

Youth Task Force in Za'atari Refugee Camp

Young People and COVID-19

May 2020

The Youth Task Force (YTF) is an action-oriented field-level forum, which is focused on youth-specific advocacy, planning and coordination, while addressing the cross-cutting nature of the population group, and works toward advancing the youth agenda in humanitarian settings in line with the Global Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action.

Youth Voices

The lockdown that became a learning opportunity



When 13-year old Salam first visited UNHCR/Blumont's center one year ago, she was impressed by the number of classes offered at the center. She decided to take part in some of the classes and to commit until she benefitted from the free extra-curricular support. But the start of COVID-19 changed the daily routine drastically, and "teacher Asma asked us to stay home and to create an e-mail instead, to be able to access the Connected Learning Hub Platform", said Salam. This was easier said than done because she had never created an e-mail before.

But together with her fellow students, Salam discovered via the internet how to create e-mail to continue the Arabic, English, and Science lessons.

However, internet access in the camp is a constant challenge. But Salam did not let that stop her and instead, she started waking up at dawn to avoid the heaviest hours of internet usage in the camp, with the goal to continue her learning. Studying remotely was a new endeavor, and Salam always thought that the only proper way to study was to be physically present in a classroom together with a teacher. After this new experience, Salam now believes that online learning through digital devices is a great and innovative way to study! As our societies become more digitalized, this option for learning is adding complementary skills that cannot be taught in class!

Practices from the Field

How are Youth Programs in Za'atari Camp Adapted to the Current COVID-19 Response?

Za'atari Refugee Camp is highly affected by the nationwide curfew and lockdown measures. All youth spaces, centers, and programs are not operating due to the government's decision to close all public places; only allowing public hospitals to operate. Many Syrian Refugee youth in the camp have limited access to technology and alternate forms of education and information that are being promoted via virtual platforms and online. Despite the internet connectivity challenges, youth-serving organizations in the camp, with great engagement and participation of young people, have developed alternative methods to continue engaging adolescents and youth in the camp. Below are a few examples:



50 youth volunteers at UNFPA/Questscope Youth Center are utilizing their WhatsApp groups to spread awareness messages to their families, neighborhoods, peers, and social networks about COVID-19. Each volunteer is working via WhatsApp with a group of young people to provide guidance and mentorship on a few selected activities such as music, indoor sports, recreational crafts, English, and tips on life skills and self-development. Mentorship programs remain active through regular phone calls by mentors and mentees, with a focus on coping mechanisms during COVID-19.

Blumont's learning activities during COVID-19 have been shifted to remote solutions. Instructors and volunteers have been trained to begin remote classes for students and using online platforms to continue engaging youth in the camp while keeping everyone safe. A pilot phase has been conducted during April to get feedback from young people.

The quick assessment concluded that young people are encouraged to focus on their formal education first and then urged to invest in their personal free time through additional knowledge since they are requested to work on the platform without direct supervision of coaches. Students are not restricted to specific times which means they have an open-source platform they can access at any time suitable for their schedules. The assessment also showed that the majority of students are positive towards this kind of innovative learning platforms, as it is a good source for stress-release from traditional learning.



UNFPA in partnership with the Royal Health Awareness Society organized a virtual workshop on COVID-19 for the YTF members, youth workers, and educators from the camp. YTF members are mobilizing messages from the national campaign "Elak o Feed" to share reliable and evidence-based information about the pandemic among their youth networks.

UNICEF launched the 14-Days Challenge, where youth are engaged via their social media accounts including 28 activities youth can do at home. In order to engage more youth from the camp, who may have limited accessibility, youth workers shared the challenges via phones and mobilized youth peers through word of mouth. The challenges are available on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).



Trainer from the community working with NRC is explains a tailoring session to her students online. The young man is using WhatsApp to view the same session while at home.

NRC Youth Program did not let the lockdown interrupt the delivery of courses to enrolled youth. All learners that had their courses interrupted were given the opportunity to continue their learning remotely. Through a variety of remote facilitation methodologies and the usage of WhatsApp as a base-learning platform, 238 youth in Za'atari are able to continue their learning in vocational and ICT related courses. To maintain the psychosocial/social engagement approach in the programs, recreational activities such as calligraphy, sketching and reading clubs continued remotely as well as disseminating critical COVID-19 information.

Camp Priorities of Youth in Za'atari

"Daring to ask, listen and act. A snapshot of the impact of COVID-19 on women's and girls's rights and sexual and reproductive health."



In April 2020, UNFPA Jordan in coordination with Plan International and the Institute for Family Health (IFH)/ Noor Al Hussein Foundation, commissioned a rapid assessment of the COVID-19 situation in Jordan. The aim was to measure the impact of COVID-19 on gender-based violence and sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and rights among women and adolescent girls. One of the findings were that 55% of adolescent girls reported an increase in household tasks including doing chores and looking after younger children in the household, followed by hindered mobility. Adolescent girls are affected by closures of non-formal education opportunities such as women and girls' safe spaces and youth programs, depriving them of social engagement with their peers and educators. Additionally, young girls reported having less information on how they can access SRH services during the lockdown than prior to it. The report recommends recognizing SRH services and rights as essential services (including family planning, sexual health education, and maternal services) and should remain available and open during times of restriction, provided they follow hygiene protocols. Click [here](#) to access the assessment.

NRC Internal (Micro) Assessment on Young People

On March 25th-26th 2020, NRC carried out a rapid assessment for young people aged 15-32 across Za'atari and Azraq Refugee camps and host communities to better understand their access to technology and internet, interests, learning priorities and youth ideas and motivation to support their communities as part of the COVID-19 response.

According to the findings, 90% of youth own a smartphone but only 14% claim to have engaged in remote online learning this past year. Females, host residents, and youth in formal education are most likely to engage in this form of learning. The top 3 reasons for not pursuing e-learning includes: No/unreliable internet access, preference for classroom-based learning, and no access to required devices. There was a high expression of interest (73%) in remote learning among those who have not previously engaged, particularly among camp residents and older youth. The assessment indicates that although access to smartphones is high, there is a need for greater internet access. As such, remote learning solutions should focus on low-bandwidth methodologies in order to maximize access to learning. NRCs current interventions have been informed by the assessment findings. Click [here](#) to access more of the findings.

Number of Youth & Adolescents living in Za'atari Camp

District	Youth - 15 to 30 Years			Adolescents - 10 to 19 Years		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
ZAT D00	208	172	380	403	308	711
ZAT D01	726	736	1,462	792	871	1,663
ZAT D02	723	785	1,508	863	926	1,789
ZAT D03	563	553	1,116	605	620	1,225
ZAT D04	498	507	1,005	597	530	1,127
ZAT D05	687	645	1,332	691	688	1,379
ZAT D06	847	950	1,797	881	964	1,845
ZAT D07	679	739	1,418	783	744	1,527
ZAT D08	1,096	1,129	2,225	1,100	1,012	2,112
ZAT D09	634	619	1,253	676	647	1,323
ZAT D10	730	790	1,520	726	801	1,527
ZAT D11	893	977	1,870	899	973	1,872
ZAT D12	626	638	1,264	703	695	1,398
Grand Total	8,910	9240	18,150	9,719	9,779	19,498

Source: UNHCR, May 2020

Useful Links and Resources

- The Global Compact for Young people in Humanitarian Settings created [a page as a hub for technical resources](#) that can help practitioners in the field best consider young people and adolescents in their responses to the COVID-19 pandemic across sectors.
- The Compact have also created a guidance on ["COVID-19: Working with and for young people"](#).
- GAGE Rapid Assessment - ["Exploring the impacts of covid-19 on adolescents in Jordan's refugee camps and host communities"](#).

Members

The YTF members are: Blumont – Finn Church Aid (FCA) – Institute for Family Health/Noor Al-Hussein Foundation (IFH) – Jordan Health Aid Society (JHAS) – LaLiga - Mercy Corps – Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) – Questscope - Relief International - Save the Children – UNFPA – UNHCR - UNICEF.

The YTF is chaired by UNFPA and co-chaired by NRC. For further details, please contact Bothaina Qamar at qamar@unfpa.org and Dina Alaeddin at dina.alaeddin@nrc.no.

Access the YTF Terms of Reference [here](#)