North West Syria Joint Education and Child Protection Needs Assessment, June 2023

Global Education Cluster

قطاع التعليم استجابة سوريا عبر الحدود | Education Cluster Syria Cross Border

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وحدة تنسيق الدعم ASSISTANCE COORD ANTION UNIT

Child Protection Whole of Syria (Türkiye Hub)

Child Protection

Acknowledgements

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Acronyms

ACU	Assistance Coordination Unit
AP	Associated Press
CAFAAG	Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups
CCCM	Camp Coordination and Camp Management
CHF	Child Headed Families
COVID-19	Corona Virus Disease 2019
CP	Child Protection
CRC	Convention of the Rights of the Child
EC	Education Cluster
EWARN	Early Warning, Alert and Response Network
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GEC	Global Education Cluster
HNAP	Humanitarian Needs Assessment Programme
HNO	Humanitarian Needs Overview
HSOS	Humanitarian Situation of Syria
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMU	Information Management Unit
INEE	Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies
ISSIM+	IDP Sites Integrated Monitoring Matrix
JENA	Joint Education Needs Assessment
JNA	Joint Needs Assessment
KI	Key Informant
MHPSS	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
MSNA	Multi-Sector Needs Assessment
NFE	Non-Formal Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NWS	North West Syria
OOSC	Out of School Child
PSS	Psychosocial Support
SDR	Secondary Data Review
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UASC	Unaccompanied and Separated Children
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
WaSH	Water, Sanitation, and Health

Executive Summary

1 Introduction

In the twelfth year since the crisis was declared, Syria, and Northwest Syria (NWS) specifically, continues to face a context marked by instability, economic strife, violence, and natural disaster. Active armed incidents and clashes are regularly reported around frontline areas and often result in civilian casualties.[1] The area is also greatly affected by an economic downturn[2]. Initially, the economic downturn was triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic and the global supply chain disruption increasing prices of basic goods. The situation was exasperated by the escalation of hostilities in Ukraine since February 2022, which has further increased prices of staples such as wheat whilst also drawing humanitarian assistance and resources away from the region.[3] REACH's Humanitarian Situation Overview in Syria (HSOS) of Idleb reports the average worker would have to work for 62 days to afford the cost of the basic monthly Survival Minimal Expenditure Basket (SMEB).[4]

In *Schools in Syria*, Assistance Coordination Unit's (ACU) Information Management Unit (IMU) calculated there are approximately 1.84 million school aged children in NWS (aged from 6-17 years old).[5] In their census of formal schools across the area, ACU estimated approximately 1.03 million children were enrolled for the 2021-2022 school year.

2 Methodology

The objective of the assessment is to provide a common understanding of the impact of the crises on education and child protection needs in NWS, enabling the production of recommendations for informed operational strategies and decisions. A total of 49 communities were included in data collection. 4 structured tools and one semi-structured tool were used to collect data, including structured tools surveying non-formal education (NFE) centre staff, key informants (KIs) from the community, parents and caregivers of children attending NFE centres and, finally, parents and caregivers of children attending no education.

116 NFE (NFE) centres were assessed through structured surveys with centre staff, including head teachers, teachers, and administrative staff. An NFE centre was only included if the (majority of) children attending the centre did not attend formal school elsewhere. Overall, 191 parents and caregivers of children attending NFE centres were interviewed.

3 types of KIs were targeted in each community and for each displacement and camp status. These were then aggregated to the community level, using the area of knowledge methodology[6]. For each, a community leader was surveyed, along with one KI selected by enumerators for their knowledge on gender issues and one KI selected on their knowledge of children with disabilities. A total of 689 KIs and a total of 724 parents/caregivers of children attending no education were surveyed using structured tools.

[1] Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian Needs Overview (December 2022) - UNOCHA
[2] Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian Needs Overview (December 2022) - UNOCHA
[3] Syrians in desperate need of aid hit hard by Ukraine fallout: Bassem Mroue for AP News. Published on 08/05/2022
[4] Humanitarian Situation Overview in Syria (HSOS): Greater Idleb Area, December 2022 - REACH Initiative
[5] School in Syria, Edition 7. (August 2022) - Information Management Unit, Assistance Coordination Unit.
[6] An explanation for how each indicator was aggregated at the community level can be found explained in the data aggregation tables, accessible here

KIs and parents were asked to focus on school aged children, aged between 5-17 years old.

The data for centres is presented at the shift or centre level, depending on the indicator, whilst all other tools are aggregated to the community level, using rules that can be found in the full methodology section of the report and Annex 3 (Data Aggregation Tables).

In addition to parent and staff surveys, children were consulted through focus group discussions (FGDs) using semi-structured tools. In total, the assessment team conducted 29 FGDs with a total of 216 participants. Within each of the 3 areas of control, 8 discussion groups (of 6 to 8 children maximum) were planned:

- 4 groups including children aged 11-14 years old attending NFE. This was be separated into inside and outside camp, as well as by gender.
- 4 groups including out-of-school children aged 11-14 years old not attending any form of education. This was separated into inside and outside camp, as well as by gender.

On top of this, in Azaz there were 5 FGDs aimed at 15–17-year-olds (secondary school-aged).

3 Key Findings from KIs and Parent/Caregivers of Children Not Attending Any Education

3.1 Distance and Cost

When asked to identify barriers related to the school or the journey to the school, distance and lack of transportation, as well as costs and fees of formal education, were the two most reported barriers. The prevalence of these two barriers demonstrates two of the key cross-cutting issues related to accessing formal school in NWS. Firstly, the economic difficulties faced by households and, secondly, the lack of formal schools with space for children to attend located near key population groups. As explored further on, formal schools overcrowding was another very frequently identified barrier by parents and caregivers.

3.2 Protection

Findings suggest that security concerns related to travelling to or being at school was another common and prescient barrier to accessing formal education. Whilst this barrier was identified for girls in a higher proportion of assessed communities than for boys, the data suggests that this is still a relevant barrier for boys across age groups. Security concerns was also particularly reported to be a barrier for displaced children inside camps, especially for girls.

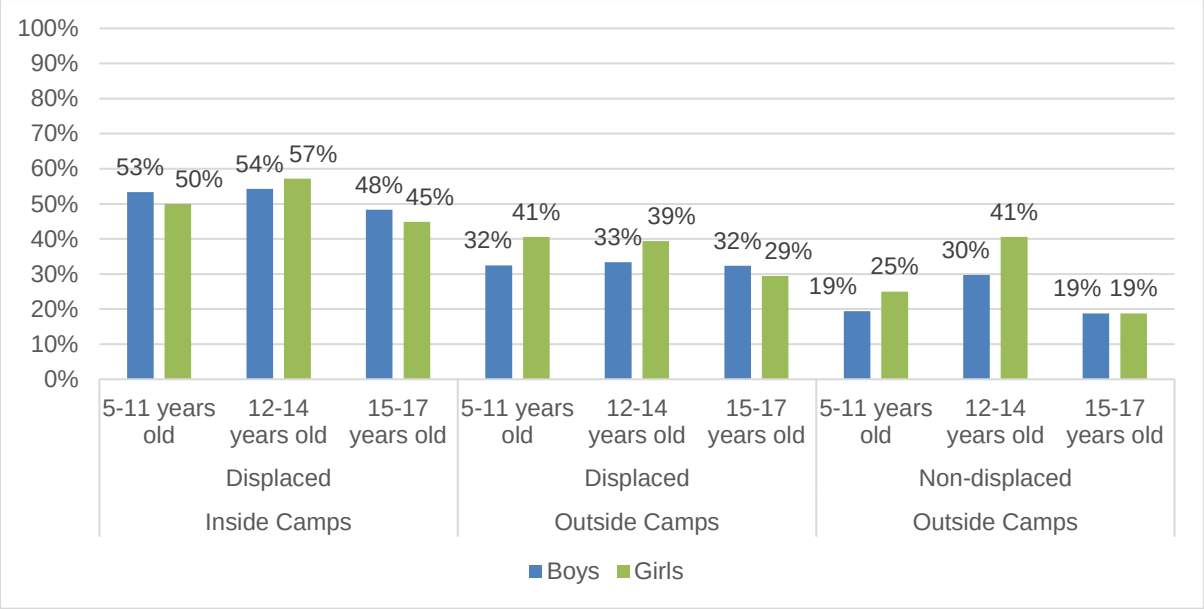

Figure 1: % of assessed communities where at least one parent/caregiver reported perceiving that children do not feel safe in the community.

Parent and caregiver respondents were asked whether children generally found the community to be safe. Findings suggest that displaced children generally felt less safe than non-displaced children. **Those groups that were most reported to feel unsafe were 12–14-year-old girls living camps** (reported by parents/caregivers from 57% of assessed communities). This compares to only 19% of assessed non-displaced communities outside camps where parents/caregivers identified that 5-11-year-old boys and 15-17-year-olds boys felt generally unsafe.

KIs were asked to identify the key protection and safety concerns for children within the assessed communities. **The most common answer for boys inside and outside of camps were verbal bullying and physical bullying. Bullying and violence towards other children may be a sign that children need psychosocial support**. In a separate question, at least one KI in **90% of both inside camp and outside camps communities identified children showing the signs of psychosocial distress**.

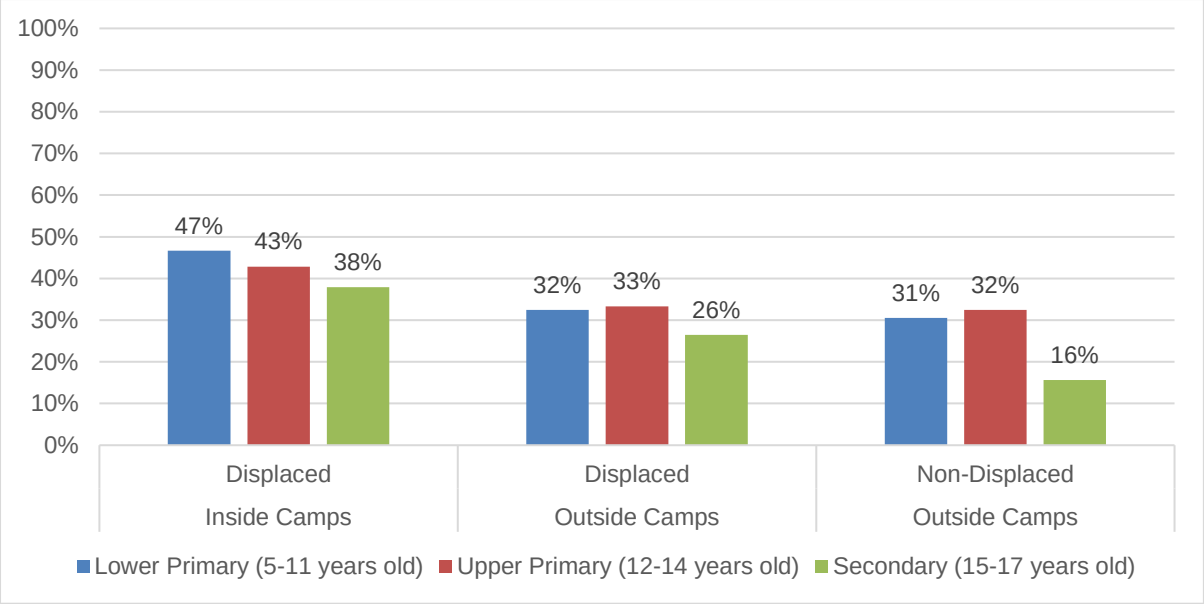

Figure 2: % of assessed communities where one or more parent/caregiver has identified gender-based or sexual violence/abuse as a protection issue for girls.

Sexual or Gender-based Violence (SGBV) was most identified as a risk by parents/caregivers for girls living inside camps and was mostly reported as a concern for lower primary girls (5-11 years old) (At least one parent/caregiver in 47% of assessed communities).

3.3 Child Labour

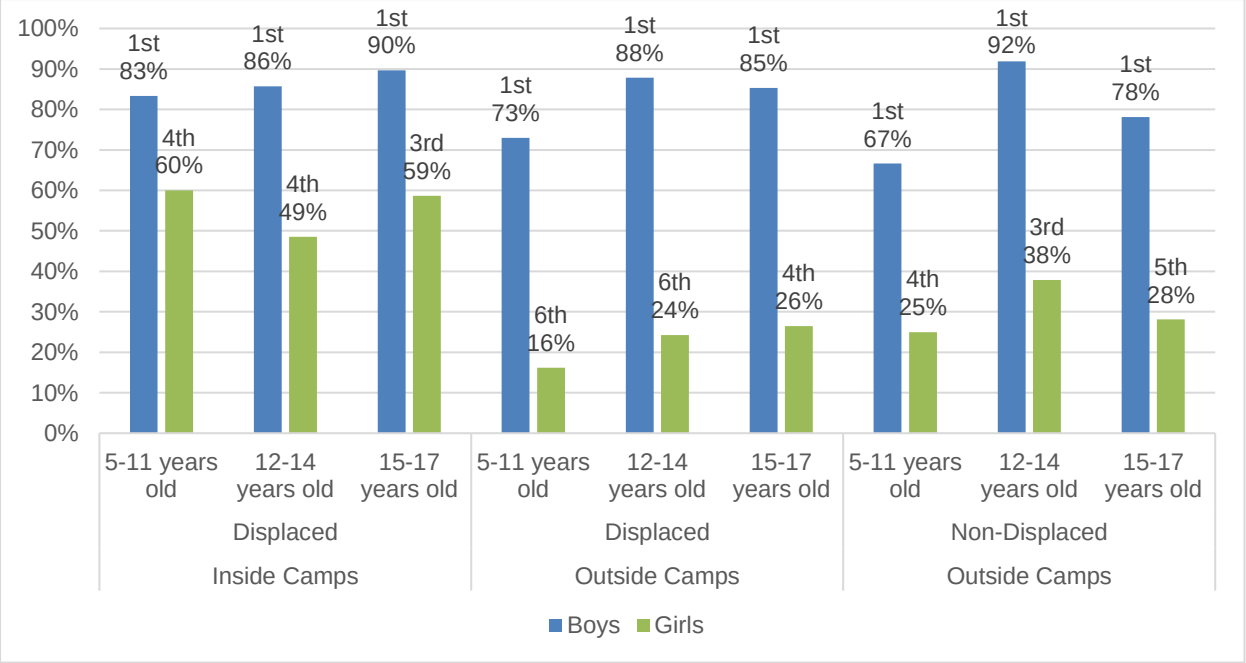

Figure 3: % of communities where one or more parent/caregiver respondent reported that the child working outside the home was a barrier to accessing formal education and rank of this barrier compared to other barriers related to the home barriers[7]

When asked to identify barriers to formal education relating to the home or household, across every displacement and camp status, and across every age group, **the most identified barrier to accessing formal education for boys was working outside the home**. The percentage of assessed communities where parents/caregivers reported working outside of the home as a barrier to formal education is comparable across all displacement groups. It is important to note that for lower primary boys, it was more often reported for boys inside camps (at least one parent/caregiver in 83% of assessed communities) than when compared to boys outside of camps (73% of displaced assessed communities and 67% of non-displaced assessed communities). **During the FGDs with children, economic conditions and the need for children to earn an income was consistently the most voted for barrier to accessing education**.

[7] More than one answer could be selected. Ranking based on the number of communities where an option was reported by at least one parent/caregiver.

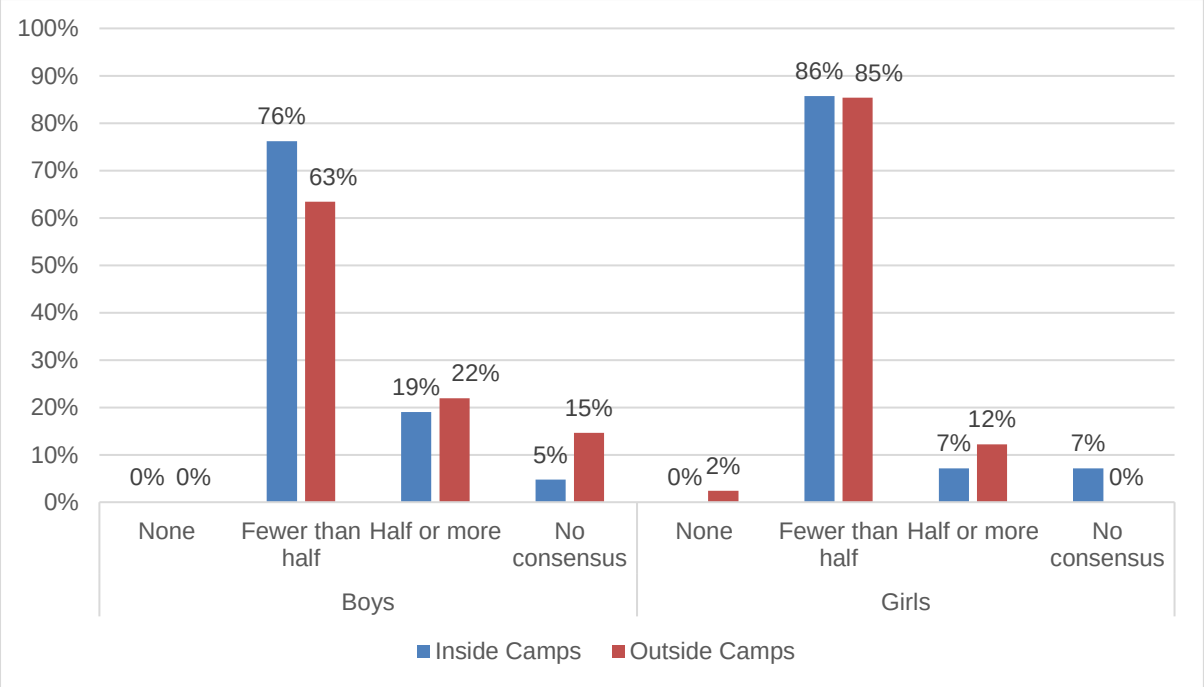

Figure 4: % of communities by estimated proportion of boys outside camps engaging in child labour, as estimated by KIs.

KIs from nearly all assessed communities, for both disaggregation, reported the presence of child labour in their community, indicative of the widespread nature of child labour within NWS. In Figure 4, the "half or more" column in particular acts as a proxy for assessed communities where child labour is more common. **It was more common for KIs from both displacement statuses to report that half or more of boys would be working than half or more of girls**. This does not mean that these girls are not performing labour; instead, it is likely that girls are generally more involved in labour that takes place within the house, which might also be less visible.

KIs were asked how common it was for children in their community to work in hazardous conditions. **Regardless of children's gender or displacement status, KIs in all (100%) assessed communities reported perceiving that children in their community were working in hazardous conditions** either commonly, sometimes, or rarely. When focussing on parents/caregivers answering it was common for the conditions to exist, hazardous labour was more frequently reported for older children, in particular boys. However, at least one parent/caregiver in 70% of communities reported it was common for displaced boys inside camps aged 5-11 years old to work in conditions that expose them to extreme heat, cold or humidity. Parent/caregivers in 63% of communities reported it was also common for displaced, in camp girls aged 5-11 years old to work in such conditions.

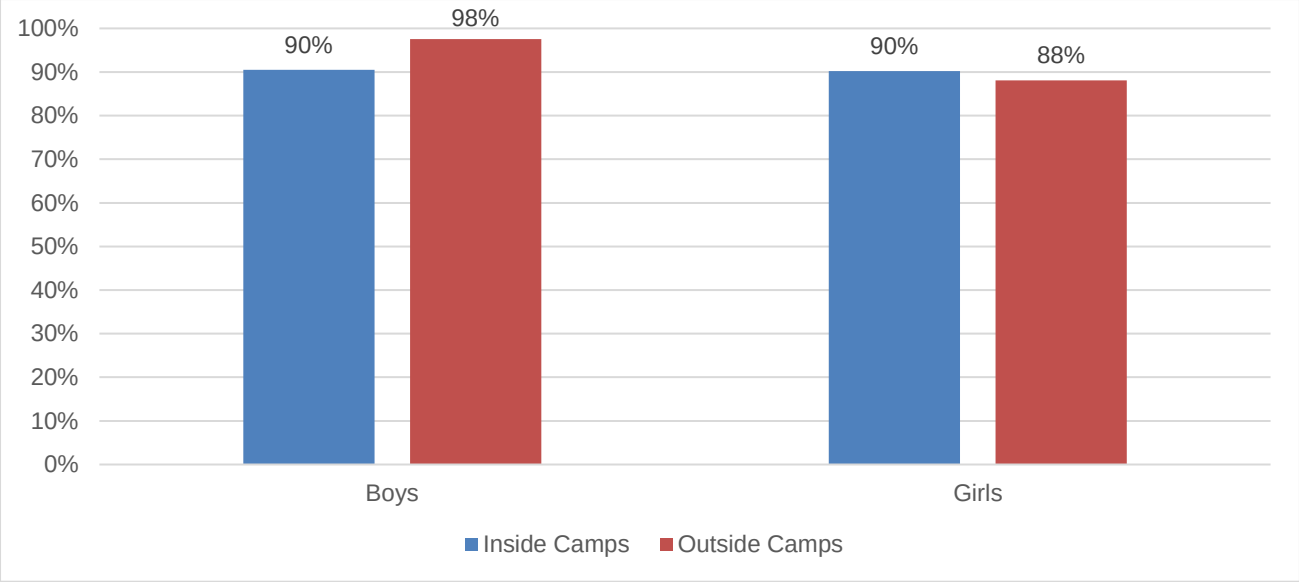

Figure 5: % of communities where one or more KI reported it was common for children to be working in one or more forms of hazardous conditions, as opposed to sometimes, rarely, or never.

3.4 Child Marriage

For non-displaced secondary aged girls, marriage and/or pregnancy was the second most selected barrier related to the home or household, with parent/caregiver respondents from 50% of assessed communities identifying it as a barrier. For displaced secondary aged girls in camps, it was the fifth most selected barrier, with parents/caregivers in 45% of assessed communities identifying it as a barrier.

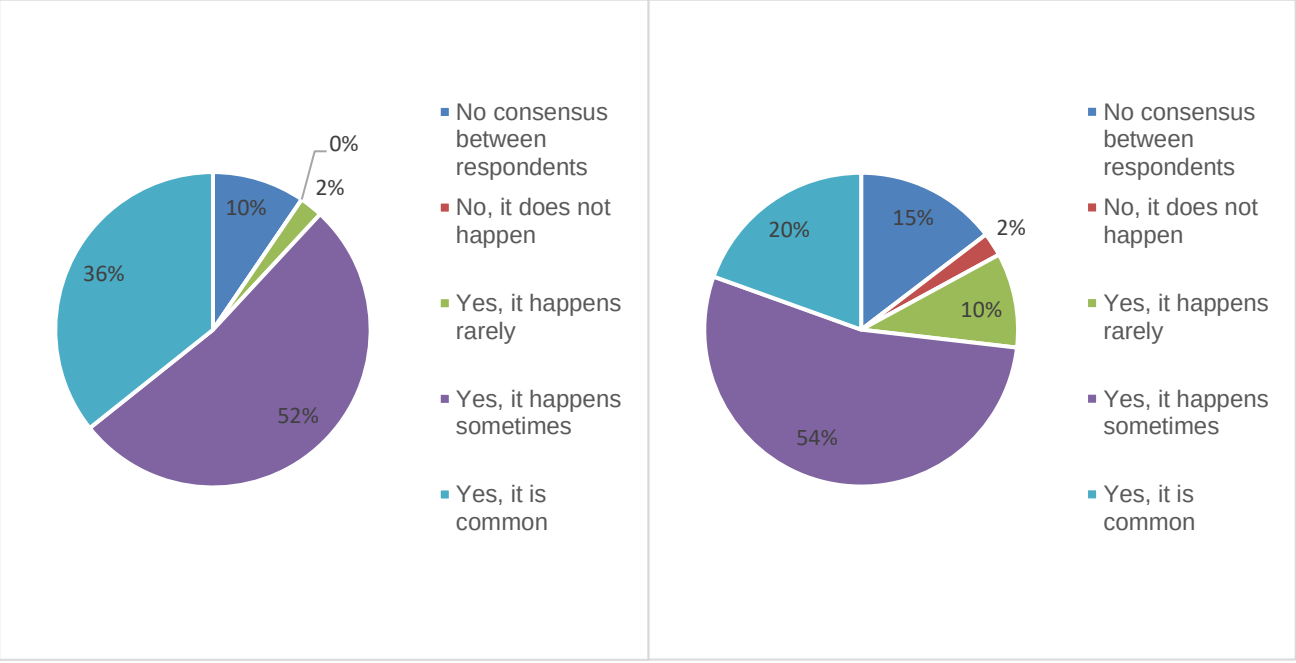

Figure 6: % of communities inside camp (left) and outside camp (right) by the prevalence of child marriage, as estimated by KIs.

When asked about their perception of the change in prevalence of child marriage in their communities, KIs in **36% of assessed communities inside camps reported perceiving that in the 12 months prior to data collection, there had been an increase in child marriage.** KIs in only 7% of assessed communities reported perceiving a decrease. **Outside of camps, KIs from 42% of assessed communities reported perceiving that the prevalence of child marriage had increased in the 12 months prior to data collection**; with KIs in only 10% of assessed communities perceiving child marriages had decreased.

3.5 Disability

KIs were asked about the key barriers to accessing formal school for children with disabilities. It was commonly reported that schools were physically hard to access for children with disabilities, as reported by at least one KI in 98% of assessed communities in camp and at least one KI from 98% of communities outside of camps. **Formal schools are also frequently not well adapted to children with disabilities, as identified by at least one KI from 100% of assessed communities outside camps and at least one KI from 95% of communities inside camps.**

It is important to note that the financial capital of the households of children with disabilities can have a considerable impact on the barriers to accessing education experienced by children with disabilities. **At least one KI from 83% of assessed communities inside camps and 93% outside camps identified that families of children with disabilities have economic needs (particularly if this child is unable to work or requires additional, expensive healthcare).** Economic needs can increase barriers to formal education, such as through the inability to pay fees and costs, as well as children needing to spend time on income generating activities.

3.6 Preferred intervention

When parents and caregivers were asked for their preferred intervention to support children returning to formal school, across all age groups and displacement statuses, material support or cash for education costs was commonly picked across a wide range of assessed communities. This likely reflects the poor economic situation within Syria, and NWS specifically, with many barriers being related to the households' financial means[8]. These barriers include child labour, the costs of education, child marriage, and many more.

For those displaced inside camps, providing cash without other forms of interventions would be unlikely to increase access to formal schools. Parents/Caregiver respondents from displaced communities inside camps also reported preferring interventions that involved transportation to school and improving the safety around schools. Camps are less likely to have formal school facilities, whilst existing formal schools tend to be located further away from camps, increasing the distance needed to travel and increasing the risk of children being exposed to protection incidents.

[8] World Bank Syria Overview

4 Key Findings from NFE Centres and Parent/Caregivers of Children Attending Centres

4.1 Infrastructure and Learning Conditions

Half (49%) of assessed NFE centres inside camps were composed of one or more tents, compared to 3% of centres outside camps. The most common structure type of assessed NFE centre outside camps was an apartment converted into a school. Only 18% of in camp and 3% of out of camp assessed NFE centres were purposefully built to be education centres.

The number of students reported per assessed shift was compared to the number of teachers reported, allowing to calculate the pupil-teacher ratio. Based on the Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) standard of 40 students per teacher, **all (100%) assessed NFE shifts outside camps were found to have a pupil-teacher ratio below the acceptable threshold, whilst 83% of assessed NFE shifts inside camps were below this threshold**, with 17% of assessed NFE shifts having a pupil teacher ratio above 1:40.

4.2 Curriculum

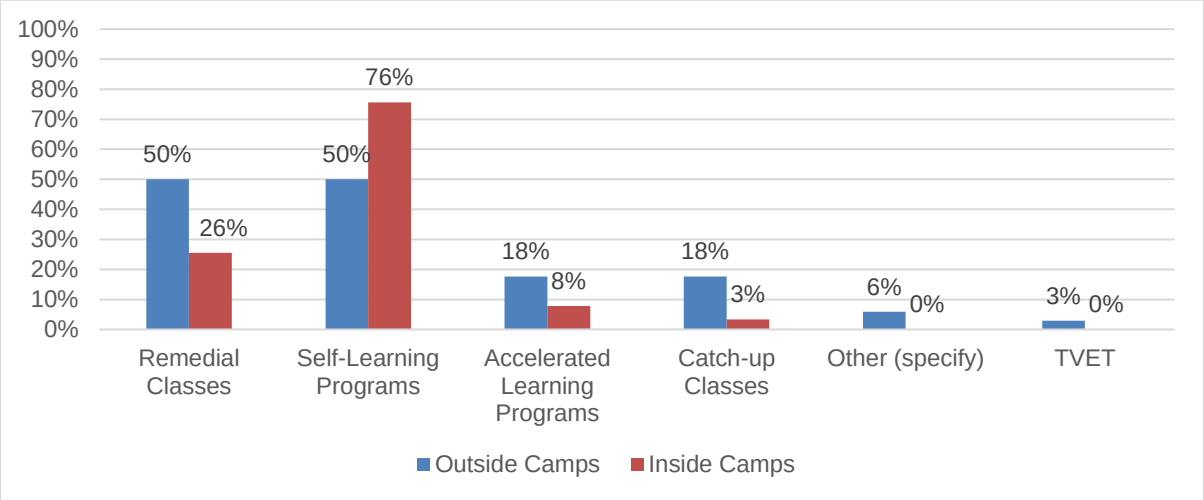

Figure 7: % of assessed shifts by curriculum type[9]

Findings suggest a general **lack of technical and vocational education and training in non-formal centres in NWS**. These centres were not excluded from the sample but appeared to be very rare. Some barriers to accessing formal education that emerged from this assessment, including children engaging in hazardous child labour and parents not finding the existing curriculum useful, might reduce engagement. Perhaps reflective of this, during FGDs with children, **vocational training was specifically mentioned by children** as a preferred alternative to formal and other forms of NFE.

[9] More than one answer could be selected.

4.3 Protection

In general, particularly when compared to findings for inside the community, parents and caregivers were more likely to report perceiving their children felt safe within NFE centres. It was more likely for parents/caregivers to report that they perceived that girls felt unsafe in NFE centres than boys.

When asked for the perceived protection concerns in NFE centres for each gender, verbal bullying was the most reported concern for both girls and boys. The second most commonly reported perceived protection concern for both genders was unsafe infrastructure. This unsafe infrastructure may relate to the high number of centres made from tents and other temporary materials, although the data could not be aggregated to explore this further.

During the FGDs, boys in particular reported physical punishment by teachers. This was only reported as a perceived risk in 4% of assessed communities by parents/caregivers of boys aged 5-11 years old. Whilst low, this is worth further investigation.

5 Recommendations

These findings will inform the upcoming NWS education cluster strategy development focusing on priority actions to address the gaps/barriers identified in the JNA, centred around equitable access and quality, as well as strengthening inter-sectoral collaboration with WASH cluster and CPAoR.

To the Education Cluster Team and its Partners

Equitable Access to Safe/Inclusive and Protective Education Services:

- Education Cluster coordination team and partners to create an advocacy plan to ensure education is elevated in decision making and funding allocations specifically targeting the barriers and gaps identified in the assessment.
- Education partners to prioritise response activities based on the results of the Rapid Needs Assessment (to be conducted in July-September 2023) and the school building structural assessment covering all affected education facilities.
- Develop guidance on temporary and permanent school rehabilitation/construction (including WASH facilities, and menstrual hygiene management) in collaboration with engineers and education partners, as well as WASH partners.
- Promote the use of cash for education and/or multi-sector to respond to economic barriers to access to education as outlined in the results of the JNA, based on the SOPs being developed by the Cash Task Force and the Education Cluster.

Enhance the Quality of Formal and Non-formal Education:

- Cluster partners to target adolescents and youths in their non-formal education response through providing them with different pathways for accessing learning and livelihood opportunities.
- Custer coordination team to develop in collaboration with partners a capacity development plan for all teachers and school personnel, including inclusive education, teacher well-being,

classroom management, social-emotional learning, based on Cluster standards to be developed.

- Advocate to local authorities on integrating INEE standards in Education in Emergencies response (school mapping, needs identification, teacher: student ratio, teacher recruitment).
- Education Cluster partners to continue to promote the implementation of WASH and Health integrated school safety protocols in formal and non-formal education institutions.
- Cluster coordination team to ensure that Education partners consider the needs of children with disabilities at all stages of the response (including, physical and learning environment, teaching and learning materials availability, teacher training).
- Education Cluster partners to harmonize non-formal education standards (including criteria and definitions, content, duration, age group targeted, learning and well-being assessments) to ensure inclusivity, quality education and wellbeing of children.
- Education Cluster to conduct partners' capacity development interventions and activities, including INEE standards MHPSS, CP-EiE framework, Gender and GBV risk mitigation, jointly with other clusters and sub-clusters.

To the Education Cluster and the CPAoR Team

- Implement the joint strategy and workplan developed by Whole of Syria joint PSEAH network (including complaints mechanisms including child safeguarding and GBV risk mitigation).
- Education Cluster and CPAoR partners to ensure effective and safe referral mechanisms to child protection and that health services are utilized by school communities (teachers, staff, caregivers, students).
- Education Cluster and CPAoR partners to integrate MHPSS in their education response through the CP-EiE framework, jointly with the MHPSS Task Team.
- Education Cluster and CPAoR partners to promote and train caregivers on child protection risks and challenges, positive discipline, and social emotional learning.

1 Introduction & Context

In the twelfth year since the crisis was declared, Syria, and Northwest Syria (NWS) specifically, continues to face a context marked by instability, economic strife, violence, and natural disaster. Active armed incidents and clashes are regularly reported around frontline areas and often result in civilian casualties.[10] Economic indicators across Syria, including NWS, are worsening[11]. Initially, the economic downturn was triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic and the global supply chain disruption increasing prices of basic goods [12]. The situation was exacerbated by the escalation of hostilities in Ukraine since February 2022, which has further increased prices of staples such as wheat whilst also drawing humanitarian assistance and resources away from the region.[13] REACH's *Humanitarian Situation Overview in Syria (HSOS)* of Greater Idleb reports the average worker would have to work for 62 days in order to afford the cost of the basic monthly Survival Minimal Expenditure Basket (SMEB).[14]

In total there are approximately 4.8 million people in NWS.[15] According to the Shelter Cluster and the United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees (UNHCR), 2.8 million of the 4.8 million are internally displaced persons (IDPs), with 1.8 million estimated to reside in camps.[16] According to the 2023 Humanitarian Needs Overview[17] (HNO), there are a total of 2,912,801 people in need in the three Governates of NWS.

In *Schools in Syria*, Assistance Coordination Unit's (ACU) Information Management Unit (IMU) calculated that there are approximately 1.84 million school-aged children in NWS (aged from 6-17 years old).[18]

In their census of formal schools across the area, ACU estimated approximately 1.03 million children were enrolled at the time of data collection (November and December 2021) for the 2021-2022 school year. According to these estimates, 45% of school-aged girls (aged 6-17 years old) and 43% of school-aged boys were not enrolled in formal schools.[19] Geographically, Idleb governorate was found to be the area with the highest number of children not enrolled.[20]

In ACU's *Joint Education Needs Assessment* 2021 (JENA) of Out of School Children[21], the rates of enrolment were equal between boys and girls at the lower primary level. Whilst equal in the first stage of education (22% of girls not enrolled compared to 23% of boys), girls were gradually more likely to drop out as they got older. For children aged 11 to 15 years, ACU found that 44% of boys were not

[10] Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian Needs Overview (December 2022) - UNOCHA
[11] Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian Needs Overview (December 2022) - UNOCHA
[12] Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian Needs Overview (December 2022) - UNOCHA
[13] Syrians in desperate need of aid hit hard by Ukraine fallout: Bassem Mroue for AP News. Published on 08/05/2022
[14] Humanitarian Situation Overview in Syria (HSOS): Greater Idleb Area, December 2022 - REACH Initiative
[15] Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian Needs Overview (December 2022) - UNOCHA
[16] Camp Crisis in North West Syria (January 2023) - CCCM Cluster and UNHCR
[17] Syrian Arab Republic: 2023 Humanitarian Needs Overview (December 2022) - UNOCHA
[18] School in Syria, Edition 7. (August 2022) - Information Management Unit, Assistance Coordination Unit.
[19] School in Syria, Edition 7. (August 2022) - Information Management Unit, Assistance Coordination Unit.
[20] School in Syria, Edition 7. (August 2022) - Information Management Unit, Assistance Coordination Unit.
[21] Joint Education Needs Assessment for Out of School Children. (March 2022) - Information Management Unit, Assistance Coordination Unit.

enrolled compared to 46% of girls, whilst for children aged 16 to 18 years, 61% of boys were not enrolled compared to 66% of girls.

Following a comprehensive secondary data review, an assessment was planned in NWS between the Education cluster and Child Protection AoR. Due to the existing data, it was decided to focus on children who were attending Non-Formal Education (NFE) NFE or no education at all. This allowed for an exploration of barriers and child protection risks driving low enrolment. In March 2022, the Education Cluster and Child Protection Area of Responsibility (CPAOR) in NWS were selected as part of an initiative of the Global Education Cluster and the Global Area of Responsibility for Child Protection to improve the framework for intersectoral collaboration. This initiative included support for these joint needs assessment.

In NWS, NFE is defined as a school or learning centre not directly operated by one of the three education directorates (Idleb, Aleppo, or Turkish). These centres, usually but not exclusively ran by NGOs, aim to offer a safe space and learning to children who do not fully access the formal school system. For this assessment, the focus was on non-formal centres where children did not also access formal school at all.

Project Timeline

March 2022
4 days distance training on needs assessments and emergency preparedness. 8 coordination teams and their partners were invited. The Education Cluster and CPAoR in NWS were selected for a mission to support a joint needs assessment.

May 2022
Presentation of the Joint Analytical Framework on Emergency Education – Child Protection to Coordination Teams

Mid-July – Mid-August 2022
Joint Secondary Data Review

Mid-August – October 2022
Data Collection preparation, training, and tool design

Mid-October – Mid-November 2022
Primary data collection

December 2022
Results Analysis Workshop, to jointly formulate recommendations on the most effective operational activities and approaches, linking educational and child protection interventions.

The overarching objective of data collection was to provide a common understanding of the impact of the crises on education and child protection needs in NWS, enabling the production of recommendations for informed operational strategies and decisions.

2 Methodology

2.1 Secondary Data

The research design was structured according to the joint analytical framework of Education in Emergencies and child protection (developed at the global level), as well as a Secondary Data Review (SDR) of both sectors (Annex 1).

There had been a range of assessments taking place in NWS that allowed the SDR to develop a well-rounded understanding of formal schools within NWS, including ACU's *Schools in Syria*[22] and *Schools in Syrian Camps*[23] reports, but also more general assessments such as the *Multi-Sector Needs Assessment*[24] and the *Humanitarian Needs Assessment Programme.*[25] The previous large-scale assessment that had focused on children not enrolled in formal education was ACU's *Joint Education*

[22] School in Syria, Edition 7. (August 2022) - Information Management Unit, Assistance Coordination Unit.
[23] Schools in Northern Syria Camps, Edition 5 (August 2022) - Information Management Unit, Assistance Coordination Unit
[24] 2022 Multi-Sector Needs Assessment, Education Results Dashboard (November 2023) REACH Initiative and UNOCHA
[25] Humanitarian Needs Assessment Programme (HNAP) | Syria: Shelter Situation - 2021 IDP Report Series

Needs Assessment of Out of School Children,[26] conducted in June 2021. This assessment interviewed a range of stakeholders, including parents and caregivers, as well as teachers. The assessment also included interviews with children not attending any education.

Building on the information in the SDR (Annex 1), the assessment aimed to answer the following research questions:

1) What are the key barriers to accessing formal education in NWS?

2) What are the key issues facing children in NFE when attending these centres, including issues related to infrastructure, staff, and child protection risks?

3) What are the key child protection risks for children in each of the selected communities?

4) How do existing vulnerabilities, including displacement, disability, gender, camp residence, and age group, deepen educational needs and child protection risks?

2.2 Sampling Strategy

This assessment adopted a non-probability sampling approach, combining quota and convenience sampling. To efficiently use resources and allow for comparison between children attending NFE and not attending NFE, this assessment targeted all communities with 2 or more non-formal centres operating within the community, as reported in the 4Ws. An NFE centre was only included if the (majority of) children attending the centre did not attend formal school elsewhere. This is to prevent inclusion of summer schools, catch up classes, and other non-formal forms of education aimed at children who are otherwise enrolled and attending formal education, to ensure the results of the assessment focus only on the children who are outside the formal school system.

A total of 49 communities were included in data collection. 4 structured tools and semi-structured tool were used to collect data, including structured tools surveying NFE centre staff, key informants (KIs) from the community, parents and caregivers of children attending NFE centres and, finally, parents and caregivers of children attending no education.

[26] Joint Education Needs Assessment for Out of School Children. (March 2022) - Information Management Unit, Assistance Coordination Unit.

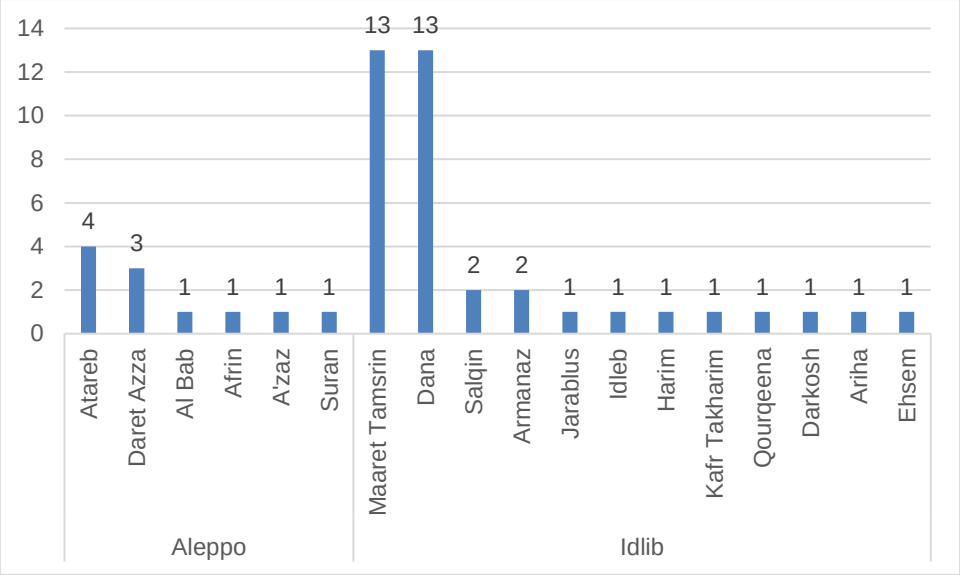

Figure 8: Number of assessed communities by Sub-District

Due to the prevalence of communities with NFE centres in Maaret Tamsrin and Dana, these sub-districts are well represented in the sample. In total 49 communities were surveyed. 41 communities had respondents from inside camps and 41 communities had respondents from outside camps. These respondents have been disaggregated in the findings below.

NFE Centre Surveys

Within the 49 communities, a total of 116 NFE centres were assessed through surveys with centre staff, including head teachers, teachers, and administrative staff. Of the assessed centres, 8 were operating multiple shifts at the time of data collection, meaning a total of 124 shifts were surveyed. For these centres, the team conducted one survey per shift. 90 shifts were inside camps, at a total of 84 NFE centres (with 6 NFE centres running two shifts). For outside camps, there were 34 shifts operating at 32 centres, with 2 centres operating two shifts. Results are presented as a percentage of shifts or a percentage of assessed centres, depending on the most relevant metric.

One-fifth of NFE centre respondents (25 of the 124, 20%) were female. Most respondents were headteachers.

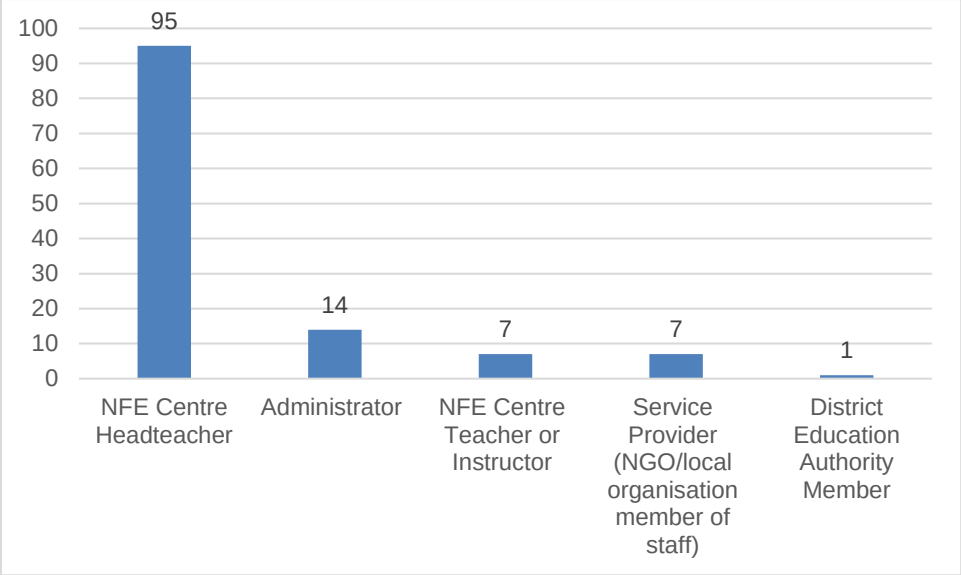

Figure 97: Number of NFE centre respondents by respondent profile

Community Level Surveys for NFE Parents and Caregivers

For assessed centres within camps, one parent or caregiver of a child attending the centre was interviewed, with the assumption that they would be displaced (as they were living in a camp). For assessed centres outside camps, at least two parent/caregivers were interviewed: one displaced parent/caregiver and one non-displaced parent/caregiver. This was to include the experiences of both displaced populations outside camps and non-displaced populations.

In total, 191 parents and caregivers of children attending NFE centres were interviewed, the majority of whom were male (121, whilst 70 were female). Most (163) interviewed parents and caregivers had children attending a centre aimed at lower primary aged children (5-11 years old) whilst the remaining 28 had children attending upper primary (12-14 years old) and secondary (15-17 years old) centres. The latter two age groups have been grouped in the findings due to the relatively small sample size.

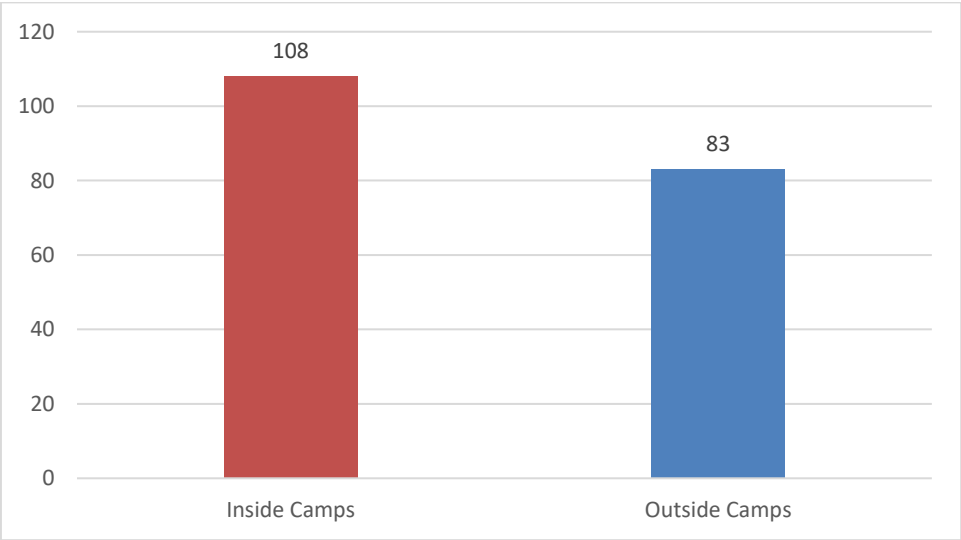

Figure 8: Number of assessed parents and caregivers of children attending NFE by camp status.

Parents and Caregivers of Out of School Children (OOSC)

To assess the needs of children that were not enrolled in formal school and not attending NFE, referred to as “out of school children” (OOSC), enumerators used quota sampling techniques to sample the parents and caregivers of OOSC. The use of quota sampling means that enumerators were tasked with interviewing an equal number of displaced and non-displaced parent/caregiver respondents outside of camps, as well as displaced parent/caregivers in camps. This sampling strategy was repeated for each of the school-age groups. An example of the sampling of these respondents is illustrated below for each target community.

Camp Status	Displacement status	Lower Primary (5-11 years old)	Upper Primary (12-14 years old)	Secondary (15-17 years old)
In camp	Displaced	1	1	1
Out of camp	Displaced	1	1	1
	Non-Displaced	1	1	1

Table 1: Example of sampling of parents and caregivers of OOSC for each community

Whilst it is very common for parents and caregivers to have children that are in different age groups, the respondents were selected based on having at least one child in a particular age group. They were then asked about all children within their community with the same camp status and displacement status from that age group. In total, 590 surveys were included in the final dataset.

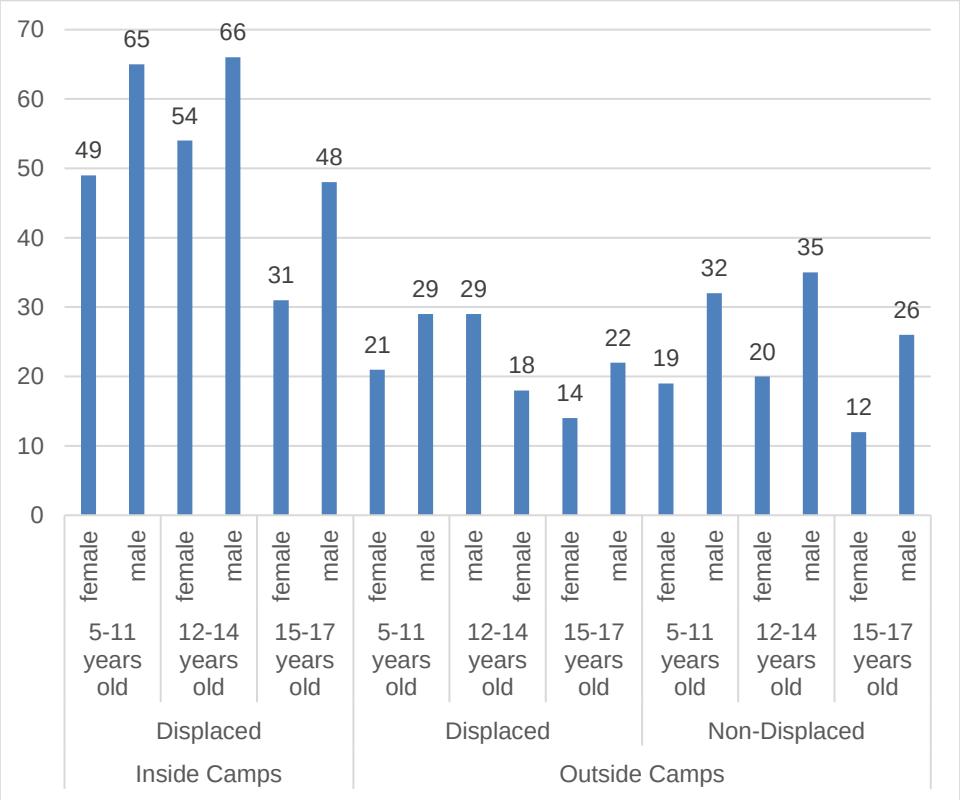

Figure 11: Number of interviewed Parent/Caregivers of OOSC, by displacement, camp, age group of the child they reported on and the respondents gender.

Community Key Informants

The fourth tool was used to assess community KIs. Matching the camp location of targeted NFE centres, a set of 3 KIs were interviewed by enumerators. The first was a community leader, chosen due to their overall knowledge of their community and their needs. Two further profiles were then selected to ensure a more comprehensive understanding of the gender and disability dynamics. As such, one gender expert and one disability expert were also interviewed per camp status, per community. Whilst these experts were selected using enumerator discretion, the guidance provided indicated that these KIs needed to work closely with these types of children. These KIs came from a mixture of NGOs and CSOs operating within the community, camp leadership and/or from the communities themselves. The KIs were surveyed using the same tool. The findings from these tools were then aggregated and reported on at the community level, with the most prevalent indicator being "% of assessed communities where at least one KI reported…".

As with the out of school parent and caregivers, KIs were targeted by displacement and camp status.

Camp Status	Community leader	Disability expert	Gender expert
In camp	1	1	1
Out of camp	1	1	1

Table 2: Example of sampling for key informant interviews in one community. For findings, the portion of the community inside the camp and outside the camp were treated as separate units.

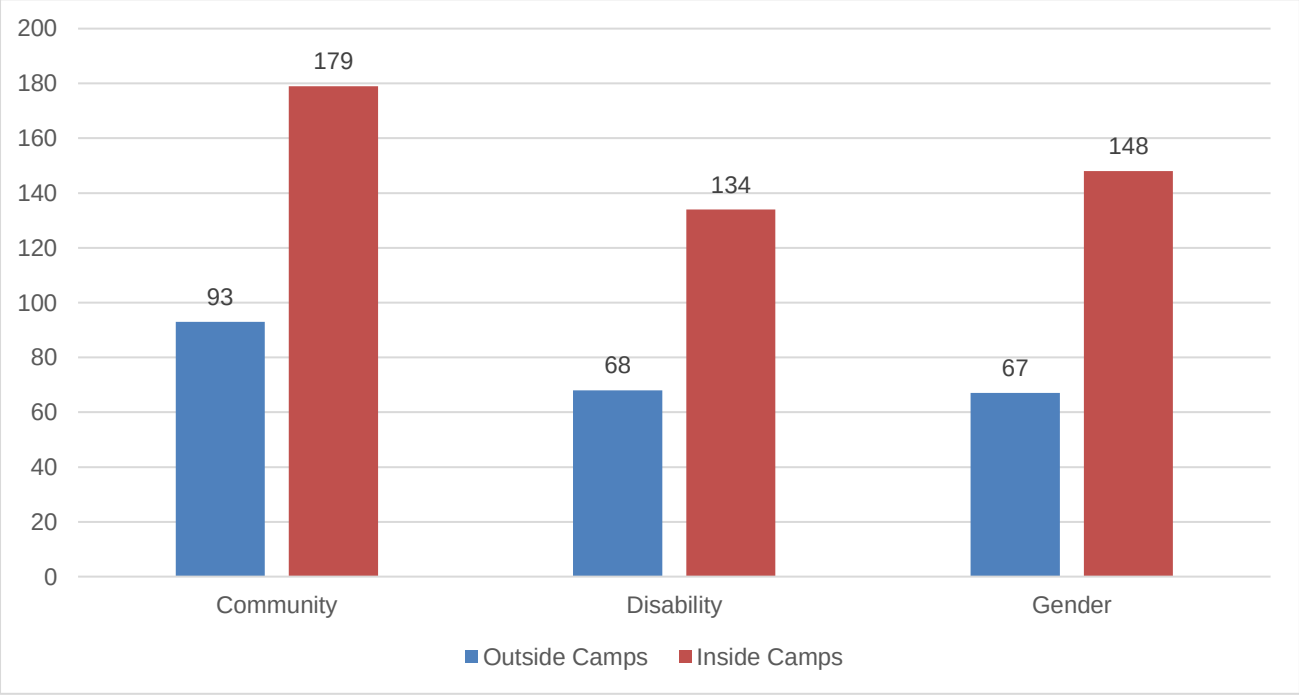

Figure 9: Number of KIs by type

A total of 689 KIs were included in the final dataset, 42% (287) of whom were female. Using this sampling technique of targeting different expertise meant a diverse range of KIs were included in the final dataset. Selected profiles included camp administrators, community leadership committee members, community and religious leaders, local authorities, protection actors. Gender KIs were most commonly members of the community (45), PSS facilitators (34) and protection actors (29). Disability KIs were most commonly parents or caregivers of children with disabilities (85) or otherwise a member of the community (34).

Focus Group Discussions with Children

To assess the factors preventing children from accessing and attending formal education and concerns related to child protection, 29 focused group discussions (FGDs) were implemented with boys and girls in NWS in December 2022. Within each of the 3 education directorates within NWS, 8 discussion groups (of 6 to 8 children maximum) were planned:

- 4 groups including school children aged 11-14 years old attending NFE. This was be separated into inside and outside camp, as well as by gender.
- 4 groups including out-of-school children aged 11-14 years old not attending any form of education. This was separated into inside and outside camp, as well as by gender.

On top of this, in Azaz there were 5 FGDs aimed with 15–17-year-olds (Secondary aged).

The consultations with children aimed to explore certain issues in the education and protection of displaced and host community children, in parallel and in addition (triangulation and comparison) to the data from the review of secondary sources and interviews with KIs (adults).

In total, 216 children participated, 109 among whom were girls. For more information on the sampling, please refer to the child participation report in Annex 2.

Disaggregation	Total	Girls	Boys
Total	216	109	107
IDP	153	75	78
Host community	63	34	29
Informal education	91	45	46
Attending no education	125	61	64
Children with disabilities	21	10	11

Table 3: Number of children participating in FGDs, by displacement type, education, and disability status

2.3 Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection was carried out by partners from the Education Cluster and Child Protection Area of Responsibility. Data collection was led by ACU. The training of trainers was held on Tuesday 4th and

Wednesday 5th of October 2022 at ACU's office in Gaziantep. A further training ran by these trainers was then held the following week, with some of the enumerators attending online whilst others attended at NGO offices in NWS. Following this training, a pilot allowed for key elements of the tool to be changed, whilst also checking whether the enumerators had understood the concepts from the training. ACU oversaw the division of labour between partners, assigning partners the communities they were responsible for carrying out data collection in. This system of supervision and focal points allowed for an accurate and efficient data collection across targeted communities.

Data from all tools was collected through KOBO on an account created for the assessment. The data was cleaned daily, allowing regular follow up with specific enumerators. Data was analysed using R studio, using a package that allowed for data aggregation and disaggregation.

OOSC parents/caregivers and KI findings, as well as NFE parent findings, were aggregated to the community level. A more detailed breakdown of aggregation per indicator can be found in the aggregations table on the GEC Box. Data is reported as a percentage of assessed communities across NWS and can be disaggregated by each of the relevant characteristics. For OOSC parent/caregivers and KIs, disaggregation is available by camp status, whilst for OOSC parent/caregivers, aggregations were also available by age group and displacement status.

Data obtained from parents of children that attend NFE centres was also aggregated to the community level. Due to the large numbers of NFE centres in certain assessed communities compared to others, this was an attempt to assess the prevalence of trends across these assessed communities without giving weighting to certain geographic areas over others. This data was then disaggregated into age group and camp status.

For NFE centres, data was predominantly reported at the shift level. Some NFE centres ran multiple shifts. In these centres, for indicators where it was expected that both shifts would have matching answers (for example, on questions related to physical infrastructure), these answers were aggregated to ensure that both respondents had given matching answers. For these indicators, the findings are reported as a % of centres. If the two answers did not match, the centres were coded as no consensus.

Data from the FGDs with children were collected via a paper form and then entered into an Excel document for analysis. Detailed results from consultations with children can be found in the dedicated report, in Annex 2 of the report.

2.4 Limitations and Assumptions

- Assessed communities were initially selected using 4Ws data from the Education Cluster. As data collection progressed, it became clear that this data had been collected for the previous academic year, with many NFE centres no longer operating. During data collection, the legal status of these NFE centres also came into question, with local authorities often attempting to increase formal education enrolment rates by banning NFE. NFE centres operated by NGOs were often affected, meaning many targeted centres were closed before and/or during data collection.

- Using 4Ws data also meant that non-formal centres were not included if they did not have a link to Education Cluster partners. This is likely to bias the results related to NFE centres, as

religious or other forms of NFE centres without links to NGOs were not included in the sample, so will not be reported here.

- Due to there being very few Technical Vocational Education Teaching Centres (TVET), there is very little data collected on 15-17-year-olds attending NFE. However, the lack of TVET centres in a context of high child labour and low enrolment for secondary children, is in itself is a finding that should be considered.

- During the first weeks of data collection, the sampling technique had not been appropriately communicated to several enumerators. This meant that many of the profiles were repeated, with enumerators collecting multiple gender, disability or community KIs surveys, as well as OOSC parent surveys, where the sampling design indicated that only one survey per type was needed. Rather than removing these surveys from the dataset, they have been aggregated into one unit. This means units are unequal in their numbers of surveys.

  Enumerators used snowball sampling techniques to access parents and caregivers, as well as KIs. Enumerators did not declare whether respondents had a prior engagement with the NGO in question. Snowballing techniques may increase sampling bias, meaning that drawing conclusions about larger populations is not advised.

- Similarly, enumerators were frequently collecting data in NFE centres that had interactions with the NGOs. Any potential conflict of interest has not been explored and sensitive topics may be underreported.

- Due to the analysis type, the most common indicators are prevalence indicators, measuring in how many assessed communities a certain phenomenon takes place. This does not allow for analysis of severity of issues, such as measuring the number of children engaging in different types of more or less hazardous child labour.

3 Findings – Community findings from KIs and Parents/Caregivers of Children not accessing any education.

3.1 Preferred Education Type

When asked to select the preferred education types for the children within their communities, parents across population and displacement status most commonly reported formal education for both boys and girls. In assessed communities where there was no consensus between respondents, the lack of consensus was between formal education and either non-formal school or qur'anic school.[27]

[27] Qur'anic school here defined as an alternative to formal education in which children learn predominantly religious teachings.

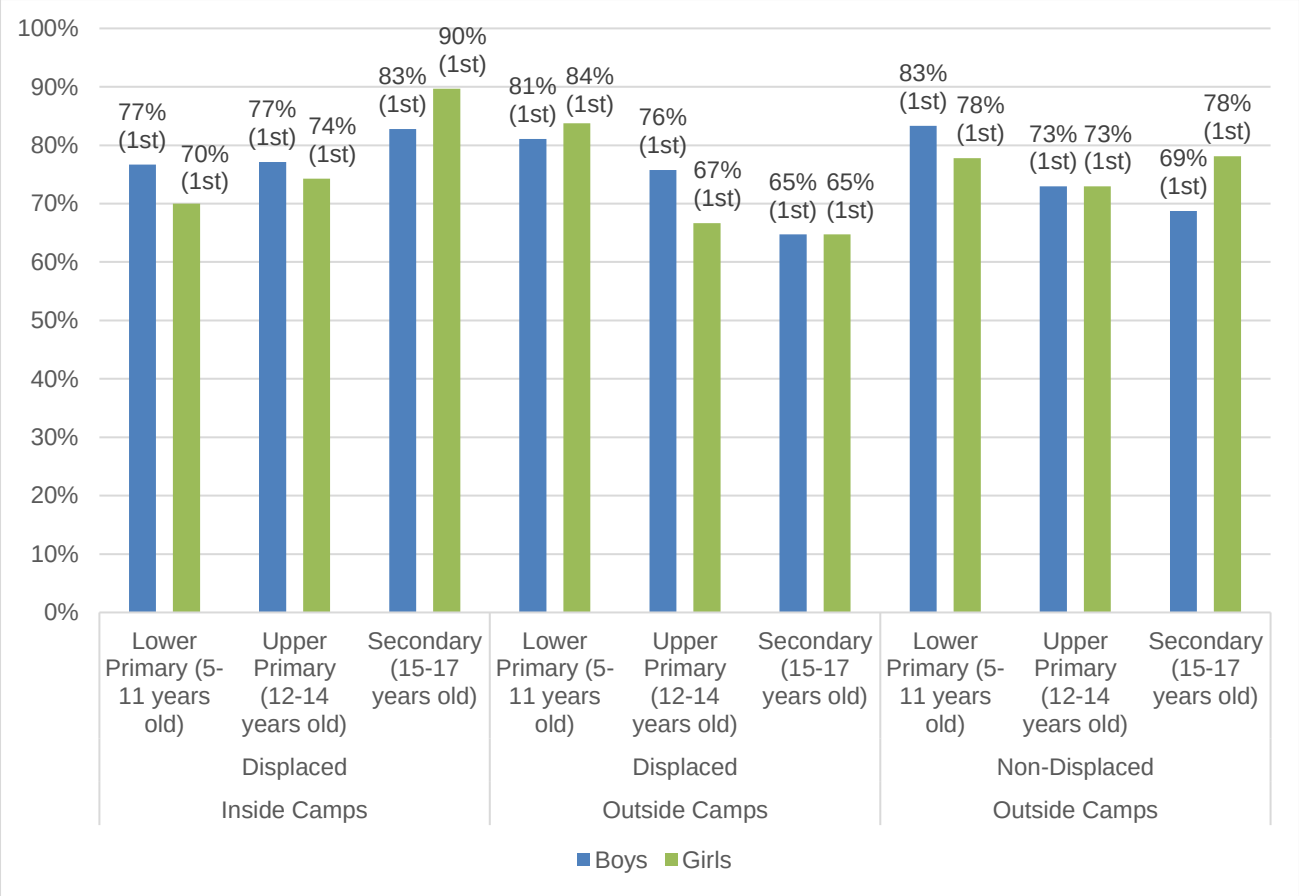

Figure 13: % of assessed communities where parents/caregivers reported formal education as the preferred education type and rank of formal education compared to other education types.

3.2 Distance and Cost

Whilst the attendance and enrolment rates vary between the secondary data sources, it is widely agreed that between 20-50% of children with NWS are not accessing the formal education system. To further explore why, KIs and the OOSC parents/caregivers were asked to identify the barriers for children to accessing formal education. The first question explored barriers related to the formal education system itself, including conditions within formal schools and the journey to the school. This question was multiple choice for all respondents, and respondents were able to report multiple responses for barriers that they had identified within the community. Please note that this section only includes responses from interviewed parents/caregivers of OOSC, not from parents/caregivers of children attending NFE.

Distance to Formal School and Lack of Transportation

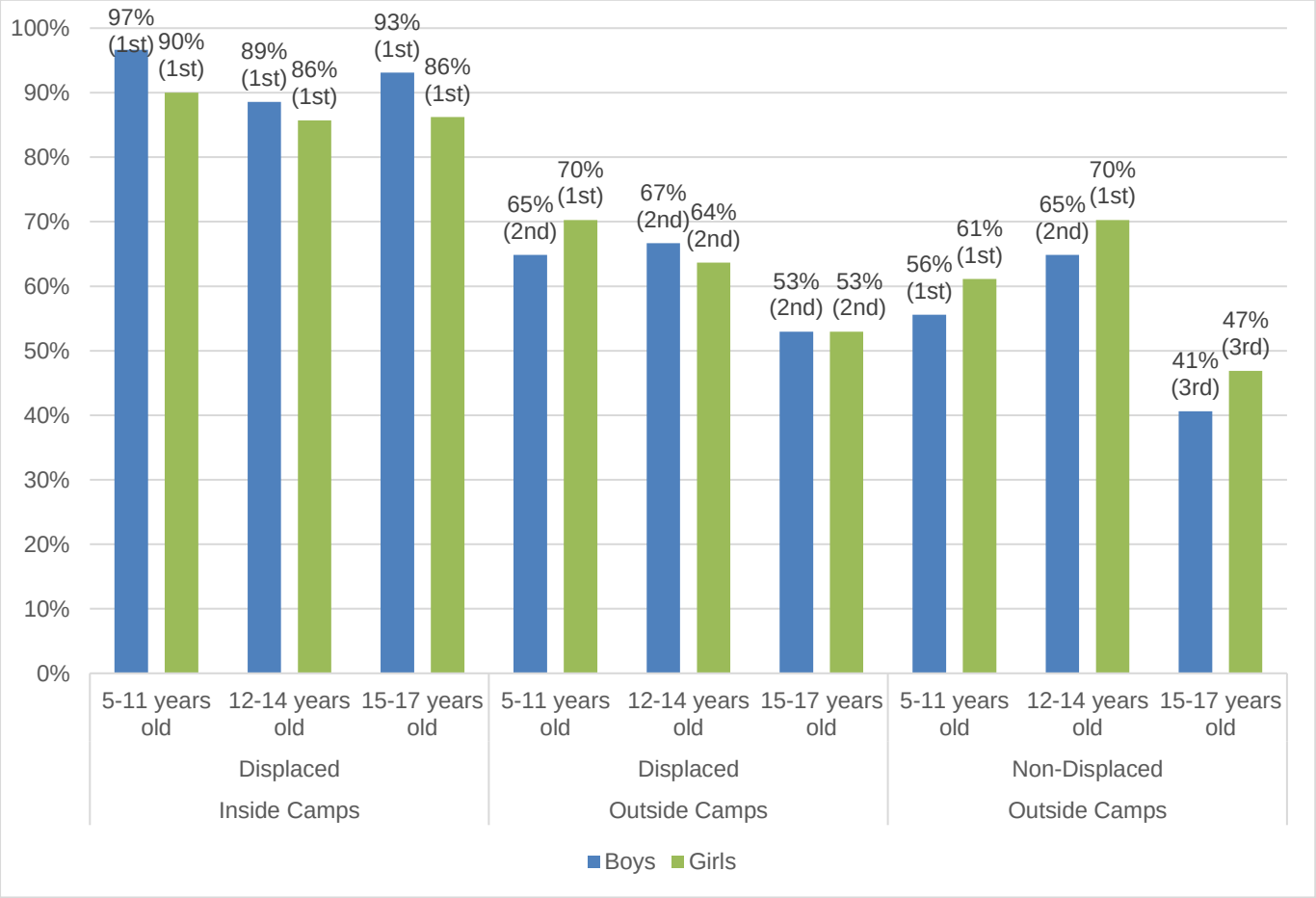

Figure 14: % of assessed communities where one or more parent/caregiver respondent reported that the distance to formal school and lack of transportation was a barrier to accessing formal education and rank of this barrier compared to other reported school/journey barriers[28]

When asked to identify barriers related to the school or the journey to the school, distance and lack of transportation, as well as costs and fees of formal education, were the two most reported barriers for every disaggregation of the parents/caregiver respondents across gender, camp and displacement status, and age group. There were only two exceptions: Out of camp, non-displaced, secondary aged boys and girls[29].

The prominence of distance as a key barrier was further triangulated in the KI findings; distance and lack of transportation was either the first or second most reported barrier across all disaggregation. Whilst this could be expected for populations in camps, it is worth further exploration as to why this barrier was so widely reported for non-displaced populations and displaced populations outside camps. In theory, these population groups lived in settlements closer to the formal schools. However, as is discussed in the report, a combination of the loss of formal schools entirely (with ACU reporting 10% of assessed schools were not operational[30]) and the overcrowding of remaining schools may

[28] More than one answer could be selected. Ranking based on the number of communities where an option was reported by at least one parent/caregiver.
[29] "Formal schools were overcrowded" was in the top two most reported rather than distance and lack of transportation for both aggregations.
[30] School in Syria, Edition 7. (August 2022) - Information Management Unit, Assistance Coordination Unit.

help explain this finding. The most reported barrier for accessing education is also a cross cutting barrier for all population groups, showing the similarity between needs across displacement and camp status.

In line with this, findings from other assessments also suggest limited education infrastructure directly inside IDP sites. According to the 2022 IDP Site Integrated Monitoring Matrix Plus (ISIMM+), 1,213 of the 1,344 assessed IDP sites did not have any education facilities. When it came to accessing services inside or near the camp, 42% of households assessed by ISIMM+ in camps reported not having access to primary education facilities, whilst 80% reported not having access to secondary education facilities.

In the child participation FGDs, distance to school, the absence of formal education inside displacement camps, and the lack of transportation or inability to cover transportation expenses were all frequently selected barriers by participant children. Children in camps particularly commonly reported facing related difficulties, as accessing formal education frequently means leaving the camp daily and walking long distances. For children in NFE, this was the most voted for barrier, especially by boys.

Costs and Fees of Formal School

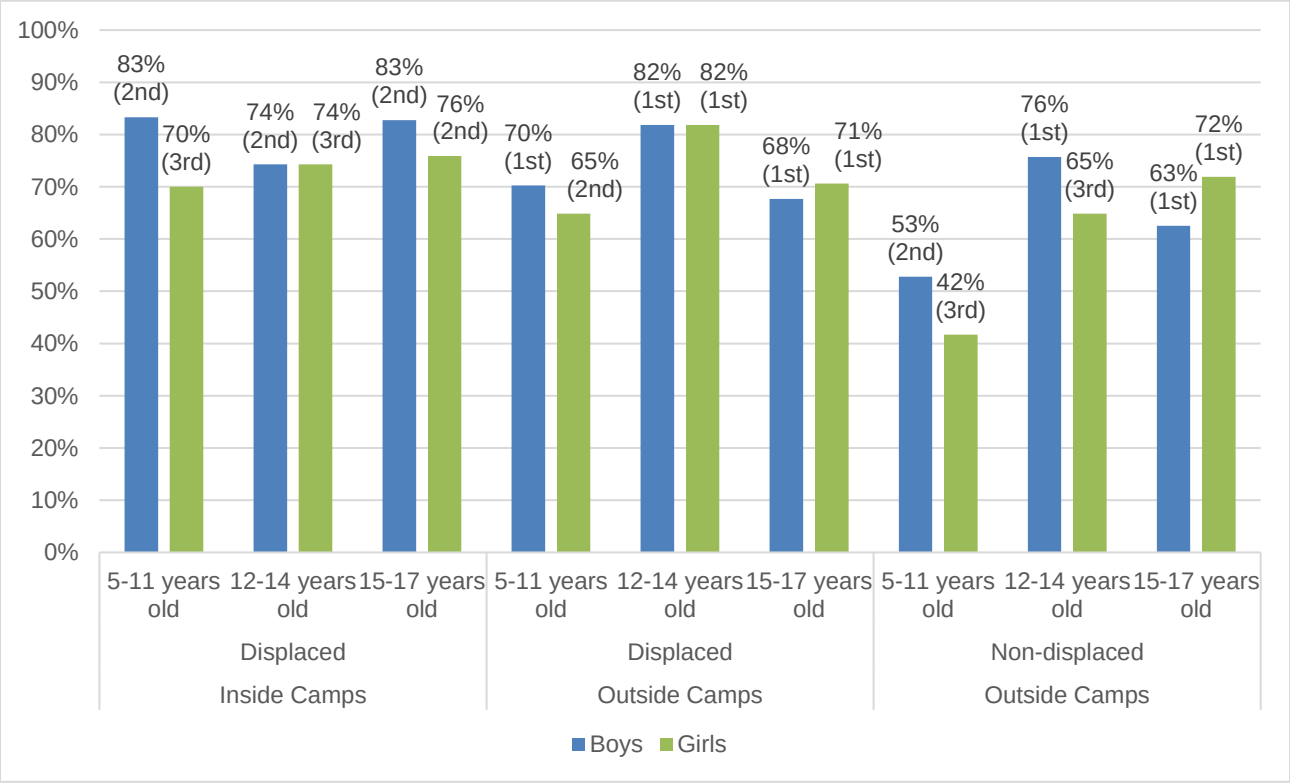

Figure 15: % of assessed communities where one or more parent/caregiver respondent reported that the costs and fees were a barrier to accessing formal education and rank of barrier compared to other school/journey barriers[31]

In those assessed communities where distance and transport were not the most reported barrier, the costs and fees of formal education was the most reported barrier. This was reported by at least one

[31] More than one answer could be selected. Ranking based on the number of communities where an option was reported by at least one parent/caregiver.

parent/caregiver in 93% of assessed communities for boys and 89% of assessed communities for girls.

Costs and fees were also in the top two most reported barriers by parents and caregivers across all gender and camp disaggregation, with the notable exception of two groups (Out of camp, secondary aged girls and out of camp, upper primary aged girls[32]).

As explored in more detail in the SDR (Annex 1), whilst some schools do charge fees, fees often only consist of only 1 USD for registration. Therefore, it is likely that those respondents who report costs/fees as a barrier to accessing education are often more generally considering the opportunity cost of education. The education opportunity cost is a combination of both the resources spent (for example, the fees, travel costs, education materials and so forth) but also the theoretical resources lost by the child attending school (for example, the labour hours either within the home or earning an income for the household).

[32] This barrier was widely reported across assessed communities for both groups with at least one KI identifying this as a barrier for these groups in 80% of communities for out of camp, secondary aged girls and in 78% of assessed communities for out of camp upper primary aged girls.

3.3 Security Concerns and Protection

Security Concerns for Child Travelling to or Being at Formal School

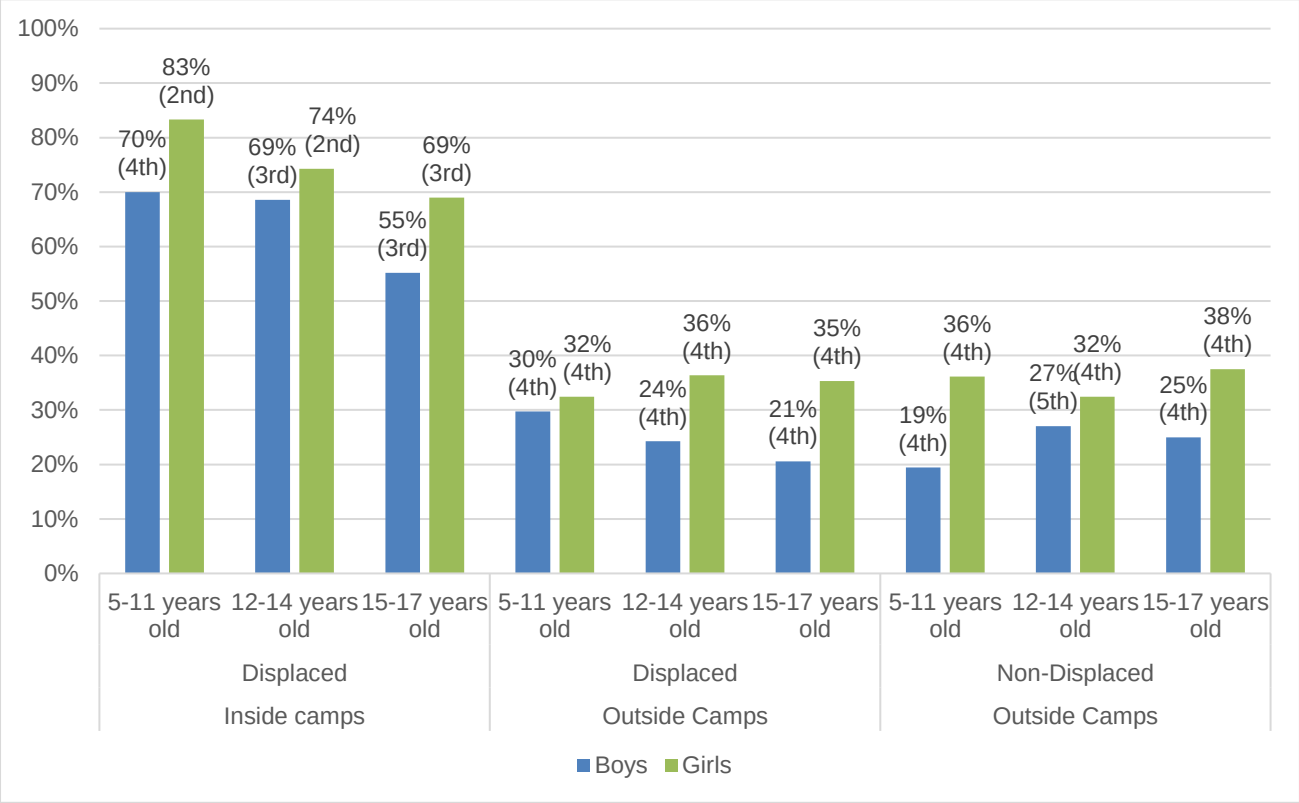

Figure 16: % of assessed communities where one or more parent/caregiver respondent reported that security concerns for child travelling to or being at formal school was a barrier to accessing formal education and rank of this barrier compared to other school/journey barriers[33]

Findings suggest that security concerns related to travelling to or being at school are another common and prescient barrier to accessing formal education, particularly for girls. Whilst this barrier was more commonly identified for girls, the data shows that this is still a relevant barrier for boys across age groups. In particular, security concerns was a common barrier for displaced children inside camps, especially for girls. In line with this, during the KI interviews, security concerns were either the most or second most reported barrier for girls in upper primary and lower primary age groups, from both inside and outside camp settings. Both parent/caregiver respondents and KIs also often identified this as a barrier for boys residing in camps.

As discussed, the ISIMM+ findings found no education facilities inside 1,213 of the assessed 1,344 IDP sites. This lack of access within the camps means children from within camps are likely to travel further, sometimes across unsafe environments, compared to children residing in urban areas. This is not to say that these security concerns do not function as a barrier to children outside of camps, merely that they are identified across numerous assessed communities for children within camps.

In line with the findings above, during the FGDs with children, the security situation and related protection issues was the most voted for barrier to accessing formal education for girls according to

[33] More than one answer could be selected. Ranking based on the number of communities where an option was reported by at least one parent/caregiver.

participants. Other issues preventing access to formal education mentioned during FGDs with girls were fear of kidnaping, limitations in the freedom of movement, the fears of families to send their daughters to schools, and the difficulties they face to move without a companion. Further details can be found in Annex 2.

Security Concerns and Protection Issues in the Community

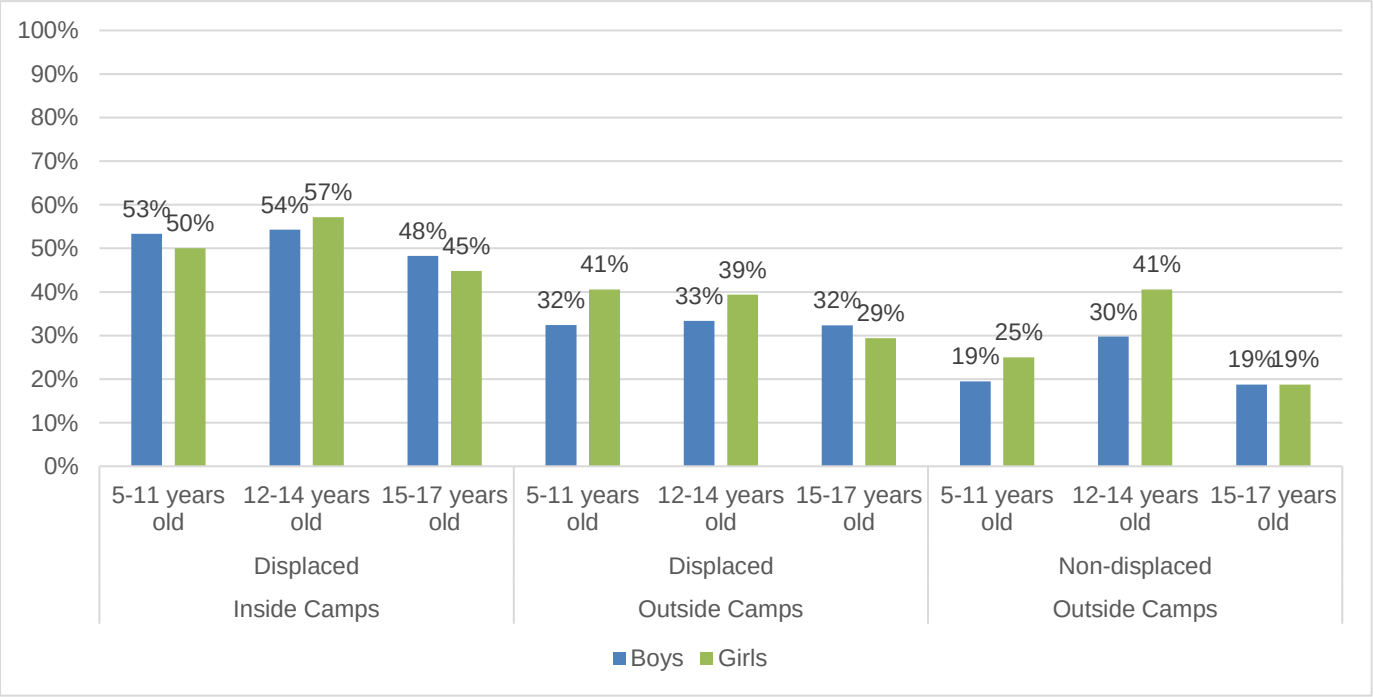

Figure 1710: % of assessed communities with one or more parent/caregivers reporting that children generally do not feel safe in the community.

Parent and caregiver respondents were asked whether children generally found the community to be safe. Findings suggest that displaced children might generally have felt less safe in their community than non-displaced children, at least according to parents and caregivers. Groups that were most commonly perceived to not feel safe were 12-14-year-old girls living camps (reported in 57% of assessed communities). This compares to only 19% of assessed communities where respondents perceived that 5-11-year-old and 15–17-year-old boys generally felt unsafe.

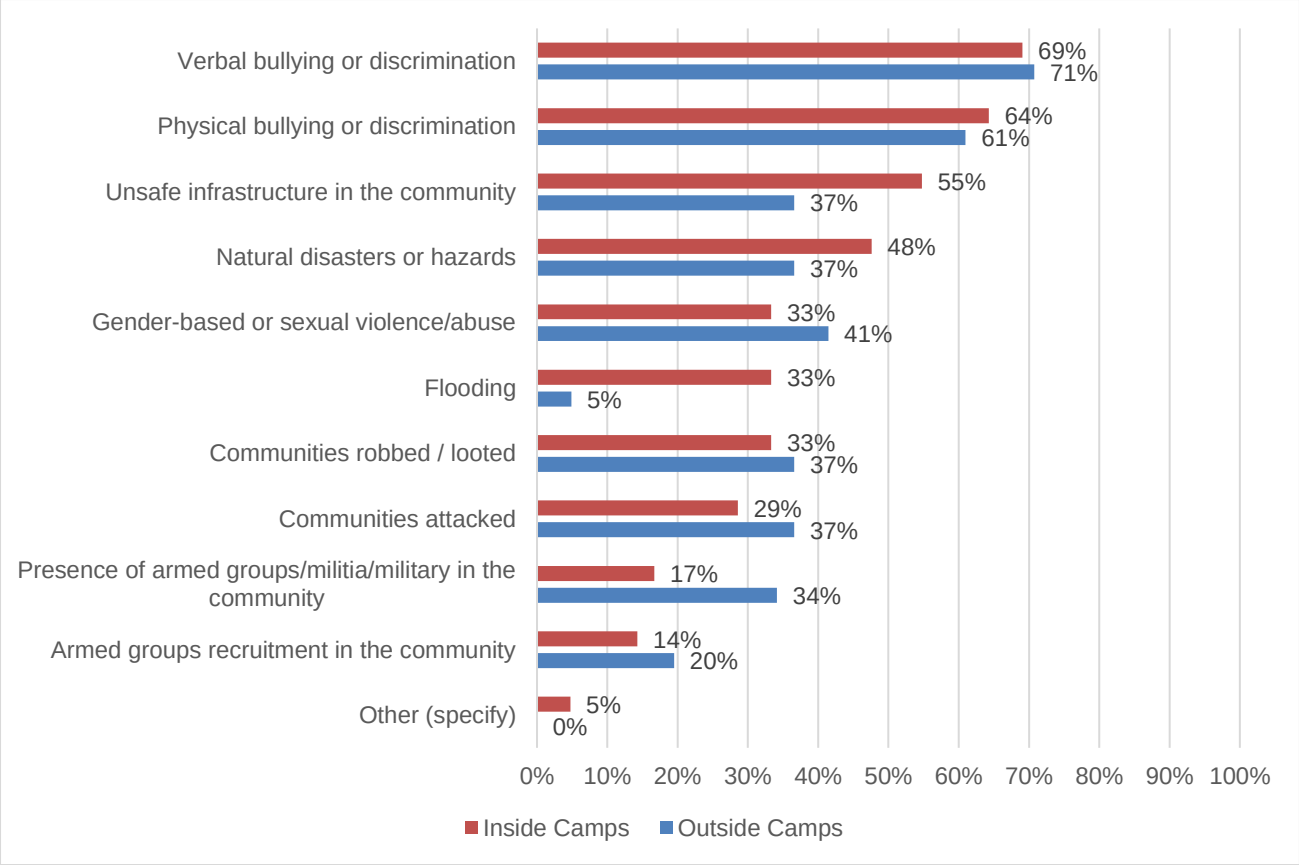

Figure 18: % of assessed communities per type of risk boys may face in their community, identified by at least one KI[34]

KIs were asked to identify the key protection and safety concerns for children within the assessed communities. The most common answers for boys inside and outside camps were verbal bullying and physical bullying. Bullying and violence towards other children may be a sign that children need psychosocial support. In a separate question, at least one KI in **90% of both inside camp and outside camps communities identified children showing the signs of psychosocial distress**. The two phenomena may be linked, as children with psychosocial distress may exhibit this by bullying other children.[35] It may also be possible that the verbal and physical violence came from adults, with the questionnaire not differentiating between the two.

KIs more commonly reported flooding and unsafe infrastructure as type of risks boys may face inside camps, whilst armed groups recruitment was more often reported by KIs as a risk boys outside of camps may face.

[34] More than one answer could be selected.
[35] Invisible Wounds - The impact of six years of war on the mental health of Syria's children – Save the Children (2017)

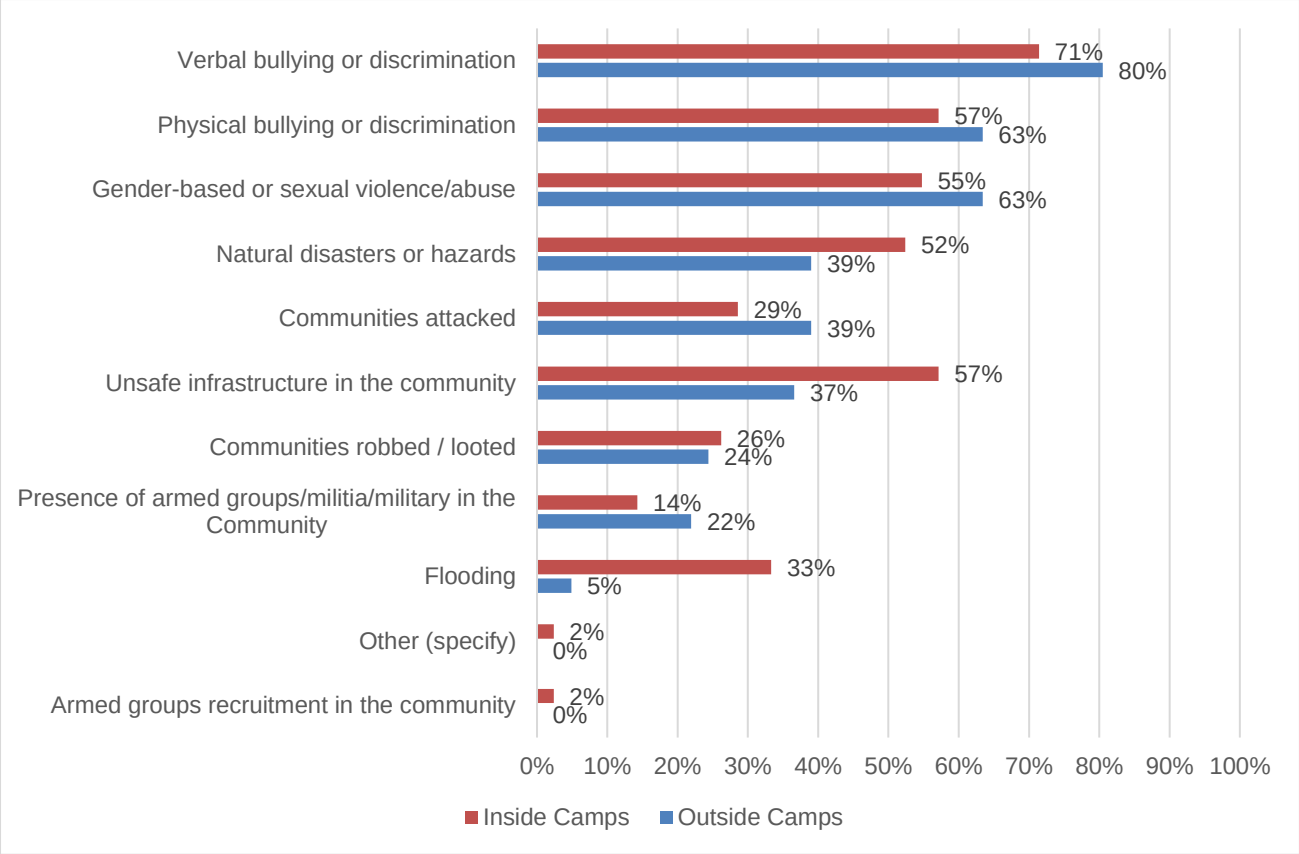

Figure 19: % of assessed communities per type of risk girls may face in their community, identified by at least one KI[36]

For girls, physical and verbal bullying were also frequently identified risks across both types of assessed communities. SGBV was more commonly reported key protection issue for girls when compared with boys.

[36] More than one answer could be selected.

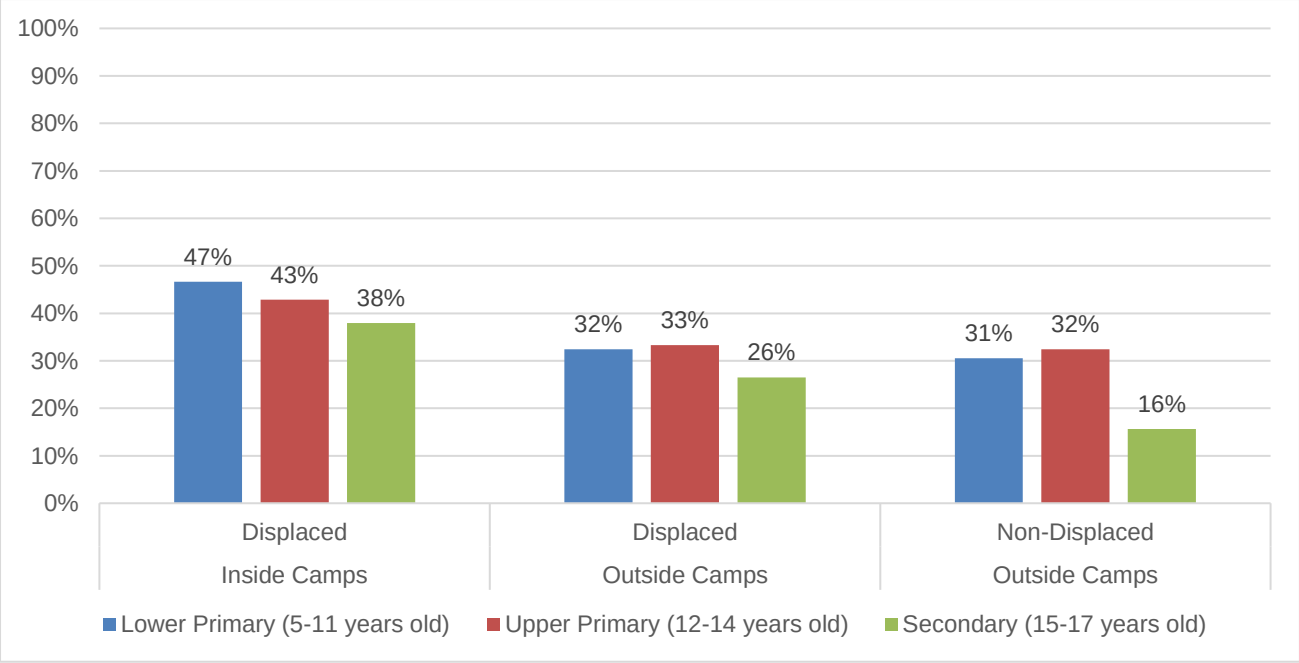

Figure 110: % of assessed communities where one or more parent caregiver has identified gender-based or sexual violence/abuse as a protection issue for girls.

SGBV was most often reported as a risk by parents/caregivers for girls living inside camps, with it being reported as a concern for lower primary girls in 47% of assessed communities. This compares to only 16% of assessed communities where it was reported as an issue for non-displaced, secondary girls. The relatively lower proportion of assessed communities where SGBV for girls aged 15-17 years was reported as a concern, when compared to other age groups of the same displacement and camp status, may be related to the higher rates of marriage within this age group. It may be perceived that girls at this age who are married, or betrothed, may be at a lower risk of SGBV, particularly, as intimate partner violence within the household is likely to be less reported than attacks outside the home. Respondents in the Gender Based Violence Area of Responsibility (GBVAoR) Voices of Syria assessment identified early marriage as a way to protect women from forms of GBV.[37]. Further research is recommended to explore the links between child marriage, SGBV and how this affects girls of different ages in NWS.

[37] 2022 GBV AoR Voices of Syria GBV assessment

3.4 Learning Conditions

Overcrowding at Formal Schools

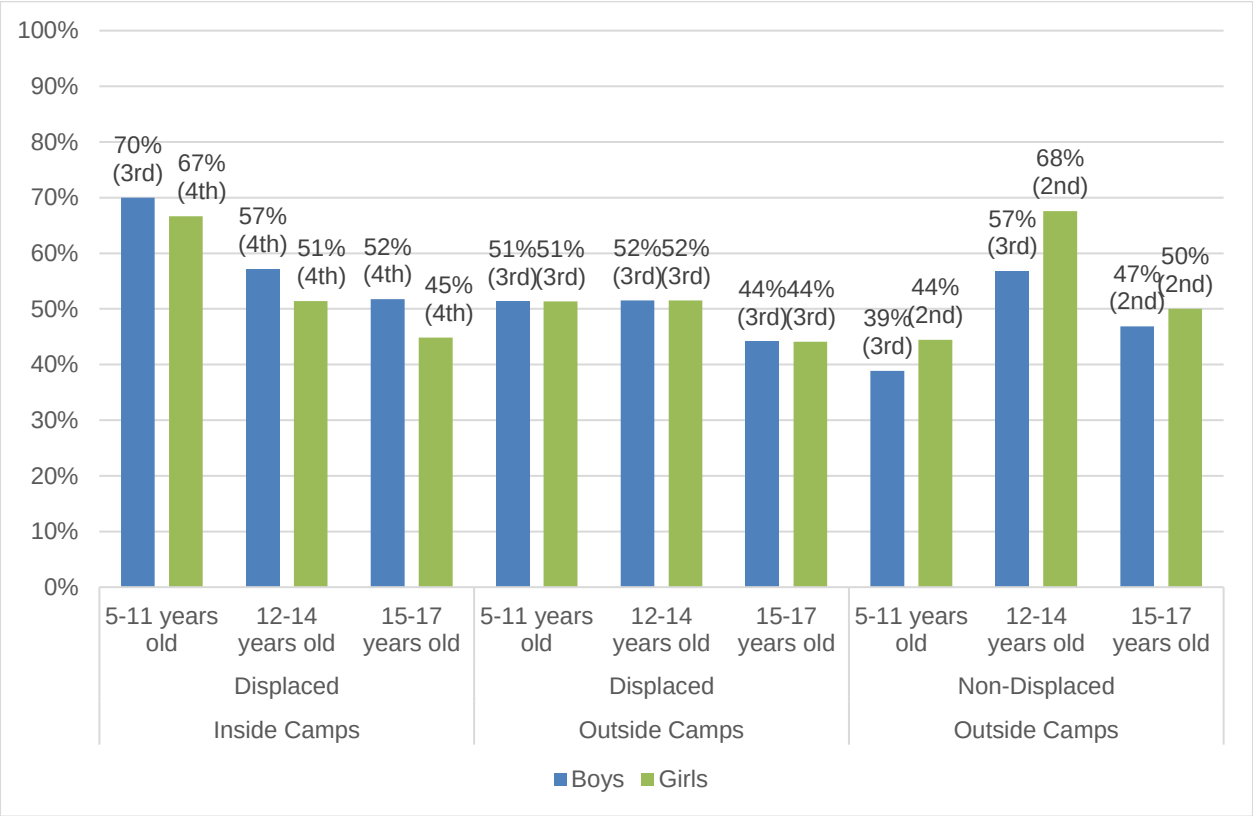

Figure 21: % of communities where one or more parent/caregiver respondent reported that the formal school being overcrowded was a barrier to accessing formal education, and rank of this barrier compared to other school and journey related barriers.[38]

Another commonly reported barrier to accessing formal education from assessed communities was the issue that formal schools were overcrowded. Overcrowding occurs when the number of students enrolled in the school is larger than the number of students the school is designed to accommodate. This was the second most commonly reported barrier for non-displaced segments, including lower primary, upper primary and secondary-aged girls, and secondary-aged boys. This barrier was reported across a range of assessed communities and population types, indicating that overcrowding at formal schools is a cross-cutting issue.

The conflict in NWS has reduced the number of functioning formal schools, with schools being affected directly by conflict, as well as being used as displacement shelters and general degradation due to economic conditions[39]. ACU's Schools in Syria reports show that 10% of the assessed schools were not functioning at all, whilst others were not running at maximum capacity due damaged classrooms and facilities.[40] The reduction of the number of overall schools over the years, along with schools being used as displacement centres, may have contributed to such overcrowding of existing schools. Overcrowding, in turn, causes poor interaction and increases classroom discipline issues,

[38] More than one answer could be selected. Ranking based on the number of communities where an option was reported by at least one parent/caregiver.
[39] School in Syria, Edition 7. (August 2022) - Information Management Unit, Assistance Coordination Unit.
[40] School in Syria, Edition 7. (August 2022) - Information Management Unit, Assistance Coordination Unit.

making it equally difficult for teachers in an overcrowded classroom to offer quality instruction. It also makes it difficult for teachers to take care of their students and respond to their urgent needs for psychosocial support and care, lowering the quality of education being delivered[41].

Lack of Male and Female Separation

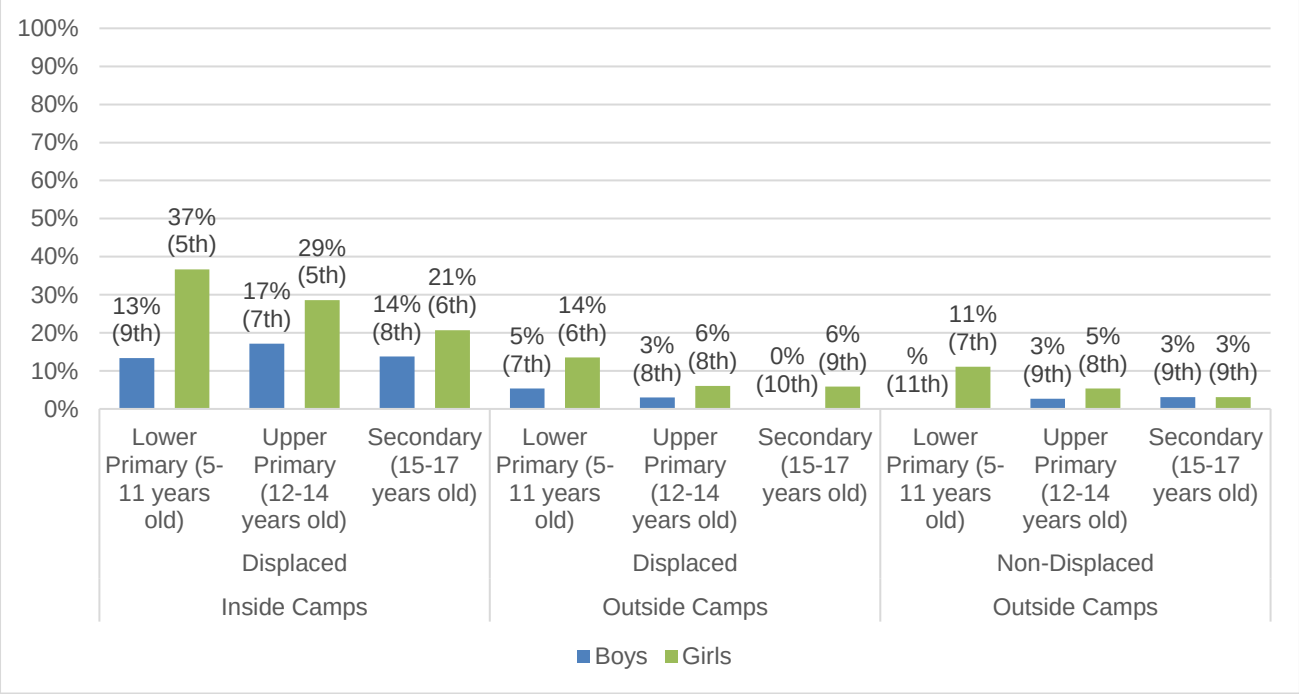

Figure 22: % of communities where one or more parent/caregiver respondent reported that the lack of separation between boy and girl students was a barrier to accessing formal education and rank of this barrier compared to other school and journey related barriers.[42]

Whilst not the most common barrier reported by parent/caregiver respondents, the lack of separation between boy and girl students in schools is a more frequent barrier for girls than for boys. Overall, 91% of the schools assessed by ACU were mixed schools, whilst only 4% (151 schools) were for female students only[43]. The issue of separation appeared more salient for girls inside camps than other displacement types. Further research comparing the facilities of schools in camps, such as presence of gender-segregated water, sanitation, and health (WASH) facilities, as well as exploring the attitudes towards gender within households in NWS, may provide insight into why this is the case.

3.5 Child Labour and Barriers related to the Home

Parents and caregivers of OOSC, as well as KIs, were asked to identify barriers to formal education that related to the household and home of the child. To understand how these barriers are reported, it's also important to understand the wider cultural, societal, and economic situation that parents are reporting from. This section presents an exploration of these barriers, analysing these findings using other related data collected by the JNA.

[41] INEE Blog – Education Crisis in Syria – Teacher's Perspectives (2023)
[42] More than one answer could be selected. Ranking based on the number of communities where an option was reported by at least one parent/caregiver.
[43] Schools in Syria, Edition 7. (August 2022) - Information Management Unit, Assistance Coordination Unit.

Working Outside the Tome and Helping in the Home/Farm as a Barrier to Education

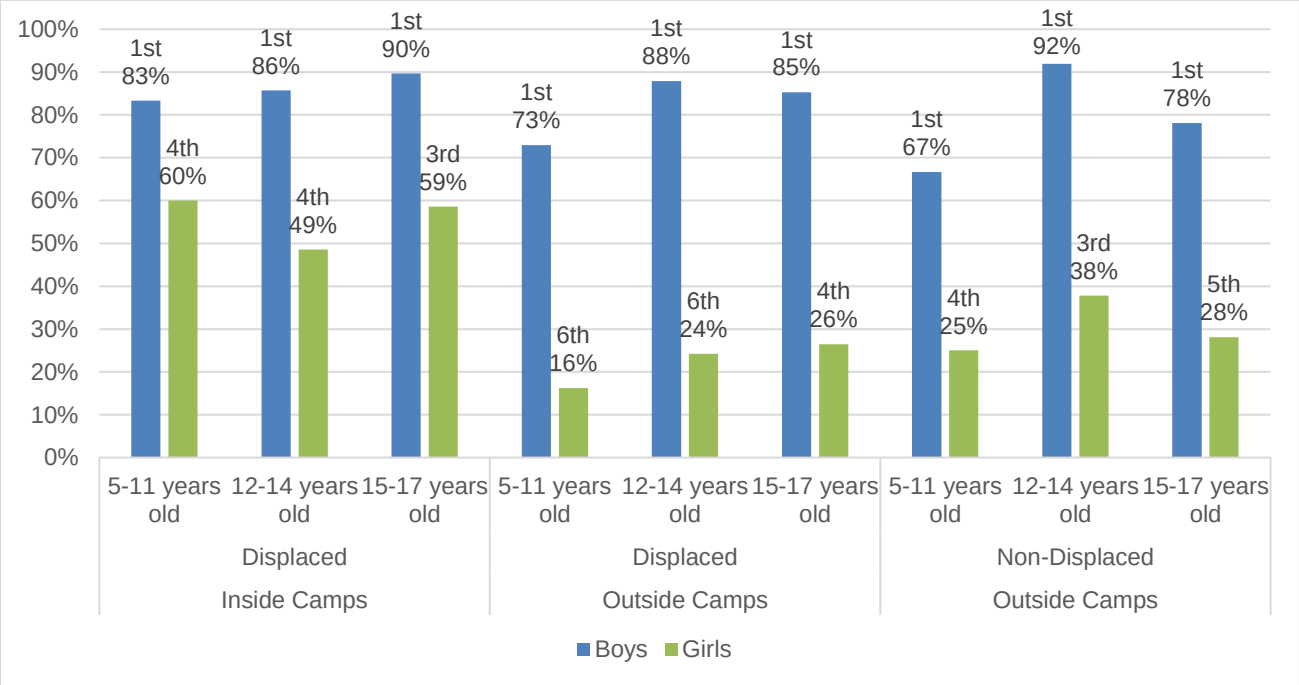

Figure 23: % of assessed communities where one or more parent/caregiver respondent reported that the child working outside the home was a barrier to accessing formal education and rank of this barrier compared to other home barriers[44]

Across every displacement and camp status, and across every age group, the most identified barrier to accessing formal education related to the home for boys was working outside the home. The percentage of assessed communities where working outside of the home was reported as a barrier to formal education is comparable across all displacement groups. It is important to note that for lower primary boys, working outside the home was slightly more commonly reported for boys inside camps (83% of assessed communities) than when compared to boys outside of camps (73% of displaced assessed communities and 67% of non-displaced assessed communities).

While the findings clearly suggest a potential difference between boys and girls, working outside of the home was also relatively commonly reported for girls inside camps. This barrier was reported by parents/caregivers for lower primary girls in camps in 60% of assessed communities, compared to just 16% of displaced assessed communities outside of camps and 25% of non-displaced assessed communities. This trend is also clear for upper primary girls, with working outside the home being considerably more often reported as a barrier for girls in camps than displaced and non-displaced girls out of camps. World Vision find that children in widow's camps are particularly at risk of child labour. The combination of vulnerability, economic hardship and lack of education facilities may combine to make child labour more prevalent in camp settings[45].

During the child participation exercise, economic conditions and the need for children to work was consistently the most voted for barrier to accessing education. Findings from the FGDs with children suggested that boys involved in child labour, and in particular those out of school, often work more than 8 hours per day, with some boys reporting 9, 10, or 11 hours of work per day. Adolescent boys

[44] More than one answer could be selected. Ranking based on the number of communities where an option was reported by at least one parent/caregiver.

[45] The Women and Children of Syria's Widow Camps: Hardest to reach, most at risk (April 2022) - World Vision

and girls aged 15-17-year-old reported working on average for 7 hours/day, while younger boys and girls aged 11-14-year-old reported working on average for 6.5 hours/day.

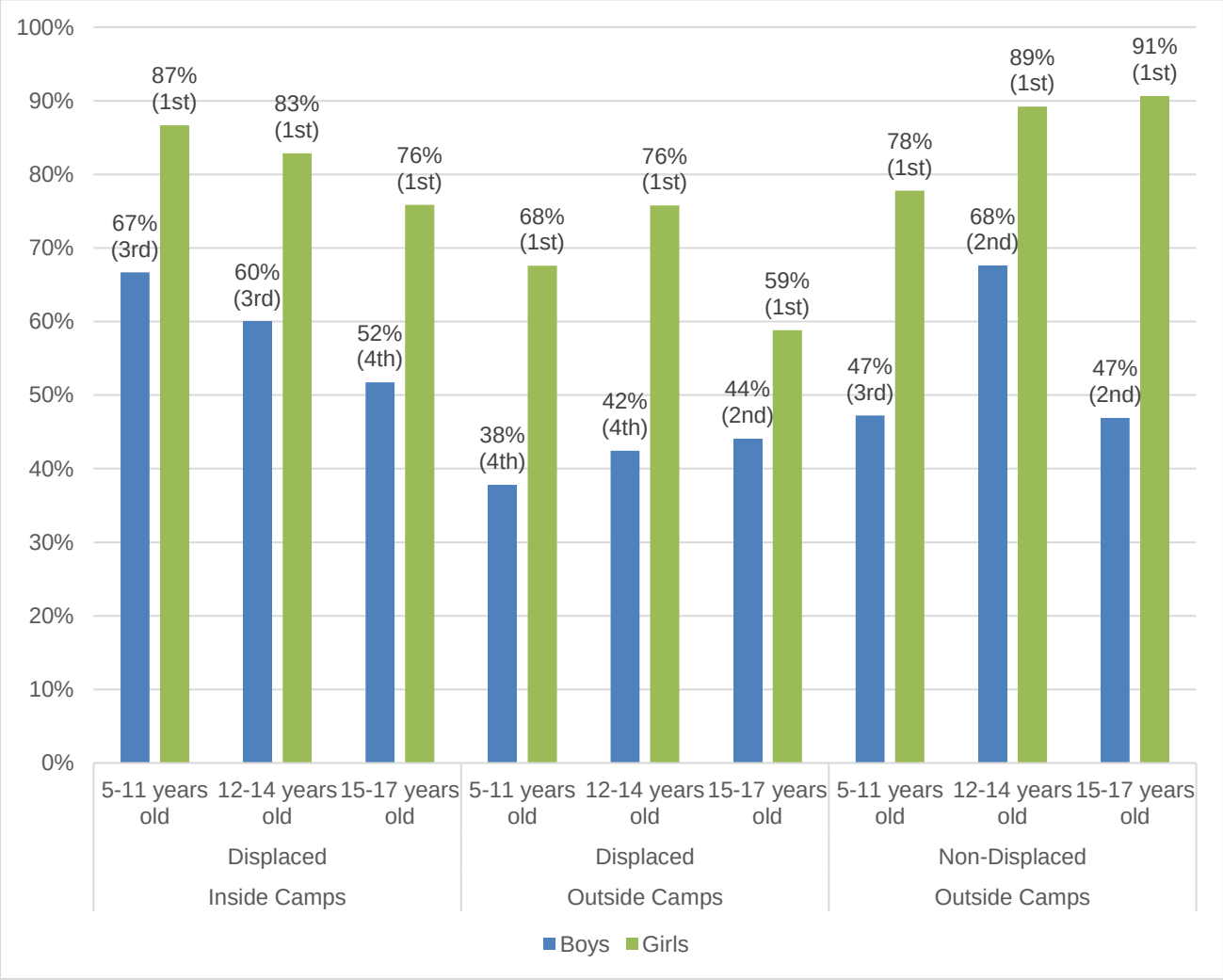

Figure 24: % of assessed communities where one or more parent/caregiver respondent reported that the child helping inside the home/farm was a barrier to accessing formal education and rank of this barrier compared to other home barriers[46]

For girls, helping within the house or on the farm was reported as a barrier to accessing formal education relatively similarly across displacement groups, with the only difference being the slightly lower proportion of assessed communities where this barrier was reported for displaced girls residing outside of camps. This difference, however, is marginal, with this barrier appearing cross-cutting for all school-aged girls.

During FGDs with children, girls frequently reported undertaking labour at home, particularly mentioning “housework” (4 hours/day on average). In this context, it may be more common for girls to take care of the house and of their younger siblings, whilst boys may more commonly engage with labour outside the home.

[46] More than one answer could be selected. Ranking based on the number of communities where an option was reported by at least one parent/caregiver.

Perceived Prevalence of Child Labour

As child labour is such a common barrier for children accessing formal school, it makes sense to take a step back and review the phenomenon of child labour within NWS, as well as its relationship to accessing formal schools.

Taking into account the indicative nature of the findings, the potential of underreporting on sensitive questions, and the potentially more limited visibility on child labour more generally, KIs were asked to provide an indicative estimate of child labour prevalence across the assessed communities. KIs were asked to estimate the prevalence of child labour as a percentage of children of their relevant group (i.e. a % of displaced boys, outside of camps, aged 5 to 11 years old). The KIs answered the question by selecting a multiple of 10% (such as 20%, 30%, etc). These results were then aggregated into the following options: “None” (0%), Fewer than half (10%-40%), half or more (50%-100%). Finally, to aggregate the results from multiple KIs, the most common answer per assessed community from these options were selected. If the vote was split between two options, the community is reported as “no consensus”.

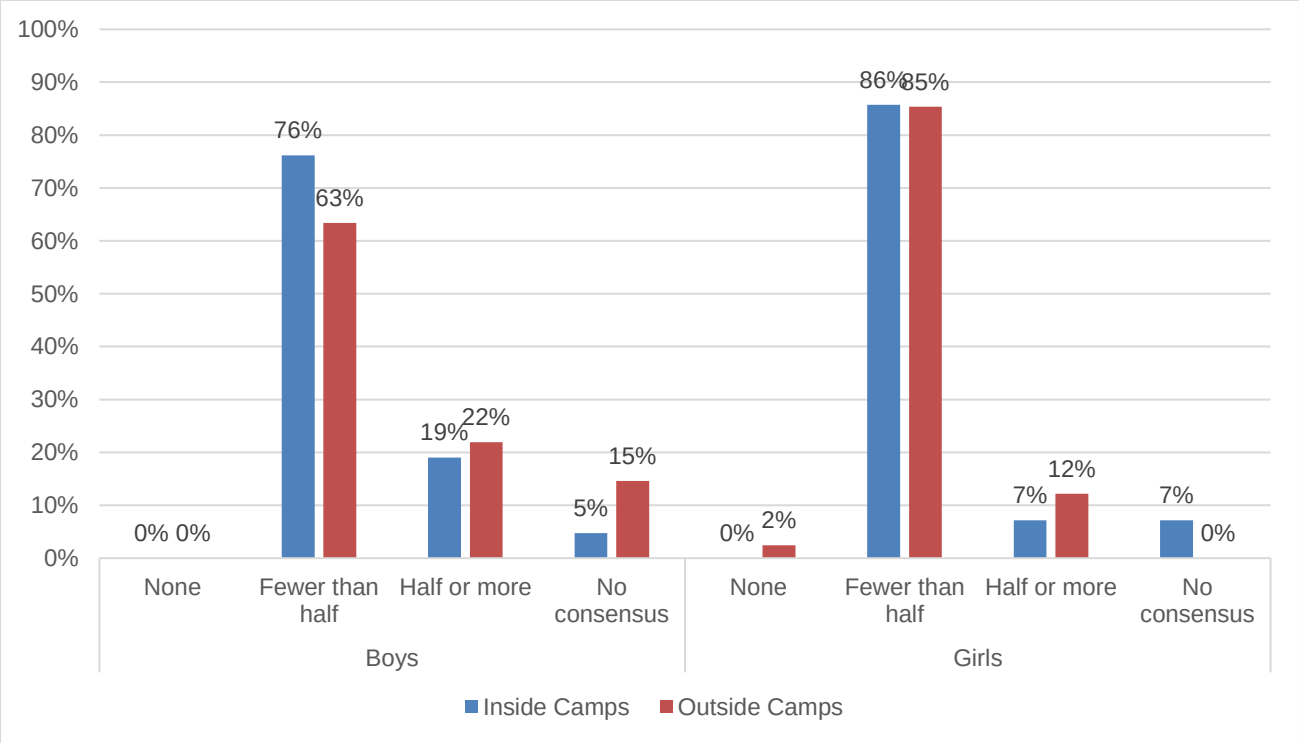

Figure 25: % of assessed communities by estimated proportion of boys and girls engaging in child labour, as estimated by KIs.

KIs from all assessed communities, for both disaggregation, reported the presence of child labour, apart from 1 community outside camps where KIs reported that no girls engaged in child labour. This suggests child labour is widespread in NWS.

In the graph, perhaps the most interesting column is the “half or more” column, which acts as a proxy for assessed communities where child labour is more common. It was more likely for KIs to report that half or more of boys would be working than half or more of girls. However, girls might be more commonly engaged in other types of labour (inside the house), and girls' labour might therefore be less visible and/or under-reported.

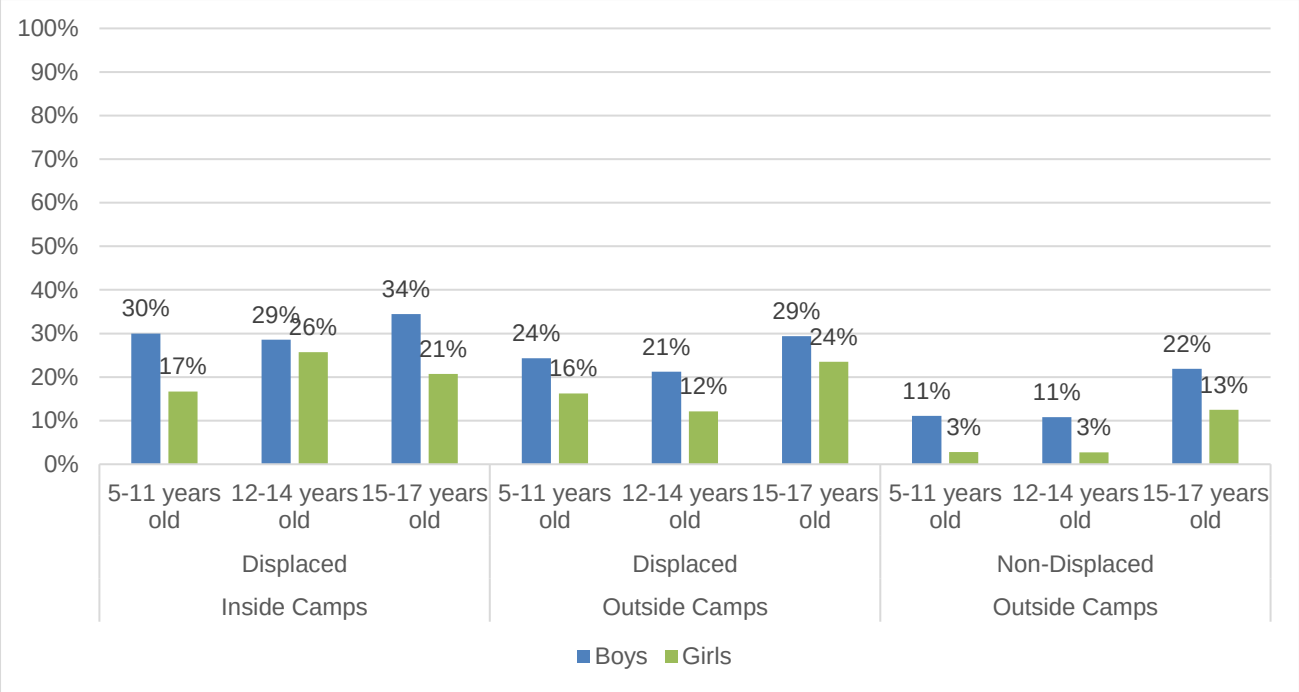

Figure 26: % of assessed communities where parent/caregivers identified that half or more of the children in their community engaged in child labour.

The same process of asking respondents to estimate a proportion of children within the community that were working, and then categorising that estimate for analysis and disaggregation, was conducted with parents and caregivers of OOSC children. To explore the severity within assessed communities, the displayed data only shows the percentage of assessed communities that indicated that half or more of each age and gender group were engaging with child labour.

A key and concerning finding to note was the perception of prevalence of child labour for displaced lower primary boys and girls. Parents and Caregivers in camps in 30% and 17% of assessed communities estimated that more than half of boys and girls this age respectively inside their communities were engaging in child labour. Parents and caregivers in 24% of assessed communities identified that more than half of displaced boys outside camps were working, whilst parents and caregivers in 16% of assessed communities identified that more than half of displaced girls outside camps were working. Whilst child labour at any age is a concern, the prevalence of young children working not only indicates deep economic issues for the household, but also that they are unable to engage with the basics of learning, meaning children are less able to integrate in formal schooling as they get older.

Child Labour – Type

Reported Types of Work for Boys	5-11 years old	12-14 years old	15-17 years old
Agriculture	83%	90%	85%
Shopkeeping	81%	90%	68%
Working in markets	93%	90%	95%
Mechanic	83%	86%	83%
Trash collection	88%	86%	83%
Selling goods on the street	74%	83%	78%
Begging	60%	57%	54%
Construction	38%	50%	61%
Delivery of goods	45%	40%	24%
Sewing and tailoring	29%	38%	22%
Hairdressing and barber shops	14%	26%	17%

Figure 27: % of assessed communities, by type of labour identified by one or more parent/caregiver respondent who had identified child labour in the community [47]

Parents and caregivers were asked to identify the work undertaken by children who did engage in child labour within their community. The most reported types of work for boys were working in markets, engaging in agriculture, and working as a mechanic. Findings suggest that boys might be more likely to work in construction as they get older, which might be due to the perception that older boys are more likely to be able to carry heavy loads required.

Reported Types of Work for Girls	5-11 years old	12-14 years old	15-17 years old
Agriculture	83%	93%	93%
Sewing and tailoring	83%	83%	78%
Hairdressing and barber shops	62%	71%	63%
Trash collection	69%	52%	44%
Shopkeeping	24%	48%	46%
Begging	52%	43%	37%
Working in markets	45%	40%	37%
Selling goods on the street	48%	36%	29%
Delivery of goods	2%	7%	5%
Mechanic	0%	7%	5%
Other	0%	2%	0%

Figure 28: % of assessed communities with girls engaging in child labour, by type of labour identified by one or more parent/caregiver respondent who had identified child labour in the community[48]

[47] More than one answer could be selected.
[48] More than one answer could be selected.

The difference between types of labour for girls compared to boys is stark. Both boys and girls were commonly reported to work in agriculture. However, whilst boys were often reportedly working in markets, girls more commonly reported to work in hairdressing or sewing and tailoring. As identified by Save the Children in 2021, these gendered labour roles are likely in place partly to keep young girls away from men[49].

One key concerning finding to note was the prevalence of trash collection in all age groups, but particularly lower primary children for both boys and girls. Whilst trash collection is a very visible form of labour, meaning respondents were more likely to identify it taking place, trash collection increases the risk of injury to children through contact with sharp or hazardous objects, as well as exposing them to contamination and other pollutants. It may also increase the likelihood of children coming across unexploded ordinance or other extremely hazardous materials[50].

Child Labour – Reason

To prevent child labour, both as a barrier to accessing education and as an end to itself, it is important to understand the reasons given by parents and caregivers for why children engage in child labour.

Reported Reasons for Labour for Boys	5-11 years old	12-14 years old	15-17 years old
Contribute to household income	100%	100%	100%
Contribute to the care of other family members	69%	86%	63%
Gain experience and skills	67%	67%	61%
Earn to cover the cost of their siblings' schooling	43%	62%	44%
School is not perceived as useful and prefer spending time in these activities	64%	50%	34%
Support self/be economically independent	38%	36%	41%
Earn to cover the cost of going back to school	33%	26%	22%
Pay for the bride price / bring money to their marriage	7%	10%	24%

Figure 29: % of assessed communities by reason for boys to engage in child labour, as identified by one or more parent/caregiver respondent[51]

These reported reasons for boys were generally consistent across age groups, with a key focus on contributing to the household income. This sense of responsibility, likely driven by unfavourable economic conditions for many households in NWS, should be considered when planning any intervention. The findings for girls mirror those of boys, with a similar focus on responsibility to the household and family members.

[49] A community-level assessment and participatory approaches to reduce child labour in Northwest Syria (January 2022) - Save the Children and Exigo
[50] "Many in northern Syria live off rubbish dumps" – Sonia Ali, Al Monitor (March 2020)
[51] More than one answer could be selected.

Reported Reasons for Labour for Girls	5-11 years old	12-14 years old	15-17 years old
Contribute to household income	100%	100%	100%
Contribute to the care of other family members	81%	88%	63%
Earn to cover the cost of going back to school	31%	19%	15%
Earn to cover the cost of their siblings' schooling	45%	57%	41%
Gain experience and skills	38%	40%	32%
Pay for the bride price / bring money to their marriage	5%	7%	10%
School is not perceived as useful and prefer spending time in these activities	62%	55%	46%
Support self/be economically independent	26%	26%	27%

Figure 30: % of assessed communities by reason for girls to engage in child labour, as identified by one or more parent/caregiver of out of school children[52]

Child Labour – Working in Hazardous Conditions

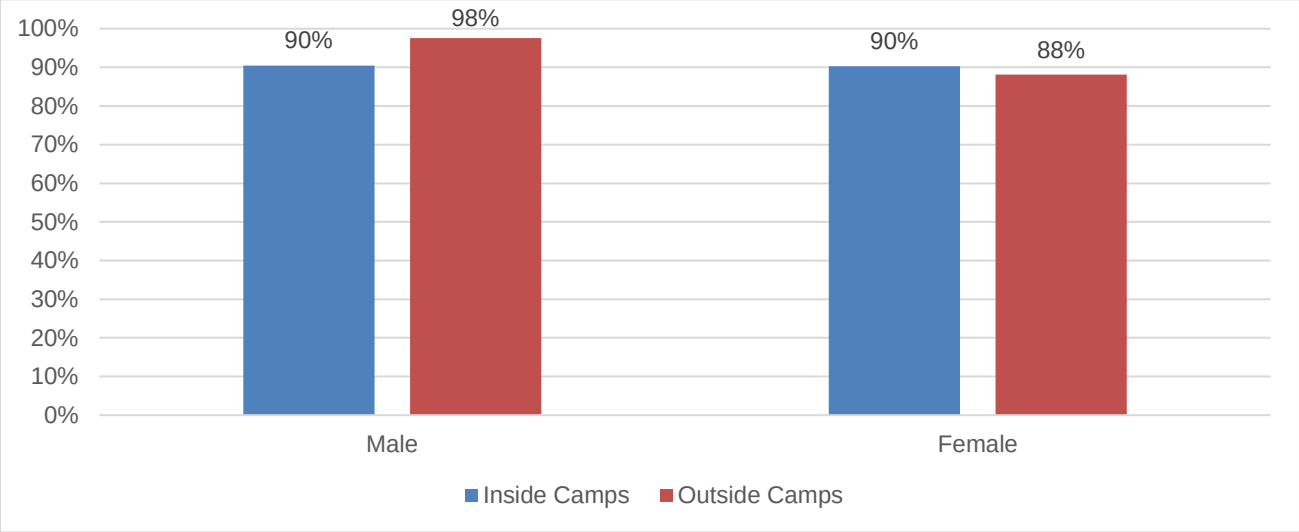

Figure 31: % of communities where at least one KI reported it was common for children to be working in one or more types of hazardous conditions.

KIs were asked to estimate how common it was for children in their communities to work in hazardous conditions (selecting whether it was common, happened sometimes, was rare, or did not happen at all). Across both disaggregation, gender and displacement status, KIs in all (100%) of assessed communities identified children working in hazardous conditions. This section focuses on the displacement status and gender of children most likely to engage with hazardous conditions (including only the "yes, it is common" response).

[52] More than one answer could be selected.

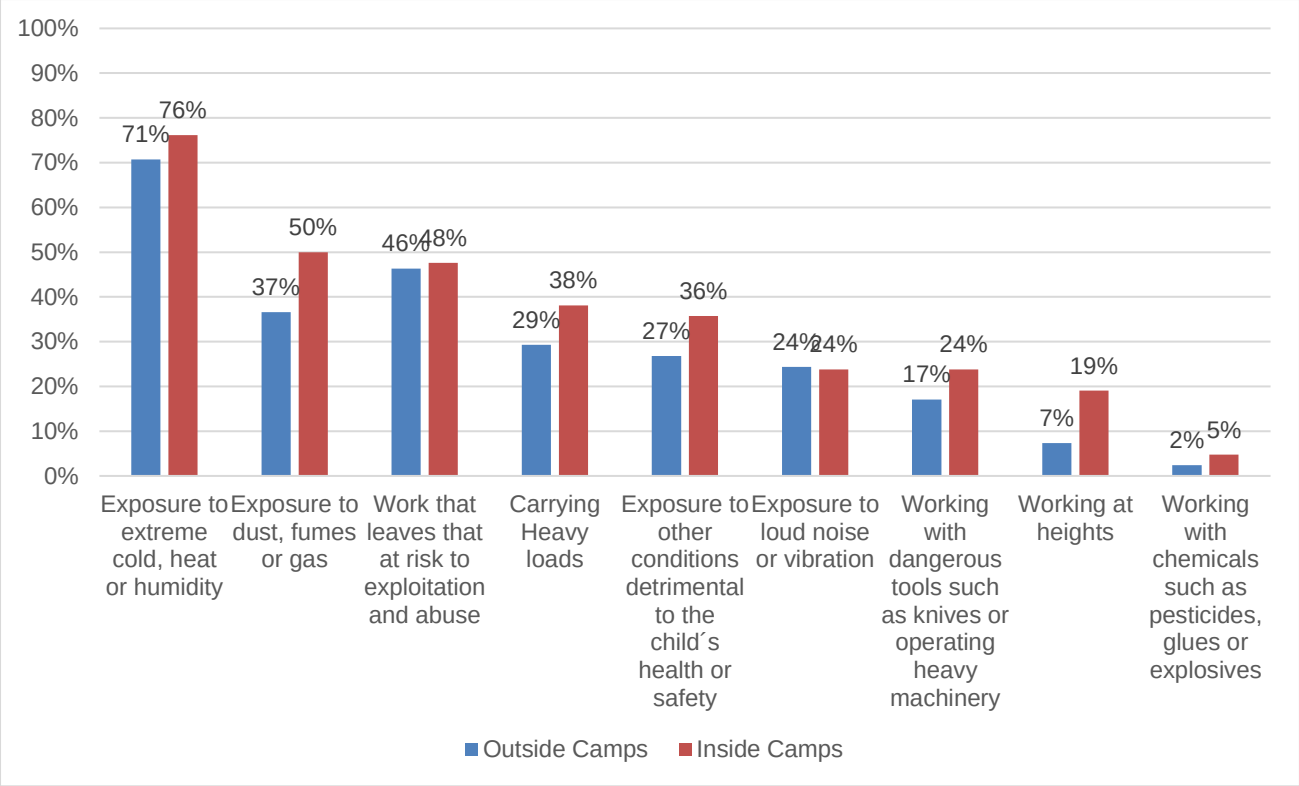

Figure 32: % of communities where at least one KI reported that it was common for boys in the community to be working in the following hazardous conditions.

The most reported type of hazardous conditions for boys to be working in was the exposure to extreme cold, heat, or humidity, likely related to the climate of NWS, with summer temperatures reaching 45 Celsius during the summer, or falling to -5 Celsius or lower during the winter[53]. This option does not consider the other adverse weather conditions in NWS, including storms and flooding, which might further contribute to a hazardous working environment.

Boys inside camps were more commonly reported to be engaged in work involving carrying heavy loads, being exposed to dust/fumes/gas, or working with dangerous objects or heavy machinery than boys outside camps. This may reflect the generally higher rates of labour for populations within camps. It may also reflect worse economic conditions within camps, with boys forced to engage with more hazardous types of work due to these conditions.

[53] World Data – Climate in Aleppo

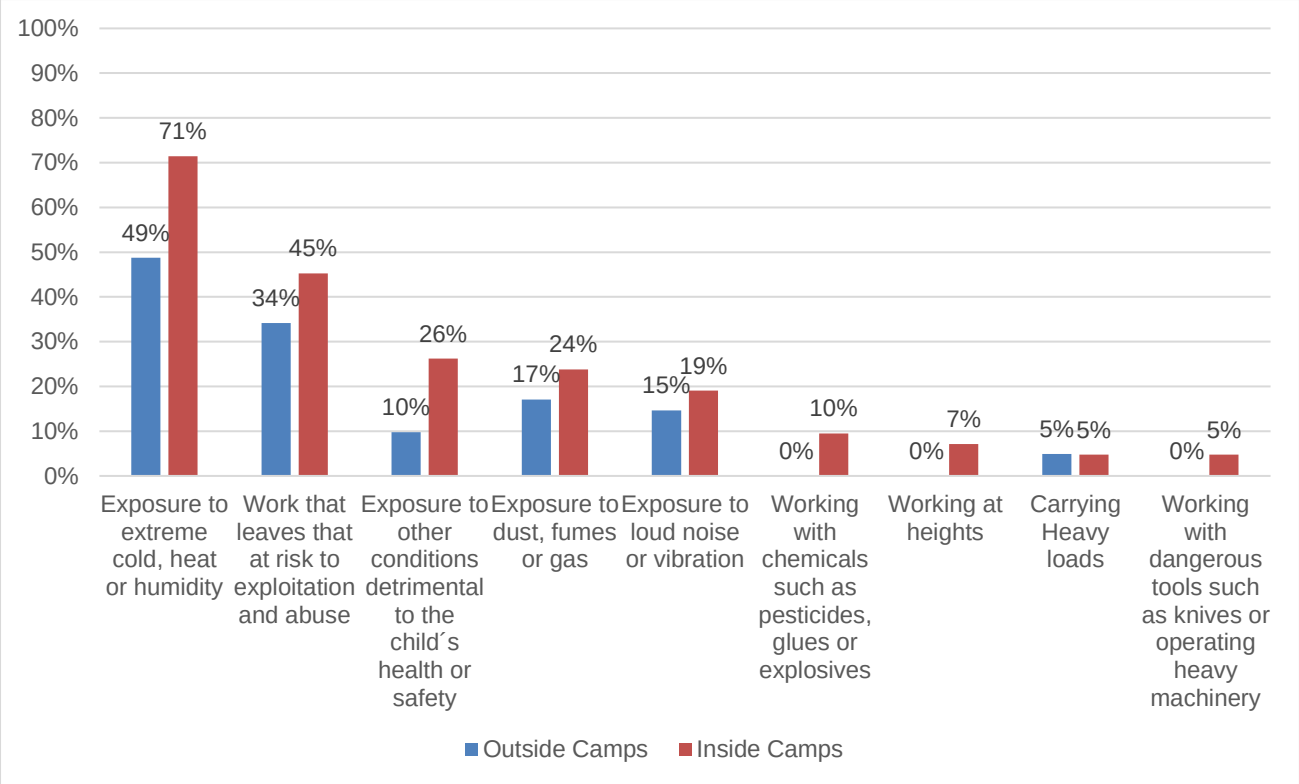

Figure 33: % of communities where at least one KI reported it was common for girls in the community to be working in the following hazardous conditions.

For girls, exposure to extreme temperatures was the most reported type of hazardous conditions in which girls worked, followed by engagement in work that leaves girls exposed to the risk of exploitation or abuse. Hazardous conditions were more commonly reported for girls inside camps than outside of camps.

3.6 Gender and Access

As well as exploring the gendered dynamics of child labour, it is worth further exploring the role of gender in preventing girls from accessing education. KIs and parent/caregiver respondents could also select “cultural beliefs” as a barrier for accessing education. This was left to the interpretation of the respondent but covers the role of girls and boys within society, and the relationship of this role to formal education.

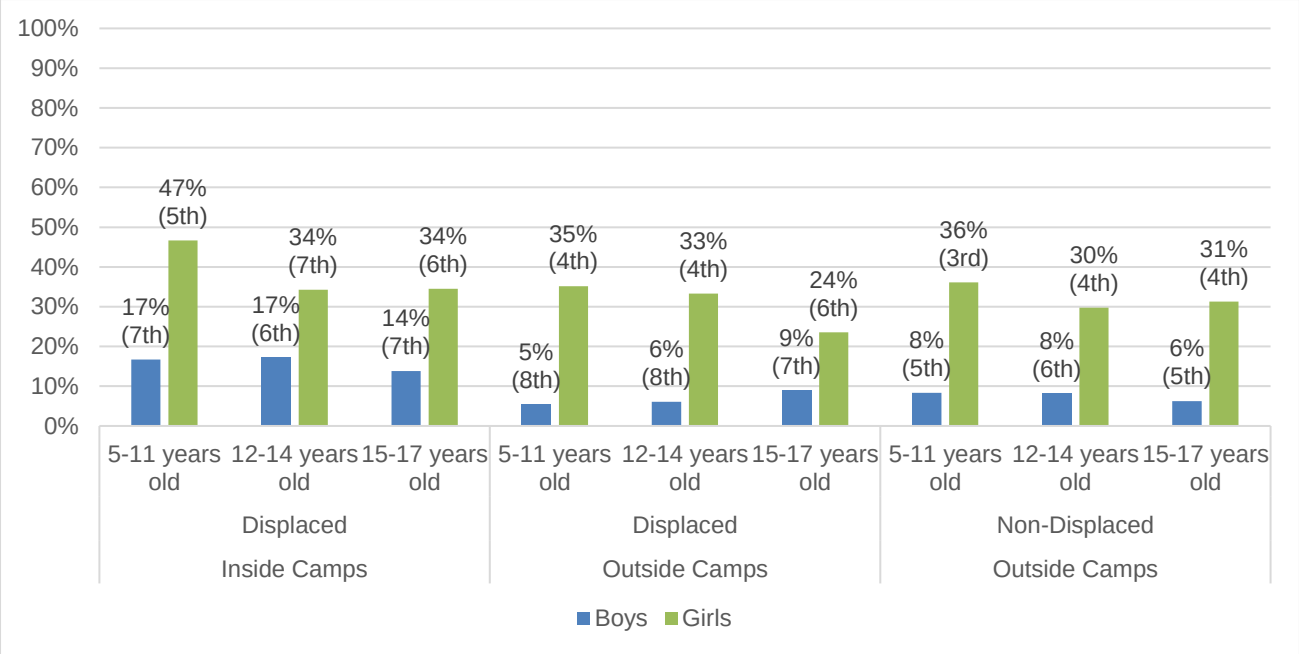

Figure 34: % of communities where one or more parent/caregiver respondent reported that cultural beliefs was a barrier to accessing formal education and rank of this barrier compared to other home related barriers[54]

For every age group and displacement status, parents and caregivers in a higher proportion of assessed communities identified cultural beliefs for girls compared to boys. The spread of this barrier was consistent across age groups, being most selected for lower primary aged girls in camps (47% of assessed communities) and least selected for displaced secondary girls out of camps (24% of assessed communities).

[54] More than one answer could be selected. Ranking based on the number of communities where an option was reported by at least one parent/caregiver.

These cultural issues are likely related another assessed barrier: marriage and/or pregnancy. For many of the groups of boys, marriage and/or pregnancy was not mentioned as a barrier by a single Parent/caregiver respondent across all the assessed communities. For non-displaced secondary aged girls, however, this was the second most commonly selected barrier, reported by parent/caregiver respondents in 50% of assessed communities. For displaced secondary aged girls in camps, it was the fifth most selected barrier (reported in 45% of assessed communities).

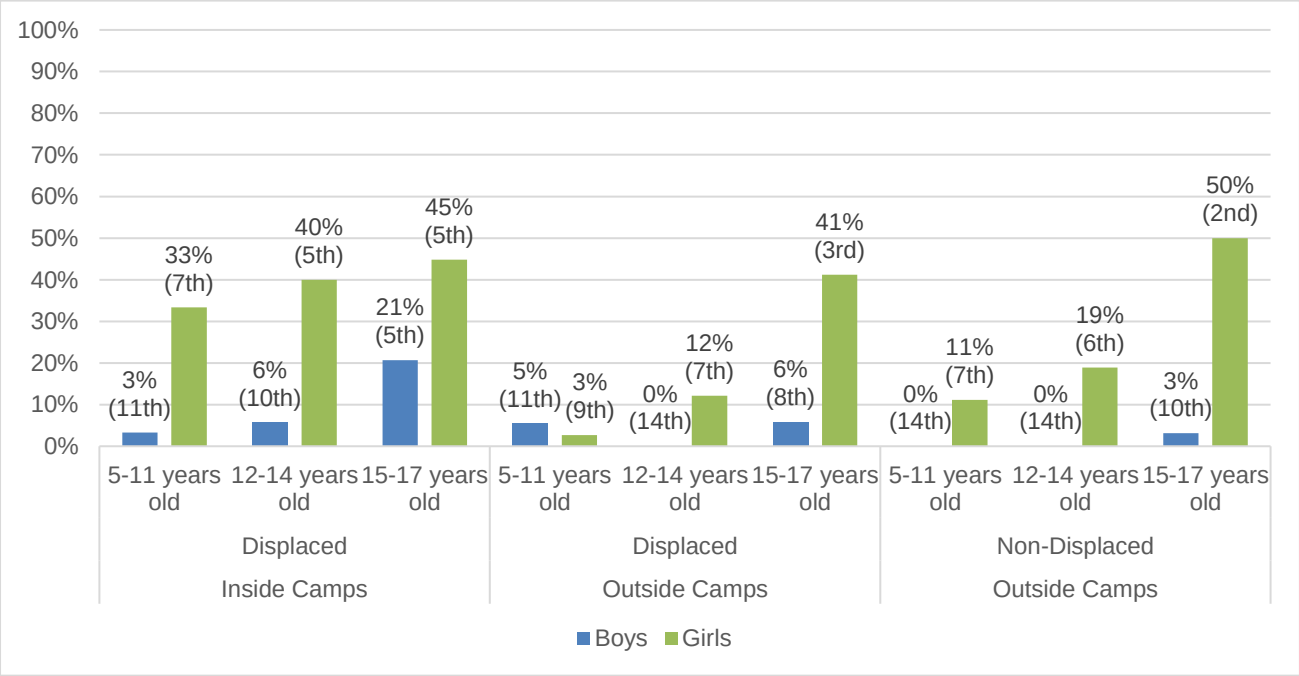

Figure 35: % of communities where one or more parent/caregiver respondent reported that marriage and/or pregnancy was a barrier to accessing formal education and rank of this barrier compared to other home barriers.[55]

Marriage and/or pregnancy was similarly more widely reported as a barrier to formal education for girls than compared to boys by parents/caregivers. It is important to note that, whilst marriage and/or pregnancy was identified as a barrier for displaced lower primary-aged girls in camps in one-third of assessed communities (33%), there is little evidence to suggest girls this age are getting married in so many communities. Respondents might have reported this barrier based on the idea that girls are likely to be married rather than pursuing a career, reducing the necessity of educating girls.

[55] More than one answer could be selected. Ranking based on the number of communities where an option was reported by at least one parent/caregiver.

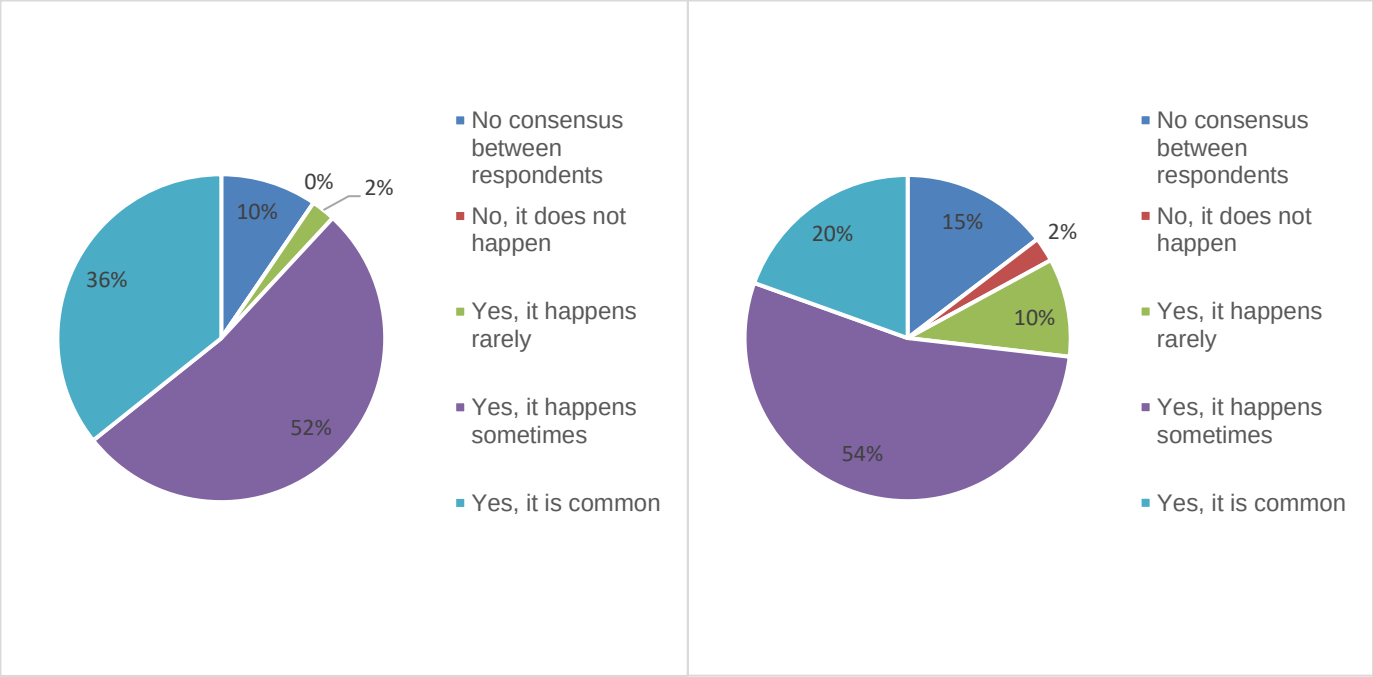

Figure 12: % of assessed communities inside camp (left) and outside camp (right) by the prevalence of child marriage, as estimated by KIs.

KIs were asked to estimate the prevalence of child marriage in their community, with these results then aggregated to the community level using a simple voting methodology. It is key to note that KIs in none (0%) of assessed communities in camps and only 2% of assessed communities outside of camps reported that child marriage never happens in their community. KIs in most assessed communities inside camps (88%) and outside camp (74%) reported that child marriage either happened sometimes or was common within their communities.

When measuring the perception of changes in prevalence of child marriage in NWS, KIs in 36% of assessed communities inside camps reported that in the past 12 months, there had been an increase in child marriage. KIs in only 7% of assessed communities reporting a decrease (with the remaining assessed communities reporting it had stayed the same, they did not know or unable to come to a consensus between respondents). Outside of camps, this pattern was similar, with KIs from 42% of assessed communities reporting perceiving the prevalence of child marriage had increased in the 12 months prior to data collection, compared to KIs from 10% of assessed communities who reported having perceived a decrease.

3.7 Barriers to Accessing Education – Disability

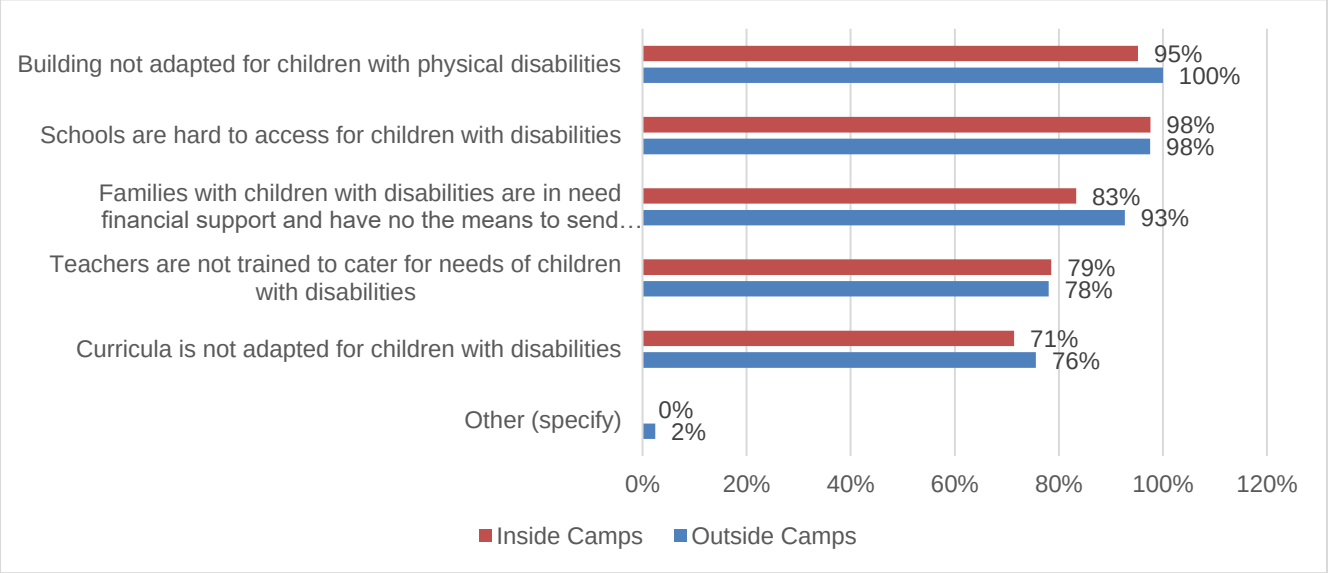

Figure 36: % of assessed communities per type of disability-specific barriers to accessing formal education for children with disabilities identified by at least one KI.[56]

KIs were also asked to identify the key barriers to education for children with disability. Focussing on the barriers specific to children with disability, physical access was a clear issue. In 98% of assessed communities from both camp statuses, KIs reported that schools were physically hard to access for children with disabilities. Formal schools are also frequently not well adapted to children with disabilities, as identified by at least one KI from 100% of assessed communities outside camps and at least one KI from 95% of communities inside camps.

KIs from 83% of assessed communities inside camps and 93% outside camps identified that families with children with disabilities have economic needs (particularly if this child is unable to work or requires additional, expensive healthcare), increasing barriers to formal education. Save the Children's 2021 report found that households with any member with a disability faced increased barriers to education for all members.[57]

[56] More than one answer could be selected.
[57] A community-level assessment and participatory approaches to reduce child labour in Northwest Syria (January 2022) - Save the Children and Exigo

Barrier	5-11 years old	12-14 years old	15-17 years old
Building not adapted for children with physical disabilities	95%	98%	85%
Curricula is not adapted for children with disabilities	62%	76%	56%
Families with children with disabilities are in need financial support and do not have the means to send children to school	88%	90%	88%
Schools are hard to access for children with disabilities	95%	95%	98%
Teachers are not trained to cater for needs of children with disabilities	74%	79%	71%

Figure 37: % of assessed communities per type of disability-specific key barriers to accessing formal education for children with disabilities identified by at least one parent/caregiver respondent.[58]

The patterns from the KI data are supported by the data collected from parent/caregiver respondents, with little change between the age of the children. Finances appear to play a key role across age group and across camp status, as well as the physical infrastructure of the formal school and the journey to the formal school.

[58] More than one answer could be selected.

3.8 Preferred Intervention

Parents and caregivers of OOSC were asked to identify the intervention they would prefer to receive that would support children to return to their (the respondents') preferred education type. As noted earlier, formal education was almost universally reported as the preferred education type by respondents.

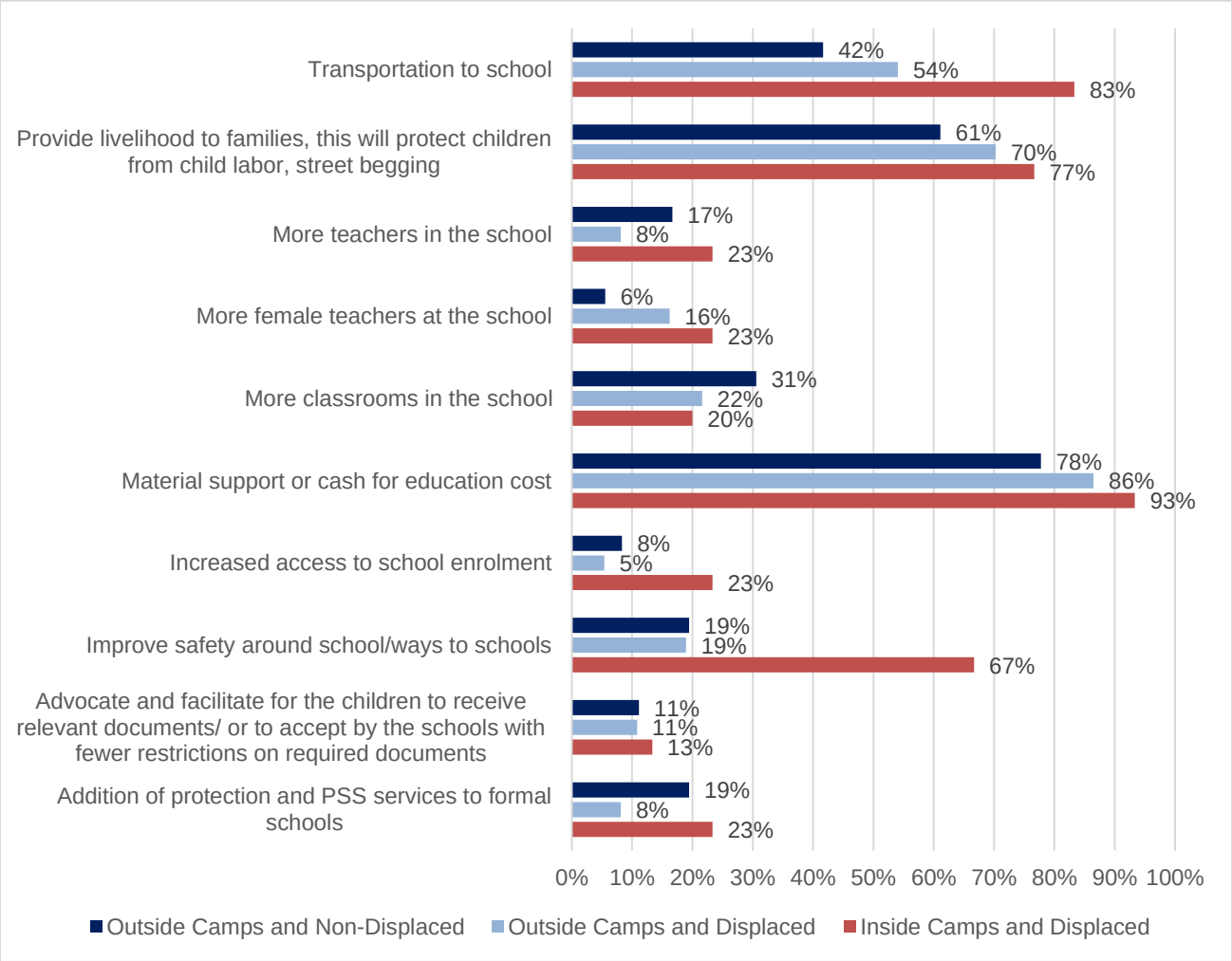

Figure 38: % of assessed communities per type of intervention (identified by at least one parent/ caregiver of out of school children) that would support sending 5-11 year old children to their preferred education type[59]

Across all three age groups and displacement status, material support or cash for education costs was the most reported type of intervention. This likely reflects the poor economic situation within NWS, with many reported barriers to education seemingly being related at least partially to the households' limited financial means, including child labour, the costs of education, and child marriage.

Findings suggest that, particularly for displaced communities living inside camps, cash alone might be insufficient to facilitate access to formal education, which is reflected in the high proportions of parents/caregivers in assessed communities inside camps reporting that transportation to school and improvement of the safety around schools would support children to attend education. As discussed,

[59] More than one answer could be selected.

formal schools tend to be located further away from camps, increasing the distance needed to travel and increasing the risk of children being exposed to protection incidents.

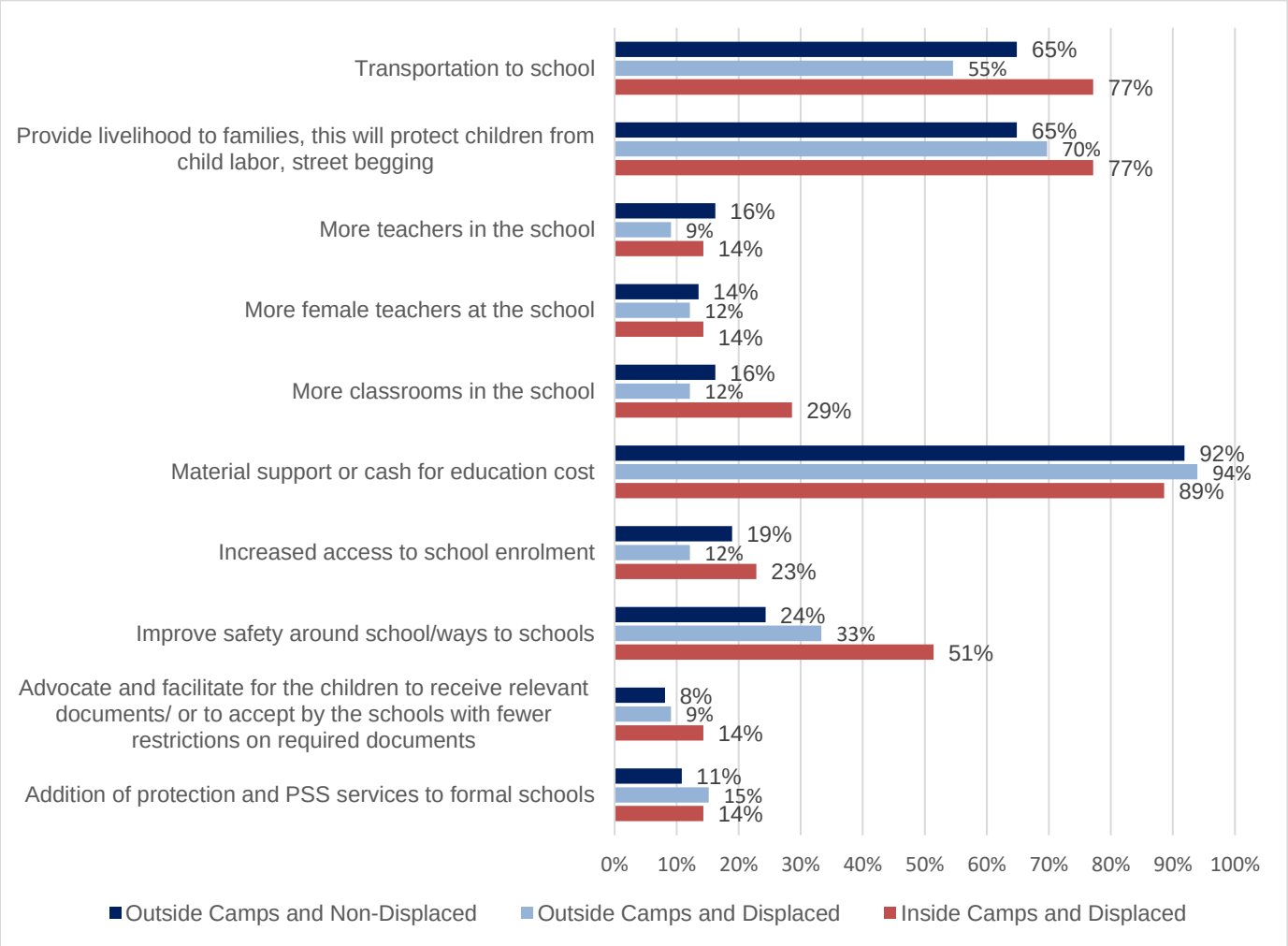

Figure 39: % of assessed communities per type of intervention (identified by at least one parent/ caregiver) that would support sending 12-14 year old children to their preferred education type.[60]

[60] More than one answer could be selected.

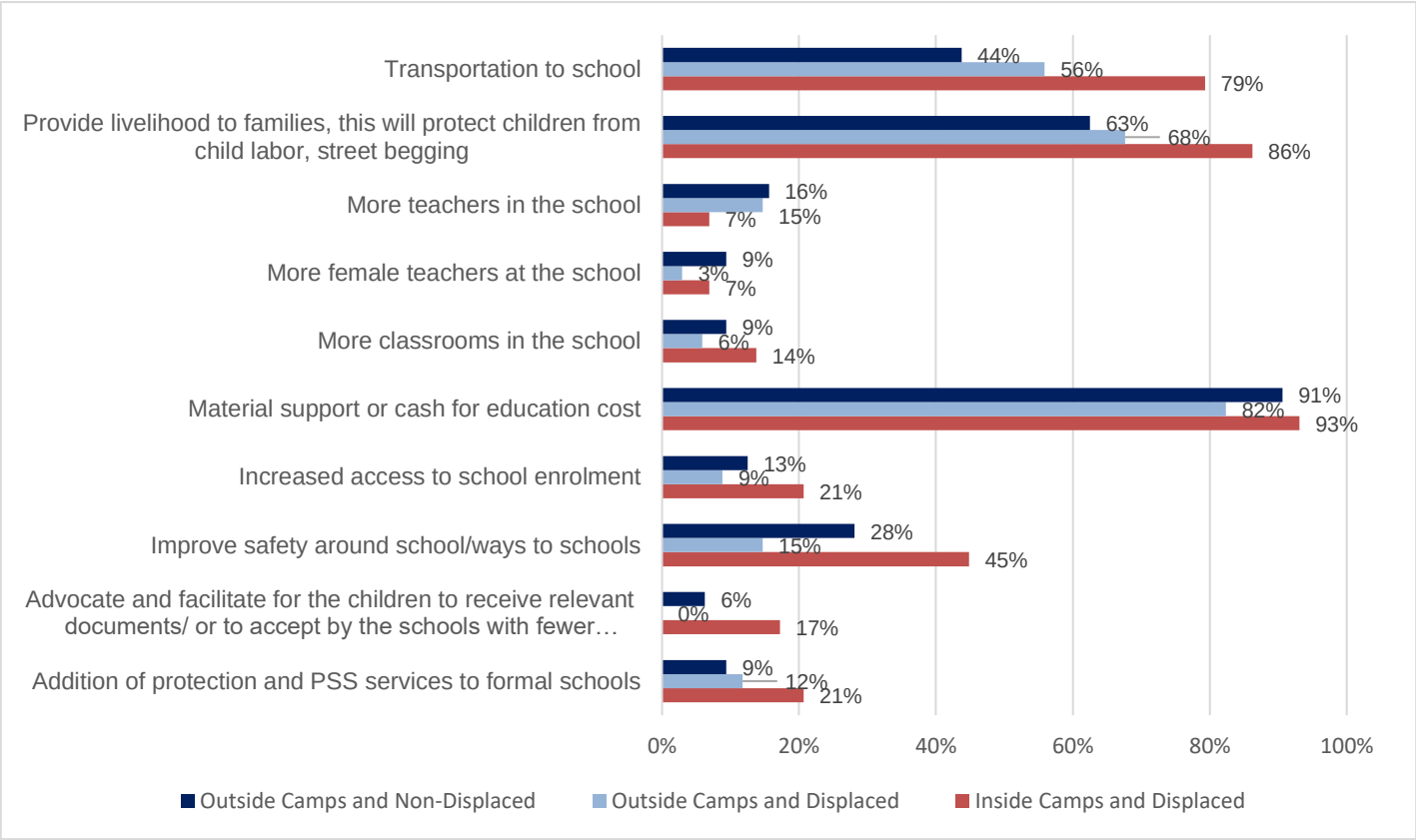

Figure 40: % of assessed communities per type of intervention (identified by at least one parent/ caregiver) that would support sending 15-17 year old children to their preferred education type.[61]

[61] More than one answer could be selected.

4 Key Findings – NFE Centres and Parents/Caregivers of Children Attending NFE Centres

The findings presented in this section pertain to data collected at the NFE facility level. When referring to NFE centres and shifts directly, the findings are based on responses from interviewed staff working in the assessed NFE facilities. When referring to parents and caregivers in this section, respondents were the parents and caregivers of children attending the assessed centres.

The data for parents and caregivers is aggregated and reported at the community level. Due to the small sample size of parents and caregivers of children from upper primary and secondary age, only lower primary data is reported in this report.

4.1 Infrastructure and Learning Conditions

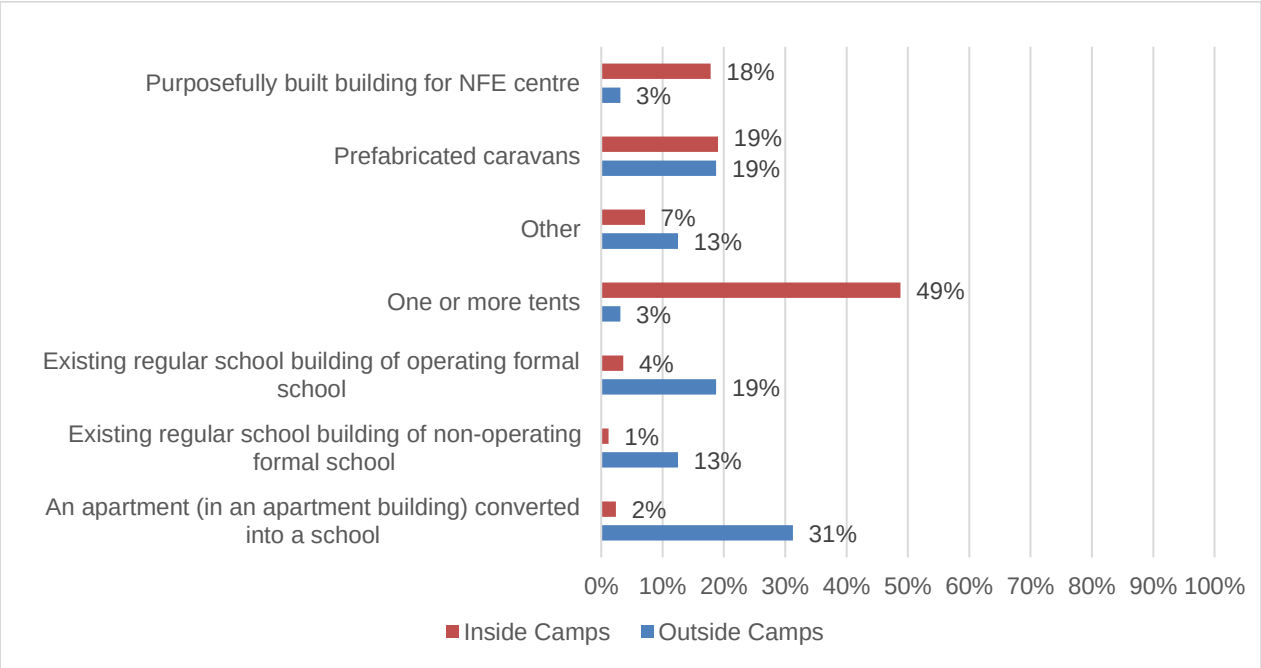

Figure 41: % of NFE Centres by building type.

There is a clear distinction in the reported building types when comparing assessed NFE centres inside and outside camps. Half (49%) of assessed NFE centres inside camps were reportedly composed of one or more tents, compared to only 3% of centres outside camps. The most common type of assessed NFE centre outside camps was an apartment converted into a school. Only 18% of in camp and 3% of out of camp assessed NFE centres were purpose-built buildings. Assessed NFE centres were far more likely to be in existing formal schools (either operational or non-operational) if they were located outside a camp rather than inside a camp.

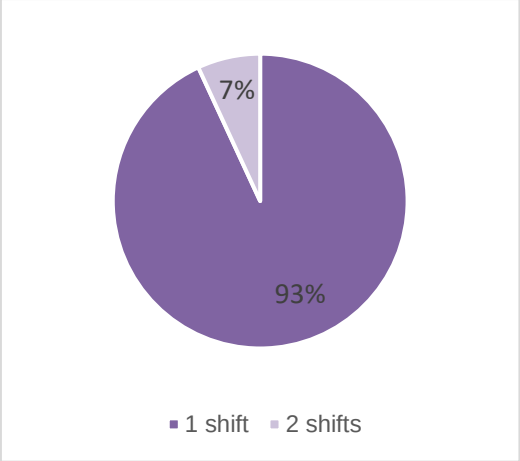

Figure 42: % of assessed NFE centres by number of shifts

The majority of assessed NFE centres reportedly operated in one shift, with only 7% of assessed centres operating in two shifts. There was no difference in the ratio of one or two shift schools when comparing assessed NFE centres inside and outside camps.

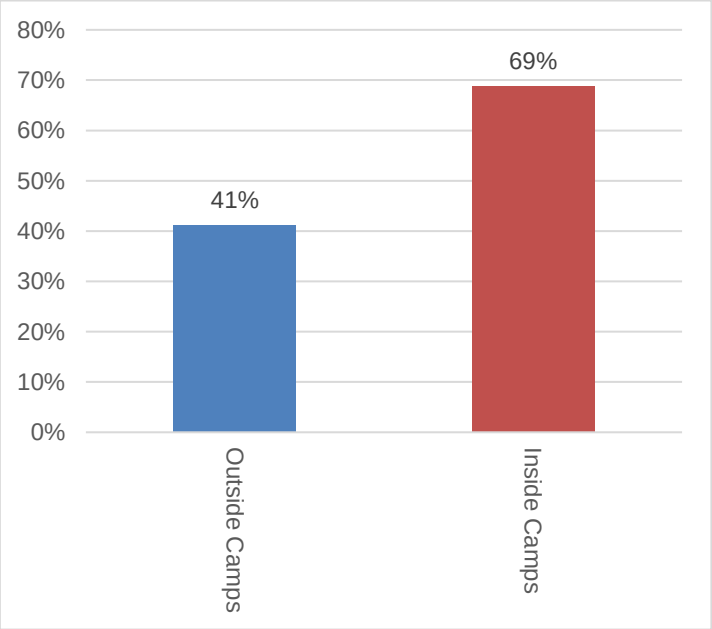

Figure 43: % of assessed NFE shifts where it was reported that at least one classroom was overcrowded during school hours.

The number of students reported per assessed shift was compared to the number of teachers reported, allowing for the calculation of the pupil-teacher ratio. Using the INEE standard of 40 students per teacher, 100% of assessed NFE shifts outside camps were found to have a student teacher ratio below the acceptable threshold. Outside camps, while 83% of assessed NFE shifts also had a ratio below the threshold, whilst 17% of assessed NFE shifts had a ratio above 1:40.

4.2 Curriculum

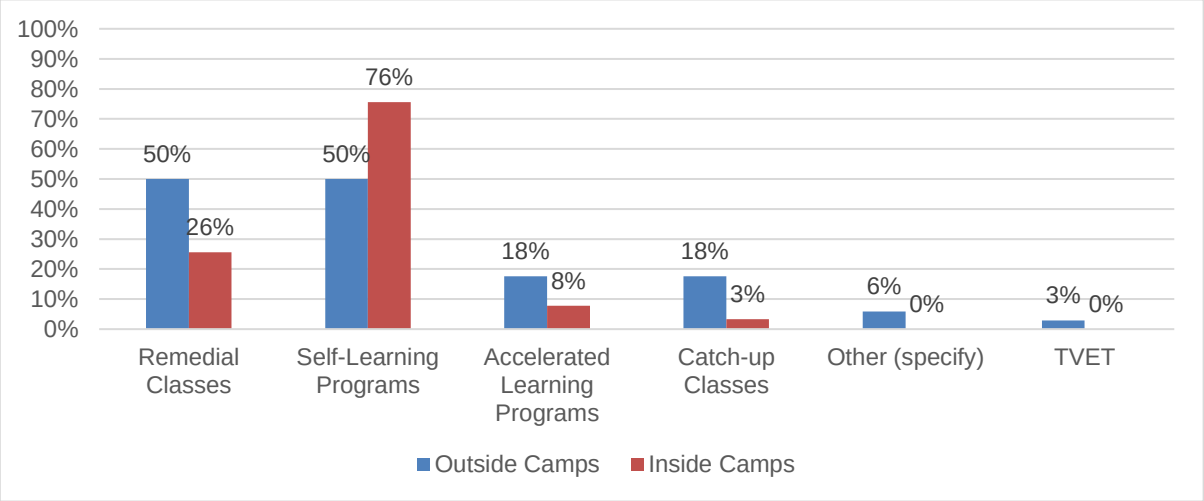

Figure 44: % of assessed shifts by curriculum type[62]

Most assessed shifts (76%) operating outside of camps are teaching self-learning programmes, whereas shifts inside camps were more evenly split between self-learning programmes (50%) and remedial classes (50%).

One finding to note is the lack of Technical and Vocational Education and Training being taught by non-formal centres in NWS. These centres were not excluded from the sample but are instead very rare. Findings of this report have thus far demonstrated that frequently accessing formal education has many barriers, children frequently engage in hazardous child labour and parents do not find the existing curriculum useful, reducing engagement. During child participation, vocational training was specifically mentioned by children as a preferred alternative to formal education.

4.3 WASH

Respondents were surveyed on the quality of latrines within the assessed NFE centres. Using the Joint Monitoring Project Minimum standards[63], a composite indicator was then calculated. All latrines needed to be of an acceptable type, be gender segregated, lockable, hygienic and sufficiently far away from classrooms. In total, only 22% of assessed centres had latrines that fulfilled all of these criteria. 31% of assessed NFE centres outside of camps had latrines that were of a high enough quality, compared to only 19% of assessed centres inside of camps.

NFE centres were asked whether drinking water was available on site. 97% of assessed centres outside camps said it was available, compared to only 87% of assessed centres inside camps. Of those available, the water sources are listed below.

[62] More than one answer could be selected.
[63] JMP Minimum Standards – WHO and UNICEF

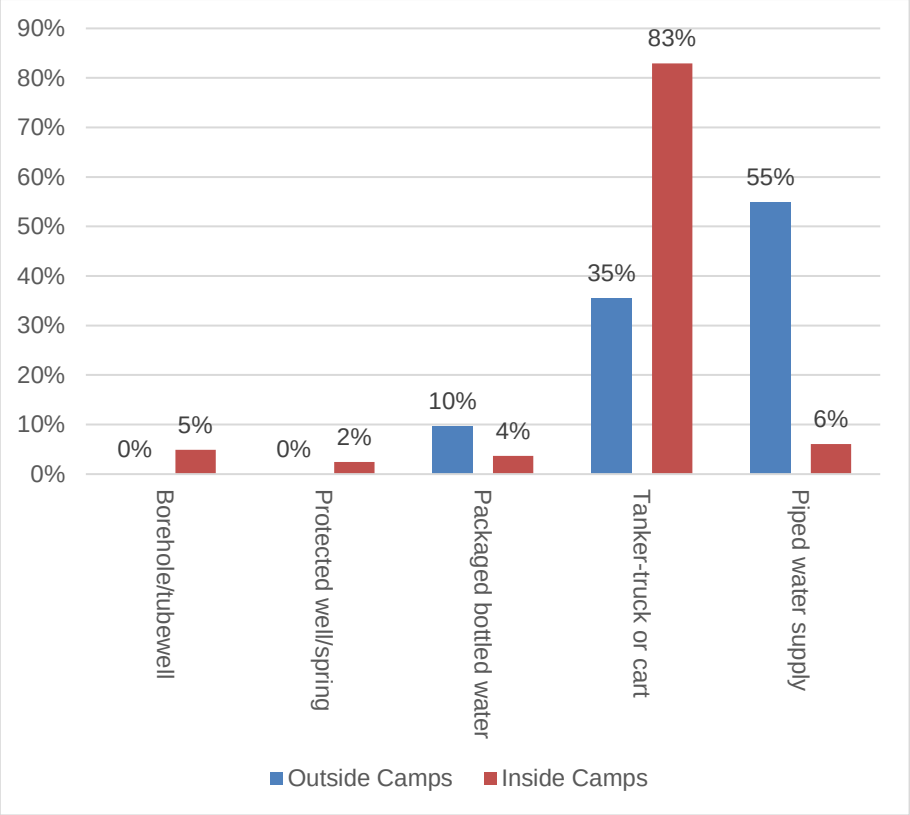

Figure 45: % of assessed NFE centres with water source onsite, by drinking water source.

55% of assessed NFE centres outside camps had access to directly piped water, compared to only 6% of assessed NFE centres inside camps. Instead, 83% of assessed NFE centres inside camps rely on taker-trucks or carts, common for camps across NWS. Respondents in15% of assessed NFE centres reported the water source was close to any form of contamination, with no difference in proportion between camp and non-camp centres. Respondents in 88% of assessed NFE centres inside camps reported drinking water is chlorinated to protect from cholera and other waterborne diseases, compared to 74% of assessed centres outside camps.

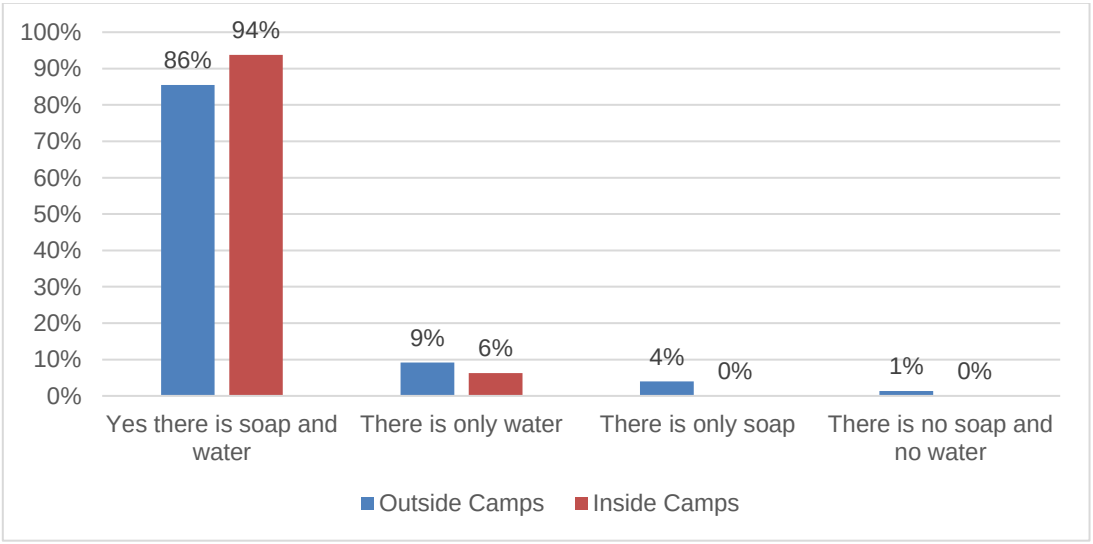

Figure 46: % of assessed NFE centres by whether handwashing facilities were available and hand both soap and water.

Considering cholera outbreaks in NWS, as well as COVID-19, handwashing stations are important for protecting children's health. 86% of assessed centres outside camps and 94% of assessed centres inside camps had adequate washing facilities.

Respondents in only 10% of assessed centres inside camps and 16% of assessed centres outside camps reported stocking sanitary items for menstruating students. Whilst the assessed centres were mostly aimed at 5-11 year old children, the provision of sanitary materials can encourage girls to attend, particularly with the varied ages of puberty for girls.

4.4 Disabilities

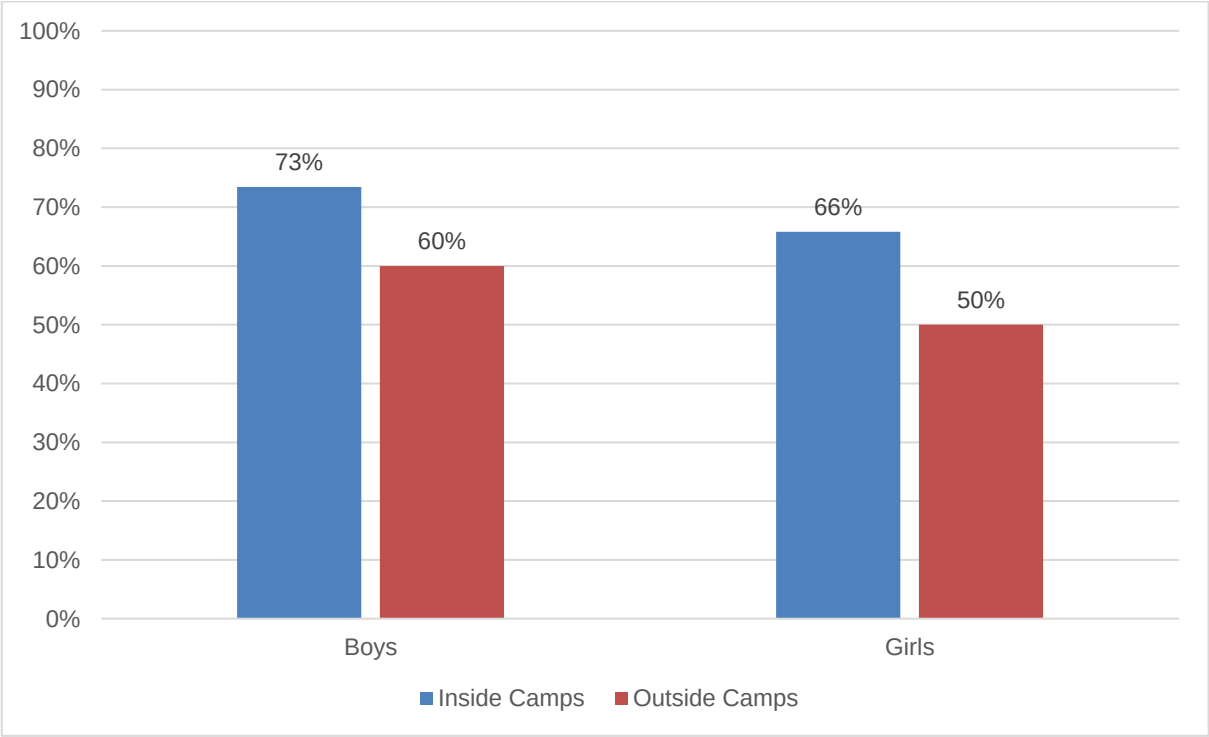

Figure 47: % of assessed NFE centres with one or more child attending with disabilities, by gender of child with disabilities.

As discussed, children with disabilities face high needs when it comes to accessing formal education. This can be seen in the relatively high proportion of NFE centres with children with disabilities attending. The study also found several NFE centres that were specialised on the care and education of children with disabilities.

Respondents in 57% of the assessed NFE centres reported having at least one latrine accessible for a child with disabilities (with the latrine having sufficient width, a ramp, a grab bar or other modifications). The proportion was equal for centres inside and outside of camps.

Respondents in 87% of assessed centres in camps reported a drinking water source that is accessible for children with disabilities, compared to 74% of assessed centres outside of camps. Having drinking water accessible to children with disabilities was more common than having a suitable handwashing station, with only 47% of assessed NFE centres having a station accessible to children with disabilities.

Respondents in 66% of assessed NFE centres outside of camps reported having classrooms that were accessible for children with disabilities, compared to 54% inside camps.

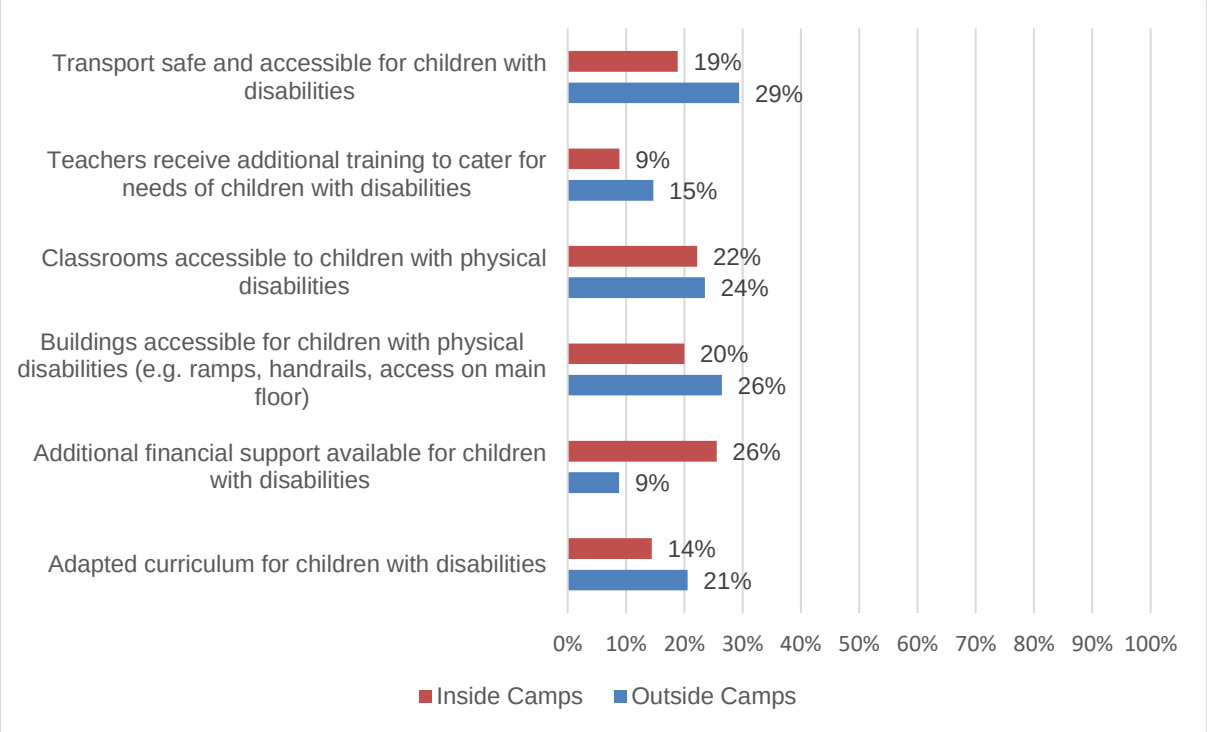

Figure 48: % of assessed NFE centres by provisions to support children with disabilities[64]

Direct provisions for children with disabilities were relatively rare within assessed NFE centres. The most common were accessible classrooms and safe transport. Particularly concerning was the lack of specific training teachers received to cater for the needs of children with disabilities, with respondents in only 9% of NFE centres in camps and in15% of centres outside of camps reporting that this training had taken place.

[64] More than one answer could be selected.

4.5 Protection

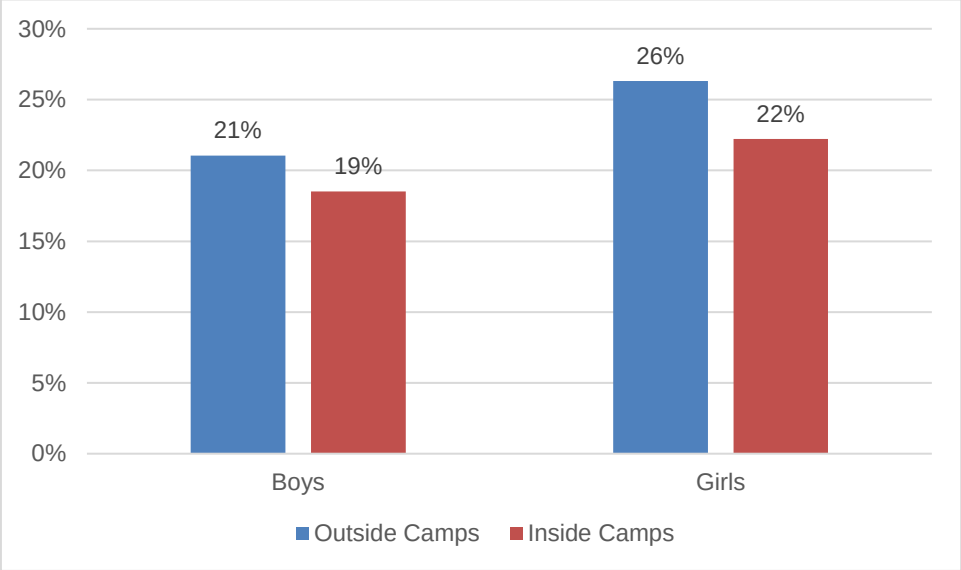

Figure 49: % of assessed communities where one or more of the parent/caregiver respondents reported children generally feel unsafe attending NFE centres aimed at children aged 5-11 years old.[65]

In general, particularly when compared to findings for inside the community, parents and caregivers were more likely to report that they perceived their children felt safe within NFE centres. It was more likely for parents/caregivers to report that they perceived that girls felt unsafe in NFE centres than boys, with girls attending centres outside camps the most likely to be reported to feel unsafe.

[65] Due to the small sample sizes of parents/caregivers of children attending NFE centres aimed at upper primary and secondary age, the results from parents/caregivers of children attending NFE centres aimed at lower primary age have been reported.

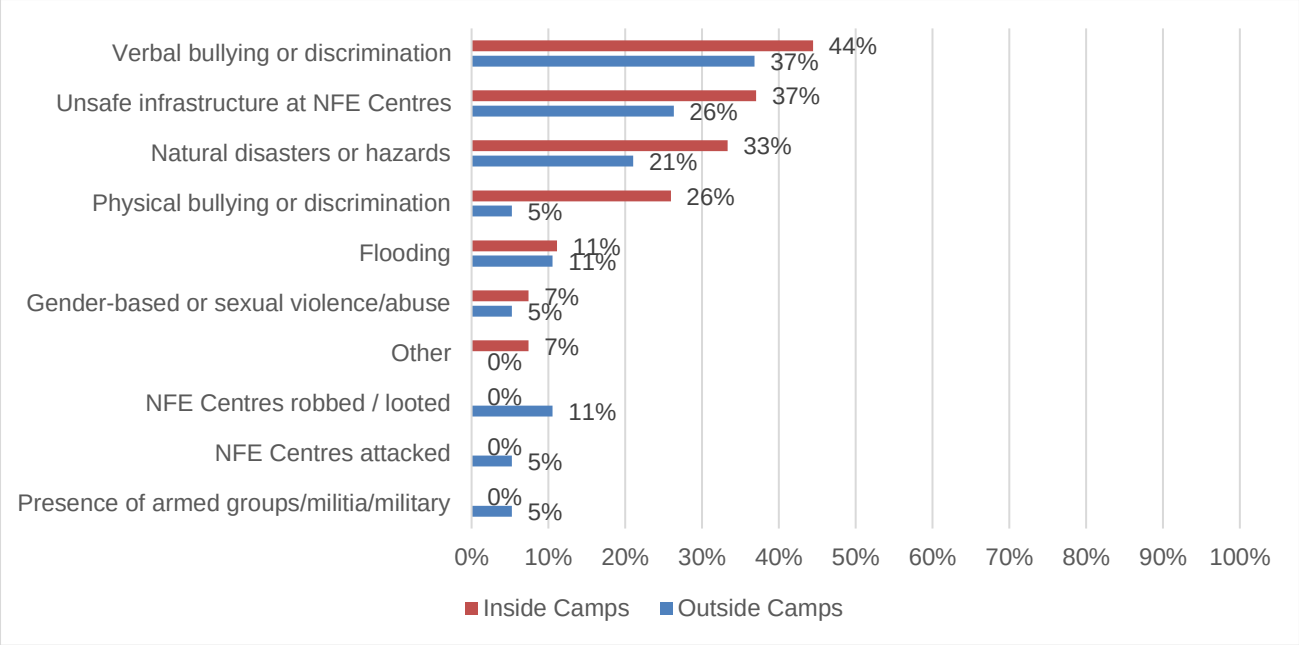

Figure 50: % of assessed communities per type of risk girls may face at the NFE centre, identified by at least one parent/caregiver of a child at an NFE centre aimed at children aged 5-11 years old [66] [67]

The most reported type of risks parents and caregivers identified for girls at NFE centres was verbal bullying, which was particularly reported for girls attending NFE inside camps. The infrastructure was also relatively commonly reported to be unsafe. The same risks featured among the most reported risks for boys. Physical punishment by teachers was only identified as a risk for boys, with this being identified in 4% of assessed communities inside schools. Whilst low, this finding is worth further investigation.

[66] More than one answer could be selected.
[67] Due to the small sample sizes of parents/caregivers of children attending NFE centres aimed at upper primary and secondary age, the results from parents/caregivers of children attending NFE centres aimed at lower primary age have been reported.

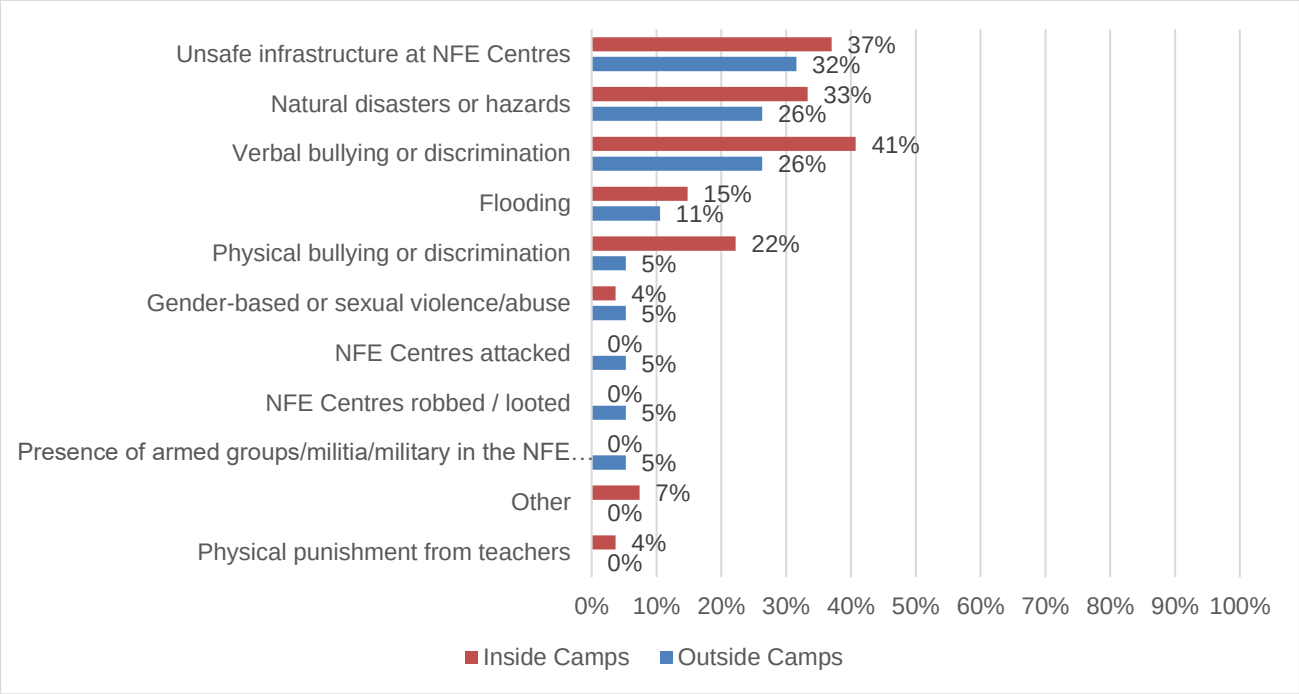

Figure 51: % of assessed communities per type of risk boys may face at the NFE centre, identified by at least one parent/caregiver of a child at an NFE centre[68] [69]

[68] More than one answer could be selected.

[69] Due to the small sample sizes of parents/caregivers of children attending NFE centres aimed at upper primary and secondary age, the results from parents/caregivers of children attending NFE centres aimed at lower primary age have been reported.

5 Key Findings and Conclusion

Barriers Related to the School/Journey and Protection in the Community

- Formal School was selected as the primary preferred education type.
- Distance and Costs, as well as distance and lack of transport, were interchangeably the two most selected barriers to formal education that related to the school or journey. Overcrowding of schools also played a key role as a barrier to formal education.
- Costs and Fees of Formal School was also widely reported, likely as a proxy for the wider Education Opportunity Cost for household.
- Parents and Caregivers of children within camps were more likely to report that their children felt unsafe than other types. Girls were more likely to be reported to feel unsafe than boys.
- For boys, the key risks identified by KIs were verbal and physical bullying and discrimination. KIs within camps also reported that unsafe infrastructure was likely to effect boys.
- For girls, the most common reported risk by KIs was verbal bullying and physical bullying. However, Sexual and Gender Based violence/abuse was the third most reported risk faced by girls as reported by KIs.
- Parents and Caregiver respondents of girls within camps were more likely to report that SGBV was a key risk for girls inside camps when compared to other displacement and camp statuses.

Barriers related to home and Child Labour

- Working outside the home was the most selected reported barrier related to the household for boys by parent/caregiver respondents. It was also a frequently reported barrier for girls inside camps.
- Working within the household was the most frequently reported barrier for girls by parents/caregivers, across all age groups and displacement statuses.
- KIs in all communities recorded the presence of child labour for both genders, apart from one community, outside of a camp, in which KIs said there were no girls taking part in child labour.
- The type of labour for boys most commonly reported by parents/caregivers was agriculture. Shopkeeping, working in markets, mechanics and trash collection were widely reported by at least one parent/caregiver for all age groups.
- The type of child labour most commonly reported for girls was also agriculture. Sewing and tailoring, and hairdressing and barber shops were widely reported. Trash collection was mostly commonly reported for children aged 5-11 years old.
- The most commonly reported reasons for child labour for girls and boys were to contribute to household incomes, followed by contributing to the care of other family members.
- Children working in hazardous conditions was widely reported across displacement types in NWS.

Barriers related to girls and children with disabilities.

- Cultural Beliefs was far more widely reported as a barrier for girls than boys by parents and caregivers.
- Marriage and pregnancy was the second most commonly reported barrier by parents/caregivers for non-displaced for secondary aged girls. It was commonly reported for all girls, particularly when compared to boys.

- KIs in most assessed communities inside camps (88%) and outside camp (74%) reported that child marriage either happened sometimes or was common within their communities. KIs were also far more likely to report that they perceived child marriage to be increasing rather than declining.
- Children with Disability face a range of barriers to formal school. Most commonly reported was physical access and lack of adaption to formal schools. Economic concerns for families with children with disabilities was also seen as a barrier.

NFE Centres

- The majority of NFE centres in camps were tents, whilst the most commonly reported building type for centres outside of camps was converted apartments.
- Despite many conditions being conducive to TVET education, there are very few TVET centres in NWS.
- 31% of assessed NFE centres outside of camps had latrines that were of a high enough quality, compared to only 19% of assessed centres inside of camps.
- Respondents in only 10% of assessed centres inside camps and 16% of assessed centres outside camps reported stocking sanitary items for menstruating students.
- It was very common for children with disabilities to be attending NFE centres, but very few centres were adapted to the needs of these children.
- Children were reported to generally feel safer in NFE centres than the community, with verbal bullying and unsafe infrastructure the most reported perceived risk for girls and boys aged 5-11 years old.

6 Recommendations

These findings will inform the upcoming NWS education cluster strategy development focusing on priority actions to address the gaps/barriers identified in the JNA, centred around equitable access and quality, as well as strengthening inter-sectoral collaboration with WASH cluster and CPAoR.

To the Education Cluster Team and its Partners

Equitable Access to Safe/Inclusive and Protective Education Services:

- Education Cluster coordination team and partners to create an advocacy plan to ensure education is elevated in decision making and funding allocations specifically targeting the barriers and gaps identified in the assessment.
- Education partners to prioritise response activities based on the results of the Rapid Needs Assessment (to be conducted in July-September 2023) and the school building structural assessment covering all affected education facilities.
- Develop guidance on temporary and permanent school rehabilitation/construction (including WASH facilities, and menstrual hygiene management) in collaboration with engineers and education partners, as well as WASH partners.
- Promote the use of cash for education and/or multi-sector to respond to economic barriers to access to education as outlined in the results of the JNA, based on the SOPs being developed by the Cash Task Force and the Education Cluster.

Enhance the Quality of Formal and Non-formal Education:

- Cluster partners to target adolescents and youths in their non-formal education response through providing them with different pathways for accessing learning and livelihood opportunities.

- Custer coordination team to develop in collaboration with partners a capacity development plan for all teachers and school personnel, including inclusive education, teacher well-being, classroom management, social-emotional learning, based on Cluster standards to be developed.

- Advocate to local authorities on integrating INEE standards in Education in Emergencies response (school mapping, needs identification, teacher: student ratio, teacher recruitment).

- Education Cluster partners to continue to promote the implementation of WASH and Health integrated school safety protocols in formal and non-formal education institutions.

- Cluster coordination team to ensure that Education partners consider the needs of children with disabilities at all stages of the response (including, physical and learning environment, teaching and learning materials availability, teacher training).

- Education Cluster partners to harmonize non-formal education standards (including criteria and definitions, content, duration, age group targeted, learning and well-being assessments) to ensure inclusivity, quality education and wellbeing of children.

- Education Cluster to conduct partners' capacity development interventions and activities, including INEE standards MHPSS, CP-EiE framework, Gender and GBV risk mitigation, jointly with other clusters and sub-clusters.

To the Education Cluster and the CPAoR Team

- Implement the joint strategy and workplan developed by Whole of Syria joint PSEAH network (including complaints mechanisms including child safeguarding and GBV risk mitigation).

- Education Cluster and CPAoR partners to ensure effective and safe referral mechanisms to child protection and that health services are utilized by school communities (teachers, staff, caregivers, students).

- Education Cluster and CPAoR partners to integrate MHPSS in their education response through the CP-EiE framework, jointly with the MHPSS Task Team.

- Education Cluster and CPAoR partners to promote and train caregivers on child protection risks and challenges, positive discipline, and social emotional learning.

Annex 1: Secondary Data Review

Contents

Introduction and Context

As part of the Joint Needs Assessment in Northwest Syria (NWS), carried out by the Education Cluster and Child Protection Area of Responsibility, a secondary data review was conducted. Using the DEEP software, taggers from a number of organisations took part in the process. The following report is the findings of this secondary data review.

In the eleventh year since the crisis was declared, Syria, and NWS specifically, continues to face a context marked by instability, economic strife, violence and natural disaster. Active armed incidents and clashes are regularly reported around frontline areas and often result in civilian casualties.[70] The area is also greatly affected by an economic downturn. Initially, the economic downturn was triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic and the global supply chain disruption increasing prices of basic goods. The situation was exasperated by the escalation of hostilities in Ukraine since February 2022, which has further increased prices of staples such as wheat whilst also drawing humanitarian assistance and resources away from the region[71]. REACH's *Humanitarian Situation Overview in Syria (HSOS)* of Idleb reports the average worker would have to work for 62 days in order to afford the cost of the basic monthly Survival Minimal Expenditure Basket.[72] According to the 2023 Humanitarian Needs Overview[73] (HNO), there are a total of 2,912,801 people in need in the Governates of Idleb, Aleppo and Ar-Raqqa.

Population of Interest and Displacement

In total there are approximately 4.8 million people in NWS. In *Schools in Syria*, Assistance Coordination Unit's (ACU) Information Management Unit (IMU) calculated there are approximate 1.84 million school aged children in NWS (aged from 6-17 years old)[74].

According to the Shelter Cluster and UNHCR, 2.8 million of the 4.8 million are internally displaced people. Out of these displaced populations, 1.8 million of these currently reside in Internally Displaced People (IDP) camps. 56% of these are children, meaning there are currently approximately 1.01 million children residing in IDP camps in NWS[75].

Equal Access

In their census of formal schools across the area, ACU estimated approximately 1.03 million children were enrolled at the time of data collection for the 2021-2022 school year. According to these estimates, 45% of school aged females (aged 6-17 years old) and 43% of school aged males were not enrolled in formal schools[76]. Geographically, the highest area of children not enrolled found by ACU was Idleb governate. Idleb's particularly low enrolment is at least in part due to a large number of camps and IDPs, with 2 million IDPs living within its borders, as well as frequent clashes between the many armed groups and forces within its area.[77] In ACU's *Joint Education Needs Assessment* (JENA), 23% of the children aged between 6 to 10 years (the first cycle of the basic education stage

[70] Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian Needs Overview (December 2022) - UNOCHA
[71] Syrians in desperate need of aid hit hard by Ukraine fallout: Bassem Mroue for AP News. Published on 08/05/2022
[72] Humanitarian Situation Overview in Syria (HSOS): Greater Idleb Area, December 2022 - REACH Initiative
[73] Syrian Arab Republic: 2023 Humanitarian Needs Overview (December 2022) - UNOCHA
[74] School in Syria, Edition 7. (August 2022) - Information Management Unit, Assistance Coordination Unit.
[75] Camp Crisis in North West Syria (January 2023) - CCCM Cluster and UNHCR
[76] School in Syria, Edition 7. (August 2022) - Information Management Unit, Assistance Coordination Unit.
[77] Humanitarian Situation Overview in Syria (HSOS): Greater Idleb Area, December 2022 - REACH Initiative

in grades 1-4) were not enrolled. 45% of children aged 11 to 15 years (the second cycle of basic education, grades 5- 9) were not enrolled whilst 64% of children aged 16 to 18 (secondary education grade 10-12) were not enrolled. Whilst equal in the first stage of education (22% of girls not enrolled compared to 23% of boys), girls were gradually more likely to drop out as they got older. For children aged 11 to 15 years, ACU found that 44% of boys were not enrolled compared to 46% of girls, whilst for children aged 16 to 18 years, 61% of boys were not enrolled compared to 66% of girls.

Figure 1, taken from ACU's JENA, shows the proportion of out of school children (i.e. children that were not enrolled) in camps compared to outside camps (labelled as "A city/town"). It also allows for comparison between genders and age groups. ACU's assessment was completed in 110 communities across NWS. While the data should be understood as indicative, the assessment suggests that girls are more likely than boys, and those in camp are more likely than out of camp, to not be enrolled in education..

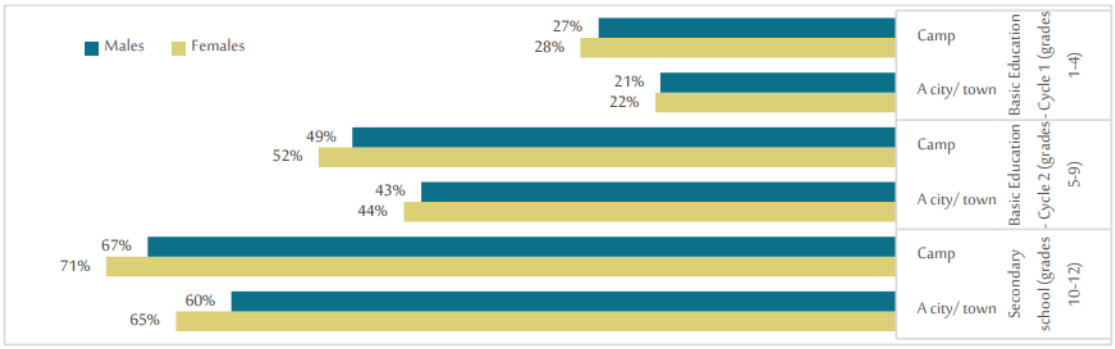

Figure 13: % of out of school children by gender, age, and place of residence (Source: ACU's JENA Thematic assessment, March 2022)

REACH's 2022 *Multi-Sector Needs Assessment* (MSNA) used a different methodology and questionnaire. Data collection took place in July 2022. The MSNA found that the proportion of children that had not attended education in the past 12 months was lower. However, the patterns established by ACU, in terms of gender, age and displacement status remained similar. The MSNA's figures also found that children were more likely to not be attending if they were displaced, were female and became gradually less likely to attend the older they got. 89% of non-displaced children had attended education at some point in the 12 months prior to data collection compared to 86% of displaced children outside of camps and 80% of displaced children inside camps.[78] The MSNA found that 95% of girls and 94% of boys aged 7 had attended any form of education in the 12 months prior to data collection, compared to 54% of girls aged 16 and 48% of boys aged 16.

In findings from the 2022 IDP *Integrated Monitoring Matrix Plus* (ISSIM+), there were no education facilities inside 1,213 of the 1,344 assessed IDP sites. When it came to accessing services inside or near the camp, 42% of assessed households in camps reported they did not have access to primary education facilities whilst 80% reported not having access to secondary education facilities.[79]

[78] 2022 Multi-Sector Needs Assessment, Education Results Dashboard (November 2023) REACH Initiative and UNOCHA
[79] IDP Sites Integrated Monitoring Matrix Plus (June 2022) - CCCM Cluster

ACU's JENA found that of the assessed out of school children, 82% of boys and 80% of girls had previously been enrolled. This aligns with the enrolment findings, with children increasingly likely to drop out of school as they become older. The same study also found that the dropout rates in camps were higher than those in cities and towns. As discussed above, camps are likely to have less access to formal education services, driving dropout rates, whilst the residents of camps are likely to face severe economic pressures.[80]

Education Opportunity Costs

Increased Education Opportunity Costs

The findings from various sources suggests that there may have been a shift in attitude towards education in NWS. While traditionally education in Syria has been greatly valued, the fall in living standards and corresponding reliance on coping mechanisms, appears to have reduced the perceived importance of schooling for children in NWS.

The Turkish lira, which was adopted as an alternative to the Syrian pound in 2020 in NWS, was devalued to its lowest level against the dollar in November 2022 and continued to fall in value. The devaluation is coupled with additional increases in the prices of basic commodities, including food, water and fuel[81]. The *Humanitarian Needs Assessment Programme* (HNAP) had already reported that in January 2022 that 89% of people in Greater Idleb suffered from extreme poverty, with less than 1.90 US Dollar (USD) available per person per day[82]. As 2022 went on, the continued economic deterioration only worsened living conditions.

This economic deterioration has had both a direct and indirect effect on access to education. 22% of assessed out of school children in ACU's JENA stated that eliminating school fees would support their return to school. The highest percentage of schools that charge students for paying fees was found in Idleb governorate, where 89% (693 schools) of the schools charge students fees. Frequently, these fees are a registration fee equal to approximately one US dollar per year[83]. When respondents discuss fees, it is frequently part of a conversation on the wider costs of education, including learning materials, travel and time taken away from earning. Economic conditions can directly increase the material costs to households, increasing the education opportunity cost. The education opportunity cost is the time, income and resources spent/lost as a result of a child attending school, compared to the relative benefits to the child and household of the child attending school.

As the situation in NWS has continued to deteriorate, economic pressures are changing societal norms. In Bonyan's study of displaced children in over 500 camps, 93% of child respondents mentioned it was the child's duty to support their family, labelling it as the main factor for them

[80] Joint Education Needs Assessment for Out of School Children. (March 2022) - Information Management Unit, Assistance Coordination Unit.
[81] Briefing Note: Economic Trends in Greater Idleb (June 2022) - REACH Initiative
[82] Humanitarian Needs Assessment Programme (HNAP) | Syria: Shelter Situation - 2021 IDP Report Series
[83] Schools in Syria, Edition 7. (August 2022) - Information Management Unit, Assistance Coordination Unit.

dropping out[84]. In Assembly of Turkish American Associations' (ATAA) assessment of 18 camps in Idleb, more than 54% of respondents also cited the need for children to work and support their family[85].

In the 2022 MSNA, 45% of children that had not attended school in the previous 12 months were identified as not attending because they could not afford for the children to go to school and/or the child was working to support the household.[86] This was higher for children from displaced households, with 52% children being unable to attend because of this barrier to attendance. In ACU's *JENA of Out of School Children*, 35% of children interviewed (1,476 children) stated that they work to support their households.[87] Save the Children's study of out of school children in 2022 found that where going to school is an option, the value of such an education has diminished in the opinion of many caregivers to the point where it is no longer seen as worthwhile to send a child to school once they have basic literacy and numeracy skills and/or can be spending their time providing for the family.[88]

Prevalence of Child Labour

According to the Child Protection Area of Responsibility's *Situation Report*, 79% of key informants (KIs) in assessed communities reported that children are engaged in some type of work that prevents them from going to school.[89] In ACU's *JENA of Out of School Children*, 19% (959 persons) of caregivers reported that they send their children to work and learn a money-making profession instead of educating them in formal schools, with the survey finding approximately 38% of out-of-school children engage in some form of paid labour."[90]

Types of Child Labour

There is a key difference in types of child labour depending on the gender of the child. Save the Children's Child Labour report found that adolescent boys begin working between 12 and 17 years old, while for girls, 15 to 17 years old is the most common age for child labour. Boys reported not only that it was more socially accepted for them to work, but also that those in their community praised them for working and supporting their families[91].

This report found children working in multiple lines of work, depending on the industries in their area, including (but not limited to): agriculture, mechanics, scrap metal collection, begging, selling goods on the street, sewing, tailoring, shop keeping, and delivery of goods[92]. *Child Protection Situation Monitoring* reports agree with these findings, reporting that the top 4 work categories measured in 2022 were agriculture, workshops, domestic work, and begging. Restaurants, garbage collection, mechanics, shops, car repair, and begging were seen to be more socially acceptable for boys, whilst

[84] A Study About the Situation of Education in Displacement Camp North West Syria (2021) - Bonyan Organisation
[85] Idleb Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (May 2022) - ATAA Humanitarian Relief Association
[86] 2022 Multi-Sector Needs Assessment, Education Results Dashboard (November 2023) REACH Initiative and UNOCHA
[87] Joint Education Needs Assessment for Out of School Children. (March 2022) - Information Management Unit, Assistance Coordination Unit.
[88] A community-level assessment and participatory approaches to reduce child labour in Northwest Syria (January 2022) - Save the Children and Exigo
[89] Child Protection Situation Monitoring 2022 Mid-year Report (August 2022) - Child Protection Area of Responsibility, Whole of Syria (Turkey Hub)
[90] Joint Education Needs Assessment for Out of School Children. (March 2022) - Information Management Unit, Assistance Coordination Unit.
[91] A community-level assessment and participatory approaches to reduce child labour in Northwest Syria (January 2022) - Save the Children and Exigo
[92] A community-level assessment and participatory approaches to reduce child labour in Northwest Syria (January 2022) - Save the Children and Exigo

girls worked sewing, cleaning and hairdressing. These types of labour meant the girl was less likely to interact with men at work, allowing her to perform labour out of the house in perceived non-threatening location.[93]

According to the *Child Protection Situation Monitoring*, the percentage of children involved in begging increased throughout 2022, and the increase was greater among boys. 57% of KIs reported boys engaged in begging in their community, whilst 50% also reported the presence of girls begging in their community.[94]

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) defines hazardous child labour or hazardous work as work that "involves children being enslaved or exploited, separated from their families, exposed to serious hazards and illnesses and/or left to fend for themselves on the streets of large cities". Whilst Save the Children's report into child labour finds that the worst forms of child labour take place in approximately 50% of communities[95], REACH found fewer than 10% of communities where the worst forms of child labour took place[96]. Further research is recommended to estimate the scale and severity of the worst forms of child labour.

Displacement Deepens Economic Barriers

Whilst not necessarily a barrier on its own, displacement serves to deepen and multiply other barriers to accessing formal education. Not only does displacement physically move children away from schools and education services, it also deepens economic concerns, increasing the education opportunity. Displacement often further reduces living standards, overstretches coping mechanisms and depletes resilience[97]. Displaced populations are particularly affected by price increases and a loss of livelihood opportunities. 26% (965 children) of the children interviewed by ACU's *JENA of Out of School Children* stated that the main reason for dropping out of school is frequent displacement, which was confirmed by 23% (1,052 persons) of caregivers of out-of-school children[98].

Frequent displacements can also cause registration issues, including the losing of documents and schools becoming overcrowded and rejecting new enrolments during periods of high displacement. In ACU's *Schools in Syria* report, 37% of schools were found to be moderately overcrowded (30-40 students in classrooms designed for 30 students) whilst 13% of schools were found to be overcrowded (40 students or more in a classroom designed for 30)[99]. Displacement events also reduce the overall number of schools available for learning, with schools being used as shelters or barracks. According to Save the Children International, "One in three schools [in the whole of Syria] are severely damaged or destroyed, and many used schools as shelters."[100]

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[93] Child Protection Situation Monitoring 2022 Mid-year Report (August 2022) - Child Protection Area of Responsibility, Whole of Syria (Turkey Hub)
[94] Child Protection Situation Monitoring 2022 Mid-year Report (August 2022) - Child Protection Area of Responsibility, Whole of Syria (Turkey Hub)
[95] A community-level assessment and participatory approaches to reduce child labour in Northwest Syria (January 2022) - Save the Children and Exigo
[96] Briefing Note: Economic Trends in Greater Idleb (June 2022) - REACH Initiative
[97] Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian Needs Overview (December 2022) - UNOCHA
[98] Joint Education Needs Assessment for Out of School Children. (March 2022) - Information Management Unit, Assistance Coordination Unit.
[99] Joint Education Needs Assessment for Out of School Children. (March 2022) - Information Management Unit, Assistance Coordination Unit.
[100] Action towards Increased Quality Education for Internally Displaced Children (2021) - Save the Children International

Displacement in NWS not only increases the education opportunity cost for displaced children, it also increases barriers for all population groups.

Distance

A frequently cited barrier to accessing formal education across the secondary data is schools being physically too far away. As discussed, this is linked to displacement, as well as a reduction in the number of functional schools and the lack of education services in camp settings. In the 2022 MSNA, 29% of displaced households in camps answered their children had not attended education in the 12 months prior to data collection due to the formal school being too far away. This is compared to 12% of IDP households outside of camps and 8% of non-displaced households.

Save the Children International further explores the education opportunity cost when they conclude that child labour may be caused by poor education systems and a lack of access to education. The inability to access education nearby increases the costs of attending, with hours spent travelling to school and the risks to children increased. A poor education system increases the opportunity costs, increasing the likelihood of child labour[101]. Children are particularly at risk in camps, with UNOCHA's situation report claiming that in a study of 28 camps, 58% of boys and almost half of all girls over the age of 11 were engaging in child labour outside the home[102].

Child Marriage

Early marriage is frequently cited as a barrier to enrolment and reason for drop out for girls in findings from a wide range of sources. Child or early marriage, used synonymously, refers to any formal marriage or informal union between a child under the age of 18 and an adult or another child[103]. In Bonyan's assessment of children in camps, 17% (or 142 children) reported dropping out of school because their parents wanted to wed them[104]. In REACH's HSOS of Idleb, early marriage was reported in 68% of assessed communities, whilst children leaving school due to early marriage was reported in 36% of the assessed communities in May 2022 for the 2021-2022 school year[105]. Whilst education may be seen as less important for girls culturally, early marriage is also exasperated by poor economic conditions, with households seeking a marriage to ensure girls do not become victims of sexual violence and to provide financial relief for the girl's family[106].This trend appears to be more common in displaced communities, with girls leaving school in order to be married being reported in 47% of IDP communities.[107]

World Vision and UNICEF identify that increased risk of GBV is related to the deterioration of economic conditions in NWS. REACH also identify the link between domestic violence and economic stressors, with financial stress and shifting gender roles within the household being associated with higher levels of violence against women. While issues of domestic violence are more sensitive and harder to evaluate using a key informant methodology, it is noticeable that in the study period (November 2021 to May 2022), KIs in 8 to 12% of assessed communities noted domestic violence as one of the main protection risks faced by households each month. As gender based violence tends

[101] A community-level assessment and participatory approaches to reduce child labour in Northwest Syria (January 2022) - Save the Children and Exigo
[102] Situation Report, North-West Syria (11 August 2022) - UNOCHA
[103] UNICEF Website - Harmful Practices: Child Marriage - UNICEF
[104] A Study About the Situation of Education in Displacement Camp North West Syria (2021) - Bonyan Organisation
[105] Humanitarian Situation Overview in Syria (HSOS): Greater Idleb Area, June 2022 - REACH Initiative
[106] Briefing Note: Economic Trends in Greater Idleb (June 2022) - REACH Initiative
[107] Humanitarian Situation Overview in Syria (HSOS): Greater Idleb Area, June 2022 - REACH Initiative

to be an underreported phenomenon, this relatively high level of reporting may signal the high level of GBV risks for children and women in NWS[108]. World Vision and UNICEF also identified that no shelters are available for women subject to violence in NWS, deepening the risk of gender based violence for women and girls, particularly with single motherhood being stigmatised.[109]

Certificate Recognition

Depending on the area of control of the school, the curriculum being taught may not lead to a recognised certificate. In schools in opposition controlled areas, the certificates are not recognised by Turkish or Syrian authorities.[110] This further reduces the incentive for parents to send their children to school, as students are unable to use their qualifications to apply for higher education or economic opportunities in Syria or Türkiye without sitting further exams, at extra cost to the household. As parents/caregivers do not believe this certificate, or the curriculum being taught in the process, is worthwhile, this reduces the benefits of education and increases the likelihood of children working and/or being married. In the MSNA, 9% of households with children not attending school regularly cited the lack of recognition for the certificates as the key reason[111]. 14% of out of school children in ACU's JENA identified the lack of recognition for the certificate as a key barrier to education. 19% stated that providing a mechanism for accrediting the certificates offered by schools or linking these certificates to universities where students can continue their education will contribute to their return to their schools[112].

Co-Education and Age Specific Learning

Once a child has dropped out of school, reintegrating them into the school system is challenging for both the child and their classmates. 33% (841 children) reported their age is no longer aligned with their academic levels, either due to dropping out or school being closed during the COVID-19 pandemic. This was confirmed by 33% (1,067) of assessed caregivers[113].

Before the crisis in Syria, schools were largely separated by gender. Now, due to necessity, most schools are mixed, which can be a barrier for girls to accessing education. 91% of the schools assessed by ACU were mixed schools, whilst only 4% (151 schools) were for female students only[114]. When asked about factors related to customs and traditions that reduce attendance, 36% (295 children) of assessed out of school children in ACU's JENA, identified this as a barrier to education (with respondents able to select multiple options)[115]. 30% of assessed caregivers stated they would prefer for their children to be sent to a single sex school, but were not asked whether this was a direct reason for their children not attending education.

Gender mixed schools can both result in children being removed from school for cultural reasons and can cause female students difficulty in school. Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) minimum standards require that toilets in mixed schools are separated by gender to reduce

[108] Briefing Note: Economic Trends in Greater Idleb (June 2022) - REACH Initiative
[109] Alternative Care in North West Syria (May 2022) - World Vision and UNICEF
[110] Syria's Education Crisis: A Sustainable Approach After 11 Years of Conflict (March 2022) - Qaddour and Husain for Middle East Institute Website
[111] 2022 Multi-Sector Needs Assessment, Education Results Dashboard (November 2023) REACH Initiative and UNOCHA
[112] Joint Education Needs Assessment for Out of School Children. (March 2022) - Information Management Unit, Assistance Coordination Unit.
[113] Joint Education Needs Assessment for Out of School Children. (March 2022) - Information Management Unit, Assistance Coordination Unit.
[114] Schools in Syria, Edition 7. (August 2022) - Information Management Unit, Assistance Coordination Unit.
[115] Joint Education Needs Assessment for Out of School Children. (March 2022) - Information Management Unit, Assistance Coordination Unit.

the risk of sexual harassment and abuse. 54% of assessed schools did not have gender segregated toilets.[116] ACU's Out of School JENA also cited parents not wanting their girls to mix with boy students, or to be taught by male teachers.[117]

Children with Disabilities

ACU's Out of School JENA found that 45% of children with disabilities are out-of-school[118]. The 2022 MSNA found that only 52% of children with a health condition were reporting that they had attended education at any time in the 12 months prior to data collection, compared to 85% of children without a health condition[119]. The MSNA found for displaced children within camps and for non-displaced children, the third most commonly reported reason for not attending school was schools and teachers were not able to accommodate children with disabilities. This was regardless of whether there was a child with a health condition present, with 17% of all households in both categories citing this as the main driver.[120] This was particularly prevalent in Idleb, with 21% of all households with children not attending school citing this as the key driver. In ACU's *JENA of Out of School Children*, 20% (52 children) of children with disabilities didn't attend school because the schools were not equipped to receive children with disabilities[121], whilst the *Schools in Syria* report found that only 1% (30 schools) of the total assessed functional schools have specialists to deal with children with special needs. 97% (3,480 schools) of the schools are not equipped to receive children with disabilities at all, despite the presence of 4,038 students with disabilities within 24% of the assessed operational schools[122].

Save the Children's report into child labour found that depending on the disability, it was more acceptable for a child with disabilities to beg. If a child had a disability accepted by society, with little social stigma, such as blindness, they may be able to participate in the general labour market, according to a KI. But if a child has lost their hands, or similar, it is likely they will either beg or rely on others for support[123].

Even if children themselves did not have disabilities, sharing a household with someone with disabilities, such as a parent or sibling, increases the education opportunity cost. Children living in households that include people with special needs are more likely to engage labour, especially if the specific needs of their families are accompanied by economic and protection concerns, which turns children into breadwinners for themselves and their families[124].

[116] Schools in Syria, Edition 7. (August 2022) - Information Management Unit, Assistance Coordination Unit.
[117] Joint Education Needs Assessment for Out of School Children. (March 2022) - Information Management Unit, Assistance Coordination Unit.
[118] Schools in Syria, Edition 7. (August 2022) - Information Management Unit, Assistance Coordination Unit.
[119] 2022 Multi-Sector Needs Assessment, Education Results Dashboard (November 2023) REACH Initiative and UNOCHA
[120] 2022 Multi-Sector Needs Assessment, Education Results Dashboard (November 2023) REACH Initiative and UNOCHA
[121] Joint Education Needs Assessment for Out of School Children. (March 2022) - Information Management Unit, Assistance Coordination Unit.
[122] Schools in Syria, Edition 7. (August 2022) - Information Management Unit, Assistance Coordination Unit.
[123] A community-level assessment and participatory approaches to reduce child labour in Northwest Syria (January 2022) - Save the Children and Exigo
[124] Child Protection Situation Monitoring 2022 Mid-year Report (August 2022) - Child Protection Area of Responsibility, Whole of Syria (Turkey Hub)

Teaching and Learning Environment

Learning Environment

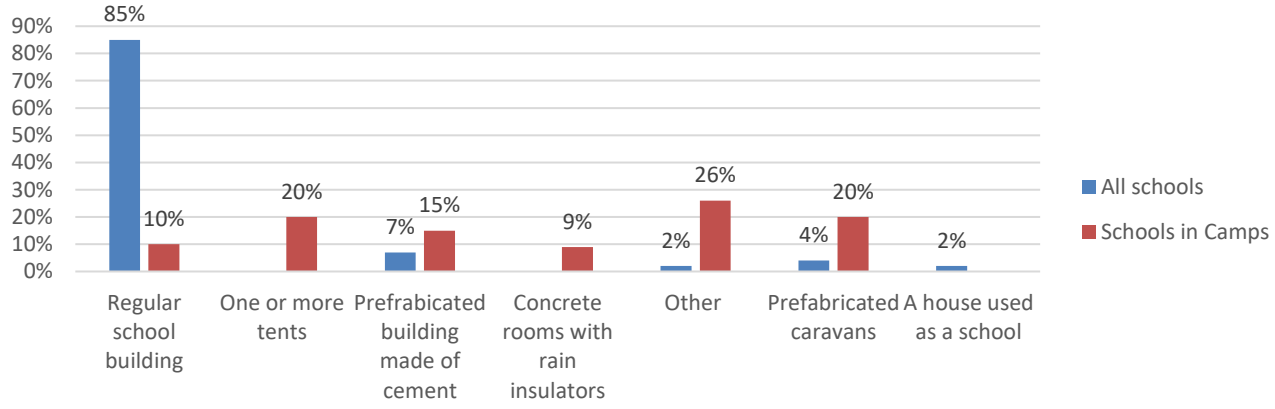
Of the assessed schools in the *Schools in Syria* report, 89% were functional and hosting classes at time of data collection[125]. Of these functional schools, 85% were "regular" schools, defined as buildings that were designed and constructed with the intention of being a school and/or education facility.

The HNAP found that almost 50% of these schools were operating two shifts per day, as a way of solving formal school overcrowding. The HNAP found in camps there was an average of 34 enrolled students per teacher, whilst there was an average of 53 children per operational classroom, demonstrating the roles shifts take in relieving overcrowding.[126]

The findings from ACU's *Schools in Syria* and *Schools in Syrian Camps* are synthesised in figure 2. The figure demonstrates the diverse improved types of formal school buildings in camps, compared to out of camp settings.

ACU also found that 87% of the total classrooms within the operational schools were properly equipped, while 13% of the rooms needed repairs to varying degrees.[127]

Figure 2: Schools in Northwest Syria by Building Type
(Source: ACU's JENA Thematic assessment, March 2022 and ACU's Schools in Syria Report, August 2022)



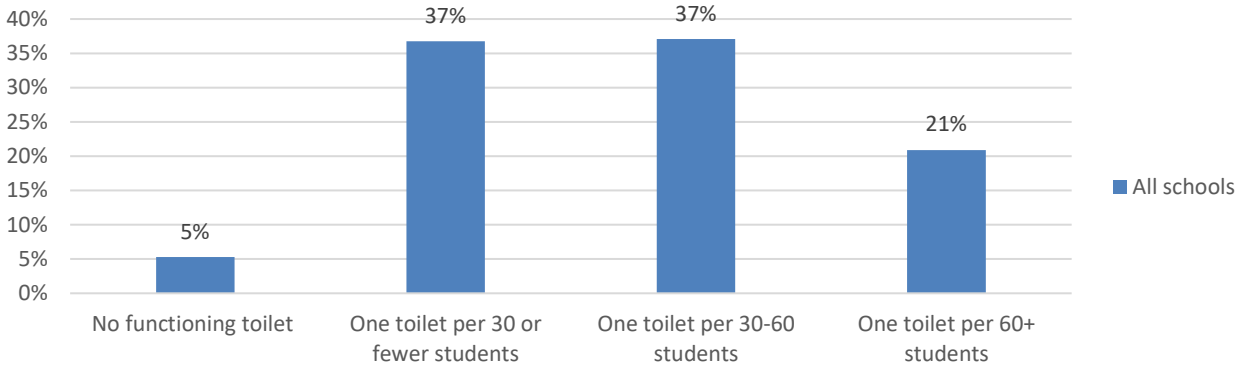
Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) in Schools

According to the Sphere project guidelines, one toilet should be provided per 30 girls and one toilet should be provided per 60 boys[128]. ACU's *Schools in Syria* reports there are no functioning toilets in 6% (207 schools) of all operating schools, whilst the *Schools in Syrian Camps* report finds that 23%

[125] Schools in Syria, Edition 7. (August 2022) - Information Management Unit, Assistance Coordination Unit.
[126] Education Services: Schools Across Syria (November 2020) - Humanitarian Needs Assessment Programme (HNAP)
[127] Schools in Syria, Edition 7. (August 2022) - Information Management Unit, Assistance Coordination Unit.
[128] SPHERE Handbook - Online Interactive Edition

of assessed schools (45 schools) in camps did not have toilets at all. The ratio of number of toilets compared to number of students is shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Schools in Northwest Syria by ratio of latrines to students
(Source: ACU's JENA Thematic assessment, March 2022 and ACU's Schools in Syria Report, August 2022)



There was no gender-segregated toilets in 54% (1,767 schools) of the operating mixed-gender schools.

41% of schools (1,459 schools) get water from the public water network, 35% (1,274 schools) of the operating schools get water for drinking through water trucks that transport water to the school, 7% (235 schools) get water from a well adjacent to the school, 6% (219 schools) have a well within the school that provides water, and 2% (80 schools) get water from nearby places such as homes adjacent to the school or other neighbouring places. In 9% (331 schools) of schools' students bring drinking water with them from their homes due to a lack of drink water sources.[129]

It was found through the study that 63% of schools do not have sufficient quantities of cleaning materials and soap, that there are not sufficient amounts of hand sanitizers in 73% of schools, and that shared facilities are not periodically sterilized in 61% of schools.[130] As of 14 January 2023, 555 lab-confirmed cholera cases and 20 deaths have been recorded by the *Early Warning, Alert and Response Network* (EWARN) team in NWS. More than 37,700 suspected cholera cases have been reported, in both the Idleb and Aleppo governorates, of which more than half are children aged four years and younger. 18% of cases were reported in camps[131]. Poor sanitary services in camps and towns, as well as damaged water infrastructure and a reliance on alternative sources of water further deepens the risk faced by Northwest Syrians to cholera and other waterborne diseases[132]. Schools play a significant role in preventing the spread of cholera outbreaks, including providing hygiene training and ensuring the sanitation of their own facilities. The data presented for schools, particularly schools in camps, show that due to the lack of latrines and drinking water sources achieving minimum standards, as well as the lack of cleaning and sanitary products, schools may pose an additional risk to children from waterborne diseases, rather than preventing the further spread.

[129] Schools in Syria, Edition 7. (August 2022) - Information Management Unit, Assistance Coordination Unit.
[130] Schools in Syria, Edition 7. (August 2022) - Information Management Unit, Assistance Coordination Unit.
[131] North West Syria Cholera Updates: NWS and RAATA (January 2023) - UNOCHA
[132] Humanitarian Situation Overview in Syria (HSOS): Greater Idleb Area, December 2022 - REACH Initiative

Teachers and Other Education Personnel

The *Schools in Syria* report found that 83% (717 teachers) of the teachers interviewed were specialized (graduated from colleges and institutes that qualified them to practice the teaching profession), while 17% (146 teachers) were unspecialized and practiced teaching as a result of the lack of teaching staff (regardless of the educational certificate they hold). 93% of the teachers were taking a salary, whilst the remaining 7% of were volunteers. There is approximately an equal split between male and female teachers in the assessed schools[133].

In the *JENA of Out of School Children*, 17% (410 children) of the children stated that the main reason for not enrolling in school is the teachers' frequent absence, and this was confirmed by 15% (464 persons) of dropouts' caregivers.[134] This absence can be explained by examining teacher conditions. Whilst 93% of teachers are paid in theory, the salary is frequently delayed or not sufficient to needs. Only 2% (113 teachers) reported that salaries are proportionate to daily living, whilst 36% (4,165 teachers) of the total teachers in Idlib governorate did not receive their salaries during the academic year 2020-2021[135]. According to REACH's *Humanitarian Situation Overview*, overcrowding of schools due to a lack of teachers and classrooms was an issue in 61% of assessed communities, with the situation frequently caused by salaries not being paid and teachers leaving for other work[136].

At the end of January 2022, nearly 300 teachers in 21 schools in NWS went on strike, as some had not been paid for over four years. By February, 1,820 teachers from 107 schools were on strike affecting more than 42,000 children. Whilst this dispute was resolved, industrial action by teachers due to late or insufficient salaries continues to disrupt learning[137].

Codes of Conduct are used to ensure minimum standards for behaviour of teachers, as well as clear disciplinary measures and predetermined punishments for breaches are understood by both the school administrative teams and the teachers themselves. The *Schools in Syria* report found that only 52% (3,225 teachers) of teachers reported signing a Code of Conduct, while 48% (2,994 teachers) said that they did not sign any document that informed them of their rights and duties.[138] This lack of agreed formal agreements means teachers frequently use their own judgement on acceptable behaviour, which may vary by personal experience, context and culture, potentially increasing the risk of inappropriate conduct to children or even other teachers.

Safety At & On the Way To Formal School

ACU enumerators in the *Schools in Syria* report asked students about their feelings of safety at school, finding that 11% (823 students) of the students surveyed reported that they did not feel safe at school. This was echoed by teachers, with 31% of assessed teachers (1,452 teachers) reporting that their students did not feel safe at school.[139] The *Schools in Syrian Camps* report found that 25%

[133] Schools in Syria, Edition 7. (August 2022) - Information Management Unit, Assistance Coordination Unit.
[134] Joint Education Needs Assessment for Out of School Children. (March 2022) - Information Management Unit, Assistance Coordination Unit.

[135] Joint Education Needs Assessment for Out of School Children. (March 2022) - Information Management Unit, Assistance Coordination Unit.
[136] Humanitarian Situation Overview in Syria (HSOS): Greater Idleb Area, June 2022 - REACH Initiative
[137] Whole of Syria Humanitarian Situation Report (February 2022) - UNICEF
[138] Schools in Syria, Edition 7. (August 2022) - Information Management Unit, Assistance Coordination Unit.
[139] Schools in Syria, Edition 7. (August 2022) - Information Management Unit, Assistance Coordination Unit.

of teachers surveyed in school in camps also echoed that students expressed they felt unsafe at school.[140] These numbers are relatively low, which may be explained by schools offering relative safety and sanctuary to students. Whilst internally they may have issues, schools serve as a safe space for students to gather and to interact with adults, particularly compared to the wider security situation in communities.

Whilst inside schools may be seen to be relatively safe, the journey to school through the community does offer significant hazards to children. The main security risk expressed by children for their journey to school was the absence of traffic control mechanisms and traffic police, increasing the risk of traffic incidents to children walking along verges, with pedestrian's walkways rarely separated from the central roadway. ACU's survey of school students found that 93% of children travel to school on foot and do not use transportation. Other security concerns identified were in areas were schools were located near uninhabited areas, with children fearing for kidnap or the risk of gender based violence. The final risk identified on the journeys to school was crossing military checkpoints or through military zones to reach their schools[141].

In REACH's *Humanitarian Situation Overview of Idleb* from June 2022, a threat from shelling, snipers or gunfire was reported as a protection risk in 39 communities, whilst fear from imminent conflict was reported as a protection risk in 79 communities[142]. Living around these dangerous protection risks and with many of their contemporaries undertaking child labour, this may explain further why schools are seen as safer spaces for children.

Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC) and Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups (CAFAAG)

UASC are common across NWS. The *Alternative Care in Syria* report finds the causes of separated children reported by KIs, include death of caregiver (71% percent of KIs), divorce of caregivers (52% of KIs), economic reasons (33% of KIs), remarriage of a caregiver (22% of KIs), disappearance of a caregiver (13% of KIs), and child marriage (20% of KIs)[143]. Specifically, it has led to the emergence of numerous UASC, and child headed families (CHF), children living alone or with other children, increasing the risk of exposure to violence and protection concerns[144].

One particular displacement context of concern in NWS are camps for widows, the wives of those who are missing and other single females. These camps, known as Widow Camps, offer a unique set of challenges to women and children. A 2022 World Vision report on the *Children and Women of Widow Camps* finds that due to the lack of male breadwinners, children in these camps are more likely to be engaged in child labour and less likely to be engaged in education. 58% of boys in the camp and 49% of girls in these camps are engaged in child labour, whilst 85% of respondents report witness a marriage of a child under 18 years old. In particular, when a boy reaches the age of puberty, they are deemed to be an adult man and are forced to leave the camps, with little in the way of prospects, education or support mechanisms[145]. These children are particularly vulnerable to

[140] Schools in Northern Syria Camps, Edition 5 (August 2022) - Information Management Unit, Assistance Coordination Unit
[141] Schools in Syria, Edition 7. (August 2022) - Information Management Unit, Assistance Coordination Unit.
[142] Humanitarian Situation Overview in Syria (HSOS): Greater Idleb Area, June 2022 - REACH Initiative
[143] Respondents were able to select multiple answers.
[144] Alternative Care in North West Syria (May 2022) - World Vision and UNICEF
[145] The Women and Children of Syria's Widow Camps: Hardest to reach, most at risk (April 2022) - World Vision

becoming associated with armed forces or armed groups, or other forms of exploitation[146]. Similarly, if a widow in NWS remarries, the new husband will frequently force any adolescent boys to leave the household. As with children from widows camp, these children are extremely vulnerable[147].

Mental Health and Psychosocial Services (MHPSS)

In a multi-sector need overview of schools in Idleb, ATAA found no PSS workers in all assessed schools[148]. ACU's *Schools in Syria* report found psychological counsellors were available in only 5% (191 schools) of the school whilst only 18% (646 schools) of the total assessed operational schools have teachers who have attended PSS trainings[149]. In the *JENA of Out of School Children*, 21% (569 children) of the assessed out of school children reported that providing specialized psychological counsellors within the schools to be referred to for solving all problems may contribute to their return to school[150]. *Child Protection Situation Monitoring* found that 64% of KIs reported a need for specialized services for caregivers, specifically including case management and MHPSS[151]. This demonstrates the lack of services and support available to both children and caregivers. The role of schools as a safe space for children offer the opportunity to provide Psychosocial Services (PSS) to children who may be experiencing signs of psychosocial distress. Offering these services and making them widely available may lower the education opportunity cost for households, helping to increase enrolment and attendance in formal schools.

Conclusion

The ongoing and shifting crises in NWS continues to negatively affect children across the region. The education opportunity cost for households sending their children to formal schools is increased by deteriorating economic conditions. Whilst barriers related to the education system are present and reducing access to education, including the lack of, distance to and overcrowding within formal schools, these barriers are being further compounded by the ongoing economic crisis. The reduced spending power of households, falling living standards and reliance upon coping mechanisms increase the education opportunity cost for households, with every hour being spent in education being an hour a child may potentially be providing for the household.

Displacement further increases these opportunity costs for households, physically locating households further from formal school and worsening the economic security for the household. Whilst all children of all ages can be found working in NWS, girls become increasingly more likely to be married, as a coping mechanism for both economic and protection concerns.

Within the school system itself, school infrastructure and WASH facilities frequently do not reach INEE standards, which both increases the risk of waterborne disease and reduces the attendance

[146] The Women and Children of Syria's Widow Camps: Hardest to reach, most at risk (April 2022) - World Vision
[147] Alternative Care in North West Syria (May 2022) - World Vision and UNICEF
[148] Idleb Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (May 2022) - ATAA Humanitarian Relief Association
[149] Schools in Syria, Edition 7. (August 2022) - Information Management Unit, Assistance Coordination Unit.
[150] Joint Education Needs Assessment for Out of School Children. (March 2022) - Information Management Unit, Assistance Coordination Unit.
[151] Child Protection Situation Monitoring 2022 Mid-year Report (August 2022) - Child Protection Area of Responsibility, Whole of Syria (Turkey Hub)

of female students. Whilst schools are seen to be relatively safe from protection concerns, the journey to schools and the lack of PSS support within schools are an area of concern.

Due to the high reported rates of out of school children, further research should be undertaken on methods for bridging the gap between formal education and children not attending. The barriers for out of school children should be further explored, to provide an updated analysis of the education opportunity cost for households across displacement groups. Non-formal mechanisms, particularly in camps, should then be explored for their role in reducing this education opportunity cost, providing children with other basic services and protection.

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Annex 2: FGDs with Children

Joint Education and Child Protection Needs Assessment – North West Syria

Child Participation FDGs Findings

December 2022

Executive Summary

On barriers that boys and girls, including children with disability, in informal education or out of school, in and outside camp settings in NWS face to access and attend formal education.

Children in focus group discussions expressed a number of reasons for not enrolling in formal education, with the top 5 ranking reasons being:

1. Child labor and economic and social conditions

Poverty, the inability of families to meet the needs of children, and the consequent orientation of children towards employment is the most voted reasons that prevent children from enrolling in formal education. Findings show that economic reasons affect the inability of more boys than girls to enroll in formal education. Whether by region or by camp residency status or for out-of-school and in information education children, this reason overall always ranks between the 1st and the 3rd position, clearly signifying the absolute prevalence of economic factors as key to reducing children's ability to access formal education in NWS.

2. Challenges to access formal education schools/centers

Some of the challenges which children expressed include distance between their places of residence and schools, absence of formal education inside displacement camps, lack of transportation or inability to cover transportation expenses.

Children in displacement camps in particular face special difficulties, as they are forced to leave the camp daily and walk long distances. For children in informal education, this reason is the most voted, especially by boys.

3. **Security situation**

Conflict-related security issues (such as shelling, explosions, changing areas of control of the military force) lead to frequent periods of interruption of the formal education system and limit children's access to education in general. Additionally, this context also leads to difficulties in obtaining educational documents required to complete education and imposition of restrictions on movements, especially to girls. This is by far the most voted reason for girls as to what impacts their inability to access formal education. Girls in different FGDs mentioned issues like fear of kidnaping, limitations in the freedom of movement, fears of families to send their daughters to schools and the difficulties they face to move without a companion as key limitations preventing them from accessing formal education. From a regional perspective, security received a very high vote in Azaz.

4. **Displacement and population movements**

The security and economic conditions and limited income forced many Syrian families to move and internally flee several times. For girls, this is the 2nd most voted reason of all (en pair with challenges to access formal education). For children in Azaz this is considered the main reason for children's inability to access formal education. The four reasons scoring the highest are related

to the conflict and socio-economic context in NWS and constitute nearly 63% of the reasons that limit children's ability to enroll in formal education.

5. **Ill-treatment by teachers and other students in formal education**

Children in FGDs expressed the prevalence of cases of beating and verbal abuse by teachers, and the spread of cases of bullying and discrimination on the basis of displacement by teachers and other students. This reason shows considerable prevalence amongst boys.

Other reasons identified and voted by children in the 29 FGDs which explain challenges to accessing formal education include:

a. Lack of basic supplies for education.
b. Poor quality of formal education.
c. Absence of caregivers.
d. Challenges for children with disability (only in Atareb).
e. Children devaluing the importance of education.
f. Lack of civil identification documents.
g. Gender considerations (only for girls in Atareb).

From the gender perspective it has emerged that boys are highly affected by economic issues that force them to drop off education in search for employment and ways to support their family. Boys are also typically more often victims of ill-treatment in school, by teachers and other students.

Girls are more heavily impacted by security as well as by societal and gender norms that impose on them plenty of restrictions in movements due to fear of conflict-related violence as well as of gender-based violence.

In the prevailing security, economic and social conditions of NWS, gender stereotypes and more so inequalities are as such that the expected roles and responsibilities of males and females force boys and girls to engage in activities with higher responsibilities that are not appropriate for their age and abilities. Hence boys are forced to leave education and go towards employment in order to support the family, while girls are obligated to take care of younger siblings and do house chores. Girls are also restricted from going to school because of the fear of kidnapping or harm because of their gender. Interestingly, girls also consider the poor quality of formal education a serious barrier, more than boys. They also seem to suffer slightly more impediments to access formal education in case of absence of caregivers (if data for similar for boys and girls).

In the NWS situation, geography plays an influence on the reasons for children's inability to access formal education. In Azaz, children indicated displacement as the main reason for them not being able to regularly go to school, and general insecurity is also a major factor. Socio-economic factors are instead the key reason mentioned by children in Harem and Atareb regions.

Other findings show that in general, negative influence by peers, parents not promoting children's education, lack of support or encouragement to pursue an education are factors that induce many children in NWS to abandon formal education. This reason is more prevalent for boys.
For children outside of education the lack of basic supplies is a considerable challenge in accessing formal education (more than for children currently enrolled in informal education).
Children with disability face specific challenges accessing formal education and also mentioned fears related to bullying and neglect by teachers. It has also been mentioned that due to the experienced poor quality of the formal educational offer, some children prefer to turn to vocational training as a more appropriate alternative than formal education. Finally, but not the least, it is important to note the significant negative impact that lack of civil document has on children's education, especially for boys.

On how boys and girls, including children with disability, in informal education or out of school, in and outside camp settings in NWS spend their days.

The activities children are involved with during a regular day in NWS include:

- **Attending informal education** for those who are enrolled, for about 4 hours/day. Informal education takes place in the mornings.

- **Working**, which primarily is the case for out of school children (both boys and girls) but may be the case also for some children in informal education, for an average of 6.8 hours per day. Girls report working much less hours than boys. Boys involved in child labour, and in particular those out of school, work for very long hours, way above 8 hours/day, with picks of 9, 10 and 11 hours reported by some boys. Needless to say, this situation is a child right violation in contradiction to the CRC and relevant ILO conventions on child labour.
  Adolescent boys and girls aged 15-17-year-old work on average for 7 hours/day, while younger boys and girls aged 11-14-year-old work on average for 6.5 hours/day, which may indicate a tendency to an increased number of worked hours per day with growing age.

- Girls seem to spend more hours of the day at home, and in particular being involved in so-called **housework** (4 hours/day). In this context, often girls are requested to take care of the house and of their younger siblings, while this may not be expected of boys (who instead are more often requested to work to contribute to the family income).
  Out of school children (boys and girls) report much less involvement in housework (2.5 hours/day). However, girls out of school show the longest involvement in housework of all children (3.5 hours/day). In most cases, housework is done in the afternoons until late afternoon/early evening.

- Boys and girls in informal education show much more availability of time to **play with friends** (2.7 hours/day) than their out-of-school peers who seem to only have 1 hour/day to play with friends.

Age-wise, it is noticed that adolescent boys 15-17-year-old spend only 1 hour/day playing, while younger children (boys and girls) aged 11-14 years spend on average 2.25 hours/day playing.

- In the evenings, out of school children spend more time **watching TV or phone and browsing YouTube or other programs** (2.2 hours/day) than children in informal education (1.7 hours/day).

- Most children (with a prevalence of boys) spend time **sitting with their parents** in the evening hours (1.4 hours/day).

- Children **take meals** daily, if it is unclear whether all children take the required three meals per day or only two (or even just one). Having breakfast has not been mentioned by all children, but at least by a majority.

- Concerning **sleeping**, the average is for 8.6 hours/day, which seems to indicate a good rest time for both boys and girls and for all kinds of children by age, residency and educational status. Children wake up early but not too early (at around 6 or 7 am) and apparently go to bed not too late (at around 9 or 10 pm).

- Children also **walk to/from home** each day to accomplish their tasks, whether going to work or to informal educational activities (it can be estimated that children on average walk for 1 hour/day).

1 Consulting children on their education and child protection needs

1.1 Methodology

With the purpose to know the reasons that prevent children from accessing and attending formal education, and what are the concerns related to child protection, 29 focused group discussions (FGDs) were implemented with boys and girls in NWS in December 2022.

The consultations with children aimed to explore certain issues in the education and protection of displaced and host community children, in parallel and in addition (triangulation and comparison) to the data from the review of secondary sources and interviews with key informants (adults).

Consultations with children focused on two questions:

- What are the main barriers that prevent children from enrolling in formal education?
- What are the daily activities of children and potential protection risks?

Data collection through child consultations was carried out through structured discussions with children in focus groups. Each child focus group discussion (FGD) was led by two facilitators, staff of organizations (national and international NGOs) members of the Education Cluster (EC) and

the Child Protection (CP) Sub Cluster in NWS. Where possible, for girls' focus groups the evaluation team should have included at least one woman.

Facilitators of the child FGDs were trained by the Global Education Cluster (GEC) Accountability to Children Specialist on how to ensure ethical and meaningful child participation, which fulfills the required nine basic requirements[152]. The training focused on ensuring a child safeguarding protocol (including protection from sexual exploitation and abuse of children) and child-friendly facilitation methods for the sessions to be implemented based on the main considerations for safe and meaningful children's participation in data collection, starting from informed consent and work methodology, all the way to data analysis.

1.2 Data Collection Process

The consultation process was conducted using child-friendly and age-adapted FDG guides developed by the GEC Accountability to Children Specialist and approved by the in-country CP Sub Cluster and EC.[153]

The typical focus discussion session was designed as follows:

- Introduction and informed consent;
- Ice breaking and session rules;
- Identification and prioritization of barriers in accessing formal education;
- Daily activities clock;
- Closing and feedback.

Participatory activities, focusing on issues related to the causes that impede children from enrolling and attending formal educational opportunities and on protection issues were carried out with girls and boys who are displaced, living in or outside camps and with host community children. Discussions aimed to consult children on their views about such issues are meant to ensure that their voices are heard, allowing comparisons between the views of adults and children in the EC- and CP Sub Cluster-led joint needs assessment.

Consultations were held in local language (Arabic) based on the facilitation guides originally designed in English.

1.3 Sampling and participants' figures

The sessions targeted two age-groups:

- 10-14 years old;
- and 15-17 years old.

[152] Also available in Arabic here.
[153] Accessible in English here.

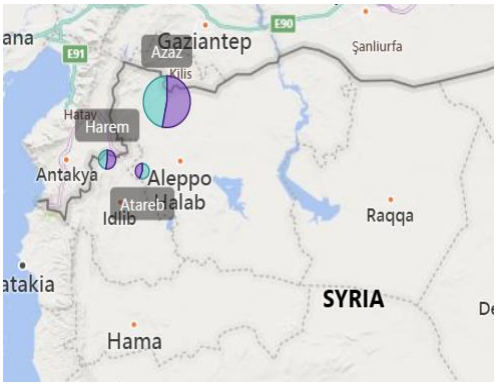
Participating children were selected based on criteria including displacement, disability and the current type of education attended.

Targeted children thus included:

- In Azaz, Atareb and Harem: **children aged 11-14 years attending non-formal education, separated into inside and outside camp residency, as well as by gender**.
- In Azaz, Atareb and Harem: **out-of-school children aged 11-14 years not attending any form of education, separated into inside and outside camp residency, as well as by gender**.
- In Azaz: **adolescents aged 15-17 years** (secondary school age level).[154]

Sessions with children were distributed over three geographical areas in **Harem, Atareb and Azaz**. In each administrative region, two communities were chosen. One of the communities in each of the administrative areas was selected due to the presence of a camp or camp-like setting for displaced people.

Participating children were **chosen in the most inclusive manner possible to represent all children in terms of age (within the two pre-defined age-groups 11-14 y.o. and 15-17 y.o.), disability and gender, in addition to displaced and resident children, children who have dropped out of formal education and those within informal education.**



In total, **216 children participated**:

[154] 15-17 year-olds are frequently under assessed in Education and Child Protection assessments, with few non-formal education centre operating for this age group and very low rates of enrolment in formal school.

109 girls **107 boys**

29	216	153	63	125	91	21
# of FGDs	**# of total Children**	**# of IDP Children (in and outside camp)**	**# of Host Community Children**	**# of Children out of school**	**# of Children in informal education**	**# of Children with Disability**
14 with girls, 15 with boys	109 girls (50.46%), 107 boys (49.54%)	75 girls, 78 boys	34 girls, 29 boys	61 girls, 64 boys	45 girls, 46 boys	10 girls, 11 boys

Children with disability were included in FGDs with all other children and represent 9,72% of all involved children, with the following details:

Location	**21 CwDs** (9.72%)	**Gender breakdown: 10 girls with disability, 11 boys with disability**	**Age group**
Atareb	14	7 girls, 7 boys	10-14
Azaz	2	1 girl, 1 boy	15-17
Harem	5	2 girls, 3 boys	10-14

Specific details of child participants by geographical area are as follows:

Atareb:

8	57	31	26	28	29	14
# of FGDs	**# of total Children**	**# IDP Children**	**# of Host Community Children**	**# of Children out of school**	**# of Children in informal education**	**# of Children with Disability**
4 with girls, 4 with boys	25 girls, 32 boys	13 girls,18 boys	12 girls, 14 boys	13 girls, 15 boys	12 girls, 17 boys	7 girls, 7 boys

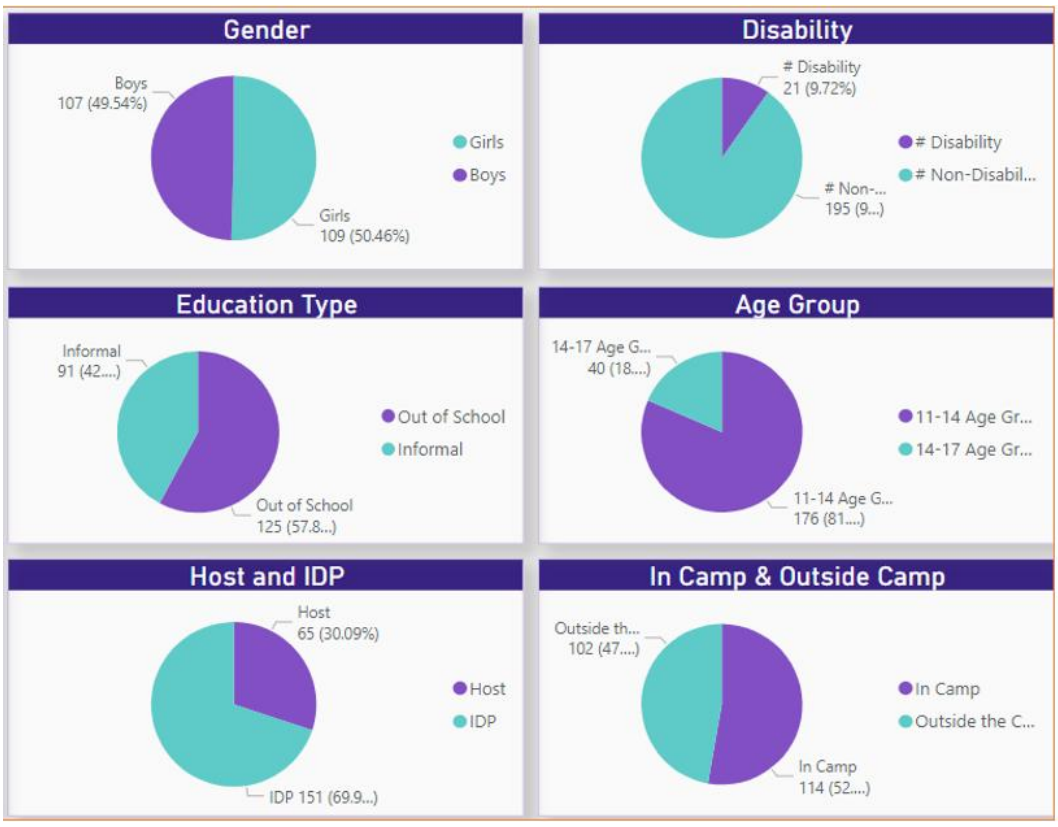
Azaz:

13	98	84	14	69	29	2
# of FGDs	**# of Children**	**# IDP Children**	**# of Host Community Children**	**# of Children out of school**	**# of Children in informal education**	**# of Children with Disability**
6 with girls, 7 with boys	52 girls, 46 boys	46 girls, 38 boys	6 girls, 8 boys	36 girls, 33 boys	16 girls, 13 boys	1 girl, 1 boy

Harem:

8	61	38	23	28	33	5
# of FGDs	# of Children	# IDP Children	# of Host Community Children	# of Children out of school	# of Children in informal education	# of Children with Disability
4 with girls, 4 with boys	32 girls, 29 boys	16 girls, 22 boys	16 girls, 7 boys	15 girls, 13 boys	17 girls, 16 boys	2 girls, 3 boys

The following charts represent key figures from the child participants' sample:



1.4 Child Safeguarding for ethical and meaningful Child Participation

In line with the 9 basic requirements for safe and meaningful child participation which guided the whole process, precautions have been taken to minimize risks to all participants during child FDGs. Key steps included, but were not limited to:

- All staff have received training on child safeguarding and have signed their organisation's child safeguarding policy and code of conduct delivered by the GEC Accountability to Children Specialist.[155]
- All staff have signed the specific code of conduct for needs assessment.
- Informed consent was obtained from all participating children and their parents/guardians before and at the start of the consultations.
- Children have been informed of how they can file complaints or provide feedback.
- FGD facilitators were instructed on how to access information on CP referral by region.

1.5 Data Analysis Methodology

A consulting team specialized in data and information management[156] has been hired locally to lead on the data analysis process[157] and to draft the first draft of the narrative report from child FGDs.

To analyze the information shared by children during FGDs, the following steps have been undertaken, in partnership between the consulting company, the NWS CP Sub Cluster and EC Coordination Teams and the GEC Assessment and Child Accountability Specialists:

- Drafting FGD reports in formats developed in English by the GEC Accountability to Children Specialist and approved by the in-country CP Sub Cluster and EC.
- Receiving raw data from the 29 FGDs, drafted in Arabic by each facilitation team, submitted to CP Sub Cluster and EC Coordination Teams.
- An excel data base was created and raw data was coded based on location – gender – age – disability – displacement – education status and residency inside or outside displacement camp.
- Each FGD was coded: the geographic location was coded using the first two letters of the name of the location.
- Separate excel sheets were created for:
  - ✓ Initial raw data
  - ✓ Answers to the first research question: what are the reasons preventing children from accessing formal education?

[155] Training module in English accessible here.
[156] Contact details available upon request.
[157] It is to be noted that the the data analysis consulting team was not responsible nor supervising the data collection and the team only worked on the available data.

- ✓ Answers to the second question: what is the children daily routine and protection risks?
- ✓ Initial findings.

- Quick presentation of preliminary findings[158] at a validation workshop held in Turkye on 14 December 2022.
- With the analyzed data, an interactive power bi data base was developed to facilitate navigating the data in a dynamic way.

For the first question on the reasons that impede many children in NWS to access and attend formal education, the objective was twofold:

- Let children express themselves freely in mentioning what are barriers that they see or even experience in accessing and attend formal education.
- Rank the identified barriers so that children could specify which are the most significant challenges that they and their peers face in accessing and attending formal education.

To this purpose, during FGDs children were asked to first identify such barriers through an open-ended question posed by the facilitators. Once all the barriers that children mentioned were written down on paper, children were asked to "vote" them (by marking the listed barriers with a pencil stroke symbolizing their vote). Children were able to vote more than one barrier in each FGD (and up to three barriers), which is important to clarify to understand that the number of votes provided by children in any given FGD during this activity does not necessarily correspond nor represent the actual number of participating children.

For the second question on the daily routine, children completed a clock divided into 24 hours, one hour per activity. The Daily Activity Clock exercise presented some inconsistencies in the reported data which led to a decision to remove 13 (of 29) FGDs from the set. For this reason, only 16 FGDs have been analysed. Additionally, children were supposed to be asked about any protection risks they face that are linked to the activities they implement during the days, especially when outside of home (for example while walking or playing outside) and if involved with work describe any challenge or even forms of violence they may be exposed to. Similarly for children in informal education they should have been asked about protection risks on to way to/from the educational center and at the center itself. Unfortunately, reported information from FGD did not include such details. As such, the Daily Activity Clock has been analyzed to represent the kinds of activities children in NWS are involved with during a regular day, and how long such activities can last (on average) for some of the participating children. Other interesting finding show the different share of some the activities by gender, for girls and boys, and by educational status, for children in informal education and children out of school.

An inductive approach for the analysis of qualitative child FGD information was adopted. The purpose of using an inductive approach was to condense the raw textual data into a brief format as well as to establish links between the assessment objectives and the information captured through the consultations carried out with children.

[158] The PPT delivered by the hired consultants with preliminary child FGDs findings is accessible in English here.

It had been planned to extract qualitative information in the form of comments and quotes made by the children during FGDs in order to better qualify and enrich data on the reasons for not accessing formal education and on how children spend their days with a specific attempt to identify potential protection risks when they implement the described daily activities. If the extracted findings do not always provide a vast array of qualitative information, useful comments by children were captured whenever possible in the analysis to represent their voices.

1.6 Closing the Feedback loop with Children

The needs assessment exercise will end in 2023 with the final step required for a truly ethical and meaningful participation process: closing the feedback loop with children. Reports in graphic form, or other child-friendly outputs, will be designed with the main information from child consultations and distributed to the participating children to show them the results of their participation.

1.7 Limitations and Challenges

Limitations:

- The process of children's participation does not provide statistically representative information. All trends taken from the data collected are indicative and caution should be used when attributing them to wider trends across the whole of NorthWest Syria.
- The process does not aim to generate quantitative data, but rather qualitative information.
- Security and logistics only allowed remote training and method of work.
- Working across language barriers between coordination, enumerators and during the analysis.
- Culture-related factors that usually prevent children from participating and restricting their space for participation might have affected the ability of the interviewed children to express themselves freely.

Challenges:

- The ability to meet with children with disability was not equal in the three different locations.
- Some data collectors may have been biased towards some issues by summarizing or rephrasing the answers of the participating children.[159]

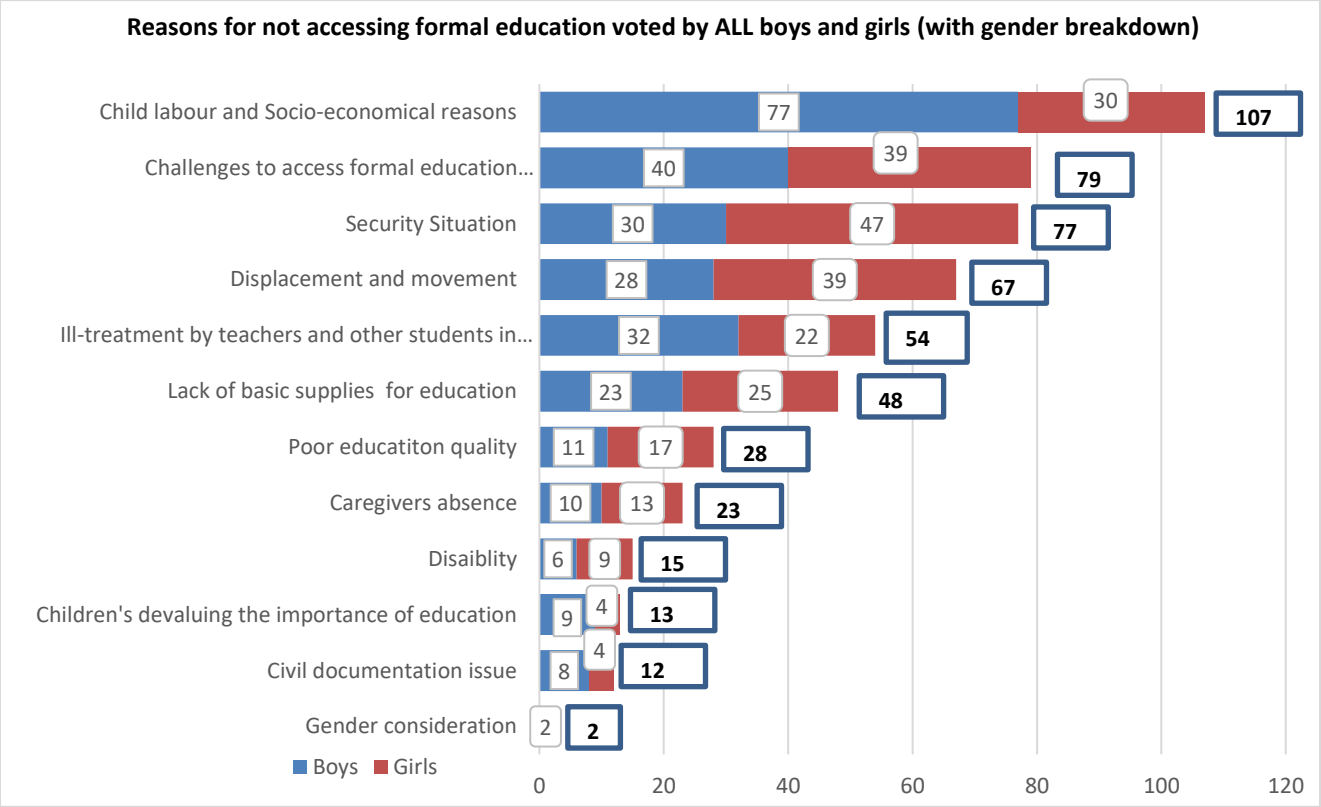
[159] Examples of answers that may not fully reflect the only opinion of children as noted in the received FGDs reports include: "no enough support for good teachers forced them to leave teaching or not giving their best when teaching" and "the small amount of the salaries for teachers led that they are not giving their best when teaching and that also led to some children leaving education".

2 Findings from Consultation with Children

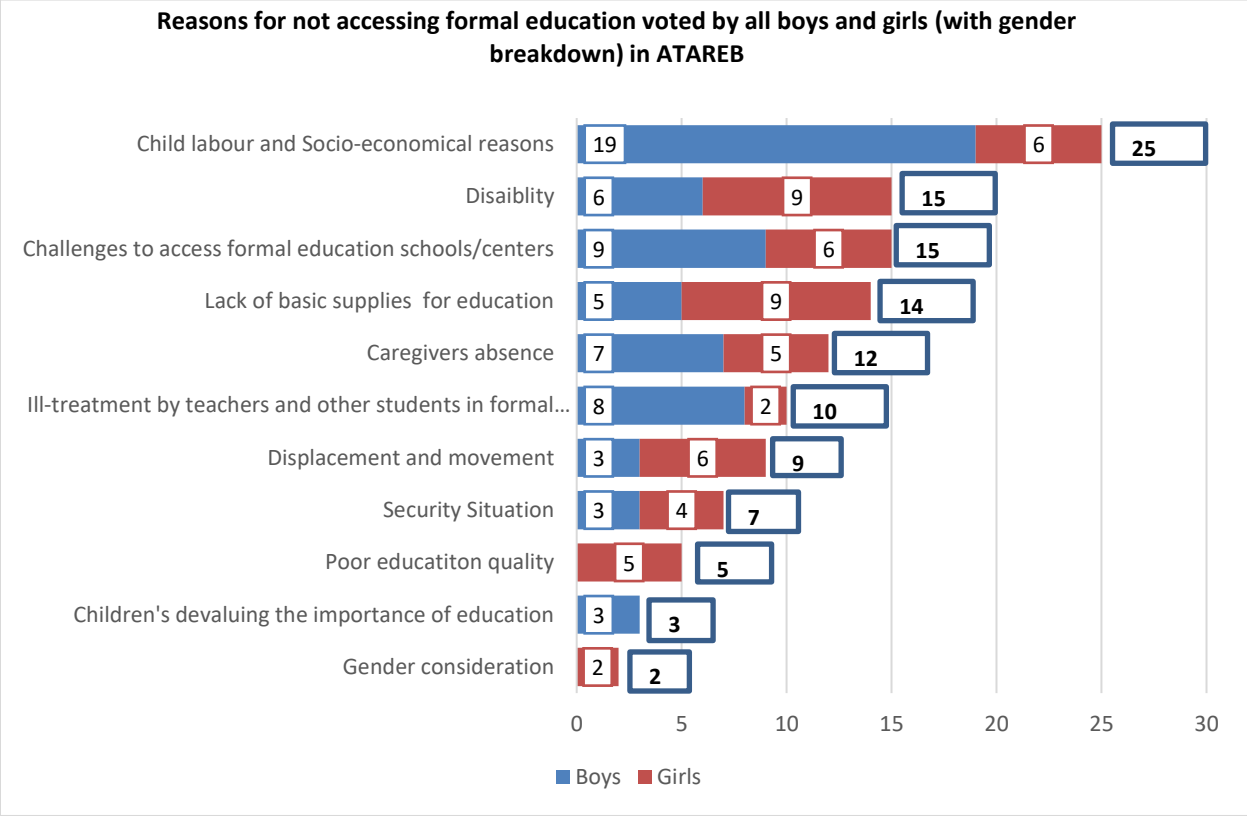
2.1 Barriers affecting boys' and girls' Access to Formal Education in Atareb, Aziz and Harem

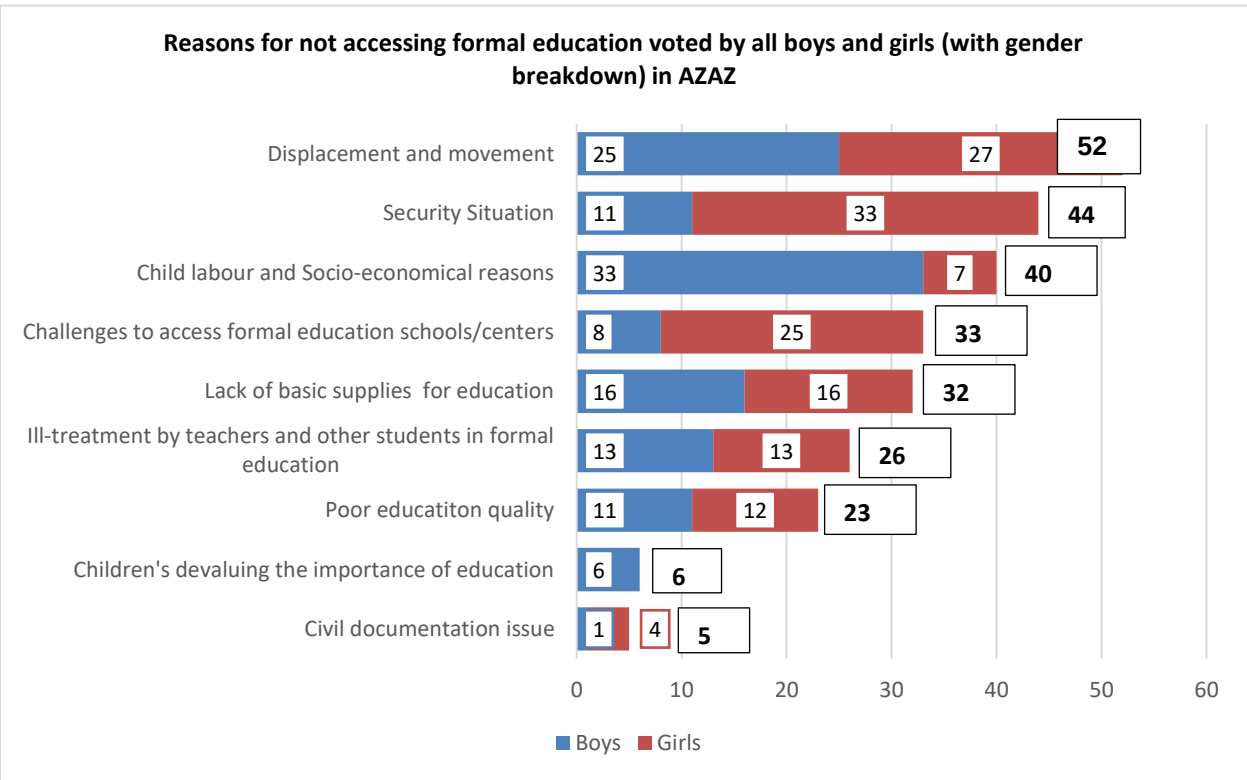
Children in focus group discussions expressed a number of reasons for not enrolling in formal education, and the situation of the region plays an influence on these reasons. In Azaz, children indicated that displacement and the different times they had to change their location is the main reason for them not being able to regularly go to school, while socio-economic factors are the key reason mentioned by children both in Harem and Atareb.

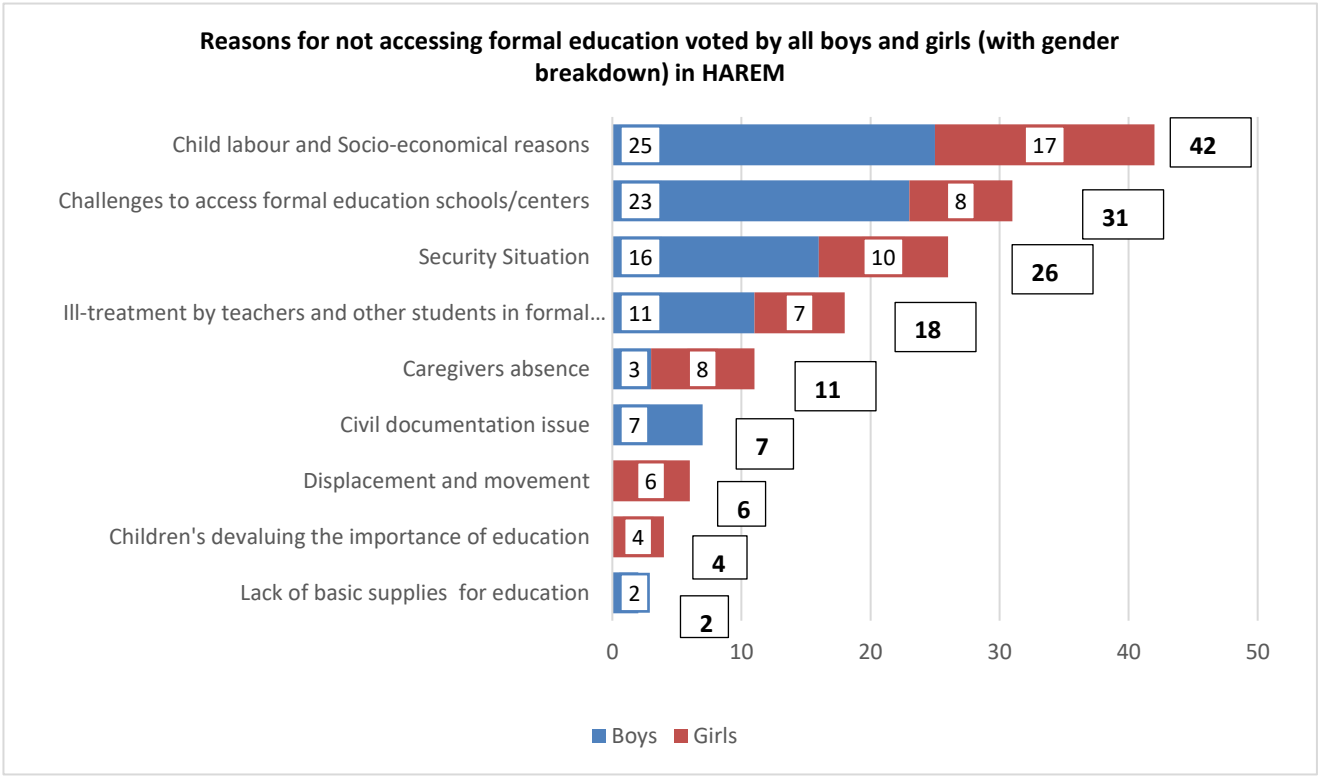
Findings of the FGDs show the following: **Reasons for not accessing formal education by received votes from all boys and girls in FGDs**



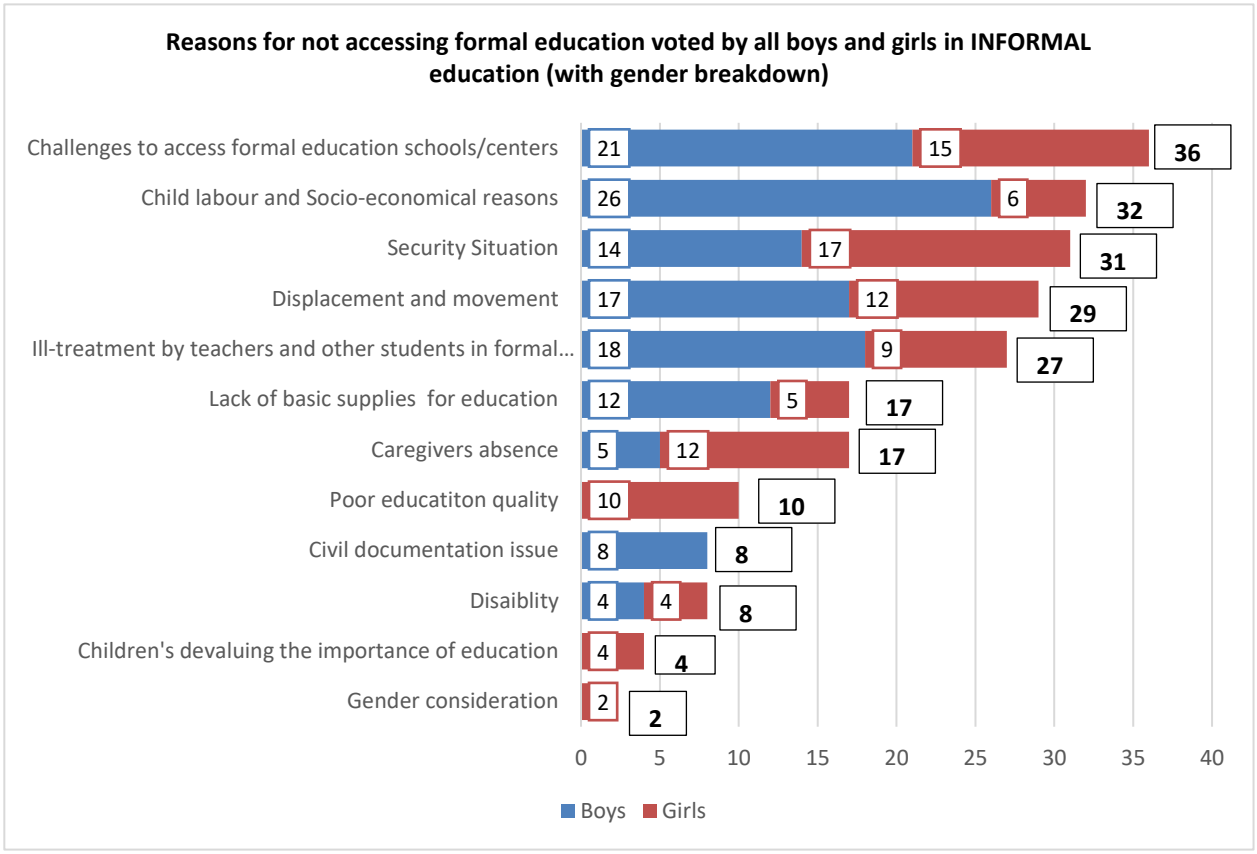
Details by region, with gender breakdown, are as follows:



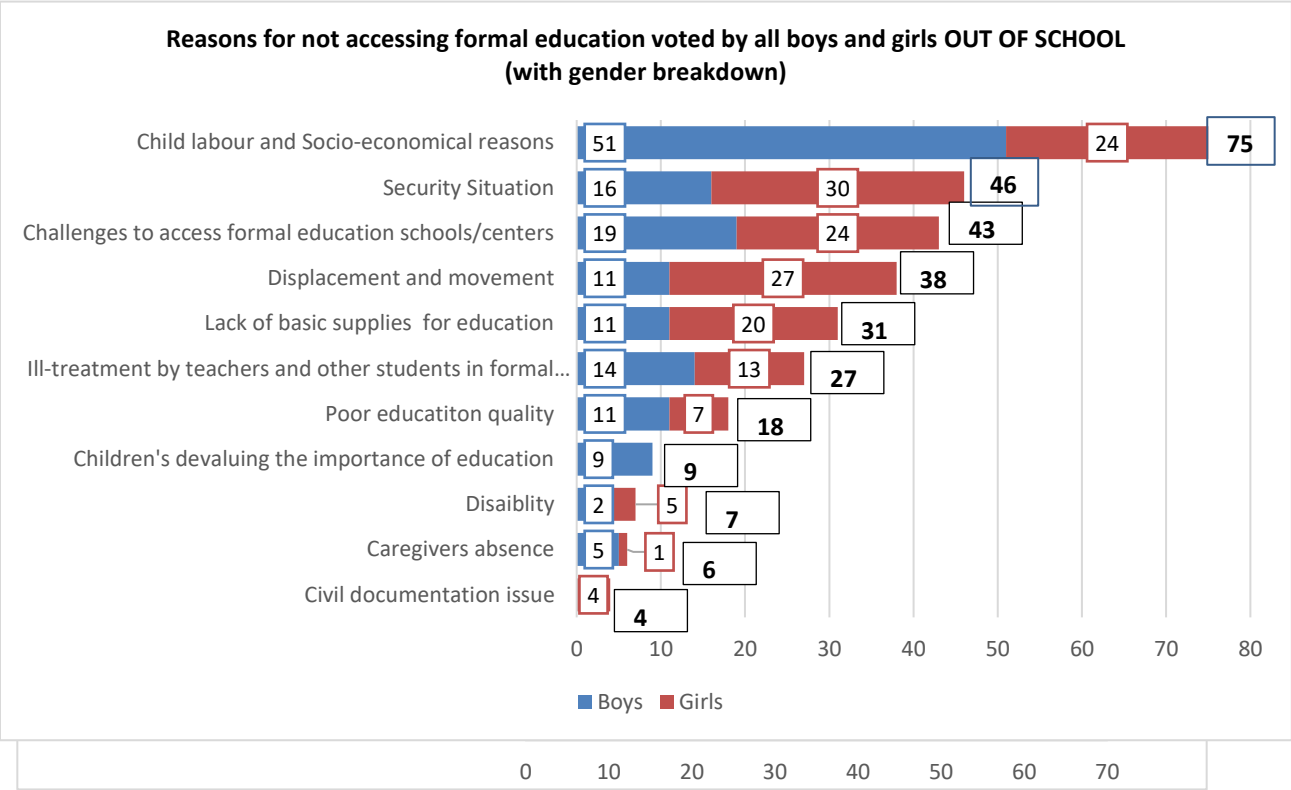


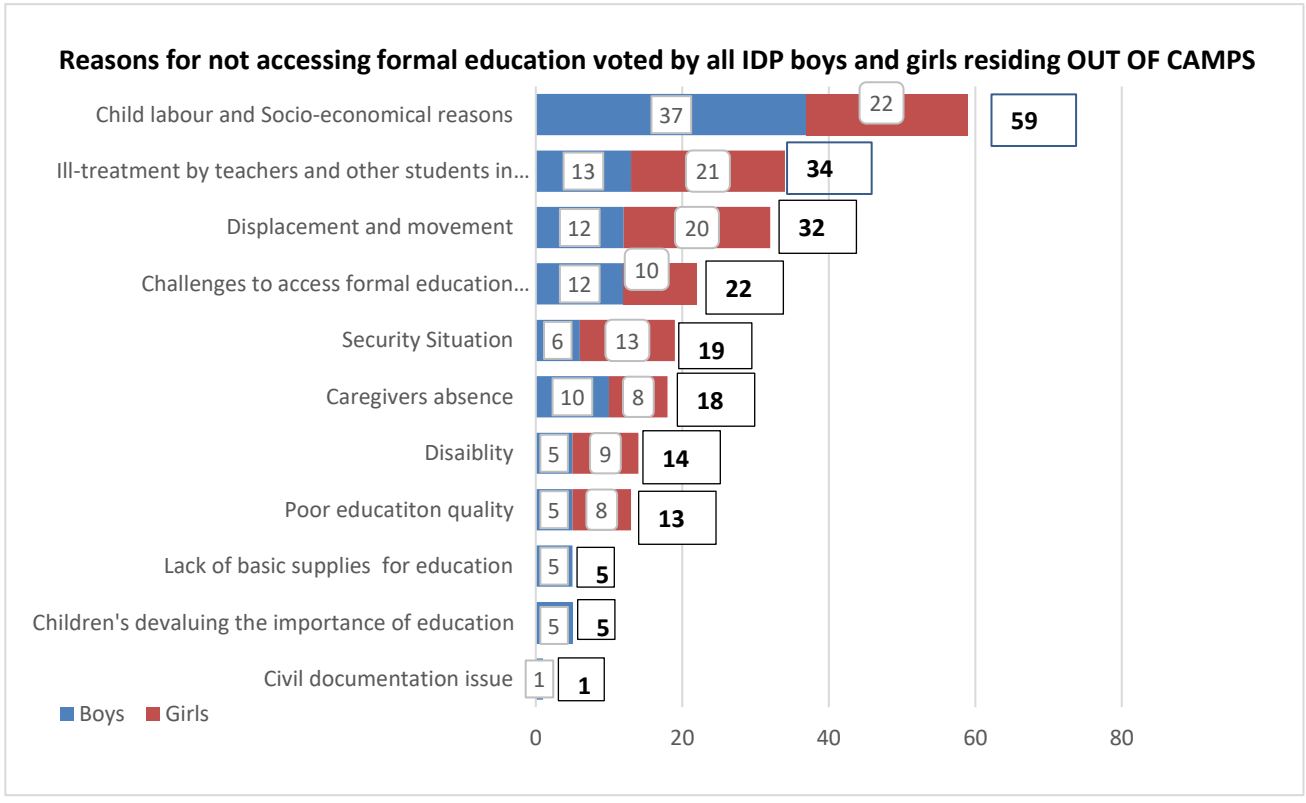

Reasons for not accessing formal education voted by all boys and girls (with gender breakdown) in HAREM
Child labour and Socio-economical reasons
Challenges to access formal education schools/centers
Security Situation
Ill-treatment by teachers and other students in formal...
Caregivers absence
Civil documentation issue
Displacement and movement
Children's devaluing the importance of education
Lack of basic supplies for education
25
17
42
23
8
31
16
10
26
11
7
18
3
8
11
7
7
6
6
4
4
2
2
0
10
20
30
40
50
Boys
Girls

Details for children in informal education and children out of school are as follows:



Additional details are provided here for IDP children in camps or out of camp settings, by gender:





Child Labour and Economic and Social Conditions

Poverty, the inability of families to meet the needs of children, and the consequent orientation of children towards employment is the most voted reasons that prevent children from enrolling in formal education, with a total of 107 votes received in the 29 FGDs. Child labor may be a result of economic conditions and may be based on the attitudes of caregivers and children's perceptions, which calls for further research in measuring these trends.

Boys voted this reason in stagger majority: in boys-only FGDs this reason received a total of 77 votes, as opposed to 30 votes received in girls-only FGDs. It therefore seems that **economic reasons affect the inability of more boys than girls to enroll in formal education**. Children during FGDs informed that they are assigned to agricultural work and sheep herding in Harem region, where they spend most of the day's hours in this task. Older boys go to work with professional craftsmen, while girls are obligated to do household and agricultural work and taking care of their younger siblings for many hours during the day.

Boys in Harem region voted for this reason with the highest votes (25 votes); for girls too, this is the most voted reason of all (17 votes). In comparison, in Azaz region this reason only received 7 votes from girls while boys gave it 33 votes. In Atareb region, girls gave this reason 6 votes and boys gave it 19 votes. Concerning children who are out of education, out-of-school boys voted this reason with 51 votes, again a much higher number of votes than that of out-of-school girls (24 votes).
Concerning children who are in informal education, informal schoolboys voted this reason with 26 votes, again a much higher number of votes than girls in informal education (6 votes).

1. Challenges to access formal education schools/centers

Many children face difficulties in accessing formal education. Some of the challenges which children expressed, include: **distance between their places of residence and schools, absence of formal education inside displacement camps, lack of transportation or inability to cover transportation** expenses. Children placed this reason for not attending formal education second in the list, with a total of 79 votes.

Boys and girls in all FGDs voted for this reason at equal rate (40 votes by boys, 39 votes by girls). **For both girls and boys this is the second most voted reason for not been able to access formal education** (for girls this reason is en pair with displacement).

Looking specifically at displaced children residing in camps, this reason received 57 votes (29 votes by girls, 28 by boys), much less than displaced children living outside camps which gave it 22 votes. **Children in displacement camps in particular face special difficulties, as they are forced to leave the camp daily and walk long distances**. They also face additional challenges and fears, whether security or financial related, and many girls are further restricted because of the fear of their parents or caregivers of these risks.

Azaz region is where this reason was voted the most (33 votes), followed by Harem (31 votes), while this reason only received 15 votes in Atareb.

For children in informal education, this reason is the most voted (36 votes), **especially by boys** (21 votes). For out-of-school children, this reason is placed 3rd in the list however it is much more voted than by children in informal education, with 43 votes, with a slight prevalence of votes by girls (24 votes).

2. Security situation

The regions of NWS are witnessing security developments and chaos with a high frequency, such as **shelling, explosions, changing areas of control of the military force**. These unstable conditions lead to frequent periods of interruption of the formal education system and limit children's access to education in general. Additionally, this context also leads to difficulties in obtaining educational documents required to complete education and imposition of restrictions on movements, especially to girls. With 77 votes by all participating children, this reason is the third most serious that limits their access to formal education.

This reason seems to have a different effect on girls and boys. So, girls have provided 47 votes to this reason, while boys gave it 30 votes. This is **by far the most voted reason for girls** as to what impacts their inability to access formal education. Girls in different FGDs mentioned issues like fear of kidnaping, limitations in the freedom of movement, fears of families to send their daughters to schools and the difficulties they face to move without a companion as key limitations preventing them from accessing formal education.

Looking at children outside education, they gave this reason 46 votes, while children in informal education voted for it with 31 votes. In both cases, girls voted this reason the most.

From a regional perspective, security received a very high vote in Azaz: 44 votes, where it is the absolute most voted reason by girls (33). In Harem it received 26 votes in total, but interestingly here girls gave it 10 votes against 16 by boys (the second most voted reason for girls in this region, and the 3rd most voted by boys). Finally, in Atareb region this reason ranks only 8th, with 7 total votes.

Children in informal education rank this reason 3rd with 31 votes, and again girls gave it the most votes (17 votes) amongst all reasons. For out of school children, this reason ranks higher: 2nd in the list, with 46 votes, and again girls gave it the most votes (30) amongst all reasons.

3. Displacement and population movements

The security and economic conditions and limited income forced many Syrian families to move and internally flee several times. Displacement also results in restrictions on the ability of children to access formal education: as such, displacement places 4th amongst the reasons impeding children to access formal education, with a total of 67 votes.

For girls, this is the 2nd most voted reason of all (en pair with challenges to access formal education) with up to 39 votes; boys gave it 28 votes.

Findings vary according to geography. **Children in Azaz gave this reason 52 votes, and it is considered the main reason for children's inability to access formal education in this region**. In this region, boys gave it 25 votes (27 votes by girls) which makes it the 2nd most voted reason by boys in Azaz for not accessing formal education. In Harem and Atareb regions this reason was instead much less voted: it has received only 6 votes by girls in Harem, and only 9 voted by children (6 votes by girls, 3 by boys) in Atareb.

Both children outside education and children in informal education placed this reason 4th in the list: 38 votes by children outside education (27 votes by girls, the 2nd most voted reason), and 29 votes by children in informal education (slightly more voted by boys: 17 votes).

The four reasons scoring the highest are related to the conflict and socio-economic context in NWS and constitute nearly 63% (330 out of total 525 votes) of the reasons that limit children's ability to enroll in formal education.

4. Ill-treatment by teachers and other students in formal education

Formal education and its associated issues of policies, procedures and professional commitments constitute one of the important reasons affecting children's enrollment in formal education. Failure to adhere to child safeguarding policy and the integration of child protection and the provision of a safe educational environment put many children at risk of harm as a result of mistreatment by teachers, their attitudes towards responding to children's reactions during crises and lack of psychosocial support. **Children in FGDs expressed the prevalence of cases of beating and verbal abuse by teachers, and the spread of cases of bullying and discrimination on the basis of displacement by teachers and other students.**

Children gave issues related to ill-treatment by teachers and other students a total of 54 votes, with a **considerable prevalence amongst boys**, which gave it 32 votes against 22 by girls.

At the regional level, this reason was most voted in Azaz (26 votes), followed by Harem (18) and much less voted in Atareb (10). In Azaz this reason was voted equally by both boys and girls (13 votes each), while in Harem and Atareb boys voted for it more than girls (11 votes by boys out 18 total in Harem, and 8 votes by boys out 10 total in Atareb).

Both children in informal education and out-of-school children gave this reason 27 votes in total, but for children in informal education the prevalence for boys is very evident: 18 votes by boys compared to 9 votes by girls.

5. Lack of basic supplies for education

The ability to provide basic supplies for education is one of the factors that constitute a financial burden on Syrian families in NWS. In light of the low income and the dependence of many families on humanitarian assistance to secure their basic needs, **many families find it difficult to**

purchase or secure basic supplies for the education of their children. The provision of stationery, educational materials and clothing is one of the most important issues expressed by children as a reason preventing them from enrolling in formal education.Children in the 29 FGDs gave this reason 48 votes in total, with trends similar for boys (23) and girls (25).

By region, it is noted that this reason received a much higher voting in Azaz (32 votes) thus raking 4th amongst all reasons. In Atareb it received 14 votes (with prevalence for boys: 9 votes) while in Harem this reason only received 2 votes by boys, thus ranking the very last in the list.

This reason is more voted by children outside of education (31 votes) than for children in informal education (17), but with opposed gender trends: this is much more of an issue for boys in informal education (12 votes), while it got much more voted by girls (20 out 10 total) amongst those who are out of school.

6. Poor quality of formal education

The quality of formal education refers to the process that takes place inside schools. **Children expressed the lack of interest of teachers in the educational process and the lack of academic support for students.** As such, as a result of the weakness of the educational process and its outputs, some children in FGDs mentioned that some prefer to turn to vocational training as a more appropriate alternative than formal education.

Children gave poor quality of formal education 28 votes, placing it at the 7th position amongst the main reasons that limit the ability of children to enroll in formal education. **Girls voted for this reason more than boys** (17 votes against 11, respectively).

It is very interesting to note that this reason was not mentioned by children in Harem, and only got 5 votes by girls in Atareb. In Azaz region instead this reason got a total of 23 votes, with similar trends for boys (11) and girls (12).

Children outside education voted with 18 votes, with a much higher prevalence amongst boys (11), the only case where this reason got more voted by boys **while in general it appears to be more relevant for girls**. In facts, this is clearly the case for children in informal education where this reason got 10 votes only by girls.

7. Absence of caregivers

The crisis in NWS has led to many changes which contributed to creating an unsafe environment for children, especially with regard to the family and caregivers. This situation induced changes in the roles or structure in families, imposing different roles on children that prevent or limit their enjoyment and/or access to various developmental opportunities, including educational ones. Children gave absence of caregivers 23 votes amongst the reasons that limit children's ability to enroll in formal education.

Votes by gender show interesting variations. Globally, **votes are similar for boys and girls but with a slightly higher prevalence amongst girls** (13 votes, while it got 10 votes by boys). In Harem, this reason was voted much more by girls (8 votes) compared to boys (3), while in Atareb,

there is a slight prevalence for boys (7 votes). For out of school children there is a clear prevalence for boys: 5 votes against only 1 vote by girls, while for children in informal education the trend is the opposite: 12 votes by girls against only 5 votes by boys. This reason was mentioned in Atareb (12 votes) and Harem (11 votes) regions, while it has not been mentioned by participating children in Azaz.Out-of-school children only gave this reason 6 votes, while children in informal education gave it 17 votes.

8. Challenges for children with disability

Only in Atareb region children in FGDs identified an additional reason for children's inability to access formal education: this reason concerns the specific challenges for children with disability. This reason got a total of 15 votes (9 by girls and 6 by boys). Children with disability participating in FGDs expressed the **seriousness of this challenge and also mentioned fears related to bullying and neglect by teachers**.

Out-of-school children in Atareb gave it 7 votes (5 by girls) and children in informal education gave it 8 votes (4 votes by both girls and boys).

Children with disabilities accounted for approximately 10% of the total number of participating children (21 CWDs, 11 boys and 10 girls) the majority of whom where in facts included in FGDs in Atareb (14 CWDs, against 2 in Azaz and 5 in Harem), which may explain why in FGDs in Atareb this specific reason appeared that was instead not mentioned in the other regions.

9. Children devaluing the importance of education

Results show that some children are influenced by other peers: **seeing other children earning money leads them to believe that education is not of high importance**. In addition, **some children experience lack of interest in their educational opportunities from their families and surrounding communities**. With **lack of any support or encouragement to pursue an education**, children may start to search for jobs and activities that would make them feel that they are effective and have the ability to control resources and reach decision-making power.
Children therefore mentioned that some devalue the importance of education and voted this as the 10th ranking reason that limit their ability to enroll in formal education, with a total of 13 votes. It is evident thought that **this reason is more prevalent for boys**, who gave it 9 votes, compared to girls, who gave it only 4 votes. This trend is confirmed by regional-level figures: in both Azaz and Atareb this reason was voted by boys only (6 and 3 votes, respectively). Exception is Harem, where this reason was voted by girls only (4 votes). Similarly, in out-of-school children FGDs this reason was voted by boys only (9 votes), while in FGDs with children in informal education this reason was voted by girls only (4).

10. Lack of civil identification documents

In its internal policies, formal education depends on two types of documentation. The first is based on **civil papers such as the civil record or family book**, and the second type is related to **papers that reflect interim achievement progress** (educational stage - grade level - no objection paper from the previous school - an official statement from the previous school).

Children are aware of the mandatory need to possess required documents and have given to absence of civil identification documents 12 votes (which place this reason 11th in the list of all reasons that limit children's ability to enroll in formal education).
Children's views align with the well-known challenge of availability of civil identification documents in this prolonged conflict. Many Syrian families indeed do not have civil papers, either because of the war or the absence/lack of confidence in the departments that should issue these documents. Other families are also unaware of the priority of these documents despite child protection activities and legal awareness provided by the humanitarian response. On the other hand, repeated displacement and the security situation have resulted in the inability of some Syrian families to possess or update their identity papers.

It is evident that this reason is **more prevalent for boys**, who gave it 8 votes, compared to girls, who gave it only 4 votes. Concerning regional-level figures, in Azaz this reason received only 5 votes, with a prevalence for girls (4 votes), while in Harem the general prevalence for boys is confirmed as this reason got 7 votes by boys only. In Atareb this reason was not mentioned by children in FGDs. In out-of-school children FGDs this reason was voted by girls only (4), while in FGDs with children in informal education this reason was voted by boys only (8).

11. Gender considerations

Finally, **girls in Atareb** identified an additional reason that limits children's ability to enroll in formal education, which refers to gender issues (which received 2 votes). If this reason is mostly repetitive of explanations provided in other previous reasons, especially the first reason on economic factors, it has been decided to represent it separately as the girls who mentioned it specifically referred to the impact of gender on education.
As already mentioned, **the expected roles and responsibilities of males and females in light of the security, economic and social conditions in NWS force boys and girls to engage in activities with higher responsibilities that are not appropriate for their age and abilities**. Hence boys are forced to leave education and go towards employment in order to support the family, while girls are obligated to take care of younger siblings and do house chores. Girls are also restricted from going to school because of the fear of kidnapping or harm because of their gender.

2.2 How Boys and Girls in Atareb, Aziz and Harem spend their Days

The second topic within the scope of the assessment was to explore the quality of life of children in NWS and try to understand how the current context affects children's daily life.[160]
The results show that most of the children live a routine life with a semi-steady pace, noting that the years of conflict affected the roles and responsibilities of boys and girls and imposed on them a set of changes that equally affect both sexes. Boys spend long working hours outside the home, while girls are obligated to take care of their younger siblings and household chores throughout the day. Many boys and girls expressed their negative feelings and sadness because of their inability to enroll in formal education, which reduces the level of their hopes, dreams, and internal

[160] The Daily Activity Clock exercise presented some inconsistencies in the reported data which led to a decision to remove 13 (of 29) FGDs from the set. For this reason, only 16 FGDs have been analysed.

motivation. The lives of boys and girls in FGDs appear as a constant routine devoid of any emotions or ambition. Children in FGDs indicated the following as their main activities during an average, regular day:[161]

Children involved in informal education
(activities duration in hours)

		All children	Girls	Boys
(*)	**Sleeping**	8.6	8.6	8.6
	Informal education	3.8	4	3.75
	Working	2	2	0
	Housework	4.1	4.3	4
	Playing with friends	2.7	3	2.5
(*)	**Sitting with parents**	1.4	1.2	1.5
	Staying at home	2	3	0
(*)	**Taking meals**	1.9	1.9	1.9
	Watching TV or phone and browsing YouTube or other programs	1.7	1.5	2
(*)	**Walking to/from home**	1	1	1
	Going to the mosque	2	2	2
		31.2	32.5	27.3

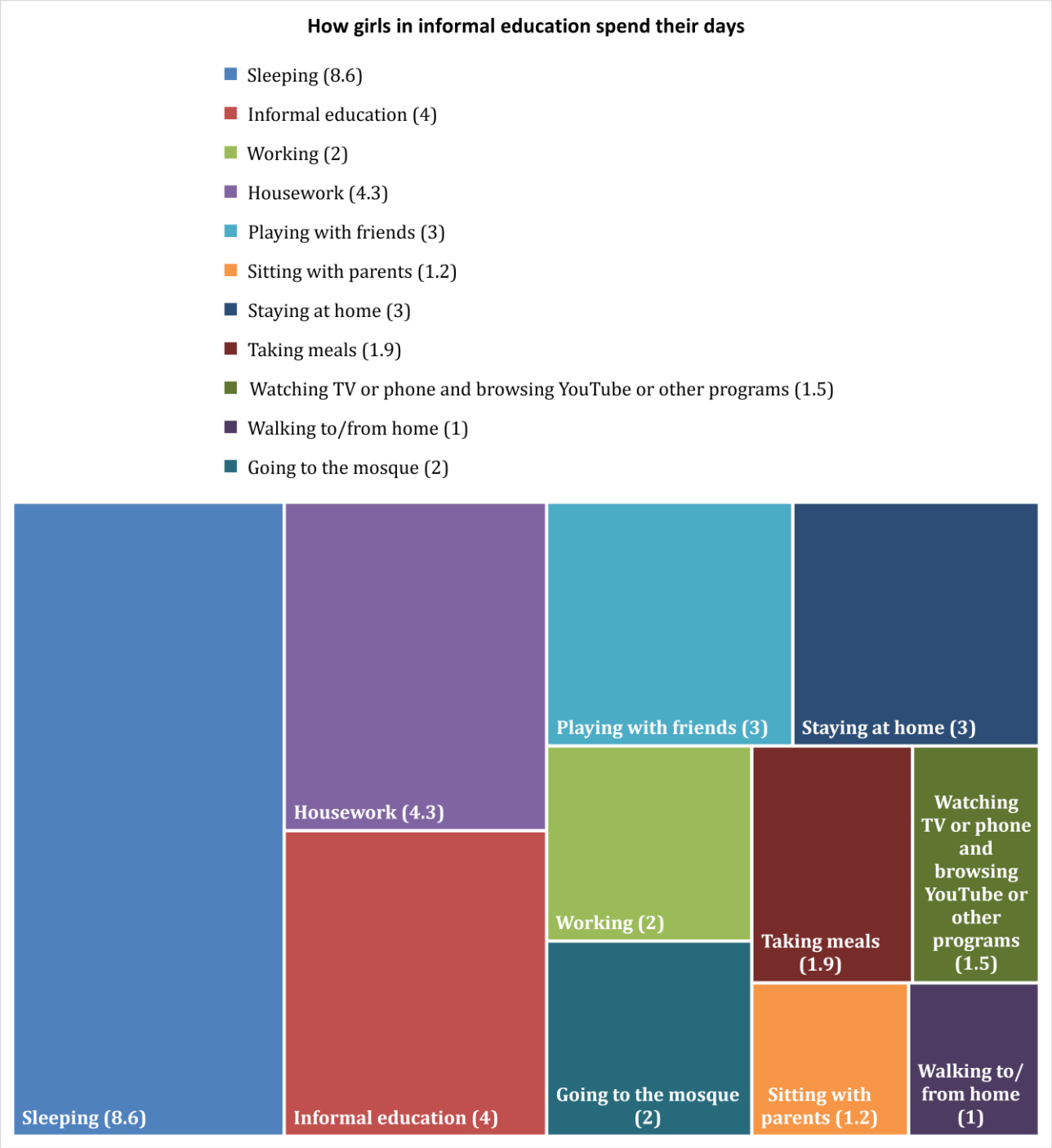
Children out of school
(activities duration in hours)

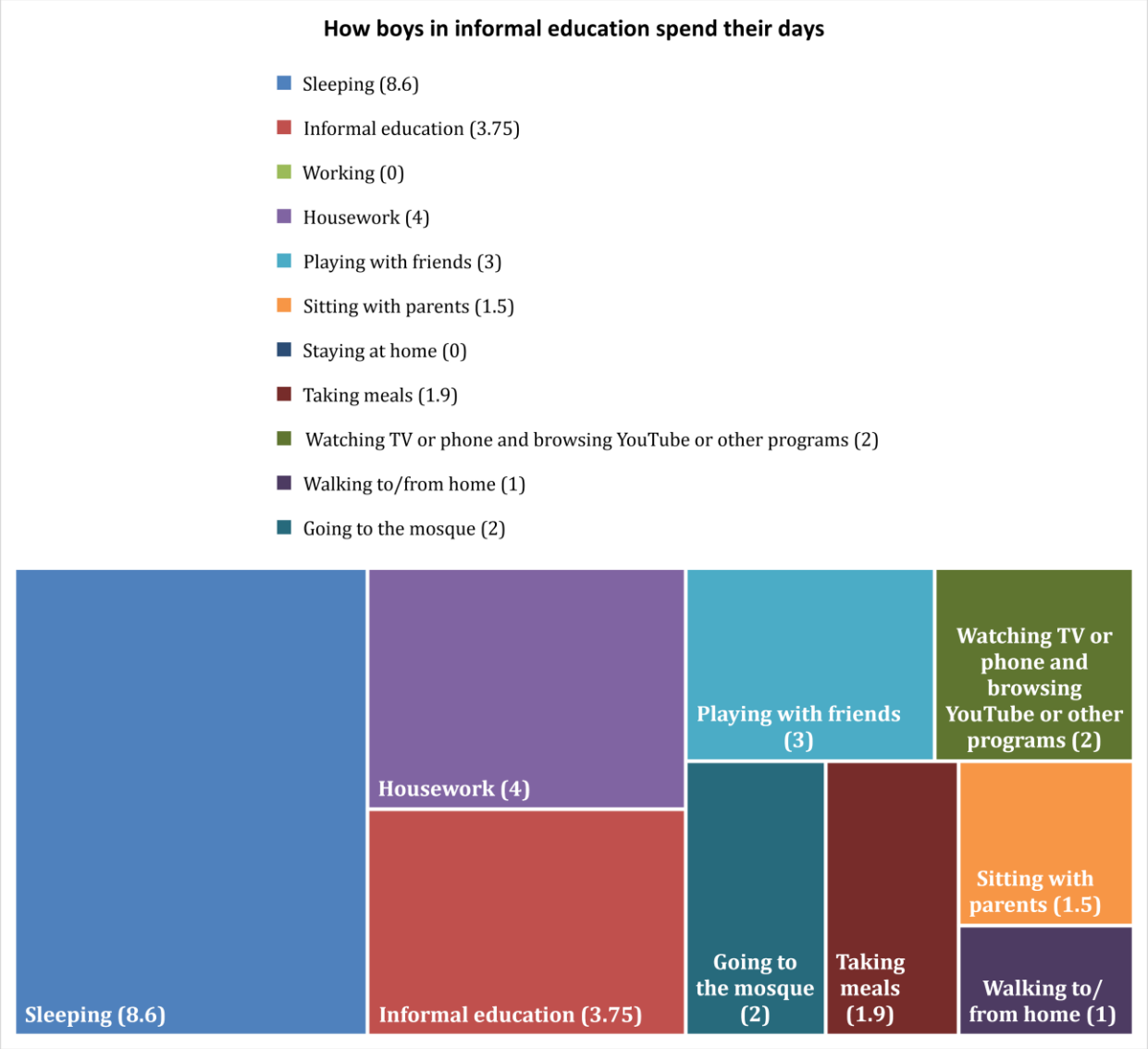
		All children	Girls	Boys
(*)	**Sleeping**	8.6	8.6	8.6
	Informal education	0	0	0
	Working	7.3	5.3	8.3
	Housework	2.4	3.5	1.7
	Playing with friends	1	1	1
(*)	**Sitting with parents**	1.4	1.2	1.5
	Staying at home	2	2	0
(*)	**Taking meals**	1.9	1.9	1.9
	Watching TV or phone and browsing YouTube or other programs	2.2	2.5	2
(*)	**Walking to/from home**	1	1	1
	Going to the mosque	0	0	0
		27.8	27	26

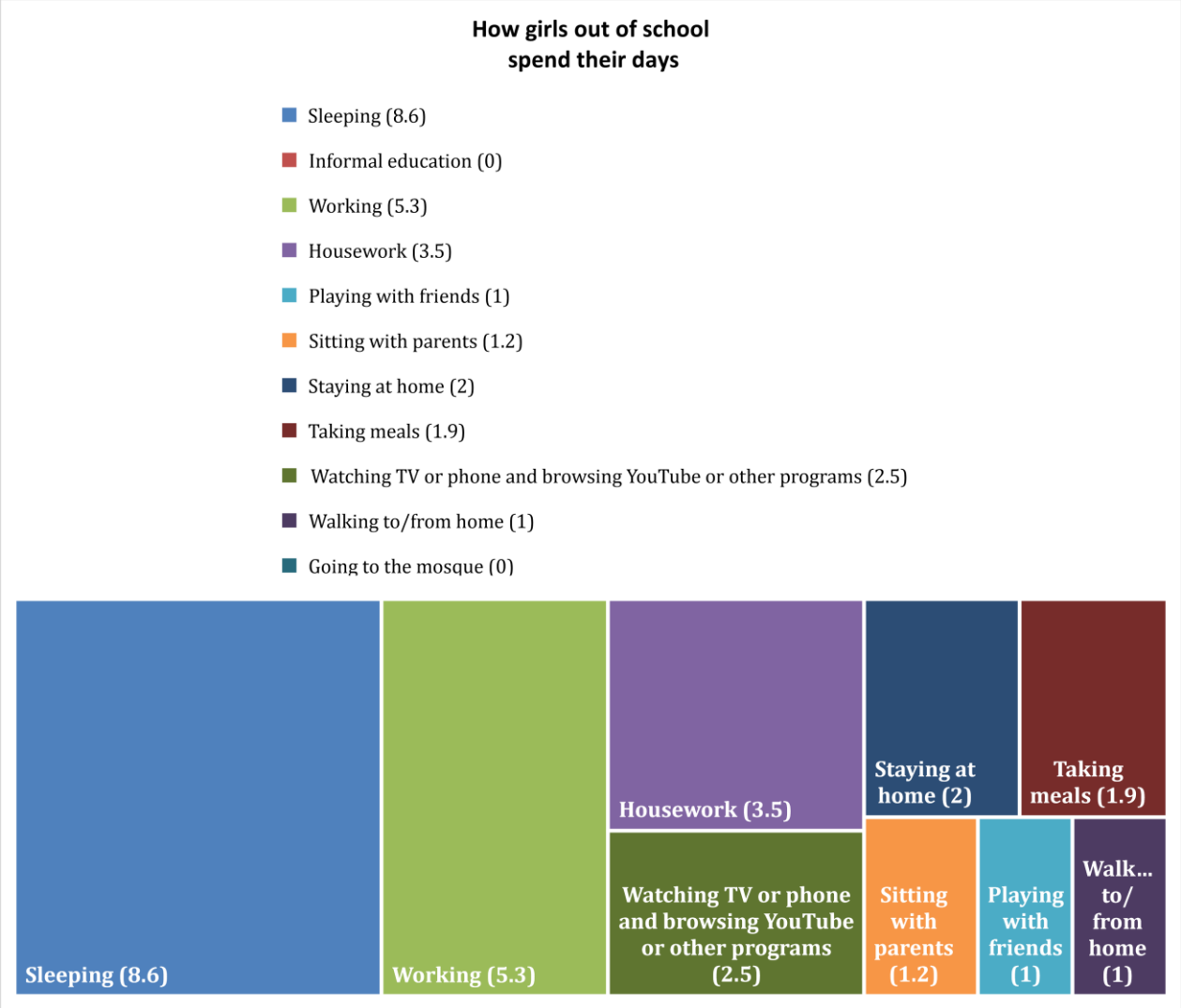
(*) Daily activities for which no remarkable difference has been noted for children in informal education and out of school children

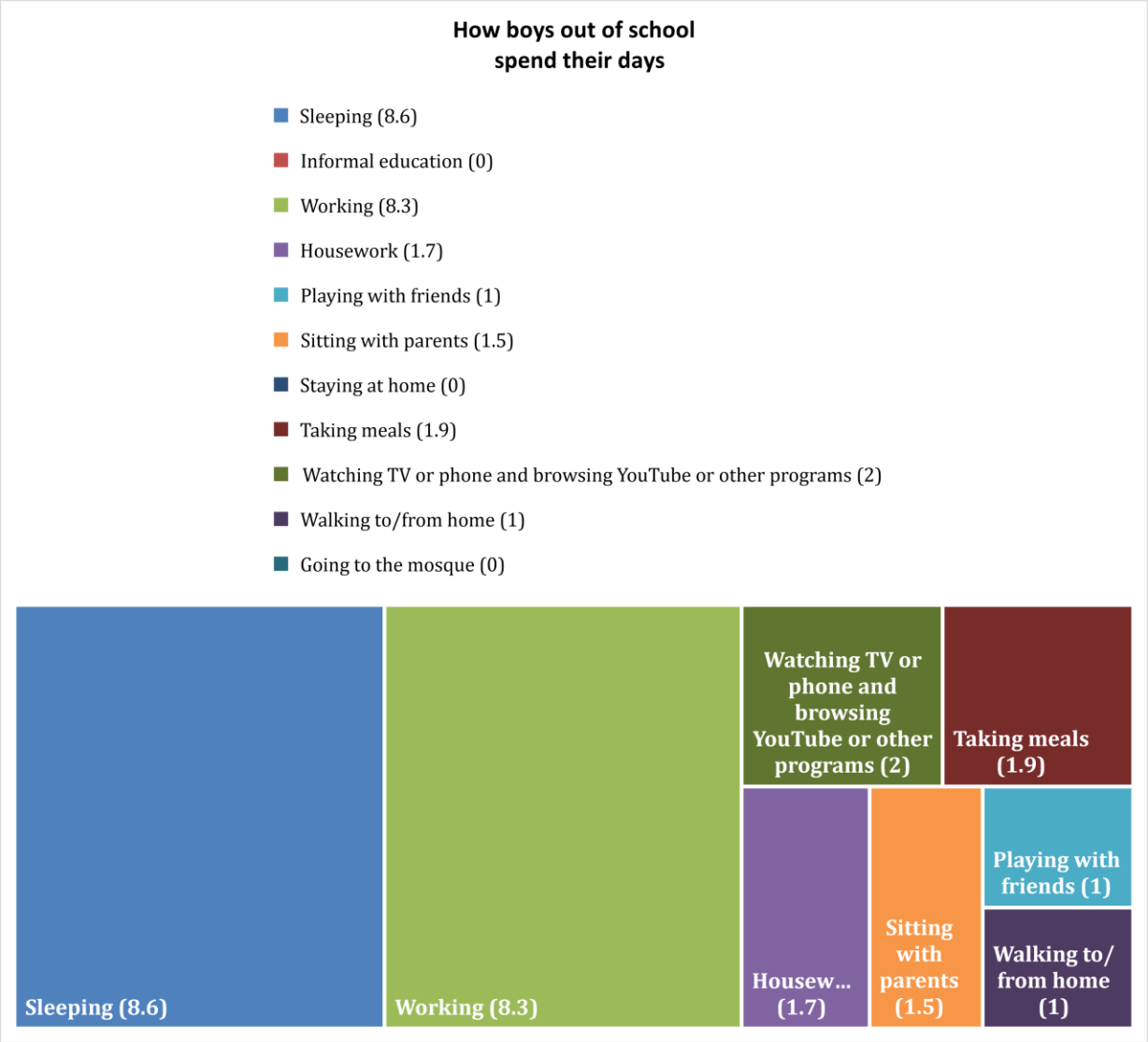
Totals amount to much more than 24 hours a day. This is because the represented figures do not represent exactly how an average child (boy or girl, in informal education or out of school) spends their day exactly, since the data sources are not homogenous (figures have been calculated from a smaller data set of only 16 FGDs out of the total 29, and the described daily activities were not consistently mentioned by all children in all 16 FGDs). As such, these figures are meant to rather represent the *kinds* of activities children in NWS are involved with during a regular day, and *how long such activities can last (on average) for some of the participating children*. Other interesting findings show the different share of some of the activities by gender, for girls and boys, and by educational status, for children in informal education and children out of school.

[161] N = 16 FGDs.


How girls in informal education spend their days
Sleeping (8.6)
Informal education (4)
Working (2)
Housework (4.3)
Playing with friends (3)
Sitting with parents (1.2)
Staying at home (3)
Taking meals (1.9)
Watching TV or phone and browsing YouTube or other programs (1.5)
Walking to/from home (1)
Going to the mosque (2)
Sleeping (8.6)
Housework (4.3)
Informal education (4)
Playing with friends (3)
Staying at home (3)
Working (2)
Taking meals (1.9)
Watching TV or phone and browsing YouTube or other programs (1.5)
Going to the mosque (2)
Sitting with parents (1.2)
Walking to/ from home (1)


How boys in informal education spend their days
Sleeping (8.6)
Informal education (3.75)
Working (0)
Housework (4)
Playing with friends (3)
Sitting with parents (1.5)
Staying at home (0)
Taking meals (1.9)
Watching TV or phone and browsing YouTube or other programs (2)
Walking to/from home (1)
Going to the mosque (2)
Sleeping (8.6)
Housework (4)
Informal education (3.75)
Playing with friends (3)
Watching TV or phone and browsing YouTube or other programs (2)
Going to the mosque (2)
Taking meals (1.9)
Sitting with parents (1.5)
Walking to/ from home (1)


How girls out of school spend their days
Sleeping (8.6)
Informal education (0)
Working (5.3)
Housework (3.5)
Playing with friends (1)
Sitting with parents (1.2)
Staying at home (2)
Taking meals (1.9)
Watching TV or phone and browsing YouTube or other programs (2.5)
Walking to/from home (1)
Going to the mosque (0)
Sleeping (8.6)
Working (5.3)
Housework (3.5)
Watching TV or phone and browsing YouTube or other programs (2.5)
Staying at home (2)
Taking meals (1.9)
Sitting with parents (1.2)
Playing with friends (1)
Walk... to/ from home (1)



Sleeping

- Average time spent sleeping: 8.6 hours.
- Waking up time: usually, children wake up at around 6 or 7 am.
- Going to bed: usually, children go to bed at around 9 or 10 pm.

There are no noticeable differences between boys and girls, nor for children out of school or in informal education. In-camp and out of camp children also do not show different sleeping patterns, nor do children in the three regions.

Participation in informal educational activities

Time spent engaged in education has been mentioned only by children involved in informal educational activities, both boys and girls, both in camp and outside camp settings.

In the 6 FGDs where children reported spending time in educational activities each day, education starts at 8 am and takes place in the mornings (finishing hour varies from 11 am to 1 pm), with one exception where girls reported starting at 10 am and finishing at 4 pm.

- Average time spent in informal education: 3.8 hours per day.
- Average time spent in informal education for girls: 4.0 hours per day.
- Average time spent in informal education for boys: 3.75 hours per day.

Figures by gender might be skewed by one of the 2 FGDs where in-camp girls reported 6 hours of information education a day (from 10 am to 4 pm) which seems very long since all other children who mentioned being involved in informal education reported from 2 to 4 hours/day. In this light, it seems safe to estimate that both boys and girls spend about 3-4 hours/days in informal education.

For in-camp children the average time spent in informal education is 5 hours, but again this figure might be skewed by the one girl FGD that reported 6 hours/day. Instead, for out-of-camp children the average duration of informal education activities is 3 hours/day.

In this sub-sample of children, boys are a majority, and all children are aged 11-14 years, but this cannot be seen as an indicator that more boys than girls or that more young children than adolescents above 14 years are involved in informal educational activities.

Working

Children mentioned being involved in work in 10 FGDs. These include all the 9 FGDs of out of school children in the reduced sample for the Daily Clock Activity, plus 1 FGDs with girls involved in informal education.

- Average duration of working/child labour: 6.8 hours per day.
- Average duration of working/child labour for girls: 4.5 hours per day
- Average duration of working/child labour for boys: 8.3 hours per day

Removing the 1 FGD with girls in informal education, concerning exclusively children out of school figures are as follows:

- Average duration of working/child labour for out-of-school children: 7.3 hours per day.
- Average duration of working/child labour for out-of-school girls: 5.3 hours per day
- Average duration of working/child labour for out-of-school boys: 8.3 hours per day

Girls clearly report working much less hours than boys. In 4 FGDs, out of schoolboys reported working for up to 9, 10 or 11 hours/day, a staggering duration clearly not in line with ILO conventions that forbit children from working excessive hours.

The least worked hours/day are reported in 2 FGDs with girls: 2 hours (including the only FGD with girls in informal education in this small sample).

Adolescent boys and girls aged 15-17-year-old work on average for 7 hours/day, while younger boys and girls aged 11-14-year-old work on average for 6.5 hours/day.

Housework

In 11 of the 16 FGDs children reported being involved in housework. This applies to both boys and girls, in informal education and out of school children, in camp and out of camps. Both groups aged 11-14 and 15-17 years reported being engaged in housework.

- Average duration of housework: 3.4 hours per day.
- Average duration of housework for girls: 4 hours per day
- Average duration of housework for boys: 3 hours per day

In most cases, housework is done in the afternoons until late afternoon/early evening. In 2 FGDs, older boys aged 15-17 years reported being busy with housework in the morning instead, from 7 to 8 am. In various FGDs that reported several hours spent in housework, children may be engaged discontinuously during different hours of the day.

Girls indicated a longer involvement in housework: up to 4 hours/day, with a pick of 7 hours/day reported in 1 FGD and a second reaching 5 hours/day. Boys, which on average are involved in housework for less time than girls (3 hours/day), reported the longest duration in 2 FGD of 5 hours/day but also the lowest reported figure of 1 hour/day.

Children (boys and girls) engaged in informal education report an average of 4.1 hours/day in housework, while out of school children (boys and girls) report 2.4 hours/day in housework. In particular, girls out of school show the longest involvement in housework of all children, above the general average: 3.5 hours/day. Out of school boys instead show the shortest involvement in housework of all children: 1.7 hours/day.

Children (boys and girls) engaged in informal education are more numerous in this sub-sample compared to out of school boys and girls who report being involved in housework.

Playing with friends

In only 6 FGDs children reported spending some time daily playing with children, and the majority are boys.

- Average duration of play time with friends: 1.8 hours per day.
- Average duration of play time with friends for girls: 2.0 hours per day
- Average duration of play time with friends for boys: 1.75 hours per day

If a minority in reporting having time to spend playing with friends, girls seem to be playing longer (2 hours/day) compared to boys (1.75 hours/day).

Interestingly, children (boys and girls) in informal education spend much more time playing with friends (2.7 hours/day) than their peers who are out of school (1 hour/day).

In this small sample, it is also noted that adolescent boys 15-17-year-old spend only 1 hour/day playing, while younger children (boys and girls) aged 11-14 years spend on average 2.25 hours/day playing.

Sitting with parents
In 13 of the FGDs in the sample for the Daily Clock Activity, children (with a prevalence of boys) reported spending time sitting with their parents each day.

- Average duration of sitting with parents: 1.4 hours per day.
- Average duration of sitting with parents for girls: 1.2 hours per day
- Average duration of sitting with parents for boys: 1.5 hours per day

Children sit with their parents in the evening hours, usually in between 7/8 pm and 9/10 pm. Only in 3 FGDs children mentioned sitting with their parents in the late afternoon rather (somewhere between 4 and 7 pm).

Staying at home
In 2 FGDs, girls only reported spending an average of 2.5 hours at home in the afternoon.

Taking meals
In all the 16 FGDs in the sample for the Daily Clock Activity, children mentioned taking meals. However, reported information is not systematic: for example, in only 2 FGDs children reported having the 3 meals/day (breakfast, lunch, dinner), and in 4 FGDs children reported only 1 meal/day (be it breakfast, or lunch, or dinner). In the other cases, children reported having 2 meals/day (4 FGDs lunch and dinner, 6 FGDs breakfast and lunch).
In 10 of the 16 FGDs children reported having breakfast.
The duration assigned to each meal is 1 hour (which may be just a simplification and not necessarily correspond to the actual duration of each meal). As such, it is estimated that children spend on average 1.9 hours/day taking meals.

Watching TV or phone and browsing YouTube or other programs
In up to 8 FGDs children reported spending time daily watching TV or phone and browsing YouTube or other programs. This happens always in the evenings, with varying time-frames from 5 pm to 11 pm.

- Average duration of watching TV or phone and browsing YouTube or other programs: 2 hours per day.
- Average duration of watching TV or phone and browsing YouTube or other programs for girls: 2 hours per day
- Average duration of watching TV or phone and browsing YouTube or other programs for boys: 2 hours per day

In this small sample, more out of school children reported spending time watching TV or phone and browsing YouTube or other programs, for an average of 2.2 hours/day. Instead, the smaller number of children in informal education who reported watching TV or phone and browsing YouTube or other programs do so for an average of 1.7 hours/day.

Only 2 of the 8 FGDs where children reported watching TV or phone and browsing YouTube or other programs concern out of camp children who indicate a much shorter time spent on average in these actions: 1 hour/day. Instead, the more numerous in-camp children who watch TV or phone and browse YouTube or other programs do so for an average of 2.3 hours/day.

Walking to/from home

In 9 FGDs children reported spending 1 hour/day walking back/from home (only in 1 FGD boys mentioned walking to/from home for 2 hours/day). Figures apply to both boys and girls, in informal education or out of school, in camp and out of camp settings.

Going to the mosque

In 2 FGDs, one with girls and one with boys (both in camp and involved in informal education), children reported spending 2 hours at the mosque: girls in the morning (7-9 am) and boys in the afternoon (4-6 pm).

3 Conclusions

The results confirmed that the continuation of the humanitarian crisis in NWS still poses new and renewed challenges that affect children's access to formal education. Girls and boys confirmed that the economic and social conditions and orientation towards employment, and frequent displacement constitute major challenges for children's access to formal education. The need to support their families and the low income force many boys to turn to employment in order to earn money and meet basic needs in support to their family. Fear of kidnapping or ill-treatment in school prompt many families in NWS to take strict measures by not allowing girls to participate in formal education or community activities. Issues related to the education system quality, such as the prevalence of abuse and bullying, the lack of formal education opportunities in displacement camps, and the quality of the formal educational process, are further major reasons that limit children's ability to enroll in formal education. Girls and boys reflected negative attitudes and perceptions about the quality of life and that the daily routine dominates the total number of hours of the day.

4 Recommendations

- Results show a significant impact of context-related issues in NWS on children's access to formal education, and it is useful to devote a targeted study to assess this impact.
- The current study did not measure caregivers' attitudes about their decisions not to send children to formal education, to send them to work, or to keep them at home, and this also may be a useful field of study.
- Emphasis on adherence to quality standards within formal education and improved mainstreaming of child protection is needed.
- Emphasis on the necessity of adhering to child safeguarding policies and code of conduct, preventing sexual exploitation and abuse from workers in formal education, and building their capacities is needed.
- Support is needed to ensure meaningful access for girls and boys with disabilities into the physical environment and formal education processes.
- Addressing the problem of the civil identification documents required for the enrollment of girls and boys in formal education is important.
- Increasing the space for children's participation in evaluating key issues, investing in their opinions, amplifying their voices, and advocating for them is a must do for all humanitarian child-focused organizations in NWS and to make the educational and child protection responses more accountable to children.

Annex 3: Data Aggregation Tables

Data Aggregation Tables can be found here.

Global Education Cluster

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Child Protection Whole of Syria (Türkiye Hub)

Child Protection

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