



Assessment Report

EDUCATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT GREECE

May 2016

Savethechildren.net

Education Needs Assessment

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Executive Summary

One-hundred percent of child refugees and migrants stranded in sites across Greece are out of school. For the majority of girls and boys, their education has been disrupted for far longer than their journey to Europe, and the time they have spent waiting in Greece. **On average, children have been out of school for 1.5 years.**

The amount of time that children have been without learning ranges from one month to seven years. Forty-five percent of Syrian children surveyed have been out of school for more than three years. For Afghan children, the average is just under eleven months.

More than one in five of the school-age children surveyed have never been to school, including girls and boys as old as 11, 12 and 13 years.

This level of disruption to learning threatens to have a long term impact on children's cognitive and social development, wellbeing, the acquirement of essential life skills, and their overall future.

Ninety-nine percent of parents say that **war and displacement have been the main barriers** preventing their children from beginning or continuing their education. For those children that have been to school before, the quality of education they received is very varied. Whilst many Syrians are happy with the quality of schooling before the war, attacks on schools, insecurity, and displacement has meant that many have not benefited from the services that were once on offer. Afghan parents report insecurity, and overall a poor quality of provision.

As refugees in other countries, barriers to education include the cost of school fees, discrimination, the lack of language support, and the lack of opportunity for enrolment. In Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan, 60% of Syrian children are not enrolled in school.ⁱ

Education has emerged as a clear priority for children, and their caregivers. **77% of girls and boys listed going back to school as one of their top priorities**, followed by Family (60%), Health (43%) and Home (28%). **One in three parents and caregivers reported that education was the key reason for leaving for Europe.**

The learning needs of children are very varied, given the time that many children have spent out of school, their varied experiences of education, and the uncertainty surrounding where they may settle – in Greece, in

another EU country, as a refugee deported back to Turkey or to their home country. The provision of non-formal education must account for a range of needs, and incorporate first language literacy and numeracy, in addition to Greek and English language learning. 71% of parents request English lessons for their children, above all other subjects.

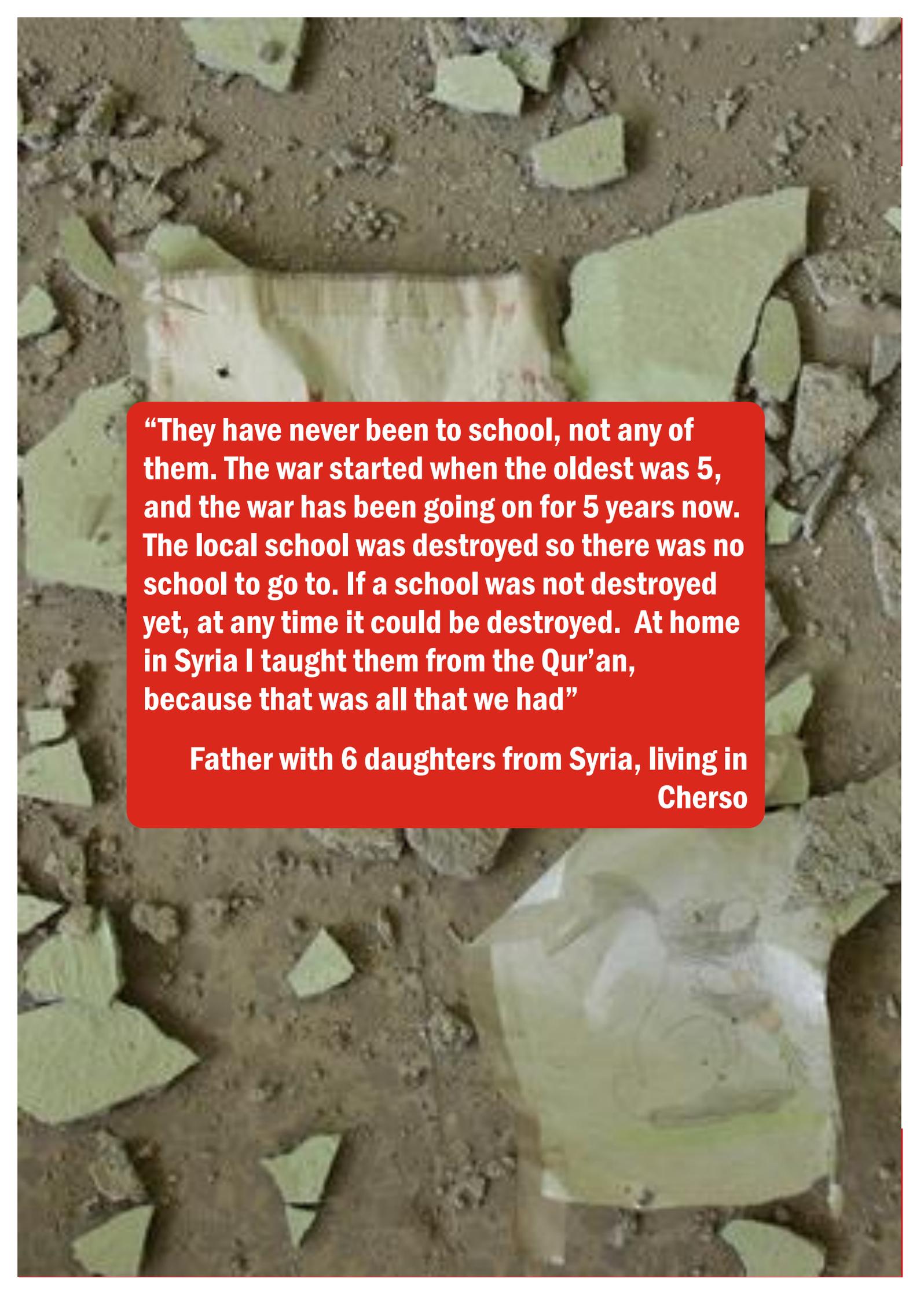
Formal schools in Greece, and in other EU host countries, must also consider the wider needs of refugee children who have been out-of-school for some time, and have experienced conflict and insecurity.ⁱⁱ

Education is currently one of the largest gaps in the humanitarian response. Whilst several small initiatives do exist, coverage is limited, no systematic registration of students has taken place, and many sites do not have designated learning spaces. Children are not accessing either formal or non-formal education on a regular basis in designated learning spaces, disaggregated by age, according to a structured timetable, and with access to essential teaching and learning material. Furthermore, as child refugees leave their home countries, travel along the transit route and seek asylum in countries in Europe, there has been no tracking of their learning.

Since the borders to FYR of Macedonia closed, the context in Greece has shifted to a more static one, whereby families and children are expected to remain in reception sites for several months whilst their registration, asylum claims, and applications for reunification or relocation are processed. **This change presents an opportunity to authorities, donors and humanitarian actors to get children back to school. Further disruption to their learning must be prevented.**



Credit: Pedro Armestre/Save the Children



“They have never been to school, not any of them. The war started when the oldest was 5, and the war has been going on for 5 years now. The local school was destroyed so there was no school to go to. If a school was not destroyed yet, at any time it could be destroyed. At home in Syria I taught them from the Qur’an, because that was all that we had”

Father with 6 daughters from Syria, living in Cherso

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List of abbreviations

CFS	Child Friendly Space
EU	European Union
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FYROM	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
PSS	Psychosocial support
SC	Save the Children
UASC	Unaccompanied and Separated Children

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Save the Children in Greece

Save the Children Greece (SC) has been providing assistance to children and families on the move across Greece since August 2015. SC has operations in 7 locations: on the islands of Lesbos, Chios, Samos, Leros and Kos, and on the mainland in the Attika region (Athens) and in northern Greece. Save the Children has now reached over 345,000 people including more than 125,000 children with Child Protection and Nutrition activities, as well as distribution of food and non-food items, such as winter clothing, blankets and solar chargers.

Education was identified as a key gap in SC's Multi-Sector Needs Assessment completed in July 2015. At the time, no educational activities for refugee and migrant children arriving in Greece were identified. The assessment however recognised that the transient nature of the population made most education programming impossible. Now that the borders have closed and the population is by and large static, this new context allows for the implementation of Education in Emergencies programming. SC currently runs 10 Child Friendly Spaces. As well as providing recreational activities and psychosocial support, many of these safe spaces also include English and Greek language learning activities. Before completing this Needs Assessment, SC field teams reported an increasing demand for the provision of more education. Parents and caregivers have made requests for classrooms, teachers and learning material.

This Education Needs Assessment was completed in response to both the change in context following the closure of the borders, and also the increasing demand from the communities that SC works with. Until recently, in Greece and across the European response, Education has not been a priority for authorities or humanitarian actors. There is evidence to suggest that this is now changing, and it is hoped that this assessment will contribute to a wider understanding of the educational profile and priorities of children and their caregivers, and a commitment to the provision of education for out-of-school refugee and migrant children across Europe. This understanding is vital to Save the Children, the Ministry of Education and other organisations and education actors.

Context

Since the beginning of 2015, Greece has been the entry point into Europe for more than 1 million refugees and migrants seeking safety and security for them and their families. When the borders were open, people arriving on the islands would travel to the mainland and the northern border, then transit through the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia, to Austria and Germany.

With the border between Greece and FYROM now officially closed, nearly 54,000 people are stranded in Greece, of which close to 46,000 are residing in dozens of official and unofficial sites on the Greek mainland. Immediately following the border closure, the authorities initiated voluntary relocation from the border, and from the islands to a series of government run camps throughout central Macedonia (in Greece). Refugees and migrants are unable to continue their journey, and those who arrived after 20th March are currently detained on the islands as part of the EU agreement with Turkey.

The Government, through the Ministry of Interior, and in conjunction with the military, are identifying and establishing camps, specified for different nationalities, of varying capacities and locations on a regular basis.

An estimated **53,688** people are currently stranded in Greece, with **26,850** in northern Greece, **8,511** on the islands, and **15,234** in Attika region (Athens). On the mainland alone, refugees and migrants have been dispersed across 40 sites.

On the islands, many hotspots have turned into closed sites/detention centres after the implementation of the EU-Turkey deal. Many NGOs have suspended their services in the detention centres as they will not support the detention and deportation of migrants to Turkey.

As of 21st March, the Ministry of Migration, under the Ministry of Interior, is the coordination body for camp management. All decision making is coordinated by this body and communicated to the military. The military is responsible for camp setup, site management and basic service provision (start-up of health care, food and basic NFI distribution). All site-level access to new camps is authorized by the military. In some areas police provide additional presence for crowd control and riot prevention. However, in Athens, some sites are managed by the First Reception Services (FRS) under

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the Ministry of Migration, such as Elliniko I, II and III, and Eleonas.

The demographics of arrivals since the start of 2016 are as follows:ⁱⁱⁱ

49%	Syria
26%	Afghanistan
16%	Iraq
3%	Iran
3%	Pakistan
3%	Others

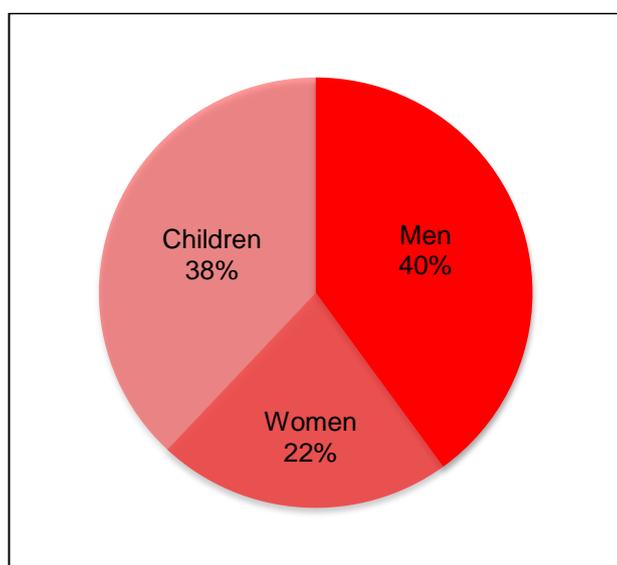


Table 1: Breakdown of arrivals in 2016, UNHCR

Assessment Plan

Objectives

The objectives of the assessment were as follows:

1. Identify the learning priorities for child refugees and migrants, including target languages.
2. Determine how long children have been out of school.
3. Determine the reasons why children have been out of school, including those relating to access to education in the countries of origin, and during displacement.
4. Explore the previous experience of education in the countries of origin and during displacement.
5. Establish whether qualified teachers are present in the affected population, whether they are

willing to teach, and what support they would require to do so.

6. Identify any barriers that might prevent boys and girls from attending school once classes for children are provided
7. Outline any existing educational access.

Team Composition

The assessment was completed by Mary Greer, Education Coordinator for Save the Children Greece and a member of the Save the Children UK Humanitarian Surge Team. In each location, the Education Coordinator was accompanied by one of Save the Children's Cultural Mediators in order to conduct interviews and discussions in Arabic and Farsi.

Methodology

A total of 155 children, parents, caregivers, and teachers were reached as part of this assessment. Structured interviews were conducted with 85 parents and caregivers (52 female, 33 male) and 18 teachers from the refugee community (13 female, 5 male). In addition, 6 focus group discussions were conducted with a total of 52 children (13 female, 39 male). Information regarding the educational profiles and experiences of 130 children (74 female, 56 male) was collected, which includes information provided by parents and caregivers, in addition to focus group discussions with girls and boys themselves. Overall therefore, the assessment includes information collected directly or indirectly (via parents discussing children's educational profile) for 230 people.

Through interviews and discussions, the majority of data collected was qualitative. However, key questions were designed to collect vital quantitative data, namely the time children have spent out of school.

Targeting

9 sites in three broad geographical areas were chosen in order for the assessment to be representative of the affected populations dispersed across Greece. Syrians (49%), Afghans (26%) and Iraqi (16%) refugees account for 91% of the affected population and more than 91% of families with school-age children. These three nationalities were targeted for this assessment (see

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limitations below). Of the 230 people for whom information was collected, the disaggregation of nationalities roughly aligns with the makeup of those arriving: 53% Syrian, 40% Afghan and 7% Iraqi.

At a site level, adults were approached at random to determine whether they were care-givers of school-age children (5-17 years) and were therefore suitable for interview. Respondents were approached on the main paths through the sites, at service access points, and at their tents (where appropriate). The split between male and female respondents was monitored regularly in order to conduct a similar number of interviews with men as with women. On several occasions, a snowball technique was adopted whereby an interview with one parent or caregiver would lead to an interview with another, as other adults observed the assessment, approached the assessment team, or were identified by respondents. For the most part teachers were identified by parents, caregivers, and children, or by SC staff working in Child Friendly Spaces (CFS). Children for Focus Group Discussions were identified with the help of CFS or partner NGO staff. For several of the discussions, girls and boys were already taking part in activities at the CFS and were invited to participate in the discussion at the CFS.

As a child's rights organisation, Save the Children adheres to rigorous standards of child safeguarding in all of our activities, and protects the confidentiality of those taking part in assessments.

Locations and timeframe

9 sites were visited as part of the assessment, over a period of 12 days. 7 of the sites visited are open reception sites, one is a closed detention centre, and one is an informal camp. See Annex I for maps.

Athens/Attika, 12-15 April

Site 1: Elliniko I (open reception site)

Site 2: Elliniko III (open reception site)

Site 3: Schisto (open reception site)

Lesbos, 18-21 April

Site 4: Kara Tepe (open reception site)

Site 5: Moria (closed detention centre)

North Greek Border, 27-30 April

Site 6: Cherso (open reception site)

Site 7: Idomeni (open informal site)

Site 8: Nea Kavala (open reception site)

Site 9: Diavata (open reception site)

Limitations

Minority nationalities not represented: This assessment does not represent the priorities, needs and opinions of those refugees and migrants belonging to minority nationality groups e.g. Pakistani, Somali, Iranian. At each site, a translator (SC staff, SC volunteer or partner staff) was identified for the main first language of the population. The organization of the sites by nationality means that 80-90% of residents share a language in each location.

Site	Nationalities
Elliniko I	90% Afghanistan, 1% Pakistan, 9% Other
Elliniko 3	93% Afghanistan, 2% Iran, 5% Other
Schisto	98% Afghanistan, 2% Syria
Kara Tepe	Data not available
Moria	Data not available
Cherso	65% Syria, 35% Iraq
Diavata	60% Syria, 30% Iraq, 10% Afghanistan
Idomeni	50% Syria, 40% Iraq, 10% Other
Nea Kavala	60% Syria, 40% Iraq

Table 2: Nationalities by site, UNHCR site profiles^{iv}

The ongoing shortage of translators for all humanitarian actors at camp level is a challenge for any assessments and consultations. The result is that whilst Arabic and Farsi speakers were approached as part of this assessment, the team was not able to speak with those belonging to minority nationalities. A small number of Kurdish speakers from Syria and Iraq were included in the assessment as they also spoke Arabic or English. Overall Iraqis are somewhat underrepresented in the number of respondents. In sites where nationalities other than the main three formed a larger proportion of the population – namely Moria detention centre – based on observation, very few school-age children belonged to these groups. However, a major limitation

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of this assessment remains the lack of information on those coming from countries other than Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq.

Focus group discussions with girls: At present no female SC Cultural Mediators are present at the sites visited. It is possible that this had an impact on the number of girls participating in FGDs, since 13 girls and 39 boys took part. One general observation from site visits completed for this assessment is that more boys than girls gather together away from their tents and families in the sites. Overall, information regarding 74 girls and 56 boys – including information given by parents and caregivers – was collected for this assessment.

However, the priorities and opinions of boys are better represented than girls, given the numbers taking part in FGDs.

Refugees who arrived in Greece previously: Due to the rapid nature of this assessment, it was not possible to reach refugees who may have arrived before the current crisis, living outside of the reception sites, in order to assess their needs, and also what access they have had to non-formal and formal education.

Site-level data: The data collected for this assessment is insufficient to draw rigorous comparisons between the priorities, needs and experiences of refugees and migrants living in different sites. For example, to determine any difference in reasons given for children being out of school in Cherso versus those in Schisto. In general the analysis disaggregates by nationality rather than by site.

It is anticipated that UNHCR's upcoming pre-registration exercise will include the collection of basic educational data from all refugees and migrants residing in sites across Greece. This exercise will strengthen data at a site level, and in general, provide authorities and organizations with more comprehensive demographics necessary to planning and implementation.

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Photographer's credit: Anna Pantelia/Save the Children

Rida* with her daughters from Syria left as her children were unable to go to school and her husband who is a teacher was unable to go to work. She waits for the borders to open so she can go to Germany where her 12 year-old son is.

Findings

Prioritisation of education

Education emerged as the number one priority for child refugees residing in Greece. As part of the 6 FGDs in 4 reception sites, children were given 10 flashcards, each depicting an area of life (see Annex 2). Children were asked to select the three that were most important to them right now. 36 out of 47 children – 77% - included education as a top priority, followed by Family (60%), Health (43%) and Home (28%).

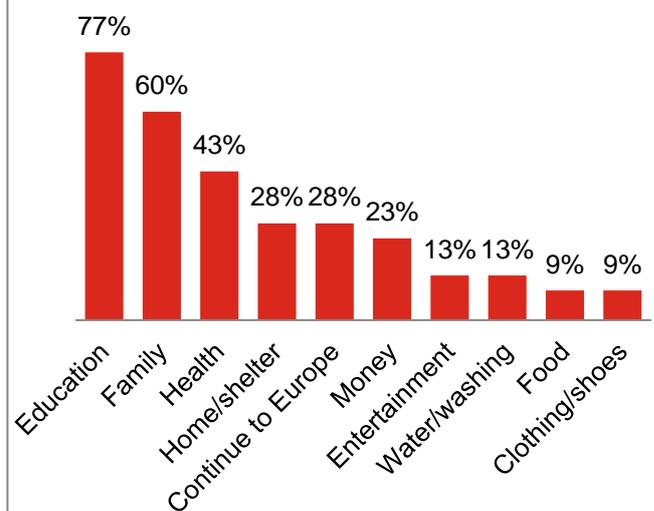


Table 3: Children's top priorities

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The only group of children for whom education did not come out on top was unaccompanied adolescent boys (aged 15 to 17 years) in Diavata. For them, family was the top priority (7 out of 7), followed by both education and continuing on to the rest of Europe (4 out of 7). This is perhaps unsurprising given their current circumstances.

“If you have a good education you are not dependent on anyone else, you are self-sufficient”

“Education because I want to have progress in my life, I don’t want to stop”

“If you have an education you can even help your parents. My parents don’t have a good education”

“If you have an education you have a good future”

“I want education. Because of the conflict in Syria we don’t speak English. And now we are in Greece we don’t speak Greek”

“To have a good education is to have money, housing and family”

“A good education is good for you and for your community”

“Why education? Because they cut it from us by force, that is why we want it too much....[the armed groups], they wouldn’t let us learn”

“[School] is important because it can fix society, the future of society for everyone”

Girls’ and boys’ responses when asked “Why have you prioritised education?”

100% of parents and caregivers asked whether they would send their children to attend classes if there were classrooms and classes led by qualified teachers, answered yes.

“Our time is just wasted here. We would be grateful for education. My request is to have education for my child even if it is outside of here I would accompany her every day to school. If you have an address, I will bring her to school. Lots of people want to send their children to school. Everyone wants this. We found a place but they said they cannot accept her because they don’t have an appropriate course. We had an interview with the school but they said there was no course.”

Father with two daughters from Afghan, Elliniko I

In sites where Save the Children currently run Child Friendly Spaces, several parents made the distinction

between playing and learning and identified education as a key gap:

“I asked for a school as the priority, not the playground but a school. This is what I am asking for, education, it is my priority. I don’t want them to grow up without education, and all they know is war. Playing is good but the most important thing is school. All of these children are school-age. An hour or two playing is fine but most of their time should be spent learning”

Mother of 3 from Aleppo, now in Cherso

Though not explicitly asked, 31 parents and caregivers (27 Syrian, 4 Afghan) – **more than 1 in 3 of those interviewed – cited education as a key reason for making the journey to Europe.** In this way, the importance of education was highlighted by parents and caregivers without any prompting. All parents approached and asked if they were happy to discuss the education of their children were happy to do so:

“I want to put them in a school. Education is the most important thing to continue our normal lives. The important thing is we have to be safe at home, to be at school, not to send them to “go bring wood, go bring water”. Their life here is in lines, line, line! My sister’s son is here too, he studied Nuclear Physics, he was 3rd in his year and so close to graduation. And now he is here in order to not be in prison and beaten”

Mother of 4, two sons in Germany, from Idlib, now in Idomeni

Parents, caregivers and teachers explained the importance of education in terms of both their current situation, and the future. As described above, education is vital to continuing “our normal lives” and to children’s safety. Refugees with a teaching background made particular reference to the lack of structure and routine of life for children in the camps, in addition to the time that children have spent out of school already:

“I want to help many children. There is nothing to learn in the camp but bad manners. [They’ve been] 3 to 4 years without school. They’ve forgotten everything”

Female primary school teacher from Syria, living in Nea Kavala

“The children are too free here, they have to start studying to be busy, it is much better to be busy”

Retired male head teacher from Afghanistan, now in Schisto

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Others highlighted the importance of education in securing a positive future for their children:

“In our country there is war, and many people are only people, to eat, drink and simply live. We don’t want to live like animals, we want to promote ourselves, we want to go to Europe to contribute and to help build. If we have education and good circumstances we can do this.”

Female primary school teacher from Syria, living in Nea Kavala

The role that education plays in children’s future and their place in society and was voiced by each of the focus group discussions conducted with girls and boys living in the reception sites. In comparison to parents and teachers, children focussed on the role that education has to play in their future, rather than their current situation. When asked why so many had included education in their top priorities, going back to school and continuing their education was linked to a “good future”, “progress”, and self-sufficiency. One adolescent boy from Afghanistan living in Elliniko I said that to have a good education meant you could also have “money, a good positive life, housing and a family”. Almost the exact same statement was made by a boy of a similar age from Syria, living in Diavata. Other children focused on the contribution they can make to society with an education. One Syrian teenager living in Moria said that with an education you can help “fix society, the future of society for everyone”. A similar sentiment was expressed by an Afghan woman living in Kara Tepe:

“I want [my children] to participate and do good for society. I don’t have a problem if I die but I want them to go to school and learn”

The above quote belongs to a widow from Afghanistan, mother to 3 boys and 1 girl aged 5 to 12 years. Just the two oldest had ever attended school, and only for 2 months.

Length of time that children have been out of school

100% of children are currently out of school. For the majority of girls and boys, they have been out of school for far longer than the period of their current displacement. The educational status of 130 child refugees and migrants (74 girls, 56 boys), aged 6 to 17, were assessed across the 9 sites, through interviews with parents and caregivers, and focus group discussions

with girls and boys. The average age of those assessed was 11 years.

The time that children have spent out of school ranged from 1 month to 7 years. Overall **the average time since children were last in school is 18.2 months**, over a year and a half ago.

Of the 130 assessed, a significant number of children had never started school. **28 children (20 girls, 8 boys) have never been to school before, over 1 in 5** of those surveyed.

The average age of children who have never been to school is 8.6 years. However, this group includes children as old as 11, 12 and 13. Girls are disproportionately represented within this group – 20 out of a total of 28. Whilst a higher numbers of girls than boys were included in the assessment, this alone does not account for the imbalance.

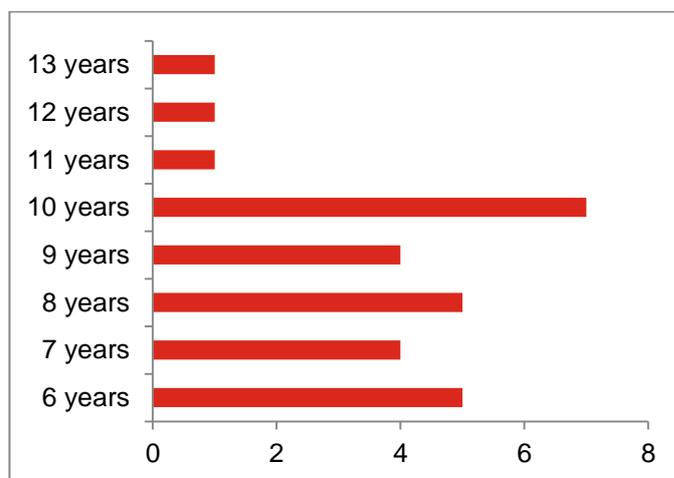
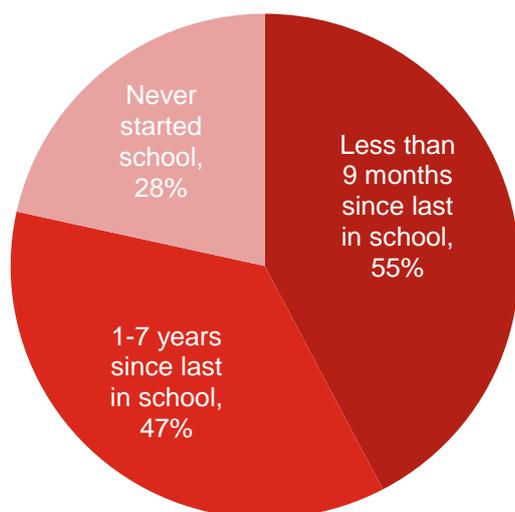
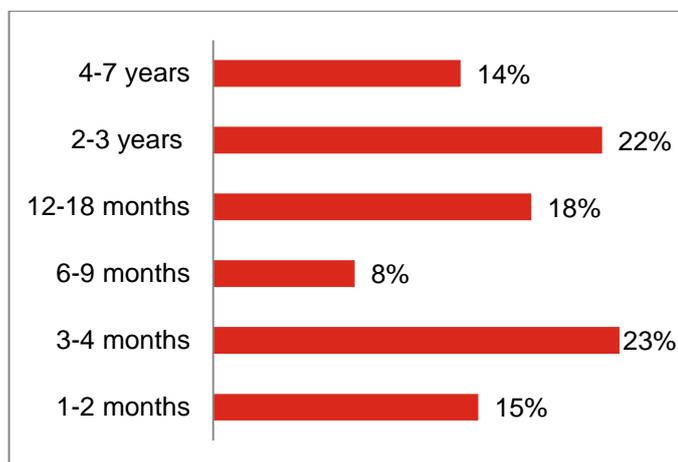


Table 4: Age of children who have never been to school

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Taking into account the children who have never started school, and assuming children start school aged 6, here is the following breakdown of the time that children have missed of school:



Tables 5 and 6: Time that children have spent out of school

Whilst 38% of those assessed had missed 1-4 months, aligning approximately with the period of time they had spent travelling to Europe, and residing in sites in Greece, for the majority (62%), their learning had been disrupted for far longer than the duration of their current displacement. The level of disruption is markedly different when disaggregated by nationality. 31 out of 54 girls and boys from Afghanistan (57%) have been out of school for 1-3 months, and **overall the average time spent out of school is 10.7 months. For Syrians on the other hand, the average time spent out of school is 25.8 months, over 2 years.** Just 14 children out of 67 (21%) have missed 1-3

months, whilst **30 children (45%) have been out of school for 3-7 years.**



Table 7: Average time children have spent out of school by nationality

Reasons for children being out of school

Almost half of parents and caregivers interviewed cited war as the reason for children being out of school.

“They have never been to school, not any of them. The war started when the oldest was 5, and the war has been going on for 5 years now. The local school was destroyed so there was no school to go to. If a school was not destroyed yet, at any time it could be destroyed. At home in Syria I taught them from the Qur’an, because that was all that we had”
Father of six girls from Syria, Cherso

1 in 3 cited the journey to Europe, and 1 in 5 cited displacement. 13% reported a combination of both war and displacement as a result of war as the reasons for girls’ and boys’ learning being disrupted.

“The children stopped going when the aeroplanes were above the school and the shotgun was in front of the house, we would hide the children in the corner. We went to Turkey for one month but it was not possible to go to school - not safe, they would get robbed if they went to school.”

“Why [have my children not been in school?]? Because of the war, the bombs, they are bombing the schools and everything.. And also because we had to run from place to place. The airplanes are bombing the schools without even caring if there are children in the school. The schools became dirt and rubble.”

“When the bombing started it was not safe to send them there. The school until then was not bombed, but the road to school was dangerous.”

Parents from Syria

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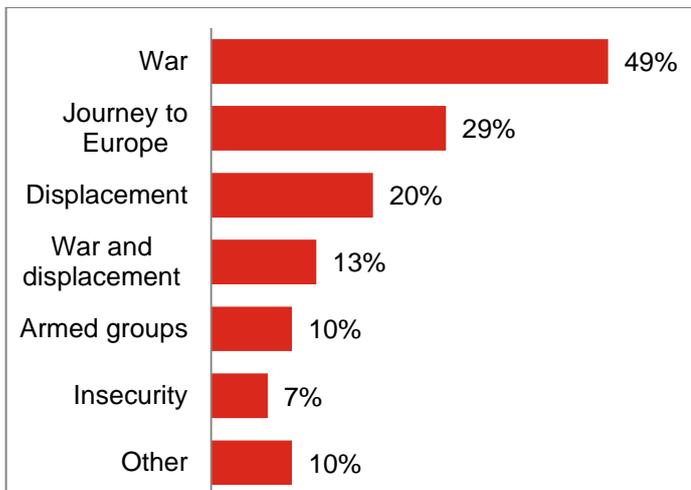


Table 8: Reasons for time children have been out of school

When disaggregated by nationality, the reasons given are quite different. The overwhelming majority of parents and caregivers from Syria (76%) reported war as the main reason for children having missed school, whilst 70% of those from Afghanistan cited displacement (including the journey to Europe).

A broader analysis demonstrates that in fact **86% of parents and caregivers reported war or the consequences of the war in Syria as the reason for children’s learning being disrupted.** The secondary reasons cited include displacement as a result of insecurity caused by the ongoing war (31%), and occupation by armed groups (18%). Just 16% of those interviewed said that the journey to Europe was the only reason for their children missing school.

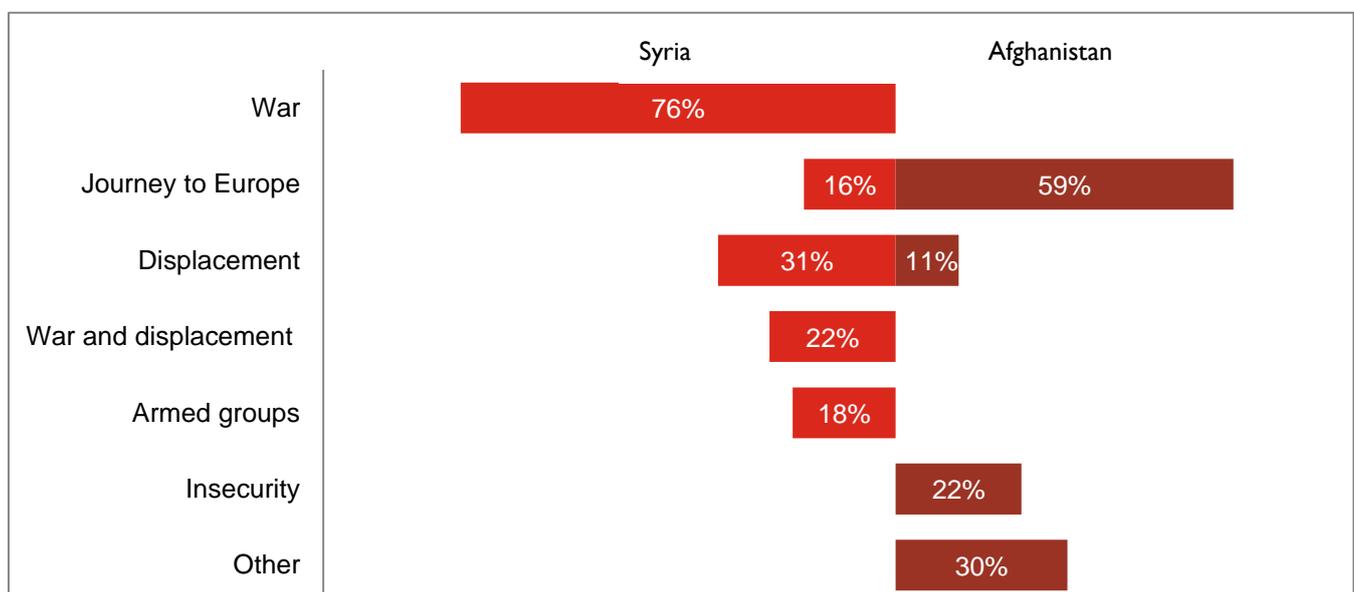
“[Why have my children been out of school?] Because of the war, the bombs, they are bombing the schools and everything. And also because we had to run from place to place. The airplanes are bombing the schools without even caring whether or not children are there. The schools will become like dirt and rubble”

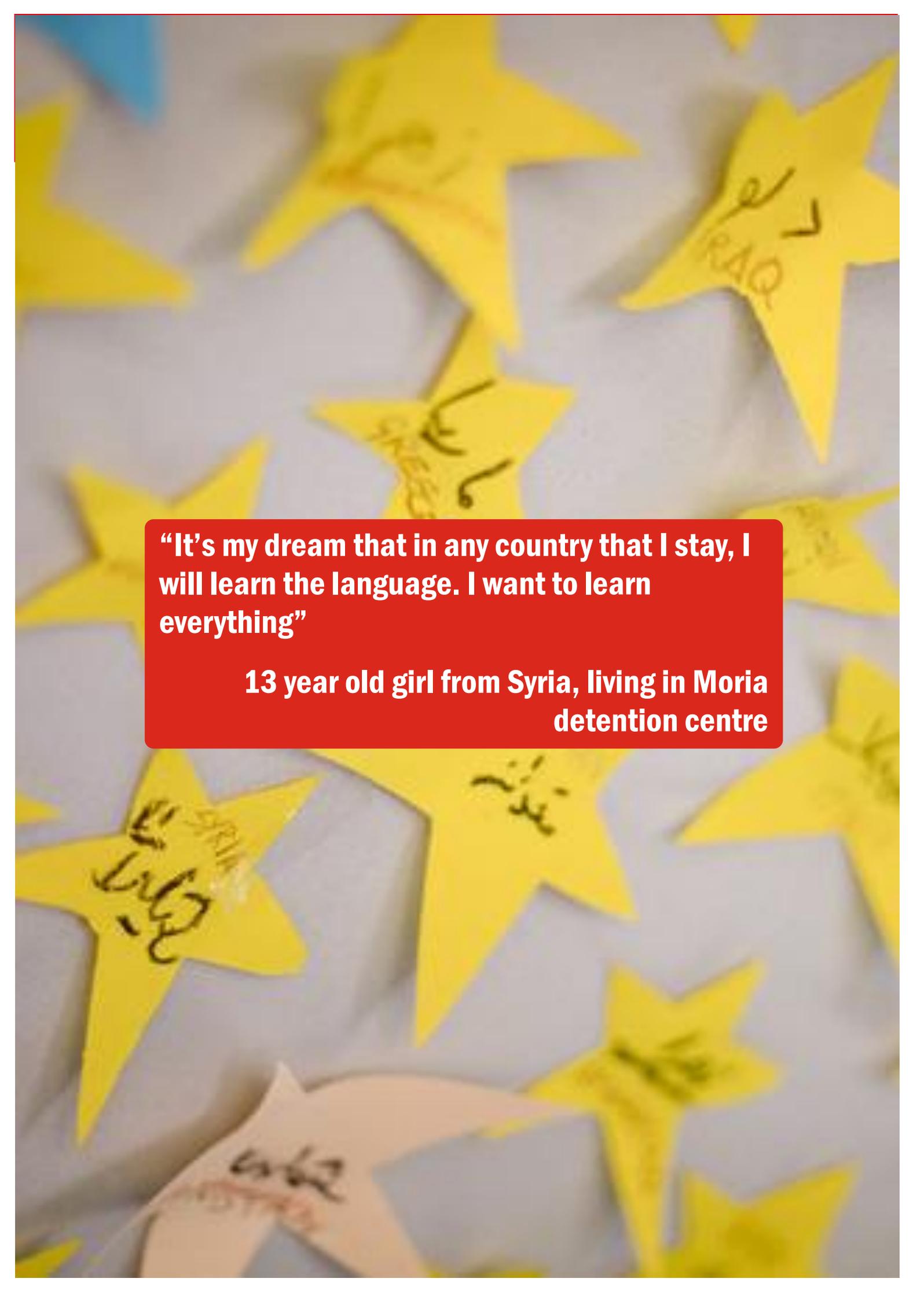
Mother of 4 from Idlib, Syria, Idomeni

Insecurity was cited by 22% of parents and caregivers from Afghanistan, the majority of whom identified the armed groups as the main threat to schools, teachers, and children.

For those for whom the journey to Europe was not the only reason their children had missed school, many parents from Afghanistan listed several barriers that prevented their children from attending school in their home country. One father living in Schisto said that his daughter had never been to school because she is deaf and has limited speech and there were no special schools available. In addition, the region where they lived is controlled by armed groups, who would not allow parents to send their girls to school. Whilst his sons did attend school previously, the conditions in the school and the quality were very poor. In particular, the facilities had no heating, there was a lack of materials, and only religious subjects were taught. As a result, his sons stopped going to school.

Table 9: Reasons for time children have been out of school, by nationality





“It’s my dream that in any country that I stay, I will learn the language. I want to learn everything”

13 year old girl from Syria, living in Moria detention centre

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Learning priorities

Parents and caregivers

English was by far the most reported learning priority by the 85 parents and caregivers interviewed. It was reported as the top learning priority by **71% of respondents**. The two most common reasons for this choice were a) it is an international language spoken in all Europe/the world b) it enables children to communicate with others.

“English, because it is the world's international language. For me, everything else is good, but English is our priority.”
Mother from Syria, Cherso

Those that did not identify English as their top priority highlighted the need for “general education” whilst others highlighted languages as a priority but did not specify which language:

“Languages, but I don't know which language because I don't know where we'll be”

Just 10 respondents (12%) identified Greek in addition to English, whilst 25 (29%) identified their children's first language (e.g. Arabic, Farsi). 8 respondents identified German as a priority as this is their intended country of settlement. 12 respondents highlighted the importance of learning the language of the country where they would settle, or the country that would “welcome them”, but did not specify the language as they did not know where this might be.

For a small number of respondents, questions around the learning priorities for their children elicited more emotive responses. This was true in particular for Idomeni, where families are living in an informal settlement of over 10,000 people beside the border fences with FYROM:

“To be educated in everything, not be make borders in education. I want them to grow to know everything. If my son falls and the ambulance asks him to write his name on the hospital form, he does not know how to even write it. English and the language of the country we will go to are important. We want our children to go to school in the new school year, not to lose another year. When my husband called me [from Germany], he says the children there are all going to school, and his heart broke into pieces knowing his

children are here and cannot go to school. We want to be a family and be safe and continue their education.”

Father of 6 from Idlib, Syria, Idomeni

“We are not arrived in Europe yet. First we must arrive in Europe. You could not be forced to learn something in school, every child should choose what he wants himself. We must have our own options for their education. Because it's hard to be pushed to do something you don't want to do”

Father of 2 from Syria, Idomeni

Children

When asking the same question of children, languages also emerged as the biggest learning priority. However, whilst English was the top requested language, there was a wider range of responses than with parents and caregivers. For example in Moria, the boys' focus group identified English as their first choice, followed by “everything else” including Arabic and Maths. And a girl living in the same detention centre said:

“It's my dream that in any country that I stay, I will learn the language. I want to learn everything”

In Schisto camp in the Atikka region, a focus group of 8 boys from Afghanistan aged 8-12 together identified German, English, Greek, Maths and Dutch. The focus group with 6 girls aged 10-15 in the same location, identified languages including English and Greek, and Science.

Teachers from the community

The teachers presented the broadest set of learning priorities. Whilst the level of priority given to English, children's first language, Greek, and other European languages aligns with that reported by parents, teachers gave a much broader picture of the learning, beyond the parameters of languages and other subjects. Behaviour and familiarity with being in a learning environment were key themes:

“The children have nothing to learn here. The children here have been out of school for many years and they have forgotten many things. So we cannot separate children according to age but according to their level of education. A basic need is for them to be in the classroom and to learn how to use their pencils and exercise book”

Female primary school teacher from Syria, Nea Kavala

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“If they want to really learn, first of all they have to know to hold a pencil, how to sit, how to respect the teacher, and how to listen. Then we can begin the subjects”

Female Arabic teacher from Syria, Kara Tepe

A former head teacher of a large primary school in Afghanistan with 35 years of teaching experience, complained that children are “too free here, they have to start studying to be busy, it is much better to be busy”. This concern around children being “too free” and living without the routine and structure that school offers was repeated by several respondents.

Quality of education received previously

Parent’s and caregivers opinions of the schooling their children received previously (where applicable) are varied according to their home country, and in some cases, their experience as refugees in other host countries.

Syrians

Only a very small minority of parents had complaints regarding the quality of education in Syria before the war started 5 years ago. Education was described by respondents as “good” or “very good”:

“The quality [of education before the war] was good. The teacher said it was a pity we had to leave when [the authorities] asked my husband to join the army, because we were afraid. A pity because my children were good students”

Mother living in Moria detention centre, Lesbos

Several parents similarly noted the status that their children had enjoyed as students, including a Kurdish mother from Aleppo living in Idomeni on the FYROM border:

“Syrian education was very good and all of our children were first in their class. The private schools were even better than Government schools because they had a smaller number of students per class.”

Mother from Syria, Idomeni

“In Aleppo the way of teaching, even if the student is not good at school, you are good, even one of the best! [The teachers] encouraged him. It’s famous in Syria, this method of teaching. He sees the teacher cares for him, and he will try harder to improve himself. There are lots of levels

[amongst students] but they treat them equally and so [the students] will try their best”

Father of two from Syria, Cherso

During several interviews, questions around education in Syria before the war drew extremely emotive responses from parents and caregivers, as they described what once was, and the impact that ongoing conflict has had on their children’s education, and the wider status of the Syrian people leaving for Europe:

“Before the war the education was good. We ran from Syria for education. If we don’t have education then we become like animals. We were put in boats and risked our lives because of education.”

Mother from Syria, Cherso

“Education was good but there is no country without its problems. The people from Aleppo we are very smart, but the government pushes down on us. Even Steve Jobs went away from Syria. The smart ones run away.”

Father from Aleppo, Idomeni

Syrians as refugees in neighbouring countries

6 respondents from Syria had children who had attended school as a refugee in a neighbouring country in the region – 2 in Turkey, 3 in Iraq and 1 in Pakistan. The period children attended school as refugees varied from 1 to 6 months. Language emerged as a key barrier to children’s learning. The same father from Cherso who described the positive teaching methods in Aleppo, complained that in Turkey there was no language support, no teaching of English, and poor teaching methods:

“In Turkey you don’t have this way of teaching. I had to give the teachers a present in order to encourage him. I would go to my Turkish neighbour to ask about the different letters so that I could help my son and he would know for the next class. My children are my life. I lost everything. I gave everything for my children to be educated, not to see the war and the [violence]”.

A Kurdish parent from Iraq described the quality of education living in a refugee camp in Turkey as “middling”, where teachers from a local public school gave some lessons to children, but not in a “real school”. Another mother in Nea Kavala said that her son stopped attending school in Turkey after 3 months because the language was too difficult, and he couldn’t

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communicate with other students. A Kurdish Syrian family described a similar experience in Iraq where the children attended lessons for 1 month but couldn't understand the local Kurdish dialect. The importance of investing in language support will be vital for all national governments in Europe, in order to tackle this barrier that families have experienced in primary host countries.

Afghanistan

In line with the reasons that parents reported children had missed school, those parents from Afghanistan whose children had attended school there complained of both insecurity and poor quality. Every parent interviewed whose children had attended school in Afghanistan cited **insecurity**. Whilst most described insecurity in general, several named armed groups as a threat to the safety of students (especially girls) and teachers. Two parents reported that their local schools would sometimes close because of fear of attack, and other times teachers would not turn up to teach as they were afraid. Several reported attacks on their children's schools, including bombs, gas attacks and deliberate poisoning of children's food. Whilst several parents were afraid for the safety of their daughters, given armed groups' opposition to girls' education, one mother was also afraid for her sons:

"I was afraid [armed groups] would take the children and recruit them to be soldiers. And then in school they ate poisoned food, so they did not go to school again".

Mother from Afghanistan, Kara Tepe

45% of Afghan respondents described the education their children received previously as of a poor quality. The remainder described insecurity alone, and just one respondent, a doctor who worked for INGOs and the UN and sent his children to a private school in Hirat, described the quality of education as "high". The reasons given for the poor quality of education include overcrowding, lack of qualified teachers, no training of teachers, poor facilities (including the cold), lack of material, and low quality of instruction.

Afghans living in Iran

12 parents were interviewed who had previously lived in Iran where their children had attended school. All but one of these parents commented on the cost of sending

their children to school in Iran, complaining that the fees were too high. 9 of the parents also described problems around discrimination in the classroom and as Afghan migrants and refugees living in Iran. One group of parents living in Kara Tepe in Lesbos linked these two issues:

"Discrimination was a problem, as Afghans you are treated differently. [For example] if you were late paying the school fees they would say "You have to go!""

Potential barriers to children accessing education

Just 3 parents and caregivers identified any barrier that might prevent their children from attending classes, should they be provided. Two relate to teachers – the need for qualified teachers, and that teachers encourage students. The final related to the current situation and its effect on children's wellbeing:

"The environment is not good here. I am concerned for their mental health, their psychology and their motivation is not good."

Father of 3 from Afghanistan, Schisto

Though not a common complaint reported by other respondents, this concern was mirrored by one girl and two unaccompanied adolescent boys taking part in FGDs. All three voiced concerns that their current situation would be a barrier to attending classes and learning:

"For me, I can't learn because my situation is so bad, so uncertain. For me I don't know where in Europe I will be, so I don't know what to learn"

16 year old boy from Syria, Diavata

"First of all, the psychological situation is very bad. First we must start with the psychological state of our minds and then we can go to school. Now I cannot for even a minute in a class"

17 year old boy from Iraq, Diavata

"I don't want education, I don't know [which country] I will learn in. I do not care if I am in school or not, I just want to be always with my family"

11 year old girl from Syria, Moria

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For these young people, the uncertainty around their future, and the difficulty of their current circumstances, makes the prospect of attending school right now hard to fathom.

83% of respondents did not identify any problems that might prevent children from attending classes once they are available. Three parents from Afghanistan said that it was “too soon to judge” what barriers there might be, and that they “cannot predict” what problems might arise.

Presence and availability of teachers in the community

18 teachers (13 female, 5 male) were interviewed across the 9 locations. Their backgrounds include Pre-School, Primary, Secondary and University levels, and experience ranges from one month to 30 years. This number interviewed is by no means representative of the number of qualified teachers present in the refugee and migrant community. One former head teacher in Schisto for example presented a list of 12 fellow teachers (9 female, 3 male) from Afghanistan who are meeting regularly to discuss ways to begin classes for children. Whilst conducting interviews in Cherso, a man from Syria, a firefighter by profession, approached the SC staff member to say that he had identified 8 teachers living in the camp who “are ready and happy to teach”. All teachers interviewed as part of the assessment were identified by parents and children. A total of 22 parents and caregivers – 1 in 4 - said they knew of teachers living in their sites.

“Yes there are a lot of teachers. We can bring them here easily. They are killing themselves to go back to teaching”
Mother of 3 from Syria, Cherso

Each respondent was asked whether they would be willing to teach if classes for children started in their camp. All but two teachers answered yes. One Syrian English teacher said she could not teach because she had just had her asylum application rejected and expected to be deported from Moria back to Turkey. And the second Afghan teacher living in Kara Tepe said she would not be able to support activities because she is 8 months pregnant.

The most resounding demonstration of the willingness of teachers from the refugee community to support the

provision of education is the fact that several already are. In Nea Kavala, several parents reported that a woman was providing lessons to 25 students in her tent, and a girl on her way to classes accompanied the assessment team to her tent. The female teacher described how she had taught children in her home in Syria when the war started and her school closed. With another teacher from Syria living in the camp she now delivers Arabic, English and Maths lessons to 25 girls and boys in Nea Kavala. Similarly in Elliniko I, the team met with two female teachers from Afghanistan who had cleared a space in one of the living areas and are teaching evening English classes to over 30 boys, girls and women living in the disused hockey stadium. Another teacher from Syria is already teaching Arabic classes on a daily basis at SC’s Child Friendly Space in Kara Tepe camp, having approached staff facilitating activities there. Whilst not currently leading activities, other teachers interviewed are taking steps to organise classes. In Schisto a group of 12 teachers have approached local authorities and a Ministry of Education representative to help secure a space to conduct classes, and basic materials.

When asked what support they would require in order to be able to teach, the most common response was “materials” including exercise books, pens, books in children’s first languages, black/white boards, tables, and desks. The second most cited request was “a place to teach”, be that some shade, a big enough tent, or a classroom:

“The place [to teach] is the first thing. There is no space big enough [currently]. There are different levels and ages but we can’t separate the children right now”

Female teacher from Syria, Nea Kavala

The lack of communal space was a common complaint amongst those teachers who are already conducting classes, or are planning to do so. Those who had sought out designated spaces for teaching children have had limited success.

Four teachers also suggested that training would be a welcome form of additional support. One primary school teacher in Elliniko III from Afghanistan with 30 years of experience said that although she had attended many seminars and training over the years, “I don’t know the system here”.

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Current access to learning

Whilst 100% of children are currently out of school, in several locations there are small initiatives providing opportunities for learning. This assessment did not include a comprehensive mapping of activities. However, a few general observations can be made of those initiatives found at each of the 9 locations.

In locations where SC runs Child Friendly Spaces (8 out of 9), basic Greek and English learning is included in the programme of recreational activities and psychosocial support. Activities are broadly disaggregated by age in some locations, but CFSs do not have the space for separate learning spaces with dedicated teachers and a full timetable of classes, where more structured learning can take place.



Credit: Gabriele Francois Casini/Save the Children

The three observed refugee-led initiatives have so far struggled to obtain the space needed to deliver classes to children. In Elliniko I and Nea Kavala, teachers from the community have designated small areas of their accommodation as learning spaces – in one case using their own tent, and in another, putting blankets on the floor and using shelves to block off the space from other sleeping areas. In both cases, this space is inadequate given both the numbers of children attending, and the overall numbers of school-age children living in each site. Teachers from the community also reported a lack of even basic materials, including books, pens and blackboards.

In addition to the initiatives listed above, several parents reported small ways in which they have tried to keep their children learning whilst they are without school. In Moria detention centre, a father from Afghanistan described how he helped children prepare poems that they read to the Pope during his recent visit. He also helps children prepare plays and songs. 6 parents (3 from Syria, 3 from Iraq) said that they have been doing a little teaching of their own children, including some English and Arabic. Parents and caregivers demonstrated how they have identified and made the most of the limited opportunities that their children have to learn:

“Yesterday we found some books in English to keep them busy in their minds and working on their letters. Also they go to the CFS. Of course we thought that when we got out [of Syria] they could continue [their education] at any kind of school wherever we go but unfortunately we are stuck here. They will be the first children to attend any activities and any school. My daughter goes to the CFS to learn English with the Arabic animator every day and then tries to teach the smaller children as well.”

Mother from Syria, Moria, Lesbos

Whilst there are some learning activities available in each site, the coverage is limited, no systematic camp-wide registration of students has taken place, and just two sites currently have designated learning spaces (Idomeni Cultural Centre and Schisto restaurant area). Therefore, education remains a large gap in the overall humanitarian response and service delivery at a site level. At no location are all children accessing non-formal education on a regular basis in designated learning spaces, disaggregated by age, according to a structured timetable, and with access to essential teaching and learning material.

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Site	Education activities taking place for children
Elliniko I	<p>Refugee-led initiative – evening English classes for 30+ including women inside the accommodation area - limited materials</p> <p>Basic English and Greek learning activities taking place at SC CFS (English and Greek)</p>
Elliniko III	<p>Basic English and Greek learning activities taking place at SC CFS (English and Greek)</p>
Schisto	<p>Military-led initiative using one of the permanent buildings for daily Greek classes, taught by a soldier with translation support from a refugee. Mixture of ages, children and adults together.</p> <p>Refugee-led initiative of 12 Afghan teachers, led by former head teacher, looking for materials and space to begin classes</p> <p>Basic English and Greek learning activities taking place at SC CFS (English and Greek)</p>
Kara Tepe	<p>Basic English and Greek learning activities taking place at SC CFS (English and Greek) in addition to daily Arabic classes by refugee teacher</p>
Moria	<p>Basic English and Greek learning activities taking place at SC CFS (English and Greek)</p>
Cherso	<p>Basic English and Greek learning activities taking place at SC CFS (English and Greek)</p>
Diavata	<p>SOS Children’s Village – Greek language classes open to adults and young people</p>
Idomeni	<p>Idomeni Cultural Centre – semi-permanent structure with two learning spaces and an outdoor recreational area. Activities include languages and maths, and teachers are composed of international and refugee volunteers</p>
Nea Kavala	<p>Refugee-led initiative – daily Arabic, Maths and English classes for 25 children of mixed aged in a tent belonging to one of two female teachers</p> <p>Learning activities taking place at SC CFS (English and Greek)</p>

Table 10: Existing initiatives observed at each site

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Recommendations

To humanitarian actors and the Greek authorities:

- In all locations, **prioritise the inclusion of education in the humanitarian response** to the current refugee and migrant crisis in Greece, including the establishment of an **Education Working Group**.
- **Provide immediate access to education for all out-of-school refugee and migrant children residing in Greece, ensuring no further disruption to children's learning and helping to mitigate the long-term impact on children's development, wellbeing, and future life opportunities.**
- Provide learning that is **relevant to the diverse needs of children, based on the different likely scenarios** (ie. receive asylum in Greece, family reunification or relocation to another EU country of asylum), **and taking into consideration the priorities** of children, parents and caregivers. In the short to medium term, non-formal education should include English, Greek, basic numeracy, and basic literacy in the first language of instruction (e.g. Arabic, Farsi), as well as structured psychosocial support (PSS) and child resilience activities. Given the level of disruption to many children's education to date, structure, routine, a quality learning environment, and positive teacher-student relationships will be crucial to ensuring the needs of out-of-school children are met.
- **Involve the affected community** at all stages in the design and implementation of education programmes, including the **use of refugee and migrant teachers** in the delivery of first language learning, the participation of children, and consultation of parents and caregivers.
- Lay the ground work for **children's access to formal education in Greece** or in another country of relocation/asylum/return, including an assessment of the capacity of the national system to enrol students from September and provide for the diverse needs of child refugees and migrants.

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Information gaps

Two information gaps have emerged as key priorities for the urgent implementation of non-formal education, and for preparing for children's access to formal education:

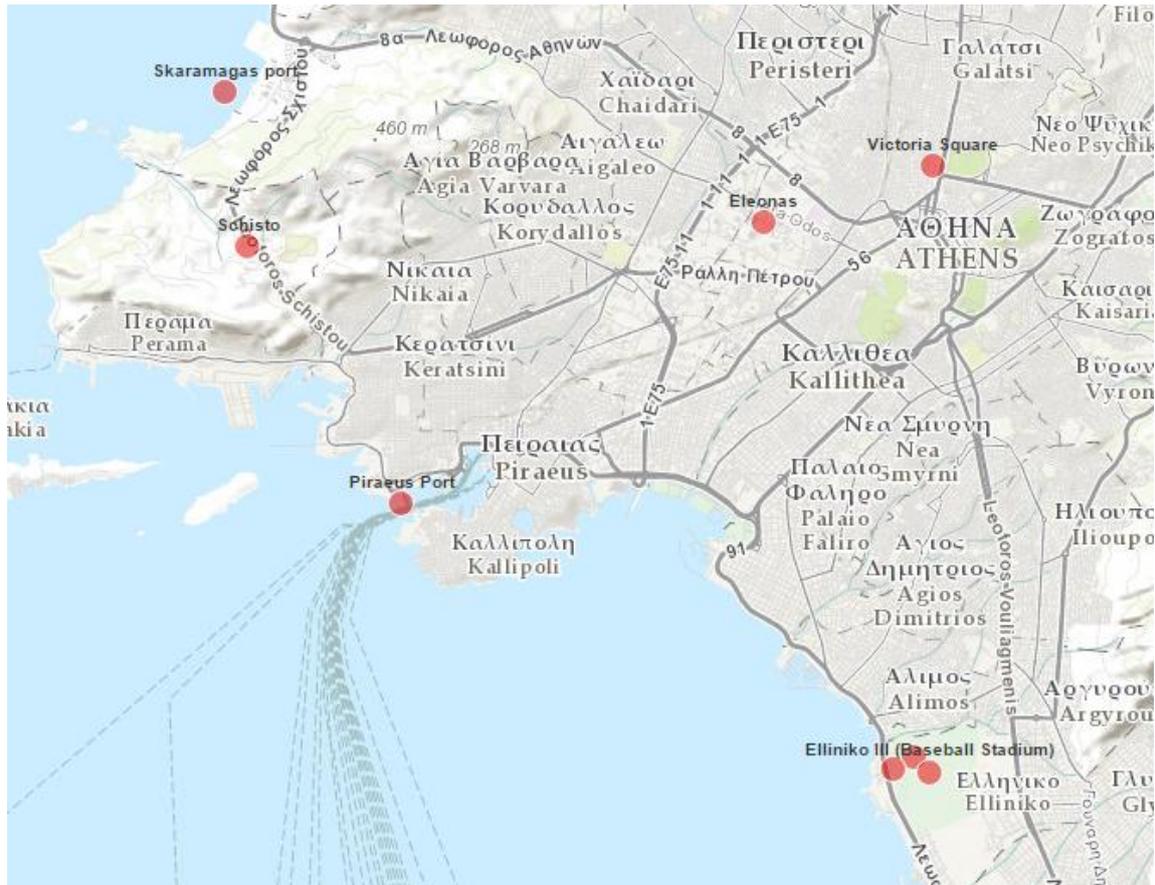
1. A full mapping of existing and planned educational activities in all sites in Greece in order to ensure the best use of existing resources and capacities, and to coordinate an effective education response, ensuring no child is left behind.
2. A nation-wide assessment of the capacity of the Greek formal education system to receive refugee and migrant children from September. This would need to be completed on a national as well as a local level, taking into account the different capacities of schools within municipalities currently hosting official and unofficial sites, and the varied needs of children. Key gaps in capacity where teachers and schools require additional resources and support would be identified as part of this assessment.

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Annexes

Annex I – Maps of sites visited

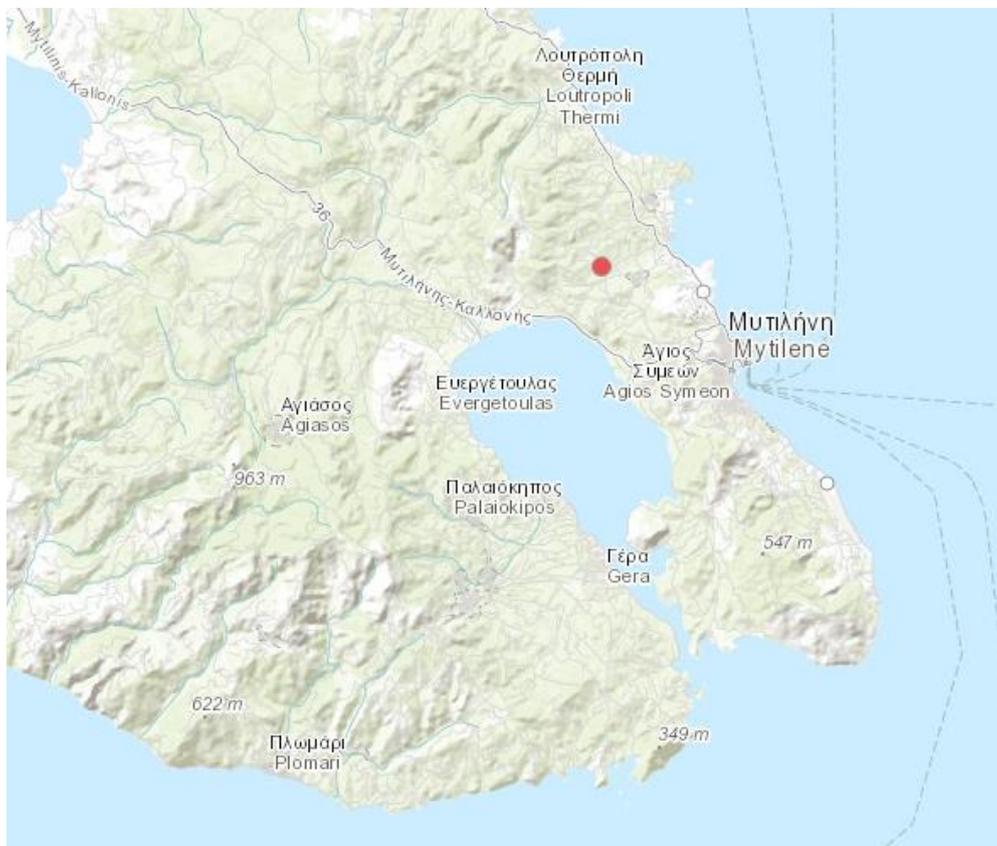
Athens/Attika



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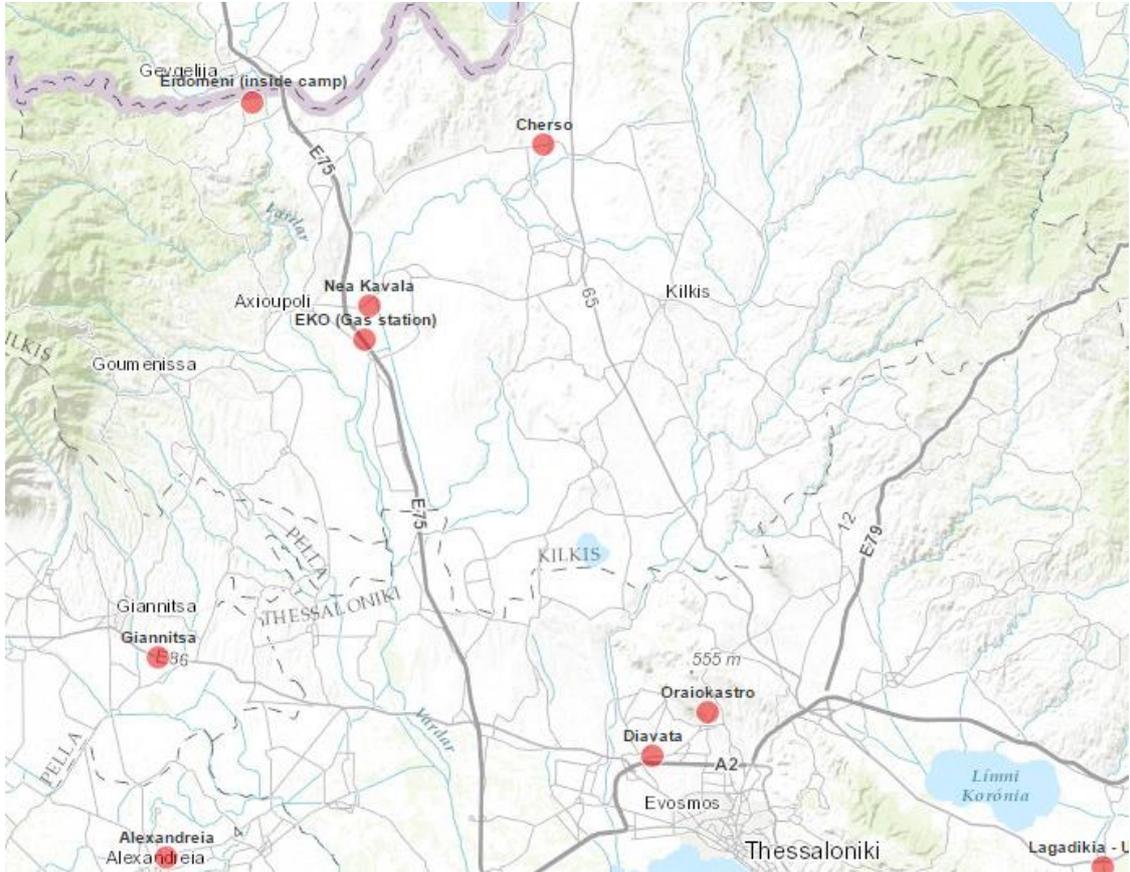


Lesbos



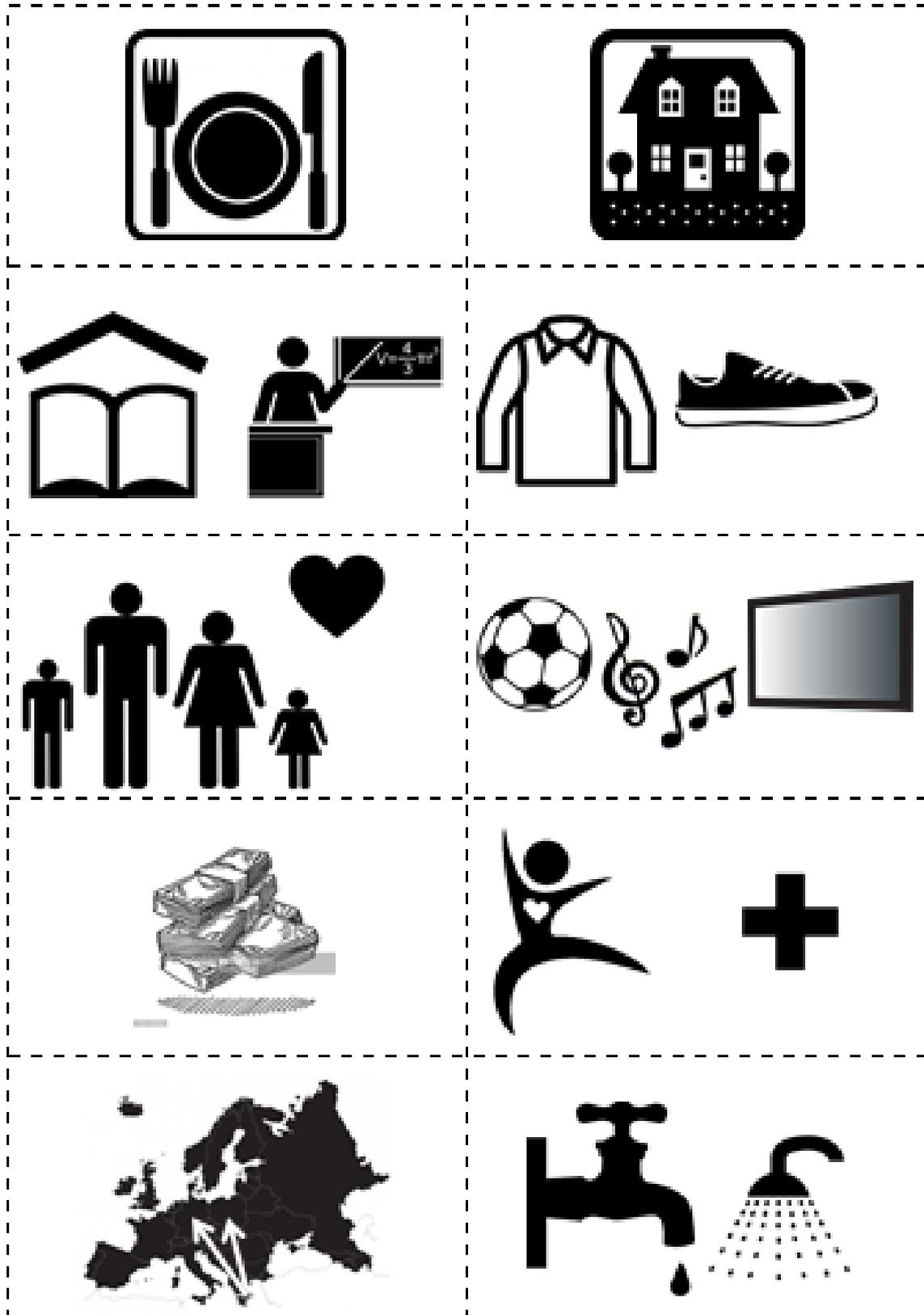
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North Greek Border



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Annex 2 – Focus Group Discussion prioritisation flashcards



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Annex 3 – Definitions of types of education

Formal Education	Structured, graded educational system running from primary school through to university
Non-Formal Education	Any organized educational activity outside the established formal system that has learning objectives and outcomes
Informal Education	Lifelong process where individuals acquire attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from daily experience and educational influences and resources in their environment – from family and neighbours, from work and play, from the marketplace, the library and the mass media

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Annex 4 - Endnotes

ⁱ http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/70207_71753.html

ⁱⁱ <http://www.sec-ed.co.uk/best-practice/supporting-syrian-refugee-children-who-arrive-in-your-school/>.

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/country.php?id=83>

^{iv} <http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/country.php?id=83>



Save the Children believes every child deserves a future. In Greece and around the world, we work every day to give children a healthy start in life, the opportunity to learn and protection from harm. When crisis strikes, and children are most vulnerable, we are always among the first to respond and the last to leave. We ensure children's unique needs are met and their voices are heard. We deliver lasting results for millions of children, including those hardest to reach.

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