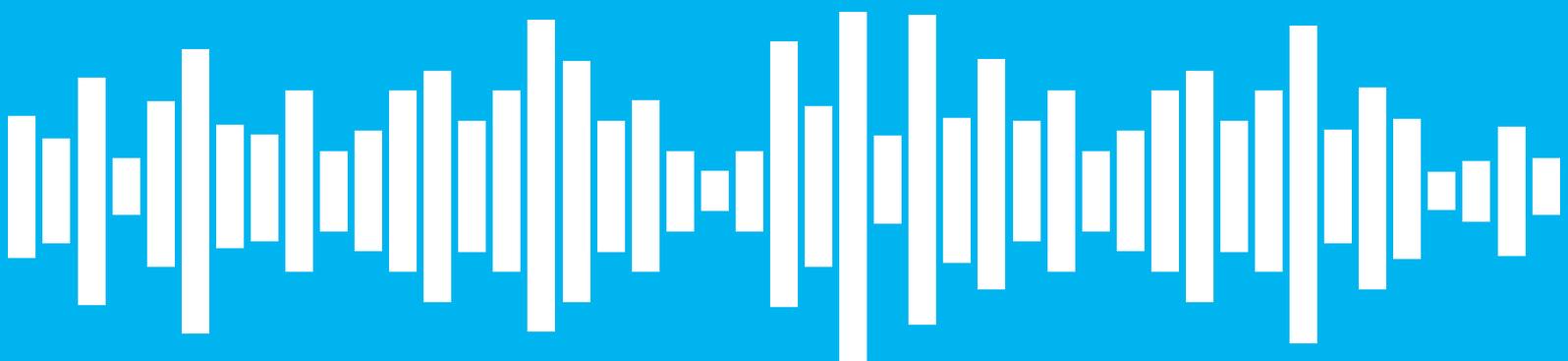


Language for Resilience

Best practices for engagement with digital educational resources among refugee and host community youth in Jordan

September 2019





Contents

- Acknowledgements..... 2**
- Foreword..... 3**
- Executive summary 4**
- Introduction..... 5**
- Background and context..... 6**
- Part 1: Describing and defining the beneficiary population..... 7**
 - 1.1 Methodology and limitations..... 7
 - 1.2 Segmenting the beneficiary population..... 7
 - 1.3 Developing representative beneficiary personas 11
 - 1.3.1 Background 11
 - 1.3.2 Summary of personas..... 11
- Part 2: Engagement with digital educational resources..... 14**
 - 2.1 Methodology and limitations..... 14
 - 2.2 Key findings and discussion..... 16
 - 2.2.1 Barriers to engagement 16
 - 2.2.2 Aspects of effective engagement..... 20
 - 2.3 Conclusions 24
 - 2.4 Recommendations 24
- Part 3: Mapping recommendations to personas 26**
- Appendix: Detailed beneficiary persona profiles..... 28**
- References 34**

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Foreword

The 2030 Agenda and 2018 Global Compact on Refugees both call for all forcibly displaced children and youth (including refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced people) to have access to inclusive, equitable and quality education. This aim chimes very closely with that of the British Council, which works for a safer, more inclusive and more prosperous world through programmes that connect people within and across international borders, and crucially with programmes that aim to leave no one behind.

We have long-standing ties in Jordan, with a continuous presence there, working in programmes in arts, education and English language, for 70 years. Jordan has generously played host to refugees and migrants from a number of contexts during this period, most recently from the war in Syria. This has inevitably put pressure on the existing education system, and it is a principle of our work that we listen to the voices of not only refugees and migrants, but also the communities that host them, and particularly those most affected by migration.

The advent of readily available digital forms of education and educational resources that have grown exponentially in the 21st century has provided both opportunities and barriers to education (including language education). It is not unusual for the enthusiasm of programme creators for digital technology to reach large numbers, to obscure their vision about the true needs, attitudes and realities of the people they are trying to reach. Understanding these needs, attitudes and realities is particularly pressing in the fluid and complex contexts of refugee communities and the communities that host them.

The British Council is committed to digital learning and to helping provide access and resources through digital means. However, we do not see digital learning itself as the panacea for all learning challenges, and we are acutely aware that face-to-face learning continues to have a crucial place – as the voices in this report clearly testify.

The research (commissioned by the British Council and conducted by LearnJam) acknowledges that refugees and migrants are individuals first, and not a homogenous group. Their voices and realities need to be carefully listened to in order to inform potential programmes that may genuinely enable them to engage with education through the appropriate language that is everyone's right. As it says in the report, 'it is the individual rather than the technology that is paramount'.

The creation of 'personas' in this report, drawing on the experiences of individuals to exemplify the multifarious real lives of refugees, migrants and the host community, is, I believe, a uniquely effective way of indicating realities and giving a sense of voice and agency to the people we hope to reach. The situations they find themselves in, while all in the context of Jordan (although they come from a number of countries), are mirrored in many other contexts across the globe as populations continue – through upheaval, insecurity and inequality – to be on the move. There is much in this report that is likely to be of relevance in many contexts beyond Jordan.

The British Council is grateful to LearnJam for carrying out this important piece of research and also, most particularly, to the people who were willing to be interviewed in the hope of creating better futures for the many others in situations similar to theirs.

Mike Solly

Principal Consultant: Head Language for Resilience
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Executive summary

This report focuses on best practices for engaging young, marginalised and/or displaced people in Jordan (in both the refugee and host community) with digital resources that afford them access to educational opportunities. The research was conducted on behalf of the British Council from March to June 2019. The findings presented combine both primary and secondary research, involving surveys and interviews with resource providers and beneficiaries, and a segmentation of the beneficiary population according to existing literature and our own findings from surveys and interviews.

Key insights and conclusions

- The beneficiary population can be broadly segmented as follows: refugees living outside camps (in urban areas), refugees living in camps and Jordanian communities that are vulnerable and/or impacted by displacement.
- Definition and description of the beneficiary population must take into account fluidity of movement, vulnerability and differences in (educational) goals and motivation according to life stage.
- Context is critical. Beneficiaries have many competing demands on their time, and education may not be their highest priority. Learners who choose to take up an educational opportunity will benefit from 'wraparound' academic, social, technical and logistical support.
- Face-to-face interaction is key to sustained engagement with educational resources, even if these resources are digital/online. People highly value the ability to discuss opportunities and resolve their challenges in person. To this end, a blended approach is likely to be effective at preventing disengagement with the technology-based aspects of a learning programme.
- On-the-ground involvement with the community is important in building trust and credibility around new educational opportunities. In particular, peers can be motivating role models of successful engagement.
- The range of educational offers in this space is potentially overwhelming for prospective beneficiaries, and little clarity or support is available for planning or navigating individually appropriate long-term educational pathways.
- People may doubt the value of digital educational resources, deterred either by a lack of guaranteed accreditation for their study efforts and subsequent employment prospects, or by a general suspicion around digital/online learning and a preference for more traditional, classroom-based approaches.
- Perceptions of credibility can be improved by means of association with individuals or institutions who are already seen as trustworthy and authoritative, e.g. the Ministry of Education, a long-established university, or a member of the local community who found a job with the skills they gained from a course.
- Online digital resources may prove less easily accessible than offline resources due to connectivity issues which are widespread in Jordan but which particularly affect refugee camps. Even offline resources may be challenging to access if they are housed in learning centres that are located inconveniently for learners.

Introduction

The British Council describes language learning as an absolutely essential part of humanitarian development as it ‘helps refugees and their host communities to withstand challenges, to recover from crisis, to overcome barriers – to build resilience’.¹ The organisation carries out work in Jordan focused on arts, education and society, and as part of their drive to provide services and support for both refugees and vulnerable host populations in Jordan, they have developed a range of programmes and projects, including the Language for Resilience initiative.

The present study, conducted on behalf of the British Council, investigates access to education for these young people in Jordan, specifically the Language for Resilience audience, and explores the factors that influence their sustained engagement with digital educational resources. We consider the field of education broadly, not limiting our discussion to language learning, and interpret ‘young people’ as roughly 12 to 35 years old.

We begin with a brief background to the context and details of the research design, followed by two sections that address separate but complementary research questions: Part 1 provides an abstracted segmentation of the Language for Resilience beneficiary population and suggests six personas which illustrate these segments; and Part 2 reports on the views and experiences of several real members of this population and the organisations that work with them, with a view to sharing insights into successful engagement approaches and making recommendations for the future. Finally, Part 3 of the report links the recommendations for successful engagement back to the six personas; and Part 4 considers the potential of one specific digital educational platform aimed at the Language for Resilience audience.

1 <https://www.britishcouncil.org/language-for-resilience>

Background and context

As a result of its geographical location, and its political stability in a region of relative instability, Jordan has been significantly affected by recent migration. The country has opened its borders to people fleeing violence, war and persecution in various neighbouring countries, and over the last eight years has provided refuge to hundreds of thousands of people, predominantly those displaced by the war in Syria.

Of the roughly 750,000 refugees in Jordan,² the vast majority come from Syria (approximately 88 per cent), followed by Iraq (approximately nine per cent), Yemen and Sudan. Most arrived in Jordan in 2012 or 2013, and over 80 per cent of the refugee population live outside camps, in urban areas. The remainder (approximately 16 per cent) live in three main refugee camps in the north of Jordan: Za'atari, Azraq and the Emirati-Jordanian camp. Of the registered Syrian refugee population, 13.7 per cent are aged 12 to 17 and approximately 28.9 per cent are aged 18 to 35.³

The local government, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and various other non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and aid organisations are helping support these refugees and provide housing, water, electricity and healthcare. While initially in the Syrian crisis the focus was on these more immediate basic needs, because the conflict has drawn on for so long the needs of the refugees, approximately 50 per cent of them children,⁴ have changed and evolved over time. This has led to a more recent focus on programmes for education, social and political life, well-being, community and environmental impact, aiming to help young people and their communities move forward with their lives and tackle the problem of 'waithood'. However, it is important to note that this shift in focus has not necessarily coincided with developments in infrastructure or political mechanisms that would allow refugees to enter employment or further study, meaning that even these programmes might be seen as contributing to waithood rather than materially relieving it.⁵

The need for education since the refugee crisis has grown. The Jordanian government has been the main entity involved in segmentation efforts of the population in need of education, as well as the work needed to deliver education to these segments. For example, many schools at primary and secondary level now operate in double shifts⁶ to accommodate the large influx of pupils. These government education initiatives are supported by a range of educational programmes run by international and local NGOs. In the years directly following the escalation of the crisis in Syria, these educational initiatives focused predominantly on providing support and opportunities to refugees living in Jordan.

However, as Jordan is a small aid-dependent country, supporting and housing this increase in population has come at a huge additional cost to the government and has put extra strain on limited resources, including water and electricity. It has also affected educational opportunities for many young Jordanians due to the number of schools operating double shifts. To try to redress this negative impact on Jordanian youth, many NGOs and humanitarian organisations have introduced quotas to ensure that services and initiatives intended to benefit Syrians do not do so at the expense of the local Jordanian population.⁷

In this context sits the challenge of how best to engage these young, vulnerable people in educational programmes and initiatives, whether they are refugees or Jordanians. The present study sought to address three broad research questions.

1. What sub-groups exist in the population of refugee and host community youth in Jordan with respect to accessing educational opportunities?
2. What approaches to engaging these groups are more or less successful, from the perspectives of both resource providers and individual learners themselves?
3. What opportunities are there to better engage these groups, both initially and over a longer term?

2 Some organisations point out that estimates are typically based on officially registered individuals, and therefore the real number of refugees in Jordan may be much higher.

3 All statistics come from UNHCR reports (2019a; 2019b).

4 Statistics reported and regularly updated by UNHCR at <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria/location/36>

5 As discussed in detail by Wagner (2017).

6 The school opens in the morning for Jordanian children and in the afternoon for Syrian children.

7 Reported by MicroFinanza (2018) at <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/66060>

Part 1: Describing and defining the beneficiary population

1.1 Methodology and limitations

In this section we consider the beneficiary population as a whole and describe how this audience can be theoretically categorised and each category personified. Data was gathered from both providers and users of digital educational resources in this region to get a balanced overview of the needs and views of different stakeholders. We also consulted existing published reports for further insights into typical beneficiary segmentation.

It is important to note that these representations of the population are necessarily reductive given the scope and brief of this project. Although abstracted illustrative vignettes can be pragmatically useful when planning the format, content or delivery of social and educational interventions, any effective engagement strategy will still ultimately need to recognise and serve the individual realities and identities of the beneficiaries it aims to support.

Therefore, the segments and personas outlined here are not intended to exhaustively capture or describe all of the target population, as indeed that would be an impossible task given the uniqueness of each person's situation; and the real population is, in fact, not evenly distributed across these three segments or their sub-segments (for instance, as noted above, considerably more refugees live outside camps than in camps).

Finally, we do not presuppose any homogeneous need among all members of a given group, or for that matter a need that matches the expectations of the NGOs and organisations that provide services to this audience. Any such simplification and categorisation can only attempt to make the complexity of this context more tractable for those trying to address its challenges; it cannot redress the mismatch between the promise of the educational resources made available to young refugees and Jordanians and the reality of the restricted job market available to them in Syria and Jordan (WANA Institute & Royal Scientific Society, 2018; Wagner, 2017). Instead, our purpose is to define a broadly representative set of population segments, identifying the typical circumstances and needs that make them distinct enough to be meaningful in discussions of how best to engage with and support the needs of individuals within different groups.

1.2 Segmenting the beneficiary population

Four key factors are commonly considered when segmenting the populations of interest to the present study.

Movement. Reports by GIZ (2016) and UNESCO (2018) note the impact of porousness and fluidity in defining these populations. This particular characteristic of being almost constantly 'on the move' has an impact on the types of services that are relevant for learners and how those learners discover and engage with the resources. Research by CARE International (2018b) also highlights that a significant number of Syrian refugees have returned or are planning to return to Syria permanently, though perhaps not in the next 12 months; so movement may well continue both into and out of Jordan for a number of years to come. Therefore, a key distinction exists in this context between refugees and host community Jordanians, who do not have this characteristic of fluidity.

Vulnerability. Individuals that must contend with difficult living circumstances are less likely to actively participate in education delivery, irrespective of intervention design (ACAPS & UNHCR, 2013). For the populations considered by the present study, there are some key differences in terms of vulnerability, particularly between refugees living in a camp and young people living within the host community (i.e. outside camps).

1. Refugees living in camps have some additional security and support, but may lack freedom to leave the camp and to work.
2. Refugees outside the camps have more freedom, but are less supported in meeting basic needs such as water, electricity and food. Rental housing suffers from poor availability and poor maintenance, though costs are decreasing.⁸
3. Young Jordanians have some of the same needs and vulnerability levels as refugees in their community, but generally have a better support system and network. There is more access to resources and less restriction in terms of their ability to study and work.

⁸ See Welch and Jourdi (2018) for an extensive review of the current state of the Jordanian marketplace.

Focus/need. In existing literature, specific information is not always given about the age of learners. For example, reports and projects often refer to ‘school children’ or ‘school-age children’ rather than categorising by age (e.g. Global Business Coalition for Education, 2016; ACAPS & UNHCR, 2013; Save the Children, UNHCR & Pearson, 2017). Given the wide range of possible age groupings, as well as the various levels of education (pre-primary, primary, secondary, tertiary, adult), the lack of specific reference to an age grouping makes it difficult to discern the extent to which the specific age of the learner will impact on the success or failure of an educational intervention. However, in the present study (see the Key findings section in Part 2 below), we did perceive a broader distinction between younger, school-age learners, who generally focused on education for the sake of personal development and academic success, and those who were older and looking for professional development and employment opportunities.

Gender. Although their respective percentages of the population are more or less equal, existing literature sometimes makes reference to the differences between males and females. This is particularly the case in reports about the refugee community, and typically mentioned in relation to perceived or actual responsibilities for earning an income (males) and family care (females). However, while traditional gender roles may exist within both the refugee and host communities, some research (e.g. CARE International, 2018a) suggests that these are by no means fixed, and may even be changing, at least temporarily, due to the current context of conflict and the concomitant reprioritisation or reallocation of immediate needs, duties and decisions. This was corroborated by our interviews with engaged individuals for this study, in which

there was no evidence of particular access or engagement strategies being more or less successful with particular gender groups. Therefore, in this report, we judge the influence of gender on engagement to be indeterminate and we do not consider it a key factor in our segmentation.

The three characteristics of movement, vulnerability and focus/need combine to create three distinct segments.

1. Refugees living outside refugee camps (approximately 84 per cent of total refugee population in Jordan⁹).
2. Refugees living in refugee camps (approximately 16 per cent).
3. Jordanian communities that are vulnerable and/or impacted by displacement.

Each of these segments can be further broken down into:

- a. young learners (12- to 17-year-olds, for the purposes of this report) who are focused primarily or exclusively on education for personal development. And, for the refugee community only:¹⁰
 - i. attending school
 - ii. not attending school
- b. older, work-age young people (18- to 35-year-olds) who are focused primarily or exclusively on professional development and employment opportunities.

⁹ Percentages as of June 2019, according to UNHCR (2019a).

¹⁰ CARE International (2018a, p. 8) notes that: ‘Only 53.9% of Syrian children below the age of 18 are attending school, compared with 85% of Jordanian children and 80.1% of Iraqi children.’ Thus, like most existing literature on this topic, we do not further sub-divide segment 3a (Jordanian host community) by school attendance; this distinction is relevant only to segments 1a and 2a.

Additionally, within and across these segments, there are a number of mediating factors which will naturally influence individual lives and the suitability of particular resources, as well as the best ways to help individuals discover and access these resources. These include:

1. their individual motivations and aspirations
2. individual challenges, frustrations or traumas
3. the level of stability they have achieved where they are located
4. who and how many are in the household (family circumstances)
5. individual or household access to money (socioeconomic standing)
6. familiarity with digital tools and resources (digital literacy)
7. what has led these young people to access social services (background)
8. infrastructure (particularly internet access) in the proposed area of service delivery.

Some of these points emerged as themes in the interviews we conducted with engaged individuals who were using digital educational resources. However, it is important to note that the segmentation above has been defined independently of the other data gathered for this study and was not used to select real participants to interview. These issues are explored in more detail below, in Part 2 of this report.

Figure 1, below, gives details of the typical distinguishing characteristics of the three broad segments and their sub-segments, as summarised above.¹¹ Names in brackets, e.g. (Mahmoud), indicate corresponding illustrative personas in Section 1.3.

Figure 1: Characteristics of the three segments and sub-segments of the learner population considered in the present study

	1. Refugee Living among host community	2. Refugee Living in a camp	3. Jordanian Host community
In general	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predominantly from Syria (over 80%), but also from Iraq, Yemen, Sudan and other countries • Mostly formally registered with the Jordanian government and UNHCR (but if not, then ineligible for humanitarian aid) • High level of mobile phone ownership • Struggling financially (80% of Syrian refugees in Jordan are living below the poverty line), with any cash assistance typically spent on rent • In some urban areas, refugees may have access to ‘connected learning hubs’ run by JOHUD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All refugees living in camps are Syrian • High level of mobile phone ownership: 58% of adults in camps own a smartphone and 47% of those who do not own one still have access to one through a family member • Poor internet connectivity (including 3G coverage) • In the most densely populated camps, Za’atari and Azraq, residents have (or will have) access to ‘connected learning hubs’ and employment offices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More likely than Syrian refugees to report a shortage of household funds • Twice as likely as Syrian refugees to have elderly family members contributing to household income • Generally slightly smaller households (approx. 4 people) than Syrian refugee families (approx. 5 people) • Less likely than Syrian refugee families to have a female head of the household • 94% of adults own a mobile phone (85% own a smartphone): only 37% have access to a desktop computer, laptop or tablet

¹¹ Based on data from CARE International (2018a; 2018b), UNHCR (2019a; 2019b), 3RP (2019–20), Krafft et al. (2018), UNESCO (2018), Wilson & Casswell (2018) and Pew Research Center (2019). See CARE International (2018b, pp. 125–130) for a detailed breakdown of refugee and host community occupations, income sources and level of education, among other factors.

	1. Refugee Living among host community	2. Refugee Living in a camp	3. Jordanian Host community
a. Aged 12–17 years	<p>(Mahmoud)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Likely to have had education disrupted by conflict, potentially for several years If in school, attending second shift (with girls more likely to attend than boys, but at greater risk, e.g. of harassment when walking home) May have access to digital educational resources through school partnerships with NGOs Looking for work on a daily basis (91% of Syrian refugee children) Otherwise dependent on family members for financial support (however, 1 in 10 Syrian refugee families report a boy or a girl being married under 18, primarily to ease financial pressure on the household) 	<p>(Hayat)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Likely to have had education disrupted by conflict, potentially for several years Possibly in school, but not subject to double-shift system May have access to in-camp educational programmes and resources provided by NGOs Living in a family unit, perhaps with a female head of household 'Males (of this age) are among the most vulnerable groups, because of the need to support their families' (UNESCO, 2018) 	<p>(Noor)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enrolled in school Unlikely to attend a shift school but if so, attending first shift Half as likely as Syrian children to be looking for work on a daily basis
b. Aged 18–35 years	<p>(Maryam)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unemployed (or, if employed [about 1 in 5], more likely to be male and working informally with no formal contract) Educated at least to primary level (up to approx. 14 years of age) and possibly to secondary level (up to approx. 18 years of age) Approx. half of the population reporting some form of psychosocial distress (e.g. fear, hopelessness) Concerned about access and cost of healthcare, education and housing 	<p>(Ahmed)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educated at least to primary level (up to approx. 14 years of age) and possibly to secondary level (up to approx. 18 years of age) Approx. half of the population reporting some form of psychosocial distress (e.g. fear, hopelessness) Largely reliant on humanitarian support due to limited opportunities to generate income Concerned about access to humanitarian aid, food, healthcare and education Mostly own or have access to a smartphone 	<p>(Adib)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More likely to be employed than Syrian refugees, but still widespread unemployment

1.3 Developing representative beneficiary personas

1.3.1 Background

Personas, traditionally, have been used primarily in the field of marketing, where a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data is used to create reliable and realistic representations of key audience segments and facilitate a wider and more general understanding of the potential user groups. Such abstractions can serve as valid 'representations of stakeholder roles that are useful to guide the information design process' (Reeder & Turner, 2011, p. 979), thus enabling systems and products to be tailored to all potential user groups, maximising their effectiveness and impact.

In using personas, it is especially important to avoid stereotyping, a risk which is particularly acute in such a politically and socially sensitive field as migration. While personas have not widely been used in the education in emergency (EiE) context, they do nonetheless offer genuine opportunities for education planners and managers to ensure that they are delivering programmes which cater to the wide range of different audiences under their aegis, and that they are doing so as effectively as possible. Personas can be especially useful in migratory contexts where referring too explicitly to a particular individual or group could be dangerous for them.¹² Personas also offer a mechanism by which marginalised groups, rather than only groups which are already visible and mainstreamed, can have their voices recorded and interests reflected.

Personas are useful for those unfamiliar with the EiE context as well as those working in the field. Personas enable the former group to gain a clear, general understanding of the data without resorting to stereotyping or reification and allow the latter group to relate representative beneficiary identities directly to their specific contexts. Personas enable such implementing agencies to absorb particular recommendations and to construct and deliver more effective, tailored programmes in their project areas, thereby following the 'transformative' approach of Mertens et al. (2009, p. 88), in which the central question posed is: 'How can research contribute to social justice and the furtherance of human rights?' Given this, for the purposes of this research, the creation of an 'engaging' persona rather than a 'goal-directed' or 'role-directed' persona is most appropriate, since this approach creates 'a vivid and realistic description of fictitious people'.¹³

The six personas that follow were initially derived from the broad segments outlined above and later informed and elaborated by insights arising from the interviews conducted for Part 2 of this report.

1.3.2 Summary of personas

The personas summarised here are expanded on in the [Appendix](#). The identities and descriptions are fictional but based on the typical characteristics of individuals in the segments defined above in Section 1.2. Any very close resemblance to real individuals, living or dead, is unintentional.

¹² See Feitosa (2019) for an example of this, where the persona of 'Haziq' is used to represent a wider group of refugees who do not trust the UNHCR.

¹³ See Nielsen (2014) for an accessible overview of the four main perspectives on persona design.

Figure 2: Overview of personas and how they correspond to the segmentation in Section 1.2

Segment	Summary description	Persona
1a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refugee • Living outside camp (in host community) • 12–17 years old • Attending school (sub-segment i) 	Mahmoud
1b	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refugee • Living outside camp (in host community) • 18–35 years old 	Maryam
2a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refugee • Living in a camp • 12–17 years old • Not attending school (sub-segment ii) 	Hayat
2b	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refugee • Living in a camp • 18–35 years old 	Ahmed
3a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jordanian (host community) • 12–17 years old • Attending school 	Noor
3b	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jordanian (host community) • 18–35 years old 	Adib

1a: Mahmoud

Mahmoud is keen to finish his secondary education so that he can continue studying for a certified qualification at a higher level (computer science or a similar subject). He has completed and enjoyed an online course before, which suited him because he is sometimes shy and lacks confidence when interacting with others face-to-face. Mahmoud is comfortable in a digital environment and even does some paid technical work in his free time, but he struggles to find the English support he needs. He would benefit from support in identifying good-quality resources for self-study and from opportunities to build his confidence when speaking with others, especially in English.

1b: Maryam

Maryam is a very motivated learner and has already participated in a number of free online courses provided by an NGO. These have helped her improve her skills for her part-time work in project management, monitoring and evaluation with another NGO. Ultimately, Maryam has a specific goal of finding work and resettling in Turkey, so she would benefit from support in identifying learning content that is focused and differentiated enough to help her achieve this. Her employment and future mobility prospects would also be improved if the courses she took were formally accredited.

2a: Hayat

Hayat is a sociable and confident young person, active in her local community and on social media. Although she has the motivation and potential to learn and develop her skills, she has missed several years of formal schooling so has no qualifications and does not know how to learn effectively or how to find suitable resources. Hayat has attended some non-formal classes run by an NGO and wants to continue studying. She would benefit from following a structured and accredited course, but any online element would need to be managed asynchronously as lack of a smartphone and poor connectivity mean she cannot access the internet with any reliable regularity.

2b: Ahmed

Ahmed has already participated in a blended learning course and while he certainly benefited from the face-to-face part, he didn't get much from the remote part. This was not because he didn't try, but he was inexperienced in using this kind of approach and there were also infrastructure/connectivity constraints. Ahmed also finds it difficult to navigate his way through the resources on the internet, both for himself and his children. He could be much more effective in his choices if they were curated better for him, or if he were advised about relevant and appropriate sources of information.

3a: Noor

Noor is hard-working at school and at home, but her school attendance is affected by the need to help with family responsibilities and she might not complete her school-leaving qualifications. Noor thinks that continuing her education online might help her manage her family and study commitments more flexibly and gain better opportunities, but her digital skills are quite patchy and she also worries that she might not be able to dedicate the necessary time to attend or complete a course. Moreover, her ability to access the internet is limited by her lack of a mobile phone, unreliable Wi-Fi locally and a paucity of computers or other digital resources at her school.

3b: Adib

Adib left school with no qualifications and is not currently participating in any educational programme. His literacy skills in his first language are quite limited, as are his digital literacy skills. He lacks self-confidence as a learner and regrets that he has no qualifications, but his long working hours make it difficult to find time to study. Adib really wants to develop his digital skills as he hopes this would improve his business prospects and show his son the importance of education. If he could get help with learning how to learn and developing his digital skills, and especially if this included face-to-face support and the opportunity to gain a basic certification, he could gain skills, opportunities and self-confidence.

Part 2: Engagement with digital educational resources

2.1 Methodology and limitations

In this section we investigate what approaches are more or less successful when engaging the populations described above with digital educational resources, and what opportunities for improvement there might be, both initially and in the longer term.

To address these research questions, we conducted individual semi-structured interviews with representatives of nine organisations (seven providers of educational resources plus two organisations with expertise in this area) and seven members of either the refugee or host community in Jordan, ranging from 14 to 34 years old, whom these organisations had identified as exemplifying successful engagement with digital educational resources ('engaged individuals'¹⁴). This focus on successful engagement was intended to highlight best practices and avoid any risk of traumatic associations with negative experiences for the learners involved. Moreover, by definition, it was not possible to identify and contact individuals who had not already engaged with the organisations we were liaising with.

The majority of the organisations we interviewed ($n=7$) are providers of digital educational resources aimed at young, marginalised and/or displaced people in refugee or host communities, and operate in Jordan ($n=6$) or in a similar context elsewhere ($n=1$). We also interviewed two 'local experts', i.e. representatives of organisations who do not offer digital educational resources but who have extensive, in-depth experience and awareness of the educational provisions and/or beneficiary populations in this context.

Interviews with resource providers and local experts were conducted remotely. Interviews with engaged individuals were conducted in person or via phone/Skype in Jordan, and participants were given the choice of using English or Arabic as the language of discussion. In advance of data collection, all participants were informed of the aims and format of the research and gave their consent to participate. We use pseudonyms for individuals throughout this report, but where relevant, we use the names of contributing organisations and the resources, programmes or services they offer.

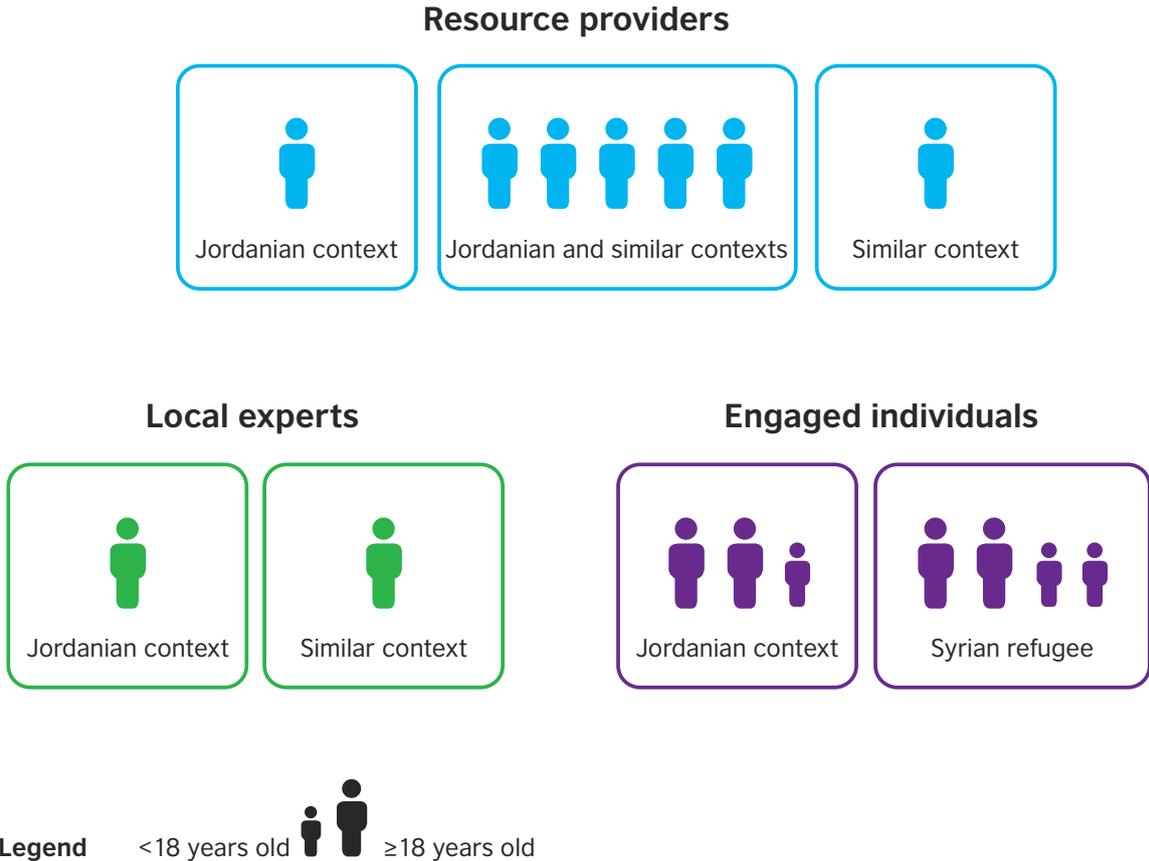
Finally, the engaged individuals we interviewed happened to fall within segments 1a-i, 1b, 2a-i, 2b, 3a and 3b, but it should be remembered that this was coincidental and the personas outlined in Part 1 of this report were not used as categories or criteria for participant recruitment in Part 2.

All research projects are necessarily limited in some way, and this study was subject to the same risks of bias as much as other research which draws on self-reported success of particular interventions. Beneficiaries' own experiences are also an important part of understanding what constitutes effective engagement, but we were mindful of potential research fatigue and other ethical considerations relating to these populations.

Research practices for a study of this nature should not generally cause participants to feel undue anxiety or to relive negative experiences, a consideration which informed our decision to focus on best practices and to limit our sampling to individuals who willingly self-selected to share their stories of positive engagement. Further insights might be gained by future studies involving participants who have dropped out or otherwise failed to engage with the resources in question.

¹⁴ When selecting these individuals, the resource providers applied their own interpretations of 'engagement', but all related broadly to beneficiaries' motivation and alignment to their particular programmes or resources. All the engaged individuals we interviewed were effectively 'super-users', i.e. people for whom these educational services appeared genuinely valuable and valued, even potentially life-changing.

Figure 3: Breakdown of all individuals and organisations who participated in Part 2 of the present study



2.2 Key findings and discussion

It is surprisingly difficult to neatly define what constitutes engagement in an educational context. Kahu (2013) describes several dominant perspectives taken by research concerning ‘engagement’, which all exhibit some shortcomings of definition, limitation and/or scope. However, Zyngier (2008, p. 1,765) points out that ‘engagement is difficult to define operationally, but we know it when we see it, and we know it when it is missing’. The present study takes this more intuitive approach. Most participants in their interviews implicitly treated ‘engagement’ as referring to reaching, recruiting and/or retaining individuals as active users of particular digital educational resources. This is the interpretation that guides the discussion and conclusions below.

2.2.1 Barriers to engagement

1. Digital approaches may not be seen as ‘real education’

Interviews with three resource providers and three engaged individuals suggested that there is a general lack of awareness, even suspicion, among both refugee and host community youth in Jordan about the use of digital approaches for educational purposes. Some potential learners (or related stakeholders such as a younger learner’s parents) may feel more comfortable with traditional classroom-based education and sceptical that online or digital approaches could be as effective:

Some communities simply rejected the entire concept of online learning and said if it’s not in a school with walls, it’s not acceptable. And it’s unfortunate because some of their kids, some of their friends, they all wanted to be involved in online learning, but then were actively discouraged with false information like ‘it’s not recognised’ or ‘it’s not real’ or ‘it’s not going to help you’.

Resource provider, operating online higher education courses with partners across Europe, the Middle East and North Africa

We live in a society where there is no perspective about taking online lessons [...] I used to share with [people] and show them and it was a shock to them. ‘Really? An online lesson?’ They wouldn’t believe that I take online lessons and that I had homework and I took quizzes and there are links. To them this was very weird [...] So it was a huge shift: ‘There is online learning?’ ‘Yes!’ ‘Based on your level?’ ‘Yes!’
24-year-old Jordanian, living in south Jordan

Some resource providers mitigate this discomfort with technology by providing blended courses or adding traditional accompaniments (e.g. textbooks, written homework) to modern digital tools (e.g. tablets), and ensuring that face-to-face contact is included alongside the use of digital or online content:

I think [there’s] definitely an attitude of suspicion towards [digital education] in the region, but I’d say we haven’t necessarily found that with our programme [...] for a couple reasons: one is that the programme’s quite small and we work very closely with a small group of students; and, two, our programme is a blended learning model, so even though the content is online, there’s a very robust presence of students and partners on the ground, and students are meeting together and learning together, and we have a lot of face-to-face contact time with students as well.

Resource provider, commenting on experience from a Lebanese context

[Our resource] has no textbooks. And some of the parents and children ask for textbooks, just so, you know, they feel like other children going to school. And although we did not use the actual textbooks as part of [our educational] sessions, eventually we did provide textbooks to children. The tablets remained at the [learning centre], so children did not take [them] back home. [Parents] wanted to see children actually writing on paper, children writing on books, or notebooks; and so we gave them textbooks; they would go back home, they would write with their friends, with their siblings, in front of their parents. So, that also facilitated the engagement of both children and parents.

Resource provider, working with children in both refugee and host communities, and in both formal and informal settings

One resource provider, which offers online higher education courses across Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, reported that their approach to engagement is different in countries where digital is a more normal, everyday part of life (e.g. Germany, France, Turkey). In these contexts, their approach would involve more digital and less face-to-face engagement. By contrast, this organisation’s experience was that learners in Jordan tend to associate mobiles and laptops more with social media or gaming than education. The implication is that traditional, offline, in-person educational approaches may be seen as more serious, valuable and credible.

Scepticism about newer, digital approaches to learning and preference for more traditional, face-to-face approaches occur in many contexts throughout the field of education (see Pedro (2009) for a review of technology implementation and attitudes in higher education among OECD countries). Moreover, people's ability to transfer and apply their digital skills for educational purposes does not necessarily come from just using technology every day for work, communication or entertainment (Pedro, 2009; Reid, 2014). Thus, while it may be true that Syrian refugees are 'seen as the most tech-savvy population of migrants in history' (UNESCO, 2018, p. 12), it does not follow that they will automatically be willing and able to use technology effectively in a learning context.

The question also arises whether learners from the refugee community, had they stayed in their countries of origin, would ever have needed or wanted to use digital educational resources. Likewise, if certain learners from the host community had higher socioeconomic status or better connectivity (see point 5, below), would they feel they needed or wanted such resources? Some particularly engaged learners we interviewed had evidently become so engaged partly because they did not have access to any other educational opportunities, or because their current circumstances of displacement require the greater flexibility offered by digital resources and/or blended programmes. Their challenging circumstances led them to see digital educational resources as an effective solution, and their motivation and engagement grew accordingly. Once they themselves had tried digital approaches and found the experience worthwhile and valuable, they began to feel frustration at others' scepticism, with some even displaying a sense of responsibility to share their successes with their peers in an effort to persuade the wider community to consider such opportunities more seriously:

I speak about my community and also myself when I say that people don't know what digital learning is and they find it very weird when learning more about it. Take me for example, I registered because my friend shared about it and that it is a good experience, etc. At first, I wasn't very positive about it and questioned whether I took the right decision. When I experienced it myself, I knew she was right. At first, I wasn't convinced; I said, 'OK, I will try and see'. So people don't know anything about it, and sometimes when you tell them about it, they might be convinced and think positively and try, just like I did, or they would not consider or think about it, like it is nothing and forget about it.

24-year-old Jordanian, living in south Jordan

2. Online education may not be formally or widely accredited

A major consideration in whether people choose to engage with online studies is that they are not necessarily officially recognised in the way that traditional face-to-face courses or degrees are. As Wagner (2017) points out, simply gaining a certificate from an NGO (for example) is often not enough; learners may understandably see little value in attending a course or studying for a certificate when the results will probably not afford further opportunities (such as employment) or be transferable to new contexts or countries if they later move away. This was well attested in the present study. Four resource providers, one local expert and three engaged individuals noted the importance of official accreditation, either by the Jordanian government or by other countries' governments:

There's the idea of 'Well, is this worth it?' and 'Should I be doing this?' [...] If they don't see 'What is this qualification? How can it help me? How is it going to help me eventually earn a living and improve my future?', then they're not going to stay in it, which contributes to a lot of dropout at secondary level [and tertiary level] [...]

Accreditation's a big one, making sure that their learning is valid and accredited, ideally locally and, with a lot of our programmes, internationally as well [...] So, really understanding the value. It has to have value, right?

Local expert, working with over 20 organisations providing higher education for refugees

For one individual in particular, his positive experience and high level of dedication and commitment was ultimately driven by accreditation. It was evident that the same learner, who appears to be self-motivated, ambitious and experienced in his field, did not and would not have the same level of long-term positive engagement in the absence of accredited certification:

If I'm to take online training or courses in the future, it needs to be accredited. I honestly can't waste my time by taking a course or something to build on my professional skills then being told that adding this certificate or course won't be that helpful on your CV.

34-year-old Syrian refugee, living in Amman

This learner had nearly completed his degree in Syria before coming to Jordan, where he had to begin from scratch, so his emphasis on accreditation is unsurprising. Ultimately, certificates from NGOs that are not officially accredited, however hard-earned, may be of no more practical value for refugees' long-term employment than any other 'time pass' activities they might undertake to counter the monotony of 'waithood' in this context (Wagner, 2017).

3. *Appropriate educational choices and pathways may be unclear*

Related to the issue of accreditation, interviews with two resource providers, one local expert and two engaged individuals revealed the importance of beneficiaries receiving accurate information from the start about what is being offered to them to avoid any future disappointment or discovery that a particular opportunity has little real-world applicability or wider accreditation. Interestingly, one engaged individual (a 30-year-old Jordanian national who lived in Syria until the conflict) made inaccurate claims about the accreditation of courses offered by a particular organisation – one with which he had, in fact, studied and later been trained to facilitate. This particular organisation, which we also interviewed, had emphasised how hard they work to counter such confusion, but clearly, despite their best efforts, there is still some risk of misinformation and misunderstanding around accredited educational opportunities.

Younger learners in particular may also struggle to understand the difference between multiple resources, or how they are expected to benefit differently from each, even when they appear to be currently using and engaged with them all. One individual (14-year-old Syrian refugee, living in a camp) used very general terms to describe his learning experiences and struggled to identify how ostensibly similar digital resources provide him with different learning opportunities. He was mostly unable to use terminology accurately to refer to particular tools or learning experiences (e.g. using ‘mini-laptops’ for ‘tablets’, ‘learning on the desktop’ for ‘computer skills’), or to name specific channels he has been using (he was able to name only two, focusing on topics or lesson titles instead), despite seeming generally engaged with digital educational resources. This becomes crucial when expecting positive impact and high levels of engagement in multiple digital resources, while, in reality, enrolling young learners in multiple digital learning programmes can end up being perceived as more overwhelming than amplifying.

Similarly, it may be the case that there are just so many resources and opportunities available that, however valuable they are, potential beneficiaries could easily be uncertain how to identify the most suitable resources for them, or else motivated by other more pressing concerns than content relevance. One engaged individual (adult Syrian refugee, living in Amman) observed that many refugees tend to sign up and apply for whatever is available just because it covers costs, and that this can lead to neglecting real passions or learning needs in order to get other support they need. His view was that instead of looking for a suitable learning experience that matches interest and potential, students end up enrolling in programmes that they find unsatisfactory after a short period, leading them to drop out or change their major.

Moreover, learners in stable, established educational contexts may be said to have a clear, predictable pathway, e.g. middle school → high school (→ university) (→ postgraduate studies) → employment. But for learners in this context, even if they make good initial choices, what happens later? How can they move seamlessly from one resource to another and continue engaging and progressing with appropriate educational opportunities? These issues were not easily addressed by participants in the present study. It was difficult, both for the researchers and for the resource providers themselves, to envisage potential beneficiaries’ extended educational paths, i.e. how learners can or do move from one opportunity to the next, either with one provider or across different providers. It is clear that there is a glut of educational resources on offer, but it remains unclear how one might navigate a path through all these to continue learning and progressing – if, indeed, one needs or wishes to do so.

Two resource providers referred to successful examples of building bespoke pathways for learners. For example:

One of our partners [...] offers a diploma programme that’s accredited through [a college] in the US. Once students complete this diploma programme, those credits count towards continuing with [a US university’s] associate’s degree programme [...] And then, when they complete that associate’s degree, the credits from the associate’s count towards the bachelor’s degree programme. So it builds, one upon the next. So that they know that when they’ve finished the course, they have opportunities to continue for further study.

Local expert, working with over 20 organisations providing higher education for refugees

It is important to note that this structured approach was more a product of successful cross-provider collaboration than of designing one course in its own right to be distinctly broken down into micro-stages or micro-credits. This participant also lamented that there was a limit to how far learners could progress in this way:

At the moment, we have a lot of requests from students who complete bachelor’s degree programmes, and they say ‘I would love to do a master’s. Where do I go from here?’ We currently only have one partner who’s offering masters’ degrees, in education. So that’s one gap, at least at tertiary level: various students who very successfully complete their bachelors’ and want to keep going, and there just aren’t the opportunities available.

Of course, some individuals may be fortunate or focused enough to have identified clear personal goals and to navigate their own pathway that will help them reach these goals:

I have been practising [my profession] for almost five years now. So it is crucial to me to take a degree in [this subject], because my goal is to shift more gradually to conducting training in my field. So, before registering, I asked about the university, the degree accreditation, and I asked other students enrolled in the programme about it.

34-year-old Syrian refugee, living in Amman

Thus, the degree of self-awareness, self-discipline and self-motivation seems to influence the level of clarity on, and therefore the benefit of, decisions made in regards to long-term plans that involve the digital learning options available for each individual. Similarly, it impacts the level of engagement with the digital resources within reach.

4. Beneficiaries have competing personal and cultural priorities

Three resource providers and one local expert explained that there may simply be other demands on potential beneficiaries' time and attention – such as illness, family commitments or the need to work. They stated or implied that competing family or economic responsibilities will generally take precedence over studying, which can lead to learners dropping out of courses, either temporarily or longer-term:

Particularly working with the most vulnerable groups, there's so many competing priorities for these people. There's consistent life challenges they face that have to be taken into account. If they're taking three to four hours out of their day [...] that's [time] that they could be potentially using to generate income, and so [...] it's a huge sacrifice.

Local expert, managing humanitarian programmes in Jordan and Lebanon

While none of the engaged individuals referred exactly to 'competing priorities' in their interviews – perhaps they felt it was irrelevant, given that they have clearly overcome any conflicting demands to actively pursue educational opportunities – all four of the adult beneficiaries interviewed did refer to the importance of 'flexibility' and how their engagement with particular digital resources was greatly influenced by the fact that they could fit their studies around their lives:

[My wife and I don't] feel that this system has impacted our daily life negatively. Digital learning has given us the chance not to be on campus to study.

34-year-old Syrian refugee, living in Amman

What is great about it is that it is free, flexible time, you don't spend too much time with transportation [...] so you can use two hours of transport in studying a session instead.

30-year-old Jordanian national, but lived in Syria until the conflict

It is logical now that instead of crossing distances to take a helpful course, I do it from home. Especially for homestay moms! In one of the recent meetings with [a resource provider], most of the ladies attending were homestay moms, so they would say that it helps them with the other responsibilities they have; or people who have disabilities, or learning disabilities or anything else that hinders their access to education, they find digital resources the best solution.

30-year-old Syrian refugee, living in a camp

It is undeniably tempting for providers of digital educational resources (or indeed, any educational programmes) to feel encouraged by the motivation and participation of such engaged learners – all educators want to feel that they are making a valuable (and valued) contribution to the world. However, it should be remembered that the perceptions of beneficiary needs may differ between the resource providers and the beneficiaries themselves, and for some individuals these differences may be irreconcilable. As Wagner (2017, p. 112) points out:

In Mafrq,¹⁵ there is plenty of evidence that [what] the youth [emphasis in original] NGOs have in mind is modelled after Western models of adolescence, with extended schooling and no involvement in (waged) labor. [But] in Syrian families of rural background, minors have always constituted a valuable resource and contributed to the family income [...] While NGO programs prepare young beneficiaries for Western middle-class life models, they overlook the socioeconomic background of their target group. In particular, they fail to grasp that young Syrians' survival mechanisms – including child labor and early marriage – cannot be attributed to displacement solely.

15 A town in north Jordan whose population comprises approximately 80,000 to 100,000 Syrian refugees, equivalent to roughly 50 per cent of the total population (Wagner, 2017, p. 110).

Thus, the fact that potential beneficiaries have other priorities which conflict with the time and effort they might otherwise dedicate to education is not necessarily a reflection on the effectiveness of resource providers' engagement strategies. And of course, it is not only the refugee population who may have priorities or preferences that are incompatible with even the best-designed resources and programmes. For example, one of the engaged individuals in the present study (24-year-old Jordanian, living in the south) mentioned peers dropping out of online courses, because they would be required to speak with 'foreigners or strangers', not to mention in a foreign language (English), and that she herself had had to overcome the associated 'fear' and 'anxiety' of such interactions at first.

5. Basic barriers to access remain

In addition to the above challenges, for those who do choose to access online resources it is often necessary to travel to a community centre, university or some sort of 'learning hub'. Interviews with five resource providers, one local expert and five engaged individuals revealed common challenges that can impede even this basic initial access: learners may have to queue for a computer or arrive at a pre-defined time; learning centres may only be open at certain times, which are not always convenient for learners; limitations of local transport or poor weather conditions can make it difficult for learners to even get to these locations at all; and, at times, there has been no internet connectivity at all within the refugee camps in Jordan.¹⁶

Naturally, this considerably limits the availability of any online resource for that population in particular, whether educational or otherwise, and, of course, it also makes it generally impractical to recruit and engage these individuals via digital/online methods. And connectivity issues can potentially hinder participation in online education for the non-refugee population as well – indeed, one of our interviews with a Jordanian learner in a southern town eventually had to take place by phone because of an internet connectivity issue.

2.2.2 Aspects of effective engagement

6. Offline methods are effective in engaging beneficiaries

Most organisations we interviewed reach their target beneficiaries via both offline channels (word-of-mouth and face-to-face approaches, such as events or leafleting) and social media (typically Facebook). The only organisation that did not explicitly mention either online or offline ways of engaging their target audiences was one whose resources are provided as part of regular school education, i.e. learners are not actively recruited, because they automatically get access to the resources as part of their school attendance:

We've tried to encourage kind of a uniform approach in each case if possible, but nearly universally it's standard flyers, so printouts and flyers that are posted in common areas around the camp or community, as well as utilising things like text messaging, SMS, emails where possible [...] Word-of-mouth has become a bit of a method as well. Learners will tell their friends that they're taking this course and so that's been a key recruitment piece.

Resource provider, offering digital English language courses for refugees and host communities in East Africa and MENA

Particularly for those resource providers focusing on the refugee population in Jordan, a reliance on traditional offline media is unsurprising, given the unreliable internet connectivity in the camps; but this approach appeared to be favoured even by those interviewees who did not refer to connectivity issues. In fact, eight of the nine resource providers and local experts interviewed and all of the engaged individuals cited the importance of offline approaches (on-the-ground activity, face-to-face contact or word-of-mouth communication) as a main way of initiating or maintaining engagement. For example:

I actually learned about the programme from a friend of mine [...] I asked her if she knew about resources or courses that would help me without the need to attend classes, because I am already busy.

24-year-old Jordanian, living in south Jordan

When you see that you are benefiting from a certain resource or an individual, it is normal to share about it with other people around you, especially when it is life-changing. I'm among the people who are proud to be working and interacting with [this resource provider], because it nearly changed my life 180 degrees.

30-year-old Syrian refugee, living in a camp

I think the most effective way to teach the camp residents about such opportunities is through gathering people and raising awareness. A lot of the girls in the camp are out of school, and it is probable that they stay at home and don't know what is available in the camp, whether it is organisations, activities, programmes, courses, etc. So they could go around knocking on doors and tell girls and families about [the programme], and that there are other girls participating, and what subjects and activities it provides learners with and how it benefits girls and helps them strengthen their personalities.

15-year-old Syrian refugee, living in a camp

¹⁶ This was mentioned by various participants during interviews in April to May 2019, but the situation had changed by June 2019 and may, of course, change again in the future.

This last illustrative quotation comes from a learner whose general experience highlighted the desire of some individuals to be actively involved in their local community, of which education is just one part. Many things which make people feel more involved in their community, for example by improving adolescents' popularity among peers or adults' sense of professional development, can contribute to motivation. This in turn may affect engagement with education by forging new relationships and raising awareness of new opportunities. In other words, for some learners perhaps education is not the priority; community is, but the latter is a means to the former.

Although face-to-face approaches might be considered by organisations as logistically overwhelming or demanding high capacity, it seems to be perceived as effective by the individuals who are expected to engage with their resources. For example, our interview with the aforementioned engaged adolescent revealed two useful interactive means of engagement: demoing or simulating some of the digital content available and in-person interaction with a coach, where students get to ask questions and comment on the experience. She noted that prospective beneficiaries who observed existing users of a particular resource became more curious about it and so were prompted to find out more and later enrol themselves.

It seemed at first from interviews with learners under 18 years old that they were particularly dependent on physically present teachers or coaches rather than shifting more towards independent, self-paced learning, including digital approaches. But, in fact, other interviews revealed that face-to-face contact with tutors and coaches is important for maintaining engagement with older beneficiaries as well. For example, one resource provider called it a 'critical element [...] absolutely necessary', and the engaged individuals who had been following a blended learning model reported enjoying this format, because the blended approach includes face-to-face interaction in addition to the facilitation of digital resources that help them navigate the course content efficiently and effectively. One local expert, drawing on experience with over 20 NGOs and education providers working with refugees, explained emphatically:

The on-the-ground partner is instrumental and is absolutely invaluable [for maintaining engagement]. It's having that face-to-face support, who's there with them and has a physical presence, that's what does it. That's what keeps them in. That's the difference between the eight per cent retention you get in a MOOC and the 80 to 90 and above per cent retention you get with programmes that a lot of our partners are running. Without that support, you'll

hook people in and you'll get them to sign up, but having that ability to [...] create a cohort of learners that they can study with and communicate with for academic support, for social support, and also having the on-the-ground partner to go through the logistics, and the application procedures, and if they're struggling and they have a problem, getting the help that they need to overcome that, getting the flexibility to reschedule things – all those pieces that you would normally get if you're face-to-face on a campus somewhere – these are the pieces that the on-the-ground provider can offer these students. And that's what keeps them in it. That's what keeps them from dropping out when things get tough and that's what keeps them motivated.

Local expert, working with over 20 organisations providing higher education for refugees

In addition to face-to-face contact and other offline approaches, SMS, email, WhatsApp, Facebook and service providers' own websites were also occasionally mentioned by resource providers as ways of engaging beneficiaries. Indeed, refugees' preference for SMS and simple instant messaging apps such as WhatsApp to communicate with family and peers and to share information about opportunities is widespread, if not indefinitely scalable (UNESCO, 2018, p. 31). One review of technology-enhanced educational provisions in development contexts (Gulati, 2008, p. 12) noted that when equity of access was considered, 'traditional technologies such as printed material, radio, and television remain more effective and accessible for rural and disadvantaged groups'.

Moreover, while the use of social media is common among Syrian refugees because they use it frequently to communicate with family abroad and quickly find opportunities, Jordanians in host communities may not necessarily share this constant and frequent need to be on social media and, of course, may also have different lifestyles and economic status. So, alternative approaches, such as SMS, may be more effective in engaging beneficiaries in the host community in Jordan – though perhaps not among refugees due to the prevalence of multiple SIM card use in this community, which can cause difficulty in maintaining contact with individuals whose numbers may change frequently, becoming temporarily or permanently unreachable (Wilson & Casswell, 2018, p. 9). Ultimately, whether social media, SMS, face-to-face or other offline approaches are used to engage potential beneficiaries, the conclusion we must draw is that the most suitable approaches will align with a given community's specific context, needs and challenges in the first place.

7. Community is key

Resource providers tend to make significant use of local partners (typically international NGOs, where the organisation itself is not the resource provider) to engage with potential and current beneficiaries. Due to their presence in a particular community, these local partners have an existing relationship with community members and a sensitive awareness of their educational and more general needs and priorities.

But even more important is the supporting role played by fellow community members themselves. Five resource providers, one local expert and five of the engaged individuals interviewed commented on the importance of community for both initial and ongoing engagement, with particular reference made to the value of peer support and, for prospective beneficiaries, the value of peers as role models of successful engagement with digital educational resources:

We collaborate in helping each other. If I struggle with a question, I ask my friend and vice versa. So there is collaboration between us.

15-year-old Jordanian, living and studying in a mixed host/refugee community

I actually helped, I think, four or five people enrol [with the organisation I'm studying with], because I felt that this is an important opportunity, and I felt that I personally benefited from it, so I wanted others to benefit from it as well.

30-year-old Jordanian national, but lived in Syria until the conflict

During conversations with some of the women recently, they really made a point of saying: 'These women are my sisters and I come as much to be with them as I do to come and be involved in the project itself.

Local expert, managing humanitarian programmes in Jordan and Lebanon

[When we piloted our programme] they themselves were doing a lot of peer learning and peer support face-to-face [...] They were not really going to the learning centre, they would just get together, for instance, they would go to the cafeteria [...] informally meeting [...] So what we did for the second group [...] was to [train] the first ones as co-facilitators.

Resource provider, working on open educational resources and open access courses in Jordan and Lebanon

Ads help a lot to reach people [...] Any simple ads like on Instagram will help spread the word [...] Or producing a short clip showcasing individuals [who are enrolled in digital learning programmes] sharing about their achievements; success stories, this is the best thing to share. This encourages people to say: this person is doing good things. I want to be like him/her.

24-year-old Jordanian, living in south Jordan

[Peers are valuable in] bringing in new engaged learners, because when they see somebody from their background, from their community, who's doing this work and who's succeeding, it obviously inspires others to start and to stay committed [...] You have to exemplify and showcase success stories, but not in a superficial way like in a magazine. They want to physically see it in front of them. They want to see the tangible success.

Resource provider, operating online higher education courses with partners across Europe, the Middle East and North Africa

These insights are consistent with research in other contexts (e.g. Murphey & Arao, 2001) which has shown that 'near-peers' – people whose backgrounds, experiences and narratives are similar to the learner's own – can be highly effective and motivating role models.

Related to the importance of community involvement, four resource providers (three of whom serve both the refugee and host community youth in Jordan) mentioned involving learners themselves in the development and promotion of course content. For example, it could be that learner feedback directly affects the design of future courses or that, after completing their own course, they come back as facilitators/tutors for future cohorts:

I think involving the learners as much as possible in the actual development of the courses [helps maintain engagement] Learners that are already [...] starting to get much more comfortable with online [...] can empathise with learners like they were a year ago, that have never used online before. [...] And they can feed into what they want to see in the course, how they want it to be designed [...] And I think giving learners a stake in their education [...] leads to higher engagement, because [...] they've been part of the process. And when you're part of the process, you feel more involved, don't you?

Resource provider, providing online higher education for refugee and host community youth in Jordan and Lebanon

8. Association with established authorities can lend credibility and catalyse acceptance of new approaches

Interviews with three resource providers suggested a beneficial effect on engagement of associating new approaches with established institutions. The implication is that people respond better to novelties when they are introduced or endorsed by someone who is already trusted, such as a peer in the community, a representative of a well-known organisation or major university, or the Ministry of Education. Such collaboration can thus mitigate some of the suspicion or uncertainty around digital learning in beneficiary communities, and potentially avoid the spread of misinformation about what opportunities are available.

One engaged individual also specifically raised the issue of credibility and how his opinion quickly changed when he realised that his online tutors were the same established academics who would have been teaching him offline:

When people hear that there is a platform that provides free learning or an internet course, you start doubting its credibility; does this content provide correct knowledge, does it not? [...] So when we used [this resource provider's] courses we realised that they provide trusted knowledge with well-referenced resources [...] You are talking about people who are experienced in their fields. It is not untrusted resources.

30-year-old Syrian refugee, living in a camp

9. Is effective engagement a virtuous circle?

Interviews with engaged individuals suggested above all that engagement tends to lead to further engagement. In other words, once a person has already demonstrated a willingness to try a particular approach or resource, their curiosity and awareness are raised; they become visible to organisations operating in this space, and further opportunities may more easily present themselves. Interestingly, rather than any particular content or strategy on the part of resource providers, six of the seven engaged individuals interviewed in this study – one of whom has already taken over 20 courses with one particular resource provider – demonstrated an attitude that simply having a genuine interest, self-motivation and making a 'commitment' to learning were key to their ongoing engagement:

Those [people] who are interested in digital learning enrol and follow programmes. It is really about personal interest after all. [And] you need to be patient and some people don't have patience. Like, for instance, if I had had no patience and I had said, 'Oh no they speak in English and they speak fast and I can't hear them', I would have dropped out and said: 'It is enough.'

24-year-old Jordanian, living in south Jordan

[My experience with digital learning] is a great one. I took around 15 [courses] from different websites and in more than one subject. It helped me really, it helped me become more knowledgeable and competitive in the workforce.

30-year-old Jordanian national, but lived in Syria until the conflict

Honestly, after around eight years of no education at all, I was desperate to have access to education again and once I found it, I seized it and held on to it so hard.

34-year-old Syrian refugee, living in Amman

Of these six particularly motivated individuals, the four older learners in particular (all over 24 years old) exhibited one common strategy: they all have clear long-term goals with tangible applicability to their wider lives, and a sense of how their participation in particular digital educational courses or resources can help them achieve these. For example, one individual was very clear about building on the specialist skillset he had been developing for the past five years, which helped him evaluate various educational options and make a well-thought-out decision about the one that he believes will best support his plans.

Of course, motivation is critical for effective learning in general, and inherent interest or enjoyment in the subject is particularly powerful (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Learners can be helped to internalise and integrate learning needs with their personal values and goals by being appropriately challenged, feeling supported by and connected to others, feeling a sense of choice and autonomy, and actively recognising the relevance of what they are learning to their wider life context (*ibid.*).

2.3 Conclusions

The major themes arising from this study, particularly the common barriers to engagement, are consistent with findings reported in previous research commissioned by the British Council (for example, Fincham, 2017). These barriers relate predominantly to how a course or content is designed and set up, i.e. however an organisation might try to reach potential beneficiaries, these individuals are less likely to engage in either the short or long term if they remain unconvinced of the value of digital educational resources, are uncertain how to choose and navigate among many options, or cannot reliably access the resources in the first place. And, of course, there will always be some individuals who simply have personal life priorities that take precedence over education.

Assuming that the ideal digital educational resource exists – one which is valuable, credible, accessible, accredited/applicable and (of course) pedagogically robust – there are a number of effective approaches to engagement that relate to how that resource is communicated and delivered to those who might willingly choose to use it. Essentially, once points 1–5 above have been satisfactorily resolved in order to secure initial engagement, points 6–9 can help maintain that engagement. But the latter will be of little use without first addressing the former. These are certainly not challenges that can be overcome easily or quickly, if at all – it is unlikely, for example, that every conceivable educational offering will be accredited by the government or that even the most digitally literate individuals will be able to adapt these skills to an educational context without some guidance and support.

Moreover, crucial to effective engagement with any resources is the provision of ‘wraparound’ academic, social, technical and logistical support – at least some of which should be face-to-face – and genuine integration within the beneficiaries’ wider community. In particular, wider awareness and acceptance of credible, valuable educational resources will benefit from the existence of peers as role models of motivated engagement.

In short, future efforts at engagement should take into account the complexity and diversity of beneficiaries’ real-world needs and the central role of community in individual decision making, as well as investing in improved awareness of the legitimacy of digital content and platforms for educational purposes. Partnerships and connections between providers may also be useful, to the extent that they can facilitate fruitful, navigable pathways for learners through the myriad of resources on offer. But while these resources may be digital, they need to fit comfortably alongside the demands and constraints of beneficiaries’ everyday lives (e.g. earning an income, childcare), which are often resolutely fixed in their offline realities.

2.4 Recommendations

First and foremost: any ‘solutions’, digital or otherwise, for the challenges faced by young, marginalised and/or displaced members of the refugee and host communities in Jordan need to foreground these communities’ real needs, recognising that individuals’ personal and cultural priorities may not always be compatible with organisations’ educational or political priorities.¹⁷ In short, the individual, rather than the technology, is paramount. None of the findings from this study suggested that the nature of a particular technological intervention (e.g. platform versus tablet, online versus offline) affects how resource providers engage their audiences. Best practice is clearly person-centred.

Generally, for those individuals who may truly welcome and benefit from digital educational resources, the present study gives rise to a number of principles that should be considered by any organisation hoping to improve and sustain engagement (not implying any order of priority). Due to the digital focus of this study, many suggestions below involve technology, but they do not necessarily require an internet connection, given that reliable connectivity (including 3G connections) may still be an issue for some beneficiaries.

¹⁷ See Wagner (2017) for an extensive critique of existing development discourse and intervention efforts for the Syrian refugee population in Jordan in particular.

Where relevant, recommendations below are linked to one or more of the target audience segments described earlier in the report.

1. Prioritise approaches such as blended learning, which combine the flexibility of digital resources with the support of face-to-face contact, and ensure these approaches truly are blended, with asynchronous online time and synchronous offline time being used appropriately, given their respective affordances and limitations. The ultimate role of a teacher is to facilitate learning and not to have learners depend on them for everything they need/do. Blended learning has the potential to support both vulnerable young and adult learners, both in refugee and host communities, for academic and professional development tracks. In addition to flexibility, cost and time reduction, the blended learning approach supports learning differentiation among learners, which eventually leads to a higher quality of education (UNHCR, 2019c).
2. Ensure the outcome of these programmes is accredited and/or transferable as credits for future study or employment. As adult refugee learners in refugee and host communities highlighted in the data analysis section earlier, seeking employability and enrolment in graduate studies programmes across the region and many other countries around the world without accredited education is a real challenge. With a significant number of refugees constantly moving from a host country to another or returning permanently to their home countries after years of displacement, learners are still subject to losing years of investment in informal education due to lack of accreditation and certificate equalisation. Thus, more strategic and collaborative efforts with ministries of education and departments of education are key to securing a progression in such a process.
3. Help individuals become better online/digital learners by providing training and support with independent learning, critical thinking and so on. It may be useful to start this process of developing autonomy before learners actually begin using the digital resources with a scale that meets their age and learning abilities. The delivery approach for such programmes, however, should be flexible enough to bridge the learning gap in digital literacy between refugee and Jordanian learners. Therefore, it is critical to assess pre-training digital knowledge and skills among beneficiaries in refugee and host communities, as well, to help content creators develop and test digital learning tools to enhance the learning experience for users in those different communities. On the other hand, learning facilitators should be familiar with good practices in digital learning and be engaged online/digital learners themselves to guarantee the genuine and realistic progression of their programme training.
4. Reduce clutter and increase clarity. The number of existing offerings in this space is potentially overwhelming; beneficiaries may need help understanding the value of individual resources, how they differ from each other, and how to choose the best path through them to reach their personal goals. Refugee learners who are 18 to 35 years old will appreciate such guidance when making life-changing decisions regarding their college majors and career paths. Within the context of a variety of global digital learning offerings, strategic planning becomes essential to refugee learners across the region, hence the value of clarity and customisation of digital learning experiences.
5. Continuously re-evaluate and iteratively improve current digital educational programmes and resources with direct reference to users' current attitudes, views, behaviours and experiences. What is working? What is not working? What lessons emerge from shadowing users? In this case, engagement in digital learning solutions offered for each segment of learners should be observed and assessed differently as the learning goals behind engaging with digital resources are different from one to another.
6. Involve beneficiaries themselves: showcase individual success stories,¹⁸ incorporate existing users' feedback into resource development and conduct more face-to-face interaction with current and prospective users. As shown in the data analysis section, a key factor to engagement is community-based learning opportunities that providers grant their beneficiaries, such as other digital learning resources, professional training programmes, mentoring new beneficiaries. This integration of the 'pay it forward' approach could potentially be facilitated with the support of the Ministry of Education in public schools or schools in refugee camps, or by a general community presence through cultural days, customised activities related to the organisation's work, live simulations, etc. to suit beneficiaries of all ages.

¹⁸ A number of organisations already make efforts to share past and current 'success stories' with prospective beneficiaries, e.g. through WhatsApp groups, meetings with alumni and Facebook groups.

Part 3: Mapping recommendations to personas

In this section, we draw together Parts 1 and 2 by illustrating in more depth how the main recommendations arising from the latter would be relevant to the former, as well as typical challenges implementing agencies would need to consider.

The six key recommendations made in Section 2.4 above were, in summary:

1. implement blended learning approaches
2. ensure accreditation of digital/online education

3. provide training on how to become autonomous digital learners
4. reduce clutter and increase clarity
5. continuously evaluate and improve digital resources and learning experiences
6. involve the beneficiaries themselves.

The following two tables give more detail on the correspondence between these recommendations and the illustrative segment personas described in Section 1.3 and the Appendix.

Figure 4: Correspondence between recommendations 1–3 and the six personas

Persona	Recommendations		
	1	2	3
1a: Mahmoud	Mahmoud is nervous about any face-to-face learning in small groups. Front-loading the online component might increase his confidence.	A certificate would not only help him get work in IT locally, but might also help with a university application.	Mahmoud already has this knowledge so wouldn't need to re-learn the basics – he could enter at a higher level.
1b: Maryam	Maryam is very goal driven and has a specific aim – the programme needs to be differentiated for her particular objective.	Since she wants to get to Turkey, where she wants to work, she needs certification which is transferable.	While Maryam has experience of using Kiron, a diagnostic to check her general digital skills would be necessary.
2a: Hayat	Asynchronicity is important for Hayat because the digital connections are not reliable – it would be difficult for her to be online at a specific time.	Hayat needs all the official credit she can get because of her lack of secondary education.	Hayat lacks 'learning to learn' skills because she has missed so much formal education.
2b: Ahmed	Ahmed is open to online learning, but he faces significant infrastructure/connectivity constraints.	This is very important to Ahmed for intrinsic (personal) and extrinsic (work/study) reasons.	While Ahmed has decent general digital skills, he needs more specialist support (e.g. navigating massive open online courses).
3a: Noor	Noor likes the flexibility of being able to work online because of her (sometimes unpredictable) family commitments.	This is crucial as Noor may not complete the Tawjihi. A certificate of her digital skills could help her get work.	Noor's digital skillset is quite scattered and patchy. A clear diagnostic of her skills would be useful for her.
3b: Adib	Adib does not want to do an online-only course. That said, if his online skills were upgraded, he could study during the day (when waiting for customers).	A certificate would be very intrinsically motivating for Adib, as he left school with no certification.	Adib has minimal digital skills and would need an introductory course to be taught the basics.

Figure 5: Correspondence between recommendations 4–6 and the six personas

Persona	Recommendations		
	1	2	3
1a: Mahmoud	Mahmoud's time use accessing IELTS materials is inefficient – he knows he needs to get a good IELTS score, but does not know how to achieve this.	Many young people like Mahmoud struggle to find the English support they need – the lessons learner can be widely disseminated.	Mahmoud has experience of creating short 'explainer' videos – a skill which could be harnessed to share knowledge and build capacity.
1b: Maryam	Maryam would need to focus on the content she needs in order to meet her learning objective, otherwise her focus may be too broad.	Maryam understands monitoring and evaluation and the feedback process – with this knowledge, she could help develop questionnaires, focus groups, etc.	As a teacher, Maryam has contact with other people who would be interested in the programme.
2a: Hayat	Hayat is in many WhatsApp groups, where her friends regularly share educational websites, but she needs to know which ones are good.	Hayat is a confident user of social media, and could be involved in gathering information and data from a wide sample of people.	Hayat is motivated and well respected in her local community. Given the appropriate resources and training, she could upskill others in a similar position.
2b: Ahmed	Ahmed's online learning activity could be much more focused if the content were better curated.	Ahmed is knowledgeable and articulate, and has previous experience of training, making him a rich resource.	Since Ahmed teaches locally, he could cascade his knowledge, especially if he was also upskilled as a trainer.
3a: Noor	Lacking knowledge and support in her life, Noor could benefit from clear direction or guidance by experts.	Noor's experience is comparable to many young women. This information could be useful when scaling the programme.	Noor could share the skills and knowledge she gains with her siblings.
3b: Adib	Adib has limited experience of formal and informal learning, so needs guidance and support.	Adib would be more comfortable sharing his feedback in a face-to-face focus group.	If the programme works, Adib could be a role model for older learners with minimal digital skills.

Appendix: Detailed beneficiary persona profiles

Demographics	
Age	17
Gender	Male
Education	Mahmoud was attending secondary school before coming to Jordan and now attends the second shift at a local school, but his attendance is irregular. He feels frustrated that he is older than the other pupils in his class because he had to restart the academic year when he arrived in Jordan.
Location	He now lives in east Amman, but he is originally from Baghdad.
Family	He has a large family, living with his parents, three brothers and two sisters.
Language skills	His first language is Arabic, in which he is strong in all areas. He has been trying to learn English, but he remains at A1 level.
Work	He does some data entry work for a local accountancy firm, and also goes door-to-door at weekends offering to fix people's phones and computers.
Behaviour	
Educational	He has completed an online course which developed his digital skills in using Microsoft programs. He hopes to take more similar courses in future. He has been going to extra English language classes outside school, provided by a local NGO, but his attendance has been poor. He feels shy about participating.
Digital	He spends much of this time online looking at (free) IELTS websites, videos and materials to try and develop his skills.
Environment	
Social	He lives in a mixed socioeconomic area. When he is not at school or working, he spends most of his time in his bedroom.
Technological	Good 3G/4G available. His family house has an internet connection which is slow but reliable.
Psychographics	
Self-image	He sometimes lacks confidence when he is with other people.
Aspirations	His immediate goal is to finish school. Then he wants to do his bachelor's degree in computer studies (or a related subject). Eventually, he would love to go overseas to do a master's degree or PhD.
Motivations	He is motivated by the frustrations of his father, who had a good professional job in Syria but has not been able to find regular work in Jordan.
Fears	He is worried that his relatively poor English skills will prevent him from achieving his dreams after school.

Demographics	
Age	23
Gender	Female
Education	Maryam has a bachelor's degree in management.
Location	She is a Syrian Kurd, originally from Qamishli. She now lives in a rural area of Ma'an, in the southern part of Jordan.
Family	She lives alone. The rest of her family are in either Syria or Turkey.
Language skills	Her mother tongue is Kurdish, but she also speaks Arabic fluently. She has good conversational English and French.
Work	She works part-time for an NGO in one of their field offices, focusing on project management and monitoring and evaluation. At the weekends she sometimes works as a tour guide in Petra, working with English- and French-speaking tourists.
Behaviour	
Educational	Maryam participates in free online courses via www.kiron.ngo , focused on different aspects of management and organisation. She teaches English and French to mixed groups of Jordanians and Syrians in the local community centre.
Digital	In addition to the courses she follows at Kiron, she is an active social media user.
Environment	
Social	There are relatively few refugees where Maryam lives, and even fewer who are Kurdish. As a result, she sometimes feels quite lonely and isolated.
Technological	All the digital access she gets is through the NGO she works for.
Psychographics	
Self-image	Maryam is a workaholic. She knows that one of the reasons she works so hard is that she suffers from trauma, and this is her way of dealing with it.
Aspirations	She would like to be reunited with her family in Turkey. She knows that her best chance to do this is to upskill herself so she makes herself more employable.
Motivations	She loves learning and does not enjoy living alone in a foreign country. She is motivated to give herself the best opportunity to leave and be successful.
Fears	She is worried that the skills and knowledge she gains won't be accredited properly and therefore will not be recognised by a reputable authority.

Demographics	
Age	16
Gender	Female
Education	She attended primary school in Syria for five years but left before she could go to secondary school. She has never participated in formal schooling in Jordan.
Location	She currently lives in Za'atari camp.
Family	She lives with her parents. Her two brothers left the camp last year and now live in Tafila, southern Jordan.
Language skills	Her first language is Arabic. She has good English skills (B1+) and has also taught herself some Turkish via YouTube.
Work	None. She would like to work but is unable to because of her situation.
Behaviour	
Educational	Hayat has attended some non-formal classes run by an NGO in the camp. She was particularly interested in the sessions run on public health and would like to know more, but there are few resources available to her. She watches YouTube a lot and has learnt some Turkish by watching soap operas with subtitles.
Digital	She is sometimes able to use her father's smartphone, but only if he is present and can supervise. He does not like her to use it by herself. There are some cybercafés in the local area, but they are expensive and usually busy. When she can, she likes to go on social media, where she is an active user of Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp.
Environment	
Social	Where Hayat lives is very crowded, and everybody is Syrian. Some of the people there are from the same part of Syria as her, while others are from different areas. She knows lots of people in the camp, and is involved in many different activities.
Technological	Internet connections are poor, and 3G/4G reception is also very patchy. It cannot be relied upon.
Psychographics	
Self-image	Even in her very challenging circumstances, Hayat remains positive. She knows that she is capable of much more than she is doing at the moment.
Aspirations	She would love to go to university, but in her current situation this is unlikely because she has missed so much formal schooling. If this is not possible, she would like to develop knowledge and skills in other ways to give herself the opportunity to work.
Motivations	She wants to develop skills which will enable her to get a job either in Jordan or in Syria if she is able to return home.
Fears	Her lack of formal education will prevent her from ever being able to have the opportunity to create a good life for herself and her family.

Demographics	
Age	28
Gender	Male
Education	Ahmed was in his final year of his bachelor's degree in Arabic literature when the war in Syria broke out. All the records at his university were destroyed, and he has not been able to obtain any kind of certificate to show his academic background.
Location	Originally from Dar'a in Syria, Ahmed came to Jordan in 2013 and now lives in Azraq camp.
Family	He is married with two children (a five-year-old girl and seven-year-old boy).
Language skills	High levels of Arabic oracy and literacy. Conversational English (CEFR level: ¹⁹ high A2).
Work	He works part-time in a shop in the camp. He also does some voluntary teaching work with one of the NGOs which works there, both with children and with adults.
Behaviour	
Educational	A few months ago, Ahmed attended some face-to-face training by an NGO in academic writing, which he really enjoyed. There was also a digital component to this training, where he had to participate in a massive open online course, but he did not complete this. Not only was it too expensive (he can only afford a limited data plan), it was done in English – and his English isn't good enough for him to participate fully.
Digital	He has a cheap smartphone which he uses mostly for social media. When he is on social media, he spends a high percentage of his time researching funding opportunities so that he can complete his bachelor's degree. He is also in several WhatsApp groups, where useful information is shared by people in a similar situation. Some of the information he finds about studying abroad is written in English, Turkish or other languages he doesn't understand. He sometimes lets his children use his smartphone to play English language games, but he doesn't know which ones are most helpful for them to learn the language.
Environment	
Social	Everyone in the camp community speaks Arabic. Around 20 per cent of adults have some English capacity. There are a few Turkish speakers.
Technological	Most people have a smartphone and use it on a regular basis. Wi-Fi is available in local cybercafés, but it is unreliable. 3G mobile coverage is generally available.
Psychographics	
Self-image	Ahmed sees himself as someone who could be having a greater impact on his community. He feels very disappointed – even embarrassed – that he didn't finish his degree.
Aspirations	He would like to teach Arabic at a secondary school (where there is a shortage of people with his skills) but he isn't able to do. He would like his children to have as many opportunities as possible in terms of education.
Motivations	He wants to develop his skills and knowledge base so that he can become a teacher. He is keen to use the internet to do this, but there are knowledge and economic constraints on him being able to.
Fears	He is worried that because of his situation, he will not be able to make the most of his knowledge and his passion for teaching.

19 Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/level-descriptions>

Demographics	
Age	14
Gender	Female
Education	Noor attends the local government secondary school, but her attendance is affected by the pressures of her family life.
Location	She was born and lives in Mafraq.
Family	Her father works overseas. She has three younger siblings (five, seven and 11 years old).
Language skills	Her first language is Arabic. Her receptive skills (reading and listening) in English are reasonably good, but her productive skills (writing and speaking) are poor.
Work	She does not do any paid work, but has to help her mother look after her siblings (e.g. taking them to and from school, cooking for them) and also do general household tasks.
Behaviour	
Educational	Noor sometimes goes online on her friend's phone as she doesn't have her own. She likes borrowing books from her local library, but the selection is poor and the library is not always open.
Digital	She does not go online very much as she doesn't own her own phone. Her school has very few computers, so she doesn't have much opportunity to develop her digital skills.
Environment	
Social	Noor lives in quite a poor area of Mafraq. There are large numbers of Syrians in her community as they are close to the border, but she doesn't know many of them. Public transportation is not common, and where it does exist it is expensive.
Technological	Wi-Fi is available in local cybercafés, but it is unreliable. 3G mobile coverage is generally available.
Psychographics	
Self-image	Noor would like to do more for herself and her local community, and is a hard worker, but time is a major factor constraining her. This is sometimes a source of frustration.
Aspirations	She would like to gain a wider knowledge of the world, through both face-to-face and online interactions.
Motivations	She would like to combine working for herself with helping to look after her family. She believes that learning new skills will help her achieve this and give her opportunities which she doesn't currently have.
Fears	She worries about the time commitment required if she were to participate in a digital skills course, and that she might start a course and not be able to finish.

Demographics	
Age	35
Gender	Male
Education	Adib left school when he was 15 and has no qualifications.
Location	He lives on the outskirts of Amman.
Family	He is married and has one son (aged 11).
Language skills	His first language is Arabic, but his literacy skills are quite limited.
Work	He works long hours as a taxi driver.
Behaviour	
Educational	Adib is not currently engaged in any kind of educational behaviour. He would like to help his son with his homework, but doesn't feel able to.
Digital	He has a basic smartphone, but he only really uses it for phone calls at the moment. He has no experience of using a computer.
Environment	
Social	Adib's community is Jordanian. There are few refugees living in his area of Amman.
Technological	A few people have smartphones but there are no computers available locally.
Psychographics	
Self-image	Adib is a proud man, but lacks self-confidence in terms of education and learning because of his previous (lack of) experience.
Aspirations	He is happy in his job, but thinks that if he had better digital skills, he could set up his own taxi driving business. He also thinks that if people start using more taxi apps in Jordan, he could benefit from the opportunity of developing these skills.
Motivations	Adib has always wanted to get an academic qualification because he left school at a young age. He has felt this has been something missing. He also wants to be a good role model for his son, who is struggling at school. If he can get a certificate which proves that he has passed the course, he hopes it will encourage his son to complete his Tawjihi. ²⁰
Fears	He is worried about participating with others in a learning situation because of his poor literacy skills.

²⁰ The Tawjihi is the school-leaving certificate examination in Jordan which students take at the end of secondary school.

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