

UNICEF EDUCATION

Foundational Learning Case Study

JORDAN

Supporting Teachers to Improve Foundational Learning for Syrian Refugee Students in Jordan

March 2024

Many of the 34,000 students in Jordan's Syrian refugee camps faced difficulties acquiring foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN) skills, even before the extended COVID-19-related school closures. Upon schools reopening, UNICEF found that over three quarters of Grade 5 and 6 students in the camps were unable to read at a Grade 3 level. Without adequate reading skills, these children were unable to access the wider curriculum and therefore at increased risk of dropping out.

In response, UNICEF, in partnership with the Jordan Ministry of Education and the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), developed the Jordan Reading Recovery Programme (RRP) to support Grade 5 and 6 students struggling with reading and to improve their foundational literacy skills.

To better support students, the priority of the programme was to equip teachers with the tailored tools and knowledge they need to improve the reading levels of their students. Designed by national, regional, and international Arabic specialists, the RRP [employs evidence-based practices](#) to accelerate reading proficiency. Two of its key approaches include [targeting instruction by competency level](#) rather than age or grade and structured pedagogy, which entails a comprehensive package of scripted lesson plans, books and resources matched to competency levels. The RRP utilizes an electronic assessment system that enables teachers to screen and place children in the programme, and track their progress.

Equipped with tailored training and resources, teachers and Syrian volunteers deliver focused lessons to small groups of 10-15 students, four days a week, over a 16-weeks period, totalling 64 sessions. UNICEF's partner, the

Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), conducts weekly classroom observations and offers immediate feedback on pedagogical approaches, which enables contentious improvement. Embedded into the programme is the use of the [Mubakkir e-assessment](#) technology to provide results of students' learning. This tool ensures learning can be adjusted to the pace of students' progress, so that reading difficulties can be identified and supported. Furthermore, the progress is regularly measured to inform the RRP's implementation.

RESULTS

- Over the past two years, 3,759 (49 per cent female) children have been supported across 27 schools and 26 non-formal education centres in Zata'ari and Azraq Syrian Refugee Camps.
- The RRP yielded promising results with over 90 per cent of students demonstrating improvement in reading skills, and over 70 per cent of students achieving above 70 per cent on summative assessments.
- Overall, teachers noted an improved sense of confidence and bolstered agency, with 95 per cent acknowledging the benefit of feedback sessions and observations in refining classroom practices.

LESSONS LEARNED

- **Irregular student attendance posed a key challenge during implementation.** UNICEF responded with parental engagement and community outreach initiatives, emphasizing

the importance of consistent attendance and facilitating home-based learning through face-to-face meetings and online notice boards to engage parents. In the next phase, individual school reports will be automatically generated by Mubakkir to provide information to parents on student progress.

- **Targeting older students through the competency-based approach has helped to address gap in learning support.** The success of the RRP underscores its effectiveness in addressing the learning needs of older children not mastering Grade 3 reading levels and bridging educational gaps in crisis-affected contexts. By addressing critical literacy gaps and empowering teachers and Syrian community members, the RRP's competency-based approach not only enhances learning outcomes but also offers a blueprint for scalable interventions in other Arabic-speaking contexts in the region.

NEXT STEPS

In the 2023/24 academic year, UNICEF will continue to support the implementation of the RRP in Syrian Refugee camp schools and non-formal education centres. This support includes enhancing the capacity of schools to independently ensure the quality of the programme without external assistance. Additionally, the Jordan Ministry of Education has requested UNICEF to adapt the programme to address the requirements of vulnerable schools in host communities.

Cost effectiveness: Whilst the competency-based model can be applicable to any Arabic speaking context, the costs will be driven by factors such as whether it is implemented in- or out-of-school. In the second year, with project design costs excluded, the implementation cost in the Syrian refugee camps was US\$ 222 per child. The main cost drivers were printing materials, the Mubakkir e-assessment system and paying incentives to Syrian volunteers. UNICEF expects this cost to drop as the programme is adapted and scaled to schools in the host community.

For more information, please contact:

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