

NO LOST GENERATION

Protecting the futures of children affected by the crisis in Syria



STRATEGIC OVERVIEW

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As the crisis in Syria rages on, approaching its fourth terrible year, an entire generation of children is being shaped by violence, displacement, and a persistent lack of opportunity – and could be lost forever, with profound long-term consequences for Syria, the region, and beyond.

The **No Lost Generation** strategy proposes practical ways to avoid this harsh possibility, showing the impact that could be achieved with a critical investment today of **\$1 billion** focused on expanding access to learning and psychosocial support, strengthening social cohesion and peacebuilding efforts, and restoring hope for the future to millions of children.

There is still time to prevent the loss of a generation. With assistance to protect them from violence, abuse, and exploitation; education to foster their minds and build resilience; and support to heal the hidden wounds of a merciless war, the children of Syria can build a better future for themselves, their families, and their societies.

But we must act now, with urgency, in a coordinated global effort to champion the children of Syria and support neighboring nations affected by the crisis.

Why is an entire generation at such risk?

More than five million children already have been affected by the unrelenting crisis in Syria. The immediate threats to their lives are many – from violence and life-threatening disease, to lack of access to safe drinking water and inadequate nutrition.

Beyond the immediate risks to children is the hidden impact of the on-going conflict – one that threatens not only the wellbeing of individual children, but the future of an entire generation.

Threats to education: The economic and social collapse in Syria has reversed decades of educational achievement. More than 3 million children have left school – and thousands of young school-aged children have never been enrolled. In Syria, one in five schools has been destroyed, damaged, or used for other purposes. School systems in host nations are stretched to the breaking point.

Threats to protection: The crisis in Syria has put already-vulnerable children at greater risk of less visible harm, including child labour, early marriage, and the recruitment of children by armed groups. Far too many children have witnessed or experienced horrific violence, or been lost or separated from loved ones, increasing the risk of abuse and exploitation and leaving deep emotional wounds.

Threats to an entire region: Millions of refugees have streamed across the borders to neighbouring countries – including 1.2 million children. With local resources strained, host communities are struggling to provide services not only for child refugees but also their own young citizens. And across the region, shrinking opportunities for increasingly disenfranchised youth and few chances for young people to make their voices heard further hamper recovery and reconciliation.

No Lost Generation: Unless we reach these children now with assistance to protect them from violence, abuse, and exploitation, education to foster their minds and their resilience, and support to heal the hidden wounds of a merciless war and strengthen social cohesion, the hopes of an entire

generation could be lost forever – with profound long-term consequences for Syria, the region, and beyond.

How can we protect the futures of children affected by the crisis in Syria?

Averting such a harsh possibility is the driving force behind **No Lost Generation**, a strategy to address the hidden impact of this long conflict by expanding access to learning and psychosocial support, strengthening social cohesion and peacebuilding, and restoring hope for the future.

First proposed in October 2013 by leading international humanitarian organizations and supported by key advocates and donors, *No Lost Generation* brings together regional stakeholders and global champions for millions of children affected by the crisis in Syria.

The *No Lost Generation* strategy builds on the latest evidence of the impact the crisis is having on children generally, not least diminished access to education and protection. It includes specific, sustainable activities to be implemented over the next year and beyond, with clearly identified targets.

- **Increasing learning and skills**, including increasing school enrolment and keeping children learning; improving quality of education; and expanding vocational and remedial secondary education and alternative ways of delivering education; and governance-related issues affecting access and learning.
- **Providing a protective environment**, including protecting children and upholding their human rights; providing psychosocial support, including teacher training; promoting birth registration; providing mine-risk education; monitoring the child protection situation and assessing children's vulnerability; strengthening institutional and community-based protection mechanisms and referral systems; and addressing gender-based violence and specific needs of adolescent girls.
- **Broadening opportunities for children and adolescents**, including building life-skills for children and adolescents; vocational training; mobilizing communities to support peace building (e.g. peace forums and opportunities for children's voices to be better heard, integrating peacebuilding into education, programmes that directly confront conflict and its causes, sports and arts, etc.).

The No Lost Generation strategy calls for **US\$ 990 million** from October 2013 to December 2014. Fully implemented, it can provide millions of children affected by the conflict in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, with learning opportunities, a protective environment and opportunities to build their future – upon all of which both reconciliation and peace-building in Syria depend.

KEY ACTIONS

IN SYRIA

In Syria, the crisis has pushed the capacity of basic social services to breaking point, with a devastating impact on 4.3 million children. 2.26 million children are out of school. The Ministry of Education has lost 22 per cent of its teaching staff and 18 per cent of its school counsellors. There is an acute lack of learning spaces, with one in five schools destroyed, damaged, or used for other purposes, and school construction halted due to insecurity and attacks on school infrastructure.

The psychosocial wellbeing of children has also been profoundly affected. Many families are keeping their children at home or marrying their daughters at an early age to keep them safe. Conversely, more children are working outside of the home, with strong indications of an increase in the worst forms of child labour.

For 2014 alone, **US\$128 million** is needed to provide a range of services to children, adolescents and young people, including:

Providing 3.9 million children with access to learning opportunities, including:

- Teaching and self-learning materials
- Early childhood development interventions
- Vouchers and other incentives to encourage school enrolment
- Advocacy for girls education and safe schools
- School rehabilitation and temporary learning spaces

Providing 500,000 children with access to a protective environment, including:

- Family tracing and reunification
- Psychosocial support services
- Gender-based violence support and prevention
- Establishment of child-friendly spaces and recreational activities
- Explosive remnants of war risk reduction
- Advocacy and awareness-raising on child protection, including child recruitment

IN LEBANON

Planning figures indicate that by the end of 2014, as many as 1.65 million refugees from Syria will be in Lebanon -- a country of about 4.3 million people. Refugees are crossing the border into a country whose public services are already overwhelmed.

The refugee surge in Lebanon has created an education crisis affecting all Syrian, Palestinian, and poor Lebanese children. Over 80 per cent of Syrian children in Lebanon remain out of school. Out of the 1.3 million affected school aged children it is estimated that some 770,000 will be out of school by end 2014. This figure far surpasses the 275,000 Lebanese school-aged children currently enrolled in public schools and will have a significant impact on scarce resources and on quality of learning. Compounding barriers include instruction of some subjects in foreign language (English or French), differences in curricula, unfamiliar teaching methods, discrimination, and prohibitive costs of transportation.

For 2014 alone, **US\$322 million** is needed to provide:

346,500 children with access to learning opportunities, including:

- Improved learning space environments
- Teacher training
- Institutional support to Ministry of Education

300,000 children with a protective environment, including:

- Psychosocial support services
- Front-line worker training to build coping skills

- Capacity building for child protection actors
- Establishment of child-friendly spaces

382,000 children and adolescents with initiatives to broaden their opportunities, including life skills training

IN JORDAN

The majority of registered Syrian refugees in Jordan are children under 18, and the burden on the public education system is taking its toll. To absorb the influx of Syrian students, the school system has re-introduced the practice of 'double shifts' in overcrowded schools, a policy that is affecting education quality and derailing on-going public education reform.

Child refugees are experiencing profound distress caused by conflict and displacement. Violence against children at home and in schools is widespread as an acceptable disciplinary practice. Boredom and aggressive behaviour is common, especially among boys and youth, potentially heightening the risk of recruitment by armed groups.

Meanwhile, as Syrian refugee families use up their savings, many are forced to send their children to work in dangerous jobs. Child poverty is also increasing for Jordanian children and 85 per cent of Jordanian youth aged 20 to 24 are unemployed.

For 2014 alone, **US\$169 million** is needed to provide:

328,000 children with access to learning opportunities, including:

- Alternative education services such as informal education
- Early learning opportunities
- Learning materials and supplies
- Basic life skills activities
- Resilience building activities
- Additional learning spaces

180,900 children with a protective environment, including

- Strengthening community-based child protection committees
- Gender-based violence prevention initiatives
- Psychosocial support

292,500 children and adolescents with initiatives to broaden their opportunities, including

- Community-based protection mechanisms, community outreach
- Post-basic and higher learning opportunities for youth

IN IRAQ

An estimated 84,000 child refugees from Syria are currently in Iraq, and projections indicate that number could double by the end of 2014. The vast majority of these children have not had regular access to schooling for months, or in some cases years, greatly limiting their opportunities for learning and increasing the risk of protection violations and abuse.

Host communities are struggling to meet the needs of child refugees, with insufficient classroom space to accommodate all children and not enough programmes to provide appropriate psychosocial support.

For 2014 alone, **US\$84 million** is needed to provide:

132,246 children with access to learning opportunities, including:

- Early childhood education development services in camp and non-camp settings
- Parent training and orientation to increase participation
- School-based emergency preparedness and response training
- Teacher training

84,500 children with a protective environment, including:

- Assistance for unaccompanied and separated children
- Psychosocial support
- Specific initiatives to protect children from child labour; recruitment by armed groups
- Support for victims of gender-based violence
- Initiatives to strengthen institutional capacity to address GBV

370,000 children and adolescents with initiatives to broaden their opportunities, including:

- Technical and vocational education
- Literacy initiatives
- Life skills and entrepreneurship training
- Social cohesion and peaceful co-existence initiatives

IN TURKEY

There are close to 300,000 registered children refugees currently in Turkey, and that number is expected to more than double, reaching more than 750,000 refugee children by end 2014. There are countless obstacles to education – from the language used in classrooms to curriculum choices, certification and recognition of learning attainments. Girls and children with disabilities are especially likely not to be enrolled, to drop out, or not attend regularly. Other reasons for early drop-out include children forced to work to support families. Children in both camp and non-camp settings thus continue to be vulnerable to exploitation, family separation, child labour, forced and early marriage, violence and abuse, while there are also pressures to return to Syria to fight, particularly for boys.

For 2014 alone, **US\$83 million** is needed to provide:

432,480 children with access to learning opportunities, including:

- Enrolment and retention initiatives
- Educational facilities constructed or refurbished
- Education and learning materials for camp and non-camp settings
- Advocacy for measures to assure accreditation and recognition of school certificates
- Language training

348,900 children with a protective environment, including:

- Identification and reporting services for child protection and gender-based violence
- Support and services for children with special needs

911,600 children and adolescents with initiatives to broaden their opportunities, including life skills, language training, and vocational training in camp and non-camp settings

IN EGYPT

In Egypt, approximately 40 per cent of the 250,000 to 300,000 Syrians who fled to Egypt are school-aged children. The quality of the school environment in Egyptian public schools is a significant barrier to the enrolment and retention of Syrian children, as are the difficulties they face in adjusting to the Egyptian dialect and curriculum. Child protection concerns have also increased in the form of detention and deportation, increased number of separated and unaccompanied children and hostility against children.

For 2014 alone, **US\$36 million** is needed to provide:

125,000 children with access to learning opportunities, including:

- Early childhood development and learning initiatives
- Measures to promote girls' education
- Education infrastructure constructed, improved or maintained
- Safe learning environments

50,560 children with a protective environment, including:

- Community-based child protection and psychosocial support structures
- Increased psychosocial, health, legal, and security support for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence
- Structures to identify and support children at risk and community-based initiatives to strengthen coping mechanisms
- Safe spaces for refugees and girls and women from host communities

75,610 children and adolescents with initiatives to broaden their opportunities, including:

- Lifelong learning opportunities
- Psychosocial support and peaceful co-existence initiatives
- Community leadership initiatives

The **No Lost Generation** strategy is an evolving one. It has already been embedded into key planning at the regional and individual country level, and nearly 60 per cent of the proposed initiatives and funding requirements are now incorporated into the existing funding mechanisms of the revised Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan (SHARP5) and Regional Response Plan (RRP6). Humanitarian and development organizations are also working to integrate these initiatives in longer-term plans, such as Reaching All Children with Education and the Stabilisation Roadmap in Lebanon, and the National Resilience Plan in Jordan.

The success of the **No Lost Generation** strategy will rely to a great extent on how many children can be reached with the proposed activities, and the social environment in which they are undertaken. So the strategy also calls for urgent action to safeguard the lives and future of children through sustained advocacy and engagement for:

- Unconditional, cross-line humanitarian access to besieged communities and remote areas inside Syria, to reach the most vulnerable children and families;
- Continued advocacy with all parties to the conflict to immediately demilitarize schools and cease all recruitment of children by armed groups;
- Expanded absorption capacity of schools inside Syria and in refugee-hosting countries, and greater attention to employability of young people;
- Promotion of peacebuilding, tolerance, and reconciliation across all initiatives

As the third anniversary of the conflict approaches, the children of Syria need advocates and champions more than ever – and to succeed, the **No Lost Generation** strategy depends on joint effort by global partners and sustained regional engagement on behalf of all children affected by the crisis in Syria, and on renewed public support.