

APRIL 2016



A FUTURE IN THE BALANCE

How the conflict in Syria is impacting on the needs, concerns and aspirations of young people across the Middle East

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Acknowledgement

NRC, IRC-KHF and IBC would like to thank the youth who participated in the research and shared their experiences. Without their help we would not have been able to complete the report and ensure that youth issues amongst refugees, internally displaced people and their host communities in the region are highlighted. We would also like to thank the teams in the region who supported the fieldwork and analysis.

The report has been produced by NRC in Jordan and written by Lara Al Jazairi in 2016. The report was based on data from Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq (KRI), and Turkey.

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The cover photo was produced in an art workshop conducted by Felipe Jacome titled “Dreams and aspirations of Syrian refugee youth in Lebanon”. Young people were asked to write a letter to someone they love, and then express what they wrote in painting. Jacome then took portraits of young people and incorporated them into an image, including the letter and paintings.

Cover image: Photo and design by Felipe Jacome/NRC

All the names in the report have been changed to protect the identity of the individuals.

This research has been supported by:



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Executive Summary

The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), together with the King Hussein Research Foundation (KHRF) and the International Blue Crescent Relief and Development Foundation (IBC), have undertaken research in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and the Kurdish Region of Iraq (KRI) to better understand the needs, aspirations and challenges faced by displaced and local community youth aged between 15 and 24.

The study confirmed that across the Middle East a whole generation of young people from Syria and refugee-hosting countries is losing hope in the future. Living in insecurity and often in conditions of extreme poverty, they are faced with many barriers to accessing education and economic opportunities. They have only very limited chances to engage in social and civic activities and feel disempowered and frustrated. The human capital of this generation – so crucial for the future of the region – risks being lost.

Refugee youth from Syria face the greatest challenges, with hundreds of thousands forced to live without valid legal documents, such as residency visas or work permits, which directly impacts their freedom of movement and access to services and jobs. However, the immense pressures placed on the resources of refugee-hosting countries mean that local community youth are also struggling. While some of the difficulties they face predate the current conflicts, the large influx of newcomers to their communities has impacted negatively on their lives and has increased their concerns about the future. Such challenges have caused resentment towards refugees and/or Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), which threatens social cohesion as well as community stability, security, and prosperity.

Faced with multiple restrictions in all areas of their lives, both refugee youth and those from host communities often feel a sense of despondency and disengagement. While each country has its specificities, NRC's research found that most Syrian refugee youth who were interviewed are considering onward movement because of harassment, the lack of residency status and the lack of education and job opportunities. Local community youth often shared similar concerns. "There's no future for us" and "I have lost all hope" were common themes among young refugees in all countries covered by the survey. The lack of opportunities open to youth means that many young people interviewed said that they were looking for money to travel to Europe despite the enormous risks.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the lack of viable and recognised routes to reach countries outside the Middle East means that many are turning to smugglers. This costs large sums of money and sometimes lives. More than 1 million arrivals to Europe by sea alone were recorded in 2015, 53 per cent of them Syrian nationals and many of these were young men¹.

Despite the often negative portrayal of youth as potential troublemakers, NRC found that youth in the Middle East, as elsewhere in the world, desperately want to fulfil their potential and contribute to their communities and societies. Like many young people interviewed by NRC, a 17-year-old refugee woman in Jordan said "my dream is to return to Syria and re-build my country." Others simply stated that they want to help in any way they can, for example by volunteering their time and skills.

If we are to avoid a lost generation, much more support needs to be given to youth to allow them to regain control over their futures and develop into educated, productive and engaged members of society. This is in line with recommendations of the 2015 Amman Youth Declaration and the subsequent adoption of UNSC Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security in December 2015, which calls for greater investment in youth and more opportunities for young people to engage in societal and political processes.

In order to help address the challenges highlighted by youth themselves in this study and to support them to realise their potential, governments of countries neighbouring Syria, the international community and humanitarian aid actors should consider the following key recommendations:

International donor governments should:

- Support and fund comprehensive national youth strategies that address youth disempowerment and include systematic youth engagement and participation in social and political processes.
- Advocate for and support refugee-hosting countries to review and amend entry, registration and/or residency regulations for young refugees and IDPs, and their families.
- Support host governments to significantly scale up formal education funding and responses, particularly for youth, including vulnerable host community youth, so they can access accredited secondary and

tertiary education opportunities, including vocational training and provision of scholarships for universities in host countries and beyond.

- Ensure continued support for alternative, informal education opportunities with psychosocial assistance for adolescents and youth who do not have access to formal schooling.
- Fund programmes that provide economic opportunities for both displaced and local youth, including start-up grants, micro-finance, internships, vocational training and apprenticeships.

Governments of refugee-hosting countries in the Middle East should:

- Develop comprehensive national youth strategies that address youth disempowerment and include systematic youth engagement and participation in social and political processes.
- Review and amend entry, registration and/or residency regulations to ensure young refugees and IDPs, and their families, can obtain and renew legal documentation through clear, affordable and consistent processes.
- Establish more flexible procedures that enable refugee and IDP youth, who have come of age in displacement, to prove their identity when they do not have official IDs and cannot produce originals or copies of official documents, and remove punitive measures in cases where such documentation is absent.
- Promote and support secondary school enrolment and retention and increase higher education opportunities for refugees, IDPs, vulnerable host community adolescents and young adults, including by creating affordable places or waiving foreign students' fees.
- Create flexible mechanisms that allow adolescents and youth to prove prior learning, skills and training without original certificates. Remove onerous requirements for obtaining documentation that also create additional protection risks.
- Address the high numbers of dropouts from post-primary education by ensuring quality and varied post-primary learning.
- Review the normative framework and procedures related to access to work in order to facilitate equitable access to employment or economic opportunities for both male and female displaced and local youth. This review could include

consideration of initiatives that promote "Syrians working for Syrians" including as employees of INGOs.

- Greatly increase the number and quality of market-linked vocational training opportunities for both displaced and local youth including the creation of favourable conditions for private sector actors to contribute. These opportunities should include both soft skills such as employability as well as technical components and provide equity of access for female and male youth.
- Operationalise the 2015 Amman Youth Declaration and UNSC Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security to enable young people to participate meaningfully in society and in political processes.

Aid agencies should:

- Engage with national governments in developing comprehensive national youth strategies that address youth disempowerment and include systematic youth engagement and participation in social and political processes.
- Facilitate non-formal or informal educational opportunities for youth who cannot attend government-run institutions, including vocational and tertiary education and accredited learning opportunities.
- Provide out-of-education youth with pathways back into formal education through diverse learning opportunities that help youth to reintegrate into formal education, including greater provision of language skills.
- Extend and expand economic opportunities for both displaced and local community youth, and utilise the skills and experience of refugee and IDP youth in aid programmes.
- Prioritise targeted youth programmes that provide holistic personal and community development, and strengthen volunteering, youth-led initiatives and other leadership opportunities, particularly for young women.
- Support and build on existing youth initiatives and community activities where they exist rather than creating parallel structures.



Introduction



Photo by: Nicolai Aas /NRC

“As long as there is no future, there are no ambitions”

20- year- old Syrian refugee (male) in Islahiye, Turkey

Youth are often neglected during humanitarian crises. Their concerns are rarely heard and their needs seldom prioritised. At the end of 2015, NRC initiated research to understand the challenges faced by displaced and local community youth aged 15-24, as well as their needs and aspirations, in order to better inform both policy and programming. The research was conducted in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Iraq (in the KRI). This was undertaken with the support of the KHRF in Jordan and the IBC in Turkey. The majority of displaced youth were refugees from Syria (including Palestine Refugees from Syria (PRS)), but also included Palestine refugees in Lebanon² and IDPs in Iraq. The research covered four main areas: protection, education, economic opportunities and social/civic engagement.

In the course of the research, NRC, together with the KHRF and IBC, conducted 67 focus group discussions, in which 519 youth (over 50 per cent of them female) participated³. Of these, 99 youth were from the local community and the remainder were displaced youth living in both camps and host communities. Over half of the focus groups were facilitated by youth trained in qualitative research methodology. In addition, NRC

conducted 30 in-depth, one-on-one interviews to gain a better understanding of youth experiences. NRC researchers also met with a number of key informants from UN agencies, international and local non-governmental organisations (NGOs), local government officials and those who work with youth, such as teachers or youth leaders, to benefit from their expertise and experience.

This report aims to amplify the voices of youth and allow them to speak for themselves and explain their challenges and how they wish to positively engage in the region – if only they are given the chance. The quotes selected in the text below are not comprehensive but reflect the general trends heard from participants during the research.

NRC's regional Middle East operation is one of the largest providers of assistance to refugees fleeing the war in Syria, in addition to providing emergency relief in Syria itself. In Iraq, NRC also supports many thousands of IDPs affected by conflict. NRC is extremely grateful for the work conducted by both the KHRF and the IBC in conducting research in Jordan and Turkey respectively and for making this report possible.

Protection Concerns

Valid legal documentation and gender based violence



We used to have a residency visa but we haven't renewed it in one-and-a-half years. We cannot afford it. If they stop us at a checkpoint, we may be deported. So we avoid moving."

23-year-old Syrian refugee (male) in Tyre, Lebanon

This study exposed a number of protection issues faced by young people – both refugees and locals – across Syria's neighbouring countries. These included harassment, exploitation, discrimination and restrictions on freedom of movement. Though the specifics varied from country to country, the two main concerns reported by almost all young people in focus group discussions were the lack of valid civil and legal documents and different forms of Gender-Based Violence (GBV), including forced and early marriage.

Lack of valid legal documents

Across the region, displaced youth face multiple challenges relating to registration, residency and civil documentation.⁴ The lack of a simple piece of paper or a stamp in a passport is often the deciding factor between seeing a doctor and ill-health or between accessing education and work opportunities or dissatisfaction and poverty. Those without valid legal documents can face harassment, detention and even risk deportation back to Syria.

For many, holding valid legal documents is the key to escaping conflict and accessing safe territory. For example, according to one 19-year-old Arab IDP woman in the KRI, "We only got residency recently. It's difficult for Arabs in the KRI. My relatives and I managed to stay but many people who couldn't enter the KRI had to return to live under Daesh (ISIS or Islamic State of Iraq and Syria)." A number of refugee youth in Turkey described violent assaults by border guards when trying to enter the country, often because they didn't have valid passports. "They used to kick us at the border; they shoot people at the border", said one 15-year-old boy living in Islahiye, southern Turkey. One 24-year-old refugee woman, also living in Islahiye, said, "There are many refugees currently entering irregularly and they are not issued the Kimlik (Turkish ID) because the border is closed now. If they get caught by police

they are sent back to Syria." Though NRC is not able to independently verify these reports, they reflect the findings of human rights groups who have recorded similar instances of shootings and violence at the Turkish-Syria border and increasingly at (and within) Europe's borders.

In addition to government restrictions, refugee youth from Syria told NRC that they were not able to legalise their stay in host countries because of the difficult procedures, the costs involved and their inability to find a local 'sponsor' in countries where this is a requirement.⁵ According to one 16-year-old female Syrian refugee in Tyre, Lebanon, "The biggest difficulty we faced was renewing the residency permit ... In the beginning, my uncle's wife, who is Lebanese, sponsored us. But some problems arose and now we don't have a sponsor. Now no one in my house has valid residency."

In Lebanon, the need to regularise legal status due to the problems associated with illegality was ranked as a key problem in 87 per cent of focus groups.⁶ In January 2015, the Lebanese government adopted measures to prevent Syrian refugees from entering the country and has introduced complex restrictions on renewal of their legal stay. Within a year of the policy's implementation, between 53 and 70 per cent of Syrian refugees are estimated to have lost their residency visas in Lebanon.⁷ Up to 15,000 Syrian refugees have migrated from Lebanon, among them young, single men⁸. The restrictions on entry and legal stay for PRS are even greater, with 86 per cent estimated to lack valid residency documents⁹. They too have been leaving Lebanon mainly using unofficial routes. In Jordan, some 215,000 Syrian refugees in host communities are estimated to be without updated government registration¹⁰. Without legalised stay or government registration, displaced youth are facing high levels of insecurity, and their ability to live and thrive in their host countries is severely restricted.

Consequences of the lack of valid legal documents

Youth cited the main consequences of not having valid legal documents as arrest, detention and deportation, lack of freedom of movement and in some countries forced relocation to camps. An inability to work and restricted access to basic services, particularly health care and education, were also significant concerns. According to one Syrian-Kurdish woman in KRI, "Because I don't have a registration form or residency permit, I cannot work or leave the city of Dohuk because security personnel will stop me at the checkpoint." Similarly, one young male refugee in Turkey said, "My name on the official document was not entered correctly ... As a result it's impossible to register at the university." A number of Syrian refugee youth in KRI reported having to pay bribes to have their residency cards issued or the process sped up. They also mentioned that those without residency or registration could often not access assistance from any organisation or the local authorities. In Lebanon, many youth reported that the army conducted violent raids to carry out spot checks on residency¹¹.

In all four countries, youth had heard stories of arrests and deportations and the subsequent fear often meant they confined themselves to their homes and surrounding area. A 21-year-old Syrian refugee woman in Beirut said, "I don't have residency. I've heard that if they find us they may arrest us and put us in prison. I cannot move now because of the checkpoints." A Syrian-Kurdish refugee in Domiz, KRI said, "I cannot move from my place because I don't have the residency card. If I go out I will be in trouble and might be kicked out of the KRI." One 25-year-old Syrian man in Kfar Shouba, Lebanon said, "If we get caught at a checkpoint without residency, they will take our ID from us. We would have to pay \$650 to get it back, plus \$200 to renew the residency. Some people who are caught without the valid residency documents are being sent back to Syria. But we cannot afford to renew residency. Without valid documents, we are forced to stay at home." Others felt that spot checks on residency were discriminatory. One Arab IDP girl in Duhok, KRI, said her family was required to renew the residency every month and "if we are stopped by police we are questioned. So we are not free to leave the house as before."

Many youth fled Syria without taking any documentation with them. Others have never possessed an ID as they

came of age in displacement. One consequence of this is the inability to register births, deaths and marriages. According to one young man in Jordan's Zaatari refugee camp, "I had difficulty obtaining a birth certificate for my child. My wife didn't have her Syrian ID with her and it's a requirement for issuing the birth certificate." A 20-year-old Palestinian-Syrian refugee now living in Katermaya, Lebanon, describes the impact, "My daughter doesn't have a nationality. There is nothing to prove she is my daughter. Without a nationality, I can't return to Syria if the conflict ends. Maybe they won't let my daughter enter. There's no future for her. She can't study or do anything." As many youth are of marriageable age, an inability to register marriages and births disproportionately affects this age group.

Another problem is the absence of documentation for enrolment in education institutions, including education



NRC/ Photo by: Hussein Amri

certificates or transcripts from Syria. This constitutes a major barrier to accessing schools and universities. Others are unable to enrol in state schools because they lack valid legal residency. According to one 15-year-old Syrian refugee in Katermaya, Lebanon, “When I came to Lebanon I was enrolled in school for two months. But then my residency expired. I couldn’t afford \$200 for renewal of residency, so I left.” One 17-year-old Syrian refugee in Domiz, KRI said, “I had difficulty enrolling at school because the registration form and residency took a long time to be issued. I missed many classes.”

Without alternative options to obtain and renew documents, combined with obstacles in accessing legal remedies displaced youth are subjected to a host of protection concerns. Often the only viable way for refugees to renew their documents, obtain new ones or replace lost legal papers is through the Syrian embassy in the refugee-hosting country. However, youth commonly fear approaching the Syrian authorities. To overcome such challenges, some have resorted to high-risk coping strategies such as accessing informal health care clinics, borrowing identity documents or even returning to Syria to retrieve documents. In Lebanon, it was reported that one coping strategy was paying people through a series of informal networks to carry out the paperwork in Syria and transport official transcripts and documents over the border¹². For most youth, returning to Syria whilst the government is in place is simply not an option. One young man in Turkey said, “We get told in Syria that we are ‘terrorists’! Even if we go back to Syria, we might get killed, the regime might accuse us [saying] that we smuggled weapons and betrayed the country and that is just because we stayed in a country that’s not friendly with to the Syrian regime.”

Gender based violence, including early marriage and sexual assault

Concerns around forced or early marriage were consistently raised in focus groups, with almost all rejecting the practice. While it existed before the conflict, youth felt it was more prevalent in displacement where it is used as a coping mechanism either to protect women from abuse, in some cases related to passing checkpoints or accessing services without valid legal

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Girls back in Syria used to get married after they finished high school. Here, because of the bad economic situation and because we don’t study, girls get married earlier.”

15-year-old Syrian refugee (female)
Islahiye, Turkey

documents, or to relieve household financial pressures. Many reported the impact of early marriage on education, as girls are often required to leave school to marry. Conversely, many marry because they are unable to study. “A 16-year-old girl should be in school,” said one young woman in Amman.

Early marriage was found to be prevalent amongst Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. One 18-year-old woman from Borj Al Shamali camp in Tyre said, “Many parents want their daughters to marry early – from age 11 and above. There’s a lot of early marriage in the camp and many get divorced after two months. I’m against this. No one should marry until they are 18. A girl will not have her rights before then.” In Gaziantep, Turkey, one young woman said, “Many Turks take Syrian women as second wives and that causes problems. According to the law here, a man can only have one wife; the second wife has no rights.” Another added that any child born within an unrecognised marriage cannot be registered thereby impacting the rights of future generations. Without increased protection for displaced girls and women, they will continue to be pressured into early marriage, risking their ability to complete their education and leaving them vulnerable to health complications in childbirth, domestic violence or trafficking.



Reem's story

Reem is 20-years-old. She is already a widow. "I was sixteen when I got married [in Syria during the start of the war]," she says. "My husband's sister introduced us. When he proposed, I said 'yes'. It was my choice. But I wasn't aware about all the responsibilities. It became too much with all the work I was expected to do. Before I got married, I was in school. But when he proposed, I left [my studies]."

Her short marriage was beset with problems from the outset. "We were only married four months when he was arrested at a Syrian military checkpoint. First he was in one of the worst detention centres and then he was moved to Adra prison. He stayed in prison for nine months and then we fled to Lebanon." But just over a year after escaping Syria, they decided to return. It was a decision that would cost her husband his life. He was killed when an airstrike hit their home. Reem returned to Shebaa in southern Lebanon to stay with her family, all of them now refugees. "I'm afraid of the future, of what will happen", she says. "I'm afraid to re-marry in case the same thing happens again. I would refuse any offer of marriage that came now."

They live in poverty. It's a large family, crammed into a small apartment. None of them have residency; it's too expensive and they don't have a sponsor. No one in the family has permanent work. Her father sometimes finds work for four or five days a month in a cement project, earning barely enough to feed them. They haven't paid the rent for two months and fear eviction. Reem's mother explains that she is going to marry Reem's 13-year-old sister to a 17-year-old boy – she cannot afford to keep her as part of the household.



Photo by: Sam Tarling /NRC

Among local community youth, young women also raised the issue of early marriage. Reflecting on her situation, one Jordanian girl said, “Most of us got married at 14. One of the worst decisions we made was early marriage.” Others agreed, saying that early marriage prevented girls from accomplishing their dreams and being able to work, study or travel. “It’s her right to play, not marry,” said one. In Duhok, KRI, local Kurdish women reported that the common age for girls to marry was between 15-18 years but they felt the best age was at 25. In contrast, the male focus group in KRI felt girls should marry at 15-20 years whereas men should wait until they are 25-30 years old. Many of the females felt they were subjected to parental pressure.

When a girl gets a proposal the family accepts because it’s not socially accepted to refuse,” said one woman in Duhok. Young men felt that they had the freedom to choose who they could marry without any pressure from their families. Their concerns about marriage often focused on the expense. The prevalence of early marriage among host communities suggests that

interventions to prevent it should focus on building community and societal awareness on the issue. Displaced female youth had often experienced, witnessed or lived in fear of sexual harassment and assault. The fear of sexual violence and exploitation often meant that a girl’s freedom of movement was restricted not only in the camps, but also in host communities.

According to one 19-year-old refugee woman in Irbid, Jordan, “I don’t do anything other than stay in the house with my family. The main difference here is that my parents now fear for me going out alone so a family member always comes with me wherever I go.” Women repeatedly mentioned these restrictions on movement. In the KRI, women and girls spoke about the practice of honour killing, highlighting instances where women and girls are pressured into sex and then abandoned by their partner, which exposed them to reprisals from their families.



Education

Costs, curriculum and language of instruction



In Syria, I was at the top of my class. But now [studying] is difficult for me because of the different curriculum, particularly English. I don't see anything in my future now."

16-year-old Syrian refugee (female) in Azraq camp, Jordan

In addition to the protection concerns described above, which often force young people out of school, youth reported challenges related to the cost, structure and capacity of the education system. Problems with the curriculum were also mentioned repeatedly, as were challenges with the language of instruction. In the absence of educational opportunities, young people often suffered from low self-esteem, abandoning their hopes and dreams for the future.

Cost of education

Educational costs, specifically in Lebanon where few state-run secondary schools are available, were seen by many as a major barrier to accessing an education¹³. According to one 17-year-old Syrian refugee girl in Dahiyeh Lebanon, "In Syria, I wanted to be a doctor. My dream is to study and continue my education. But I can't tell my family because I know they cannot afford it now and every school here costs money."

Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are also affected. For example, an 18-year-old female from Bourj Al-Shemali camp in Tyre said, "Here, it is too expensive to finish my studies." Educational expenses also include associated costs such as for books, transport or uniforms. The issue of transport was particularly pertinent for refugees living in host communities where secondary schools might be far away. One young woman living in Islahiye, Turkey, said, "We have many skills, but the only available school is too far away." Even in some of the larger camps, such as Zaatar in Jordan, schools are often far from places of residence. This was seen as a prohibitive factor, especially for girls, as parents feared for their safety and would not let them travel a long distance from home. "Even if a girl gets a scholarship [to university]," said one young woman in Islahiye, Turkey, "if it is far from her place of residence, her family won't let her go." Travel to school is further complicated by risks associated with passing checkpoints without valid legal documents, as described above.

Curriculum and language barriers

Even when schools are affordable, adapting to a new curriculum outside of Syria was seen as a key challenge for displaced youth. This was raised in a majority of focus group discussions across the four countries and was found to be a key factor when youth drop out of school.¹⁴ According to one refugee female in Emirati



Only a few families let their daughters go to school; you can count the number on your fingers. Others would like to send their daughters to school but they do not have the financial means and prioritise the boys. School is expensive because of transportation and uniforms, and some books are not provided for free."

15-year-old Syrian refugee (female) Islahiye, Turkey

Jordanian Camp (EJC), Jordan, "Only a few students study for the Tawjihi [high school matriculation exam] because they have to repeat two grades due to the different curriculum." Repeating grades is frustrating for many. "There's a placement test for refugees," says one young woman in a camp in KRI. "I sat for it and didn't do well in the exam. I'm 18 years old and currently studying in the seventh grade. I don't feel comfortable in class – it's embarrassing." Others chose to quit education rather than repeat grades. "I was in grade 10 in Syria," says one young man in Domiz 2 camp KRI, "After the diagnostic test, I had to attend grade 8 in the KRI school. I preferred to leave school." To overcome this obstacle, some youth have taken extreme measures to obtain an education. One 15-year-old girl said, "I couldn't

enrol in Lebanon because the curriculum is too difficult and I'm not strong in English. There are some private schools that offer extra classes but we couldn't afford it." Instead, she returned to Idlib to continue her education and lived "one week under constant bombing" before being forced to move to Hama to finish her ninth grade.

Host community youth also repeatedly raised issues related to the curriculum and methods of teaching, which were often seen as out-dated¹⁵. According to one young man in Duhok, KRI, "Our random curriculum has a very big impact on job opportunities because we lack skills, even when we graduate. That's the consequence of an education system that depends on theory rather than practice, internships or experience." Students mentioned a lack of computer and language skills, a constantly changing curriculum and the dominance of rote learning. "Education in our context depends on memory," said one young man.

In Turkey and in the KRI, the language of instruction at educational institutions is different from the language of teaching in Syria (or elsewhere in Iraq for IDPs) where Arabic is used, posing additional challenges for displaced young people. Where Arabic language schools exist near residential areas, they are often

full to capacity, leaving many students unable to find a place. "We are eager to pursue our studies, but the Arabic schools are far too crowded," said one young IDP male in Bajed Kandala camp, KRI. In such cases, youth request more local language classes as well as increasing the numbers of Arabic schools and universities. Across all age groups, males and females repeatedly requested more non-formal educational opportunities, particularly in languages (often prioritising English or local languages). They also requested courses in information technology, Qur'anic studies (specifically women) as well as vocational training to provide greater skills for the job market or simply to relieve the monotony of their daily lives. Language was also seen as a particular challenge for local youth living in the KRI where schools are in Kurdish but universities are in Arabic or English. "Every day the Ministry of Education comes up with a different dialect or language to use for instruction," complained one Kurdish youth. "We feel like we are laboratories for tests." In some cases, young people have helped each other to overcome the challenges associated with language and curriculum. One young woman in EJC, Jordan said, "I made many friends with Jordanian girls at the school," she says. "They helped me a lot with my studies when I struggled with the new curriculum."¹⁶

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It's my dream to complete my studies. It breaks my heart that I left my studies behind."

24-year-old Syrian refugee (female) Islahiye, Turkey





Economic Opportunities

Challenges to earning an income



Back in Syria we used to think about the future. We used to think about being doctors or teachers. Now all we think about is how to feed our families. We're carrying a heavy load on our shoulders. It's beyond our age."

17-year-old Syrian refugee (male) in Islahiye, Turkey

Employment, including child labour

A dominant theme for all youth (refugees, IDPs and those in the local community) was their inability to gain employment. Youth unemployment across the region is at a staggering high, with the Middle East and North Africa experiencing the highest rates in the world according to the International Labour Organisation (ILO).¹⁷ The Middle East is experiencing a youth bulge and unemployment rates for youth are often considerably higher than for adults. Despite the lack of formal work opportunities, many refugee youth (especially young men) need to work to ensure their family's survival, even in cases where work is illegal in host countries and carries the risk of deportation. Due to the absence or illness of parents some young people are the primary income earners in their households. In the vast majority of cases, they work in any job they can find such as in agriculture, manual labour, food services or retail – not the jobs they dreamed of having. Often it's daily or seasonal work.

Many of those who are forced to work are children. One 15-year-old refugee boy in Islahiye, Turkey said, "I've had all kinds of jobs. There's nothing I haven't done." Another refugee from Syria living in a camp for Palestinians in Tyre, Lebanon, explained that "I can't work and study at the same time. I work because I have to pay the expenses of the house". Both secondary school-aged children and older youth have had their education disrupted due to the changes in their families' economic situation. "The economic situation forces us to work instead of entering school," said one IDP male in KRI. According to one young female living in Amman, Jordan, "Youth are out of school so they can provide money for their families because the [World Food Programme] coupons stopped."¹⁸ A young male refugee in Domiz, KRI, said, "Everybody wishes to be a graduate of university. However, I left my university studies to secure a living for my family when I came to KRI."

Working informally

In Jordan and Lebanon, heavy restrictions are placed on working refugees. For example, in Jordan, non-nationals must gain a work permit from the Ministry of Labour costing 170-370 JD (US\$ 239-520). This is prohibitively expensive for most refugees and dependent on having a passport, residency permit and sponsor. Consequently, few refugees in Jordan have applied for a permit and the vast majority who work do so informally (99 per cent).¹⁹ While the authorities have often turned a blind eye to this black labour market, youth participating in the research reported frequent patrols by the authorities looking for undocumented workers. "When someone is caught working illegally, they can either sign a waiver that they will not work again or they are sent back to the camp," said one 18-year-old male in Azraq camp, Jordan. "If the person who makes the complaint has connections, the worker may be deported to Syria."



We all wish to go to Europe rather than live in this miserable situation in the camp. That's our ambition."

20-year-old Yazidi IDP (female) in Bajed Kandala camp, KRI

According to a 19-year-old male in Zaatari camp, also in Jordan, "Sending someone back to Syria is a death sentence. A Syrian man was caught working. He was beaten by the police and afterwards deported. We heard that he was shot on returning to Syria."

Those working in the informal sector are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse from employers. "I worked in a restaurant for a month (12 hours a day) and I got 15,000 Iraqi Dinar (US\$13) per day. A local worker got

double that amount,” said one male refugee in Domiz, KRI. “The pay is barely enough to buy yoghurt,” said one young woman in Islahiye, Turkey. “Sometimes they don’t give us our salary”, said a young male refugee in Amman, Jordan, “because there is nothing to prove that we work.” There were also reports that young women (and young boys) were vulnerable to sexual harassment in the workplace. Youth consistently expressed the desire for regularised employment contracts, greater legal protections and less discrimination between refugees and the local community in terms of access to employment opportunities and pay.

Across the region, youth also complained about nepotism and corruption in determining access to job opportunities. This was mentioned in all of the discussions with local youth in Jordan. “We are a wasta [‘connections’] country,” said one young man in Amman, Jordan. In Duhok, KRI, a Kurdish male said “There is an absence of social justice because those who have influence and connections in the government can get jobs.” There was also resentment that refugees/IDPs were prioritised both by businesses and in terms of assistance.

Competition for work

While refugee youth felt exploited and subjected to low wages, youth from local communities felt that their opportunities to find work had significantly reduced due to the arrival of newcomers and the saturation of the labour market. As refugees living in host communities

often settle in the cheapest areas and work in the informal sector, the competition for jobs has hit the poorest sections of the local population hardest. “IDPs and refugees have a huge impact on job opportunities for local labourers,” said one Kurdish male in Duhok, KRI. “They get jobs more easily because they work for less money.” A young Turkish male in Gaziantep said, “I can’t earn enough money for my livelihood and can’t support my family because of the refugees.” These pressures were consistently identified by youth as one of the main sources of tensions between the local community and refugees/IDPs. Therefore, ensuring equal access to livelihood opportunities for both displaced and local community youth is a key factor in promoting social cohesion.



Most work opportunities go to Syrian workers because they accept lower wages, and because there are many Syrians, there are no empty houses to rent. Because of the lack of work opportunities, many Lebanese are leaving the country. Most of them are going to Germany.”

18-year-old Lebanese (female) in Tyre



Ibrahim's story

Ibrahim is 23-years-old from Shebaa, a small town in the hills of southern Lebanon. "The situation is very bad here. There's no work. Because of the Syrians, there is less work for Lebanese. Syrians take lower wages," says Ibrahim.

He studied until seventh grade at school. "When I left school I started an apprenticeship in tiling. I wanted to become a supervisor. But because so many Syrians are good at this job, there is no work anymore for Lebanese ... Even many graduates cannot find work and have travelled to another country. This was the reason I didn't complete my studies – what was the point when it won't help me find a job?"

He's not the only one in his family to have noticed the change. "My father owns goats but he no longer makes a good living selling them or their milk. Many Syrians do this work too and they sell for a cheaper price."

He sees the divisions around him, "Because of the lack of work opportunities and difficult living circumstances, there are tensions between Lebanese and Syrians ... I've witnessed fights between them."

"Most of the youth in Shebaa choose to join the Lebanese army just to earn enough money to cover the basic necessities," he says. "From my family, three joined the army, [as did] four from my uncle's family ... I applied but they refused to take me because I have bad eyesight ... If there were work opportunities, no one would choose to join the army because the situation here is not stable and it is risky."





Social and Civic Engagement



There are some volunteer activities that youth participate in to help Syrians and Jordanians in need. I joined one of them, helping to renovate and decorate houses.”

15-year-old Jordanian (male) in Irbid, Jordan

The lack of education or employment opportunities for youth contributes to an overall feeling of disempowerment and disengagement from society. Youth across the region (refugees, IDPs and locals) feel like they have little voice or opportunities to participate in society. The majority of youth felt that elders were the ones who made the decisions and women often felt doubly disempowered due to gender norms. Relatively few opportunities exist for youth to engage in social and civic activities, such as volunteering, despite the positive energy and creativity they could contribute to their communities.

During focus group discussions, young refugees consistently asked for youth centres where they can come together and called for more joint activities between displaced and local youth. It was felt that young people have a lot offer in terms of promoting social inclusion, integration and cohesion.

Lacking a voice

Despite massive youth engagement in the protests that sprang up across the Middle East from 2011, five years on, youth in the region feel disempowered. “There’s no one who listens to us,” said one young refugee woman in Islahiye, Turkey. One 20-year-old Syrian-Kurdish refugee in Kawergosk camp in KRI said, “If there is somebody present who is older than you, then you cannot speak – or if you do, they won’t listen. Our ideas are not important.” Local youth raised the same issues. One 19-year-old Kurdish male in Duhok said, “Our society, our parents and our political leaders are the reasons why youth have no voice today ... [T]hey feel we are not mature enough to speak and decide by ourselves.” A young Lebanese woman in Tyre said, “I don’t think that youth can present their ideas. The government is the one who makes the decisions.”

For women, the challenges were compounded by gender norms. “There is no freedom for women to express their view and opinions,” said one Kurdish high

school student. A Jordanian woman said, “Most of us are not able to express our thoughts or opinions, especially with our husbands. We may sometimes be on the same page yet at other times our husbands will proceed with decisions they’ve made regardless of what their wife think or need.” Many felt youth voices were important: “If youth had a stronger voice, they could claim their rights,” said one 16-year-old refugee in Azraq camp, Jordan.

Across the region, the participation of both displaced youth and local youth in community or voluntary initiatives was found to be low. Displaced youth often put this down to the current living conditions – “Youth have no role in the community,” said one 25-year-old male refugee in Kfar Shouba, Lebanon. “The biggest issue for youth is to find a job and bring money into the home. I don’t think there is a role for youth as long as we are refugees.” Female refugees living in Zaatari camp in Jordan felt there was no social or civic engagement by youth due to the breakdown in the sense of community as a result of poor living conditions. Others believed it was because of fear. According to one young man in Zaatari, “There are secret police around us in the camp, reporting everything to the Syrian regime.” Even local youth felt some trepidation when engaging with the authorities. “People are afraid to participate”, said one Jordanian male.



I go to volunteer at a Syrian organisation that works with orphans. We do distributions and offer theatre for the children in Arabic, and sometimes we sing to them in English. I volunteered because my mother works there and she encourages me by saying that these people are in need and we need to help them.”

15-year-old Syrian refugee (male) Gaziantep, Turkey

Making a contribution

Despite the challenges, and often contrary to popular perceptions, NRC found that youth in the Middle East, as elsewhere in the world, desperately want to fulfil their potential. They expressed a strong desire to contribute to the development of their societies and communities. NRC met with a number of youth who were engaged in voluntary work. In Duhok, local females at the high school collected money to buy textbooks for refugee and IDP students who couldn't afford them. One 23-year-old female refugee in EJC camp in Jordan said, "We conduct awareness sessions on issues such as early marriage and hygiene. The youth themselves came up with the idea. The idea came from the problems we saw in the camp. We felt we had to make a change and so we started to volunteer." In Lebanon, Palestinian refugees in particular took part in regular protests against the United Nations and Relief Works Agency (UNRWA), which runs the camps there, often due to reductions in aid.

Many youth were found to have creative ideas and were filled with the desire to help those less fortunate than themselves. One of the main obstacles raised was the lack of support they received to translate their ideas into practice. "If I had the chance I would like to take part in activities which bring Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian youth together" said one 15-year-old PRS in Lebanon. "For example, we could go and visit sick people ... I would need to find someone to support me to organise youth to carry out such activities." One young male refugee in Zaatari camp said, "If we have an idea or initiative, the organisations do not adopt it. I wanted to

gather all the excellent students in Arabic and English to teach literacy to weak students. That would enable them to improve their grades and help educate people. All we needed was a place where there was a white board and electricity. I asked many organisations over the past year but have had no response so far." The lack of available space for youth to come together was seen as a problem by a majority of participants across the four countries. "There's no support for us to work on our talents; there are no centres for youth around here," said one female Syrian refugee living in Islahiye, Turkey. In some of the focus group discussions, both displaced and local youth noted that young people with disabilities and special needs were particularly excluded. One 15-year-old PRS living in Lebanon with a disability said, "There are no activities for disabled people in the camp."

Many youth expressed that they would like to participate in common activities that bring displaced and local youth together. One 19-year-old Syrian refugee woman in Kawergosk camp, KRI, said, "If there were joint activities with local youth, I would participate in them. I would show them that we are better people than they think we are and that we have many skills." A young Jordanian male in Irbid said, "It's a good idea to have projects bringing Syrian and Jordanian youth together." According to an Arab IDP male in Hashram 1 camp, KRI, "What we need are spaces which we can use to arrange activities for entertainment, a big café where people can meet and get to know one another or sports fields where we can play football. Young people are the ones who interact most outside the house so it is up to youth to create social cohesion." These types of activities not only create new social ties, but can also help give young people a sense of hope that is otherwise lacking.



Photo by: Hussein Amri /NRC



Mahmoud's story

Mahmoud is 19-years-old and originally from Mosul, in northern Iraq. He was forced to flee his home in June 2014 when ISIS entered his neighbourhood. Now he lives in Hashram 1 camp for IDPs, located in the centre of the city of Erbil.

Mahmoud is involved in volunteering in the camp. They started a campaign to help vulnerable people who do not have access to a support network. "We help to organise tents and living spaces and assist with distributing food and hygiene items," he says. "The camp was very crowded. Some elderly women were living by themselves in their tents and organisations could not access them. So we helped aid agencies to reach them and give them assistance."

He says that three youth were involved in setting up the project, although one has now left to Turkey. Today there are 15 volunteers involved. They managed to get some support from NGOs working in the camp and run campaigns supporting health awareness for children. Due to the amount of rubbish piling up in the camp, they run clean-up campaigns and awareness sessions on environmental issues. "We also launched a campaign for children's rights. This followed an incident where one child in the camp was afraid to go to school because he had been beaten by a teacher," he says.

When asked why he volunteers his time, Mahmoud replies, "If I say it is not my business and others say it is not their business, then who is going to help our community? Are we going to do nothing and rely on people from outside?"



Conclusions and Full Recommendations

Conclusions

Youth in the Middle East are caught in and influenced by a complex web of challenges. Both displaced and local community youth, like young people the world over, desperately need more opportunities to fulfil their potential. They want to be well-educated and have stable jobs. They want to be able to participate in the decision-making that affects their lives and contribute to social development. They want to live in stable, prosperous societies, free from discrimination, exploitation and conflict.

In the absence of basic needs and opportunities, youth feel frustrated and despair for their futures. This is driving many to seek protection outside of the Middle East, by whatever means possible. One young refugee living in Azraq Camp, Jordan, said he wanted to move to another country where he could “study, work and live like anyone else.” Another refugee in Lebanon said, “The only silver lining I have in my life now is to be able to save some money and travel to Europe. I know it’s dangerous and risky but it’s the only hope. There’s no employment, no services, no electricity and no feeling of security.” Local community youth share similar concerns. According to one young Kurdish man in KRI, “Everyone wishes to emigrate from this country. The situation is very bad and it’s getting worse day after day.”

UNHCR and other refugee support groups have noted that the lack of viable, recognised and safe routes to third countries are forcing many refugees to risk their lives by turning to smugglers. More than 1 million arrivals to Europe by sea were recorded in 2015, the majority from Syria and Iraq.²⁰ The 18 March agreement between the EU and Turkey aims to curb the flow of refugees to Europe but risks forcing desperate young people to undertake even more dangerous journeys in order to fulfil hopes of a better future. The only alternative for many will be to go back to war-torn Syria. As one displaced young man living in Jordan said, “If I cannot go to another country, I will be forced to return to Syria. I cannot stay here. A human only dies one time if killed there. But here I die every day.”

In the 2015 Amman Youth Declaration and the subsequent adoption of UNSC Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security in December 2015, the UN Security Council urged member states to consider setting up mechanisms that would enable young people

to participate meaningfully in society and in political processes. For this to happen, and for young people to rediscover hope in the Middle East, the challenges outlined by youth themselves need to be addressed.

For too long, youth have been marginalised in humanitarian responses and development programming. Investing in youth today should be seen as an investment in the region’s future.

Full Recommendations

International donor governments should:

Improve the protection of youth:

- Support and fund comprehensive national youth strategies that address youth disempowerment and include systematic youth engagement and participation in social and political processes.
- Advocate for and support refugee-hosting countries to review and amend entry, registration and/or residency regulations for young refugees, IDPs and their families.
- Ensure that all funded youth programmes include prevention of risky behaviour as a central objective in the theory of change and consider empowerment, employability and economic interventions.

Increase access to education and learning:

- Support host governments to significantly scale up formal education funding and responses, particularly for youth, including vulnerable host community youth, so they can access accredited secondary and tertiary education opportunities such as vocational training and provision of scholarships for universities in host countries and beyond.
- Support the scale up of access to tertiary education through robust online and distance learning programmes.
- Ensure continued support for alternative, informal education opportunities with psychosocial assistance for adolescents and youth who do not have access to formal schooling.
- Provide technical and financial support for host governments to build flexible, high quality education systems that meet the needs of both host and refugee communities.

Increase access to economic opportunities:

- Support host governments to facilitate equitable access to employment or economic opportunities for both male and female displaced and local youth.
- Fund programmes that provide economic opportunities for both displaced and local youth, including start-up grants, micro-finance, internships, vocational training and apprenticeships.

Improve social/civic engagement:

- Recognise refugee and local youth as agents of positive change in their communities and involve them in determining funding priorities, programme planning, development and decision-making.
- Fund programmes that promote youth leadership (especially for women), social and civic engagement and youth empowerment, particularly those that bring displaced and local community youth together as a means to promote social cohesion.

Governments of Refugee-Hosting Countries in the Middle East Should:

Improve the protection of youth:

- Develop comprehensive national youth strategies that address youth disempowerment and include systematic youth engagement and participation in social and political processes.
- Review and amend entry, registration and/or residency regulations to ensure young refugees, IDPs and their families can obtain and renew legal documentation.
- Review, reduce or abolish registration and/or residency fees or fines as part of clear and consistent processes for applying for or extending registration or residency.
- Establish more flexible procedures that enable refugee and IDP youth, who have come of age in displacement, to prove their identity when they do not have official IDs and cannot produce originals or copies of official documents. Remove punitive measures in cases where such documentation is absent.
- Ensure youth and their families have access to assistance and services irrespective of their registration or residency status.

Increase access to education and learning:

- Promote and support secondary school enrolment and retention for refugees, IDPs and vulnerable host community adolescents.
- Increase higher education opportunities for refugees, IDPs, vulnerable host community adolescents and young adults, including by creating affordable places or waiving foreign students' fees
- Address the high numbers of dropouts from post-primary education by ensuring quality and varied post-primary learning.
- Create clear pathways back to all levels of formal or alternative education for adolescents and youth currently receiving informal learning.
- Create flexible mechanisms that allow adolescents and youth to prove prior learning, skills and training without original certificates. Remove onerous requirements for obtaining documentation that also create additional protection risks.
- Train education authorities and put in place appropriate protection policies at every level to address the distinct challenges faced by IDP and refugee youth, including the impact of displacement on cognitive development and the increased protection risks to girls and boys such as violence or bullying.
- Address issues of language as a barrier to access to education through the provision of additional support or modification of requirements where the language of instruction differs from students' first language.

Increase access to economic opportunities:

- Review pre-existing frameworks and procedures so that they facilitate equitable access to employment or economic opportunities for both male and female displaced and local youth. This review could include consideration of initiatives that promote "Syrians working for Syrians", including as employees of NGOs.
- Greatly increase the number and quality of market-linked vocational training opportunities for both displaced and local youth including the creation of favourable conditions for private sector actors to contribute. These opportunities should include both soft skills, such as employability, as well as technical components. Provide equity of access for female and male youth.

- Take measures to provide working youth with adequate protection from exploitation.

Improve Social/Civil Engagement:

- Reflect youth priorities and support youth participation and decision making in national and refugee response strategies
- Operationalise the 2015 Amman Youth Declaration and UNSC Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security to enable young people to participate meaningfully in society and in political processes.

Aid agencies should:

Improve the protection of youth:

- Engage with national governments in developing comprehensive strategies that recognise youth as agents of positive change, address youth disempowerment and increase systematic engagement and participation of youth in social and political processes.
- Increase provision of information and legal services related to civil documentation for young refugees, IDPs and their families.
- Support community-based initiatives to positively influence social norms and attitudes of young men and women related to Gender-Based-Violence, including early marriage.

Increase access to education and learning:

- Facilitate non-formal or informal educational opportunities for youth who cannot attend government-run institutions, including vocational and tertiary education and accredited learning opportunities.
- Provide out-of-education youth with pathways back into formal education through diverse learning opportunities that help youth to reintegrate into formal education, including greater provision of language skills.
- Support refugee and vulnerable host community adolescents and youth to remain in the formal system through holistic programming, including economic, educational and psychosocial support.
- Provide opportunities for youth to develop transferable, soft skills to aid their personal development and employment opportunities.

Increase access to economic opportunities:

- Extend and expand economic opportunities for both displaced and local community youth and utilise the skills and experience of refugee and IDP youth in aid programmes.
- Ensure that projects delivering economic opportunities also build youth skills in employment and are in-line with international standards of inclusion, gender equity, non-violence and Do No Harm.

Improve social/civil engagement:

- Prioritise targeted youth programmes that provide holistic personal and community development and strengthen volunteering, youth-led initiatives and other leadership opportunities, particularly for young women.
- Use community-based programming to create bridges between displaced youth and local community youth for increased social cohesion and resilience.
- Support and build on existing youth initiatives and community activities where they exist rather than creating parallel structures.



1. UNHCR, "UNHCR Refugees/Migrants Emergency Response – Mediterranean", available online at <http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/regional.php>, last accessed 29 March 2016.
2. The descendants of those displaced from Palestine in 1948 or 1967.
3. The focus groups in Lebanon were carried out by a separate researcher for NRC's internal report "Refugee Youth in North Lebanon: Pathways, Barriers, and Steps Forward", 2016. A total of 231 youth participated across 31 focus group discussions. This report draws on those findings.
4. This was raised in 78 per cent of focus groups, 15 out of 23 focus groups in KRI, Jordan and Turkey and 27 out of 31 focus groups in Lebanon. Syrian refugees in Lebanon, who are either not registered with the UNHCR or do not wish to use their UNHCR registration as a basis for renewal, need to find a Lebanese citizen ("sponsor") who would pledge personal responsibility for them.
5. Human Rights Watch Turkey, "Turkey: Syrians Pushed Back at the Border", November 2015, available online at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/11/23/turkey-syrians-pushed-back-border>, last accessed 29 March 2016; Amnesty International, "Struggling to Survive Refugees from Syria in Turkey", 2014, available online at http://amnesty.org.tr/uploads/Docs/struggling_to_survive_refugees_from_syria_in_turkey811.pdf, last accessed 29 March 2016.
6. Amnesty International, "Turkey: EU risks being complicit in detention, beatings and deportation of Syrian refugees - New report", December 2015, available online at <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/turkey-eu-risks-being-complicit-detention-beatings-and-deportation-syrian-refugees>, last accessed 29 March 2016. See also Amnesty International, "The Human Cost of Fortress Europe", 2014, available online at http://www.amnesty.eu/content/assets/Reports/EUR_050012014_Fortress_Europe_complete_web_EN.pdf, last accessed on 29 March 2016.
7. Syrian refugees in Lebanon, who are either not registered with the UNHCR or do not wish to use their UNHCR registration as a basis for renewal, need to find a Lebanese citizen ("sponsor") who would pledge personal responsibility for them.
8. NRC, "Refugee Youth in North Lebanon: Pathways, Barriers, and Steps Forward", 2016.
9. 53 per cent is an estimate from UNHCR based on data collected during household visits in February 2016. In July 2015, a survey conducted by University Saint Joseph found that 70 per cent of refugees did not have valid residency.
10. NRC "Drivers of Despair", 2016, available online at https://www.nrc.no/arch/_img/9213246.pdf, last accessed on 29 March 2016. UNRWA, "Profiling of Vulnerability of Palestinian Refugees from Syria", October 2015, citing Tatwir, Strategic Studies and Human Development Survey, 2015.
11. UNHCR "Jordan Operational Update February 2016", available online at <https://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=10564>, last accessed 30 March 2016.
12. NRC, "Refugee Youth in North Lebanon: Pathways, Barriers, and Steps Forward", 2016. Ibid.
13. Raised in 30 per cent of focus groups in Turkey, Jordan and KRI.
14. NRC, "Refugee Youth in North Lebanon: Pathways, Barriers, and Steps Forward", 2016.
15. Raised in 82 per cent of focus groups (9 out of 11) in Jordan, Turkey and KRI. No comparable data for Lebanon
16. Raised in 4 out of 23 focus groups in Jordan, Turkey and KRI.
17. ILO, "MENA region retains highest youth unemployment rate in the world", October 2015, available online at http://www.ilo.org/beirut/media-centre/news/WCMS_412797/lang-en/index.htm, last accessed 29 March 2016.
18. The World Food Programme, which provides food aid to Syria refugees, has repeatedly been forced to decrease the numbers of people it provides assistance to and the extent of the assistance in the last two years due to shortfalls in its budget.
19. ILO & Fafo, "Impact of Syrian refugees on the Jordanian labour market", 2015, available online at http://www.ilo.org/beirut/publications/WCMS_364162/lang-en/index.htm, last accessed on 29 March 2016.
20. "UNHCR Refugees/Migrants Emergency Response. Mediterranean", available online at <http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/regional.php>, last accessed on 29 March 2016.

The background of the entire page is an abstract artistic composition. It features a large, faint sketch of a human face in profile, facing right, with green lines for the eyes, nose, and mouth. The face is set against a backdrop of vibrant, textured brushstrokes in shades of orange, red, and white. Scattered throughout the composition are various musical notes, stems, and arrows in green and black, suggesting a theme of rhythm, movement, or perhaps the 'balance' mentioned in the title.

A FUTURE IN THE BALANCE

Youth needs, concerns and aspirations in the Middle East

ABOUT NRC

The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) is an independent, humanitarian, non-profit, non-governmental organisation which provides assistance, protection and durable solutions to refugees and internally displaced persons worldwide.

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