

# THE HANDS UP FOR SYRIA APPEAL

## FINAL REPORT 2020

*Educate Today, Rebuild Tomorrow*



مؤسسة الأصفري  
The Asfari Foundation

Saïd  
Foundation



HANDS UP  
FOUNDATION

# OVERVIEW

As Syria's brutal civil war enters its 10th year, life remains precarious for many civilians. The UN's Refugee Agency (UNHCR) estimates that some 12.2 million Syrians – around two-thirds of the population – have been forced to flee their homes either as internally displaced persons (IDPs) or refugees abroad. Syrians now constitute the largest displaced population in the world. At least half of those affected are children.



We can't take a picture of the students in class without them waving at the camera! © SAWA

The crisis in stability has produced a crisis in education. Some 2.1 million children aged 5–17 are now out of school, with 8.1 million in need of ongoing educational support. Before 2011, around 26% university-age Syrians were enrolled in degree programmes. Now the figure stands at a mere 5% – well below the global average of 37%.

Help is required to save this “lost generation” of young people robbed by the war of their school years – not just for their sake, but for Syria's. It is essential that these young people acquire the knowledge, the skills and the confidence necessary to rebuild Syrian society and welcome back prosperity when the fighting ends.

For this reason, in 2016, we launched the Hands Up for Syria (HUFS) Appeal – a collaboration between the Asfari Foundation, the Saïd Foundation and the Hands Up Foundation. You contributed an extraordinary £4.15m, which the Saïd and Asfari foundations then doubled to £8.3m. The funds were entrusted to Save the Children, the International Rescue Committee (IRC), and UNHCR for projects to help young Syrian refugees back into education. In 2019, SAWA for Development and Aid (SAWA) were brought in as an additional partner, through the Hands Up Foundation, on account of their exemplary work in this space, and to utilise the remaining funds that could not be deployed by the aforementioned organisations.

In this report, we take stock of the vital impact your donations have had over the last four years on the lives of Syrian children, their parents and their teachers, as well as on university students and vulnerable women in some of the world's most insecure communities.

As COVID-19 further complicates the humanitarian situation across the region, and the world looks on for a safe, sustainable way out of lockdown, it's our chance to say a heartfelt “thank you” for the crucial boost your generosity has given to literally thousands of young people, and their families, as they await the chance to resume their lives in safety and peace.



 **111,010**  
CHILDREN, YOUNG AND  
VULNERABLE PEOPLE AND THEIR  
FAMILY MEMBERS HELPED



# SYRIA: HOW YOU HELPED

Syria was, predictably, where the challenges presented by the war were most daunting. With the fighting far from over, an estimated 13.1 million in the Syrian Arab Republic today stand in need of humanitarian assistance, including some 6.6 million IDPs. Amid the torn fabric of everyday life, the hopes for many of a normal education have receded. More than two million children – a third of Syria's child population – are out of school, with around 40% of school buildings damaged or destroyed in the conflict.

Save the Children led the HUFS response within Syria itself. In partnership with local NGO Olive Branch, it ran three Alternative Learning Centres and five Education Tents in the Dara'a and Quneitra governorates of south-central Syria. Its popular Back to Learning scheme brought basic skills training to children aged 3-15 and life skills education to adolescents in a safe, stable and fun environment.

Before the government's advance into Eastern Ghouta forced the closure of the programme in April 2018, HUFS money directly benefited more than 25,000 children, indirectly impacting an estimated 60,000 in the children's wider community. Olive Branch also used the funds to engage young men and boys at local mosques in education to improve their work prospects.

With the war ongoing, the operating environment for relief organisations can change rapidly. As the government's capture of Eastern Ghouta prompted a swell of refugees towards north-west Syria, Save the Children diverted HUFS funding to scale up the emergency response in Idlib, Northern Aleppo and Northern Hama as they worked to deal with the influx of these arrivals.

Save the Children's work in these unimaginably tough circumstances produced some invaluable lessons and notable successes. Syrian locals and the NGO field staff repeatedly stressed the value of

its early learning programmes. Vital knowledge was gained in developing preparedness plans for drastic scenarios, especially the early stages of a military advance.

The project's achievements have helped secure funding for teacher training for Save the Children in other parts of Syria. But most important of all was the message the project sent to the children of Syria: that amid the devastation and chaos, work is still being done to provide for their future and enable them to learn, grow and prosper.



Refugee children at school in a community based early childhood education classroom. © International Rescue Committee (IRC)

 **37,814**

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE  
BENEFITED FROM PROGRAMMES  
DIRECTLY

 **125**

STUDENTS FUNDED  
THROUGH UNIVERSITY

 **1,689**

CHILDREN ACCESSED PRESCHOOL HEALING  
CLASSROOMS (PHC), WITH 92% SEEING IMPROVEMENT  
IN COGNITIVE AND SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILLS

# SUCCESS STORIES

## LAYAN

Mariam and Ali fled Syria with their baby son Hussein and unborn daughter Layan. Now four years old, Layan does not understand that she is living as a refugee, and considers the town of Akroum in Lebanon as her home. It's the only place she knows, and where her childhood memories are being formed.



Children patiently waiting for their lesson to start  
© International Rescue Committee (IRC)

Layan has been attending early childhood education classes at an IRC centre for two years. Initially she was passive and refused to communicate. But despite the harsh conditions and continued deprivation in which her family lives, Layan has never missed a day of school and is now growing into a bright, intelligent, fun-loving child who smiles and loves to draw, colour and play with playdough.

She has made friends with other children in the classroom, and at home repeats French songs and words.

*"I love sending my daughter to school," says Mariam. "Our home is too small and playing outside is not an option as it's not a safe environment. The centre has relieved me in so many ways; I know very well that Layan and Hussein are in safe hands and are treated with much love and compassion."*

## FATIMA

Fatima, a DAFI alumna, is now a master's student at the American University of Beirut. Originally from Idlib, Syria, she fled to Lebanon in 2012. Her university education, funded by HUFs donors, has given her the scope and confidence to set some seriously ambitious goals.



Fatima (21), a DAFI alumna and is now a Master's student in Astrophysics at American University of Beirut (AUB) and a graduate assistant © UNHCR/Antoine Tardy

*"DAFI has given me the opportunity to overcome all the obstacles that were ahead of me," she says. "My journey will not stop here. I will keep on pushing myself to help my community and myself in whichever way I can. One of my goals is to win the Nobel Prize in Physics, or to work for NASA! When I was a child, one of my dreams was to become an astronaut."*

*"I believe something: being a refugee does not mean that you cannot have dreams. You need to dream big in order to achieve big."*

Fatima knows the expertise she is gaining will one day be needed in her home country.

*"The future is waiting for us," she says. "Eventually we will have to go back to Syria and to rebuild our country. So, we have to face our fears and to navigate through them. Syria really needs us. There are many generations who are waiting for us there. We have to help them, to make the future beautiful for them."*



## NADIA

*“Our house in Daraa was like heaven, a small house with a garden full of flowers and plants. I used to plant grains the most,”* says Nadia, 43, who fled Syria for Jordan in 2013 with her four children. At first, living in Jordan was difficult as she tried to build a new life for her family in an unfamiliar land. A neighbour encouraged her to visit an IRC women’s centre, where Nadia started courses in sewing, English and IT. She also took out a loan for 50 dinars (£57) to buy a sewing machine to make and sell clothes.

*“When I bought the machine, I was only working for my neighbors,” she explains. “Then my mental health started to get better, and I started to get involved within society.”*

She wanted to become more self-sufficient. Through an IRC business training programme, Nadia received a grant of 2,658 JOD (£3034), and with this support has been able to grow her business, increase her profits and finally employ some staff.

*“My workshop today hosts 10 Syrian and Jordanian workers,” she says. “I dream of owning a clothing factory and a trademark five years from now.”*

Back at the IRC women’s center, Nadia now volunteers as a fashion designer and sewing trainer. *“I love education and training, and feel proud when I transmit the knowledge I have to others, especially when they benefit from it,”* she says. *“To date, I have trained almost 200 women.”*

She is thrilled to have found her independence, and a way to build not only her own economic resilience but that of others in her community.

*“The most beautiful thing in life is to be independent through your work,”* she says.



Grant recipient Nadia in her workshop.  
© International Rescue Committee (IRC)



TEACHERS IN COMMUNITIES WHERE PHC WERE IMPLEMENTED ATTENDED FURTHER TRAINING, WITH 95% SCORING 75-100% ON CLASSROOM ASSESSMENTS AFTER THE TRAINING COURSE



PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS TRAINED IN SUPPORTING CHILDREN’S LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT



99% OF PARENTS PROMOTED LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT AT HOME AFTER ATTENDING THE PARENTING SKILLS SESSION



VULNERABLE WOMEN ACCESSED SKILL-BUILDING ACTIVITIES IN NON-TRADITIONAL SECTORS

# HOW YOU HELPED SYRIANS IN LEBANON

Lebanon carries the heaviest per capita refugee burden in the world, with an estimated 1.5 million displaced Syrians scattered across the country, many in informal tent settlements. Around a third are children.

Education needs among this precarious population remain high. Around 54% of school-age refugees do not receive any form of education at all, and are at increased risk of exploitation, violence and discrimination due to critical years of learning they have missed and the difficulty of protecting their wellbeing out of school.



Refugee children at school in a community based early childhood education classroom. © International Rescue Committee (IRC)

HUFS projects have been working tirelessly to plug gaps at every level in the overburdened Lebanese education system – offering everything from clean, colourful kindergartens to university scholarships.

Save the Children ran 11 learning centres across Lebanon, giving maths, literacy, art and hygiene classes to children aged 3–6 to prepare them for enrolment in the Lebanese school system. Thanks to their efforts, almost 3,000 children were able to rejoin formal schooling, while 1,000 caregivers were coached in how to support their child's learning progress at home.

SAWA focused its efforts on the rural area of Beka'a, which hosts some 38% of Lebanon's Syrian refugees. Through its Retention Support Centre, SAWA ran classes in Arabic, maths, English, science, music and sport for almost 300 out-of-school children, two-thirds of whom went on to enrol in the Lebanese school system.

With cold weather and food security a priority in the region, SAWA distributed wood and fuel to families, providing hot daily meals and a winter jacket to each and every student. Thanks to HUFS funds, these essential services will be continued for another year.

In Bek'a'a and the volatile region of Akkar, IRC provided 25 Preschool Healing Classrooms, catering for 1,689 children. Based on 30 years' experience delivering education in emergencies, these classrooms go beyond academics to create positive environments where children feel safe and cared for, and are able to experiment with play-based learning materials and decoration kits.

The successes were astounding: 92% of children showed improvement in their cognitive and social-emotional skills thanks to the project. The IRC also trained 72 teachers and teaching assistants, boosting livelihood opportunities and enhancing teaching capacity in these communities.

Through the UNHCR DAFI programme, HUFS donors provided for a total of 55 Syrian refugees to access university scholarships in Lebanon and further their dreams of higher education and widen their horizons. The impact spread beyond the individuals themselves, with DAFI students regularly volunteering their time and skills to contribute to positive and sustainable changes in their communities. Your donations provided an opportunity that the scholarship recipients will never forget – Manal, 25, was out of education for five years after fleeing Syria, but has since been able to resurrect her dream of qualifying as a lawyer.

"I lost these five years, until DAFI came to my rescue," she says. "I felt so happy when I received my scholarship. Resuming my studies was my ultimate dream."

 **117**  
INDIVIDUALS RECEIVED  
STARTUP GRANTS AND  
MENTORSHIP

 **174**  
YOUNG PEOPLE ATTENDED  
SIX-WEEK BUSINESS SKILLS  
TRAINING



# WHAT YOUR DONATIONS ACHIEVED IN JORDAN

Jordan hosts the second highest number of refugees per capita in the world, with 655,000 registered Syrian refugees and a roughly equal number unregistered. UNICEF estimates that 85% of Syrian children live in poverty, while high unemployment rates mean that negative coping strategies and exploitation are rife, with families, particularly women and mothers, forced into dangerous, degrading work, early marriage or child labour.

Despite the Jordanian government's commitment to securing the education rights of refugee children, access to learning remains a challenge for a large proportion of refugees, with an estimated 83,920 Syrian children out of school.

Save the Children's project went out among hard-to-reach families (refugees living outside urban areas in informal tented settlements on farming land) in the Jordan Valley to focus on livelihood and child-protection barriers to school enrolment. Running from 2017 until June 2019, the project was a resounding success, reaching 800 children through sessions on protection and livelihood, three-quarters of whom showed improvement in psychosocial wellbeing, with 433 proceeding to enrolment in the school system.

Meanwhile, 391 parents and caregivers completed training in household budgeting and personal development, and a further 356 completed vocational training. Startup kits gave many the means of establishing their own businesses – smoothing the pathway towards a stable education for their children.

Over in the Jordanian capital of Amman, two-thirds of refugees live below the absolute poverty line, in accommodation classified as “urgently requiring attention”. The IRC's Appeal-funded flagship centre at Queen Noor Garden in the east of the city directly benefited over 5,000 members of this highly vulnerable community.

Targeting vulnerable youth groups and women, this outstanding outreach effort provided services to 1,200 individuals, offering almost a thousand vulnerable women with skills training in non-traditional sectors, along with case-management support for those affected by gender-based violence.

Its broad sweep of activities, which included group sessions, community meetings and awareness raising events, all fostered lasting community cohesion, while many of the 571 individuals the IRC supplied with apprenticeships, skills training and startup grants have started successful home-based businesses and are employing others in their community.



Women attend an IRC skills building session.  
© International Rescue Committee (IRC)

Finally, over the four years, HUFs funding was used to put 70 Syrian students through university via the UNHCR DAFI scholarship programme. These students are already giving back a great deal to their communities, with many volunteering across Jordan in areas such food distribution, data analysis, teaching and health.

Some, meanwhile, have even bigger dreams to help Syria's population-in-exile.

“My dream,” says Ousai, 29, a student in his second year at Zarqa University who has been living in camps since 2013, “is to create an NGO supporting refugee students who want to apply for scholarships in order to prepare them in the best possible way.

“I wish people would pay attention to all the greatness and talent that exists among us.”



YOUNG PEOPLE WERE  
RECRUITED FOR BUSINESS  
SKILLS TRAINING OR  
APPRENTICESHIPS



TEACHERS AND TEACHING  
ASSISTANTS TRAINED ACROSS  
THE PROJECTS



CHILDREN SUPPORTED BY HOLISTIC PROGRAMMES  
FOCUSING ON IMPROVING LIVELIHOOD OPPORTUNITIES  
FOR THEIR FAMILIES AND FACILITATING IMPROVED CHILD  
PROTECTION AND ACCESS TO EDUCATION, WITH 76%  
SHOWING IMPROVEMENT IN PSYCHOSOCIAL WELLBEING





With deep gratitude from the Asfari Foundation, the Saïd Foundation and Hands Up Foundation to all the Hands Up for Syria Appeal donors for their enormous generosity.

#### Additional Photo Credits:

Front Cover: We can't take a picture of the students in class without them waving at the camera! © SAWA. Page 2 - bottom left: DAFI students on campus in Beirut, Lebanese University Hadath Campus. © UNHCR/Antoine Tardy 2018. Page 3 - Top right: Women attend an IRC skills building session. © International Rescue Committee (IRC).

#### Backcover left to right / top to bottom:

1: Manal, (25), a third-year student in Law at the Lebanese University (UL Campus in Zahle, Beqaa) on a DAFI scholarship; from Al Zabadani in Syria, lives in Lebanon since 2011 © UNHCR/Antoine Tardy. 2: Refugee children at school in a community based early childhood education classroom. © International Rescue Committee (IRC). 3: Women attend an IRC skills building session. © International Rescue Committee (IRC). 4: UNHCR staff conduct focus group discussion with DAFI students © UNHCR/Antoine Tardy. 5: Students working on activities that incorporate technology and available resources in the center. © SAWA. 6: Our

teachers showing off their "Appreciation Certificates" they received from SAWA on teachers' day. © SAWA. 7: Syrian refugee studying at Al-Albayt University on a DAFI scholarship. © UNHCR/Antoine Tardy. 8: Children patiently waiting for their lesson to start. © International Rescue Committee (IRC). 9: The classes are completed for the day, time to get on the busses and head home. © SAWA. 10: Ousai (29), a DAFI student from Daraa, Syria; second-year BA student in Management of Information Systems at Zarqa University in Jordan. © UNHCR/Antoine Tardy 11: Teacher training at IRC. © International Rescue Committee (IRC). 12: Women attend an IRC skills building session. © International Rescue Committee (IRC). 13: Grant recipient Nadia in her workshop. © International Rescue Committee (IRC). 14: Women attend an IRC skills building session. © International Rescue Committee (IRC). 15: Fatima (21), a DAFI alumnus and is now a master's student in Astrophysics at American University of Beirut (AUB) and a graduate assistant from Idlib, Syria; in Lebanon since 2012. © UNHCR/Antoine Tardy. 16: Omar enjoying his reading class. © International Rescue Committee (IRC).

\* Some names have been changed to protect the children attending the programmes.



Save the Children

