family and consequent impact on children's lives), would strengthen their understanding of protection-related issues and concerns, as well as teachers' capacity to identify struggles children may face and better equip them to properly address them. As explained in chapter 2, the capacity of teachers to identify refugee children's inherent, intersectional vulnerabilities and shape their approach towards them in a sensitive and conscious way can determine the success or failure of a displaced child's experience at school. Therefore, more efforts should be channelled to strengthen and systematise training opportunities for teachers, especially those teachers directly involved with refugee students (Bengtsson et al., 2021). Awareness of such capacity building opportunities must be accompanied by making them more accessible to virtually all teachers in the Kingdom. In addition, the importance of teachers' preparation to work with refugee children must be clear at the institutional level. Although afternoon-shift teachers work on "daily-contracts" (ibidem) and are "less stable" in schools, providing them with appropriate knowledge and preparation could not only facilitate their work, but equip them with relevant skills that would make them an asset in the education field.

The MoE has made efforts, in cooperation with relevant civil society actors, to enhance capacity building opportunities for teachers across the country (see section 5.1 chapter 2). Nevertheless, as explained, the interviews with teachers and school personnel suggested that such training opportunities for teachers in the afternoon shift have not been easily accessible, and many were unaware of the availability of such capacity building opportunities. Although the relationship between the interviewed teachers and their

students seemed strong and positive, it could be useful to strengthen capacity building opportunities for afternoon shift teachers (Bengtsson et al., 2021). This could be relevant under several perspectives. First, it would assess the understanding and knowledge of teachers of protection concerns and the appropriate approach to adopt when dealing with refugee children. Second, it would increase awareness of refugees' intersectional vulnerabilities and their backgrounds, including the challenges they face daily in Jordan (e.g., lack of access to employment opportunities; lack of education; poverty; discrimination), thus enhancing empathy and cultural sensitivity. Third, building the capacities of teachers working directly with refugee students would boost their ability to identify signs of distress, anxiety, depression, malnutrition, violence and other factors suggesting difficult living conditions. These elements would directly positively impact the relationship between teachers and students, making the latter feel more understood and seen.

Alongside highlighting the relevance of fostering greater interaction and cooperation between the schools and the refugee community, it is also necessary to take action to improve teachers' working conditions, especially in the afternoon shift. As mentioned in chapter 2 section 4 and 5, schools face challenges from their side such as, *inter alia*, teachers' motivation. Teachers, especially those working in governmental schools and in the afternoon shift, lack motivation as a consequence of poor and unstable working conditions and low salaries (Bengtsson et al., 2021). These circumstances make it hard for teachers to be motivated and to keep a positive attitude at school. In addition, considering that teachers in the afternoon shifts do not have regular contracts as their counterparts in the morning shift (see section 5.1, chapter 2), the relation between lack of incentives to attend training, low compensation, unstable working conditions and motivation should be further considered to study the impact it has on teachers' performance at school (*ibidem*). Cooperation between schools and the refugee community must be paired with advocating for better working conditions for teachers. This could lead to increased satisfaction, thus potentially translating into increased motivation to undertake capacity building and training opportunities (see section 2 chapter 2).

2.1 Future steps for research

Based on what was discussed in section 2, future research could analyse a number of aspects to strengthen and systematise training opportunities for teachers aimed at enhancing their capacities to work with refugee children.

First, it may be worth it to compare and study practices and outcomes of training programs for teachers working with refugee students in Jordan and other countries⁹⁸ hosting high numbers of refugees. Such analytical and comparison efforts would be useful to point out lessons learnt and best practices to enhance teachers and students' relationships and teachers' awareness and understanding of refugee students' backgrounds and circumstances. This could also inform policy recommendations for scaling and replicating successful programs across different governorates in Jordan. By comparing schools that received training with those that did not, it would be possible to study the long-term impact of culturally sensitive and awareness-raising training opportunities for teachers working with refugee students. Through utilising monitoring and evaluating tools, it would be possible to observe changes in refugee students' attendance, performance, and overall well-being at school in a protracted period of time.

Secondly, evaluating the availability of training for teachers working in the afternoon shift could assess the barriers to training accessibility and understand whether training opportunities improve the quality of education for refugee students. Consequently, it would be possible to study the dynamics of the relationship between refugee students and their teachers, focusing on how this relationship impacts students' feelings of safety, belonging, and academic engagement, and how this relationship changes after teachers received proper capacity building sessions. Through qualitative methods like interviews and focus groups with both students and teachers it would be possible to explore how training influences these relationships.

Thirdly, it is important to evaluate the initial level of teachers' awareness of refugees' vulnerabilities, challenges and circumstances in the country, as well as their understanding of protection-related concerns of refugee children which may be hindering their access or consistent attendance to school. According to the findings of the initial

⁹⁸ For example, the studies carried out in Turkey and Greece mentioned in this research (respectively, Tumen et al., 2023, and Antoniadou et al., 2023)

assessment, it is possible to plan and implement appropriate training curricula aimed at increasing their existing capacity. Assessing their initial preparation is fundamental to then successfully evaluate the impact of capacity building opportunities for teachers in Amman and across the country.

Finally, as discussed in sections 1.1.1 and 3 about the involvement of the refugee community itself in educational initiatives, the role of community and parental engagement in educational initiatives for refugee children must be explored. Once again, interaction between refugee parents and teachers could facilitate highlighting the community's needs. Researching the effectiveness of community outreach and parental involvement in enhancing refugee children's educational experiences and outcomes should be conducted in order to understand whether such interaction and cooperation can enhance teachers' capacity to understand and respond to refugees' needs and positively affect the educational experience of refugee children.

3. Is it possible to rethink the double shift system?

As discussed in section 3 of chapter 2, the double shift system has been a partial and necessary solution to respond to the increasing numbers of refugees in the country, initially Syrians but then extending to other nationalities too. Some of the personnel interviewed claimed that the division in shifts was necessary to ensure that students had access to education, hinting that quality of education was decreasing and students were not benefitting due to overcrowded classrooms.

However, the interviews' findings show that the double shift system can hamper refugees' feelings of inclusions and integration within the Jordanian educational system and community overall. The feelings and insights shared by students about their experience at school were similar, although the boys have reported more often than the girls that they have issues with Jordanian students from the morning shift. This has raised important questions related to the impact of the double shift system on quality education, refugees' mental health and their overall educational experience. Most students claimed that although they feel safe and happy at school, their feeling of safety is hindered by issues with Jordanian students from the morning shift. The double shift system is a good enough solution on paper to a series of issues, but the experiences of refugee children on the ground must be acknowledged, considered and utilised as a guiding light in leading the

way to better, more inclusive education. The double shift system seems like a double-edged sword: while partly tackling the issue of overcrowded classrooms and allowing for more refugees to access education, it fosters separation between the two communities. In addition, the system seems to enhance divisions within the same refugee community. As hinted by both some students, school personnel and another interviewed person, the afternoon shift seems to recreate an environment in which one major group (i.e., that of Syrian refugees) is stronger than the minorities (e.g., Yemeni refugees), thus recording episodes of discrimination and harassment among the refugee community itself.

This has been backed by existing literature on the topic, suggesting that the separation of Jordanian and refugee children can hinder sentiments of belonging, stability and hope (Salem, 2020). Most children interviewed commented on such separation, expressing that the double shift system increases segregation and affects cooperation between Jordanian and refugee students – this was especially claimed by children in the school for boys. The need to increase cooperation between the two shifts was expressed by several students. Some explained that they do not interact with Jordanian children because there are none in their classes, and they do not have the chance to connect with those from the morning shift. Safety both in and around school is foundational to quality education (Morrice and Salem, 2023). As per the Agenda for Sustainable Development, and especially SDG 4, access to quality education is essential for all children and youth, and it provides refugee children and youth especially a safe and stable environment where they can learn, grow and thrive (UNHCR, 2023). According to UNHCR, educational inclusion is a driver for children's safety, and helps promote other opportunities for the integration of refugee children and their families into host communities. These opportunities range from strengthening language capacities to establishing social networks, building and strengthening social cohesion, and actively engaging in civic life. However, the lack of a strong evidence base to evaluate what works and what does not to increase integration into national education systems for refugees is an obstacle that must be addressed (UNHCR, 2023).

According to Morrice and Salem (2023), about 7% of schools in Jordan welcome both Syrian refugees and Jordanian students in the same classrooms. The authors claim that these schools host between 10 and 50% Syrian students, while regular schools, those attended almost exclusively by Jordanians, register less than 10% Syrian refugee students.

Data regarding other nationality-refugees are not found, thus it is difficult to find out the proportion of non-Syrian refugees in regular schools – this suggests the need to promote and adopt the One-Refugee Approach discussed in section 1.3.1. Studying the experience of both Syrian and other refugees who attend the same classes as Jordanian students would enable to compare the findings with those refugees who are segregated to the afternoon shift instead. This would allow to understand what education is like for those refugee students that are able to share the same classrooms of Jordanian children, and whether their feelings of safety are stronger or weaker than those in the afternoon shift. In addition, it would shed light on opportunities to make education more inclusive and to allow opportunities of integration and exchange among the two communities.

If the double shift system cannot be abolished, as the consequences could be deleterious to a vast number of refugees who can only access education because of the afternoon shift, the system should be re-thought. The possibility to let refugee families decide whether they prefer to enrol their children into the morning or afternoon shift could be granted, instead of segregating refugees to the afternoon shift solely. If the morning shift were to be open to refugees, this could translate into increased interaction among different nationalities and backgrounds, thus fostering tolerance, openness to diversity and understanding. Or, if the double shift system is to be kept the way it is, then teachers in both shifts must step up efforts to promote tolerance and cooperation between national students and refugees. For example, the MoE could think of a more equal way to distribute learning hours between shifts. As explained in section 3 of chapter 2, the Ministry of Education increased the hours of school attendance to thirty a week in the morning shift, while keeping it to twenty-one hours of instruction per week for afternoon-shift students. This translated into weekday classroom instruction for children in afternoon shifts being reduced and six hours of lessons being added on Saturdays (HRW, 2016; Salem, 2020). Therefore, a viable alternative could be to introduce a fairer, more equal distribution of hours. This could have a positive impact on school attendance as well, as some of the school personnel interviewed at the school for boys pointed at this as one of the factors determining students' performance and drop-out rates. In their opinion, students are not motivated to keep attending school because, while they see Jordanian children going to school only five days a week and in the morning, they have to go to school in the afternoon and on Saturdays too (see section 3 chapter 2).

3.1 Future steps for research

Considering the findings studied in chapter 2 and existing literature on the effects and impact of the double shift system on refugee children's educational experience, some considerations can be made to proceed in researching the effectiveness of such a system.

Through carrying out broader research involving a greater number of schools and students, more insights could be drawn to understand the degree to which the system affects feelings of safety, inclusion and integration of refugee students at school and in the broader community, as well as the perception of Jordanian children towards them. Such a study could be conducted through a comparative approach with students in double shift schools versus those in integrated classrooms to assess differences in social cohesion, student relationships, and overall well-being. Consequently, focus groups could be organised with teachers and relevant school personnel. This could lead to interesting comparisons in the experiences and perceptions of students and teachers, and to a series of recommendations to potentially present at the institutional level. Through the support of civil society actors specialised in the refugee human rights protection and education, these recommendations could be presented to the MoE and other relevant institutions to produce changes within the system. Furthermore, it is important that the research is expanded to include diverse refugee groups rather than focussing solely on the main refugee groups, i.e., Syrians and Palestinians, thus fostering the implementation of the One-Refugee Approach (section 1.3.1).

Future research could also cover other aspects within the double shift system and study their impact on the educational experience of refugee students, including their performance and attendance rates. First, focus could be put onto studying the effects of school schedule on refugee student outcomes. The unequal distribution of learning hours between morning and afternoon shifts on refugee students' academic performance, attendance, and overall educational experience through conducting a comparative study on academic outcomes of students in different shifts and explore alternative scheduling models that could provide a more equitable distribution of learning hours. Secondly, focussing on issues related to bullying, segregation, and lack of interaction with host community students at school, the impact of the double shift system on refugee students' mental health should also be analysed to identify key psychological stress factors.

Finally, evaluating the feasibility and potential outcomes of alternative solutions to the double shift system, such as allowing refugee families to choose between morning and afternoon shifts, and proposing them at the institutional level would be ideal. Pilot programs could be implemented in selected schools where refugee students are integrated into morning shifts and assess the impact on social integration, student well-being, and academic performance.

Conclusions

This chapter attempted to offer insights suggesting avenues for future research, as well as some initial recommendations to achieve a more inclusive educational system, as well as a more tolerant society for refugees in the country.

Awareness. Improving the enjoyment of refugee children's right to quality education requires a focus on raising awareness of the broader community's challenges and vulnerabilities. Section 1 of this chapter established that awareness must be raised at different levels:

- a) At the host community. Raising awareness within the host community is crucial, especially given the feelings of mistrust and hostility towards refugees. In Jordan, misbeliefs about refugees accessing more rights and receiving more benefits and aid than nationals fuel aversion. In Jordan, negative stereotypes persist, with locals believing that refugees live better lives due to international support. Dismantling these negative stereotypes while reinforcing understanding of refugees' positive contribution to society is essential for building a more inclusive and tolerant environment. To do so, refugee communities must be involved in advocacy efforts. A participatory approach that engages refugees from the inception of advocacy strategies can foster a sense of ownership and accountability, strengthening communication between the refugee and host communities. Including schools in awareness-raising efforts, enhances the promotion of a more inclusive environment. Cooperation between schools and the refugee community can help former to better understand the needs and challenges of refugee students, facilitating a more supportive educational environment.
- b) Within the refugee community. Raising awareness within the refugee community itself is equally important. Internal divisions among different refugee groups

hinder advocacy efforts, so more should be done to ensure tolerance and empathy within the refugee community itself, fostering unity and cooperation despite differences in nationality and background. At the school level, tolerance and openness to diversity can be enhanced by making school curricula more inclusive and promoting an environment of understanding and inclusion. This approach would directly impact the educational experience of refugee students, reducing feelings of unsafety and discrimination.

- c) At the institutional level. Raising awareness within institutions and government about the positive contributions of the refugee community to the host country is crucial. Advocacy with the government should be informed by a deeper understanding of the refugee community's needs and vulnerabilities. While Jordan has shown commitment to inclusive education for all, significant challenges remain, including gaps in funding, capacity development, and awareness at the institutional level. Institutional employees should participate in capacity building sessions to better understand refugees' living circumstances and challenges. Addressing misconceptions at the institutional level is necessary for adopting more informed and culturally sensitive policies. Furthermore, civil society actors need to boost efforts to promote the One-Refugee Approach for supporting all refugees, regardless of nationality, and ensuring equal access to rights and services.

Future research should focus on enhancing advocacy efforts to raise awareness of refugee rights, emphasizing the role of civil society organizations, particularly refugee-led initiatives, in creating and implementing strategies. Promoting the One-Refugee Approach (ORA), which ensures equal access to rights for all refugees, is crucial, with its findings shared among institutions, actors, and schools in Jordan. Key areas for further research include understanding and addressing negative host community perceptions of refugees, which hinder social cohesion. This can be done through discussion groups that foster mutual understanding. Additionally, participatory approaches should be studied to empower refugees to take active roles in advocacy, giving them ownership of strategies and the ability to advocate for their rights. The impact of cooperation between schools and refugee communities on education and integration should also be examined, with regular meetings between parents and school staff to address concerns. Addressing

internal divisions within refugee communities is essential for fostering unity and effective advocacy. Finally, enhancing institutional awareness and policy implementation through capacity building and monitoring initiatives will improve refugee inclusion and protection.

Training for teachers. Teacher preparation and awareness of refugee children's backgrounds, vulnerabilities and needs are crucial for providing them with quality education. A culturally sensitive teaching approach that acknowledges these needs can significantly impact refugee students' educational experiences, as demonstrated by the interviews' findings in chapter 2. Regular capacity building and training programs for teachers have proven effective in improving student attendance and performance in countries hosting high numbers of refugees such as Turkey. In Jordan, the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with UNESCO and GIZ, has been working towards reforming the education system to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all, as part of the Education Strategic Plan 2018-2025 and Sustainable Development Goal 4. Training programs for school personnel have been implemented, positively impacting significant numbers of teachers, students, and parents. Nevertheless, there is a need for broader and more systematic implementation of training, as well as comparison between schools that have received training and those that have not. Monitoring and evaluation tools can help assess the effectiveness of these programs on refugee students' attendance, performance, and overall satisfaction. The relationship between teachers and refugee students plays a critical role in the students' feelings of safety, belonging, and academic engagement. Investing in strengthening this relationship through regular training and awareness-building for teachers is essential for improving the overall educational experience of refugee students.

Another aspect analysed in this chapter is the accessibility of training programs for teachers, particularly those working in afternoon shifts who are often less stable in their positions. Many teachers are unaware of the available capacity building opportunities. These opportunities should be made more accessible to ensure that all teachers in the Kingdom are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to support refugee students. The research also highlights the importance of assessing teachers' initial level of awareness of refugee students' vulnerabilities and protection-related concerns. By evaluating their existing knowledge, appropriate training curricula can be developed and

implemented to increase their capacity to work with refugee students. Future research should focus on several key areas to strengthen and systematize training opportunities for teachers. Firstly, comparing and studying practices and outcomes of training programs in Jordan and other countries to identify best practices and lessons learned. Secondly, evaluating the accessibility and impact of training programs for afternoon-shift teachers to assess whether these opportunities improve the quality of education for refugee students, their performance and attendance. Finally, exploring the role of community and parental engagement in educational initiatives for refugee children to provide insights into how these interactions can enhance teachers' understanding of refugee needs and positively affect students' educational experiences.

Rethink the Double Shift System. The double shift system in Jordanian schools, implemented to accommodate the increasing number of refugees, initially from Syria and later from other nationalities, was a necessary measure to ensure access to education. However, refugee students often feel a lack of inclusion, which can negatively affect their overall educational experience. Many students report feeling safe and happy at school, but these feelings are sometimes undermined by tensions with Jordanian students from the morning shift. This tension points to broader issues with the double shift system, which can exacerbate segregation and hinder cooperation between Jordanian and refugee students. The need for greater interaction and cooperation between the two shifts is highlighted by the students themselves, who express a desire to connect with their Jordanian peers but are limited by the structure of the school day. Safety, both in and around school, is foundational to quality education, as emphasized by the Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly Sustainable Development Goal 4. If the double shift system cannot be abolished due to its importance in providing access to education for many refugees, it could be rethought. Allowing refugee families to choose between morning and afternoon shifts could promote greater interaction among students from different backgrounds, fostering tolerance, diversity, and understanding. Alternatively, if the system is maintained as it is, efforts must be made to promote tolerance and cooperation between national students and refugees in both shifts. Teachers play a crucial role in promoting these values, and there should be a focus on raising awareness of refugee rights, protection concerns, and backgrounds. Additionally, a fairer distribution of learning hours could positively impact school attendance and student performance, as

many students and school personnel have pointed out the current arrangement as a factor in low motivation and high dropout rates.

Future research should explore the broader impact of the double shift system on refugee students' feelings of safety, inclusion, and integration within schools and the broader community. Comparative studies between students in double shift schools and those in integrated classrooms could offer valuable insights on social cohesion, student relationships, and overall well-being. Additionally, research should focus on the effects of the unequal distribution of learning hours on refugee students' academic performance, attendance, and overall educational experience. Exploring alternative scheduling models and evaluating their feasibility could lead to more equitable education for refugee students in Jordan. Finally, evaluating the impact of the double shift system on refugee students' mental health and identifying key psychological stress factors related to bullying and segregation is crucial.

Conclusion

As the title suggests, the goal of this study was to understand how teachers' awareness of refugee children's vulnerabilities, needs and challenges can impact their educational experiences at school. The study investigated these aspects in two governmental schools in Amman, Jordan, by carrying out interviews with both students and teachers, as well as other school personnel. The study also involved civil society actors who shared their views on the challenges faced by the refugee community and the opportunities to improve access to and quality of education. In order to provide a comprehensive picture of the situation of refugees in Jordan, this research first highlighted relevant aspects and vulnerabilities of the country and its population, with a specific focus on the refugee component (chapter 1).

It is evident that Jordan is facing numerous challenges, such as water scarcity, food insecurity, high costs of living and steep unemployment rates. Nevertheless, the country hosts one of the highest shares of refugees per capita in the world. Chapter 1 shed light on the hierarchy in service provision by international actors, which mostly direct support to respond to the Syrian needs. However, Jordan hosts a variety of nationalities that are equally in need of support and face relevant challenges, ranging from lack of access to employment opportunities to discrimination. Such considerations are directly instrumental to understand the background of the children interviewed in chapter 2, and to further analyse, in chapter 3, the increasing need to promote and adopt the One -Refugee Approach. Jordan not being a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Optional Protocol determined limitations and gaps in the protection and promotion of refugees' fundamental human rights. The lack of a comprehensive national legal framework setting out the rights owed to refugees with *ad hoc* implementation mechanisms exacerbates their vulnerabilities. A plethora of directives, policies and rules, which are often subject to changes, related to refugees' issues and rights makes it complicated to clearly define which refugee groups have access to which rights (as explained, this is the case of Syrian *versus* non-Syrian refugees). A Memorandum of Understanding signed between Jordan and UNHCR in 1988 aimed at filling the gap in legislation. The Memorandum establishes the country's responsibilities towards the refugee population in the country, aligning to international standards of protection and providing Jordan with guidelines to respond to refugees' needs. Chapter 1 also

investigated the role of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child to establish the right to education of all children, including refugees, without discrimination. Alongside analysing the specific articles of the Convention providing right to education to all children, efforts by the Ministry of Education to render education accessible to all children have been investigated. In addition, a brief description of the Jordanian educational system was provided as ground to move to exploring the findings of interviews carried out in two governmental schools in Amman (chapter 2). In May 2024, interviews were conducted at the Abu Obaida School for Boys and at the Al-Hussein School for Girls, located respectively in Hashmi al-Shamali and Jabal Hussein (East Amman). These encounters identified a number of factors related to the experience of refugee children.

The chapter started by analysing the methodology, panel and protocol adopted for the interviews. Challenges and limitations to the implementation of the initial protocol were also discussed in order to provide the reader with a clear understanding of the obstacles faced and mitigation measures by the author. In addition, this section could be useful to provide future research with an idea of what the main challenges have been in this context and what steps should be made to avoid them. The findings of the interviews led to structuring the chapter along four main themes. First, the school infrastructures could be improved and resources better allocated to enhance the children's experiences. The students have claimed that they would appreciate changes to make their schools look better and more modern, as well as improving the hygienic conditions of the bathrooms. Further, according to both students and personnel, more could be done to render the schools warmer and welcoming for the students. Secondly, focus was brought on the feelings and insights shared by students about their experience at school, with attention paid particularly to feelings of safety related to interactions with Jordanian students in the morning shift. Boys reported more often than girls that they had negative interaction with students from the morning shift, while some of the girls highlighted episodes of bullying in the afternoon shift itself. This raises important questions related to the impact of the double shift system on quality education, refugees' mental health and their overall educational experience. Although issues with Jordanian students from the morning shift seem to occur more often, questions related to internal divisions among groups within the refugee community must also be investigated. Thirdly, the cooperation and relationship

between students and teachers has been pointed at by children as one of the positive factors that make them enjoy school. All children said that they trust their teachers, they feel supported and understood by them: this highlights the importance of a positive relationship between teachers (and school personnel in general) and students, and how it can influence the overall educational experience of refugee students. Finally, the topic of capacity building for afternoon-shift teachers was raised. Although there seem to be an availability of training opportunities, as pointed out by UNESCO and UNICEF, the teachers and school personnel interviewed were not aware of them. This indicates a gap between the availability of capacity building opportunities and the actual awareness of such tools on the ground. The findings of the interviews conducted at the schools with both children and teachers, accompanied by the valuable insights shared by civil society actors, led to reflect on the necessary steps and future avenues for research to ensure that refugee students can enjoy quality education and improve their educational experience (chapter 3).

Chapter 3 identified awareness, capacity building for teachers and rethinking the double shift system as leading avenues for future research.

First, improving the enjoyment of refugee children's right to quality education requires a focus on raising awareness of the broader community's challenges and vulnerabilities. Accordingly, awareness must be raised at the host community; within the refugee community; and at the institutional level. Enhancing advocacy efforts to raise awareness of refugee rights, emphasizing the role of civil society organizations, particularly refugee-led initiatives, would be essential to draft and implement successful strategies. Furthermore, promoting the One-Refugee Approach (ORA) to ensure equal access to rights for all refugees is crucial. Participatory approaches should also be studied to empower refugees to take active roles in advocacy, and opportunities for increased cooperation between schools and refugee communities on education and integration should be fostered and examined. Finally, enhancing institutional awareness and policy implementation through capacity building and monitoring initiatives will improve refugee inclusion and protection.

Second, teacher preparation and awareness of refugee children's backgrounds, vulnerabilities and needs are crucial for providing them with quality education. A

culturally sensitive teaching approach that acknowledges these needs must be fostered to improve the educational experience of refugee children, as demonstrated by the interviews' findings in chapter 2. Regular capacity building and training programs for teachers have proven effective in improving student attendance and performance in countries hosting high numbers of refugees, such as Turkey. In Jordan, the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with UNESCO and GIZ, has been working on training programs for school personnel, which have positively impacted teachers, students, and parents. Nevertheless, the need for broader and more systematic implementation of training is evident, as well as comparison between schools that have received training and those that have not. In addition, the relationship between teachers and refugee students plays a critical role in the students' feelings of safety, belonging, and academic engagement. Therefore, investing in strengthening this relationship through regular training and awareness-building could be a driver to enhance educational experience of refugee students. These efforts should be accompanied by also enhancing working conditions for teachers in the afternoon-shifts. Secondly, the accessibility of training programs for teachers has been studied, particularly for teachers in afternoon shifts. Capacity building opportunities should be made more accessible to ensure that all teachers in the Kingdom are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to support refugee students. Therefore, future research could investigate outcomes of training programs in Jordan and compare them to other countries to identify best practices and lessons learned. It would be important to examine how these training programs impact the quality of education for refugee students, their performance and attendance. Finally, exploring the role of community and parental engagement in educational initiatives for refugee children to provide insights into how these interactions can enhance teachers' understanding of refugee needs and positively affect students' educational experiences.

Third, as the double shift in Jordanian schools affects inclusion and feelings of safety, the system should be investigated to either find viable alternatives or adapt it to the needs of the community. The double shift system seems to exacerbate segregation and hinder cooperation between Jordanian and refugee students. The need for greater interaction and cooperation between the two shifts is highlighted by the students themselves, who express a desire to connect with their Jordanian peers. If the double shift system cannot be abolished due to its importance in providing access to education for many refugees, then

it could be rethought. Allowing refugee families to choose between morning and afternoon shifts could promote greater interaction among students from different backgrounds. If the system is maintained as it is, efforts must be made to promote tolerance and cooperation between national students and refugees in both shifts. In this, teachers play a crucial role to promote these values and raise awareness of refugee rights, protection concerns, and backgrounds. As suggested in the final chapter, comparative studies between students in double shift schools and those in integrated classrooms could offer valuable insights on social cohesion, student relationships, and overall well-being.

Overall, this research attempted to provide initial reflections on the current situation of refugee students in the Jordanian educational system. This is clearly just a first step to further study the limitations, challenges, gaps and opportunities of this field. Though the panel involved in the interviews, comprehensive of civil society actors, was limited, the insights of the participants of this study were invaluable to highlight some of the priorities that should be taken into account to keep promoting tolerant, inclusive and understanding education. School should be a safe space for all children where diversity is valued and tolerance fostered. In this, the role of teachers is fundamental and irreplaceable.

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Interviews

Interviews at the Ministry of Education (MoE):

- Interview with an MoE employee on 26/06/2024
- Interview with Kafa Akroush, Gender and Equality Department at the Ministry of Education, on 16/05/2024

Interviews at the Abu Obaida School for Boys (Amman):

- Interviews with school personnel and students on 21/05/2024

Interviews at the Al-Hussein School for Girls (Amman):

- Interviews with school personnel and students on 26/05/2024

Interviews at the Hatten Camp (Russeyfah, Zarqa):

- Interview with a resident of the camp on 24/03/2024

Interviews with civil society actors:

- Interview with Tamara Bakez, Focal Point for General Education at UNHCR, on 09/01/2024
- Interview with Ghada Abu al-Rous, Program Development Manager at Questscope, on 19/05/2024
- Interview with a Ricky, advocate for the rights of refugees, community organiser, researcher and educator, on 27/06/2024

Annexes

Annex 1 – Letter from the University of Padua to the Minsitry of Education (AR-ENG)

Annex 2 – Questions for interviews with children (AR-ENG)

Annex 3 – Questions for interviews with teachers (AR-ENG)

Annex 1

قسم العلوم السياسية والقانون والدراسات الدولية

مكتبة أبي غزالة
Abu Ghazaleh Office

وزارة التربية والتعليم
عمان - الأردن

بادوفا 2024/05/17

موضوع: طلب تفويض لإجراء مقابلات في مدارس مختارة في عمان

إلى من يهجه الأمر ،

نؤكد بموجب هذا الخطاب على أن السيدة لورا باغانيللا، حاملة رقم الطالب 2080325، المسجلة في السنة الثانية من برنامج الماجستير في حقوق الإنسان والحوكمة المتعددة المستويات بجامعة بادوفا في إيطاليا، تقوم بإجراء بحث لأطروحة الماجستير النهائية حول إمكانية حصول الأطفال اللاجئين على التعليم في الأردن.

بدأ البحث في عام 2023 ويتم تنفيذه تحت إشراف دقيق ويتوافق مع المعايير المتوقعة لمثل هذه المشاريع الأكاديمية.

تود السيدة باغانيللا، تحت إشرافنا الأكاديمي، إجراء بعض المقابلات مع مجموعة محدودة من معلمي المدارس والأطفال اللاجئين المتحقين بالمدارس وبرامج التعليم في عمان، لجمع تجاربهم ووجهات نظرهم. ومن المقرر أن تُجرى المقابلات في شهري مايو/ أيار و يونيو/حزيران لعام 2024.

نطلب بكل احترام من وزارة التربية والتعليم الأردنية أن تمنح السيدة لورا باغانيللا التفويض لإجراء المقابلات وتقديم أي تسهيلات ودعم إضافي يمكن أن تراه ممكناً.

نحن متاحون لأي إستفسارات أخرى لديكم.

مع خالص الاحترام والتقدير،

م. أنطوان ماير/موقع/
المنسق، مختبر حقوق اللاجئين
المشرف المشارك على الأطروحة

البروفيسور باولو دي ستيفاني/موقع/
المنسق، برنامج الماجستير في حقوق الإنسان والحوكمة
المتعددة المستويات

AGATO Certified True Translation
Abu Ghazaleh
14 MAY 2024
Signature

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19/5/2024
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UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI
DI PADOVA

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The Ministry of Education
Amman
Jordan

Padova, 17.05.2024

Request for authorization to conduct interviews in selected schools in Amman

With the present letter, we confirm that Ms. Laura Paganella, student n 2080325, enrolled in the second year of the University of Padova, Master's Program on Human Rights and Multilevel Governance, is carrying out a research for a Master's final dissertation on the access to education of refugee children in Jordan.

Initiated in 2023, the research is being elaborated under close supervision and conforms with the standards expected for such academic projects.

Ms. Paganella would like to conduct, under our academic supervision, some interviews with a limited panel of school teachers and enrolled refugee children in schools and in education programs in Amman, to gather their experiences and insights. Interviews would be ideally conducted in May and June, 2024.

We respectfully request the Ministry of Education of Jordan to authorize Ms Laura Paganella to conduct the interviews and to provide any further facilitation and support it may deem possible.

We remain available for any further information.

Sincerely,

M. Antoine Meyer
Coordinator, Refugee Rights
Laboratory
Thesis co-supervisor

Prof. Paolo De Stefani
Co-coordinator,
Master's degree in Human Rights and
Multilevel Governance



امثلة للأطفال

المعلومات الشخصية:

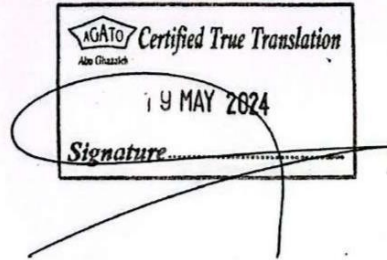
1. المعلومات الشخصية (العمر و الجنسية و مكان الإقامة و الأسرة)
2. كم عدد السنوات التي قضيتها في النظام المدرسي في الأردن؟
3. هل كنت في مدارس أخرى من قبل؟ أين؟

التجربة المدرسية:

1. هل يمكنك أن تتحدث لي عن مدرستك؟
2. ما هو أكثر شيء تحبه في المدرسة؟ (بما في ذلك البيئة و المساحات، إلخ...)
3. صف لي المعلمين؛ وكيف علاقتك معهم؟
4. هل بإمكانك أن تخبرني عن تجربتك في المدرسة؟
5. هل تشعر بالدعم والفهم من قبل زملائك والمعلمين في المدرسة؟
6. هل المعلمين على علم بأمور عائلتك/ التزاماتك الشخصية؟
7. كيف تشعر عندما قدومك للمدرسة؟ هل تشعر بالأمان والاندماج؟
8. كيف تكون الأجواء في الصف مع زملائك؟ هل تتوافقون بشكل جيد؟

الملاحظات الختامية

1. ماذا تعتقد أنه من الممكن تحسينه/ما الذي ترغب في تغييره في المدرسة، إذا كنت تستطيع/تريد؟ (البيئة، البنية التحتية، المعلمون، المواد)
2. هل هناك أي شيء تود إضافته إلى ما ناقشناه؟



امليت
٢٠٢٤/٥/١٩

Questions for children

Personal information:

- 1) Personal information (age, nationality, place of residence, family)
- 2) How many years have you been in the school system in Jordan?
- 3) Have you been in other schools before? Where?

School/schooling experience:

- 1) Can you tell me about your school?
- 2) What do you like the most about school? (including environment, spaces, etc)
- 3) What are your teachers like? What is your relationship like with them?
- 4) Can you tell me about your experience at school?
- 5) Would you say that you generally feel supported and understood at school?
- 6) [Depending on the answers they gave before about their family and background] Do your teachers know about your family situation? Are they aware of your commitments?
- 7) How do you feel when you come to school?
Do you feel safe and well-integrated?
- 8) What is it like in class with your classmates? Do you get along well?

Closing remarks:

- 1) Do you think there is anything that could be improved? If so, what is it?
(environment, infrastructure, teachers, materials)
- 2) Is there anything you would like to add to what we discussed?



أسئلة للمعلمين

البيانات الشخصية/الخبرة:

1. حدثني عن نفسك - خلفيتك و المهنة
2. متى بدأت العمل في التدريس؟
3. هل لديك خبرة سابقة في العمل مع الأطفال اللاجئين؟
4. هل يمكنك إخباري بخلفيات الطلاب داخل غرفك الصفية؟

صروف الأطفال اللاجئين في المدرسة واحتياجاتهم:

1. هل لديك معلومات عن خلفيات طلابك (العائلية، الاقتصادية، الثقافية، إلخ...)?
2. ما تقييمك لإدارة صف يحتوي على لاجئين؟ هل تواجه أي تحديات؟ إذا كان الأمر كذلك، ما هي التحديات التي تواجهها؟
3. ما رأيك في تجربة الأطفال اللاجئين في المدرسة؟
4. برأيك، ما هو شعور الأطفال اللاجئين عند قدومهم إلى المدرسة؟ كيف تقيم حضورهم في الصف؟ هل سبق ولاحظت أن المشاعر السلبية كالقلق أو الاكتئاب أو القلق منتشرة أكثر بين الطلاب اللاجئين؟ وهل يتحدث الطلاب داخل الغرف الصفية عن المشاكل التي يواجهونها خارج إطار المدرسة؟
5. هل واجهت أي تحديات مع طالب محدد؟ إذا كان الجواب نعم، هل بإمكانك توضيح ما كانت المشكلة، وإن كنت قد اعتمدت استراتيجيات محددة في التعامل مع هذه التحديات؟

توفر وإمكانية الوصول إلى التدريب:

1. هل أنت على علم بأي من الفرص التدريبية المقدمة من قبل الوزارات أو المنظمات غير الحكومية؟
2. هل سبق لك أن شاركت في أي من الدورات التدريبية المقدمة من الجهات الفاعلة في المجتمع الأردني أو الوزارات، مثل وزارة التربية والتعليم، بخصوص أساليب التعامل مع الطلاب اللاجئين؟ إذا كان الجواب لا، هل قمت بنفسك بتنمية استراتيجيات محددة في التعامل مع هؤلاء الطلبة؟ وما هي هذه الاستراتيجيات؟

محتوى وطبيعة التدريب:

1. إذا حضرت أيًا من التدريبات حول أساليب التعامل مع الطلاب اللاجئين، ما كانت طبيعة هذه التدريبات؟ وما كان التركيز الأكبر فيها؟ ما الجوانب التي تعتقد أنه يجب التركيز عليها أكثر؟ كم استمرت مدة التدريبات؟ برأيك، على ماذا ينبغي أن تركز أكثر؟

التقييم:

1. إذا سبق لك أن شاركت في هذه التدريبات، ما تقييمك لها؟ برأيك، هل كانت مفيدة؟ وهل كان لها تأثير على أسلوبك في التعليم؟
2. هل يمكنك تسليط الضوء على أي عقبات تواجه تنفيذ المحتوى الذي تم مناقشته في التدريبات؟

الاحتياجات:

1. ما الذي تحتاجه من أنظمة داعمة أو محتوى تدريبي لأجل تلبية احتياجات الطلاب اللاجئين؟

الملاحظات الختامية:

1. لقد ناقشنا التدريب بشكل مطول - هل ترى أي عوامل أخرى يمكن أن تؤثر بشكل إيجابي أو سلبي على تجربة الأطفال من وجهة نظرك كمعلم؟ (مثل الظروف المادية، الاكتظاظ، إلخ)
2. هل هناك أي شيء تود إضافته إلى ما ناقشناه؟



امنت
٢٠٢٤/٥/١٩

Questions for teachers

Personal information/experience:

- 1) Tell me about yourself – background, career
- 2) How long have you been teaching for?
- 3) Have you had prior experience working with refugee children?
- 4) Can you tell me about the composition of your classroom?

About their class/awareness of needs:

- 1) Are you generally aware about/could you tell me a bit about students' backgrounds?
(family, socio-economic, cultural, personal history)
- 2) How is it to run a class that has a share of refugee children?
Do you identify any challenges? If so, which ones?
- 3) Do you have any general view on how refugee children experience school? If so, could you elaborate on that?
- 4) How do you feel children come in when they arrive at school?
What is their general availability in class?
Have you ever noticed any negative signs that may be indicating of the situation of these children? If so, what are these signs? (physical, psychological, material)
Do children speak about issues they have outside of school?
- 5) Has there been any challenge with any particular child? Can you elaborate on the challenge?
Have you developed strategies to deal with that?

Availability and access to training:

- 1) Are you aware of any training opportunity available (ministry driven, NGOs, ...)?
- 2) Have you yourself ever received/benefitted any training from civil society actors and/or relevant ministries (e.g. the MoE) regarding the vulnerabilities of refugee children and how to better deal with them?
If not, what are strategies that you have developed, if any, to deal with their students?

Content and nature of the training:

- 1) What was the nature of the training?
What did these trainings focus on the most?
How long did they last?
What do you think they should focus on more?

Evaluation:

- 2) What do you think about such trainings?
Were they useful?
Do you think they had an impact on your teaching method?
- 3) Can you highlight any obstacles to the implementation of the contents discussed in the trainings?

Needs:

- 4) What would you need (i.e., support systems, information, training content, etc) to feel like you are meeting the needs of refugee students?

Concluding remarks:

- 1) We've discussed training at length – do you recognise any other factors that can affect in a positive or negative way the experience of children, in your view as a teacher? (e.g., material conditions, overcrowding, etc.)
- 2) Is there anything you would like to add to what we discussed?

