

Early Childhood Care and Education for refugees and host communities: examples from Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey

Virtual connection

December 10, 2020

8:30am EST (Washington DC) / 2.30pm CET (Paris, Berlin) /

3.30pm GMT+2 (Amman, Beirut, Jerusalem) / 4.30pm GMT+3 (Baghdad, Ankara)

The Center for Mediterranean Integration (CMI) and the World Bank organize a webinar on the theme of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in forced displacement context. This webinar will discuss the main needs and solutions for ECCE in the Mashreq and Turkey and initiate a conversation among development partners and colleagues, civil society, private sector actors, and local governments working on this topic. It will also launch the joint work of CMI and World Bank on ECCE in forced displacement settings.

CONTEXT

Early childhood care and education (ECCE) encompasses the holistic development of a child's social, emotional, cognitive and physical needs. Early childhood, defined by UNESCO as the period from birth to eight years old, is a time of remarkable growth with brain development at its peak, when children are highly influenced by the environment and the people that surround them.¹ Approaches to ECCE are also reinforced in the [Education 2030](#) agenda and quality ECCE is the focus of Target 4.2 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Early Childhood Development is at risk in contexts of forced displacement, and the COVID-19 crisis and social distancing measures pose additional barriers to refugees and vulnerable children. In the MENA region, 6.8 million children are internally displaced and 5.8 million are refugees, and Turkey hosts 1.2 million children refugees most of whom are missing out on their education.² Many of these children's conditions for social development are negatively impacted by exposure to traumatic events further accentuated by their lack of knowledge of the local language and culture. Most Syrian refugee children between 0 and 5 have no access to early childhood development services and are the most at risk of missing out on a pre-primary education, due to factors such as poverty, transportation issues and language barrier. What is more, most schools and educational centres closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, leaving the responsibility for early childhood education and care to families in already precarious circumstances. While the long-term impacts of COVID-19 on education and children's development is yet to be established, it is evident that ECCE needs to be prioritized in formal and non-formal approaches aiming at the socio-economic integration of refugee and vulnerable children.

In forced displacement settings, quality Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) systems can help improve social cohesion and create jobs for childcare professionals, beside from supporting the brain development in children and preparing them for school. As central governments take care mostly of formal education starting from first grade, ECCE facilities (e.g. nurseries, pre-schools, etc.) are often the result of partnerships with the private sector and NGOs and can also support the development of the local economy by creating jobs for childcare professionals. When given incentives to vulnerable and poor families, the inclusion of children in formal or non-formal ECCE systems

¹ UNESCO [definition of Early childhood care and education](#)

² UNICEF [Middle East and North Africa dashboard](#); UNICEF Press Release: "[Over 40 per cent of Syrian refugee children in Turkey missing out on education, despite massive increase in enrolment rates](#)"

reduces women's childcare responsibilities, allowing them to increased access the labor market. ECCE can also significantly improve the life course of disadvantaged children, included those affected by conflict and displacement³ by reducing learning difficulties, fostering social inclusion and reduce psycho-social damage caused by a childhood trauma.

The inclusion of refugee and vulnerable children in formal and non-formal ECCE systems would benefit from support by central and local governments alike. Inclusive policy programming at the central level can integrate refugee children under the age of 5 in formal education systems. At the same time, local governments and municipalities have a closer understanding of the needs of their local populations and can support such directives, partner with local institutions, or take direct action to support ECCE including through non-formal systems in their area. Local governments have an important role to play, especially when the ECCE offer is mostly provided by the private sector and non-profit actors, whose cost is often paid by parents with clear disadvantages for poorer children. They can partner with actors specialized in childcare and education to create ECCE opportunities, collaborate with community centers for non-formal ECCE systems, coordinate with INGOs and CSOs for cash-incentives for poor families, act as a focal point to direct families in need toward these offers, or directly offer in-kind assistance to deliver flexible and informal education for the most vulnerable children in their areas, including host community members.

However, local authorities face main challenges in implementing and supporting inclusive ECCE systems. Municipalities, Unions of Municipalities and other local actors are already strained in their daily tasks to provide a liveable environment for local populations and refugees. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic put even more pressure on local-level authorities, who are in charge of ensuring proper application of social distancing and other regulations to counter the spread of the virus. Moreover, early childhood education not being included in their main mandates, they often lack the resources and technical skills to deal with improving ECCE systems. Furthermore, frequent issues encountered in ECCE policies are the non-compliance with existing regulations that can lead to problems of hygiene, security, and education quality.

WEBINAR OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTED OUTPUTS

This webinar wants to address the main challenges for ECCE in forced displacement contexts and highlight innovative ideas for central and local authorities in MENA to provide quality ECCE to local and forcibly displaced children. Objectives of this webinar are:

1. To introduce current ECCE policies being developed in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, main challenges faced by public authorities in addressing the needs of forcibly displaced children, and the new challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic;
2. To hear from local examples involving local governments, NGOs, the private sector and showcase innovative solutions and best practices to extend quality ECCE to forcibly displaced children;
3. To contribute to developing a new programmatic roadmap for learning and capacity building of public officials to enhance ECCE systems in Middle Eastern countries hosting refugees and other displaced populations.

This webinar will include simultaneous interpretation in English, Arabic and Turkish. Connection links will be sent upon registration.

³ Britto, P.R., Lye, S.J., Proulx, K., Yousafzai, A.K., Matthews, S.G., Vaivada, T. et al. (2017). [Nurturing care: promoting early childhood development](#). The Lancet 389(10064): 91–102.



AGENDA

Moderator: Giulia Marchesini, Sr Partnership Specialist, CMI

14.30 – 14.45 Welcome Remarks

- Blanca Moreno-Dodson, Manager, CMI
- Saroj Kumar Jha, Regional Director, World Bank

14.45 – 15.30 Overview on country strategies and policies

- **Mohammed Audah**, Economist, World Bank
- **Garene Kaloustian**, Early Childhood Specialist, Lebanon
- **Erkan Acikgoz**, Head of PIKTES program, Ministry of Education, Turkey

Q&A

15.30 – 16.15 Local experiences: including refugees in ECCE offers

- **Rania Sobeih**, Director, Zaha Cultural Center, Jordan
- **Alexandra Chen**, Early childhood specialist, Harvard University
- **Kübra Çinkılıç**, Director for Family and Children, Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality, Turkey
- **Meriem Ait Slimane**, Senior Private Sector Specialist, World Bank

Q&A

16.15 – 16.30 Conclusions and next steps

- **Giulia Marchesini**, Sr Partnership Specialist, CMI
 - **Kamal Braham**, Program Leader, World Bank
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