



# ADVANCING ADOLESCENCE

getting Syrian refugee and host-community adolescents back on track





*Graffiti reads “Youth” and artist’s shirt reads “One Love”*

Matt Streng/Mercy Corps

## INTRODUCTION

The conflict in Syria and exodus of Syrians to neighboring countries is now in its fourth year. The length of this conflict tragically reminds us of the lives lost, as well as Syrian refugee and host-community children and adolescents who lack education opportunities, face serious social tensions and suffer from unfulfilled potential and productivity. A recent study by the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) showed that Syrian refugee children and adolescents are experiencing a variety of hardships including isolation and insecurity, psychological distress, extended disruptions of education and exploitative employment.<sup>1</sup> The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) recently presented a call to action to the global community stating that in order to avoid losing an entire generation of educated, engaged and productive Syrian and host-community children and adolescents, existing humanitarian efforts must be coupled with an increased focus on developing future-oriented strategies that prepare children and adolescents with the education and skills they need to help rebuild their lives and societies.<sup>2</sup> UNICEF reports that although Syrian children demonstrate amazing resilience, another year of conflict and suffering is likely to keep them from recovering their stolen potential and rebuilding their futures.<sup>3</sup>

Mercy Corps believes that in addition to children, adolescents aged 12-18 represent a critical cohort who warrants particular attention and investment. In order to move societies out of extreme poverty – an estimated 170,000 local people have been pushed into poverty in Lebanon as a result of the Syria conflict<sup>4</sup> – we must marshal the full potential of societies, including adolescents and youth.<sup>5</sup> Out of 1.1 million Syrian refugee children under age 18 living outside of Syria, nearly one in every three are between

1 The Future of Syria: Refugee Children in Crisis. UNHCR, November 2013.

2 Lost Generation – A Strategy for Children Affected by the Syria Crisis. UNICEF, October 2013.

3 Under Siege: The Devastating Impact on Children of Three Years of Conflict in Syria. UNICEF, March 2014.  
[http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Under\\_Siege\\_March\\_2014.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Under_Siege_March_2014.pdf)

4 Lebanon: Economic and Social Impact of the Syria Crisis, World Bank, September 2013.

5 “Ending extreme poverty in fragile contexts.” Getting to Zero: A USAID Discussion Series. USAID, January, 2014.

the ages of 12 and 18.<sup>6</sup> Adolescents are largely missing out on psychosocial support, education and skills building programs as they are increasingly either forced to stay indoors for their safety – the case for many adolescent girls - or to work to help provide income for the family – the case for many adolescent boys. Adolescents will also be first among the generation of children affected by the Syrian conflict to be called upon to help mend torn social fabric and rebuild broken economies.

In an effort to fill gaps in action-oriented research on Syrian adolescents and their host-community peers, Mercy Corps conducted 16 focus group discussions in Jordan and Lebanon with over 150 adolescents in January and February 2014. Based on those discussions, this report details findings and presents recommendations that should guide investments in future-oriented strategies to facilitate and improve adolescent well-being and critical development skills for adolescents.

### *Youssef's Tree*

During program design activities and discussions with host-community and Syrian adolescents in Jordan and Lebanon, participants created photography and art as a method for discussing their daily lives and plans for the future. One adolescent, a 15 year-old male from Lebanon, drew a tree and described it as follows:

**“It’s a very small drawing but it has big meaning. This tree represents me. The wind, the lines to the right of the tree, represent the things that keep me from who I want to become in life. While this wind can blow the leaves from my branches, you see them here falling to the ground, it cannot knock me over. The soil and the roots of the tree keep me from being knocked over.”**

Youssef’s tree serves as a powerful analogy that guides how Mercy Corps approaches programming for adolescents. It is helpful, as Youssef’s tree and quote represent, to approach program design by detailing the “wind,” what we refer to as the barriers that impede adolescents from developing into peaceful and productive young adults, as well as the “soil and roots,” what we refer to as the enablers that promote adolescent development.



Male adolescent, Lebanon

6 The Future of Syria: Refugee Children in Crisis. UNHCR, November 2013.

# RECLAIMING ADOLESCENCE

More than one million Syrian children who are under the age of 18 and are living outside Syria continue to miss educational and life milestones. Among these children, 68 percent are not attending school.<sup>7</sup> Inside Syria, more than half of school-age children (2.8 million) are out of school<sup>8</sup> and three years of conflict have eroded 35 years of development.<sup>9</sup> Missing these milestones will continue to deny Syria and the region of the productive, wage-earning youth and adults it needs to stabilize tensions and drive future social and economic development for decades to come.

Imagine what the lives of these children and adolescents would look like today if they had not been derailed when fighting started in Syria in March 2011. Bayan, who was age 12 when she fled Damascus for Jordan, would be completing lower secondary school and preparing for her ninth grade examination to enter upper secondary school. Mohammed, who was 15 years old when he fled Homs and resettled in Lebanon, would be completing his 12th grade examination and preparing to enter university or the workforce. Instead Bayan and Mohammed, along with nearly 300,000 other Syrian refugee adolescents, find themselves in neighboring countries where their futures are held hostage by the conflict in Syria and an insufficient response from international and host countries. As international actors and host communities anticipate the next three years, adolescents must be supported to reclaim the milestones they have missed and ensure they don't miss more. If adolescents don't reach these critical developmental milestones, it's hard to imagine a future where Syria and neighboring countries will build sustainable futures.

## Participant Selection and Methodology

From 23 January to 6 February, 2014, Mercy Corps convened 16 focused discussions with more than 150 Syrian and host-community adolescents between the ages of 14-18,<sup>10</sup> who were segmented by sex, nationality and place of residence. Focused discussions were conducted in two locations in Lebanon (Saida and Baalbeck) and two locations in Jordan (Mafraq and Hartha). Saida is an urban area on the coast 30 minutes south of the capital city, while Baalbeck is a rural area next to the Syrian border approximately 1.5 hours from the capital city. Both are heavily politicized areas. Mafraq is an urban area with the highest ratio of Syrian refugees to host population, and Hartha is a rural area with a lower number of Syrian refugees who are more geographically dispersed. Half of the participants were female and half were male.

In order to expand on existing research and literature, which has predominantly focused on either Syrian adolescents or host-community adolescents, half of the participants were Lebanese or Jordanian.

Participants were identified by outreach workers affiliated with community-based organizations (CBOs) and were included on the basis of not having directly engaged in previous child protection, psychosocial support or youth development programming in hopes of informing strategies to better engage hard-to-

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7 Lost Generation – A Strategy for Children Affected by the Syria Crisis. UNICEF, October 2013.

8 Syria Crisis: Education Interrupted. UNICEF, World Vision, UNHCR, Save the Children, December 2013.

9 The Syrian Catastrophe: Socioeconomic Monitoring Report First Quarterly Report. UNRWA, 2013. <http://www.refworld.org/docid/520dfa414.html>

10 This five-year age segment of adolescence was chosen to allow for age-appropriate program recommendations and in recognition that older adolescents are more likely not to be participating in current programming for the reasons stated above.

reach adolescents. Education status was not documented for participants; however, discussions revealed that approximately half were in school and the other half were out of school, with variation across locations, sex and nationality segments. Overall, Syrian participants were more likely to be out of school than their host-community counterparts, and Jordanians were more likely to be in school compared to Lebanese adolescents

## Number and Profile of Adolescents Interviewed by Mercy Corps

JORDAN							
Mafraq (Urban)				Hartha (Rural)			
FEMALE		MALE		FEMALE		MALE	
Jordanian ~10	Syrian ~10	Jordanian ~10	Syrian ~10	Jordanian ~10	Syrian ~10	Jordanian ~10	Syrian ~10
LEBANON							
Saida (Urban)				Baalbeck (Rural)			
FEMALE		MALE		FEMALE		MALE	
Lebanese ~10	Syrian ~10	Lebanese ~10	Syrian ~10	Lebanese ~10	Syrian ~10	Lebanese ~10	Syrian ~10

Mercy Corps' research methodology was adapted from multiple methods, specifically Photovoice,<sup>11</sup> IDEO's Human-Center Design Field Guide Aspirations Exercise<sup>12</sup> and Technology of Participation (TOPs) Focused Conversation using ORID questioning.<sup>13</sup> Instead of adhering to traditional quantitative and qualitative methods, a different approach was taken to increase engagement and improve the quality of participation. Adolescents were provided with digital cameras and art supplies and asked a series of guiding questions<sup>14</sup> related to their current situation and future goals to guide their photography and artwork. Adolescents then selected photographs and artwork to share with the group to generate discussion.

These discussions were facilitated and documented by young adults (ages 25-35) of the same sex as the adolescents. Facilitators asked adolescents a series of probing questions to describe, reflect on and interpret their photographs and drawings.<sup>15</sup> Focused discussions were complemented by in-depth interviews and program design workshops to gather additional insight into the design of program activities. In-depth interviews were conducted with key informants including Government of Lebanon Social Development Committee staff, an alternative learning school administrator in Lebanon and youth outreach workers in Jordan. Finally, a design workshop elicited sample activities from Mercy Corps Lebanon and

11 Wang, C. and M. Burris. Photovoice: Concept, Methodology, and Use for Participatory Needs Assessment. *Health Education and Behavior*. 24 (3): 369-387, 1997.

12 IDEO, Human-Centered Design (HCD) Field Guide, Second Edition.

13 Objective, Reflective, Interpretive and Decisional (ORID). More information at: [http://ispimi.org/images/meeting/082212/focused\\_conversation\\_univ\\_minnesota.pdf](http://ispimi.org/images/meeting/082212/focused_conversation_univ_minnesota.pdf)

14 Guiding Questions included: What do you like about your current situation? What don't you like about your current situation? What would you like to be doing in three to six months?

15 Probing questions included: Please describe your photograph/drawing. Why did you take/make this photograph/drawing? How does this photograph/drawing make you feel? In three to six months time, what would you like to see changed about this photograph/drawing? How would you go about making that change and who/what might help you make that change?

Jordan staff before and after the field-based work to validate or refine initial program design concepts and activities for further development.

In addition to the photography, art and focused discussions, Mercy Corps organized recreational activities for participants to join. In Lebanon and Jordan, both refugee and host-community boys and girls participated in physically active games such as soccer, volleyball, ping-pong, basketball and dodge ball.

## Key Findings from Adolescent Discussions<sup>16</sup>

During the focused discussions, adolescents described how their daily lives and future goals present a daunting uphill battle at best, or in the worst cases, represent detached, distant memories that fade with each idle day. Fortunately, many adolescents spoke with determined resilience and described strategies that would help them overcome the stress of the past, jump-start their learning and community involvement in the present and reclaim their role as co-creators of a more hopeful future. The thematic findings from these discussions are presented below and serve to inform the recommendations later in the report.



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<sup>16</sup> Note: findings are only representative of the adolescents that participated in focus group discussions and, while useful for identifying trends across and within groups to inform program design, care should be taken not to interpret findings as representative of all Syrian, Jordanian and Lebanese adolescents.

## BARRIERS TO DEVELOPMENT: Extreme Isolation, Hopelessness and Humiliation and Social Tension

**Girls' Physical and Social Isolation:** Focus group discussions revealed staggering physical and social isolation experienced by almost all adolescent girls and Syrian girls in particular. Girls were acutely aware of how their isolation limited their social and intellectual growth, particularly in Hartha (Jordan), Saida and Baalbeck (Lebanon). One Syrian girl eloquently revealed her situation when describing her photograph of a painted flower by saying, "A flower is like a person, affected by their environment, so you have to strengthen yourself, even if you as a person feel abandoned." Accounts of isolation were more apparent and stark in Lebanon with one Syrian girl in Saida describing her collective shelter<sup>17</sup> as "a prison" where she lives under "the stifling control of her parents." This finding is consistent with other findings that have shown that security, home chores and lack of knowledge of available activities result in up to 29 percent of children and adolescents leaving their homes once or less a week.<sup>18</sup>

An apparent positive deviance from the isolation theme emerged among girls originally from urban areas in Syria and currently residing in urban areas in Jordan. These girls did not share the same stories of stifling isolation heard in rural Jordan and Lebanon since they were more likely to be in school than other female participants. However, even among this apparently more socially mobile group, girls expressed an intense desire to have a shared space – a consistent request from all adolescent girls – where they could meet and exchange experiences with other girls. One of these girls stated that, "My picture is of five of us with our fingers put together in a star. Together, we are like a star, and this picture is for me to always remember them, and how my love has grown for them. These girls have become more valuable to me than sisters."



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*"A flower is like a person, affected by their environment..."*

— Female adolescent, Jordan

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*Together, we are like a star, and this picture is for me to always remember them, and how my love has grown for them. These girls have become more valuable to me than sisters.*

— Female adolescent, Jordan

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<sup>17</sup> Collective shelter is defined as a building that houses less than six families while a collective center houses more than six families, and very often these are abandoned or unfinished buildings.

<sup>18</sup> The Future of Syria: Refugee Children in Crisis. Stuck Indoors. UNHCR, November 2013.

Girl-only spaces, also known as safe spaces, allow girls to build social capital and to discuss intimate issues such as life changes, emotions and puberty, and even more sensitive concerns like domestic abuse or gender based violence (GBV). Domestic abuse and GBV were two issues of concern raised by Jordanian adolescent girls during focus group discussions. Safe spaces would provide important support to girls, including one participant in Jordan who said, “I would prefer to be alone than share space all day with people that don’t understand me.” This quote, which references a family member with whom she has a strained relationship, reveals a strong interest in finding people who understand her and with whom she can discuss strategies to overcome current challenges and pursue future goals. Adolescence represents a time when young people seek to gain independence from their families, and in a refugee situation, it is more important than ever to create supportive peer networks through which to build constructive identities while countering physical and social isolation. Parents of adolescent girls who either accompanied girls during the focused discussions or were engaged informally after the activity expressed their interest and support for their daughters to participate in activities that allow them to interact with other girls outside the home.

**Boys’ Hopelessness:** Syrian boys’ photographs and subsequent discussions detailed how many of them are consumed by a sense of hopelessness. One Syrian boy aged 17 living in Lebanon took a photo of himself holding chains. When describing the photo he said, “This is a picture of a chain, it symbolizes the blockades that forbid me from crossing the borders. I want to break free and go back.” Syrian boys did not share girls’ frustrations related to physical isolation due to fewer concerns over security, fewer chores at home and greater mobility required for work. However, they did repeatedly reference broken social networks, missing friends from Syria and a growing sense of hopelessness. One youth outreach worker described the situation for boys as, “Those that are ages 14-16 feel like they are starting over. They have no friends and don’t know where to go.”

Many Syrian boys are fixated on the notion of returning to Syria. Many referred to their desire to join the armed struggle. One boy in Mafraq responded to a question about his future goals saying, “I want to be a rebel because as a rebel I will be able to defend my country and change Syria for the better.” Another common response was a desire to help rebuild from the destruction. Many photographs taken by Syrian boys and girls in Saida showed dilapidated buildings and piles of construction debris and were described as reminding them of the destruction back in Syria. These young people were aware of the challenges that lie ahead if they return to Syria with a boy describing his photo of a block by saying, “This block makes me think that I need to be ready to go back to Syria and help rebuild the country.” This obsession with returning to fight and/or rebuild in Syria prevents them from identifying productive activities they can do in their host community. Given the lack of a foreseeable end to the violence in Syria, this focus



*This is a picture of a chain, it symbolizes the blockades that forbid me from crossing the borders. I want to break free and go back.*

— Male adolescent, Lebanon



on returning to Syria prevents young boys from planning for a future within their host community. Having a strong focus on returning to Syria in the future was often in response to adolescents' sense of scarcity (i.e. lacking friends, family, educational and recreational opportunities). This scarcity is leading adolescents to focus on getting back to Syria where scarcity was less of a concern before the war. This intense focus on returning to Syria is not a bad thing and is what currently matters most to Syrian adolescents. However, when it leads to adolescents neglecting other, possibly more important, things like an education and developing skills that will help them once they return to Syria, it can impede them from making productive and peaceful decisions in the present and short term.<sup>19</sup>

**Boys' Humiliation and Social Tension:** "It would be better to return to Syria to fight and die with dignity than live in humiliation." This statement, shared by a Syrian boy from Mafraq reveals a frequently repeated choice that Syrian refugees, particularly boys, grapple with on an ongoing basis. This sense of humiliation was often referenced in relation to sources of social tension between Syrian refugees and host communities. Sources of tension include the accusations that Syrian refugees are straining public services, spreading disease and driving up the cost of housing while driving down wages, thereby increasing competition for jobs. These sources of tension were more frequently mentioned as resulting in verbal and physical abuse in Saida, Baalbeck and Mafraq. In Mafraq, verbal assaults would often escalate to physical violence while adolescents played in the neighborhood or came into contact with each other while walking to or from school. Employment is another key source of humiliation for Syrian boys. One youth outreach worker described mediating between a boy and his former employer who refused to pay his monthly wage. Experiencing work-based humiliation is a growing concern since it is estimated that one out of every ten refugee children is thought to be working – whether as cheap labor on farms, in cafes and car repair shops or as beggars on city streets.<sup>20</sup>

One Syrian boy summed up his experience in Jordan by describing his drawing of a Jordanian flag with Syrian colors. He said, "I like Jordan but since I came here I have felt a big division between Jordanians and Syrians and I feel sad that I am not in my homeland. I am scared and want to go home to volunteer with the rebels." A Syrian boy in Lebanon added, "I would like to move to a country where humans are valued. If I cannot go there I want to leave this world." A growing sense of hopelessness combined with nearly daily experiences of humiliation is likely to increase Syrian boys' threshold for risk and, if they're able to navigate known return routes to Syria, expose them to violence on either side of the armed conflict.

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*"It would be better to return to Syria to fight and die with dignity than live in humiliation."*

— Male adolescent, Jordan

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19 Shafir, E. Scarcity: Why Having Too Little Means So Much. Times Books, 2013.

20 Under Siege: The Devastating Impact on Children of Three Years of Conflict in Syria. UNICEF, March 2014. Based on UNICEF field team estimates.

## ENABLERS TO DEVELOPMENT: Learning, Skills and Community Involvement

### Boys' and Girls' Learning

Learning through formal or informal education and acquiring new skills emerged as a priority for all adolescents, boys and girls, participating in focus group discussions. Syrians in particular stated that they want a “serious” education. One Syrian boy returned to school in Lebanon after dropping out in Syria saying, “I know I will need an education to help develop my country when I go back.” The type of education and skills adolescents valued varied across groups in Lebanon and Jordan. One group in particular, out-of-school Lebanese adolescent boys and girls in Saida, had little interest in formal education. This particular group expressed interest in low-skill work (e.g. hairdressing for girls and auto mechanic work for boys) and their future goals were to become owners of small businesses in their current skill area. This finding indicates that while many Syrian participants in Lebanon valued formal education, their school attendance was limited due to various barriers, including enrollment restrictions applied by the Ministry of Education. In comparison, Lebanese adolescents, especially those out of school, were less enthusiastic about formal learning and aspired to build their skills and secure income.



*“I love my school, my classmates.  
I love to learn, although we hate  
the principal. He shouts at us a lot.”*

— Female adolescent, Jordan

Syrian and host-community girls in Jordan were more likely to be in school compared to their counterparts in Lebanon. This is in part due to the Jordanian government largely accepting Syrian students into schools,<sup>21</sup> as well as donor support and double shifts.<sup>22</sup> These in-school girls referred to education as critical for building life skills such as self-esteem, confidence, patience and determination. One Syrian girl reflected on school saying, “I love my school, my classmates. I love to learn, although we hate the principal. He shouts at us a lot.” While this positive view of school was present among adolescent girls in Mafraq, most other participants either did not view their school positively or described it as a source of frustration and violence.

A number of Lebanese and Jordanian adolescents spoke of teachers applying corporal punishment despite recent educational reforms in Jordan to prohibit such actions. Participants cited a lack of student discipline, including the use of mobile phones and smoking in class, as potentially fueling verbal abuse and corporal punishment by teachers. For many adolescents, the violence and mistreatment by peers and teachers was identified as a key factor in their decision to leave school. One Syrian boy in Mafraq summed up the feeling shared by a number of Syrian boys when he said, “I don’t feel happy here at all. I am being

21 In Jordan, it is reported that Syrian refugees who have been out of school for more than three years are prohibited to enroll.

22 Lost Generation – A Strategy for Children Affected by the Syria Crisis. UNICEF, October 2013.

bullied and attacked on the way to and during school." Often this negative behavior is not just perpetuated by students, but also teachers who treat refugee students poorly. For those adolescents who have access to formal education, many stop attending because they do not feel safe at school.

Syrian, Jordanian and Lebanese adolescents in Hartha, Saida and Baalbeck, and boys in Mafraq, resented the poor quality of education both in terms of teacher capacity and, for Syrians, curricular content. One Syrian adolescent commented, "Our history teacher taught us seven chapters in one class," revealing the potential drop in quality that results from accelerated education. Syrian adolescent boys in Jordan also reported being placed in school based on their age even though they had been out of school



Female adolescent, Jordan

for the past two years. Not surprisingly their frustration with the difficulty of the curriculum led many of them to abandon school. Another challenge to learning shared by most refugees included English language skills. This is a particular challenge for Syrian refugees in Lebanon, whereby specific subjects are only taught in English and French, compared to almost exclusively Arabic instruction in Syria. Syrian students thus face difficulty in comprehending instruction.<sup>23</sup>

Host-community adolescents, other than in Saida, and the ambitious cohort of in-school Syrian girls in Mafraq, were more likely than Syrian refugee groups to speak of pursuing higher education and training for a professional career. One Syrian girl from Mafraq said, "I dream of just visiting the local university campus and someday taking

classes there." Most other Syrian adolescents had a much more somber outlook on future learning and skills acquisition due to either being out of school, unsure of whether their educational attainment would be recognized back in Syria, the prohibitive cost of university education or obtaining vocational skills but not finding formal work due to their illegal work status. These Syrian adolescents shared that getting back to Syria is their only option. As a result they spoke little about longer-term goals and the short-term plans required to start pursuing them.

## Boys' and Girls' Skills

While many adolescents struggled to articulate long-term goals and the short-term plans for pursuing them, they identified skills that would help them navigate an uncertain future. For Syrian adolescents, a legal framework that keeps them from pursuing formal employment presents an additional uncertainty. Many Jordanian and Lebanese adolescents without this limitation are interested in either low-skill, vocational or professional skills depending on their education and work status. Out-of-school adolescents who were already working in low-skill jobs requested business management and entrepreneurship skills that would help them become small business owners. In-school adolescents who are not planning to attend university after finishing school cited their interest in pursuing vocational skills, while those in school and planning to attend university were focused on acquiring professional skills.

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23 Under Siege: The Devastating Impact on Children of Three Years of Conflict in Syria. UNICEF, March 2014. Based on UNICEF field team estimates.

All adolescent segments expressed a desire to complement past or present schoolwork with additional learning in English language, computer literacy and writing. Many adolescents saw a direct link between creative expression skills and eventual income generating activities such as journalism, digital media, photography, art, crafts, interior and graphic design and cooking. One Jordanian girl stated, "I would like to study journalism, but I don't have enough boldness and courage for it. It is a dangerous profession and my society rejects it."

When asked by facilitators how they would acquire these skills, most suggested that older youth or adults with these skills could offer workshops. A handful of entrepreneurial-minded Jordanian girls in Mafraq felt that "some people in the community are not fully encouraged to be or do what they are capable of... there are very talented people who have not yet been discovered by the community." Intrigued, another Jordanian girl asked, "How do you know if you have a hidden talent in the first place?" which led to the group recognizing the role of teachers, family and friends to identify and support the skills and talents of adolescents.

In subsequent key informant interviews, this concept of identifying skills and supporting skill development was further explored. This probing resulted in recommendations to inventory existing skills that adolescents, youth and adults in the community already have, as well as those skills adolescents desire. Key informants also suggested organizing skills exchange workshops to facilitate skills transfer. As one Jordanian key informant put it, "We need to create opportunities for Syrians to show what skills and talents they have, and Jordanians to show what skills and talents they have. They could then come together to work on community projects that exchange and apply those skills." This type of locally resourced peer-to-peer and mentor-to-adolescent engagement should be encouraged. Young people from within the same geographic communities can mutually benefit from shared learning, if organizations facilitate these opportunities.

## Community Involvement

Despite significant differences in past experience, current realities and future prospects, Syrian and host-community adolescents shared a desire to work with peers to improve their communities. One Syrian girl reflected on the challenges ahead in Jordan and back in Syria saying, "We will have to act together, as one hand." Adolescents talked about two motivations for getting involved in their communities. First, adolescents requested better access to public space for sports, recreation and community events like food and craft bazaars. Second, improving the community was viewed as an important mechanism for gaining recognition, respect and status for their talents and skills.

A number of key interventions were identified by youth who expressed interest in contributing to their broader community:

**CLEANING UP:** Many refugee and host-community participants expressed a willingness to work together to improve nearby public spaces through trash removal and other enhancements. One Jordanian boy reflected on his photo of a sign that read, "Keeping your town clean is a kind deed" by noting the irony that the sign was rusted and worn out. Other public services that were sources of frustration for adolescents, primarily in Jordan, included water management, electricity outages and the deterioration of roads due to unauthorized digging by residents to connect water and sewage pipes to homes. One Syrian boy in Mafraq commented on the lack of services and his willingness to do his part by saying, "The

cleaners and trash men don't even work anymore. A clean city is part of our responsibility as well." One group of Syrian girls discussed forming uniformed work teams to pick up trash and compete with other teams to see who could pick up the most trash.

**SPORTS AND RECREATION:** Another category of shared concerns for adolescents was access to recreational facilities to participate in sports and community spaces to hold crafts and cooking fairs. Adolescents complained that there were too few spaces and those that existed, often sports grounds, were locked and or required fees to play. In the rare case that public facilities did exist, other barriers were present, such as scheduling. Adolescents mentioned they were often pushed aside by older youth and adults. In both Lebanon and Jordan, and among Syrian refugees and host-community adolescents, sports and recreation was described as a way to build social cohesion between groups. Organizing mixed Syrian and host-community teams, or crafts and cooking exchanges, were shared as strategies to help adolescents recognize each other for their skills and assets rather than stigmatize each other based on misinformation often passed down from parents.

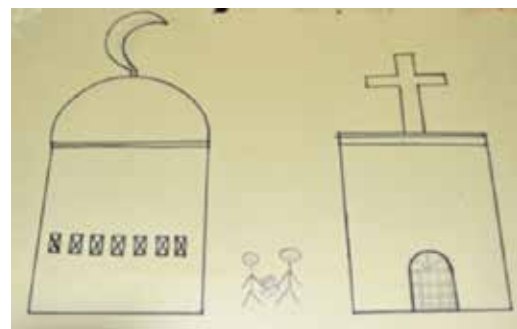
**ACTING AGAINST SECTARIANISM:** In Baalbeck, both Syrian and Lebanese boys, as well as Lebanese girls, stated that sectarianism is on the rise and is stifling their self-expression and involvement in their community. Multiple drawings depicted a desire for greater religious acceptance. A 15-year-old Lebanese boy described his drawing of a tree saying, "This tree represents me. There are forces that want to knock me down like the wind shown here. While these forces might blow off my leaves, they will never knock me down." When asked by the facilitator what forces the wind might represent in the picture, a number of boys mentioned sectarianism. In light of the rising presence of extremist groups in North Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley, it is likely that these sectarian tensions will continue to rise.

Jordanian girls were also outspoken on limitations to freedom of speech, with one girl drawing a person with an "X" over her mouth. She described the drawing: "No for silence. Yes for freedom of expression. Silence does not advance society." Adolescents cited community activities that raise awareness of different religious affiliations and nationalities working together way to build unity. Advocacy and journalism were mentioned as activities to promote freedom of speech and expression and to work against sectarianism.



*Ironically this rusted sign reads: "Keeping your town clean is a kind deed."*

— Male adolescent, Jordan



Female adolescent, Lebanon

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DESIGNING ADOLESCENT PROGRAMS

Recommendations for program activities relevant to all adolescent segments are presented below with segment-specific considerations provided in Annex 1.

## **1 Organize self- and collective- expression activities to improve psychosocial support and reduce the isolation and hopelessness afflicting adolescents.**

All adolescent segments were keenly interested in broadening their social support networks and utilizing those networks for individual and collective expression through sport, art, photography, theatre, cooking and crafts and digital and social media. These expressive activities were described as an essential building block for establishing trust, building self-esteem and confidence and encouraging teamwork; all critical foundations for the community-involvement activities described below. These activities should be group-based, mix Syrian and host-community adolescents when feasible<sup>24</sup> and be facilitated by trained and trusted Syrian and host-community mentors of the same sex as the adolescents they work with.



Female adolescent, Lebanon

In recognition of the unique stressors that many Syrian adolescents experienced as a result of the conflict in Syria, programs should allow for Syrian-only group sessions and establish a referral mechanism for adolescents requiring more specialized mental health services. For adolescent girls in particular, establishing safe spaces near where refugees live in Lebanon or community centers in Jordan is recommended. Parental or other gatekeeper approval should be obtained to instill community trust and maximize community acceptance of programming. This will increase the likelihood that parents and gatekeepers allow girls and other adolescents to participate in programs.

Parental and other gatekeeper<sup>25</sup> engagement should be seen by implementing agencies as a prerequisite for all activities proposed with adolescents, particularly girls. Parental and gatekeeper engagement should aim beyond obtaining approval for their child's attendance in program activities. Engagement involves explaining the nature of the activities, and specific logistics associated with the activities (e.g. transportation, location, same-sex supervision). Engaging parents and gatekeepers to gain a deeper understanding of their concerns for safety, reliance on adolescents for home chores or income generation and barriers to attending formal education will provide greater insight into alternative incentives that can inform more effective program design. For parents and gatekeepers who prefer their children to participate in income generation, organizers can explain the value of this type of psychosocial, educational and skill development programming, and how it can be complemented by income generation, if necessary. Organizations should consider providing activities during non-working hours to ensure working adolescents can access this important psychosocial support, especially since many young people are working in difficult circumstances.

<sup>24</sup> Location, transportation and scheduling considerations may limit the frequency of mixed-group activities, and program budgeting should take this into consideration.

<sup>25</sup> Older youth or adults who make decisions on behalf of, or influence, adolescents.

## 2

### **Reduce barriers to access formal education and provide alternative learning options to get the masses of out-of-school adolescents learning again.**

It is clear that many adolescents are eager to continue their education despite the barriers they face. These barriers significantly increase among children over 12 years old due to factors associated with being out of school for too long, feeling too old to re-enter school or initiating work and losing their desire to return. For many refugees, there is immense pressure to generate income (for boys) or help with home chores (for girls), preventing them from pursuing their education goals. As a result, adolescence is too often a time when dropout rates spike for both host-community and Syrian adolescents.

Therefore, programs working with adolescents need to proactively target those most at risk of dropping out, or recently dropped out but likely to re-enroll, with tailored support. Selection criteria used to identify those adolescents most at risk of dropping out of school include: a) high levels of absenteeism; b) girls and boys not at age for grade; c) those already involved in labor; d) those living far from school; e) adolescents from single- or female-headed households; and f) students, particularly girls, in their last year of primary school. These adolescents, as well as those who have dropped out less than 12 months ago, are well suited for a combination of strategies to improve access to school and provide alternative learning.

Strategies to improve access should include alternative scheduling by expanding the use of double shifts (morning and afternoon) and flexible shifts for girls and boys required to work inside or outside the home. Alternative transport improves access by helping get students, and girls in particular, to and from school safely. Alternative transport could include strategies that ensure students are accompanied by peers, parents or teachers when traveling to and from school. Finally, incentive structures such as conditional or unconditional cash transfers should be explored as a mechanism for offsetting significant family expenses that, if reduced, would provide an incentive for parents and gatekeepers to send their children back to school.

Alternative learning arrangements are needed for adolescents who have missed considerable time in school, remain out of school because of eligibility or other access issues or are struggling with language or curriculum. Ideally, alternative learning will follow an approved curriculum, so that upon completion of the courses the adolescent can enroll in public school or receive equivalency diplomas.<sup>26</sup> Utilizing safe spaces to offer remedial classes or after-school supplemental tutoring in areas such as literacy, numeracy and languages, or offering exam preparation courses throughout the school year to increase passage rates, is another key strategy for keeping adolescents in school and getting those who have recently dropped out re-enrolled. One strategy to increase adolescent participation and retention may include pairing education and recreation activities; creating a work-first-play-after approach may foster a greater work ethic and sense of reward.

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26 <http://unhcr.org/FutureOfSyria/> The Future of Syria, UNHCR, November, 2013.

### **3 Identify, match and develop skills that are available locally and can be transferred for use in community involvement and future employability to foster a sense of belonging and agency.**

In light of existing barriers to pursuing higher education and safe, equitable and legal employment in host communities, programs should identify and develop a skill set that builds on basic life skills, supports the pursuit of short-term goals and promotes learning that can be transferred for use in community involvement and future employability. A basic set of project management skills including working in teams, communication, responsibility and time management, negotiating, budgeting and measuring impact should be included in a core curriculum. Additional skills like computer literacy, writing, English language, digital media, graphic design, cooking and crafts can be sourced and shared among skilled Syrian and host-community adolescents, youth and adults. These locally sourced skills support building the social and technical capital that will help communities become more resilient to future shocks. Community youth leaders recommend a process of gathering information on adolescents' existing skills, skills they are willing to exchange with others and desired, desired skills, as well as assessing existing skills from the community. This community skills assessment would then facilitate the matching of desired skills with existing skills - through public skills fairs and skills matching events. Skills matching would be followed by skills - exchange workshops organized on an ongoing basis.

For host-community youth, market-oriented technical and vocational skills are recommended for out-of-school adolescents. For those already working, typically in low-skill jobs, business development or entrepreneurship training may be appropriate, coupled with finance management and basic accounting, to allow for small-business creation.

### **4 Support adolescents to get involved in their community through small-scale community service projects to hone skills, and build ownership, respect and social cohesion.**

Adolescents share similar concerns about their communities, ideas for making improvements and a willingness to work together in mixed groups to implement small-scale community service projects. Community service projects serve multiple purposes. First, they help adolescents hone their life, project-management and transferable skills through real-life application of those skills. Second, by enhancing community spaces for meeting, playing sports or displaying their cooking or crafts talents, adolescents are increasing their ownership of these spaces and the likelihood that they'll use them for constructive activities. Third, by getting involved in their communities, adolescents will increasingly be recognized and respected by adults for their contributions and seen as assets for future community development. Fourth, community projects bring together Syrian refugee and host-community adolescents to work side-by-side to improve shared community concerns. This shared sense of responsibility and accomplishment builds constructive relationships that are based on a mutual recognition of skills, assets and similarities. As more of these relationships are created the differences that fuel social tension erode and the likelihood of conflict can be diminished.

Community service projects can be supported through small grants to local organizations or more established groups able to raise funds locally. Strong mentoring is required to ensure activities are sufficiently designed and managed well, as adolescents do not necessarily have the skills to singlehandedly act without some degree of adult support.



**5****Promote realistic short-term<sup>27</sup> goal setting and planning to encourage adolescents to start learning and developing skills while in host communities.**

For adolescents to effectively navigate their path to adulthood, they need to establish realistic short-term goals and the plans to achieve them. Setting goals, developing plans and building the motivation to implement them are a critical part of personal, academic and professional development<sup>28</sup> and should be fostered in adolescent-focused programming at multiple levels including educational attainment and community service projects. Programs that help adolescents move from a commonly heard response of, “I want to return to Syria to help rebuild,” to a more realistic short-term goal and plan of, “I want to learn construction skills and I have a Lebanese neighbor who is willing to teach me,” allows adolescents to take that critical first step. While a powerful activity, goal setting and planning must be done in a delicate and careful manner to manage expectations. For the majority of adolescent refugees, and Syrian refugees in particular, their future is unclear and unstable, which is why goal setting can help create a sense of purpose and stability. At the same time, there are numerous legal, political, economic and social barriers they must navigate, and organizations facilitating this programming must take care to manage expectations and apply Do No Harm principles.

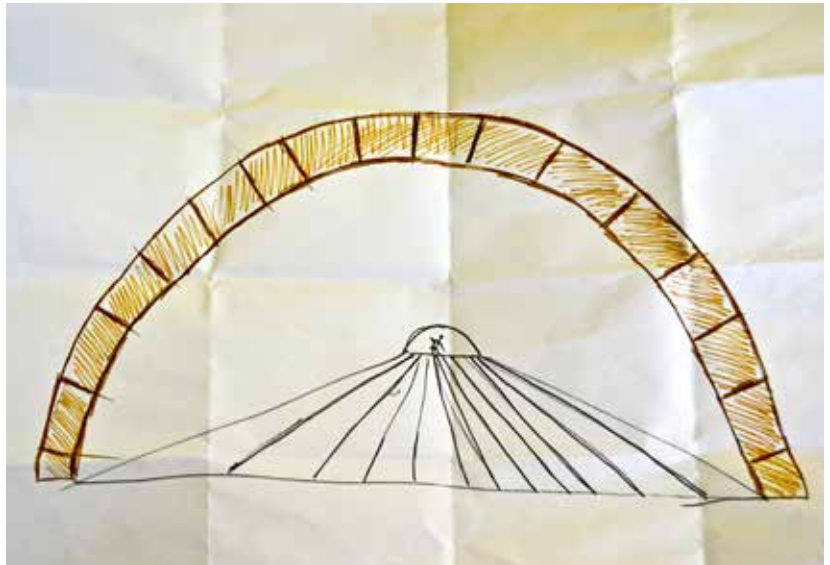
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27 For the purposes of adolescent programming, Mercy Corps defines short term as 3-6 months from the time the adolescent is participating in the goal-setting and planning activity.

28 Duckworth, A.L and M. Seligman, Self-Discipline Outdoes IQ in Predicting Academic Performance of Adolescents, *Psychological Science* 16, no. 12 (2005). Cited in Tough, P. *How Children Succeed: Grit, Curiosity, and the Hidden Power of Character*. 2012.

*“The closer side of this tunnel represents the present, and the far side represents my goal which I want to reach. However, I haven’t yet decided what that goal is. I just want to become a good citizen.”*

— Male adolescent, Jordan



## Conclusion

Mercy Corps believes that if Syrian and host-community adolescents are safe and possess positive coping mechanisms to overcome isolation, hopelessness and humiliation and build trust and social networks, they will be equipped to learn, develop skills and make decisions that help them overcome future challenges. With these capacities, adolescents will become more resilient to the shocks and stresses around them and be better able to navigate their transition to adulthood with optimism and hope. A Syrian boy captured the spirit of this transition in his drawing of a tunnel saying, “The closer side of this tunnel represents the present, and the far side represents my goal which I want to reach. However, I haven’t yet decided what that goal is. I just want to become a good citizen.”

Adolescents affected by the conflict in Syria are searching to establish goals and eager to become good citizens by improving their communities. In doing so, adolescents build a sense of individual and collective worth, emerge as future leaders and raise awareness within the community of the positive difference adolescents can make. Designing programs to help adolescents enter their tunnel of transition – from adolescent to adult, school to work or destruction to development – and emerge on the other side with an education, skills and hope for the future is not only an investment in the lives of adolescents but an investment in the future of the region for the next half-century.

ANNEX 1:

## Segment- and Location-Specific Considerations Based on Participant Demographics and Findings

FEMALE				
HOST COMMUNITY	JORDAN		LEBANON	
	Mafraq	Hartha	Saida	Baalbeck
	<p><b>LEARNING/SKILLS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tended to be in school.</li> <li>Value education.</li> <li>Interest in higher education.</li> </ul> <p><b>EMPLOYMENT STATUS/INTERESTS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not working outside home.</li> <li>Interest in professional careers and entrepreneurship.</li> </ul> <p><b>SOCIAL MEDIA</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High awareness.</li> <li>High access.</li> </ul> <p><b>ISOLATION/MOBILITY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low levels of isolation.</li> </ul> <p><b>COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strong concerns over developing city spaces by adding playgrounds, gardens and malls.</li> </ul> <p><b>CULTURAL NORMS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Previously traditional and conservative gender norms with some loosening of restrictions with arrival of Syrian refugees.</li> </ul> <p><b>SOCIAL TENSION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High perception of social tensions between Syrian refugees and host community.</li> </ul>	<p><b>LEARNING/SKILLS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tended to be in school.</li> </ul> <p><b>EMPLOYMENT STATUS/INTERESTS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not working outside home.</li> <li>Connection to countryside and rural livelihoods.</li> </ul> <p><b>SOCIAL MEDIA</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moderate awareness.</li> <li>Moderate access.</li> </ul> <p><b>ISOLATION/MOBILITY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited physical mobility primarily due to conservative values, rather than security concerns.</li> </ul> <p><b>COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strong concerns over trash and community spaces.</li> <li>Rights-based activism: freedom of expression, sexual harassment and domestic violence.</li> </ul> <p><b>CULTURAL NORMS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More conservative rural values.</li> </ul> <p><b>SOCIAL TENSION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low perception of social tensions with Syrian refugees due to apparent familiarity due to tribal ties and rural lifestyle.</li> </ul>	<p><b>LEARNING/SKILLS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most participants out-of-school.</li> <li>Low interest in returning to school.</li> </ul> <p><b>EMPLOYMENT STATUS/INTERESTS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not working outside home.</li> <li>Low-skill work (e.g. hairdressing).</li> </ul> <p><b>SOCIAL MEDIA</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moderate awareness.</li> <li>Moderate access.</li> </ul> <p><b>ISOLATION/MOBILITY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Significant levels of physical and social isolation.</li> <li>Center-based activities problematic due to limited mobility. Outreach required.</li> </ul> <p><b>COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interest in access to nature, parks and green space.</li> </ul> <p><b>CULTURAL NORMS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Socially acceptable employment (e.g. hairdressing).</li> </ul> <p><b>SOCIAL TENSION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moderate perception of social tensions.</li> </ul>	<p><b>LEARNING/SKILLS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tended to be in school</li> <li>Teacher quality poor and prevalent corporal punishment.</li> </ul> <p><b>EMPLOYMENT STATUS/INTERESTS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not working outside home.</li> <li>Desired parental support for pursuing goals.</li> <li>Vocational and professional jobs.</li> </ul> <p><b>SOCIAL MEDIA</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High awareness.</li> <li>High access.</li> </ul> <p><b>ISOLATION/MOBILITY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moderate limitations to mobility. Center-based activities OK but deteriorating security situation problematic. Outreach required.</li> </ul> <p><b>COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sectarianism cited as stifling personal expression and development.</li> </ul> <p><b>CULTURAL NORMS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Desire to break away from traditions that limit girls.</li> <li>More conservative rural values.</li> </ul> <p><b>SOCIAL TENSION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High perception of social tensions.</li> <li>High awareness of sectarianism in Lebanon.</li> </ul>

FEMALE

SYRIAN REFUGEES

JORDAN		LEBANON	
Mafrq	Hartha	Saida	Baalbeck
<p><b>LEARNING AND SKILLS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High interest and high participation.</li> <li>• Some interest in higher education.</li> </ul> <p><b>EMPLOYMENT STATUS/INTERESTS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not working outside home.</li> <li>• Interested in professional careers and entrepreneurship.</li> </ul> <p><b>SOCIAL MEDIA</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High awareness.</li> <li>• Moderate to low access.</li> </ul> <p><b>ISOLATION/MOBILITY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low to moderate mobility. Parents willing to allow participation in activities if trust is built.</li> </ul> <p><b>COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recreational activities.</li> <li>• Cooking and crafts.</li> <li>• Trash removal.</li> <li>• Volunteering with Syrian refugees in camps.</li> </ul> <p><b>CULTURAL NORMS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From urban areas in Syria, more progressive gender norms. Value education, delay marriage/childbearing.</li> </ul> <p><b>SOCIAL TENSION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High perception of social tensions between Syrian refugees and host community.</li> </ul>	<p><b>LEARNING AND SKILLS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High interest in school and low participation.</li> <li>• Interest in English to supplement learning.</li> </ul> <p><b>EMPLOYMENT STATUS/INTERESTS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not working outside home.</li> <li>• Interest in nature and rural livelihoods, including community gardens.</li> </ul> <p><b>SOCIAL MEDIA</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low awareness and access to social media.</li> </ul> <p><b>ISOLATION/MOBILITY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moderate to high physical and social isolation.</li> </ul> <p><b>COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High interest in community service projects, especially trash removal, smoking prevention and graffiti removal.</li> </ul> <p><b>CULTURAL NORMS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More conservative rural values.</li> </ul> <p><b>SOCIAL TENSION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moderate perception of social tensions with host community due to apparent familiarity due to tribal ties and rural lifestyle.</li> </ul>	<p><b>LEARNING AND SKILLS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High interest in school but high barriers including curriculum, teacher and host-community mistreatment.</li> </ul> <p><b>EMPLOYMENT STATUS/INTERESTS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not working outside home.</li> <li>• Interest in vocational training (hairdressing, cooking, secretary).</li> </ul> <p><b>SOCIAL MEDIA</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moderate awareness.</li> <li>• Low access.</li> </ul> <p><b>ISOLATION/MOBILITY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very high physical and social isolation. Parents as barriers to participation in programs.</li> </ul> <p><b>COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interest in recreational and social activities.</li> </ul> <p><b>CULTURAL NORMS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conservative gender norms, high levels of protection due to perceived insecurity.</li> </ul> <p><b>SOCIAL TENSION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moderate to high perception of social tensions between Syrian refugees and host community.</li> </ul>	<p><b>LEARNING AND SKILLS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High interest in school but high barriers including curriculum, teacher and host-community treatment.</li> </ul> <p><b>EMPLOYMENT STATUS/INTERESTS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not working outside home.</li> <li>• Very little mention of employment interests.</li> </ul> <p><b>SOCIAL MEDIA</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low to moderate awareness.</li> <li>• Low access.</li> </ul> <p><b>ISOLATION/MOBILITY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very high physical and social isolation due to security concerns and prevalence of military check points.</li> </ul> <p><b>COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interest in recreational and social activities.</li> </ul> <p><b>CULTURAL NORMS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conservative gender norms, high levels of protection due to perceived insecurity.</li> </ul> <p><b>SOCIAL TENSION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High perception of social tensions. High awareness of sectarianism in Lebanon.</li> </ul>

MALE

HOST COMMUNITY

JORDAN		LEBANON	
Mafrq	Hartha	Saida	Baalbeck
<p><b>LEARNING SKILLS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tended to be in school.</li> <li>• Value education.</li> <li>• Quality of education perceived as poor.</li> </ul> <p><b>EMPLOYMENT STATUS/INTERESTS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mix of professional and vocational interests.</li> </ul> <p><b>SOCIAL MEDIA</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High awareness.</li> <li>• High access.</li> </ul> <p><b>ISOLATION/MOBILITY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low perceived isolation.</li> </ul> <p><b>COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interest in sports and recreation, trash removal.</li> </ul> <p><b>CULTURAL NORMS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong tribal identity and allegiance.</li> </ul> <p><b>SOCIAL TENSION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High perception of social tensions between Syrian refugees and host-community.</li> </ul>	<p><b>LEARNING SKILLS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tended to be in school.</li> <li>• Value education.</li> <li>• Quality of teacher instruction perceived as poor.</li> </ul> <p><b>EMPLOYMENT STATUS/INTERESTS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interest in creating and supporting small businesses and farming value chains.</li> <li>• Interest in higher education and professional careers.</li> </ul> <p><b>SOCIAL MEDIA</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High awareness.</li> <li>• High access.</li> </ul> <p><b>ISOLATION/MOBILITY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low perceived isolation.</li> </ul> <p><b>COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High interest in community service projects, especially trash removal.</li> <li>• Also interest in public services (road repair and electricity).</li> </ul> <p><b>CULTURAL NORMS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong tribal identity and allegiance.</li> </ul> <p><b>SOCIAL TENSION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low perception of social tensions between Syrian refugees and host-community due to apparent familiarity due to tribal ties and rural lifestyle.</li> <li>• Inter-generational tension regarding access to public facilities (sports grounds).</li> </ul>	<p><b>LEARNING SKILLS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tended to be out of school.</li> <li>• Low interest in higher education.</li> </ul> <p><b>EMPLOYMENT STATUS/INTERESTS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working in low skill jobs.</li> <li>• Interest in eventual small business ownership in low-skill sectors (auto mechanics).</li> </ul> <p><b>SOCIAL MEDIA</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moderate awareness.</li> <li>• Moderate access.</li> </ul> <p><b>ISOLATION/MOBILITY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low perceived isolation.</li> </ul> <p><b>COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recreational and sports activities.</li> </ul> <p><b>CULTURAL NORMS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attempting to reject sectarian divisions/tensions.</li> </ul> <p><b>SOCIAL TENSION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moderate to high perception of social tensions between Syrian refugees and host community.</li> </ul>	<p><b>LEARNING SKILLS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tended to be in school.</li> <li>• Moderate to high interest in higher education.</li> </ul> <p><b>EMPLOYMENT STATUS/INTERESTS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional and vocational work.</li> </ul> <p><b>SOCIAL MEDIA</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High awareness.</li> <li>• High access.</li> </ul> <p><b>ISOLATION/MOBILITY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some limitations on mobility due to deteriorating security and military checkpoints.</li> </ul> <p><b>COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recreational and sports activities.</li> <li>• Advocacy for freedom of expression to counter sectarianism.</li> </ul> <p><b>CULTURAL NORMS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attempting to reject sectarian divisions/tensions.</li> </ul> <p><b>SOCIAL TENSION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moderate to high perception of social tensions between Syrian refugees and host-community.</li> </ul>

MALE

SYRIAN REFUGEES

JORDAN		LEBANON	
Mafraq	Hartha	Saida	Baalbeck
<p><b>LEARNING SKILLS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mix of in and out of school.</li> <li>• Value education.</li> <li>• Frustration with poor quality of education.</li> </ul> <p><b>EMPLOYMENT STATUS/INTERESTS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional interests. Doctors, actors to portray the political reality of Syria, journalists, athletes and engineers.</li> </ul> <p><b>SOCIAL MEDIA</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moderate awareness.</li> <li>• Moderate access.</li> </ul> <p><b>ISOLATION/MOBILITY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moderate mobility due to verbal and physical bullying and harassment while in public.</li> </ul> <p><b>COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interest in sports and recreation, trash removal, smoking prevention/cessation.</li> <li>• Interest in helping marginalized groups (homosexuals and gypsies).</li> <li>• Improvement of Syrian camp conditions.</li> </ul> <p><b>CULTURAL NORMS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong sense of purpose associated with returning and fighting.</li> </ul> <p><b>SOCIAL TENSION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High perception of social tensions with host community.</li> </ul>	<p><b>LEARNING SKILLS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mix of in and out of school.</li> <li>• Value education.</li> <li>• Frustration with poor quality of education.</li> </ul> <p><b>EMPLOYMENT STATUS/INTERESTS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study medicine, law, civil engineer, or study agriculture to rebuild Syria.</li> <li>• Work on planting projects in Syria and Jordan.</li> <li>• Journalist to expose truth about Syria.</li> <li>• Poet.</li> </ul> <p><b>SOCIAL MEDIA</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moderate awareness.</li> <li>• Moderate access.</li> </ul> <p><b>ISOLATION/MOBILITY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moderate mobility due to need to work.</li> </ul> <p><b>COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interest in sports and recreation, trash removal.</li> </ul> <p><b>CULTURAL NORMS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong sense of purpose associated with returning and fighting.</li> </ul> <p><b>SOCIAL TENSION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moderate perception of social tension with host community due to apparent familiarity due to tribal ties and rural lifestyle.</li> </ul>	<p><b>LEARNING SKILLS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most out of school.</li> <li>• Value education but high levels of frustration with access, balancing work and school and quality.</li> </ul> <p><b>EMPLOYMENT STATUS/INTERESTS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Currently many work illegally in service industry.</li> <li>• Interest in engineering, architecture and construction to rebuild destruction in Syria.</li> </ul> <p><b>SOCIAL MEDIA</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moderate awareness.</li> <li>• Moderate access.</li> </ul> <p><b>ISOLATION/MOBILITY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moderate mobility due to need to work.</li> </ul> <p><b>COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interest in sports and recreation.</li> </ul> <p><b>CULTURAL NORMS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong sense of purpose associated with returning and fighting.</li> </ul> <p><b>SOCIAL TENSION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moderate to high perception of social tension with host community.</li> </ul>	<p><b>LEARNING SKILLS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most out of school.</li> <li>• Value education but high levels of frustration with access, balancing work and school and quality.</li> </ul> <p><b>EMPLOYMENT STATUS/INTERESTS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Currently some work illegally in service industry.</li> <li>• Mix of professional and vocational interests.</li> </ul> <p><b>SOCIAL MEDIA</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moderate awareness.</li> <li>• Moderate access.</li> </ul> <p><b>ISOLATION/MOBILITY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moderate to high perception of isolation due to deteriorating security and military checkpoints.</li> </ul> <p><b>COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interest in sports and recreation.</li> <li>• Awareness-raising and talent-improvement activities.</li> </ul> <p><b>CULTURAL NORMS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong sense of purpose associated with returning and fighting.</li> </ul> <p><b>SOCIAL TENSION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moderate to high perception of social tension with host community.</li> <li>• High perception of sectarianism limiting self-expression.</li> </ul>

## ABOUT MERCY CORPS

**Mercy Corps is a leading global humanitarian agency saving and improving lives in the world's toughest places.**

With a network of experienced professionals in more than 40 countries, we partner with local communities to put bold ideas into action to help people recover, overcome hardship and build better lives. Now, and for the future.



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Mercy Corps Lebanon and Jordan for field-based support.