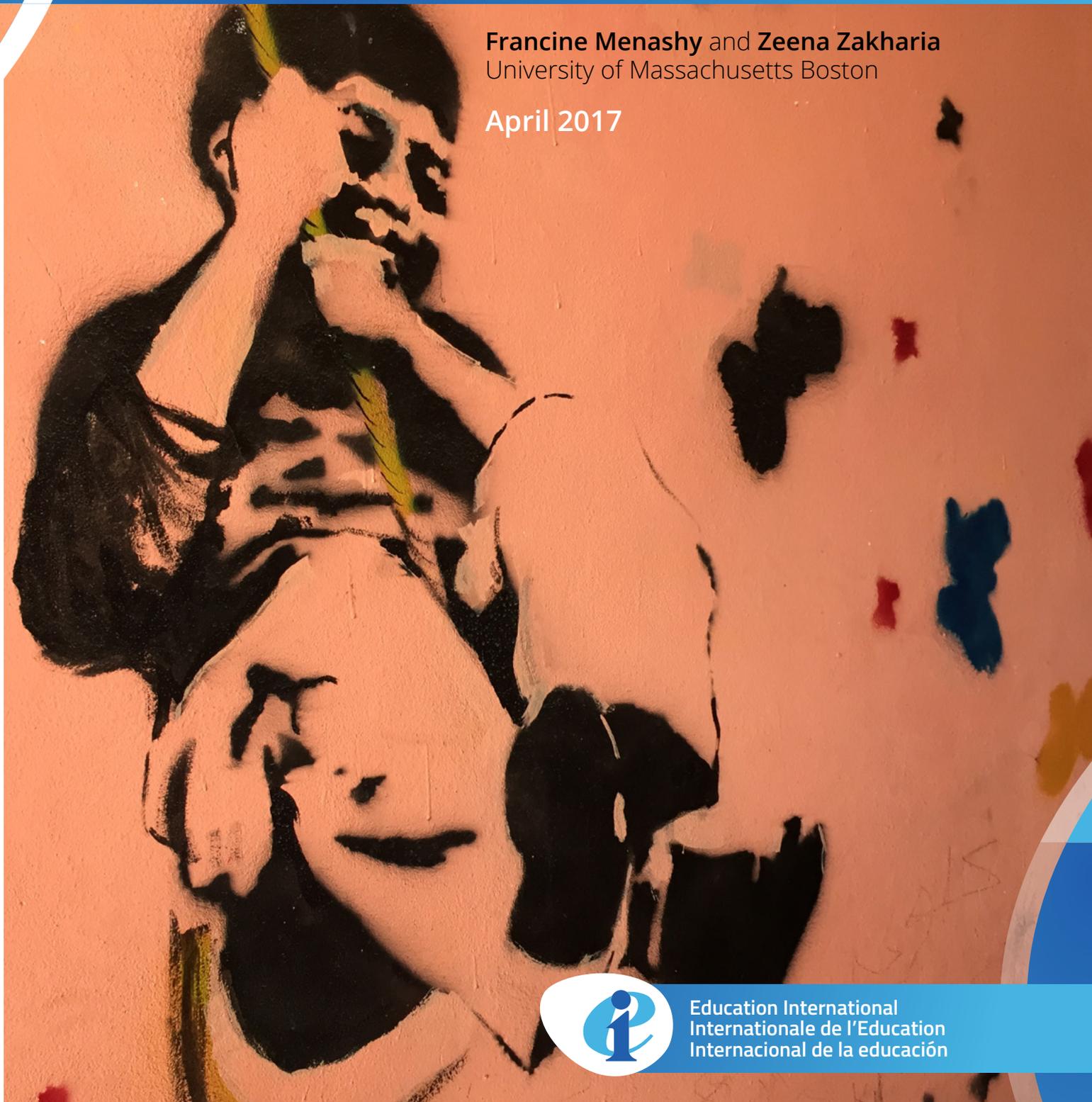


# INVESTING IN THE CRISIS: Private participation in the education of Syrian refugees

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April 2017



Education International  
Internationale de l'Éducation  
Internacional de la educación

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Painting on the wall of a Syrian refugee school, run by and for Syrians in Lebanon

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# Executive Summary

Of the 57 million children worldwide without access to education, over one third lives in settings of conflict and fragility (UNESCO, 2015). The escalating crisis in Syria has contributed significantly to this out-of-school population, with well over half of 1.4 million Syrian refugee children and adolescents not in school (UNICEF, 2016).

While education in emergencies has risen as a policy priority in the mandates of international organizations (Menashy and Dryden-Peterson, 2015), the share of total overseas development assistance to education has declined sharply in recent years, with funding persistently low in conflict-affected states (UNESCO, 2015; 2016). Within this context, private sector engagement in education has become increasingly appealing to a growing portion of the international community. Private actors have responded in turn, spurring new initiatives, funding commitments and partnership arrangements to advance the cause of educating refugee children. Such commitments are indicative of the growing role of private entities as both educational funders and providers in contexts of crisis.

This study explores the complex interrelationship between conflict and private sector participation through a case study of the education of Syrian refugees. It is estimated that 900,000 Syrian refugee children and adolescents are not enrolled in school, with enrolment rates for Syrian refugees at only 70% in Jordan, 40% in Lebanon, and 39% in Turkey (UNHCR, 2016b). Although private engagement in this context is evidently expanding, the exact nature and scale of this involvement has been unclear. This research seeks to better understand which private entities are engaging in the sector, the activities through which private companies and foundations support education, and the rationales and motivations that drive their involvement. To this end, the study is guided by the following research questions: (1) Which private companies and foundations are currently participating in the education of Syrian refugees

in Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey? (2) What is the nature of this engagement? (3) What are the rationales behind the private sector's involvement in the education of Syrian refugees?

Private participation in education is a highly contentious issue in international humanitarian, development, and academic circles. The debates hinge on questions of access, quality, educational rights, as well as the state's obligation to provide education. These issues are particularly salient in contexts of conflict and fragility where challenges to public educational governance and provision are markedly acute. This study acknowledges the potential for a range of conceptualizations of private participation in education.

Our data collection took place between May 2016 and February 2017. We first produced a "mapping" of non-state sector engagement in the education of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey. We then conducted key informant interviews with 28 international and country-based representatives from the private sector and those who have partnered with the private sector, including respondents from businesses, foundations, UN agencies, local and international NGOs, and bilateral donor agencies. Thus, we derive our findings from a range of data sources, including a systematic internet search to determine non-state actors participating in the sector; analyses of documents, webpages, and social media from companies and foundations; and key informant interviews.

Our findings show a recent surge in private sector participation in the education of Syrian refugees, where businesses and foundations are involved in a range of contexts and are involved in many different forms of engagement. Of the 144 total non-state organizations we found engaged in Syrian refugee education, 42% comprised businesses and private foundations. Of these, 76% were headquartered in the Global North; 61% did not have education as their primary mandate. Jordan hosted the majority of these actors (80%),

followed by Lebanon (74%), and Turkey (64%).

We highlight several ways in which the private sector has worked to improve educational quality and access for refugees in Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey. The top three types of engagement were funding to the education sector (49%); development and distribution of technological education innovations (49%); and the provision of professional development to education sector workers (33%). Many of these initiatives were partnership based, joining together a range of businesses, foundations, governmental entities, non-governmental organizations, and UN agencies.

Our findings also expose areas for concern, including (1) insufficient coordination among private companies and foundations, and between the state and non-state sectors; (2) decontextualized interventions with an overemphasis on technology; (3) the potential for a rise in private school establishment at the expense of public provision; (4) the vague roles of business actors in public-policy making and global funding; and (5) tensions between humanitarian aims and profit-oriented motivations for involvement in the sector.

We offer a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted roles of private actors and their involvement in education in contexts of humanitarian crisis—an arena that has historically been framed as a public sector responsibility. Our findings show that businesses and foundations have a potentially important role to play in supporting the education of Syrian refugees. Given the scale of the crisis, a reliance solely on traditional public sector actors is limited and unrealistic. However, we also raise key issues of concern and limitations to the assumed capacity of the private sector to understand and work within rapidly evolving humanitarian contexts. In particular, our research brings to light ethical tensions between the humanitarian and profit motivations of businesses to invest in this crisis. Through exposing particular concerns, our

research spurs the global education community to ask how to harness the expertise and funds of the private sector in a coordinated and ethical way that is mindful of the state's responsibility to be the primary duty-bearer to provide quality education. This effort ought to be coordinated, contextualized, equitable, and grounded in a commitment to refugee educational rights.



**INVESTING IN  
THE CRISIS:  
PRIVATE  
PARTICIPATION  
IN THE  
EDUCATION  
OF SYRIAN  
REFUGEES**

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# 1. Introduction

Of the 57 million children worldwide without access to education, over one third lives in settings of conflict and fragility (UNESCO, 2015). The escalating crisis in Syria has contributed significantly to this out-of-school population—well over half of 1.4 million Syrian refugee children and adolescents are not in school (UNICEF, 2016). The international development community has moved to respond to this and other humanitarian crises, where education in emergencies has risen as a policy priority in the mandates of international organizations (Menashy and Dryden-Peterson, 2015). However, the share of total overseas development assistance to education has declined sharply in recent years, with funding persistently low in conflict-affected states (UNESCO, 2015; 2016). Within this context, private sector engagement in education has become increasingly appealing to a growing portion of the international community. And private actors have responded in turn.

For instance, in January 2016, during the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos, members of the Global Business Coalition for Education (GBC) pledged \$75 million to support the education of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey (WEF, 2016). A White House Summit on Refugees was held in September 2016, where President Barack Obama presented a challenge for “the US private sector to draw on its unique expertise, resources and entrepreneurial spirit to help refugees regain control over their lives and integrate into their new communities.” The first of three “impact areas” cited by Obama was education, and he detailed his aim to address this through a private sector response (White House, 2016). The May 2016 World Humanitarian Summit and a January 2016 US State Department

forum at Stanford University also called on the private sector to address the Syrian refugee crisis via education (Dryden-Peterson, 2016; WHS, 2016). A range of high-profile businesses and corporate philanthropies were involved in the above initiatives, such as Goldman Sachs, Hewlett Packard, Google, LinkedIn, Microsoft, Pearson Education, Discovery Learning Alliance, IKEA Foundation, Bridge International Academies, and Rand. Numerous new private funding commitments and partnership arrangements have since been initiated to advance the cause of educating Syrian children. Such commitments are indicative of the growing role of private entities as both educational funders and providers in contexts of crisis.

This study explores the complex interrelationship between conflict and private sector participation through a case study of the education of Syrian refugees. Although private engagement in this context is evidently expanding, the exact nature and scale of this involvement has been unclear. This research seeks to better understand which private entities are engaging in the sector, the activities through which private companies and foundations support education, and the rationales and motivations that drive their involvement. We derive our findings from a range of data sources, including a systematic internet search to determine non-state actors participating in the sector; analyses of documents, webpages, and social media from private companies and foundations; and key informant interviews with the private sector and those who partner with the private sector including businesses, foundations, UN agencies, NGOs, and bilateral donor agencies.

Our findings show a recent surge in private sector participation in the education of Syrian refugees, where businesses and foundations are involved in a range of contexts and are involved in many different forms of engagement. We highlight several ways in which the private sector has worked to improve educational quality and access

for refugees in Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey. We also expose areas for concern, including insufficient coordination among private companies and foundations, and between the state and non-state sectors; decontextualized interventions with an overemphasis on technology; the potential for a rise in private school establishment at the expense of public provision; the vague roles of business actors in public-policy making and global funding; and tensions between humanitarian aims and profit-oriented motivations for involvement in the sector.

## 2. The Education of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey

Statistics on access to education for Syrian refugees are staggering. Pre-war, 94% of Syrian children were enrolled in primary and lower secondary education; yet now enrolment rates for Syrian refugee children are only 70% in Jordan, 40% in Lebanon, and 39% in Turkey. It is estimated that 900,000 Syrian refugee children and adolescents are not enrolled in school (UNHCR, 2016b).

Neighboring countries are struggling to absorb Syrian students into their school systems. For example, over 1 million Syrian refugees have registered with UNHCR in Lebanon, with half of these school-aged children (UNHCR, 2016a). The

Government of Lebanon has made policy changes and established a shift system to accommodate refugees, but the public school system has become increasingly stretched (UNHCR, 2016b; Naufal, 2012; Watkins, 2016). Given a decentralized educational system that is highly privatized, and a sectarian political context that is fragmented, non-state actors in Lebanon have been central to the provision of educational services to refugees and other marginalized populations for some time (Shuayb et al., 2014; Zakharia, 2013; 2016).

In Jordan, despite taking considerable measures to address the crisis, the government is struggling to accommodate over 660,000 Syrian refugees, 226,000 of which are school-aged (HRW, 2016). As one UNICEF report describes: “Lack of accessibility, hostile environment, and low capacity of some schools has also reportedly prevented Syrian children from enrolling in formal public schools in Jordan. Jordanian schools have also been reported to lack the resources to fully support the refugees. Some schools are already operating at full capacity... and cannot financially afford to implement a two-shift system to increase capacity” (UNICEF, 2015, p. 13). Although the Jordanian government has strived to absorb the growing number of refugee students, for instance through increasing the number of double-shift schools, schools suffer from overcrowding, and tensions have risen within host communities (Francis, 2015; UNICEF, 2015).

Turkey has also faced considerable obstacles to addressing the crisis, spending over \$6 billion to support millions of refugees crossing into the country (Ackerman, 2015; Al Rifai, 2015). By March 2016, Turkey was host to the largest school-aged Syrian refugee population, 1,353,000 children—roughly half of all Syrian refugees in the country. More than 500,000 school-aged children were without access to education (OSF, 2016, p. 8). Along with shift schooling, Turkey has established Temporary Education Centers for refugee children, but “most of these schools are improvised entities

within the confines of apartments. There are no recreational areas; they lack desks, chairs and stationery... Due lack of funding, many are facing closure" (OSF, 2016, p. 20-21). A means of educational provision has also come in the form of Syrian-run schools financed privately, primarily through funders from the Gulf (Ackerman, 2015).

In light of the ongoing Syrian refugee crisis and the above-described educational challenges for Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey, the role of the private sector has become increasingly significant. However, due to the recent and evolving nature of the crisis, little rigorous research has been conducted to study and map the roles of private entities in educating Syrian refugees. Given recent pronouncements made at high-level forums and events, many well-known and influential private actors clearly envisage key roles for themselves in ameliorating this crisis. This research seeks to understand the specific nature and rationales behind such involvement.

### 3. Conceptualizing Private Educational Engagement in Contexts of Conflict and Fragility

Private participation in education is a highly contentious issue in international humanitarian, development, and academic circles. The debates hinge on questions of educational rights as well as the ostensible role of the state as the primary duty-bearer to provide quality education and to regulate national systems. These issues are particularly salient in contexts of conflict and fragility where challenges to public educational governance and provision are markedly acute.

Citing issues of access and quality, proponents of private sector engagement maintain that private participation in educational governance, financing, and provision offer reliable and efficient mechanisms through which to effectively educate children and youth in contexts of conflict and fragility. When a government lacks capacity to adequately provide education for its population, the private sector can fill a gap through a variety of types of engagements. This involvement, they argue, is critical as a form of humanitarian assistance in the absence of a stable, functional public sector (Dixon, 2013; DfID, 2013).

In response to these arguments, opponents in this debate claim that private participation in schooling

is a neoliberal manifestation that is rooted in a faulty assumption of education as a market. Critics argue that private participation weakens public systems of education and undermines a key element to education as a human right: the responsibility of the state to provide schooling (Tomasevski, 2003). In some contexts, questions have been raised about the role of private actors in undermining state legitimacy, in turn having a negative impact on peacebuilding and statebuilding (Smith and Ellison, 2015).

Moreover, in settings of fragility, oftentimes private sector responses are not only deemed inequitable, but exploitative. Journalist Naomi Klein coined the term “disaster capitalism” to capture when catastrophic events are seen as an occasion to enact market-based, neoliberal reforms, or as she puts it: “the treatment of disasters as exciting market opportunities” (Klein, 2007, p. 6). In education, disaster capitalism has been argued to have emerged in a range of contexts. In post-hurricane Katrina New Orleans, reformers overhauled the public education system to expand privately-run charter schools, citing the hurricane as a “silver lining” and an opportunity to reform a struggling public school system via market strategies (Saltman, 2009, p. 138). In Haiti, following the earthquake in 2010, an already highly privatized education system was supported by the Inter-American Development Bank which partnered with the Haitian Ministry of Education to substantively subsidize existing private schools in order to strengthen the private sector (Verger et al., 2016). And in Liberia, a highly fragile context, enduring economic collapse, conflict, and most recently the Ebola outbreak, the public school system is on course to be outsourced to a for-profit company, Bridge International Academies (Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 2016), and a number of other private actors.<sup>1</sup> In such cases, crisis hit, and actors saw an

opportunity to enact policies and programs, which while addressing educational needs, concurrently promoted private sector interests. This “privatization by way of catastrophe” is grounded in a “logic of irreversibility” where measures are introduced as temporary, but in fact tend to redefine the policy spaces long-term (Verger et al., 2016, p. 119-120).

Yet supporters of private participation in education would dispute notions of exploitation in contexts of fragility. Drawing on the concept of “shared value,” they would note the merit of “creating economic value in a way that also creates value for society by addressing its needs and challenges,” and where business contributions to social causes can be “a new way to achieve economic success” (Porter and Kramer, 2011, p. 4). Proponents of shared value envisage humanitarian and profit-based aims as not only compatible, but desirable for all involved, while critics see a problematic tension between these differing motivations.

Recognizing the potential for a range of conceptualizations of private participation in education, our research seeks to nuance these debates through a careful examination of private engagement in conflict-affected contexts and the processes that drive this involvement.

<sup>1</sup> The original intention was to outsource the entire Liberian public education system to Bridge International Academies. However, following pressure

from a number of actors, including Education International, eight educational providers are currently in operation.

## 4. Research Questions and Design

Our study is guided by the following three research questions:

1. Which private companies and foundations are currently participating in the education of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey?
2. What is the nature of this engagement?
3. What are the rationales behind the private sector's involvement in the education of Syrian refugees?

The private sector broadly includes all non-state actors, including NGOs, religious organizations, research institutes/universities, foundations, and businesses. Although we collected initial data on the full non-state sector, our focus in the analysis of this research specifically targets private businesses and corporate foundations. In order to bound our study in terms of scope, but also given the very different recent history and types of engagement of corporate actors, when in our analysis we make reference to "private actors" or the "private sector" we are focusing on the activities of businesses, in particular their corporate social responsibility programs, and their affiliated corporate foundations. Also termed philanthropies, corporate foundations are usually the non-profit arm of a company, often with a different operating budget and mandate (Bhanji, 2016; Menashy, 2016).

Our data collection aimed to first produce a "mapping" of non-state sector engagement in the

education of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey. The three countries were chosen because they are neighboring countries to Syria and are therefore hosting very large refugee populations. A systematic internet search was conducted in an effort to determine all non-state actors participating in the sector and to create a comprehensive dataset. We acknowledge that the results of this search may not be exhaustive, some private actors may have changed their activities, or new actors may have become engaged since our research began. Key informant interviews also contributed to this dataset of organizational names. Once a comprehensive list of non-state actors was made, we coded each actor's participation based on types of engagement (see Appendix A); location of engagement; location of headquarters; and organizational mandate. This coding was determined from analyses of documents, webpages, and social media from each organization.

In order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the roles of the private sector, the nature of their engagement, and their motivations for involvement, in addition to the document analyses, we conducted key informant interviews with international and country-based representatives from the private sector and those who have partnered with the private sector, including respondents from businesses, foundations, UN agencies, local and international NGOs, and bilateral donor agencies. All those interviewed have engaged in some capacity with Syrian refugee education. In total, we conducted 28 in-depth interviews lasting one hour on average. Interviews were conducted mainly in English, and some Arabic, based on the language preference of the interviewee. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded thematically. Preliminary findings from this research were presented to international educational practitioners at the conference "Providing Education to Refugee Children from Conflict Areas in the Middle East - Fast Track to Equal Opportunities and Integration,"

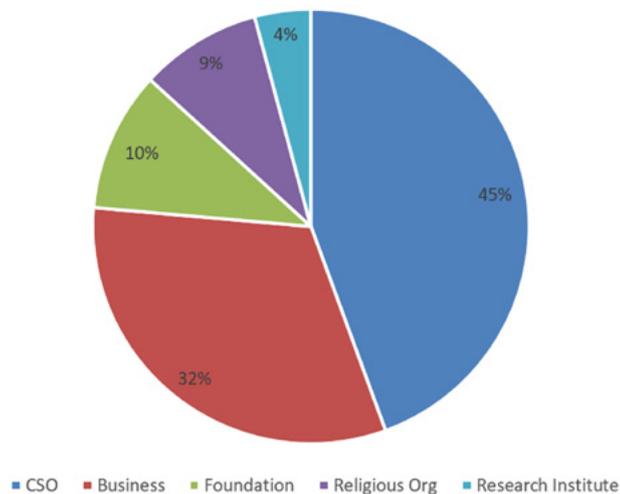
in Stockholm, Sweden in November 2016. Feedback from this presentation also contributed to our analyses and conclusions.

A primary limitation to our research is the evolving nature of the crisis and educational engagement therein, making some of our data potentially out-of-date despite its recent collection. As well, the involvement of private actors is very recent, and so the activities we found are often not firmly established programs, as many of the initiatives are just at nascent or planning stages. Finally, our focus was limited to types of engagement and to understanding motivations and rationales behind private participation, not of definitive impacts of discrete private sector-supported projects. A next stage in our research will likely involve country-level data collection on a select group of private educational initiatives where we might include the voices of recipients of programs in our analysis (for instance teachers, families, and students).

## 5. Descriptive Findings

Based on data collected between May and November 2016, we found 144 total non-state organizations engaged in Syrian refugee education, including civil society/non-governmental organizations, research institutes/universities, religious organizations, businesses, and foundations (see Figure 1). These include 46 businesses, such as Accenture, Bridge International Academies, Goldman Sachs, Hewlett Packard, IBM, McKinsey & Co, Microsoft, and Pearson Education. Private foundations also account for a large number of actors, with 15 philanthropies engaged in the sector, such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, IKEA Foundation, Open Society Foundation, and Vitol Foundation. 76% of businesses and foundations have headquarters in the Global North, and 61% of businesses and foundations do not hold education as part of their primary mandate.

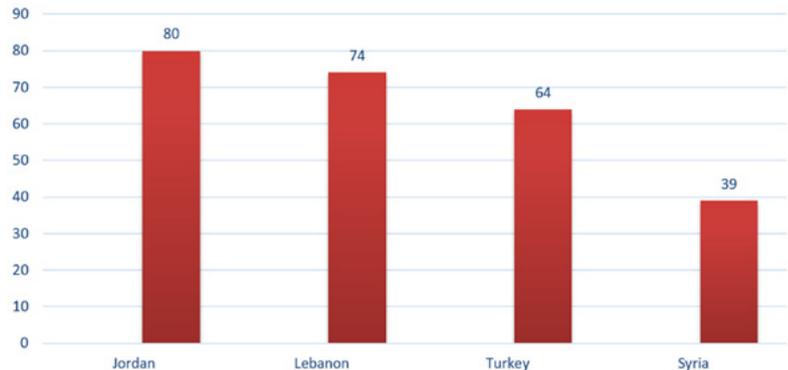
Figure 1: Non-State Participation



While many private actors are engaged in several countries, most in our sample (80%) are working

in Jordan, with slightly less in Lebanon (74%), and fewer still in Turkey (64%) (see Figure 2). Our research did not probe why private actors choose to work in particular countries, but perceptions of political and economic stability and receptiveness of governments to private sector involvement, historically and in the current moment, may be among the reasons. It is notable that of the three countries in our sample, the country with the fewest refugees has the largest private sector response in education, while the country with the most refugees, has the least.

Figure 2: Location of Operations (% Businesses/Foundation)



Private corporate actors are engaged in a range of educational operations, with many organizations engaging in more than one type of activity. The most common types of engagement are:

- Funding to the education sector (generally via non-governmental organizations or UN agencies) (49%)
- Development and distribution of technological education innovations (49%)
- Providing professional development to those in the education sector (teachers, administrators, capacity development for Ministries of Education) (33%)
- School construction, infrastructure, school “tents” (31%)

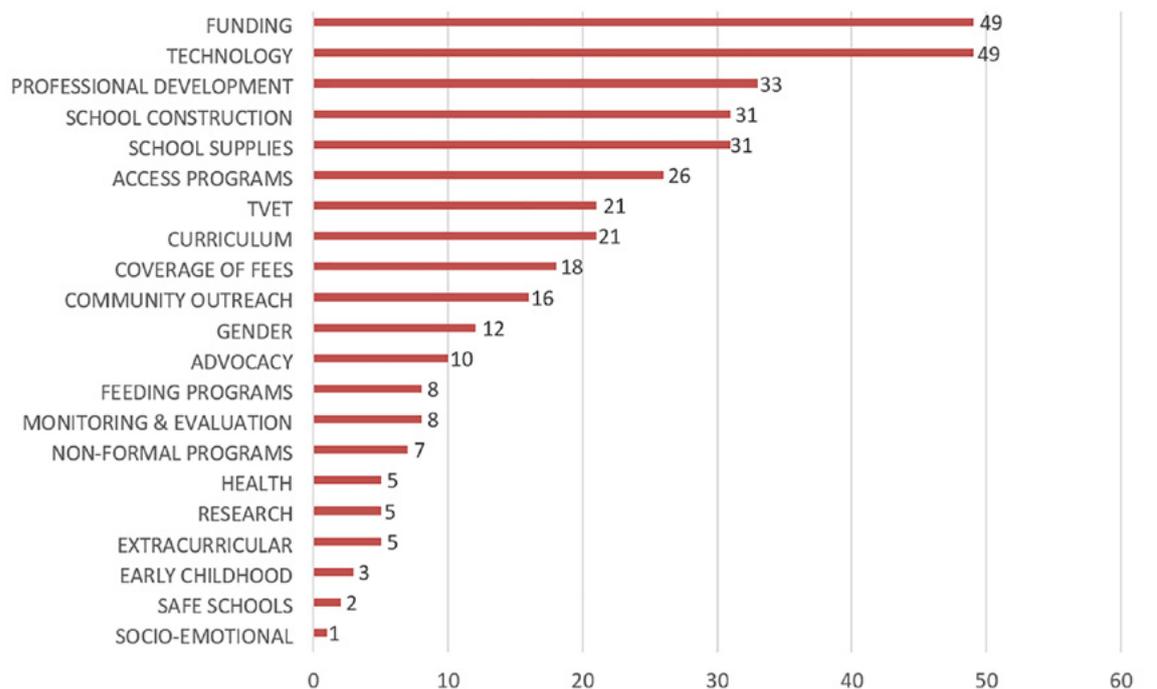
- Provision of school supplies and classroom materials (books, furniture, stationery, pencils) (31%)

Other areas of engagement include: advocacy; health services; feeding programs; gender equity programs; extra-curricular activities; curriculum development; and early childhood education, amongst others (see Figure 3). A description of these various engagements is summarized in an Appendix.

Many initiatives are partnership-based, joining together a range of businesses, foundations, governmental entities, non-governmental organizations, and UN agencies. For example, Pearson Education and Save the Children UK have joint-launched the “Every Child Learning” partnership, that aims to “to identify and develop solutions for delivering education in emergencies, drawing on the expertise and assets of both organisations” (Save the Children, 2015). In Jordan, Microsoft is working with the Norwegian Refugee Council to support vocational education (Microsoft,

2016). The IKEA Foundation has partnered with War Child to support an e-learning program for math and literacy (IKEA Foundation, 2016). And the Global Business Coalition for Education, a partnership-based convening organization, includes several companies as partners and has worked to garner and coordinate investment, policy-making, and advocacy on Syrian refugee education, proposing that: “Impactful partnerships between the private sector, nongovernmental organizations, donors, and multilateral agencies are critical to the global education development effort” (GBC, 2016c).

Figure 3: Types of Engagement (% of Businesses/Foundation)



## 6. Analysis

### 6.1 Mass proliferation, yet insufficient coordination

Private actor involvement in Syrian refugee education has grown rapidly, with most actors becoming involved only since 2015. Recent prominent events, including the World Economic Forum in January 2016, Obama's White House Refugee Summit in September 2016, and the World Humanitarian Summit in May 2016, all included "calls to action" for the private sector, and the business community has clearly been responsive: "From things like consulting companies, to small start-ups, to large multi-nationals, everyone seems to be involved" (Interview #6, Business, July 2016). A representative from an NGO explained: "Every week, I'm either talking to our philanthropy department or to different donors, private donors who are interested in funding something in this area or region. And these could be anything from just private families, so family donations or small family foundations and also larger foundations... It's a little crazy to be honest" (Interview #3, NGO, July 2016).

Respondents described this mass proliferation of private engagement as rooted in several factors. This surge is reflective of a widespread recognition of the scale and gravity of the crisis: "the Syrian response right now has the most visibility and has the strongest impact within Europe, so it's a hot political issue. So, I think that's the one that's front and center on people's minds that they want to contribute to" (Interview #19, UN agency, Oct 2016). However, large-scale refugee crises have occurred in other contexts, yet they have not garnered nearly the same level of private sector support, most notably in sub-Saharan Africa.

Thus, scale and gravity alone cannot explain the proliferation of private engagement in the education of Syrian refugees. In one sense, the attention to Syrian refugee education may be different contextually, as the overall population is perceived to be relatively well-educated, where before the war 94% of Syrian children attended K-12 schools (UNHCR, 2016b): "from the education perspective, you've got an entirely different demographic. You have people who come from a really strong education system in Syria with high enrollment rates, and now you get groups that are moving and you do have that high demand for education, but also for a strong quality education" (Interview #19, UN agency, Oct 2016). Hinting at perceptions of race and socioeconomic status, another respondent explained, as well, that donor and business actors can relate better to the Syrian population than those from sub-Saharan Africa: "a lot of people in the Syria response look similar to a lot of the people who want to donate funding. That is not like Africa crises, where maybe people can't relate because the people don't look like them" (Interview #3, NGO, July 2016). For others, the Syrian crisis is viewed as the "last straw" for those concerned about education in emergency settings, and so it has been able to "garner high-level political will" (Interview #2, Bilateral Donor, July 2016). At the same time, the importance of education humanitarian crises has now been clearly established at the global level through the high-level advocacy of organizations such as the Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), making the involvement of private actors more appealing as a humanitarian imperative (Interview #24, Bilateral Donor, January 2017).

Yet many consider the rate of private participation problematic, primarily due to limited or insufficient coordination among private actors and between private actors and governmental agencies. International aid has historically been beset by coordination issues, where traditional donors have been unaware of one another's programmes and funding priorities. This has led to widespread "aid

fragmentation” where a proliferating development environment is characterized by duplication and imbalances, including too many accumulated resources for some endeavors and countries, not enough for others, and insufficient attention paid to the role of national governments in coordinating such efforts, particularly in the long term (OECD, 2016). The private response to the Syrian refugee crisis is no exception. The surge in involvement has arguably led to independent organizations working in the region having little knowledge of what one another is doing: “we have this unprecedented case of so many countries, so many partners, of traditional, non-traditional involved in quite a complex, protracted response” (Interview #7, Business, June 2016). One area in which limited coordination has led to duplication is educational technology, explained in more detailed below.

Although the speed at which private actors have initiated and implemented projects arguably results from the urgency of the crisis, this rush indicates that many actors did not have time to conduct thorough evaluations or research on the context in order to understand what is needed or what might work best. And the inadequate level of coordination has indeed engendered a disorganized environment: “What I do know is that in the Syria response there are so many people doing so many things and it’s not coordinated. Sometimes I really wonder if because of this lack of coordination, if this is actually doing a disservice to the sector. Are there ways that we could potentially coordinate a lot more effectively together to be able to serve more children?” (Interview #3, NGO, July 2016).

A further contributor to the absence of a coordinated effort is what has been termed a bandwagon effect, where actors are motivated to get involved because everyone else is and they want to join the “club” (Interview #1, Bilateral Donor, July 2016). The Syrian refugee crisis has attracted a great amount of worldwide attention, and some business actors envisage the media

coverage of the crisis as a potential avenue to increase their brand’s visibility or to create brand loyalty (Interview #24, Bilateral Donor, January 2017). Discussed in more detail below, improvement of a business’ brand image and good “PR” are stated profit-related motivations and may be another root cause for this surge in involvement.

The issue of coordination is recognized by several organizations, and respondents voiced “the need for someone to track all the non-state actors who were involved because I think it’s very important, in terms of moving forward, to identify the gaps” and avoid duplication (Interview #6, Business, July 2016; see also Dryden-Peterson, 2016; Watkins, 2016). In response to the need to increased coordination, the INEE conducted a mapping of wider participation in the sector in 2014 (INEE, 2014). The Global Business Coalition for Education has also encouraged coordination and is in the process of creating a database of businesses engaged Syrian refugee education. Yet the reality on the ground at present is an insufficient degree of coordination.

## 6.2 The dominance of education technological interventions

A dominant form of private sector engagement is via the introduction of education-related technology for Syrian refugee children and adolescents. Our mapping found a wide variety of technologies being introduced to refugees by private actors, including: online digital learning platforms and online courses, tablet and handset distribution including online curriculum, apps with educational content, vocational training in technology, the development of new operating systems, programming for mobile phones, portable Wi-Fi hubs for use in schools, and gaming technology with educational content. Our findings show that nearly half of private actors involved in Syrian refugee education are supporting some form of educational technology.

Several respondents identified “a huge surge and push towards the tech communities” (Interview #19, UN agency, Oct 2016). As one NGO representative described: “one thing that seems to be visible in a sense, or a lot of people are talking about it, is when it comes to technology” (Interview #4, NGO, June 2016). Another respondent observed:

*when people think “private sector” and the kinds of queries we get from different groups wanting to do different things and to help support Syrian refugees, I would say 90% of them revolve around some kind of tech innovation that they think is going to help the situation. It's just sort of one of those natural things that people gravitate toward, whether it's digitizing curriculum so that a Syrian refugee can access it from no matter where they are, to designing apps that they can use. (Interview #1, Bilateral Donor, July 2016)*

For instance, an “Innovation Forum” held by the US State Department at Stanford University brought together Silicon Valley companies to “engage the tech community in Silicon Valley in coming up with solutions to bridge the education gap for Syrian refugee children” (TechWadi, 2016), including such recognizable names as Microsoft, Amazon, Google, and LinkedIn, alongside NGOs and other non-profits. A representative from a UN agency described the forum as “very exciting. We've really had high level engagement with the US government having workshops with tech companies, startup companies in San Francisco... I think there's a desire by the tech community to contribute their expertise” (Interview #10, UN agency, July 2016).

Technology is viewed as an apt form of intervention because of the need for a “solution that can reach as many people as possible for the cost that is as low as possible, that involves as little teachers as possible. Because we do see that there's a huge lack of teachers” (Interview #15, Foundation, Sept 2016). As well, technology allows for greater access to knowledge and

information and can give refugees “a sense of empowerment and a sense of agency through information and education” (Interview #20, NGO, Nov 2016). Technology is touted by companies as “a new form of aid” that “may permit teachers to reaching a larger audience of refugee students in countries of first asylum where education capacity is strained” (Microsoft, 2016). NGOs also promote “mobile education solutions which are unrestricted by borders, and enable continuity of learning by overcoming barriers such as limited classroom space and high-student teacher-ratios” (Save the Children, 2015). A recent report by the Global Business Coalition for Education, entitled *Exploring the Potential of Technology to Deliver Education & Skills to Syrian Refugee Youth*, argues that innovative technologies “would more effectively address some of the challenges related to access to education for Syrian youth and for the region” (GBC, 2016a, p. 7). This echoes global strategic goals related to refugee education, including UNHCR's 2012-2016 Education Strategy, which states that innovative use of technology will expand education opportunities through activities such as provision of computer technology, certified open and distance learning, online teacher training, eBooks, and language acquisition (Strategic Approach D) (UNHCR, 2012).

Yet this emphasis on technology is critiqued by many as de-contextualized from local refugee contexts. An NGO actor argued that “there's a disconnect between what is technically and logistically appropriate and what looks good from a branding and marketing perspective... I think there's a lot of good intention, but a lack of awareness about what the practicalities of operating in these environments are” (Interview #9, NGO, July 2016). The education director of a local NGO operating several schools noted, “I get one or more companies contacting me every week saying, ‘We have this great idea; this great technology we want to pilot at your school.’ And I say, great! What do you know about our curriculum, our students? They say, ‘you tell us.’

They don't even want to come in and see for themselves what teaching and learning looks like over here!" (Interview #25, NGO, January 2017). Similarly, a UN agency representative stated: "A lot of these solutions focus on hardware without really the understanding of peoples' development that's needed to ensure buy in, sustainability, and efficacy more generally" (Interview #10, UN agency, July 2016). Dependence on computer accessibility and electricity, for instance, are seen as barriers to effective use of particular interventions: "The pitch was, 'Here's this great online learning platform!' We said... 'we don't have electricity in northern Syria!'" (Interview #9, NGO, July 2016).

Respondents also voiced pedagogical concerns about the emphasis on technology, and assumptions that teachers and students have had exposure to particular hardware: "somehow you see them trying to apply the same solutions to these incredibly varied contexts in ways that sometimes aren't appropriate" (Interview #10, UN agency, July 2016). Technology is described as naïvely considered a silver bullet solution: "The fact that they were pushing something as kind of the panacea for education for Syrian refugees, as educationalists, without recognizing that you have to have differentiated learning and teaching techniques and such... Using an iPad and WiFi to do distance learning. That's lovely. There will be a handful of people who can do that" (Interview #9, NGO, July 2016). Moreover, the focus on technology is said to be misguided when other educational needs are seen as more urgent. Put plainly: "If you don't have the resources to build latrines or to pay teachers, I mean ... investing in technology isn't well placed" (Interview #19, UN agency, Oct 2016).

A recent report by the Migration Policy Institute recognizes the surge in technological interventions to support refugee populations, described as "digital humanitarianism." The report notes that technology can support educational efforts, particularly in terms of language learning, but also

that "many new tools have failed to live up to their promise, in part because of extensive duplication in the sector, limited understanding of refugees' needs, and funding and organizational limitations" (Benton and Glennie, 2016). The above-mentioned 2016 GBC report on the potential of technology includes similar cautions, and reminds businesses to (1) "view technology as a tool and not the solution;" (2) "support a diversity of approaches to supplement traditional education access;" and (3) "increase coordination and monitoring and evaluation of programs" (p. 20).

Our study echoes these findings. Technology has the potential to make a difference, and our research supports a need for the Syrian population to have access to technology in order to participate in local communities and join the workforce. However, the disproportionate stress on technology may be problematic, in particular when viewed as a panacea to break down barriers to schooling for refugees. Moreover, in the context of a poorly coordinated effort, many businesses are duplicating what has already been introduced. For instance, our mapping and interviews described several interventions using handheld devices for distribution to students. Such critiques compound issues concerning the decontextualized nature of certain technologies and the need for more urgent, non-technological priorities. Finally, an overemphasis on technology is viewed as pedagogically problematic. As a representative from an NGO that supplies a technological service to refugees explained, technology can never replace a teacher: "technology is a big part of the programs that we implement, but actually it's not going to replace facilitation and human contact" (Interview #20, NGO, Nov 2016).

### 6.3 Support to private, non-formal education

Some business actors have indicated that one solution to the refugee education crisis is via the establishment of non-state provided schooling,

which can address the challenges faced by the public sector in absorbing the burgeoning refugee population: “You have a situation where the public sector could only absorb a fraction of those children... yes, the public sector wants to be in control, which is absolutely to be appreciated and respected. But it will take its natural course of expansion. And in that natural course of expansion, we need to give the kids an opportunity to pursue an accredited education outside of the public sector” (Interview #11, Business, July 2016). As RAND describes in a report on Syrian refugee education, “Private schools opened by the private sector” is one approach to addressing the crisis (RAND, 2015, p. 25). The non-profit sector also notes the potential for fee-charging private schooling, as chief executive of War Child UK expressed: “there are not enough places for refugee children to enrol in schools. Children in Jordan’s Zaa’tari refugee camp have told us about classes with 120 students and one teacher. Some families might be motivated enough to find \$1 to send their children to school if there was a private one... There is evidence that private solutions can be quicker and the cost per pupil lower than with government solutions” (The Guardian, 2015).

Although the majority of business actors we interviewed work collaboratively with governments and ministries of education, others have established privately-run schools, or what is often termed “non-formal” education (NFE) environments.<sup>2</sup> Separate from the public schooling system, these schools are financed via the private sector and managed by local actors. For example,

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2 Non-formal education (NFE) is an umbrella term commonly used to describe a number of educational provisions that are outside of the formal education system and that are not officially recognized by the state through certification or accreditation. For example, these could include non-state provided schooling, accelerated learning programs, basic literacy and numeracy programs, community based education comprising a formal curriculum in a “school” setting, remedial courses, self-learning, and recreational or extra-curricular activities (Shuayb et al., 2014). NFE programs are often meant to be transitional, to allow Syrian students to transfer into the formal education system (Lebanon MEHE, 2014).

at the time of our research, a partnership of McKinsey & Co, Vitol Foundation, and Bridge International Academies was said to be supporting a non-formal schooling initiative, implemented by a local NGO and currently at the planning stages with programs piloted, in order to “to jointly develop a low-cost, high-quality education model for Syrian refugees at scale” (World at School, 2016).

Yet this non-state model is critiqued or viewed with suspicion by many actors working in the region. While they may increase avenues for educational access for particular populations, business-supported private schools in settings of conflict and fragility are widely viewed as problematic, due to a lack of accountability (Interview #24, Bilateral Donor, January 2017). In addition, the hiring of non-unionized or poorly-trained teachers is cause for concern (Härmä, 2011; Verger et al., 2016). In particular, several respondents voiced worries about the involvement of Bridge International Academies, which was slated to provide the educational content for a program.<sup>3</sup> On the one hand, Bridge is argued to fill a gap in supplying “tech-enabled, low-cost, directly structured, scripted teaching based on a good curriculum. There are few organizations who have done that so successfully at scale as Bridge” (Interview #11, Business, July 2016). Yet others view Bridge in light of its past role of establishing fee-charging, low-cost private school chains as worrisome: “With Bridge International... what’s the actual impact of these for profit private school models? We don’t know if they really are having positive learning outcomes for children and are increasing access to school to the most vulnerable” (Interview #3, NGO, July 2016). Others voiced the need “to be very cautious around low-cost private education. There’s been a lot of controversy recently around Bridge in Liberia, that’s quite well known” (Interview #6, Business, July 2016). A major concern raised by a respondent representing a bilateral agency working in the region is how businesses may

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3 At the time of writing, it was not clear whether Bridge International Academies would take this work forward.

attempt to bypass governments, convening high profile non-state actors to discuss private schooling initiatives at scale without inviting representatives from the Ministry of Education (Interview #24, Bilateral Donor, January 2017).

To be clear, at the time of our research, fee-charging private schools for Syrian refugees in Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey were primarily small-scale, initiated and led by local actors, and most often established long before the war in Syria. Of the companies with representatives interviewed for our study, primarily based in in the Global North, none currently support fee-charging private education in the Syrian refugee context. Yet in light of the above-described advocacy for private schooling in public media, and past support of low-cost private schooling in other contexts of fragility by certain actors participating in Syrian refugee education, it is important to be cognizant that the context has a potential to be fertile ground for an uptick in private schooling.

## 6.4 Private actors as global education policy-makers and funders

A growing recognition of the need for education in contexts of humanitarian crisis, and the Syrian refugee crisis in particular, has attracted business actors to intervene beyond country-level classroom supports and programs, where corporate leaders have participated in high-level policy-making and funding initiatives on refugee education.

A key player in convening members of the private sector on the issue of education in emergencies has been the Global Business Coalition for Education (GBC), which acts as an umbrella organization that unites together and offers a voice for businesses involved in global education. Through coordination, communication, showcasing the value of business initiatives in education and facilitating research into global education, the GBC allows “companies to become part of a global

movement of businesses committed to changing children’s lives through education” (GBC, 2016b).

The GBC has hosted a series of convening sessions on education in contexts of conflict, for instance in Dubai and then in Davos at the World Economic Forum. At a special session of the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul, the GBC and others hosted a breakfast meeting that brought together corporate leaders alongside high-level political actors to discuss global initiatives to support education in contexts of crisis (WHS 2016). As one respondent described:

*It was very high level. You had the heads of all the UN agencies. Ban Ki-moon came to this breakfast and spoke... I find it quite interesting to go to the GBC Ed breakfast and the room is packed with people lined up trying to be there.... listening and hearing these really senior-level [representatives] from the UN side and so forth, and then the CEOs of these major corporations talking about education in emergencies. (Interview #4, NGO, June 2016)*

In the past year, many of these high-level meetings have revolved around the theme of the establishment of a global fund to support education in humanitarian crises, widely known now as the “Education Cannot Wait Fund” (ECW), described as “a new global fund to transform the delivery of education in emergencies – one that joins up governments, humanitarian actors and development efforts to deliver a more collaborative and rapid response to the educational needs of children and youth affected by crisis” (ECW, 2016a). Alongside governments and aid agencies, the ECW is vocally supported by the Global Business Coalition for Education: “the Global Business Coalition was highly involved in the development of that platform” (Interview #3, NGO, July 2016). A core initiator and advocate for the ECW is Gordon Brown, the UN Special Envoy on Education (Brown, 2016; UN, 2016). Although the ECW is designed to address education in contexts of crisis widely, the Syrian refugee context “gave urgency for the need for this fund...” (Interview #5, Business, June 2016).

UNICEF, which provided an initial analysis that led to the formation of the ECW, is now the Secretariat of the Fund, and will be managing operations and distribution related to it (ECW, 2016b).

Respondents trace the ECW to efforts as far back as the formation of the Millennium Development Goals in the early 2000s, when the education community stressed that multi-year funding was needed in fragile contexts and that traditional aid was not flexible nor innovative enough to address sudden crises: “cultivating greater interest from those states and then the private sector to be able to prompt a fund like this was very important” (Interview #19, UN agency, Oct 2016).

In the context of diminishing bilateral aid to education, non-state actors are seen as non-traditional funders, necessary contributors to schooling in emergency settings. In a Huffington Post op-ed, Gordon Brown made clear the importance of the private sector in supporting a global fund for education in contexts of humanitarian crisis: “inside the humanitarian tent we need charities, philanthropists, businesses and social enterprises as well as governments and international agencies — not just one sector determining who gets to set the pace of progress. Not dogmatic dismissals writing off creative thinkers” (Brown, 2016). Save the Children CEO Kevin Watkins also identifies a lack of private sector engagement as problematic in the context of Syrian refugee educational needs, critiquing an “over-reliance on a small group of donors and weak engagement on the part of the private sector” in Lebanon in particular (Watkins, 2016, p. 13). According to one donor respondent: “there’s just been this uptick with the response to the Syrian crisis and the growing recognition that with all these emergencies, there’s just not enough funding and there never will be if you’re just looking at traditional donors” (Interview #1, Bilateral Donor, July 2016).

The private sector is envisaged as central to the ECW efforts: “If successful, the ECW mechanism

could do for the education of children facing emergencies what the global funds in health have done – namely, mobilise private sector engagement and facilitate high impact, value-for-money interventions through effective pooling of resources” (Watkins, 2016, p. 21-22). A respondent explains: “it’s been stated from the beginning that one of the reasons to establish the Fund is to provide a platform for private funding to be channeled, so that’s an underlying key factor for establishing the Fund” (Interview #28, UN agency, Feb 2017). Those from the non-governmental sector moreover view the participation of business actors as an indirect way to elicit more political attention to the cause on refugee education. In referencing a high-level meeting at the World Humanitarian Summit, an NGO representative explained: “I think for the sector, it’s quite important, that at this political level, and that includes the private sector in a sense, that folks are standing up for education emergencies. I think it’s connected to also why the political levels are taking notice as well. Those converge in a sense, and I think we needed that” (Interview #4, NGO, June 2016). The private sector has the capacity to garner attention from politicians who are central in decision-making on education in emergencies, and in turn opening the door to the voices of NGOs.

Participants from the business community that take part in the GBC and associated meetings are guided by several goals. The ECW Fund is seen by many as a means for business to get involved in a meaningful way: “Many business leaders were saying ‘it’s one of the worst humanitarian crises that we have ever faced, and no one has done anything... It’s time for business leaders to really step up and say we can change this. We must do something. We absolutely need this Fund’ ” (Interview #5, Business, June 2016). Business actors involved in the establishment of the ECW—mainly members of the GBC, which has grown to include some very well-known companies—are evidently perceived in a particular light, as respected global policy actors, leading others to

desire involvement: “You know, it's like a club in a way” (Interview #1, Bilateral Donor, July 2016).

Some respondents, however, voiced caution about whether the private sector is able to coordinate with state actors and agree to commit to tangible and significant contributions. For example, one donor agency representative described feeling “cautiously optimistic” about private sector engagement and the nascent ECW Fund:

*It's my greatest hope that it is early, and that it is something that people are going to stick with, and they're going to figure out how to do better and move away from the fancy meetings in Europe and elsewhere and figure out more stuff to hang your hat on a little bit. [But] sometimes I feel like: are we being really naïve? How much money could the private sector possibly even have for something like this, right?... The scale is never going to tilt such that there's more money for corporate social responsibility than for actually running a business. (Interview #1, Bilateral Donor, July 2016)*

Moreover, questions remain if the resources committed will be directed to areas of most need, and how business actors will feel about putting funds into a pool that will be distributed perhaps without their direct consultation: “Those commitments of funding, is that writing a blank check, or is that a check with specific types of asks?” (Interview #4, NGO, June 2016). A respondent explained that the role of the private sector in the ECW's Board remains unclear: “it's in the documents that there would be representation of the private sector also on the board of the Education Cannot Wait, and I question that... what kind of role the private sector would have?” (Interview #28, UN agency, Feb 2017). As well, the ECW is viewed as a work in progress and respondents voice concern that the Fund will incur large amounts of overhead and be costly to run leaving some to question “what percentage of these funds are actually going to reach children” (Interview #3, NGO, July 2016). And

as discussed below, private actors taking on public policy roles can be critiqued from the standpoint of “philanthrocapitalism” and tensions between business and humanitarian mandates.

## 6.5 Motivations: Humanitarian-Driven

Private actors have a range of motivations for engaging in the education of Syrian refugees, and many are articulated as humanitarian-related. Media coverage of the scale and magnitude of the crisis has prompted business actors sit up and take notice: “The level of displacement is so big. I think that has really profound impacts on people, in terms of really wanting to better understand what's going on but also invest resources and put in resources to help. Specifically, knowing that education can really be this life saving lever for a lot of children” (Interview #3, NGO, July 2016). Respondents told us that the images in the media of the scale of the crisis led many to feel that contributing resources was simply ethically right: “they weren't doing it out of any reason other than they think it's the right thing to do, and there is something they can do to help” (Interview #6, Business, July 2016). As one respondent put it: “I think there's the obvious pulling at the heart strings of CEOs” (Interview #7, Business, June 2016).

Similar sentiments about the private sector response were voiced from respondents from NGOs, businesses, foundations, and UN agencies: “I think there's just a growing understanding... that there is a worldwide responsibility to be able to respond, and so people are just looking for a way they can make their contribution” (Interview #19, UN agency, Oct 2016); “I think there's a lot of good intention” (Interview #9, NGO, July 2016). Businesses are motivated by the fact that “the scale, urgency, and the sustained nature of the urgency make this the biggest humanitarian conflict challenge since the Second World War” (Interview #11, Business, July 2016). Moreover,

several private actors used the rhetoric of “education as a right” in framing their work with Syrian refugees, echoing the approach of humanitarian actors. For example, one foundation respondent stated that they aim to contribute to “a healthy start in life, access to good education, and a family income for children and their families. Education is crucial for every child to be able to develop... for societies to be able to develop and to be peaceful” (Interview #15, Foundation, Sept 2016). And “we believe that education is a right and it's the role of the private sector to support the government in the delivery of education” (Interview #7, Business, June 2016). As well, some have individual connections to the crisis, with family or loved ones in the region, and so feel the need to contribute on a fundamentally personal level.

One respondent drew attention to the politicized nature of the crisis, particularly in Europe, explaining that companies which are supporting Syrian refugees may in fact be doing a disservice to their business interests, and sensed “a little bit more sincerity... I think this one is very loaded, as a way of being able to contribute to something that's highly politicized” (Interview #19, UN agency, Oct 2016).

## 6.6 Motivations: Profit-driven

We also found that particular private actors have profit-oriented motivations for participating in the sector. For instance, high-profile activities within a crisis are deemed good for a business' brand image. A business actor noted that “companies want to be affiliated with good causes, or they see some sort of strategic alignment between what their brand means and what the cause is about” (Interview #5, Business, June 2016). An NGO representative explained that sometimes “It's something where they can have a photo op” (Interview #4, NGO, June 2016). And businesses “are looking to elevate their brand and to create markets” (Interview #9, NGO, July 2016).

The creation of markets for business products is a particularly salient motivation in the region, which is viewed as a large and growing market for products: “In the Middle East there are a lot of diverse types of markets and this is also something that is in the interest of a private organization purview” (Interview #3, NGO, July 2016). According to respondents: “there's definitely a huge interest by some companies to create markets” (Interview #10, UN agency, July 2016) or to “create brand loyalty” (Interview #24, Bilateral Donor, January 2017). This is particularly appealing in the Middle East, a region with a very large youth population. In addition to the creation of a market or brand loyalty, a context of crisis may be considered an apt setting to test new innovations: “When they're innovating new things, sometimes an area in conflict might be the right environment to test out a product or service” (Interview #5, Business, June 2016).

Businesses that have corporate social responsibility programs on Syrian refugee education describe how employees feel positively about working at a company with programs they can be proud of, and this contributes to “employee engagement” (Interview #5, Business, June 2016). A business actor explained that “on the one hand you create something that hopefully is relevant for people's lives you want to touch and improve, and at the same time you also create an environment inside the group where people get excited... see themselves in a place of work that they actually want to be a part of” (Interview #11, Business, July 2016). As well, those companies with branches or production centers in the Middle East are directly impacted by the crisis. In this way, they “recognized the impact that it [the crisis] has on their employees” (Interview #7, Business, June 2016).

For some businesses, participating in social causes must rest on a “business case” for involvement, where the company ought to benefit in a direct or indirect way whilst also addressing the cause: “some of it is because they care and they realize not only that there's a social impact because they

# 7. Discussion

understood the implications of children being out of school, but for a business impact it's a good business decision for them to invest" (Interview #7, Business, June 30 2016). A UN representative explains: "it can be a lucrative opportunity for smart business people to build relationships with the philanthropic side to advance their private side" (Interview #10, UN agency, July 2016). As a respondent explains, the private sector is "driven by making money. I think we have to accept that" (Interview #5, Business, June 2016).

However, representatives from UN agencies and NGOs voice reticence concerning partnering with private actors who hold profit motivations in the Syrian refugee crisis:

*it's just that some of the private technology companies that we engage with are working on profit models, and so there has been some skepticism around partnership and engagement. They're representing themselves as [our agency's] partners when they're still for-profit structures or are looking for private margins for some of the materials they produce. It's made partnership a bit more fraught in terms of what it means to be a partner, what it means to work together and leveraging partnership to gain access or trust, or credibility. It's a big challenge for us. (Interview #10, UN agency, July 2016)*

A respondent described partnering with the private sector as "a dangerous territory, 'cause on the one hand partnership is good... We just must never forget what their business is. Their business is to continue. Their business is to sell their products" (Interview #28, UN agency, Feb 2017). Another expressed a concern for working with a partner where "it is about the bottom line" (Interview #9, NGO, July 2016).

As discussed below, our findings raise questions concerning potential conflicts between humanitarian and profit motivations, the notion of "shared value," and tensions between these competing narratives.

Our research found several corporate actors, via both businesses and philanthropic foundations, doing important work in their efforts to support the education of Syrian refugees. Ways in which the private sector has filled notable gaps include awareness campaigns, psychosocial support, food programs in schools, gender equity programs, vocational training, classroom materials and supplies, and through innovative technological interventions such as digital libraries and curricular supports. Many businesses are fiscally supporting local and international NGOs in carrying out these efforts. And given declines in aid to education, the need for non-traditional funding sources is very real, where contexts of humanitarian crisis have historically been underserved by established aid efforts. As well, the popular public profile of some CEOs may elicit the attention of influential political actors in the development arena, and in this way the private sector can act as a bridge between high-level policy-makers and smaller NGOs, opening the door for those at the more grassroots level to have input into global education policy design.

The findings also raise several interconnected areas of concern. Insufficient coordination amongst private actors participating in the sector is evident and agreed-upon by many respondents to be a major weakness in endeavoring to support refugees, leading to disorganized efforts and duplication. Insufficient coordination with public sector actors in some cases has also led to problematic engagement, skirting the host government's role in coordination mechanisms. The absence of coordination is likely rooted in several factors. The combination of a humanitarian-driven impetus alongside a form of bandwagoning onto this issue, which is deemed timely and thus able to engender high visibility

and elevate brand image, may have led to a rush in involvement without careful consideration of coordination with others, and also of context. The significance of coordination is highlighted in the Lebanon Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, which lays out a framework for coordination that includes various public, private, and local community stakeholders, including teacher unions and organizations, to ensure access and continuity of contextualized, quality education over the long term, rather than shorter-term fragmented efforts (Zakharia/INEE & LEWG, 2014, pp. 22-23). A similar set of standards has been laid out for Jordan (INEE & JESWG, 2015). Within these consultative documents, the state has an important role to play, not only in coordination mechanisms, but also in establishing policies and legal frameworks for private actor engagement in education.

Because businesses have in some cases entered this arena with longer-term profit-oriented aims, the form of intervention they introduce is often directly aligned with their company's goals—there must be a “business case” made for participation. In such cases, businesses are limited in what they promote; for instance some may defer to introducing technological interventions that can increase their brand recognition and help to widen a market for their products, but at the same time may be decontextualized from the needs of refugees. The overemphasis on technology engenders duplication and is potentially problematic from a pedagogical standpoint. Respondents voiced concerns that technology, perceived as a panacea, cannot replace the integral role of a teacher in student learning and psychosocial support. This view is moreover reiterated in the framework for the Sustainable Development Goal #4, where teachers are presented as fundamental for the achievement of quality education for all (UNESCO, 2015b). Furthermore, local teachers and teacher unions are most likely to understand contextual issues for implementation at the classroom level (Zakharia/

INEE & LEWG, 2014). As respondents noted, decontextualized technological interventions also raise questions about educational quality and relevance, particularly for students with diverse learning needs.

The public pronouncements made by particular actors touting the potential benefits of private schooling in conflict-affected contexts are cause for concern, given that there is an accepted view that public sector schools in the region are unable to absorb the growing refugee populations. Support to schools provided outside the public sector could have wider implications for equity, quality, and a rights-based approach, which considers the government as the main duty-bearer for education.

Another key responsibility of governments has historically been public-policy design and financing of education. However, in the context of education in emergencies, members of the private sector have been embraced as core policy-makers as well as funders, most notably in light of the Education Cannot Wait Fund and their participation in high-level forums at major convening events on refugee education. Respondents question the amount and type of contributions the private sector is able to make to such a fund, and their commitments more long term.

The roles of businesses in policy design have also been the target of a wider debate concerning the legitimacy and qualifications of private actors to lead and oftentimes dictate social policy. For example, critics have suggested that business leaders, including Bill Gates and Mark Zuckerberg, are representative of the rise of “philanthrocapitalism”: “the tendency for a new breed of donors to conflate business aims with charitable endeavors, making philanthropy more cost-effective, impact-oriented, and financially profitable” (McGoey, 2012, p. 185). The private sector is not only widely considered to be a prominent global development player, but also one that embodies a new form of authority. As

described by Hall and Biersteker (2002): “While these new actors are not states, are not state-based, and do not rely exclusively on the actions or explicit support of states in the international arena, they often convey and/or appear to have been accorded some form of legitimate authority” (p. 4). The new trend of philanthrocapitalism has enabled a growth in private authority to drive the trajectory of global education funding policies and programs. Yet critics question the pervasive influence of unelected corporate representatives in public policy circles, occupying their positions of authority solely due to their economic clout (Bhanji, 2016; Birn, 2014; McGoey, 2012), and argue that “the philanthrocapitalist project is irreducibly undemocratic” allowing private actors to “skirt the essential issue of accountability in the name of efficiency” (Rieff, 2015).

Education in contexts of humanitarian crisis is without doubt in need of substantial resources, and both traditional donors and non-traditional private funders have an important role to play in fiscally supporting refugee education. However, given critiques of private actors and their potential to wield authority in global policy, the roles occupied by the business sector in the establishment of such new policies and large-scale programs as the ECW are critical to understand as the Fund evolves.

A final concern rests on certain private actors’ profit-oriented goals, sometimes framed alongside a claim to humanitarian goals. Yet profit-driven motivations, in our view, are in tension with humanitarian aims, where to profit fiscally from any humanitarian crisis is arguably exploitative. Some businesses have transparently entered this fragile context in order to create markets, increase brand recognition, engender positive public relations, envisioning it as an environment to test out new innovations, increase employee satisfaction, and thereby increase profits. When a business case is made to support the education of refugee children, a crisis is framed as an “exciting market

opportunity,” or what Klein (2007) would describe as disaster capitalism.

Although humanitarian-oriented motivations are clear in many cases of private participation in the education of Syrian refugees, certain businesses are focused mainly on the “bottom line” (Interview #9, NGO, July 2016; Interview #5, Business, June 2016). Yet the very concept of “shared value,” where profit-maximization can concurrently address social challenges (Porter and Kramer, 2011), arguably holds inherent contradictions. Critics of shared value beliefs and business participation in social causes have proposed that “corporations might tend to invest more resources in promoting the impression that complex problems have been transformed into win-win situations for all affected parties, while in reality problems of systemic injustice have not been solved and the poverty of marginalized stakeholders might even have increased because of the engagement of the corporation” (Crane et al., 2014, p. 137). While this research shows that the private sector has a role to play in addressing the education of Syrian refugees, it also prompts educational actors to question the ethics of making a “business case” for involvement and “investing in the crisis” (Interview #7, Business, June 2016).

## 8. Conclusion

In this research, our goal has been to offer a nuanced understanding of a complex issue: the multifaceted roles of private actors and their involvement in education in contexts of humanitarian crisis—an arena that has historically been framed as a public sector responsibility. Our findings show that businesses and foundations have a potentially important role to play in supporting the education of Syrian refugees. We conclude that the private sector has and should continue to make a significant contribution. And in the context of diminishing development aid to education in conjunction with the enormous obstacles facing refugees and their already stretched host governments, the expertise and resources of the private sector are needed. Through a range of contributions, from in-school services and materials to global advocacy and financing, the private sector should continue to participate in supporting the education of Syrian refugees.

However, our study sheds light on some areas for concern and limitations to the assumed capacity of the private sector to understand and work within rapidly evolving humanitarian contexts. The private sector response has been characterized by insufficient coordination. Decontextualized interventions, in particular relating to educational technology, indicate a rush to involvement and limited understanding of context. This is particularly problematic where teachers and other local educational actors have not been consulted. Statements in the media by private actors have advocated for a push towards non-state schooling, which while argued to relieve a burden on public systems, can have implications for equity and quality. Private actors have taken on high-profile roles as policy-makers and contributors to global humanitarian funding, but their involvement has spurred questions concerning a genuine commitment to providing pooled resources and the accountability of unelected corporate policy-makers.

As several respondents voiced, the motivations of private actors in fragile contexts are critical

to understand; while some have articulated humanitarian aims, others view support to education in settings of conflict and fragility through a bottom-line lens, where solidifying a market hold, increasing visibility and brand loyalty are central motivations alongside those that are humanitarian-oriented. Our research brings to light ethical tensions between humanitarian and profit motivations.

Given the scale of the crisis, we stress that a reliance solely on traditional public sector actors is limited and unrealistic. The private sector has a role to play in supporting the education of Syrian refugees. It is also important to remember that the private sector is diverse; we found that businesses and foundations represent a wide range of different types of actors, engagements, capacities, and motivations.

Through exposing particular concerns, our research spurs the global education community to ask how to harness the expertise and funds of the private sector in a coordinated and ethical way that is mindful of the state's responsibility to be the primary duty-bearer to provide and regulate quality education. This is particularly urgent in establishing a foundation for longer-term systemic change in the service of all children.

A response to the enormous needs of Syrian refugee children is required from the entire global community, including the state sector—especially high-income government donors and multilaterals—in collaboration with the non-state sector—religious organizations, NGOs, businesses and philanthropies. This effort ought to be coordinated, contextualized, equitable, and grounded in a commitment to refugee educational rights.

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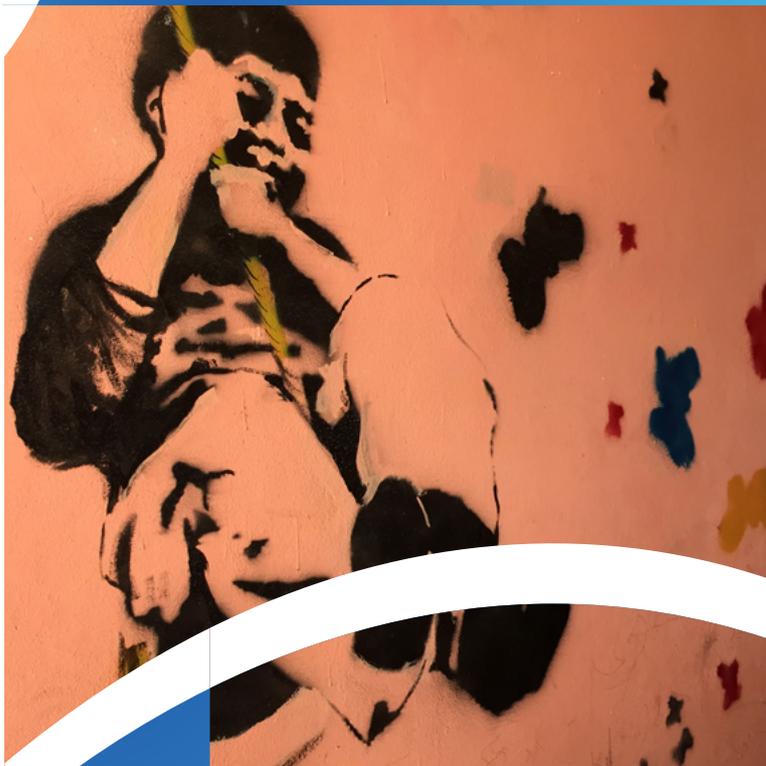
# APPENDIX: DESCRIPTION OF TYPES OF ENGAGEMENT

Type of Engagement	Description
<b>Funding</b>	Global level funder to school system, local educational organizations
<b>Technology</b>	E-resources, e-learning devices, wifi/cloud-based resources, hardware/software for education
<b>Professional Development</b>	Professional development, training, capacity development, for local teachers, administrators, Ministry of Education
<b>School Construction</b>	Construction of school buildings, infrastructure, school "tents"
<b>School Supplies</b>	School materials, stationery, provision of textbooks, uniforms, furniture, "school kits"
<b>Access Programs</b>	Activities relating to increasing refugee access to formal or non-formal education; enabling entry to school systems
<b>TVET</b>	Technical and Vocational education and training
<b>Curriculum</b>	Developing instructional materials or content/activities to teach core subjects, languages, peace and human rights, citizenship/ civic engagement, etc.
<b>Coverage of Fees</b>	Aid to families, vouchers, student school fee payments
<b>Community Outreach</b>	Parent outreach, parent education, school placement services
<b>Gender</b>	Gender equity in education; girls education/empowerment
<b>Advocacy</b>	Global, regional, or local advocacy for refugees and refugee education
<b>Feeding Programs</b>	School food programs, lunch, breakfast, after-school
<b>Monitoring and Evaluation</b>	Data collection, analysis, and monitoring of programs for improvement of school/system
<b>Non-Formal Programs</b>	Programs outside of public education system; accelerated programs; outside of school educational supports; privately-provided education
<b>Health</b>	Health-related support within schools or educational programs
<b>Research</b>	Research and development
<b>Extracurricular</b>	Music, arts, sports
<b>Early Childhood</b>	Pre-Kindergarten or earlier
<b>Safe Schools</b>	'Child-friendly spaces'; 'Safe spaces'; safety; could include the safe construction of schools, ensuring that schools are "safe zones" (i.e. no violence), anti-bullying, etc.
<b>Socio-Emotional</b>	Socio-emotional support, post-trauma therapy









**INVESTING IN THE CRISIS:  
Private participation  
in the education of Syrian refugees**

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