AN EIE RESEARCH-PRACTICE PARTNERSHIP: Learning to improve academic and social-emotional outcomes.

International Rescue Committee (IRC) & Global TIES for Children at New York University (TIES/NYU)

Location: Lebanon (Bekaa and Akkar governorates)
Target population: Syrian refugee children aged 6-16 attending Lebanese public schools
Intervention type: Retention support programming and low-cost targeted social emotional learning
Date started: October 2016
Number of beneficiaries reached: 4,600

Written by Carly Tubbs Dolan, 3EA Measurement and Metrics Director, TIES/NYU and Jamie Weiss-Yagoda, Education Policy Advisor, IRC
KEY FINDINGS

• Among Syrian refugee students enrolled in Lebanese public schools, access to International Rescue Committee’s (IRC) Healing Classrooms program—a non-formal retention support program in Lebanon—significantly improved Syrian refugee students’ Arabic reading and math skills after four months of implementation. This is the second randomized trial providing evidence that the IRC’s Healing Classrooms social-emotional learning-infused teacher training and curricular program works across delivery modes and contexts to improve children’s academic skills in crisis contexts.

• Syrian refugee children who are enrolled in Lebanese public schools who have access to IRC’s Healing Classrooms program, when compared to children who only have access to Lebanese public schools, are less likely to view interactions with peers as hostile in intent. Research in the United States has identified such “hostile attribution bias” as a common and debilitating consequence of exposure to violence and bullying and a major risk factor for developing conduct and behavioral problems.

• Syrian refugee children who had access to IRC’s Healing Classrooms program showed signs of recognizing and becoming more open to expressing their feelings, even their negative feelings. Given the complex role that emotional recognition and regulation play in response to trauma, additional analyses will examine the adaptive value of emotional expression in crisis contexts.

• While Syrian refugee children struggled to attend the Healing Classrooms retention support program, the amount and quality of implementation of retention support programming mattered. While students on average attended 40% of retention support classes, in general, higher attendance predicts improvements in Arabic literacy skills as well as improvements on a range of social-emotional skills and outcomes.
With the launch of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), global leaders acknowledged that the education SDG will never be achieved without renewed commitment to education in crisis settings. The momentum to increase funding for education is promising and urgently needed. But without a more robust evidence base for Education in Emergencies (EiE), funders, implementers and policy-makers will lack the knowledge required to make sound decisions about the most effective programs in which to invest scarce time and resources. Without evidence, decisions will continue to be based on intuition, and most importantly, children in crisis contexts will continue to be denied the opportunity to receive a quality, safe education that we know offers them the chance to build the social-emotional and academic skills they need to survive and thrive.

Pursuing traditional approaches to accumulating the evidence, however, is not enough. The current global focus on identifying “winning” programs will at best take years to motivate decision-making and at worst result in seemingly disparate evidence that precludes action. What is needed instead is a paradigm shift to learning: Why do some programs work and other programs do not, and how can those results be incorporated into practice? As with children in a classroom, learning does not occur individually or in a vacuum. It requires sustained partnerships in which stakeholders create mutual learning goals, collaboratively test ideas, and jointly refine research and programming approaches based on results.

In February 2016, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and Global TIES for Children at New York University (TIES/NYU) launched the Education in Emergencies: Evidence for Action (3EA) research-practice partnership. 3EA encompasses two programs of work:

1. **Impact**: Iteratively implement and test practices to identify not only what works to improve children’s holistic learning and development (CHILD) and program implementation quality (PIQ), but also how, for whom, and under what conditions programs work.

2. **Measurement and Metrics**: Design, adapt, test, and build capacity to embed high-quality CHILD and PIQ measurement tools and methods in field Monitoring & Evaluation systems as well as in impact evaluations.

We present here as the overarching “promising practice” a research-practice partnership dedicated to iterative cycles of action and research. In 2016-2017, the IRC delivered non-formal retention-focused tutoring support, also known as remedial programming, to 6,400 children enrolled in public schools in Lebanon and Niger using its *Learning in a Healing Classroom* (LIHC) program. LIHC is an evidence-based approach to providing reading and math courses in safe and supportive learning environments. Sites were additionally randomized to embed low-cost, targeted social-emotional learning (SEL) interventions into the curriculum. TIES/NYU then conducted a site-randomized trial to provide the first rigorous evidence of whether and how non-formal, SEL-based retention support education programs can bolster refugee children’s ability to succeed in formal education systems, as well as some of the first evidence globally on how targeted SEL practices can be embedded in curriculum to support children’s holistic learning and development. We share the lessons learned from both the interventions and from the partnership, focusing on the work in Lebanon.
The Syrian civil war has caused a massive humanitarian and political crisis in Lebanon. The Government of Lebanon estimates that it currently hosts over 1.5 million Syrian refugees, comprising more than 25% of Lebanon’s total population. As of December 2016, 55% of Syrian refugees were estimated to be children and adolescents under the age of 18. This has created a dramatic increase in the demand for basic education, stretching an already overburdened system and outstripping the capacity of the Lebanese public schools.

In response to this challenge, the Government of Lebanon developed the ‘Reaching all Children with Education’ (RACE) phase I plan from 2014-2016. The overall objective was to ensure access to quality learning opportunities in safe environments with a particular focus on opening the doors of the formal system to 200,000 Syrian refugee children. Phase I of ‘RACE’ has thus far achieved considerable results. In the current 2016/2017 school year, 194,750 Syrian refugee children (close to 52% of Syrian refugee children registered under UNHCR) are being supported through the payment of school fees and thus granted free access into Lebanese public schools. Despite these commendable efforts, more than 250,000 Syrian children between 3-18 years old remain out of school.

While there are important barriers to enrollment that remain, there are also particular challenges to maintaining the quality of education needed to ensure refugee children are learning and staying in school. These include: years of missed schooling, being taught in an unfamiliar language of instruction, and bullying and discrimination. In this sample of first to ninth graders, 61% of children were not able to read full sentences in Arabic and fully 58% of children were not able to solve simple addition and subtraction problems.

The Government of Lebanon, in collaboration with partners, intends to address many of these challenges through the second phase of its RACE strategy for the period 2017-2021. ‘RACE II’ aims at ensuring that all children aged 3-18 will have access to quality education, with an explicit focus of formalizing education pathways for out-of-school Lebanese and refugee children to enter and re-enter the formal system. This includes supporting children across the lifecycle from early childhood through secondary or vocational training. Following this vision to expand access to education services through quality and regulated non-formal education, the IRC is now working in the North (specifically Akkar) and Bekaa regions—historically among the most economically marginalized areas of the country—with Syrian students currently enrolled in school who are at risk of dropping out, providing additional support to promote their learning and retention.

Photo: Students received eight hours of retention support in math, Arabic and a second language to complement the curriculum in the formal schools. © IRC
INTRODUCTION

The Problem

Rigorous education research in crisis-affected countries has not improved commensurate to demand and need. Children living in such contexts suffer from unspeakable adversities that can result in a “toxic stress” response, disrupting healthy brain development and affecting their behavior, health, relationships and abilities to learn. We know from research in stable contexts that quality education with social-emotional learning opportunities can mitigate the impact of toxic stress — but given the dearth of research to date in crisis-affected countries, we don’t know whether, or how, this holds true for children affected by crisis.

To address this lack of evidence, between 2011 and 2015 the IRC and TIES/NYU undertook in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the first large-scale evaluation of a classroom social-emotional learning (SEL) intervention in a crisis-affected context. The results of the evaluation indicate that the IRC’s LIHC approach does show promise: after one year of implementation in two different cohorts, LIHC increased the supportiveness of teachers and schools, while also improving literacy and numeracy skills. In neither cohort, however, did LIHC reduce children’s mental health problems or experiences of peer victimization. Moreover, when the program was expanded in one cohort, the impacts on reading, math and school supportiveness faded out. To truly learn what works, more research was clearly needed.

The Approach

3EA marries innovative program delivery with rigorous research, following an iterative process outlined below.

1. Applying Knowledge and Assessing Needs: In response to the results of the LIHC evaluation in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the IRC and NYU collaborated to improve both LIHC and research measures and methods in crisis-affected countries. First, we hypothesized that LIHC’s classroom-SEL focus on building the supportiveness of the classroom environment is necessary but not sufficient to improve children’s mental health in crisis contexts. We hypothesized that what is additionally needed are “targeted” SEL practices that specifically aim to bolster the core skills – such as executive functioning and emotion regulation – that are critically impacted by adversity and necessary for learning and well-being. Second, we hypothesized that the fade-out in impact was due to a decrease in implementation quality as LIHC expanded without additional resources. We thus redoubled our commitment to collecting high-quality implementation data for mid-course corrections.

Finally, we recognized that the strategy for providing education in crisis contexts has shifted. As host country governments open up space in formal school systems for refugee students, NGOs are increasingly engaged in providing non-formal retention support programs that can help refugee children navigate barriers that prevent learning and lead to high drop-out rates. But while government and other actors have made significant investments in improving access through the formal system, little rigorous research has examined how non-formal programs can support children’s retention and learning in formal schools. Such research is imperative for informing politically- and resource-viable education strategies.

2. Designing and Implementing Interventions: The IRC and TIES/NYU collaborated on the design of two different retention support programs:

Learning in Healing Classrooms Basic (LIHC): Support is provided for eight hours per week in spaces near the communities where Syrian refugee students live. Teachers are trained to use the IRC’s LIHC approach, which focuses on establishing nurturing, safe, supportive environments. Training built teachers’ capacities to apply this approach when providing Arabic literacy, numeracy, and second language (English or French) instruction aligned with Lebanese public school curriculum.

Learning in Healing Classrooms + Targeted SEL (LIHC-Targeted SEL): In LIHC-Targeted SEL, in Cycle 1 (the first 16 weeks), students and teachers completed short, daily mindfulness exercises in between subject-matter transitions. In high-income countries, mindfulness-based practices have been shown to buffer adults and children from physiological stress responses, but no research to date has tested the impact of mindfulness practices in crisis contexts. In Cycle 2 (the second 16 weeks), students played quick “Brain Games” that use movements and playfulness to build cognitive control in between subject-matter transitions. The games are designed to target core executive functioning skills — working memory, flexibility of attention, and inhibitory control — that research indicates provides the foundation for long-term social competence and achievement.

3. Testing and Learning: This two-pronged research agenda was designed to provide measurement tools and evidence of impact necessary for program and policy decision-making:

Aim 1: Using measures and methods (developed under Aim 2), to experimentally evaluate whether, how, for whom, and under what conditions (a) access to non-formal retention support programs improves refugee children’s academic and social-emotional learning outcomes; and (b) integrating targeted social-emotional strategies into classroom instruction improves children’s academic and social-emotional learning outcomes.

Aim 2: To design, adapt, and test innovative, sensitive, and contextually appropriate measures of (a) children’s learning and well-being outcomes; (b) the mechanisms that enable learning and well-being (children’s stress, executive functioning, and social-emotional skills); and (c) measures of implementation of teacher professional development activities and classroom practices and processes.
The Implementation

During school year 2016-2017, the IRC delivered retention educational support to over 4,300 Syrian refugee children in Lebanon's Bekaa and Akkar regions. As part of back-to-school campaigns coordinated with the Government of Lebanon, the IRC identified and recruited children enrolled in formal schools for the program. These students received eight hours of retention support in math, Arabic and second language (English or French). To deliver the retention support program, the IRC trained 145 facilitators to apply the LIHC program through a five-day pre-service training on positive class management, critical thinking and positive pedagogy, in addition to literacy and numeracy instruction. To provide ongoing support, all facilitators received regular mentoring visits and attended monthly peer-support Teacher Learning Circles. Teachers who delivered LIHC-Targeted SEL received additional pre-service training and in-service mentoring to support their use of targeted SEL activities.

Due to insufficient program funding to provide retention support to all 87 communities simultaneously, we allocated community access to retention support through a lottery. This resulted in three groups:

1. Wait-List Retention Support group (J=21)
2. Retention Support group (J=33)
3. Retention Support Plus SEL group (J=33)

This site-randomized “wait-list control” design allowed us to experimentally evaluate the impact of LIHC and LIHC+ Targeted SEL programming (Aim 1), permitting the highest level of causal inference of program impact. In order to measure impact, local assessors trained by TIES/NYU assessed children, parents, and teachers at three points (Aim 2a-b): baseline (before the start of LIHC); midline (after the first 16-week cycle of LIHC); and endline (after the second 12-week cycle of LIHC). IRC staff additionally collected implementation data as part of routine monitoring and evaluation activities (Aim 2c).
KEY MILESTONES AND OUTCOMES

**Milestones**
Throughout each of the learning phases, the partnership achieved several milestones in efforts to marry rigorous research with high-quality practice:

**Collaboratively built program and research design:** In order to develop and prepare to implement feasible, flexible, and culturally appropriate program and research designs, the IRC and TIES/NYU held a series of in-country design workshops in Lebanon. These workshops provided opportunities for shared learning— including training in advanced program evaluation method and orientation to context—team building, and mutual ownership of the 3EA program.

**Integrated program and research theory of change:** The 3EA team developed and aligned program and research theories of change through an iterative and collaborative consultation process between in-country IRC staff, IRC HQ staff, TIES/NYU staff, and external consultants. These theories of change served to guide the implementation and evaluation process by ensuring that all stakeholders had a common understanding of the program and of how it was hypothesized to improve children’s outcomes.

**Evidence-based and contextually appropriate curriculum:**
The IRC engaged leading experts in SEL—for example, Dr. Stephanie Jones at Harvard University—to develop, review, and contextualize in-country Mindfulness and Brain Games activities. IRC staff also developed Arabic literacy, math, English, and French curricular materials—including teacher training guides, scopes, sequences, and lesson plans—in order to ensure lessons built core competencies aligned with the Lebanese public school curriculum.

**Innovative measurement:** TIES/NYU worked to develop, adapt, and pilot a suite of measurement tools designed to capture information about children’s learning and well-being outcomes as well as the cognitive, social, and emotional processes that enable learning and well-being. For example, during piloting, TIES/NYU found that Syrian refugee children were reluctant to respond to first-person survey questions meant to assess social-emotional skills and well-being. TIES/NYU thus adapted and used a scenario-based measure in which children were asked how they would hypothetically respond to social situations described in short vignettes. Psychometric analysis of baseline data indicated the scales resulting from this “Children’s Stories” measure were reliable and demonstrated preliminary evidence of construct validity.

**Successful program delivery and data collection:** Between November 2016 - May 2017, 145 of the IRC-trained teachers delivered two types of retention support programming to over 4,300 Syrian refugee children in 87 community sites. In order to assess the impact of the programming, 80 Lebanese enumerators were successfully trained to administer tablet-based research assessments with children, parents, and teachers, resulting in at baseline 4,346 student and parent assessments and 145 teacher assessments.

**The Preliminary Outcomes**
We report here the preliminary findings after the first cycle of the intervention, which lasted for approximately 16 weeks between November 2016 and March 2017.

At the beginning of the 2016-2017 school year, nearly one-third of Syrian refugee children enrolled in IRC retention support programming could not recognize one letter of Arabic, the language of elementary instruction in Syria and Lebanon. Of 4,438 students assessed at baseline, 30% of students scored zero on all subtasks of the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA), a test designed specifically for use in low- and middle-income countries.

Access to both types of LIHC programming significantly improved Syrian refugee students’ Arabic reading and math skills after four months of implementation. Two randomized control trials have now provided evidence that the LIHC SEL-infused teacher training and curricular approach works across delivery modes (formal schools and non-formal retention support) and contexts (the Democratic Republic of Congo and Lebanon) to improve children’s foundational academic skills in crisis contexts.

Syrian refugee children who are enrolled in Lebanese public schools and have access to both types of LIHC programming, when compared to children who only have access to Lebanese public schools, are less likely to view interactions with peers as hostile in intent. Research in the United States has identified such “hostile attribution bias” as a common and debilitating consequence of exposure to violence and bullying and major risk factor for developing conduct problems and disruptive disorders. The results of the experimental evaluation additionally indicated that Syrian refugee children enrolled in LIHC programming show signs of recognizing and becoming more open to expressing their feelings—even their negative feelings—as compared to peers without access to LIHC support. Given the complex role that emotion recognition and regulation can play in response to trauma, analyses with endline data will allow us to examine whether children’s increased emotional expression promotes or impedes positive adaptation in crisis contexts.

Neither intervention significantly improved children’s mental health after the first program cycle. Additional analyses will be conducted to determine whether mental health symptoms improved after a full year of programming (two cycles).
**Syrian refugee children struggled to attend LIHC classes.**

On average, students attended 40% of the 51 retention support classes offered in cycle 1. While this is likely due to high levels of mobility among the student population - students who remained in the LIHC programming for the duration of cycle 1 attended two-thirds of all offered classes - descriptive analyses also suggest significant motivational, contextual, and operational barriers to attending retention support.

**The amount and quality of implementation of retention support programming matters.** Descriptive analyses indicate that in general, higher attendance predicts improvements in Arabic literacy skills as well as improvements on a range of social-emotional skills and outcomes (e.g. teacher- and assessor-rated executive functioning skills, behavioral difficulties, pro-social skills). We caution, however, that these analyses are not causal, although they do adjust for many potential “selection factors” that may have influenced both students’ attendance rates and learning and well-being outcomes.

Photo: Students in IRC’s Healing Classrooms retention support program do activities that build their literacy, numeracy and social-emotional skills. © IRC
There is a paucity of evidence-generating EiE programming in part due to technical, technological, contextual, and political challenges. The 3EA research-practice partnership’s vision is to change this: to transform the EiE sector such that programs are based on an ever-growing body of evidence, rather than intuition, and their success is judged not on the basis of outputs, but on outcomes and program improvements. This experience exemplifies a research-practice partnership that is not only contributing much-needed evidence to the education sector, but demonstrating how research and practice must work hand-in-hand to achieve this vision. We have thus far encountered three fundamental challenges:

1. Insufficient funding for rapid, evidence-based program and research design. In crisis contexts, there is tension between balancing the need to begin program implementation—and therefore research activities—as soon as possible with the need to sufficiently ensure contextual relevance and appropriateness of program activities and research tools. Humanitarian programs, however, are rarely resourced adequately with start-up surge staff or funding to do evidence-based program design and research design quickly.

2. Short-term program cycles that lead to fragmented programs and hinder robust learning. A paradigm shift to a continuous learning model requires a fundamentally different funding approach and a change in expectations. Continuous learning as a research-practice partnership requires sustained capacity. In the designing and testing phases of the partnership, practitioners must learn to manage the increased demands of rigorous research while researchers must learn to navigate the realities of and sensitivities of the field. Practitioners must interpret complex research results; researchers must clearly communicate such findings. Given ambitious goals, sustained, multi-year funding is required—but rarely attained.

3. Prioritization of evidence for “proof” of what works, rather than evidence to learn and improve. Even when stakeholders are interested in using evidence for decision-making, there is a preference for straightforward, linear answers. The process of child development, however, is neither straightforward nor linear. The achievement of core skills and competencies result from a confluence of diverse biological, individual, family, school and community forces. For children living in crisis contexts, exposure to extreme adversity disrupts these forces and causes complex physiological and psychological responses that alter the course of development and learning. Magic bullets to ensure children’s holistic learning and development do not exist. Indeed, experiences in high-income countries indicate the majority of efforts to improve the quality of education and learning outcomes do not immediately succeed.

Stakeholders supporting EiE thus have two choices. They can continue with the status quo, in which the majority of programs are never evaluated, and among those that are, there is little patience for complex or null results. Alternatively, they can shift to a model with an emphasis on, and accountability for, learning, and not simply for proving results; accountability to clients, not simply to donors. This shift requires a willingness to ask why positive results are or not achieved, fund programs that seek to answer this, and make decisions based on those results.
LESSONS FOR PROMISING PRACTICE

We offer a set of lessons learned for the timely consideration of key stakeholders.

To international donors:

- Invest in non-formal and complementary learning opportunities implemented by trusted NGO partners for refugee children to catch-up, learn and ultimately thrive in host country formal education systems.
- Require the programs you fund to seek education outcomes, not simply outputs.
- Given what we know from education research about how outcomes influence each other, direct resources to programs that seek to achieve a balance of academic, social-emotional, safety and access outcomes.
- Invest in education programs in crisis settings that are based on the best available evidence—even if in stable contexts—and show a commitment to learning how to achieve these outcomes.
- Dedicate 10% of all funding towards research-practice partnerships and learning that will provide the sector with a strong evidence base on what works and achieve outcomes, as well as where, for whom, how, under what conditions and at what cost.
- Commit funding that is multi-year and includes resources for design and pilot stages so that research-practice partnerships can develop evidence-based program and research designs quickly, and then sustain programming for the time required to generate rigorous evidence and execute a meaningful learning agenda.

To the NGO community:

- Commit to designing, implementing, and learning from outcomes-based education programming that is based on the best available evidence in the education in emergencies sector.
- Develop education research agendas and share with the wider EiE community in order to share research and evaluation endeavors, share findings, and also coordinate on different types of applied implementation and research endeavors to ensure that the limited amount of funds to education in emergencies are leveraged throughout the community;
- Recognize that doing rigorous research and evaluation in emergency contexts is complicated; therefore, share practices and lessons learned as a community as well as share the different types of research endeavors being used;
- Test curricular proofs of concepts using a small-scale approach before embarking on a large-scale research initiative in order to understand how they are implemented, what works, and what needs to be modified;
- When going to scale for research, map out all the necessary human resource surge support needed to get the program and research off the ground and moving as well as ensure that the necessary resources are in place to do so;
- Keep the program and research design simple.

Photo: Preliminary findings show that the amount and quality of implementation of retention support programming matters. © IRC
When 14-year-old twin brothers Yusef and Hazma learned that their home in Damascus, Syria was destroyed by a bomb while they were visiting their older sister in Lebanon, it became clear that they would not be going home any time soon. Even before their home was destroyed, they lived under the constant threat of violence.

Since returning to Syria was not an option, the family settled in Lebanon and Yusef and Hazma enrolled in second shift classes provided by the Government of Lebanon. Adjusting to school in Lebanon was a challenge – the boys missed their home and their friends in Syria, felt like strangers, and struggled with the local Arabic dialect. On top of this, their school in Lebanon required the boys to read and speak English – a language not taught in their school in Syria. Hazma recalls that his English teacher “wasn’t very supportive and said I wouldn’t make it to the top, but I was determined.” Once top students in Syria, the boys struggled to succeed in the Lebanese school system.

Outside of school hours, Yusef and Hazma delivered coal every day. “It was a very hard and heavy job; we didn’t like it at all but we wanted to help our parents,” Yusef explains. The boys heard about a program run by the IRC that could help students struggling in public school – they wanted to enroll, but couldn’t because of work. A few months later they asked their mother if they could stop working and enroll and she agreed: “They wanted to improve their English and Arabic skills; they were behind in public school. We knew IRC before so we registered when there was room.”

In addition to help with academic subjects, the retention program integrates activities called “Brain Games” during classroom transitions. The games are designed to build students’ executive function skills – skills like attention, working memory, and impulse control – which have been associated with better outcomes for children later in life. Yusef particularly liked the game that focused on building impulse control: “You had to really think before you spoke and not just say something really fast because you want to win… The Brain Games helped me focus and pay attention to the teacher’s instructions. And how to work together as a team.”

When asked about the impact of the IRC retention program in their lives, the brothers agree that without it, they would be much further behind in their education. Their teacher notes: “Some of the kids feel (and are) very behind in school so it’s important to take extra time with them to help them fully understand an assignment and continue to encourage them that they will improve. They are very eager learners and just need the motivation to continue studying.”

Yusef and Hazma are now settling into their new lives in Lebanon. Thanks to the support of the retention program, as well as a supportive mother who values education, their futures are brighter. Hazma and Yusef both dream about being professors when they grow up: “We want to educate the next generation and build their future, share new ideas and knowledge. That’s why we really like to learn, learn, and learn!”
Photo: We want to educate the next generation and build their future, share new ideas and knowledge. That's why we really like to learn, learn and learn! Yusef & Hamza © IRC
Case-study authors:
Carly Tubbs Dolan, 3EA Measurement and Metrics Director, TIES/NYU
carly.tubbs@nyu.edu
Jamie Weiss-Yagoda, Education Policy Advisor, IRC
Jamie.weissyagoda@rescue.org

Program managers:
Lindsay Brown, 3EA Impact Director, TIES/NYU
lindsay.brown@nyu.edu
Paul Frisoli, Senior Education Technical Advisor, IRC
Paul.frisoli@rescue.org

Principal investigators:
J. Lawrence Aber, co-Director, TIES/NYU
Jeannie Annan, Senior Director of Research, Evaluation, and Learning, IRC

APPENDIX


3 Enrollment among non-Lebanese increased from 27,000 in the 2011/2012 school year to 150,947 in 2015/2016.[2] In the current 2016/2017 school year, 194,750 Syrian refugee children (close to 52% of Syrian refugee children registered under UNHCR) are being supported through the payment of school fees and thus granted free access into Lebanese public schools.


5 Human Rights Watch, 2016, “Growing Up Without an Education” Barriers to Education for Syrian Refugee Children in Lebanon

6 In the Lebanese public school system, core classes are taught in either English or French beginning in 7th grade, Ibid.

7 Based on baseline scores on 3EA-administered subtests of the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) and Early Grade Math Assessment (EGMA).


13 Ibid.


21 Aber et al., “Impacts After One Year of ‘Healing Classroom’ on Children’s Reading and Math Skills in DRC.”


Promising Practices in Refugee Education is a joint initiative of Save the Children, the world’s largest independent children’s rights organisation, UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, and Pearson, the world’s learning company.

Launched in March 2017, the initiative set out to identify, document and promote innovative ways to effectively reach refugee children and young people with quality educational opportunities.

This case study is one of more than twenty promising practices that were selected as part of the initiative.

The practices have been grouped under one or more of six themes.

- **Equity**
- **Access**
- **Learning**
- **Wellbeing**
- **Technology**
- **System Strengthening**

The practices and the experience of implementing partners have been used to identify ten recommendations, grouped under three overarching pillars, aimed at improving refugee education policy and practice. They are:

**Approaching the immediate crisis with a long-term perspective:**
1. Strengthen inclusive national systems
2. Commit to predictable multi-year funding for education in refugee responses
3. Improve collaboration and develop innovative partnerships

**Understanding different contexts and meeting distinct needs**
4. Adopt user-centred design and empowering approaches
5. Establish diverse pathways that meet distinct needs
6. Use space and infrastructure creatively

**Improving outcomes for all**
7. Support teachers to help ensure quality
8. Prioritise both learning and well-being
9. Use technology as an enabling tool in pursuit of education outcomes
10. Build a robust evidence base

Our reflections on all of the promising practices that we identified and documented and their implications for policy and practice are available in a separate Synthesis Report.

More information including case studies, the Synthesis Report and a series of articles from thought leaders in the field can be found at

[www.promisingpractices.online](http://www.promisingpractices.online)