Education Sector Working Group Meeting, March 2026
Minutes of Meeting

Date: March 10th, 2026
Place: Virtual
Chaired by: Isaac Makanani (UNICEF), Maithree Abeyrathna (NRC), and Hala Sarabi (QRF)
Attendees: UNICEF, UNHCR, Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Queen Rania Foundation (QRF), Save the Children, Amman Center for Human Rights Studies (ACHRS), Caritas Germany, Caritas Jordan, World Vision, ANERA, ARDD, Arab Network for Civic Education (ANHRE), TDH Italy, UNOPS, Jordan Coalition for Education, Questscope, Plan International, World Food Programme (WFP), Seenaryo, and COOPI.

Opening
UNICEF introduced the new Chief of Education, Ms. Manar Ahmed, who attended the meeting and shared her brief introduction.

Agenda:
- Update on Returns
- The Geopolitical situation in the region: How it may have affected our work
- Update on Education Strategy Plan (ESP 2026–2030) launch on 3 March by His Excellence, the Minister of Education.
- MOE Fee Guidelines (Dec 2025): Sense checking on any emerging trends from the field2026.
- Nordic Consultant evaluation on Swiss support to Basic Education in Camp school in Jordan
- Partner Research Updates: Save the Children Education Pulse Check in Camps with a presentation by Save the Children on its Education Pulse check
- ESA 2023 – 2024 Officially released by the MoE
- Announcement of elections and call for expression of interest
- AOB

Update on Returns:

- Over **185,000** UNHCR-registered refugees have returned to Syria since the fall of the regime (as of 28 Feb 2026).
- **8300+** refugees returned in 2026 so far (until late Feb).
- Approx. **236,000** refugees returned since the reopening of the JOR–SYR borders in 2018.
- UNHCR is aware of **20,000 refugees who re-entered Jordan** after returning to Syria (around 10% of total returnees).
- Over **2,400 refugees** reactivated their files with UNHCR.
- **Significant decrease** in returns observed since Ramadan began.
- **Demographics:** 49% women & girls; 51% men & boys. 42% are children (77,000+ since Dec 2024).
- **Place of residence before return:** 24% were camp residents (≈45,000 individuals) and 76%

were from urban areas.

- **Governorates of origin in Syria:** Highest: Daraa (19%), Homs (19%), Rural Damascus (11%), followed by Damascus and Hama.

Geopolitical Situation in the Region:

- Several organizations continue "business as usual"; others have adopted remote working arrangements due to safety concerns.
- No clear input on which agencies have evacuated expatriate staff.
- Concerns raised regarding:

Government's timing for discussing major legislation (Social Security Law + new Education & Public Human Development Law) during a sensitive geopolitical period.
Lack of civil society engagement in reviewing the new education law.

- UNICEF emphasized:

The need to treat social media safety decisions regarding school closures by relying on national security advisories from authorities. Advocacy roles must be balanced with recognition of government mandates.

Update on the Education Strategy Plan (ESP 2026–2030)

- ESP 2026–2030 launched by His Excellency the Minister of Education on 3 March.
- ESP aligns with Jordan's **Economic Modernization Vision**.
- New components highlighted:

Digitalization of education
Green schools/environmental sustainability
Continuation of teacher training and inclusive education

- Total ESP cost was said to be estimated at 8.6 billion JOD over five years.
- MoE presented funding strategies:

Government budget
Development partner support
Public–private partnerships

MOE Fee Guidelines (Dec 2025): Sense-Checking Emerging Trends

- New guidelines require **unregistered refugees** to pay **300 JOD per semester** (600 JOD/year).
- Concerns previously raised that this may increase dropouts.
- ESWG members asked to report field observations—

No member reported confirmed implementation or emerging trends yet.

- Some suggestions that implementation may have been delayed, but no official confirmation.

Nordic Consultant Evaluation on Swiss Support to Basic Education

- Swiss funded education programs, assessed by Nordic consultants with Jordan as a case study,

highlighted a strategic shift by the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC). Moving beyond its initial focus on basic and secondary education, SDC announced new priorities in Education in Emergencies (EiE) and Vocational Skills Development (VSD), aligning support with evolving needs and resilience objectives.

- NRC facilitated field visits for the SDC funded Education programme in host communities and organized discussions with school principals, teachers, and the evaluation team.

Discussions included:

- Possible Swiss shift from basic education to education-in-emergencies portfolio.
- Concerns raised as Jordan is *not* currently an education emergency context.
- Need for ESWG to proactively shape the narrative and clarify operational realities.

Partner Research Updates – Save the Children: Education Pulse Check (Camps)

- **Sample:** 8860 survey respondents + 133 caregivers in FGDs (70% camp-based).
- **Intentions to Return:**
  - 29% intend to return to Syria (higher inside camps).
  - Females more hesitant due to safety concerns.
- **Key challenges upon return to Syria (anticipated):**
  - Poor school infrastructure & large class sizes.
  - Shortage of qualified teachers.
  - Curriculum differences between Jordan & Syria.
  - Unclear grade placement & certification procedures.
  - Economic hardship affecting school attendance.
  - Some social cohesion concerns (bullying reported in some areas).
- **Documentation:**
  - 41% lack knowledge about registration procedures in Syria.
  - Main challenges: high documentation costs, distance to offices, long wait times, especially for families with missing civil documents.
- **Information needs:**
  - Clear guidance on Syrian registration procedures, required documents, nearby schools, school start dates.
- **Preferred communication channels:**
  - Social media (highest)
  - Official websites & media
  - Strong preference for *in-person* community meetings
- **Recommendations:**
  - Provide fee waivers or financial support for certificates.
  - Use mobile units to reduce logistical barriers.
  - Expand bridging/catch-up classes in both Jordan and Syria.
  - Provide school kits and transportation.
  - Strengthen psychosocial support & teacher training for reintegration of returnee children.

ESA 2023–2024 Official Release by MoE

- MoE has officially released the Education Sector Analysis (ESA), which informed the ESP and the Economic Modernization Vision.
- Members who did not receive the ESA should request it via the Inter-Agency focal points.
- Document considered a comprehensive evidence base for education statistics in Jordan.

Announcement of Elections & Call for Expression of Interest

- Self-nominations are open; nominees will have a 10-minute presentation slot in the next monthly meeting.
- Members wishing to self-nominate should email the current co-chairs:
- Isaac, Hala, Maithree, Saud, and Lina (as support focal point).
- Co-chair Terms of Reference to be shared with all members.

AOB (Any Other Business)

- UNESCO monthly update postponed to next meeting due to unavailability of the representative.
- Queen Rania Foundation introduced a new representative (Wadie) who will attend future meetings.
- Proposal proposed to fix ESWG meetings on the **first Tuesday of every month**, to align with the EDPG schedule. the members will be informed once confirmed by the co-chairs.

Action Points:

- All presenters to send slides to Saud Al-Sakr (alsakr@unhcr.org) and Lina Tu`aimeh (tuaimeh@unhcr.org) for circulation with the minutes.
- All members to share any observed implementation trends/impacts of the MoE fee guidelines at the next ESWG meeting.
- ESWG/UNICEF/UNHCR/NRC to disseminate MoE-authorized certification/recognition information materials in schools; members to support distribution.
- Save the Children to circulate the full Pulse Check report to ESWG.
- Co-chairs/Inter-Agency to (re)share the ESA to members who have not received it (ANHRE among them).
- Co-chairs to share the **Co-chair ToR** and confirm the **presentation** slots for nominees in the next monthly meeting
- Co-chairs to confirm adoption of the first-Tuesday standing meeting date and circulate calendar invites.