

## WORKING PAPER

# ERICC RESEARCH AGENDA FOR JORDAN

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Country Research Agenda for Jordan was developed over the span of nine months as part of the first year of the Education Research in Conflict and Protracted Crisis (ERICC) program. ERICC is a large-scale FCDO-funded, three-year program to generate new, rigorous research evidence on the most effective approaches to providing education in conflict and protracted crisis contexts. Ultimately, the program aims to expand the global research base in this area and provide relevant evidence to policy-makers and other education stakeholders to support necessary reform in education delivery in conflict- and crisis-affected contexts. To this end, ERICC is being implemented in six conflict-affected countries – Jordan, Bangladesh (Cox's Bazar), and Nigeria in the first cohort and South Sudan, Lebanon and Syria in the second cohort. The research agenda presented here highlights ERICC's co-constructed national research priorities within Jordan, the rationale and factors that inform these priorities, and research plans to enact the agenda moving forward.

## Disclaimer

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## ACRONYMS

AAI	Accelerating Access Initiative
CBO	Community-Based Organization
CU	Catch-Up
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessments (USAID)
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ESP	Education Strategic Plan
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
KII	Key Informant Interview
MoE	Ministry of Education
NCHRD	National Center For Curriculum Development
NFE	Non-Formal Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NLS	National Literacy Strategy
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Strategy
QRF	Queen Rania Foundation
QRTA	Queen Rania Teacher Academy
RAMP	Early Grade Reading and Mathematics Project
SDDP	School and Directorate Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

## I. BACKGROUND

### A. THE CONTEXT OF CONFLICT AND PROTRACTED CRISIS IN EDUCATION IN JORDAN

Situated in the heart of the Middle East, Jordan is a relatively small country with few natural resources. This reality has spurred the Jordanian government to focus on education as a hopeful means to develop the economy and provide for its populace, including the millions of refugees it has welcomed in the past 70 years. Today, more than one-third of Jordan's 10 million residents are not Jordanian. The country is home to approximately 2.3 million UNRWA-registered Palestinian refugees, 1.5 million Syrians, and sizable groups of UNHCR refugees from Iraq, Yemen, and Sudan. Most refugees (83%) live in host communities in rural and urban areas while only 17% reside in Jordan's ten Palestinian camps or five Syrian camps. Notably, Syrian refugee students have been integrated into regular schools, as well as into camp and second shift schools created to absorb the numbers of Syrian refugees in Jordan. These are regular government schools that have been divided into two shifts – one in the morning serving mainly Jordanian students and one in the afternoon for primarily Syrian students.

This means that, despite avoiding direct involvement in conflict, Jordan is in a protracted crisis that affects the education of all its inhabitants. Double shift schools, limited resources, and overcrowded classrooms have compromised the educational reforms and progress that Jordan has worked toward in recent decades. Because Jordan has absorbed so many refugees, the national education system and refugee education are closely intertwined. With more than 80% of refugees integrated into communities and local schools, and with all refugee children taught only by Jordanian citizens, the national education system – with its strengths, limitations, and challenges – is the primary means through which refugees access educational services. This shaped the nature of the evidence review given that the priorities of ERICC often aligned with the national priorities of the Jordanian education sector as a whole, which has been widely affected by the long-term influx of refugees. However, additional attention was paid to issues of equity, inclusion, and social cohesion across host communities and refugee camp settings.

### B. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ERICC COUNTRY RESEARCH AGENDA FOR JORDAN

Leading the ERICC research in Jordan, the Queen Rania Foundation (QRF) has conducted several activities that informed and ultimately helped to formulate the country's educational research agenda, along with national stakeholders. The Jordan country scan began with a mapping and analysis of the education stakeholders in the kingdom, the objective of which was to plot all stakeholders in education delivery and uptake within the scope of ERICC, in order to effectively engage them during all phases of the program. The stakeholders identified were a mixture of government (12), non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (39), community-based organizations (CBOs)/faith-based organizations (8), and others (15). From this group of stakeholders, ten were selected for the key informant interviews (KIIs), which were meant to inform the identification of the key gaps in the areas of education delivery, programming and research in Jordan. These were a range of government agencies, NGOs and others that scored high and moderate on the Four-Quadrant Influence-Interest Matrix that maps stakeholders according to how much interest they have in the focus area along one axis and how much influence in the sector they have on the other axis. One observation to be made here was that, apart from the three government bodies interviewed (Ministry of Education (MoE), Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, and the National Center For Curriculum Development (NCHRD)<sup>1</sup>), the other seven stakeholders selected represent international organizations that work locally. While it is unfortunate that we were not able to include more locally based organizations, this is reflective of the current conditions in Jordan in which international donors and organizations are heavily

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<sup>1</sup> The NCHRD is the entity that administers large-scale international assessments in Jordan.

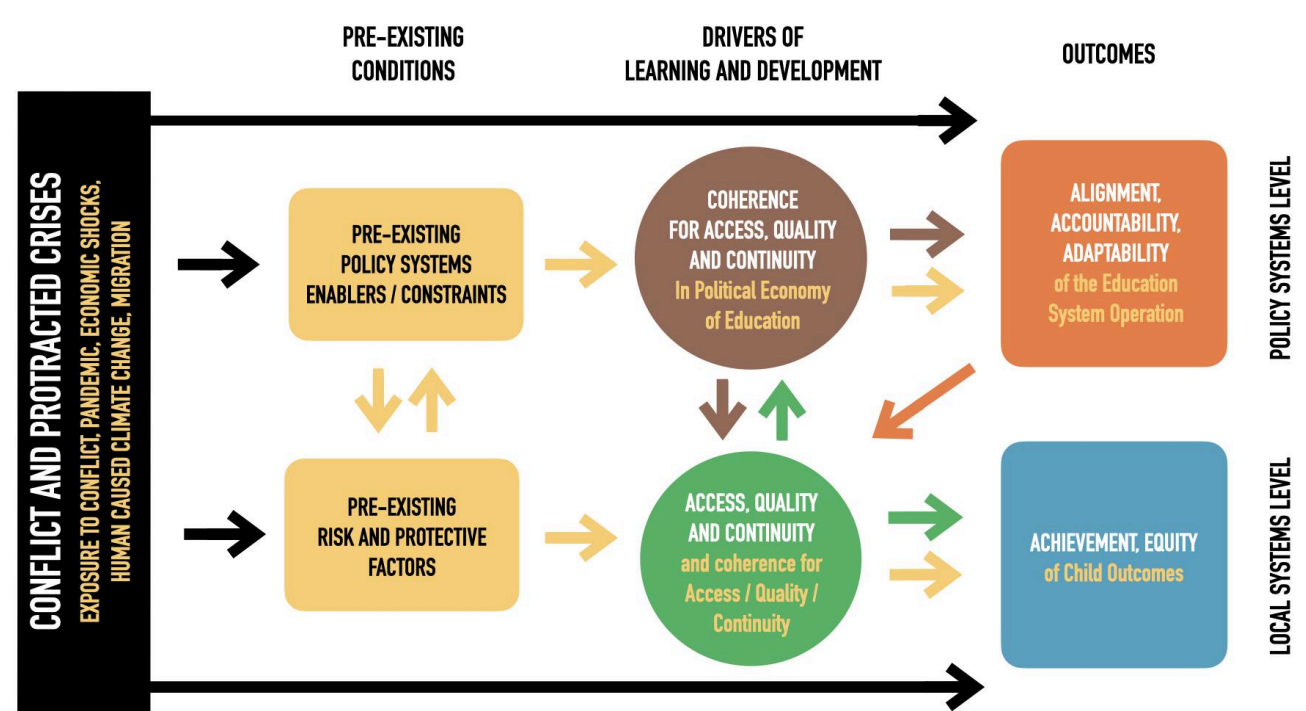
involved and provide critically needed resources. It is also reflective of the current reality within the development aid sector that tends to award contracts and channel funding to such well-established international organizations rather than local entities.

This point was also evident in another activity that QRF conducted: the mapping of current and recent education projects in Jordan. That highlighted the international interest and large-scale investment being made by the development aid sector in education delivery and programming in Jordan over the past decade. Indeed, the mapping identified 12 large-scale educational programs currently being implemented across ERICC’s three thematic areas – access, quality, and continuity.

Meanwhile, QRF also conducted a review of existing education data systems for Jordan, which was informed by two methods: (i) a desk-based review; and (ii) 11 quantitative interviews. The interviews were conducted with seven key departmental staff within the MoE and one representative from the NCHRD, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), along with one public school principal. The review revealed that while data across the education system was collected frequently, it was not adequately utilized for decision-making. In fact, data utilization was characterized as ‘limited’ across the national, administrative, and school levels. One of the main challenges that affect the utilization of data for decision-making, as highlighted in the review, was the capacity of school and MoE staff to use the Education Management Information System (EMIS).

In addition, QRF conducted an evidence review of current and relevant research on education programming, to map the evidence landscape and identify key gaps across Jordan’s education system, particularly those related to services provided to and affected by the influx of Syrian refugee students. The review was informed by key questions derived from the [ERICC Conceptual Framework](#) (Kim, H. Y. et al., 2022) regarding the current state of educational outcomes across both the policy and local levels. As part of this, 48 studies were identified, reviewed, and coded, according to four drivers of learning – access, quality, continuity and coherence. This work brought clearer insight into a number of overlapping issues and programmatic gaps in the area of education provision in conflict-affected contexts.

**Figure 1. ERICC Conceptual Framework**



A political economy analysis, separately commissioned by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and conducted by DAI Global and Integrated International, provided insights on the challenges and issues facing the education sector in Jordan. The analysis highlighted the context, significant actors, and political enablers and constraints around five key educational challenges: (i) curriculum reform, (ii) teacher professionalism, (iii) school-level management, (iv) use of evidence for policy and planning, and (v) inclusion/girls' education. The analysis added further weight to some of the already emerging categories, notably data use and sharing, teacher management, and the gender achievement gap.

As a result of the activities outlined above, seven overlapping themes emerged across the areas of access, quality, and continuity. These related to both gaps in the research literature and gaps in effective provision. The seven themes initially identified were: (i) literacy, (ii) gender achievement gap, (iii) teachers, (iv) inclusion, (v) early childhood education (KG2), (vi) data systems, and (vii) refugee education. There were provision and research gaps regarding these areas in both the local and policy systems, which comprehensive strategies at the policy level had not yet addressed for a variety of reasons. These themes became evident through the research activities as well as through national workshops with policy-makers and other educational stakeholders in Jordan.

The first national workshop was held on August 9, 2022 and brought together stakeholders from the MoE as well as local and international NGOs to present the ERICC project and to engage participants in shaping its research focus. Across two interactive sessions, attendees gave their feedback on the initial seven themes presented by QRF and then brainstormed research ideas within those themes. Finally, participants ranked both the seven thematic areas and their own proposed research questions or topics, indicating which issues they felt were most important and/or in need of attention. Participants ranked the presented topics in the following order (most to least important):

1. Arabic literacy
2. teacher management
3. early childhood education, particularly KG2
4. data systems and sharing
5. inclusion
6. gender achievement gap
7. refugee education

Taking the feedback and other results from the first national workshop, the second was planned to be more focused on developing the suggested research ideas, which QRF refined and expanded. During the second national workshop, held on September 28, 2022, participants were reacquainted with the ERICC project and introduced to its underpinning conceptual framework. In addition, in some groups, participants discussed, gave feedback on, and prioritized 13 proposed research project ideas that were developed from the previous workshop. They then selected one of those ideas to map onto ERICC's conceptual framework and further conceptualize. These exercises were effective in stimulating discussions and led to a number of interesting comments and insights into research priorities and possibilities, which were recorded by QRF. The top five research questions, prioritized out of 13, are as follows:

1. Arabic literacy teaching
2. use of data for decision-making
3. intervention needed in boys' schools
4. the needs of out-of-school children
5. teaching literacy across the curriculum

In parallel to the second national workshop, QRF hosted a consultation workshop with 11 development partners (USAID, FCDO, Swiss Development Agency, World Bank, Royal Norwegian Embassy, KfW Development Bank, UNICEF, UNRWA, UNHCR, UNESCO, and Global Affairs Canada) on October 12, 2022. The purpose of the workshop was to cultivate support for the development of the ERICC research agenda and

plan for Jordan among key development partners supporting the education sector in Jordan. This was accomplished through meaningful and collaborative discussions on the research gaps and ideas as identified by QRF (through the country scan activities); the priorities for Jordan's education system; and the ongoing educational work of the development partners. Of the seven themes first identified by QRF, the development partners, their top three priorities were: (1) teacher management, (2) Arabic literacy, and (3) data systems and sharing. These aligned with the top four priorities identified through the first national workshop. From this group, we learned that they felt that KG2 – a top priority from the first national workshop – was not a priority for them as it was already being addressed through other channels. Notes from the discussions from these workshops were recorded and fed into the development of the agenda.

Meanwhile, QRF and researchers from ERICC's academic partner New York University began conducting the RISE diagnostic assessment. This was a separate but parallel study that complements the country scan activities and took place from August to November 2022. The purpose of this study is to describe the coherence of the policy landscape for a specific topic related to public schools in Jordan with a focus on accountability relationships, defined in terms of delegation and information. More specifically, the RISE diagnostic used a systemic framework to investigate the management of teachers within Jordan, particularly those hired as temporary contract teachers who primarily staff second shift schools serving Syrian refugees.

Bringing together the insights from all these research activities and discussions, the ERICC Research Agenda for Jordan was developed throughout November 2022. As this draft formed, QRF continued to consult various stakeholders involved in earlier activities and workshops, organizing one-on-one meetings to gather their feedback. The discussions included terms of feasibility of implementation, alignment with national and organizational priorities, and potential sources of additional support. The final draft of the ERICC Research Agenda for Jordan was completed by November 30, 2022 and is detailed below. The agenda has outlined and guided the implementation phase of ERICC's research program in Jordan throughout 2023.

### III. THE ERICC COUNTRY RESEARCH AGENDA FOR JORDAN

#### A. Research priority topic: Data use and sharing at field directorate level

##### A.1. Background (current conditions, existing evidence, and policy and program status)

Data and the ability to utilize it for decision-making is critically important in countries facing conflict and/or protracted crisis, such as Jordan. The development of data systems for use in planning and policy-making has improved in the past decade due to the MoE's long-term commitment to strengthening evidence-based decision-making in the education sector.<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that the development and use of comprehensive data systems is still relatively new. The Government of Jordan officially adopted the Open-Source Education Management Information System (EMIS) as their main data platform in 2016. As a core MoE planning tool, EMIS was designed, with technical support from UNESCO, to provide accurate, timely, and comprehensive data on students, teachers, staff, schools, field directorates, and infrastructure. The data, however, is still not always accurate, timely, nor used by all levels of government and does not fully disaggregate by vulnerable groups. The refugee crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic has further strained the system in its capacity to harvest accurate and timely data for planning, policy, budgeting, and resource allocation. Part of this is due to the lack of trained staff to input data into the system at school and field directorate levels.

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<sup>2</sup> UN in Jordan (2022, June 6). "Ministry of Education Launches EMIS Policy". <https://jordan.un.org/en/188018-ministry-education-launches-emis-policy>



EMIS is considered a key component of the System Strengthening Domain of the Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2018–2025. In June 2022, the MoE launched an expanded EMIS policy that aims to improve the use and management of EMIS in three ways: (i) it clarifies key roles and responsibilities; (ii) it sets up key resources and processes; and (iii) it outlines plans to integrate data systems across the MoE.<sup>3</sup> Still, more needs to be done to ensure the accuracy and use of EMIS data at school level as well as to build the capacity of MoE staff to utilize the EMIS data and other data systems available. Other data systems include international and national large-scale assessments as well as sample-level and population-level data collected by either governmental or non-governmental entities.

## A.2. Evidence gap and type of research needed

The need for agile decision-making for budgeting, planning, resource allocation, and policy at the field-directorate (including the school) level is greatly needed as Jordan continues to struggle through successive crises, notably the refugee crisis and the economic crisis brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic. Yet, there is a clear lack of coordination, sharing, and utilization of data at field-directorate level that prevents informed and timely decision-making. For example, enrollment numbers of students are not always accurate nor is there always timely data on those students who migrate between the public and private schooling sectors. Addressing these challenges at the field-directorate level is imperative to build a more accurate database for use in central planning and policy for current and future educational emergencies.

While most attention and international funding is directed at improving data utilization at the central (MoE) level, there is a need to increase the capacity and identify the potential pathways for using data at the middle level – ie, among the 42 field directorates in the country. UNESCO has highlighted that field directorates' access to and use of data, including EMIS, is limited and does not usually happen for a number of reasons. This creates obstacles to planning strategic remedial action. In addition to the need to integrate data systems (addressed in the latest expanded Open EMIS policy), other obstacles to increasing the use and sharing of data at the field-directorate level (including schools) include:

- the timely input of data;
- the accessibility of EMIS due to a lack of trained personnel, appropriate software and modules, and the centralized oversight of the Queen Rania Center (department within the MoE responsible for management and maintenance of EMIS);
- the lack of staff with the capacity to analyze and utilize data for decision-making;
- the need to collect and disaggregate student data based on a number of vulnerabilities (e.g., disability, learning needs, etc.). Please note: EMIS does record and disaggregate data based on students' nationality across all school authorities, which relates to refugee status but is not the same.

Despite these challenges, the MoE and other international stakeholders recognize that EMIS needs higher quality data and better governance to make that happen. With such improvements, EMIS has the potential to be a tool for increasing the flow of information back to the central level from the school and field-directorate levels. Through better use and communication of EMIS and other data, the connections and decision-making between the field level and the center can be significantly strengthened, leading to a greater capacity for data utilization and more timely, accurate planning. Strengthening the field directorates' ability to use data will also strengthen their abilities to assess, support, and communicate with schools. Thus, addressing this gap can indirectly further the MoE's long-standing goal of greater decentralization, accountability, and school autonomy. In sum, the focus needs to be on the quality of data and its governance. Despite recent efforts to specify communication flows and roles and responsibilities related to data in the latest Open EMIS policy, how to operationalize this in reality within the field directorates

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.



(including at the school level) has not been explored. The research needs to address how to support the operationalization of the latest reform efforts in this area and the collection of quality data – challenges that go hand-in-hand for greater data accountability.

The type of research needed is “describe and diagnose”, leading to “design and (possibly) pilot”. In other words, this type of research will focus on identifying the existing problems and challenges within the field directorates (including schools), as well as enhance our understanding of how Jordan plans and manages the educational needs of refugees and other vulnerable groups, responsibilities which are primarily coordinated at the field-directorate level. For this purpose, the research can also look for promising practice or case studies elsewhere in improving data capacity for national systems, particularly those addressing a refugee crisis. In the absence of any such studies, this one will help to contribute evidence in the area of how national systems collect, manage, and utilize data in a protracted-crisis context and what interventions may be needed to address weaknesses in practice.

### A.3. Target drivers of learning and development (access, quality, continuity, coherence)

The target driver of learning and development in this priority area (#1) is Quality because the data collected across all student populations, including refugees and other marginalized groups, is frequently incomplete, inaccurate or not timely enough to inform decision-making in policy and planning, particularly in communities that are hosting refugees. A second key driver here is **Access**, and hence use of the data, as many at various levels of the education system do not have sufficient access or capacity to utilize the data to inform decision-making.

### A.4. Target systems

The target system is the field directorates, which are middle management departments of the MoE that are spread across 42 districts. They supervise data collection in schools and are responsible for school planning for their area, including for refugees.

### A.5. Proposed research objectives

**Research objective A-I:** To identify the barriers, enablers, and potential strategies to activate the capacity and accountability of field directorates to supervise effectively quality data collection and to utilize such data in decision-making at both local and national levels.

- a. Outcome(s) of interest (policy level and/or local level):
  - Policy and local levels (sub-national)
- b. Pre-existing condition(s) of interest:
  - Human resources (knowledge, skills, and experience), accountability systems, data systems
- c. Intervention/policy/programming of interest (if relevant):
  - School and Directorate Development Program (SDDP)<sup>4</sup>  
NOTE: This intervention is related but not the exclusive focus of the research objective.
- d. Indicative research questions:

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<sup>4</sup> The SDDP aims to increase the effectiveness of schools by creating a culture of self-initiated school improvements that involves the local community; and to increase the effectiveness of field directorates in their ability to build capacity within schools. The initial phase of SDDP ran from 2009 to 2020. The new phase launched in 2021 and is expected to end in 2023. The program is funded by Global Affairs Canada.

- What are the pre-existing policies, enablers, and constraints within and across education field directorates (FDs) that affect its capacity and commitment to collect and utilize accurate and timely data?
  - What potential interventions (strategies, policies, and/or programs) can improve the capacity and commitment of field directorates to collect and utilize accurate and timely data?
- e. Expected impact and contribution to the focal context's education policy and programming and to the ERICC evidence base:
- In the Jordanian context, the expected contribution of this objective is to understand better how to build the capacity and commitment of field directorates to collect and use accurate data to inform the planning and resources related to schools, particularly those schools that are serving refugees.
  - In the context of ERICC, the objective will contribute evidence on the obstacles, and what could work to enable and compel authorities to effectively and efficiently collect accurate and timely educational data to inform educational planning in conflict-affected contexts, giving governments greater agility in decision-making for contexts affected by influxes of refugees, and other crises.

## **B. Research priority topic: Recruitment, evaluation, and support of temporary contract teachers**

### **B.1. Background (current conditions, existing evidence, and policy and program status)**

With the influx of refugees from the Syrian civil war mainly integrated into host community schools, the need for effective, quality teachers in Jordan has only increased. Thus, within the education sector, there is a high-level focus on providing teachers with high-quality training and support. A new pre-service initial teacher education diploma program, first developed by the Queen Rania Teacher Academy (QRTA), has been set up and is now offered in four public universities. The program, also part of a USAID initiative PRESTIJ, or Pre-service Teacher Education in Jordan, aims to provide teachers of grades 4 to 10 with the pedagogical knowledge and skills in four subjects primarily: Arabic, English, math and science. Meanwhile, the MoE has also sought to improve the quality of teachers by reforming how they are supported and assessed, with the role of supervisors changing from that of primarily evaluators to that of supportive coaches.<sup>5</sup> Relatedly, the MoE has developed a new teacher ranking system that has replaced the teacher licensing system to set out a clear pathway for promotions.<sup>6</sup> Finally, the MoE has developed a new multi-purpose evaluation framework for teacher evaluations, which seeks to link teacher performance with student outcomes. However, the new evaluation framework has not yet been assessed for its efficacy in improving teacher quality or accountability for student outcomes.<sup>7</sup>

These recent reform efforts raise expectations concerning teachers' performance and the quality of education they deliver. However, these reforms apply only to full-time teachers who are recruited and hired on a national scale by the Civil Service Bureau and who are protected by regulatory frameworks. They do not apply to teachers hired on temporary contracts who primarily staff second shift schools, which most often serve refugees. These teachers, sometimes referred to as "daily paid" teachers by NGOs, also sometimes staff first shift schools when limited financial resources prevent the MoE from hiring full-time teachers. In

<sup>5</sup> Education Development Trust (2020). *Assessing the New Role of Supervisors, Jordan. Desk Review Report.*

<sup>6</sup> Ministry of Education (2022, April). *Jordan Education Strategic Plan – draft of Midterm Review.*

<sup>7</sup> DAI, Global Education, & Integrated International (2022). *Jordan Education Political Economy Analysis 2 Final Report*, p.110.

Jordan, the use of the second shift schools grew rapidly as Syrian refugees started arriving in 2011. The number of schools in Jordan were not sufficient to accommodate the integration of these refugee students into the education system, and so the school day was divided into first and second shifts, with Syrian students usually in the latter. Within a decade, the MoE established 197 second shift schools across Jordan serving Syrian refugee students.<sup>8</sup> Teachers within these schools are hired on a temporary basis with little pre-service training or experience. According to policy, they were only to teach for a semester (though many are permitted to stay for one year or longer). The use of second shift schools with temporarily contracted teachers increased again after the Covid-19 pandemic prompted a large number of families to move their children from private to public schools. As a result, the MoE has extended its policy guidance and has advised schools to keep temporary contract teachers at least one year to provide better education continuity for students.

Despite being a key part of the education system, there have been few policies regulating the use of temporary contract teachers, who are hired at field-directorate level as needed. The “daily paid teachers” label is not used according to an MoE representative because temporary contract teachers are considered simply “additional” teachers. This is because the MoE considers “daily paid teachers” as similar to other short-term substitute teachers who are paid on a daily basis for sporadic work. Both are drawn from the same pool. Despite working in schools for a full semester, year, or longer, and performing the role and responsibilities of a full-time teacher, these temporary contract teachers lack job security, meaningful evaluations, advancement opportunities, and the support often given to their full-time counterparts.

## B.2. Evidence gap and type of research needed

Despite a focus and on-the-ground progress on upskilling the full-time teacher workforce, there remains a clear gap in the coordinated recruitment, evaluation, and support for a large swathe of the teaching workforce – namely, for temporary contract teachers. These teachers, who primarily teach in second shift schools serving refugees and/or Jordanian students, are recruited by the field directorates and paid based on the number of days they work.

Evaluations of temporary contract teachers in refugee schools are carried out only sporadically due to limited resources,<sup>9</sup> and the MoE has no clear regulatory framework for managing them. Instead, they are deemed only substitutes and, since they are temporary contract employees, the ranking system does not apply to these teachers. This is despite the fact that temporary contract teachers receive the same professional development and training as their full-time counterparts. Finally, while temporary contract (or “daily paid”) teachers are not supposed to remain in their post more than one semester according to policy regulation, these teachers are often kept in post for longer (for one year) to ensure educational continuity for students. During this time, temporary contract teachers are not hired as full-time teachers with benefits, in part, due to a lack of financial resources at the central MoE level. Research is needed to determine how temporary contract teachers may be better recruited, evaluated, motivated, and supported to deliver quality teaching for both Syrian refugees and Jordanian students primarily across second shift schools. With a better understanding of the pre-existing policies and conditions for temporary contract teachers, an intervention that addresses weaknesses in recruitment, evaluation or support should be designed, piloted, and evaluated.

## B.3. Target drivers of learning and development (access, quality, continuity, coherence)

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<sup>8</sup> Delprato, M., Morrice, L. & Al-Nahi, S. (2020). *A Summary of Key Patterns in the Jordanian Education System by School Type, Gender and Region: Working Paper 1*. Centre for International Education, University of Sussex, Brighton, UK.

<https://sro.sussex.ac.uk/id/eprint/104559/1/Key%20Patterns%20in%20Jordanian%20Education%20System.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> UNESCO International Institute of Educational Planning & Education Development Trust (2022). *Ensuring Effective Teacher Management in Refugee Settings, Public Schools in Jordan*.

- a. Quality
- b. Coherence

#### B.4. Target systems (e.g., school, classrooms, household, community, MoE–NGO relationship)

- a. Policy related to temporary contract teachers
- b. Local level (i.e., classroom and schools)

#### B.5. Proposed research objectives

**Research objective B-1:** To explore how temporary contract teachers (who most often work in second shift schools serving refugees) are currently recruited, evaluated, and supported.

- a. Outcome(s) of interest (policy level and/or local level):
  - Policy level and local level
- b. Pre-existing condition(s) of interest:
  - Policies related to temporary contract teachers
  - Working conditions of temporary contract teachers
- c. Intervention/policy/programming of interest (if relevant):
  - Policies related to temporary contract teachers
- d. Indicative research questions:
  - How are temporary contract teachers recruited and deployed by field directorates?
  - How are temporary contract teachers evaluated and treated within the recent teacher evaluation reforms?
  - How are temporary contract teachers trained and supported in the classroom?
  - What are the working conditions for temporary contract teachers?
- e. Expected impact and contribution to the focal context's education policy and programming and to the ERICC evidence base:
  - In the Jordanian context, the research is expected to produce an up-to-date diagnosis of the current situation of the recruitment, evaluation, support and working conditions of temporary contract teachers, who are mainly teaching Syrian refugees in second shift schools. This topic is directly related to the issue of inclusion and ensuring equity for Syrian refugee students who are primarily taught by temporary contract teachers. These teachers are, by and large, younger, less experienced, and have much less job security than their full-time counterparts working in mainly first shift schools.
  - For ERICC, the research is expected to contribute evidence to the wider issue of staffing schools in conflict-affected countries and how the quality of education may be compromised to guarantee access.

**Research objective B-2:** To design, pilot, and evaluate an intervention (strategy, policy, or program) to improve the recruitment, evaluation, and/or support of temporary contract teachers (who most often work in second shift schools serving refugees) to raise the quality of teaching for all students, particularly for refugee students.

- a. Outcome(s) of interest (policy level and/or local level):
  - Policy level and local level
- b. Pre-existing condition(s) of interest:
  - Policies related to temporary contract teachers

- Working conditions of temporary contract teachers
- c. Intervention/policy/programming of interest (if relevant):
  - Policies and training related to temporary contract teachers
- d. Indicative research questions:
  - What intervention (strategy, policy, or program) can **be designed** to improve the recruitment, evaluation, motivation, and/or support of long-term temporary contract teachers (who typically work in second shift schools serving Syrian refugees) to raise the quality of teaching for all students, regardless of nationality or school shift enrollment?
  - How can the proposed intervention be effectively **piloted** in the second shift schools?
  - How **effective** is the piloted intervention in achieving its intended outcomes and goals of supporting and motivating teachers as well as improving students' learning outcomes?
- e. Expected impact and contribution to the focal context's education policy and programming and to the ERICC evidence base:
  - In the Jordanian context, the research will build the situation analysis and needs diagnosis from Objective 2.1 (as well as the RISE diagnostic results) and provide a possible solution through the design, piloting and evaluation of a needs-based intervention. The result of the study will provide evidence of the intervention's level of effectiveness to inform policy and planning in staffing Jordanian second shift schools with the aim of raising the quality of teaching for mainly refugee students.
  - For ERICC, the research is expected to provide evidence on "what works" in improving the recruitment, evolution, and/or support for teachers of refugee populations in conflict-affected countries.

## C. Research priority topic: At-risk and out-of-school children in primary and lower secondary school levels (grades 1–10)

### C.1. Background (current conditions, existing evidence, and policy and program status)

The number of children in Jordan who are not enrolled in school is significant. The most conservative estimate puts the total number of out-of-school children at 112,016 in Jordan (6.2%) across grades 1 to 10.<sup>10</sup> According to UNICEF data, the majority of out-of-school children are of non-Jordanian nationality – more than 50,000 are Syrian children and 21,500 are children of other nationalities, while 39,800 are Jordanian children. Boys are more likely to drop out than girls, and the causes can be traced back to a number of in-school and out-of-school factors, including the lack of accessibility and inclusivity of schools as well as economic hardships facing most communities. When children drop out of school, it can become very difficult for them to find their way back. Non-formal education often operates in isolation from formal education systems and leads to no formal certification. Many programs, such as Makani, a UNICEF-led initiative, provides out-of-school children and youth with learning opportunities, training and psychological support but it offers no opportunity to gain recognized education qualifications. As a result, out-of-school children face limited opportunities for future employment, and significant challenges regarding community assimilation. Until recently, the Non-Formal Education (NFE) program run by Questscope and the MoE has been the only MoE-accredited path to return to formal education that is available to youth who have been

<sup>10</sup> UNICEF & Ministry of Education (2020). *Jordan Country Report on Out-of-School Children*. <https://www.unicef.org/jordan/reports/jordan-country-report-out-school-children>

out of school for three years or more. While the NFE program has helped more than 25,000 youth since 2005, the program is relatively small scale and targets only those aged 13 to 18.<sup>11</sup> Meanwhile, in 2017, the NRC, UNICEF, and the MoE established a catch-up non-formal education program for children aged 9 to 12 who had never been to school or had their studies interrupted for a significant period of time.

To tackle this, the MoE has strived in recent years to remove barriers to enrollment (especially for Syrians) and to promote inclusive education. This has been evident from the goals and objectives set in the ESP 2018–2025 under the Access and Equity strategy pillar, as well as from the development and launch of the Ten-Year Strategy for Inclusive Education. Most notably, in the ESP, the MoE has set a target to increase enrollment rates for children with disabilities and modestly to expand its non-formal education program. The MoE has also adopted a wider definition of inclusive education to include ten groups of vulnerable children (i.e. gender, and those with physical disabilities among others).<sup>12,13</sup> In addition through the two phases (2016 to 2020 and 2020 to date) of the Accelerating Access Initiative (AAI), the MoE and international donors have demonstrated their commitment to providing education for vulnerable children, with renewed emphasis on Syrian refugees and children living with disabilities. Through this initiative, funding is channeled into many areas, including the training of new teachers, financing salaries for teachers and administrative staff, opening additional double shift schools, supporting blended learning, purchasing school books, providing tuition fees, covering costs for operations and equipment in these schools, as well as supporting the NFE program.<sup>14</sup>

## C2. Evidence gap and type of research needed

Despite the efforts noted above, there are many outstanding challenges to addressing the needs of out-of-school children and those at risk of dropping out, the majority of whom are Syrian refugee students. The Jordanian education system needs:

- a. Effective mechanisms for identifying and tracking at-risk children and drop-outs, including those with disabilities;
- b. Preventive measures for at-risk children to support their continued engagement in schooling;
- c. More alternative opportunities and/or pathways back into formal education for those who drop out or have lacked access to education for up to three years (who are still allowed to enroll in schools according to policy) as well as for those who have been out of school for three years or more (who are expected to access non-formal schooling options).

These look like separate but related problems. However, in reality, they are part of the same pipeline representing three categorical groups: (i) those at risk of dropping out; (ii) those who have temporarily dropped out within the last three years; and (iii) those who have been out of school for three or more years or who never attended. Each group may shift into the next category if data is not in place to identify and track these students and measures put in place to prevent them from dropping out, from staying away, or from never returning to schooling – which would result in irreversible education loss.

Data needs to be collected on each group, integrated into existing data systems, and so that plans and mechanisms can be developed (and tracked on a per-child basis) to prevent them from moving to the next category (by keeping them in school or re-engaging them in school). The EMIS Platform still lacks the input of important metrics on vulnerable student populations, out-of-school children and those with physical and

<sup>11</sup> Questscope (n.d.). “Non-Formal Education”. <https://www.questscope.org/en/our-impact/education/non-formal-education>

<sup>12</sup> Ministry of Education (2022, April). *Jordan Education Strategic Plan – draft of Midterm Review*.

<sup>13</sup> See “Jordan Declaration on Inclusion and Diversity in Education”, which describes the ten vulnerable groups identified by the updated 10-year strategy for Inclusive Education. These need to be considered among the possible groups at risk of dropping out or who are out-of-school (short and long term).

<sup>14</sup> USAID. *Accelerated Access Initiative (AAI) Fact Sheet*. Available at: <https://jordankmportal.com/resources/aai-fact-sheet>

learning disabilities. Data on these groups is especially important as it should underpin and inform current strategies designed to improve access to, and inclusion in, public schools.<sup>15</sup> Nor is there any formal diagnosis process or support for children who exhibit learning difficulties and hence, no data on this issue. There is a need to better understand this interconnected and sequential pipeline in order to stymie it, and that requires data and data-informed approaches.

Since pre-existing risks and factors contributing to the school drop-out rate are well documented by research already, research is needed on:

- How to effectively identify, track, and document interventions for the three groups described above (at-risk of dropping out, recent drop-outs, long-term drop-outs) and how to integrate them into existing data systems for use in decision-making and planning (**design and pilot**). (This is very much related to, but still distinct from, Priority #1.)
- Understanding how well existing educational programs for out-of-school children are serving different populations (based on identified outcomes) and at what cost to determine if and how they may be expanded.

### C.3. Target drivers of learning and development (access, quality, continuity, coherence)

The target drivers for this priority area (#3) are access and continuity because the development of ways to identify, track, and monitor students at risk of dropping out and who have dropped out is a prerequisite for developing comprehensive and effective policies and interventions to address these vulnerable populations. For this reason, it is also related to coherence but not directly.

### C.4. Target systems (e.g., school, classrooms, household, community, MoE-NGO relationship)

- a. The target systems are schools and local communities, NGOs, and the MoE.

### C.5. Proposed research objectives

**Research objective C-1:** To determine how to effectively identify and collect data on, as well as track (ideally over time and location) and monitor children who are at risk of dropping out, have already done so, or were unable to access schooling, and integrate this data into Open EMIS.

- a. Outcome(s) of interest (policy level and/or local level):
  - Policy and local levels
- b. Pre-existing condition(s) of interest:
  - Data and data systems (collection and management)
- c. Intervention/policy/programming of interest:
  - Expanded Open EMIS policy and database
- d. Indicative research question(s):
  - At the policy level, how can the MoE's EMIS database (a pre-existing element of the policy-level education system) be expanded and/or adapted to include/accommodate data needed to track and monitor vulnerable students (i.e. those at risk of dropping out, short-term and long-term drop-outs, and children unable to access schooling) to better inform policy and planning for these groups?

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<sup>15</sup> UNESCO (2021). *Institutional Capacity Needs Assessment on Inclusion and Diversity in Education in Jordan*. Amman: UNESCO / IDP Norway with GIZ, p. 100.

<https://en.unesco.org/news/institutional-capacity-needs-assessment-inclusion-and-diversity-education-jordan-supported>



- At the local level, how can the schools collect, enter, and utilize data to identify and track (ideally via EMIS) at-risk students (group 1), so that targeted support and/or interventions can be planned and implemented in an effort to prevent them from dropping out?
- At the local level, how can the school and/or field directorates develop a method to identify, register and track data on any support received for recent and long-term drop-outs (groups 2 and 3), including for those who never attended school? How can alternative pathways be explored to support these students returning to formal education programs?
- e. Expected impact and contribution to the focal context's education policy and programming and to the ERICC evidence base:
  - The expected impact and contribution for the Jordanian context is an enhanced data system that can more accurately account for and plan for the educational needs of the most vulnerable school-age population who are at risk of dropping out or are not currently accessing educational services.
  - For the ERICC evidence base, the research objective can provide evidence on how to effectively develop a data system to effectively identify, track, and support vulnerable school-age children to stay in, or re-engage in education.

**Research objective C-2:** To assess the outcomes and costs of current interventions to re-engage out-of-school children and youth in education and determine if and how such models could be adapted and expanded to serve a wider population.

- a. Outcome(s) of interest (policy level and/or local level):
  - Policy and local levels
- b. Pre-existing condition(s) of interest:
  - Financial and human resources (policy level)
  - Community, households, schools, children (local level)
- c. Intervention/policy/programming of interest:
  - NFE program (MoE/Questscope)
  - Catch-up (CU) non-formal education program (NRC/UNICEF/MoE)
- d. Indicative research questions:
  - What are the outcomes (including achievement levels, completion levels, destination data, etc.) for youth participating in current programs for out-of-school children (NFE and CU), disaggregated by refugee status, gender, and location?
  - For current programs for out-of-school children (NFE and CU), what is their cost vs outcomes (cost-benefit analysis) across different populations and locations?
  - In terms of beneficiary outcomes and value-for-money, would expanding current NFE programs be possible or desirable to reach more out-of-school children? If so, how?
- e. Expected impact and contribution to the focal context's education policy and programming and to the ERICC evidence base:
  - In Jordan, the expected contribution of this research is to provide much-needed analysis of costs and benefits (value-for-money) of current programs for out-of-school children, which are at present donor-funded. Currently, donors have

noticed that they are in need of data on the outcomes of participants in the program in the short and long term.

- For the ERICC evidence base, the research would contribute data on the impact and cost-benefit of program models that address the educational needs of out-of-school children and youth.

## D. Research priority topic: Literacy (with a focus on teachers)

### D.1. Background (current conditions, existing evidence, and policy and program status)

Jordan faces a literacy crisis, hidden until recently, despite efforts to improve teaching and learning outcomes across both primary and secondary education levels. This problem pre-dated the Syrian refugee crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic but it has worsened as a result of these two events. The literacy crisis now most affects Syrian children. In Jordan at the primary level, approximately 52% of 10-year-olds are unable to read and understand a short age-appropriate piece of text.<sup>16</sup> Following the Covid-19 pandemic, this figure could be as much as 10% higher, based on World Bank modeling across the region.<sup>17</sup> At the secondary level, 15-year-olds are behind the OECD average in reading by 1.5 to 2 grade levels.<sup>18</sup> Looking more closely, we find that Jordan has one of the largest academic achievement gaps according to gender of all countries participating in the 2018 round of the Program of International Student Assessment (PISA), with girls outperforming boys in reading and mathematics.<sup>19</sup>

Over the past decade, USAID launched and concluded the Early Grade Reading and Mathematics Project (RAMP), which aimed to support the MoE in institutionalizing literacy and math teaching and learning policy and practice across grades KG2 to 3 from 2015 to 2019.<sup>20</sup> In particular, the project focused on equipping teachers with effective literacy and math instruction, as well as developing and improving learning material. The causes of the literacy crisis are many, including the diglossic nature of Arabic,<sup>21</sup> the lack of children's early exposure to a literacy-rich environment, limited literacy resources, the use of ineffective teaching methods, a problematic Arabic language curriculum, and the lack of interventions for struggling readers.<sup>22</sup> As a result, improving literacy rates among students has become a top priority of the MoE. Indeed, in September 2022, the MoE launched the five-year National Literacy Strategy (NLS) that aims to improve the Arabic language literacy skills of students in grades KG2 to 6, and to promote reading as an enjoyable daily habit across four pillars: school, family, community, and media and communication.

### D.2. Evidence gap and type of research needed

While the MoE's Literacy Strategy has a number of action points, the fact remains that after grade 3, Arabic literacy is only explicitly taught in one class out of the many subjects taught. Students, especially Syrian refugees in second shift schools, need greater support to make progress in the mastery of the language, as

<sup>16</sup> World Bank (2019). *Learning Poverty*. World Bank. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/education/brief/learning-poverty>; World Bank (2019). *Jordan Learning Poverty Brief*, p. 2.

<sup>17</sup> World Bank (2020). *Learning poverty in the time of COVID-19: A crisis within a crisis*.

<sup>18</sup> QRF (2022). *Determinants of Student Achievement on PISA 2018: The Case of Jordan's Public School Students*. Amman: The Queen Rania Foundation.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> USAID. (2017) Early Grade Reading and Mathematics Project (RAMP): *Fact Sheet: Jordan*. Available at: [https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/PA00THHV.pdf](https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00THHV.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> Taha, H., Tamim, R. & Griffiths, M. (2021). *The effect of Arabic language diglossia on teaching and learning*. Amman: The Queen Rania Foundation.

<sup>22</sup> Gregory, T., Kazem, B., & Elsayed, T. (2021). *Advancing Arabic Language Teaching and Learning: A Path to Reducing Learning Poverty in the Middle East and North Africa*. World Bank. <https://doi.org/10.1596/35917>.

it is the gateway to learning in all their other subjects. Therefore, teachers of subjects other than literacy need to be aware of and understand the level that children are at in their literacy development and adapt their teaching to support that development. While reforms in the education system are slowing the upskilling of teachers, the urgency of the literacy crisis necessitates that all teachers feel responsible for helping children learn to read. Teaching children literacy needs to be a whole-school effort with a coordinated approach. The assessment data that early grade and Arabic language teachers collect on students' literacy levels needs to be shared with all subject teachers. At the same time, subject teachers need training to build their pedagogical skills in fostering reading fluency and comprehension in their subject. Across school types, USAID's early grade reading assessments (EGRA) clearly show that students in second shift and camp schools (which are mostly Syrian) are much further below children in other schools in terms of literacy levels.<sup>23</sup> Thus, there is a clear need to better support temporary contract teachers in particular in teaching literacy skills to their students (primarily Syrian refugees in second shift schools). Hence, this priority can be linked with priority topic #2.

The MoE's National Literacy Strategy (NLS) calls for this type of intervention (fostering literacy in non-Arabic language classes). The NLS states that one of their objectives is to: "Build the capacities of G4-G6 teachers to support literacy development through other subjects and emphasize the importance of literacy across all other subject curricula".<sup>24</sup> To accomplish this, the NLS calls for the assessment and monitoring of students' literacy performance, training Arabic literacy teachers to use evidence-based literacy practices and differentiated practices, and educational leaders to prioritize improving students' literacy skills among other things. However, this NLS objective is focused only on grades 4 to 6; it could be expanded to include grades 7 to 10. There needs to be literacy support across subjects in all grades from 4 to 10 (for ages 9 to 16) in order that students have the skills to progress successfully in school. There needs to be research on how to actualize this goal in practice. A promising vehicle to do so is the School Network Program, established in 2009, which works with cohorts of committed school staff to increase their beliefs, attitudes and practices in delivering high-quality teaching, learning, and leadership.<sup>25</sup> Delivered by QRTA, which co-designed the program with New York's Columbia Teachers' College, the program has shown to achieve positive results in two separate impact evaluations in 2011 and 2015.<sup>26,27</sup>

Consequently, research is needed on how to operationalize literacy support across the school, with a focus on subject teachers' practice, potentially through the Schools Network Program currently run by the Queen Rania Teacher Academy. This would mean working with implementation partners to design and pilot training, particularly in second shift schools, to assess how effectively teachers can be supported to foster literacy development along with subject knowledge in their classrooms.

### **D.3. Target drivers of learning and development (access, quality, continuity, coherence)**

#### **a. Quality**

### **D.4. Target systems**

<sup>23</sup> Morrice, L., Salem, H., & Al Nahi, S. (2020). "Educational interventions in Jordan as a response to the Syrian crisis: learning and social cohesion for all?", Policy Brief 1, produced as part of the Assessment of Education Strategies and Interventions Adopted in Jordan as a Response to the Syrian Crisis research project.

<sup>24</sup> Ministry of Education (2022). *National Arabic Literacy Strategy 2023-2028*, p.37.

<sup>25</sup> QRTA (2020). *School Networks for Instructional Improvement in Jordan. Impact and ways forward*.

<sup>26</sup> Robinson, M. (2011). "Growing School Networks for Instructional Improvement in Jordan, 2009-2010", *CPRE Research Reports* [Preprint]. <https://doi.org/10.12698/cpre.2011.rr70>.

<sup>27</sup> Pratt-Williams, J. & Cocoran, T. (2015). "Changing Classroom Practice: The Evaluation of the School Network Learning Project in Jordan", *CPRE Research Reports* [Preprint]. <https://doi.org/10.12698/cpre.2015.jordan>.

- a. Subject teachers, including temporary contract teachers in second shift schools, as well as supervisors and subject matter coordinators who provide mentorship and support to teachers

#### D.5. Proposed research objectives

**Research objective D-1:** To improve and support students' Arabic literacy skills in grades 4 to 10 (particularly in across genders) through the development of teacher training to: (i) raise awareness of students' literacy levels among teachers of subjects other than Arabic; and (ii) help these subject teachers to develop and utilize strategies to support students' reading and writing abilities in their classroom.

- a. Outcome(s) of interest (policy level and/or local level):
  - Local level
- b. Pre-existing condition(s) of interest:
  - Schools
- c. Intervention/policy/programming of interest:
  - Schools Network Program
- d. Indicative research questions:
  - What training, support, and resources can be designed to enable teachers of subjects other than Arabic language, across grades 4 to 10, to foster better literacy development among students, particularly in second shift schools and across genders?
  - How can the training and support for teachers of subjects (other than Arabic language) be effectively delivered to change teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and practices in ways that improve their classroom support for students' literacy development, particularly in second shift schools and across genders?
  - How effective is the intervention for providing training and support for teachers of subjects other than Arabic language to foster literacy development (which may include academic achievement in subject areas), particularly in second shift schools and across genders?
- e. Expected impact and contribution to the focal context's education policy and programming and to the ERICC evidence base:
  - The expected impact and contribution of the research within the Jordanian context is to support and expand the vision and operationalization of the National Literacy Strategy to foster literacy skills in students across grades 4 to 10, with a focus on impact across genders and particularly in second shift schools that cater to Syrian refugees.
  - For the ERICC evidence base, the research is expected to produce insights into how to develop teachers' perspectives and skills to better support students' literacy development across the curriculum (particularly Syrian refugee students), and not simply in language instruction classes.

## ABOUT ERICC

**The Education Research in Conflict and Protracted Crisis (ERICC) Research Programme Consortium is a global research and learning partnership that strives to transform education policy and practice in conflict and protracted crisis around the world — ultimately to help improve holistic outcomes for children — through building a global hub for rigorous, context-relevant and actionable evidence base.**

ERICC seeks to identify the most effective approaches for improving access, quality, and continuity of education to support sustainable and coherent education systems and holistic learning and development of children in conflict and crisis. ERICC aims to bridge research, practice, and policy with accessible and actionable knowledge — at local, national, regional and global levels — through co- construction of research and collaborative partnerships.

ERICC is led by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and expert partners include Centre for Lebanese Studies, Common Heritage Foundation, Forcier Consulting, ODI, Osman Consulting, Oxford Policy Management and Queen Rania Foundation. During ERICC's inception period, NYU-TIES provided research leadership, developed the original ERICC Conceptual Framework and contributed to early research agenda development. ERICC is supported by UK Aid.

Countries in focus include Bangladesh (Cox's Bazar), Jordan, Lebanon, Myanmar, Nigeria, South Sudan and Syria.

