

**NUFFIELD
COUNCIL ^{ON}
BIOETHICS**

**The humanitarian crisis and civil
war in Syria: a review of
community engagement activities
and initiatives**

September 2019

Summary

A rich set of examples of young Syrians taking control of engagement initiatives was identified for those living inside and outside the country's borders. Initiatives included practical schemes (for example, making clothes for families who needed them or organising for textbooks to be available to displaced students), to initiatives that encouraged the discussion of issues affecting them and their peers (for example, creating a radio station to spread peaceful values).

Broadening out from young people's initiatives, communities also sought to promote peace and tolerance through dialogue and taking challenges to local government leaders. Like young people, other community members undertook practical engagement initiatives such as urban farming projects and bringing people together through arts activities.

Organisations have undertaken a wide range of engagement activities with communities affected by the civil war both inside and outside Syria's borders. Organisations' work with young people is particularly wide-ranging, and includes sports schemes, engaging through the use of technology, encouraging the development of skills through engagement, and the establishment of child-friendly recreational spaces for children and young people to "sing, learn, draw, play and laugh together." Young people have also been encouraged by organisations to submit ideas about how their situation might be improved through support from those organisations.

In addition to their engagement with young people, organisations have also sought to engage the wider community inside and outside Syria. Sports, cultural, creative, and deliberative activities have been used by international organisations including various UN organisations and national organisations, as well as charities and NGOs based outside of the Middle East, some of which partnered with private companies and various government initiatives. Several programmes sought to engage displaced young people, but far fewer specifically focused engagement initiatives were identified for older people and women who had been displaced.

Several benefits have been observed as a result of this wide range of engagement activities for communities affected by the civil war. They include educational and developmental benefits, enhancing relationships and community cohesion, an opportunity to have a voice that is heard, and to experience acceptance and a sense of belonging.

However, problems also arose as a result of engagement initiatives. Reported issues included the impact of security problems and associated fear, the fact that some voices are 'heard more' than others, logistical issues, a lack of support for translating any outcomes of engagement into practice, and facing negative perceptions of refugees from some quarters. There are mixed reports on the extent to which groups such as girls, women, and older people are excluded from engagement initiatives.

Background

- 1 In March 2011, pro-democracy protests erupted in the Syrian city of Deraa after teenagers were arrested and tortured after painting revolutionary slogans on a school wall. State security opened fire on the demonstrators, killing several people. Protests subsequently spread throughout the country, with demands for President Bashar al-Assad to resign. The Syrian Government sought to crush the dissent, leading to opposition supporters taking up arms, fighting back against the regime, and expelling Government security forces from their local areas. The fighting escalated, and civil war erupted. Nearly nine years later, the war in Syria continues, and 6.2 million people (including 2.5 million children) are displaced within Syria¹ while over 5.6 million people have fled the country since 2011, seeking refuge in other countries.²

Aims of this review

- 2 This rapid review aims to consider a wide range of literature that explains and explores how communities living through the Syrian Civil war have been, and continue to be, engaged. It includes a focus on how communities have initiated their own response to the humanitarian crisis. This is not a systematic review: rather it is a review that seeks to provide a general illustration of key and varied examples of community engagement in the context of response to the Syrian Civil war. The review will contribute to the Nuffield Council's forthcoming report on research in global health emergencies.³
- 3 Four questions will be addressed:
 - [How have Syrian communities initiated, controlled, participated, and responded to the humanitarian disaster created by the civil war?](#)
 - [How have organisations sought to engage Syrian communities affected by the crisis?](#)
 - [What benefits have been observed from the engagement of Syrian communities?](#)
 - [What problems have arisen as a result of community engagement initiatives in Syria?](#)
- 4 Where possible, each of these questions is considered in two contexts: where communities remain in Syria or are internally displaced; and where communities have sought refuge in other countries. The shorthand throughout this review for these two contexts will be 'inside Syria' and 'outside Syria'.

¹ UNHCR (2019) *Internally displaced people*, available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/sy/internally-displaced-people>.

² UNHCR (2019) *Syria emergency*, available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/uk/syria-emergency.html>. Turkey hosts the largest number of Syrian refugees (currently 3.3m).

³ Nuffield Council on Bioethics (2019) *Research in global health emergencies: project page*, available at: <https://www.nuffieldbioethics.org/publications/research-in-global-health-emergencies>.

Review methods

- 5 Keywords relating to the civil war were identified and used to construct search terms that formed the basis for this rapid review. The search terms were entered into Google (in order to gather grey literature), and Google Scholar. Snowballing references identified by initial search results yielded further sources from academic journals and grey literature. Abstracts of search results were assessed for relevance and, where pertinent to the aims of this review, each result's own references were followed up. Grey literature – which comprises a large part of this review – was identified through Boolean searching via Google, in addition to papers already known to the author. Searches were undertaken from 2011 to the present day / time of writing.

How have Syrian communities initiated, controlled, participated, and responded to the humanitarian disaster created by the civil war?

- 6 This section examines how – both inside Syria and outside Syria – Syrians demonstrated their agency by undertaking community-led engagement. Paragraphs [7](#) to [11](#) address actions led specifically by young people. Paragraphs [12](#) to [16](#) go beyond a focus on young people to highlight the proactive response of Syrian communities across the age spectrum, both inside and outside Syria.

Actions led by young people inside Syria

- 7 There are several examples which indicate young people's leadership in engagement initiatives inside Syria. Some of these actions were launched out of pre-existing schemes established by NGOs, but young people's agency in taking up the mantle is clear: for example, in Aleppo, 120 15-24-year-olds took part in a UNICEF-supported and youth-led initiative called Dafa – translated as 'warmth'. The young people attended knitting and sewing courses provided by UNICEF, but subsequently went beyond the original project to do more on their own initiative:

"[The young people subsequently] came together to make woollen hats, scarves, and gloves for vulnerable children in Aleppo. The group was able to make 400 sets and bought 150 more to distribute to 550 children in three neighborhoods on the outskirts of Aleppo, where families have been returning after years of displacement amidst basic conditions and lack of services."⁴

- 8 A group of girls in Aleppo also took further another scheme initiated by UNICEF which offered sewing and tailoring training sessions. The girls "came up with an idea to help disadvantaged families in their community, using the skills they learned through the course." They bought fabrics, and spent ten days making clothes for the project, before identifying vulnerable families and inviting them to a clothes fair. Invited families showed their invitations at the door and were free to choose whatever items they wanted for their children. One of the girls who took part in the project – Sabah – observed, "We didn't want families to feel like we were handing

⁴ UNICEF (28 January 2019) *From the youth of Aleppo to its children; hand-knitted warmth to face the harsh winter*, available at: <https://www.unicef.org/syria/stories/youth-aleppo-its-children-hand-knitted-warmth-face-harsh-winter>.

out clothes to them, we wanted to maintain their dignity and freedom to choose whatever they liked!" The initiative provided 300 children with new clothes.⁵

- 9 Young people inside Syria also worked together to create a radio station to 'spread peaceful values'. A young person who contributed to the project stated that the radio station spreads "a culture of love and tolerance and to help to develop civil society, which contributes to the restoration of civilian peace within Syrian society... [We] do not solve conflicts directly. I mean we do not go down to the street, but we contribute to the preservation of civilian peace by spreading the ideas of coexistence and love to our audience."⁶

Actions led by young people outside Syria

- 10 Actions led by young people who had been displaced from Syria include those initiated by members of the Berlin-based Syrian Youth Assembly.⁷ The Assembly was established by young Syrians who attended the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, and is a youth-led platform that allows young Syrians "to work together to build peace". The organisation works with 18-35-year-old Syrians "to influence and participate in the Syrian peace process, and to [bring] peace and rebuild Syria and to empower young people and build their capacity to participate in the process of reviving peace in Syria."
- 11 Other youth-led actions include an initiative run by young women at high school in Duhok (Kurdistan Region, Iraq). The young women collected money to buy textbooks for displaced students who could not afford to buy them.⁸ Young Syrian refugees living in the Emerati Jordanian Camp (EJC) also took control of activities available to them:

"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."⁹

Actions led by communities inside Syria

- 12 Communities affected by the civil war who remained inside Syria have led several initiatives to promote cohesion and engagement among their members. They include the establishment of an education centre in the Syrian city of Sweida that encouraged students from Aleppo to work with students from Daraa, leading to "children from government families [exchanging] stories with children from opposition families." It has been suggested that such initiatives "[demonstrate] that

⁵ UNICEF (19 August 2018) *The young women of rural Aleppo support their community with help from UNICEF*, available at: <https://www.unicef.org/syria/stories/young-women-rural-aleppo-support-their-community-help-unicef>.

⁶ Swiss Peace Foundation (2016) *Inside Syria: what local actors are doing for peace*, available at: <http://cdint.org/documents/Inside-Syria-What-Local-Actors-Are-Doing-for-Peace.pdf>, at page 22.

⁷ Syrian Youth Assembly (2019) *Homepage*, available at: <https://syrian-youth.org/>.

⁸ Norwegian Refugee Council (2016) *A future in the balance*, available at: http://wos-education.org/uploads/reports/Final_youth_research_doc_-_April2016.pdf, at page 24.

⁹ *ibid.*

a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned dialogue process is not a pipe dream”.¹⁰ Also in Sweida, community members and leaders acted to reduce conflict at a local level, “mediating and promoting peaceful values.” One community leader in the city stated that “since tensions began in our area [...] we rushed to communicate with influential stakeholders [...] and to contain problems before they occurred”.¹¹ Included in this type of engagement is an example from Dayr Az Zawr, where a civil council was established by local citizens to help to manage conflict through dialogue and communication.¹²

- 13 Peacebuilding inside Syria was also the focus of the efforts of a group of young women who went to their local council to discuss challenges related to the presence of militants in their city. Battalion leaders went to the women’s families and asked them to stop their daughters from intervening in political issues, but most of the women’s parents refused to follow this order, and instead set up meetings with the local council.¹³ A related issue is highlighted in the following account:

“One initiative in Aleppo focuses on resolving the roots of the disputes in their neighborhoods through bi-monthly meetings with youth actors. They also organize youth circles, bringing people together to spread ideas of tolerance and coexistence.”¹⁴

- 14 Community groups have also worked together to undertake urban farming projects¹⁵ and rooftop agriculture projects have enabled people living in Syria “to come together to grow their own food which eases tensions between them.”¹⁶ Women in Syria have also established vocational activities such as sewing, crafts, health, and nursing. One female community member said, “to keep our children away from the language of war, we taught girls sewing, folklore singing, and art designs.”¹⁷

Actions led by communities outside Syria

- 15 Displaced Syrian communities have established various initiatives in their host countries. Syrians living in the Za’atari refugee camp in Jordan, for example,

¹⁰ Alliance for Peacebuilding (4 March 2016) *Bit by bit: local efforts to peace Syria back together*, available at: <https://allianceforpeacebuilding.org/2016/03/bit-by-bit-local-efforts-to-peace-syria-back-together-spring-2016/>.

¹¹ Swiss Peace Foundation (2016) *Inside Syria: what local actors are doing for peace*, available at: <http://cdint.org/documents/Inside-Syria-What-Local-Actors-Are-Doing-for-Peace.pdf>, at page 7.

¹² Center for Civil Society and Democracy in Syria (2014) *Effective local peace initiatives and inclusive national peace negotiations in Syria*, available at: https://peacefulchange.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/2014_03_policy_brief_syrian_peace_resources_final_eng_1.pdf, at page 3.

¹³ Swiss Peace Foundation (2016) *Inside Syria: what local actors are doing for peace*, available at: <http://cdint.org/documents/Inside-Syria-What-Local-Actors-Are-Doing-for-Peace.pdf>, at page 9.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, at page 21.

¹⁵ Syria Deeply (28 October 2014) *Greening the rubble: Syrians embrace urban farming to stave off starvation*, available at: <https://www.newsdeeply.com/syria/articles/2014/10/28/greening-the-rubble-syrians-embrace-urban-farming-to-stave-off-starvation>.

¹⁶ Swiss Peace Foundation (2016) *Inside Syria: what local actors are doing for peace*, available at: <http://cdint.org/documents/Inside-Syria-What-Local-Actors-Are-Doing-for-Peace.pdf>, at page 22.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, at page 23.

exhibited entrepreneurial attributes which have a secondary aim of promoting well-being.

“Some business owners in the camp display small birds outside their shops, which they explained were mainly kept as a hobby. A few entrepreneurs breed the birds as a side business since many households keep them as pets in their caravans. Keeping birds is a common pastime among Syrian people, and it was explained to use that having birds around in the camp helped them to relax and forget about the hardships they had experienced.”¹⁸

16 A bottom-up media communications initiative was also established inside the camp: a group of Syrian volunteer journalists living in Za’atari contribute to a monthly magazine – The Road¹⁹ – intended “to serve as a source of news and entertainment for camp residents, as well as an attempt to contribute to the information systems in the camp.” The magazine was initially sponsored by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and run by a Jordanian journalist at the Japanese Emergency NGOs (JEN).²⁰ In response to this initiative, three student journalists in Za’atari established the Za’atari Team Told Reporters (ZTTR) and “now hope to serve as contributors to The Road or to begin their own independent publication in order to write about the biggest issues and hidden problems that they feel are the most relevant and interesting for refugees in Za’atari.”²¹

How have organisations sought to engage Syrian communities affected by the crisis?

17 This section explores how organisations have engaged Syrian communities affected by the civil war. Paragraphs [18](#) to [25](#) focus on organisations’ work *inside* Syria; paragraphs [26](#) to [60](#) highlight initiatives with Syrians living *outside* of their home country.

Organisations’ work inside Syria

Working with young people

18 Several organisations have focused strongly on engaging young people inside Syria. This is illustrated by a survey report from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) on programming approaches for and with adolescents inside Syria. The survey found that, of 28 agencies who responded, eight had engaged young people in the assessment, planning,

¹⁸ University of Oxford Refugee Studies Centre (2015) *Refugee innovation: humanitarian innovation that starts with communities*, available at: <https://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/files/files-1/refugee-innovation-web-5-3mb.pdf>, at page 22.

¹⁹ TRT World (31 December 2017) *The Road, a refugee-produced magazine on coping with displacement*, available at: <https://www.trtworld.com/mea/the-road-a-refugee-produced-magazine-on-coping-with-displacement-13779>.

²⁰ University of Oxford Refugee Studies Centre (2015) *Refugee innovation: humanitarian innovation that starts with communities*, available at: <https://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/files/files-1/refugee-innovation-web-5-3mb.pdf>, at page 23.

²¹ *ibid.*

implementation, and monitoring of their programme. Of these, four organisations engaged young people in all phases of the interventions.²²

- 19 A key example of organisations' work with young people inside Syria is the establishment of child-focused community spaces. Global Communities, for example, have established child-friendly spaces "where young children can engage in recreation, psychosocial, and informal education activities."²³ UNHCR in Syria also highlights the 34 community and satellite centres across the Aleppo region established for young people. At these centres, young people access services and information, including those pertaining to legal aid, education, and psychosocial support. An 11-year-old girl who was displaced from Rajo (Aleppo) to Tel Refaat and attended one of the centres notes, "I'm happy here with all my new friends, we sing, learn, draw, play and laugh together." A 10-year-old girl also says, "We can sing as loud as we can here, and I love it".²⁴
- 20 Mobile teams working with young people in Syria have also organised child-friendly spaces in the places they visit so that children have an opportunity to play safely, listen to stories, and watch cartoons. UNHCR (a partner organisation of the initiative) reports that these mobile teams "proved to be a successful tool in Syria, as many IDPs, returnees, and host communities have difficulties reaching the static facilities such as community centres due to security reasons, financial issues or lack of knowledge."²⁵ Children's clubs established by UNHCR in the Damascus area have also sought to enable young people to express the challenges and obstacles they face in their communities or schools, in addition to submitting ideas to UNHCR that might improve their surrounding environment. An account of the initiative notes that young people were encouraged to discuss topics including the purpose of the children's clubs, what the initiative's tasks and responsibilities should be, and the future steps for the initiative.²⁶
- 21 Sports initiatives were also used by organisations to engage young people inside Syria. For example, Israa, a girl living in Syria who took part a UNICEF-supported sports scheme gives an account of how she now plays on a basketball team:

"Some days we win and on other days we lose but we treat each other like brothers and sisters. We discuss and vote when we disagree."²⁷

²² OCHA and UNICEF (2016) *Reaching adolescents and youth inside Syria: 2016 HRP mapping report*, available at: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/hrp_adol_youth_mapping_report_oct_20_ocha_v2.pdf.

²³ Global Communities (2019) *Syria*, available at: <https://www.globalcommunities.org/syria>.

²⁴ UNHCR (28 August 2019) "I'm happy here with all my new friends" - Mizken makes new friends in Syria, available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/sy/12535-im-happy-here-with-all-my-new-friends-mizken-makes-new-friends-in-syria.html>.

²⁵ UNHCR (4 November 2018) *Mobile teams make a difference in children's lives*, available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/sy/11841-mobile-teams-make-a-difference-in-childrens-lives.html>.

²⁶ UNHCR (8 August 2016) *Children's Club: children find a new environment for innovation and creativity*, available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/sy/172-childrens-club-children-find-a-new-environment-for-innovation-and-creativity.html>.

²⁷ #ChildrenofSyria (20 October 2015) *Away from war: sports bringing hope again to re-engage Syrian children with their childhood*, available at: <http://childrenofsyria.info/2015/10/20/away-from-war-sports-bringing-hope-again-to-re-engage-syrian-children-with-their-childhood/>.

22 UNICEF also supported the establishment of a football team for young people living in Syria under its Sports for Development programme. The programme aims to support the wellbeing and healthy lifestyle of young people living in Syria, while “enhancing social cohesion and including the most vulnerable youth groups.”²⁸ A report on the Sports for Development scheme includes a testimony from a Syrian scout leader who notes the change in the scouts’ role as a result of the programme:

“In addition to those who come to us voluntarily, this cooperation with UNICEF has enabled us to reach children in need and integrate them with their new environments. We focus on children living in collective shelters.”²⁹

Working with the general community

23 Separate to their work with young people, organisations have also engaged with other community members living in Syria. Examples include inviting older people to an open day of music, poetry, and dance as part of a UNHCR-organised event in Damascus “to honour their great wisdom, contributions and the effort they spent in guiding the young generation throughout hardships and displacement during the Syria crisis.”³⁰ The creative arts, including theatre, dancing, and singing have also been used by local community members to “promote peaceful values through creative arts”, and “perform musical plays and compose rap songs, calling on people to renounce sectarianism.”³¹ Community centres have also been established in Syria so that adults can engage with one another through recreational activities, vocational training, and psychosocial support.³²

24 UN organisations have undertaken several initiatives to engage communities in Syria. UNHCR and its local partner, Al-Nada, for example, sought “to reinforce engagement and communication between [refugees and displaced people living in Damascus]”³³ and UNHCR has also established a network of volunteers who are themselves refugees in Syria.³⁴ The United Nations Population Fund’s (UNFPA) Innovation Fund supported 28 young people living in Syria to attend a three-week training scheme to develop plans and skills to launch technology-based small

²⁸ UNICEF (7 April 2019) *Football for change: Israa and Afraa’s story from Hama, Syria*, available at: <https://www.unicef.org/mena/stories/football-change-israa-and-afraas-story-hama-syria>.

²⁹ #ChildrenofSyria (20 October 2015) *Away from war: sports bringing hope again to re-engage Syrian children with their childhood*, available at: <http://childrenofsyria.info/2015/10/20/away-from-war-sports-bringing-hope-again-to-re-engage-syrian-children-with-their-childhood/>.

³⁰ UNHCR (26 November 2017) *Senior citizens of the refugee community in Syria enjoy open day event*, available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/sy/11186-senior-citizens-refugee-community-syria-enjoy-open-day-event.html>.

³¹ Swiss Peace Foundation (2016) *Inside Syria: what local actors are doing for peace*, available at: <http://cdint.org/documents/Inside-Syria-What-Local-Actors-Are-Doing-for-Peace.pdf>, pp21-2.

³² See, for example, UNHCR (21 March 2017) *UNHCR - a new community centre in Aleppo to help the escalating needs*, available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/sy/10340-unhcr-a-new-community-centre-in-aleppo-to-help-the-escalating-needs.html>; and UNHCR (20 September 2017) *UNHCR Syria opens a new community center in Hama city*, available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/sy/10940-unhcrs-syria-opens-new-community-center-hama-city.html>.

³³ UNHCR (28 September 2017) *An open day increases engagement between refugees and Syrian displaced people*, available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/sy/10966-open-day-increases-engagement-refugees-syrian-displaced-people.html>.

³⁴ UNHCR (5 December 2017) *Volunteering to help others is contagious in the refugee communities in Syria*, available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/sy/11298-volunteering-is-contagious-refugee-communities-syria.html>.

businesses. The scheme also sought “to help the diverse group of young people grow accustomed to working with individuals from ethnic groups and backgrounds different from their own”.³⁵ The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and UNHCR have also jointly established a project to provide farmers affected by the war with 4,000 greenhouses, with the aim of improving the food security prospects of displaced Syrians and local farming host communities, and to provide work for displaced families.³⁶ The Syrian Women’s Advisory Board has also been established by the UN Special Envoy for Syria to ensure that the perspectives of women are taken into account in the peace process. A summary of the Board notes that it “works to show that Syrian women are not just victims, they are also leaders and need to be a part of the peace process.”³⁷

25 Examples of the work of non-UN organisations inside Syria include engagement activities organised in Local Administrative Councils (LACs). In Ma’aret al Numan, LACs have arranged public outreach and consultation meetings.³⁸ At these meetings, “citizens were able to voice their needs and concerns and were asked about the type of projects that are most needed in their communities. In such meetings the citizens thus had a stake in determining the service focus of the LAC.”³⁹

Organisations’ work outside Syria

26 Organisations have run several engagement initiatives for people displaced from Syria. A significant number of organisations’ programmes sought to engage young people (paragraphs [27-48](#)), but fewer examples were identified of the specific engagement of women (paragraphs [49-50](#)). Several initiatives which engaged communities in a more general sense were also identified (paragraphs [51-60](#)).

Working with young people

UNICEF’s work

27 UNICEF’s work outside Syria yields several examples of engagement with young people affected by the civil war, including a programme where nearly 72,000 Syrian young people aged 10-24 received training on entrepreneurship, civic engagement, and life skills. After receiving training, the young people presented project proposals, 117 of which received seed funding (supported by Canada and

³⁵ Office of the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth (2016) *Empowering Syrian youth to become entrepreneurs*, available at: <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/2016/06/empowering-syrian-youth-become-entrepreneurs/>.

³⁶ UNHCR (23 March 2017) *Greenhouse support helps displaced families in Syria*, available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/sy/10288-greenhouse-support-helps-displaced-families-in-syria.html>.

³⁷ Medium (2019) *Women rising: women’s activism that has shaped the world as you know it*, available at: <https://medium.com/we-the-peoples/women-rising-womens-activism-that-has-shaped-the-world-as-you-know-it-5850cd112bac>.

³⁸ Local Administrative Councils were formed in opposition-held areas of Syria. They began as relief agents and “evolved over time, attempting to fill the vacuum left when the Syrian government retreated from certain areas of the country.” See: Swiss Peace Foundation (2017) *The experience of Local Administrative Councils in opposition-held Syria*, available at: https://www.swisspeace.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf/Mediation/WOTRO_Report_The_Experience_of_Local_Administrative_Councils_in_Oppositionheld_Syria.pdf, at page 3.

³⁹ *ibid.*, at page 17.

Luxembourg) to turn the proposals into active projects.⁴⁰ Successful projects include Tabshoura, an app that connects school and university students with relevant private teachers who offer affordable rates for tuition;⁴¹ and an online giftshop which sells handmade and recycled items.⁴² UNICEF has also supported health workers to train young people on how to lead group discussions and provide peer-to-peer information sessions on the causes, detection, and treatment of Leishmaniasis; and also on the behaviour changes necessary to create an environment where the disease cannot thrive (the disease is spread by infected sand flies that survive in dumps, animal waste, and sewers).⁴³ UNICEF also appointed 60 young people – both Syrian refugees and young people from Jordan – to a local advisory council in Jordan to provide advice on its various youth initiatives.⁴⁴

Engagement through sport

- 28 Several examples of organisations' use of sport to engage displaced young people were identified. World Vision, for example, led an initiative in Jordan where it partnered with a Jordanian teacher to provide karate training for girls living in the Azraq refugee camp. The teacher suggests that the sport “empowers self-confidence. Once they start performing in front of each other and in front of an audience, it improves their confidence that they could become a champion one day.”⁴⁵
- 29 In Lebanon, a sports-based initiative was established by Right to Play and the Olympic Refuge Foundation which worked in partnership for three years to help young people from host communities and young people who are refugees to “rise above social and cultural differences experienced when refugee and host communities live in close proximity.”⁴⁶ Right to Play further explains:

“Through play-based activities like football, Right to Play-trained physical education teachers and coaches will address and prevent violence and discrimination among students to foster social connections in their communities. The girls and boys will learn acceptance, tolerance, understanding and communications skills—all in safe spaces, including

⁴⁰ UNICEF (15 July 2019) *UNICEF builds the entrepreneurial skills of Syrian youth to create new opportunities*, available at: <https://www.unicef.org/syria/stories/unicef-builds-entrepreneurial-skills-syrian-youth-create-new-opportunities>.

⁴¹ *ibid.*

⁴² UNICEF (15 July 2019) *UNICEF supports Syrian youth to reach their full potential*, available at: <https://www.unicef.org/syria/stories/unicef-supports-syrian-youth-reach-their-full-potential>.

⁴³ UNICEF (7 January 2019) *Young people in rural Hama, Syria join UNICEF's efforts to raise awareness on skin diseases*, available at: <https://www.unicef.org/syria/stories/young-people-rural-hama-syria-join-unicefs-efforts-raise-awareness-skin-diseases>.

⁴⁴ The Jordan Times (1 November 2017) *UNICEF appoints 60 youth for local advisory council*, available at: <http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/unicef-appoints-60-youth-local-advisory-council>.

⁴⁵ World Vision (19 August 2019) *World Humanitarian Day: karate champion empowers Syrian refugee girls in Jordan*, available at: <https://www.worldvision.org.uk/news-and-views/latest-news/2019-news/august/world-humanitarian-day-jordanian-karate-coach-empowers-syrian-refugee-girls/>.

⁴⁶ Right to Play (2019) *Right to Play and the Silkroad Ensemble* available at: <https://www.righttoplay.com/en/news/celebrating-the-power-of-music-right-to-play-and-the-silkroad-ensemble-team-up-to-empower-vulnerable-lebanese-and-refugee-youth-rise/>.

enclosed football pitches so that girls are also able to fully participate in the program.”

30 Sport also played a key role in engaging young people living in refugee camps in northern Iraq: UNICEF worked on behalf of GIZ “to organise football tournaments and readings. Hundreds of children take part in drama groups, and each camp has its own newspaper, produced by young people. Three mobile cinemas tour the camps at regular intervals.”⁴⁷ In Lebanon, young people from host communities and refugees from Syria, took part in a three-year sports programme organised by Right to Play and sports brand Asics.⁴⁸ Young people were coached to play sports to “support their development of physical, mental, and life skills.” The Syrian young people who took part gave the following feedback on the scheme:

“I love sports and activities. I love playing games. I always clean up the court after playing games so everyone is happy and the court looks tidy again[...] I love football. We run and we play. It’s really good for our bodies. When we play sports we are all equal. We don’t have a Syrian and a Lebanese team here. We are all one team when playing games.”
(Mouaatasem, aged 10)

“I really love this programme. We are together, we play and we get to know each other. It makes me really happy.” (Hanan, aged 9)

31 Also relating to engagement through sports, Adidas provided financial support for a summer school project for Syrian children in refugee camps in Sanliurfa, in collaboration with the Turkish Ministry of Youth and Sports. The project aimed to give around 2,000 children the chance “to spend their summer holiday improving mental, physical and social skills.”⁴⁹ Sports facilities and playgrounds also formed part of the Qudra project (see paragraph 27) to offer “possibilities for interaction between refugees and local citizens” in Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon.⁵⁰ In Iraqi and Jordanian refugee camps and host communities, “internally displaced persons, refugees and local people aged between 8 and 24 engage in sporting activities together in a safe environment. In addition to promoting sporting activities, this nurtures respect, tolerance, discipline, empathy, fair play and self-confidence.”⁵¹ Cricket teams have also been established in the Shatila camp in Beirut by the charity Basmeh & Zeitooneh (with support from McKinsey & Company⁵² which provides the organisation with *pro bono* support for some of its programmes).⁵³ Volunteers from London-based charity Capital Kids Cricket

⁴⁷ GIZ (22 June 2016) *Refugee camps in northern Iraq*, available at: <https://www.giz.de/en/mediacenter/39213.html>.

⁴⁸ Right to Play (2019) *Promoting a healthy lifestyle together*, available at: <https://www.rightrightplay.com/en/our-work/promoting-a-healthy-lifestyle-together/>.

⁴⁹ Adidas Group (2018) *Community engagement: support for refugees*, available at: <https://www.adidas-group.com/en/sustainability/people/community-engagement/#/support-for-refugees/>.

⁵⁰ GIZ (2016) *Supporting refugees and host communities in the countries bordering Syria*, available at: <https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/41284.html>.

⁵¹ GIZ (2016) *Sport for development*, available at: <https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/43770.html>.

⁵² McKinsey & Co (3 January 2019) *A London partner on a mission to help Syrian refugees in Lebanon*, available at: <https://www.mckinsey.com/about-us/new-at-mckinsey-blog/a-london-partner-on-a-mission-to-help-syrian-refugees-in-lebanon>.

⁵³ The Telegraph (5 January 2019) *How cricket is building bridges for Syrian refugees*, available at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/cricket/2019/01/05/cricket-building-bridges-syrian-refugees/>.

provided cricket training in the camp,⁵⁴ and The Change Foundation has sought to enable young people to become sports leaders in refugee camps in Lebanon.⁵⁵

- 32 The Salhyeh and Nayfeh municipality (Jordan) is one of the 20 communities taking part in a USAID community engagement project. In this municipality, USAID notes that “Providing safe spaces for youth to play was one of Salhyeh & Nayfeh’s top priorities. With support from USAID, in 2015, the community partnered with the municipality, the Directorate of Youth, local civil society organizations, and citizens to establish a soccer field at the Al Sharafieh Boys’ School, which was selected for its central location accessible to all participants.”⁵⁶

Engagement through entertainment and arts

- 33 Initiatives that engaged young people outside Syria in entertainment and the arts include the International Rescue Committee’s (IRC) work in devising a programme with Sesame Street. The programme – Ahlan Simsim, which translates as ‘Welcome Sesame’ in Arabic – was established in 2018 for five years and addresses the ‘toxic stress’ experienced by children in region. It uses muppet characters from Sesame Street to “model inclusion and respect, and gender equity, and [to] provide engaging educational messages, always from a child’s perspective.” The programme comprises home visits and caregiving support to “engage families through storybooks and picture books, parent brochures, caregiver guides, toys, developmentally appropriate games, digital content, and parenting resources via mobile devices.”⁵⁷ One programme participant, who fled to Lebanon from Syria with her family, attended the scheme’s Safe Healing and Learning Space in Aarsal:

“It made me and my friends get to know each other and play together. I would like to come back to the center and spend more time having fun with them.”⁵⁸

- 34 RET – a humanitarian organisation that focuses on education initiatives for young people in areas of the world affected by crisis – established a Youth Ambassadors Group of 11 young people from a range of countries (including Lebanon, Syria, and Turkey). At the group’s first meeting, “the young participants were able to identify the main challenges they face in their communities”. The youth group led a project for other young people from host and refugee communities in Turkey, “using art,

⁵⁴ Capital Kids Cricket (2018) *Refugee cricket project*, available at: <https://www.capitalkidscricket.org.uk/cricket-in-refugee-camp/>.

⁵⁵ The Change Foundation (14 February 2018) *Empowering young sports leaders in refugee camps in Lebanon*, available at: <https://www.thechangefoundation.org.uk/empowering-young-sports-leaders-in-refugee-camps-in-lebanon/>.

⁵⁶ USAID (5 July 2017) *As Jordan host Syrian refugees, youth find security in recreation*, available at: <https://www.usaid.gov/results-data/success-stories/refuge-recreation>.

⁵⁷ MacArthur Foundation (2017) *Sesame workshop and International Rescue Committee awarded \$100 million for early childhood education of Syrian refugees*, available at: <https://www.macfound.org/press/press-releases/sesame-workshop-and-international-rescue-committee-awarded-100-million-early-childhood-education-syrian-refugees/>; and MacArthur Foundation (2018) *Ahlan Simsim: annual report executive summary 2018 - year one*, available at: https://www.sesameworkshop.org/sites/default/files/2019-07/ahlan_simsim_macarthur_annual_report_year_one.pdf.

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, at page 5.

music, and dance as a tool to disseminate a culture of peace, harmony, and promoting social cohesion.”⁵⁹ Online magazine Vice reports on an exhibition in Beirut – ‘Light against darkness’ – which was the culmination of a three-month workshop that focused on supporting children from Syria to “overcome the trauma of war through creative expression.” The workshop was organised jointly by the Norwegian Embassy in Beirut and Najda Now, a Syrian NGO. A representative of Najda Now told the magazine how sketching can contribute to children’s ability to express themselves: “We want everybody to see that children can overcome the war... If they don’t have the voice, they have the color for everyone to see what they have seen.”⁶⁰

35 Art and theatre were also modes of engagement for Search for Common Ground, an EU-funded initiative which sought to engage Lebanese young people and young Syrian refugees over the course of a year so that “trusting, empathetic and respectful relationships” were developed between the two groups, and – further – that they were enabled to “work collaboratively to implement peace building activities in their communities”. The development of these relationships was encouraged through art and theatre projects. For one of the theatre workshops, the young people worked with Laban – a Beirut theatre group – on role-playing and role reversals “as a way to relate to one another’s viewpoints and personal struggles”.⁶¹

36 Music was the focus of an event organised by Right to Play and the Silkroad Ensemble in Lebanon for young refugees from Syria and Palestine that formed the culmination of a one-year project called Music for Development. Music was composed and performed by Syrian and Palestinian young people who were living as refugees in Lebanon in partnership with professional musicians. The project aimed “to provide a vehicle for the youth to explore and express their feelings, learn critical life skills like confidence, collaboration and communication, and advocate for their rights.”⁶²

37 An interactive film – *Brothers across borders* – was developed by the Danish Red Cross (in partnership with the IFRC and 14 other national societies that aid Syrian refugees) in order to help young people (12-17-year-olds) in Europe “understand and empathise with the dangers and difficult choices faced by young Syrians and their families.” The film is based on the true stories of Syrian refugees in Turkey, and young people who interact with the film take on the role of a 21-year-old Syrian refugee searching for his brother. Young people are faced with a series of multiple-choice questions and decisions to make about the brothers’ situation. The project

⁵⁹ RET (2019) *Bridging the cultural gaps through music and dance. An initiative led by the youth to the young people of Turkey*, available at: <https://www.theret.org/bridging-the-cultural-gaps-through-music-and-dance-an-initiative-led-by-the-youth-to-the-young-people-of-turkey/>.

⁶⁰ Vice (27 March 2014) *How Syrian children are drawing and using art therapy to heal the trauma from war*, available at: https://www.vice.com/en_au/article/xd5wva/syrian-children-are-drawing-to-heal-the-trauma-from-war.

⁶¹ Search for Common Ground (2014) *Better together: a youth-led approach to peaceful coexistence*, available at: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/45499>; and CBC (3 November 2015) *Better together: bridging divides between Syrian and Lebanese youth through art*, available at: <https://www.cbc.ca/arts/interruptthisprogram/better-together-remie-abi-farrage-1.3296619>.

⁶² Right to Play (2019) *Right to Play and the Silkroad Ensemble* available at: <https://www.righttoplay.com/en/news/celebrating-the-power-of-music-right-to-play-and-the-silkroad-ensemble-team-up-to-empower-vulnerable-lebanese-and-refugee-youth-rise/>.

developers suggest that this means “they get to experience real-life situations rather than hearing about them through news and second-hand sources.” They note further that “we want to challenge the students to be curious, ask questions and reflect. It is our hope that the material will help increase understanding of people who are living through situations like this, as well as inspire action by the students to help and support fellow human beings.”⁶³

38 In Germany, the CDAC Network organised a radio drama writing project for Syrian refugees. The young people shared stories with each other and project facilitators and improvised 15-minute radio plays. The Network also set up another project – If Music Be the Food of Love – a World Food Programme-funded music workshop for Syrian and Jordanian young people living in Jordan. The young people wrote, composed, and performed songs about being a refugee.⁶⁴

39 Other initiatives that focused on young displaced people in Jordan include the EU-funded Qudra programme and its ‘Happy Walls, Happy Schools’ initiative which invited young people from Syria and Jordan to take part in a mural project where they jointly painted school walls (the benefits of the scheme are set out in paragraph [65](#)).⁶⁵

Engagement through technology

40 Several initiatives have used technology to engage with young people outside Syria. In Turkey, for example, Project Hope provides young people “with digital game-based education opportunities to improve Turkish language proficiency, executive functions, and coding skills while decreasing their sense of despair and increasing hope.”⁶⁶ As part of this project, young people were given access to Minecraft and asked to use the game to imagine their dream houses and schools, with the effect of “encouraging children to imagine a better future for themselves, even for a moment for the purposes of a video game”.⁶⁷ Virtual Exchange, an initiative from Syrian Youth Assembly supported by the European Union’s Erasmus+ programme, offers “a safe online community to participate in facilitated discussions, increasing intercultural awareness and building 21st Century skills through Virtual Exchange. The programme encourages and promotes intercultural dialogue, employability, and citizenship, strengthening the youth dimension of the

⁶³ IFRC (2019) *New interactive classroom tool and game teaches kids about Syrian refugee crisis*, available at: <https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/press-release/new-interactive-classroom-tool-game-teaches-kids-syrian-refugee-crisis/>; IFRC (2019) *Brothers across borders*, available at: <https://brothersacrossborders.com/en/about/>.

⁶⁴ CDAC Network (4 July 2017) *‘I have a scream I want the world to hear’*, available at: <http://www.cdacnetwork.org/i/20170704092144-r9bjm>; and The Jordan Times (15 October 2017) *Music becomes ‘food of love’ in live performance by Syrian and Jordanian children*, available at: <http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/music-becomes-food-love-live-performance-syrian-and-jordanian-children>.

⁶⁵ QUDRA (2017) *Happy walls, happy schools*, available at: <https://www.qudra-programme.org/en/news-events/articles/happy-walls-happy-schools/>.

⁶⁶ Futurity (7 June 2017) *Coding and Minecraft boost Syrian refugee kids*, available at: <https://www.futurity.org/computer-games-syrian-refugees-1452832/>.

⁶⁷ Sirin S, Plass JL, Homer BD *et al.* (2018) Digital game-based education for Syrian refugee children: Project Hope *Vulnerable Children and Youth Studies* **13(1)**: 7-18, at page 11.

EU neighbourhood policy.”⁶⁸ Three hundred young Syrians have taken part in the programme.

- 41 Technology was also at the heart of work by the Global Nomads Group, which organised for young Syrians and Jordanians living in Amman to connect with other young people in Los Angeles using virtual reality and videoconferences. The young people “learned firsthand about each other’s lives – and explored how they could take action to transform the challenges in their communities.” The young people from LA talked to the young people living in Amman about accessing healthy and affordable food, and the impact that this had on the US students’ health. Accounts of the initiative conclude:

“Curious and confused, the Syrian and Jordanian students shot their hands up in the air: Here, families have gardens – why don’t you have them? Why do you want fast food if you know it is unhealthy? Why can’t you move to a neighbourhood where there is better food? My family has survived because of their garden; why don’t you grow one? Now, six months later, View Park High School [LA] has a community garden.”

“We rarely give our young people the chance to take charge when they see a problem, or — if we do — to move beyond Facebook activism. We rarely take this initiative ourselves. But by connecting young people in different circumstances, in different parts of the world, GNG provides invaluable opportunities to gain perspective, to find similarities, and build the capacity of individuals to become changemakers. Through programs like Reimagine: Syria, we realize that Syrian refugees don’t just need help — they have so much help to give themselves.”⁶⁹

- 42 A final example of engagement through technology was identified in France, where UNICEF set up an animation project for French-speaking children to use software to develop an animation to tell the story of two Syrian boys affected by the war.⁷⁰

Skills-based engagement

- 43 Several skills-based engagement initiatives outside Syria were identified. For example, Mercy Corps established youth centres for Syrian refugees, including in Sidon, Lebanon, where young people were taught English and computer skills. For one young woman, the scheme gave her the opportunity of “connecting with a community of girls her age.” Mercy Corps also give this account of its work in a camp in Syria.

“Mercy Corps’ work allows them to believe it [that they have a voice, that their presence matters, and that even in the face of ongoing conflict, their future is still within sight]. In Jordan’s Al-Azraq camp, Syrian refugees play soccer, learn life skills, study IT, practice taekwondo and make crafts. In Turkey, they take classes in English, Turkish, guitar, calligraphy, painting

⁶⁸ Syrian Youth Assembly (2019) *Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange*, available at: <http://syrian-youth.org/programs/3>.

⁶⁹ Medium (19 January 2016) *How Syrian refugees transformed a South L.A. school - from 7,500 miles away*, available at: https://medium.com/@global_nomads/how-syrian-refugees-transformed-a-south-l-a-school-from-7-500-miles-away-4f89243bf64b#.7v31kynq2.

⁷⁰ UNICEF (2019) *Apprends à programmer et à coder pour relever le défi solidaire de l’UNICEF!*, available at: <https://my.UNICEF.fr/contenu/participe-lUNICEF-coding-challenge-0>.

and aerobics. They learn vocational skills like hairdressing and shaving. They develop self-confidence in a group and practice positive decision-making to help them plan for the future.”⁷¹

- 44 An EU programme focused on young people affected by the Syria and Iraq crises, and aimed to help them secure regular sources of income in addition to “developing tolerance between young people in refugee and local communities.”⁷² Other skills-based engagement was organised by Global Communities and the German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ) who worked together in Turkey (through a Turkish partner, and with the approval of the Turkish Government) to provide vocational training for Syrian refugees.⁷³ A displaced 15-year-old Syrian living in Gaziantep (Turkey) describes his volunteering work:

“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.”⁷⁴

- 45 In Turkey, displaced young people from Syria, and young members of local communities in Turkey were trained to take on roles as ‘volunteer cultural intermediaries’ who initiate social activities. In spring 2019, as part of the same initiative, “a dialogue activity was run for the first time, in which Syrian and Turkish young adults discussed how they envisage their lives together as a community.” One of the dialogue champions highlights her role on boosting the confidence of other refugees: “I want to encourage them to form new networks based on common interests... and to build the kind of future they would like to be a part of.”⁷⁵
- 46 Qudra sought to improve social stability in four host communities in Bekaa (Lebanon) through establishing four semi-permanent community centres “to prevent children[‘s] marginalisation through activities reflecting a positive engagement in their communities.” At these community centres, activities focus on development of life skills, community-based awareness sessions, and psychosocial support.⁷⁶ Also in Lebanon, World Vision used Child Friendly Spaces

⁷¹ Mercy Corps (1 March 2016) *Unlocking a future for Syria’s youth*, available at: <https://www.mercycorps.org/articles/syria/unlocking-future-syrias-youth>.

⁷² European Union (2016) *FURSA: project factsheet*, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/trustfund-syria-region/sites/tfsr/files/fursa_factsheet_-_sfcg_-_livelihoods_and_local_development_-_lebanon_and_iraq.pdf.

⁷³ Global Communities (2019) *Syria*, available at: <https://www.globalcommunities.org/syria>.

⁷⁴ Norwegian Refugee Council (2016) *A future in the balance*, available at: http://wos-education.org/uploads/reports/Final_youth_research_doc_-_April2016.pdf, at page 23.

⁷⁵ The young people were supported by GIZ, Turkish municipalities, NGOs, the German Olympic Sports Confederation, and the Goethe-Institut, in addition to volunteers. See: GIZ (2019) *Turkey: schools and sports are forging bonds between Syrians and local people*, available at: <https://www.giz.de/en/mediacenter/76847.html>.

⁷⁶ QUDRA (2017) *Lebanon*, available at: <https://www.qudra-programme.org/en/countries/lebanon/>. See also: GIZ (2016) *Supporting refugees and host communities in the countries bordering Syria*, available at: <https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/41284.html>.

“as a forum for collecting children’s feedback about the services they were receiving.”⁷⁷

47 UNICEF supported the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis (MADAD) to train 120 young people as researchers as part of a participatory action research initiative “where young people can open up to each other about their lives and aspirations.” The trained researchers then interview other marginalised young people “to find their biggest challenges.”⁷⁸ One of the researchers, Israa (a 20-year-old Syrian refugee in Jordan), gives the following account of her participation in the initiative:

“The training taught me how to identify people’s problems and ways that can help make our voices be heard... These young people have been teaching me a lot in return... [they] don’t want to be pitied, they want to have their rights respected and be empowered so that they can grow to their full potential.”⁷⁹

48 MADAD also funded Youth Resolve, a consortium of five organisations (CAFOD / Caritas, Generations for Peace, Islamic Relief Worldwide, Questscope, and World Vision) to build social cohesion across Jordan, Lebanon, and Iraq. The initiative aims to give young people “the opportunity to express their talent, creativity and energy in order to improve their environment and make an active contribution to the society.”⁸⁰

Working with women

49 Compared with the spread of examples of how young people were engaged outside Syria, far fewer examples of initiatives that specifically sought to engage women were identified. In 2014, Georgetown University’s Laboratory for Global Performance and Politics planned to host a production of *Syria: the Trojan women*, performed by women refugees who had fled Syria, “weaving their personal testimonies around Euripedes’ classic text.” However, the women’s US visa applications were not approved and Georgetown instead “presented a one-time event, which included high-quality recorded excerpts and behind-the-scenes documentary footage from the process; live discussion with the women (via Skype from Amman)[...]; and discussion with leading policy experts and artists about the political realities in the region and the role of art as a humanizing force.”⁸¹

⁷⁷ World Vision (2015) *Syria crisis response: three years on*, available at: https://www.worldvision.org/wp-content/uploads/Syria-Crisis-Response-3-years-on_Impact-Report.pdf, at page 14.

⁷⁸ Office of the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth (27 April 2017) *UNICEF advocate Ishmael Beah helps give a voice to young people affected by the conflict in Syria*, available at: <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/2017/04/unicef-advocate-ishmael-beah-helps-give-voice-young-people-affected-conflict-syria/>.

⁷⁹ *ibid.*

⁸⁰ Youth Resolve (2018) *Youth Resolve - News 01*, available at: <https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/Youth%20Resolve%20Regional%20Newsletter%20Oct%20update.pdf>. See also: Generations for Peace (27 March 2018) *EU funding set to tackle tensions in Syria crisis countries*, available at: <https://www.generationsforpeace.org/en/eu-funding-set-tackle-tensions-syria-crisis-countries/>.

⁸¹ Laboratory for Global Performance & Politics (2014) *Voices unheard: Syria - the Trojan women summit*, available at: <https://globallab.georgetown.edu/projects/voices-unheard/>.

50 Dima Alardah, a former Jordanian badminton champion, worked with the Norwegian Refugee Council as a sports trainer for women and girls living in Jordanian refugee camps, but notes that doing this is a challenge “because we are working with conservative people in a conservative context, so it’s not easy for women to engage.”⁸²

Working with the general community

51 Several examples were identified where community members in a wider sense (i.e., not specifically children or women) were engaged by organisations outside Syria. As with examples that focus on engaging young people, the engagement of community members in this general sense can be divided into sub-categories.

Skills-based engagement

52 Skills-based engagement identified includes an EU Leaders’ programme initiative that worked with displaced people to become economically self-reliant through supporting them to learn new skills and develop businesses.⁸³ Other skills support was provided by the Turkish Red Crescent Society which established 15 community centres across Turkey for Syrian refugees that provide information on “registration and services, protection-related prevention activities, psychosocial support, vocational training and livelihood activities, social and harmonisation activities, language courses and health and hygiene activities.”⁸⁴

53 Community Support Committees (CSCs) also provide skills training to encourage livelihood opportunities (e.g., smartphone maintenance or sewing, and psychosocial support in arts and sports such as photography, music, martial arts, or football). An example of a support centre created by CSCs is the Al Nuzha Community Support Centre in Amman. UNHCR notes that “The vision for the centre is moving from supporting refugees from a single nationality to include Jordanians and refugees of mixed nationalities. This is a powerful tool to promote peaceful coexistence between host communities and refugees, amongst refugees themselves, and reduce negative attitudes within a better protection environment for all.”⁸⁵

54 GIZ – a Germany-based development agency – has also supported the establishment of community centres for refugees and host communities in Turkey

⁸² Peace Insight (23 February 2016) *Jordanian champion to people’s champion: how one woman is using sport to build hope in the Syrian war*, available at:

<https://www.peaceinsight.org/blog/2016/02/jordanian-champion-to-peoples-champion-how-one-woman-is-using-sport-for-hope-in-the-syrian-war/>. See also: Amy Poehler’s Smart Girls (29 January 2016) *Meet Dima Ardeh: promoting peace through badminton in Jordan*, available at: <https://amysmartgirls.com/meet-dima-ardah-promoting-peace-through-badminton-in-jordan-a0039ad47fcf>.

⁸³ European Union (2016) *Leaders: project factsheet*, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/trustfund-syria-region/sites/tfsr/files/leaders_factsheet_-_drc_-_livelihoods_and_local_development_-_jordan_and_lebanon_1.pdf.

⁸⁴ Turkish Red Crescent Society (2018) *Community engagement and accountability (CEA) assessment report: Community Based Migration Programme*, available at: <https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2019/07/Community-Based-Migration-Programme-Turkish-Red-Crescent-Society-CEA-Assessment-Report.pdf>, at page 13.

⁸⁵ UNHCR (2019) *Jordan: community support committees (CSCs)*, available at: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/68305>.

since 2015⁸⁶ and in Northern Iraq where the organisation has built six community centres in refugee camps. The activities at these community centres are set out in a 2016 press release:

“[The community centres] offer legal advice for around 20,000 people in the camps. Many had no option but to flee without any of their personal documents, so they now need new copies. The community centres also offer psychosocial support to refugees, many of whom are severely traumatised, and run literacy classes for women. The centres are an important meeting point for around 200,000 people.”⁸⁷

Engagement through technology

55 At the Za’atari Camp, researchers from Penn State University sought to explore the use of IT to foster community engagement.⁸⁸ The use of social media apps have also been tried in the Za’atari refugee camp. The app – SpeakUp – allows users to create chatrooms and invite others to join anonymously. Once inside a chatroom, app users can comment on posts, respond to polls, or upvote or downvote other posts. Those who tested the app suggest that “co-located social media can be embedded in existing or future community building activities to increase the level of participation and sense of community by exchanging knowledge and increasing social interactions, especially for the voices unheard. Adding such an anonymous communication channel could potentially overcome power relation.”⁸⁹

56 UNHCR used WhatsApp to carry out a survey with Syrian refugees in Lebanon. The survey had two aims: to test whether using WhatsApp as a tool to enhance local engagement in the crisis response in Lebanon was feasible; and to better the understanding of UNHCR of “local conflict dynamics and the impact of assistance by collecting narrative data from both host community members and refugees.” Overall, the study indicated that respondents felt that WhatsApp was an easy way of communicating their needs and concerns to international organisations, particularly providing the researchers with rich narrative data from participants who tested the engagement prospects of the app.⁹⁰

Engagement through dialogue

57 Engaging through dialogue with community members affected by the Syrian crisis was a key approach for several organisations. For example, Die Johanniter – a voluntary humanitarian organisation based in Germany – used the ‘People First Impact Method (P-FIM)’ community engagement method to engage with Syrian

⁸⁶ GIZ (2018) *Community centres for social cohesion*, available at: https://www.giz.de/en/downloads/2018_06_CCP%20Factsheet_EN_Final.pdf.

⁸⁷ GIZ, (2016) *Northern Iraq: GIZ creates new prospects for people displaced by the ‘Islamic State’*, available at: <https://www.giz.de/en/press/36885.html>.

⁸⁸ Penn State News (2 March 2016) *Technology in exile*, available at: <https://news.psu.edu/story/395818/2016/03/02/research/technology-exile>.

⁸⁹ Xu Y, Holzer A, Maitland C *et al.* (2017) Community building with co-located social media: a field experiment with Syrian refugees *Proceedings of the Ninth International Conference on Information and Communication Technologies and Development*: 1-11.

⁹⁰ UNDP (2018) *Speak up via WhatsApp: understanding the life worlds of Syrian refugees and host communities in Lebanon*, available at: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/63370>.

refugee groups, among other community groups in Berlin. The method “allows communities to identify the important changes in their lives and what these are attributable to and reveals the wider dynamics within the life of a community.” Participants were given the opportunity “to speak openly about the important issues in their lives”, and Die Johanniter’s teams “were encouraged not to ask ‘what are your needs?’ or to ‘give examples’ to avoid leading the discussion. The community groups led the discussion.”⁹¹

- 58 An initiative set up by the German Government – the Civil Peace Service – also sought to engage various population groups in Lebanon (including Syrian refugees) through dialogue so that “civil society is better able to manage conflicts in a constructive and non-violent way.” As part of the initiative – which also operates in 43 other countries⁹² – events have been held with young people, including those who might become future religious leaders, represent political youth organisations, or who work as young media professionals.⁹³
- 59 The Listen Learn Act Project – a joint initiative between Save the Children, DanChurchAid, and Ground Truth Solutions – sought to engage communities who were the beneficiaries of aid projects. The observation underpinning the project is that “the humanitarian system itself lacks incentives for organisations to put in place effective feedback loops and manage their performance based on evidence provided by beneficiary feedback.” The project used a ‘Ground Truth’ methodology to work with communities displaced from Syria to Lebanon to gather “feedback on the aid that they receive and the organisations delivering it to them... in essence [to] listen, learn and act in a timely manner to the feedback from the affected populations.”⁹⁴ Opportunities were also created for communities to have structured dialogue on issues that concern them as part of the work of CSCs in Jordan.⁹⁵
- 60 Over 700 refugees and asylum seekers – including those from Syria – participated in an engagement exercise to inform the development of the Scottish Government’s 2018-22 refugee integration strategy. They were asked for their views on questions including refugee integration, changes desired, and refugee community contributions to those changes. The Scottish strategy also states that it “will ensure that further opportunities are created for refugees, asylum seekers and communities to engage during implementation. The British Red Cross will establish an advisory group of people with lived experience. This will complement existing refugee forums, supported by the Scottish Refugee Council.”⁹⁶

⁹¹ Die Johanniter (2016) “*Putting people first*”: *community engagement in humanitarian practice*, available at: https://www.johanniter.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Dokumente/JUH/Auslandshilfe/projektberichte/P160453_Brosch_JUH_AA_Putting_People_First_final.pdf, at page 10.

⁹² GIZ (1999) *Civil peace service*, available at: <https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/41095.html>.

⁹³ GIZ (2010) *Civil Peace Service: strengthening civil conflict transformation*, available at: <https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/31609.html>.

⁹⁴ Red Barnet (2016) *The listen learn act project*, available at: <https://redbarnet.dk/eu-fonde-og-ministerier/the-listen-learn-act-project/>.

⁹⁵ UNHCR (2019) *Jordan: community support committees (CSCs)*, available at: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/68305>.

⁹⁶ Scottish Government (2018) *New Scots refugee integration strategy*, available at: <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/strategy-plan/2018/01/new->

What benefits have been observed from the engagement of Syrian communities?

61 A wide spectrum of benefits has been observed following community engagement initiatives with Syrian communities.

Educational and developmental benefits

62 Young refugees from Syria observed the importance of educational opportunities offered by organisations' engagement work. A participant in Mercy Corps' initiative (see paragraph [43](#)) observed, "My brothers and sisters and I want to learn so we will be able to help rebuild Syria... I believe that I will return one day. But if I return now and I haven't finished my studies, I can do nothing."⁹⁷ It has also been noted that, in engaging young people, they are able "to develop self-confidence, to influence decisions at local and national level, and to contribute to addressing the socio-economic challenges in their communities."⁹⁸ Participants in a life skills training that took place inside Syria (organised by UNICEF) (see paragraph [27](#)) reported that "[the] course we took helped us a lot, especially when it came to communication and conflict resolution skills".⁹⁹

63 The Happy Walls project (see paragraph [27](#)) "kick-started a process of resuming ownership of public schools in vulnerable neighbourhoods and also training teachers and local artists to continue similar projects at other public schools in Jordan."¹⁰⁰ Improvements to skills were also noted by refugee and local women who took part in FGDs organised by the TRCS: "They inform [that] vocational courses such as sewing courses and [psychosocial support] consultation[s] have been particularly useful for them and their children. Such training courses have helped [the] local community to find livelihood[s] and produce income."¹⁰¹

"A nineteen-year-old attends art therapy programming at a child-friendly centre, where she treats programming as training for her dream profession, photojournalism, and participates in a project called Inside Za`tari, interviewing and taking pictures of children around the camp to be featured on Instagram. She proudly stated that her photos had won a prize during an art exhibition in the camp. One of her peers has his photographs of Za`tari

scots-refugee-integration-strategy-2018-2022/documents/00530097-pdf/00530097-pdf/govscot%3Adocument/00530097.pdf, at page 12.

⁹⁷ Mercy Corps (1 March 2016) *Unlocking a future for Syria's youth*, available at: <https://www.mercycorps.org/articles/syria/unlocking-future-syrias-youth>.

⁹⁸ OCHA and UNICEF (2016) *Reaching adolescents and youth inside Syria: 2016 HRP mapping report*, available at: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/hrp_adol_youth_mapping_report_oct_20_och_a_v2.pdf, at page 14.

⁹⁹ UNICEF (7 April 2019) *Football for change: Israa and Afraa's story from Hama, Syria*, available at: <https://www.unicef.org/mena/stories/football-change-israa-and-afraas-story-hama-syria>.

¹⁰⁰ QUDRA (2017) *Happy walls, happy schools*, available at: <https://www.qudra-programme.org/en/news-events/articles/happy-walls-happy-schools/>.

¹⁰¹ Turkish Red Crescent Society (2018) *Community engagement and accountability (CEA) assessment report: Community Based Migration Programme*, available at: <https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2019/07/Community-Based-Migration-Programme-Turkish-Red-Crescent-Society-CEA-Assessment-Report.pdf>, at page 28.

credited by well-known newspapers, and other members of the group have established a magazine that runs stories on the camp for residents.”¹⁰²

64 A developed sense of agency has also been highlighted by participants in the same initiative.

“The act of creating a daily routine and regulating one’s activities forms in children a sense of independence that is crucial to normative youth development. In displacement, humanitarianism treats children as dependent subjects, but at the same time, Za`tari’s NGO programming instils in children a sense that they can exercise agency as independent beings in the camp.”¹⁰³

Building relationships and community cohesion

65 Fostering relationships between displaced Syrians and members of their host countries was noted as a key benefit of the Happy Walls, Happy Schools project. An assessment of the project notes that while Syrian and Jordanian children study at the same schools, there was “little to no interaction. This is due to the influx of Syrian refugees from neighbouring countries and regions that led to public schools in Jordan to become overcrowded.” The scheme, it is suggested, “provided common platforms for students to come together for achieving a shared goal and [to] discuss the future they would like to see in their schools.”¹⁰⁴

“Turkish women bring their children to various social events organised by the centre and meet refugee families. Such events and positive interaction among children have reduced bullying in the community. FGD reports show relationship[s] among refugee and local children is better compared to adults. Local children are interested to organise events for refugees and are willing to learn about their culture and ways of life.”¹⁰⁵

“the space and time provided by such NGO centres allow children to negotiate relationships and form individual identities independent of parental assistance.”¹⁰⁶

66 The RET youth music, dance, and arts project run by young people (see paragraph [34](#)) also, it is suggested, created “a sense of belonging, improving social cohesion, and spreading cultural cohesiveness.”¹⁰⁷ An aid worker for Save the Children’s child-friendly centres also reports children’s positive experiences of the centres: “Every time I see children dancing or singing or laughing or playing at our centres,

¹⁰² Gatter MN (2017) Restoring childhood: humanitarianism and growing up Syrian in Za`tari refugee camp *Contemporary Levant* **2(2)**: 89-102.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ QUDRA (2017) *Happy walls, happy schools*, available at: <https://www.qudra-programme.org/en/news-events/articles/happy-walls-happy-schools/>.

¹⁰⁵ Turkish Red Crescent Society (2018) *Community engagement and accountability (CEA) assessment report: Community Based Migration Programme*, available at: <https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2019/07/Community-Based-Migration-Programme-Turkish-Red-Crescent-Society-CEA-Assessment-Report.pdf>, at page 47.

¹⁰⁶ Gatter MN (2017) Restoring childhood: humanitarianism and growing up Syrian in Za`tari refugee camp *Contemporary Levant* **2(2)**: 89-102.

¹⁰⁷ RET (2019) *Bridging the cultural gaps through music and dance. An initiative led by the youth to the young people of Turkey*, available at: <https://www.theret.org/bridging-the-cultural-gaps-through-music-and-dance-an-initiative-led-by-the-youth-to-the-young-people-of-turkey/>.

I see that they are building positive childhood memories. That's why when I am taking pictures, I don't like telling kids to look sad because if they are happy, let them be happy!"¹⁰⁸ The same paper notes that "many children stated that they met their best friends at the centre they attend, where they learn to respectfully socialize with peers and to work through disagreements in a nonviolent manner. Attendance at the centres translates into expanded social circles for children who might otherwise interact only with family in the camp, replicating a feeling of social security many children feel they have lost since leaving behind friendships and other important social relationships in Syria."¹⁰⁹

An opportunity to have a voice

67 Having the chance to be heard was a benefit identified by participants in several engagement projects. Interviewees living in Ma-aret al Numan (see paragraph [25](#)), for example, praised the participatory approach that their Local Administration Council (LAC) made available to them. In an assessment of the LAC's activities, it is observed that participants "perceive the meetings as a much needed possibility for them to express their views and for the LAC to arrange their priorities upon those views."¹¹⁰ A related point was identified in boys who attended a child-friendly centre and sat around in a circle to discuss various emotions and identify ways to cope with them. "The volunteers passed balloons around to each attendee to blow them up with air and then pop them to demonstrate how to alleviate negative feelings."¹¹¹

68 Die Johanniter suggests that its engagement work with Syrian refugees in Berlin (see paragraph [57](#)) and the groups' discussions led participants sharing "important insights and information that would otherwise remain hidden". It provides the example of refugees sharing information on how they had been exploited in trying to get a flat by 'the mafia'. The refugees "were asked to pay a bribe of €5,000 just to get a flat, not even to pay rent."¹¹² Research on the potential of WhatsApp to be used to engage refugee and local population (see paragraph [56](#)) also suggests that if the initiative is scaled up, it would give users more of a voice, "particularly vulnerable groups who struggle with literacy and may not feel comfortable to reply via text message. By providing the option to send voice messages, the WhatsApp tool empowers people to express their needs, concerns, and fears in their own words."¹¹³

¹⁰⁸ Gatter MN (2017) Restoring childhood: humanitarianism and growing up Syrian in Za`tari refugee camp *Contemporary Levant* **2(2)**: 89-102.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Swiss Peace Foundation (2017) *The experience of Local Administrative Councils in opposition-held Syria*, available at: https://www.swisspeace.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf/Mediation/WOTRO_Report_The_Experience_of_Local_Administrative_Councils_in_Oppositionheld_Syria.pdf, at page 17.

¹¹¹ Gatter MN (2017) Restoring childhood: humanitarianism and growing up Syrian in Za`tari refugee camp *Contemporary Levant* **2(2)**: 89-102.

¹¹² Die Johanniter (2016) "Putting people first": *community engagement in humanitarian practice*, available at: https://www.johanniter.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Dokumente/JUH/Auslandshilfe/projektberichte/P160453_Brosch_JUH_AA_Putting_People_First_final.pdf, at page 10.

¹¹³ UNDP (2018) *Speak up via WhatsApp: understanding the life worlds of Syrian refugees and host communities in Lebanon*, available at: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/63370>.

Acceptance and a sense of belonging

69 Some community members indicate a broad sense of belonging and acceptance as a result of their participation. A 16-year-old participant in the Youth Resolve project (see paragraph 48) states, for example, “At the beginning of the Youth Resolve programme I was afraid that some people will not accept me because of my nationality but actually the programme helped me to engage with Lebanese and Palestinian youth which I would never think that I will be even talking to them one day”.¹¹⁴ A 60-year-old woman who uses GIZ’s community centre in Kırıkhan, Turkey (see paragraph 54) also indicated that, given her former job as a teacher in Syria, “she now wants to teach Arabic classes at the Community Centre, building new hopes for herself and her family: “I started to feel like I belong in this neighbourhood.””¹¹⁵ It has also been reported that child-friendly spaces in refugee camps “provide havens, physically bounded by fencing and manned by a security guard, in which children can engage in appropriate interactions with other children, aid workers, and the material environment.”¹¹⁶ Children’s participatory schemes have also been highlighted as key to children enjoying a sense of regulatory and routine. “imitating what pupils would expect from a school administration.” Such a sense of regulation in an environment of displacement “grants children not only a sense of security, but also predictability and control over their day-to-day lives.”¹¹⁷

What problems have arisen as a result of community engagement initiatives in Syria?

70 Alongside the benefits, a range of problems that occurred as a result of community engagement initiatives were identified – both when they were being undertaken, and after they had taken place.

Security and fear

71 Security issues were reported by some of the initiatives identified by this review. For example, bombardments, attacks, and the limitations of accessing some locations that are under the control of armed groups make it difficult for engagement programmes to be launched.¹¹⁸ Noting that there are limitations to public consultation meetings in opposition-led areas of Syria, one report also notes that LACs “sometimes face difficulties in reaching out due to the security situation.

¹¹⁴ Youth Resolve (2018) *Youth Resolve - News 01*, available at: <https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/Youth%20Resolve%20Regional%20Newsletter%20Oct%20update.pdf>.

¹¹⁵ GIZ (2018) *Community centres for social cohesion*, available at: https://www.giz.de/en/downloads/2018_06_CCP%20Factsheet_EN_Final.pdf.

¹¹⁶ Gatter MN (2017) Restoring childhood: humanitarianism and growing up Syrian in Za`tari refugee camp *Contemporary Levant* **2(2)**: 89-102.

¹¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹¹⁸ UN OCHA and UNICEF (2016) *Reaching adolescents and youth inside Syria: 2016 HRP mapping report*, available at: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/hrp_adol_youth_mapping_report_oct_20_ocha_v2.pdf.

Large town hall meetings or other gatherings in the mosque are not often possible due to the security situation.”¹¹⁹

72 In a related observation, displaced young people indicated their fear of participating in civic engagement. The following excerpt from a report by the Norwegian Refugee Council, where young people discuss the lack of social or civic engagement, illustrates this point.

“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.”¹²⁰

Varying levels of engagement: some voices ‘heard more’

73 Some assessments of engagement initiatives indicate that some voices may be heard more than others due to varying levels of engagement. Opposition-held areas of Syria have been observed, for example, to differ in the extent to which they approach the inclusion of citizens in decision-making and priority setting. In some opposition-led areas, public consultation exercises are lacking: instead, “powerful elites or specialists are more often consulted in order to receive their opinions and considerations on a specific activity... Direct beneficiaries were only occasionally consulted before the projects began.”¹²¹

74 Despite the range of initiatives for young people identified by this review, young people have also indicated they feel disengaged. Research with displaced and local community young people living in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, and the Kurdish Region of Iraq, found that most young people who responded to their survey “felt that elders were the ones who made the decisions”. The research also found that “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.”¹²² As part of a USAID assessment, young people also reported “a weaker sense of belonging than other age groups, and perceived lower levels of trust and respect within their communities”. USAID suggests that this “may be indicative of limited engagement or empowerment.”¹²³

75 Logistical issues may also have a role to play in levels of engagement. For example, community-centre based activities may also be difficult to attend in the

¹¹⁹ Swiss Peace Foundation (2017) *The experience of Local Administrative Councils in opposition-held Syria*, available at: https://www.swisspeace.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf/Mediation/WOTRO_Report_The_Experience_of_Local_Administrative_Councils_in_Oppositionheld_Syria.pdf, at page 17.

¹²⁰ Norwegian Refugee Council (2016) *A future in the balance*, available at: http://wos-education.org/uploads/reports/Final_youth_research_doc_-_April2016.pdf, at page 23.

¹²¹ *ibid.*

¹²² Norwegian Refugee Council (2016) *A future in the balance*, available at: http://wos-education.org/uploads/reports/Final_youth_research_doc_-_April2016.pdf, at page 23.

¹²³ USAID (2016) *USAID community engagement project: baseline assessment*, available at: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/43323>, at page 4.

daytime as refugees are often at work.¹²⁴ Some invitations to participate in engagement initiatives may also not be something that community members want to accept.

“citizens are not always responsive to invitations. In some interviews, it was report that, even if the LAC convenes meetings and holds public gatherings in order to get a sense of the demands of the city’s residents and to take them into account when planning for the future, the turnout is generally low. Most citizens are either not interested or busy earning a living.”¹²⁵

Logistical issues

76 More general logistical issues have also been observed as a problem for community engagement initiatives inside and outside Syria. For example, in the Za’atari camp, researchers observe barriers raised through the lack of consistent cellular networks available. They note: “while refugees can access the internet through community centers, the connections are often affected by power shortages. Despite these challenges, attempts are currently being made to foster community building activities through information technologies.”¹²⁶ The Turkish Red Crescent Society also notes that “there is not a formal community structure among the refugees in most of the areas to take collective decisions. This is largely due to their scattered living patterns.”¹²⁷

Negative perceptions of refugees

77 An assessment of community engagement as part of the Turkish Red Crescent’s community-based migration programme suggest that “rumours against refugees are often generalized by the locals creating negative perception. Although such negative perceptions among local communities are changing gradually as they interact with refugees at the centre, both local and refugee communities stress the need for developing a systematic rumour tracking mechanism to provide communities with true information.”¹²⁸

¹²⁴ Turkish Red Crescent Society (2018) *Community engagement and accountability (CEA) assessment report: Community Based Migration Programme*, available at: <https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2019/07/Community-Based-Migration-Programme-Turkish-Red-Crescent-Society-CEA-Assessment-Report.pdf>, at page 29. This is noted as a particular issue among male refugees.

¹²⁵ Swiss Peace Foundation (2017) *The experience of Local Administrative Councils in opposition-held Syria*, available at: https://www.swisspeace.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf/Mediation/WOTRO_Report_The_Experience_of_Local_Administrative_Councils_in_Oppositionheld_Syria.pdf.

¹²⁶ Xu Y, Holzer A, Maitland C *et al.* (2017) Community building with co-located social media: a field experiment with Syrian refugees *Proceedings of the Ninth International Conference on Information and Communication Technologies and Development*: 1-11.

¹²⁷ Turkish Red Crescent Society (2018) *Community engagement and accountability (CEA) assessment report: Community Based Migration Programme*, available at: <https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2019/07/Community-Based-Migration-Programme-Turkish-Red-Crescent-Society-CEA-Assessment-Report.pdf>, at page 5.

¹²⁸ Turkish Red Crescent Society (2018) *Community engagement and accountability (CEA) assessment report: Community Based Migration Programme*, available at: <https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2019/07/Community-Based-Migration-Programme-Turkish-Red-Crescent-Society-CEA-Assessment-Report.pdf>, at page 5.

78 Conflicts between refugees and local communities also occur: the Turkish Red Crescent Society (TRCS) reports that 12% of respondents to its survey (see paragraph 82) noted that there had been several conflicts between host community members and refugees in the three months previous, “which largely relate to cultural differences”.¹²⁹

Lack of support

79 A report from the Norwegian Refugee Council suggests that while displaced young people had creative ideas “and were filled with the desire to help those less fortunate than themselves”, one of the main obstacles they faced “was the lack of support they received to translate their ideas into practice.” This observation is highlighted further by the account of a 15-year-old refugee living in Lebanon:

“If I had the chance I would like to take part in activities which bring Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian youth together... 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.”¹³⁰

80 A male refugee living in Zaatari camp (Jordan) similarly observes:

“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.”¹³¹

Exclusion of women, girls, and older people?

81 Several sources reported that women, girls, and older people were excluded from some engagement initiatives. However, the picture presented here is somewhat mixed.

82 Suggestions that women and girls have been excluded from engagement initiatives includes an observation that the participation of girls in focus group discussions in Ankara was “limited due to cultural issues.” The survey found that the level of participation of refugee children in TRCS’s engagement activities according to gender was unequal: 13% of girls took part in activities, compared with 20% of boys.¹³² However, for use of TRCS’s community centres among adult refugees, more women than men use the facility (80% vs 71%).

83 The baseline assessment undertaken by USAID of communities it planned to involve in its engagement activities indicates that “women perceived municipalities

¹²⁹ *ibid.*

¹³⁰ Norwegian Refugee Council (2016) *A future in the balance*, available at: http://wos-education.org/uploads/reports/Final_youth_research_doc_-_April2016.pdf, at page 24.

¹³¹ *ibid.*, at page 24.

¹³² Turkish Red Crescent Society (2018) *Community engagement and accountability (CEA) assessment report: Community Based Migration Programme*, available at: <https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2019/07/Community-Based-Migration-Programme-Turkish-Red-Crescent-Society-CEA-Assessment-Report.pdf>, at page 5.

to be less responsive to their needs and were particularly dissatisfied with public leisure spaces, suggesting limited space for effective formal or vertical engagement, as well as informal interaction with other community members.”¹³³

84 However, “while respecting societal norms for gender segregation, but also seeking to increase gender equality, specific days were allocated for girls” as part of a USAID-supported football project (see paragraph [30](#)).¹³⁴ A participant in UNICEF’s programme that supported the establishment of football training (see paragraph [22](#)), noted: “In our community, it is not common for girls to play football. Our behaviour is constrained by social norms. But I’m bold by nature and I like trying new things, so I decided to join!”¹³⁵ In addition, the Sport for Development project (see paragraph [31](#)) is training 500 sports teachers / coaches in methods to ensure the promotion of psychosocial support, violence prevention, and conflict transformation. Half of the participants in this initiative are female.¹³⁶ Girls have also given accounts of their participation in girls-only football games as part of an anthropological exploration of the experiences of growing up in the Za’atari refugee camp.¹³⁷

85 A paper published by Oxfam which reports the views of refugees living in the Za’atari camp highlighted concerns that “organisations request women to be proactive and engage with them, yet the same organisations do not invest in cultural prerequisites or trust building measures, such as formal introductions, that preclude women from speaking to “unknown staff.”¹³⁸

86 Among older Syrian refugees living in Jordan, only 3% indicated feeling that they were fully active members of their community. A report from HelpAge International setting out a profile of older people in Jordan notes that “reasons for older people being excluded from community roles included that they were perceived as being too sick, to be from a different generation, or simply had no right to be involved.”¹³⁹

Concluding remarks

87 This review will contribute to the Nuffield Council’s report on research in global health emergencies, and particularly the report’s sections on community agency and community experience following natural and human-made disasters. The report will be published in early 2020.

¹³³ USAID (2016) *USAID community engagement project: baseline assessment*, available at: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/43323>, at page 4.

¹³⁴ USAID (5 July 2017) *As Jordan hosts Syrian refugees, youth find security in recreation*, available at: <https://www.usaid.gov/results-data/success-stories/refuge-recreation>.

¹³⁵ UNICEF (7 April 2019) *Football for change: Israa and Afraa’s story from Hama, Syria*, available at: <https://www.unicef.org/mena/stories/football-change-israa-and-afraas-story-hama-syria>.

¹³⁶ GIZ (2016) *Sport for development*, available at: <https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/43770.html>.

¹³⁷ Gatter MN (2017) Restoring childhood: humanitarianism and growing up Syrian in Za’ tari refugee camp *Contemporary Levant* **2(2)**: 89-102.

¹³⁸ Oxfam GB (2014) *Refugee perceptions study: Za'atari camp and host communities in Jordan*, available at: <http://www.cdacnetwork.org/contentAsset/raw-data/41ed4a54-388b-4605-8287-7614bdd5221c/attachedFile>.

¹³⁹ HelpAge International (2018) *A profile of older people in Jordan*, available at: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/69610>, pp4-5.

