

2023 Educational Needs Assessment

Akkar Governorate of Lebanon

Introduction:

In recent years, Lebanon has faced a series of cascading challenges that continues to strain the already fragile and insufficient infrastructure and public service sector. The devastating impacts on the economy become more exasperated in late 2019, when Lebanon was hit by a deep economic and financial crisis. These challenges have negatively impacted the living conditions of most Syrian refugees, particularly children, which were already difficult to begin with. According to the most recent VASyR report (2022), 61% of Syrian children aged 6-14 years old and 28% aged 15-17 years old attend school. Even consistency of school operations was impacted, with Lebanese public schools only operating for about 3 months during the 2022/23 school year. For most Syrian refugees, the urgent need to make a living is in direct conflict with the wish for education.

Since we first opened in 2013, one of R&R's primary focuses remains on education. Our Kousha centre serves students located all over Kousha (including Halba, Cheikh Mohammad, Kroum El-Aarab, and Khreibet El-Jindi). Around 10,000 Syrians live in this region, with about 5,500 under the age of 18.¹ The potential need is quite extensive based on the number of Syrians living in the region. Among all our centres, Kousha centre supports the largest number of students. In total, we have 401 students, according to the statistics collecting on 25 Jan 2024. Among these students, 261 are registered at Kousha Centre. We wish to know whether their needs have been influenced by the recent challenges and difficulties experienced, particularly relating to those in the education sector. Therefore, we conducted a survey in the Kousha region to evaluate the educational needs of Syrian children.

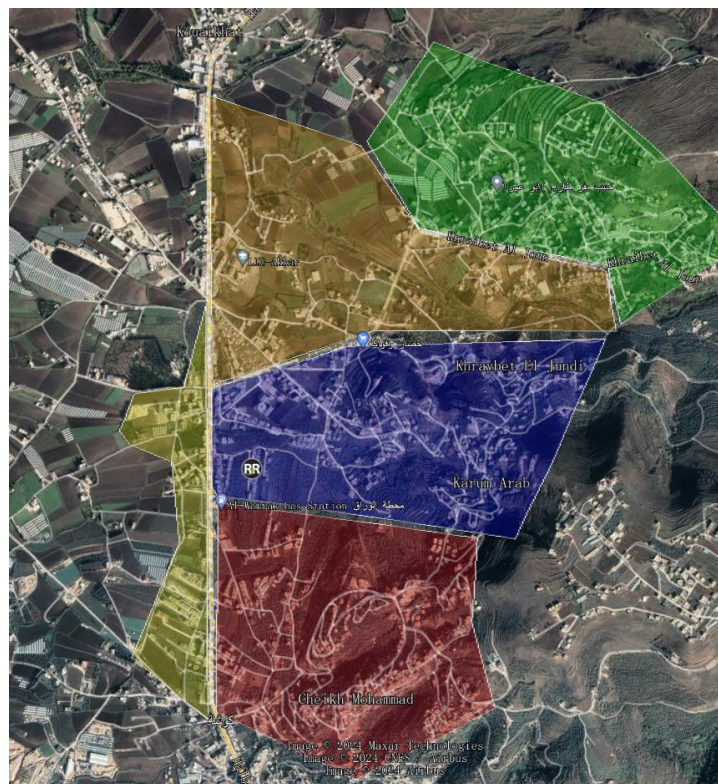
¹According to the latest updates of UNHCR, 55% of the registered Syrian refugees in Lebanon are under 18 years old.

<https://reporting.unhcr.org/operational/operations/lebanon#:~:text=The%20Government%20estimates%20that%20Lebanon,2015%2C%20are%20counselled%20by%20UNHCR>

Methodology:

We designed a questionnaire with around 10 questions (the exact number of the questions depends on their answers). The questions focused on the enrolment rate of students in school, the need for transportation support, the education result of the last school year, and the satisfaction rate of parents regarding educational support provided by NGOs in the region, including R&R.

We planned to sample the region comprehensively. In total, we aimed to collect 500 samples. Each questionnaire depicted one school-age child aged 6 to 16 and is considered one sample. The interviewee should be the household head (e.g., parents, grandparents). As seen on the map, we divided the region into 5 sub-regions. We had 5 teams conducting the survey. Each team was composed of one leader and two or three assistants. We aimed to collect about 100 surveys per sub-region. Each team tried to cover all their sub-regions geographically. We also endeavored to cover all social-economic groups. Therefore, we visited those who live in apartments, as well as garages and tents. The data was collected by KoboToolbox.

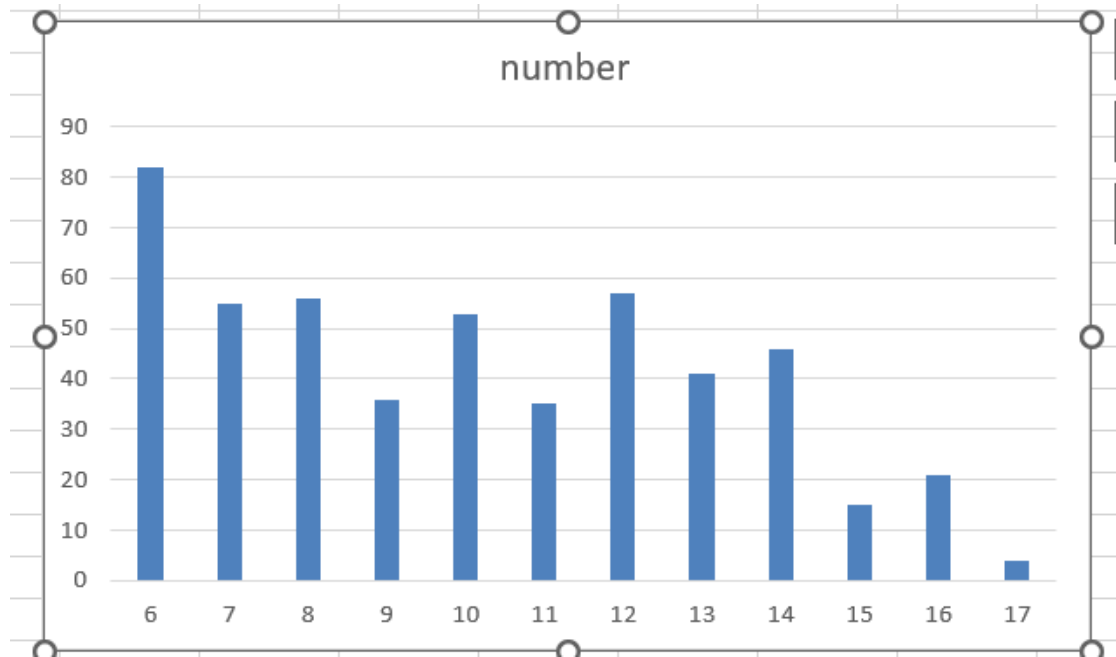


5 Sub-Regions For Survey Operation

Results:

Basic Information:

1. We collected 501 surveys filled out by Syrian families.
2. As most of the people who answered our questions were women, this survey was not very gender balanced (75.45% women in total = 65.67% mothers + 9.78 % other-women). Most male members were working outside their home. Among the majority of Syrian families, it is the mother who makes educational decisions. This survey appropriately reflects the reality of the decision-making structure in the family.
3. The gender balance of children was almost even (50.3% girl, 49.7% boy).
4. The average age of a child was 10.09 years old. The mode of the age was 6.



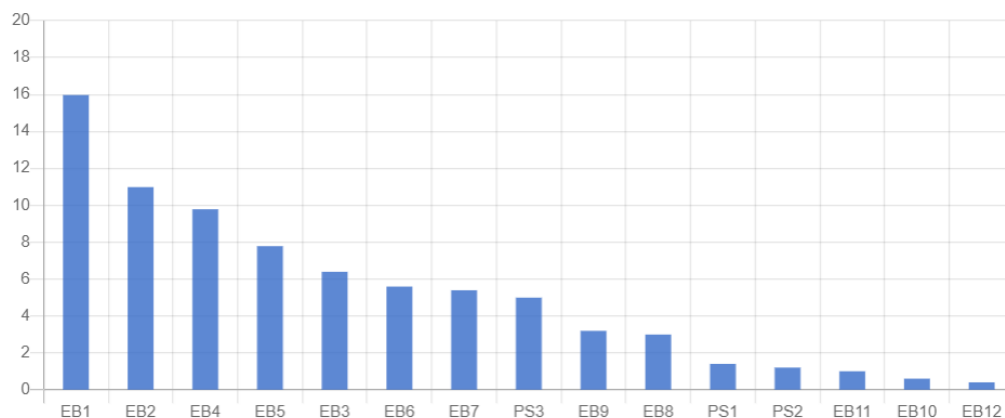
Number of Children According to Age

For Those Who Were Enroled in School:

1. 77.64% of children were enroled in school (65.07% in public school, 12.57% in private school). This was much higher than the average school enrolment rate of Syrians in Lebanon, as indicated in the introduction.² The Syrian students who attended private school in the region went to Insani Al Oula School, which specifically supports Syrian refugees. Our English students who received homework support all came from this private school.

This indicates we should continue our main task of homework help, as the majority of regional children attend school. There is potential to add BLN class(es) to account for the other 22.36% who remain out of school.

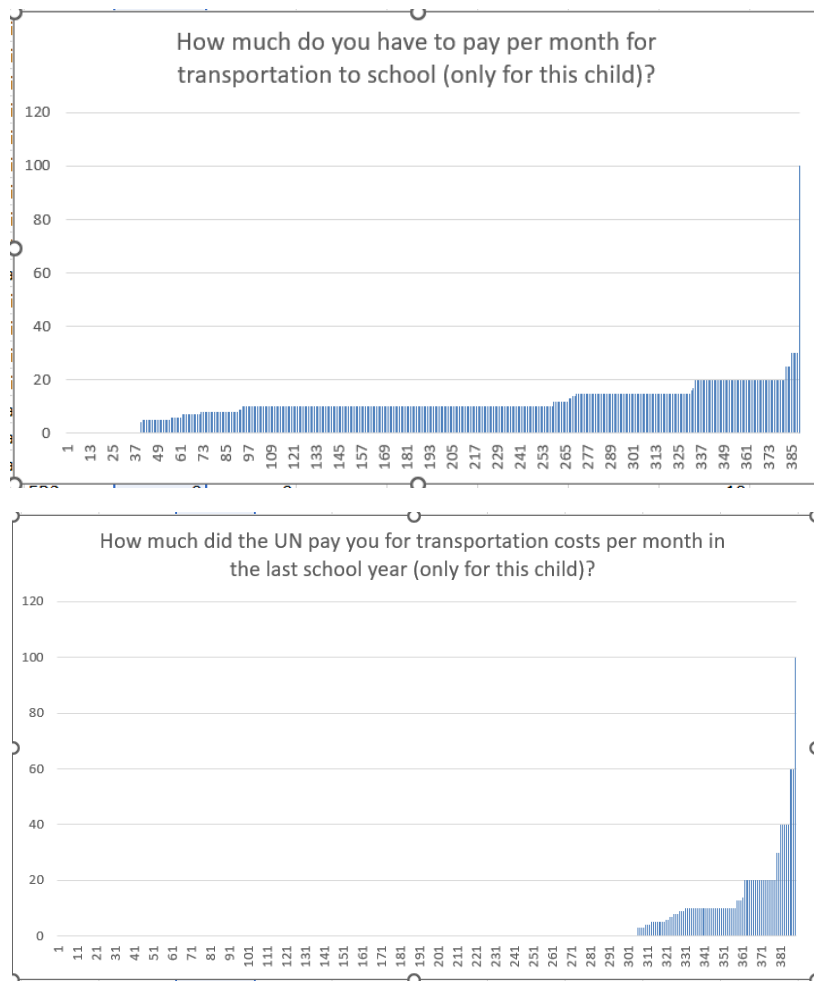
2. The following graph shows that as a child's grade level increases, the number of children attending class decreases. This might reflect the fact that the older a child becomes, the higher the possibility he/she will drop out of school.



Percentage of Children in School by Grade Level

² According to the most recent VASyR report (2022), 61% of Syrian children aged 6-14 years old and 28% aged 15-17 years old attend school.

Transportation:



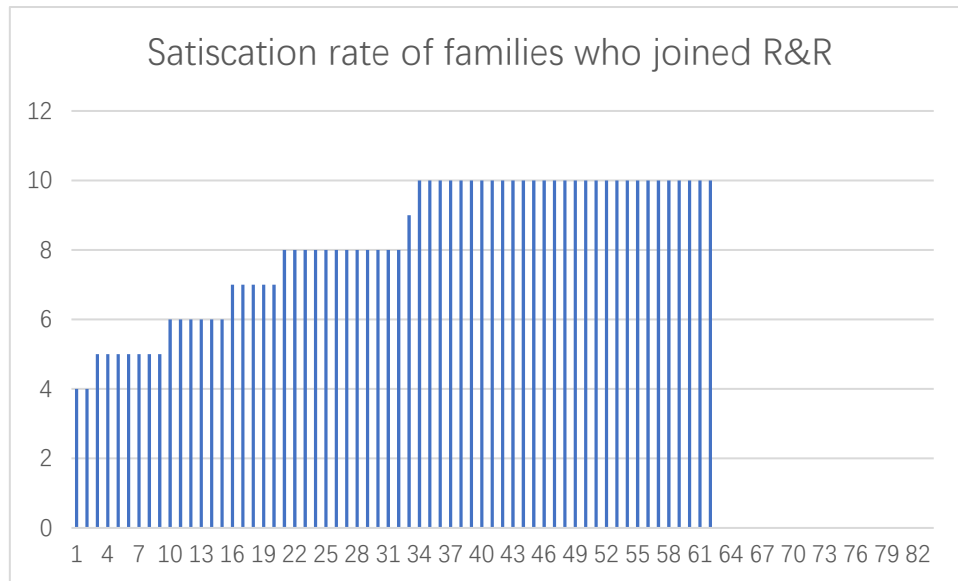
Every month, the average amount of money families spent on each child's transportation was 11.22 USD. Most families paid a similar amount. In general, very few families received any type of monetary support from the UN for transportation (about 21.6% of those who go to school). The graph clearly depicts the uneven distribution.

This data indicates that most families could still afford transportation even without UN transportation support during the last school year. While it might not be an urgent need in the Kousha area, transportation remains a large monthly expenditure for many families. Especially as the most expressed reason for not attending school was due to high transportation costs in Lebanon as a whole.³ This indicates there is a need for school transportation funding awareness.

³ According to the Lebanese Crisis Response Plan 2023 report

Success Rate:

For those who attended school, the success rate of the last school year was 79.7%. For those who studied with R&R at the Kousha Centre, the success rate was 87.1%. The provided homework help had quite a positive influence on students, with boys having a lower success rate (75.8%) in comparison to girls (83.8%). The satisfaction rate for those who attended R&R homework help was on average 8.21 out of 10.



Even for those who are not enrolled in any NGO, their families felt strongly that it's important and beneficial to send their children to NGOs supporting education. The survey showed the average expressed need for educational support as 8.33 out of 10.

In comparison to fathers, mothers expressed a higher need for education in regard to an NGO (8.34 to 6.91), and had a higher satisfaction rate if their children attended one (9.00 to 7.19).

Those Who Were Not Enrolled in School:

22.4% of children are out of school. About half (49.1%) of the children who are not in school have never been enrolled in school. 55.7% girls have never been to school, in comparison to the 41.1% of boys.

For those who had attended school before, a large number dropped out at EB3, EB4, and EB5 (45.6% in total). This percentage is similar between boys and girls. This might be due to a lack of funds. This could also be because they reached working age, and their family considered it more important for them to enter the workforce than continue their education.

About 78.6% of those not enrolled in school didn't go to any NGO for educational or vocational support. On average, families ranked their child's/children's need for BLN support very high (8.90 out of 10). However, for those who attended BLN classes, families ranked the benefit of BLN classes for their child/children lower on average (6.78 out of 10). It can be concluded that there is a need for better BLN support in the Kousha region.

In contrast, families ranked their child's/children's need for workshop support as not very high (6.88 out of 10). However, for those who attended workshops, families ranked the perceived benefit to their child/children higher (8.00 out of 10). From this ranking, it can be concluded NGOs offering workshop support provided a better experience than those who provided BLN support.

For the respondents of the survey, mothers had a greater want for BLN & workshop classes at NGOs (9.11 to 7.88 for BLN, 6.74 to 5.22 for workshop). However, for those who had already attended an NGO for workshops or BLN support, fathers had a higher satisfactory rate for both (7.50 to 6.69 for BLN, 10.00 to 7.00 for workshop). These results demonstrated that fathers were quite happy with the result of workshops.

Conclusion:

As most children in the Kousha area are enrolled in school (77.64%), we should continue focusing the majority of our time providing homework help at Kousha Centre. As the success rate of children attending our centre was higher than those who did not attend and/or attend other centres, this indicates our current pedagogy is quite satisfactory (at least in terms of the success rate). Even those who did not attend any NGO's homework help felt strongly they would benefit from it. Keeping our regular homework help running ensure an adequate response to the educational needs of families.

Although most families didn't receive transportation support from the UN (78.4%), they could still afford transportation to school last academic year. However, with an average monthly cost of 11.22 USD per child, the expense is high, particularly for families with multiple children. Our current transportation support of Techmilli Halba public school is necessary. Meanwhile, we should continue raising awareness for the importance of providing transportation support for families.

While people benefitted a lot from guided workshops, their greater need for BLN support was not satisfied. The 22.4% of students who remained out of school indicate it is necessary to implement BLN class(es) in Kousha to address this need. As discussed above, 78.6% of unenrolled students did not attend any NGO. And many of them express BLN to be of greater importance for their children. If we wish to open BLN class(es), we should aim to provide one(s) of a higher caliber.

This survey has demonstrated R&R's continuous educational support has significantly impacted our students and the region we serve. It will prove insightful for our work moving forward. At the same time, we acknowledge there is still a great educational need and gap for school-aged Syrian refugee children.