

Annexes.**Annex 1:** Further explanation of challenges in recruiting

We approached a number of school boards outside of the Montreal area repeatedly and without success. We sought the introduction of Ministry of Education staff in early 2021, however this did not lead to other school board involvement. We posit that the demands of running an adult education centre are high, and so too is the staff turnover, and staff and practitioners are unable to prioritise participation in a research project. Once we secured the ethics approval of school boards, we contacted individual schools to request their permission to conduct interviews with their staff and students, in accordance with school policies. Despite repeated attempts with multiple schools, this did not lead to participation of all schools contacted. Two schools were actively engaged in the recruitment of students and practitioners.

To increase participation of students, one school permitted two members of the research team to present the research project to all of their francisation classes as well as adult general education classes where the research team's point of contact believed we could find participants. Despite some students indicating interest to participate on the day of the presentation no eligible students contacted the research team to organize an interview. Accordingly, this mode of recruitment did not lead to the participation of participants. We were set to present at another school when the coronavirus pandemic hit and consequently the school chose not to continue facilitating access to students, so as to allow them to better focus on supporting students' transition to online learning.

Alongside recruitment efforts through schools, we also approached 10 community organizations that had some relationship with Syrian refugees in 2019. These organizations were requested to post the research projects recruitment material to their social media pages. We also presented to an English class at one community organization where Syrian students were present. Neither of these modes of recruitment led to any participants. All

those who did contact the research staff were ineligible, having already completed high school, seeking to learn French or English or to get their Syrian qualifications recognised.

Annex 2: Background literature

Disrupted education of refugee young adults

Having been unable to complete their education prior to arriving in a resettlement context, refugee young adults are at a disadvantage precisely because they are above the mandatory age of education and thus have very little state or institutional focus on them. What happens to these young adults? How do they find their way to FGA? What are their experiences there? What challenges do they face in pursuing their education? What strengths do they draw upon to complete their education?

Refugee youth and young adults are the least likely to have been able to go to school whilst in countries of first asylum as a consequence of the pressure to work and support their families (Chopra & Adelman 2017; Dryden-Peterson 2016). Their inability to go to school and finish their high school is not a choice, but largely a forced decision. Disrupted education began in the specific case of Syrian refugee students while still in Syria as conflict spewed across different areas of the country. Education in Syria was mandatory and free pre-conflict; however, as the war progressed, enrolment in secondary school in Syria dropped from 76.06 % in 2012 to 49.31% in 2013, while out-of-school adolescents jumped from 217,251 in 2012 to 1,050,405 in 2013 (UNESCO, 2018). UNICEF stated that “[m]ore than two decades of education access expansion have been lost due to the conflict” (2015, p. 28). In 2021, 2.4 million Syrian children continue to remain out of school in Syria (UNICEF, 2021). Due to the vagaries of war and limited access to education within conflict affected settings, many students remained out of school especially those living in rebel-controlled areas with over 7,000 schools being destroyed or abandoned (UNICEF, 2018). At the height of the conflict, some schools even moved underground or into caves to safeguard learning and its continuation despite the conflict (Armstrong, 2016; Ashawi, 2017).

As Syrian refugee children and youth fled to countries of first asylum such as Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq, and Egypt (UNICEF, 2015) disrupted education continued. Although enrollment began to improve, 40% of Syrian refugee children in neighbouring countries remain outside of school (Their World, 2018). However, these reported findings do not take into account those students who were unable to finish their education due to their displacement and who have since "aged out" of the traditional school age years.

Some of the reasons that schooling was not possible for these children and youth in neighbouring countries had to do with direct and indirect costs associated with education, such as distance from schools and thus transport fees, parents' fear of their children being bullied or discriminated, perceived lack of quality education provided to Syrians compared with nationals of the country, and the need to supplement the family income of refugees through child labour (UNICEF, 2015). This is a serious problem found in neighbouring countries amongst Syrian refugees where children were working in various industries, such as construction and agriculture (UN, 2018). Student access to schooling was further limited by government policy in neighbouring countries such as in Jordan, where Syrian parents were initially required to bring in certain documentation that many did not have in order to register their children in a school, or the policy that students who have been outside of formal schooling for more than three years were unable to re-enter. Similar barriers existed in Turkey and Lebanon (UNICEF, 2015). Lastly, access within the countries was inconsistent, with major discrepancies between urban and camp-based refugee populations. For example, in Turkey, 80% of students in camps were attending school while the number dropped to 30% for urban based students (UNICEF, 2015).

Education for Syrians in neighbouring countries was not ideal in terms of quality as Ahmadzadeh et al. (2014) confirm: "children spend only three and a half hours in overcrowded classrooms comprising sometimes up to 70 children", despite best efforts (p. 31). Second shifts at school were even adopted in order to accommodate Syrians, with

teachers often poorly trained, offering entertainment rather than education (Satev et al., 2016, p. 7).

Evidence from first asylum countries attests to the fact that youth and young adults faced the consequences of disrupted education more so than children (Mercy Corps, 2016).

Indeed, the 15-18-year age group were, and still are, characterised by very low formal education enrolment, with the youth category of 16-24 even further disadvantaged with vastly insufficient educational services available to them (Ahmadzadeh et al., 2014; Human Rights Watch, 2020). UNESCO concurred stating that funding was generally tied to basic education and there were limited funds for post-basic education (2016). To illustrate, while working in Jordan in 2016, one of our researchers met Syrian refugee youth in Azraq refugee camp attempting to complete their *Tawjihi*, the certificate indicating completion of secondary school in Jordan. Of a camp of 32,000 people at the time, only a handful of students were attempting to get this certification under extremely difficult conditions.

In line with the "No Lost Generation" strategy, UNESCO initiated a program titled "Bridging Learning Gaps for Youth" across the crisis affected areas with the aim of enrolling 50,000 young Syrians into secondary school (2016) yet little publicly accessible information about its results exists. With ongoing challenges in primary and secondary schools, not to mention the extreme pressure to work to live, one can assume that the numbers were not reached. As Chopra and Adelman highlighted, "[o]n a daily basis, many students must confront the binary of studying to achieve their goals or working to fulfill pressing daily needs" (2017, p. 7).

Despite their inability to continue with their schooling, education has consistently been deemed the most important aspiration of refugees and their families because of the belief that it provides social and economic mobility (Gandarilla Ocampo, Bennouna, Seff, Wessells, Robinson, Allaf & Stark 2020). Education is also viewed by global policy makers as a means to support the future return of refugees to their home countries

(Dryden-Peterson 2016). More recently, scholars have identified that ensuring education for refugees in countries of asylum is often a pragmatic trade off considering the protracted nature of displacement (Dryden-Peterson, Adelman, Bellino & Chopra 2019). In the context of resettlement, education is viewed as a key aspect to enable integration (Ager & Strang 2008; MacKay & Tavares 2005). Education for refugee students thus has immense benefits on the personal, familial, community, and national levels.

Educational needs of refugee young adults

Existing literature from Canada highlights that the challenge for refugee young adults to access and succeed in education is far greater than that for children as a result of their disrupted education and pressure to work (Wilkinson 2001; 2002; Boyd 2002; Gunderson 2000; MacKay and Tavares, 2005; Kanu 2008; MacNevin 2012; Hou and Bonikowska 2016) and lack of institutional focus on them. After years outside the formal schooling system, refugee young adults face the daunting prospect of being in school for long periods to get a high school diploma to continue to higher education or vocational training, largely without financial support. In the context of Québec students are ineligible for bursaries or loans while undertaking FGA because it is still considered secondary schooling. Some students are able to access Emploi Québec, although this was not common amongst the cohort we spoke with. While education is widely accepted as an important basis for successful integration, entering school at an advanced age can create a sense of anxiety and hopelessness (MacKay and Tavares 2005). Adding to the displacement experience and its administrative challenges, financial pressure, language barriers, overt and covert forms of racism, differences in approaches to teaching and learning, all contribute to refugee students feeling overwhelmed, unsupported and dropping out (Baffoe 2006; Blanchet-Cohen, Denov, Fraser and Bilotta 2017).

With almost all jobs in Québec requiring at least grade 10 education and some rudimentary knowledge of English or French, having effective support systems in FGA centres in Québec

is essential to ensure refugees' employability and successful integration, now and into the long term. The consequences of inaction are severe. As has been highlighted, refugee young adults who are unable to access education or fulfilling employment are vulnerable to social exclusion which can encourage their participation in anti-social activities such as gangs and crime (Boys and Girls Club 2017; Fast 2017; Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009; Sersli Salazar, & Lozano, 2010) and impact their psychological well-being (Hansson et al., 2012).

Annex 3: Questions to students

1. How did you first hear about adult education in Québec? What did you first learn about it?
2. What (or who) encouraged you to start studying at adult education? Why? Are you satisfied you followed that encouragement? Why?
3. What do you hope to achieve by completing adult education? What are your future expectations for after this completion?
4. What or who has been the greatest support through your time in adult education so far? Note: This could include a teacher, social worker, your parents or your partner, or your friends for example. Follow up: How have they supported you? Why was this support significant?
5. How would you describe the support you receive from within the adult education school? PRIMER: Is it positive or negative? Continuous or broken? Follow up: Do you receive informal support or have you accessed support services? Have they met your initial expectations?
6. What has been a challenge that you have had to face because of attending adult education school? For example, do you have household responsibilities such as looking after children? Or do you also have to work? If not, do you know whether your classmates face challenges while attending adult education school?
7. What has been the greatest challenge inside the classroom? For example, studying in a new language, understanding a new/different school culture or structure?
8. What do you get most frustrated about being in adult education? How were you able to manage that frustration? Were any of the support services available helpful to address this?

9. Is there anything else you would like to say about your experiences in adult education so far?
10. Would you encourage new Syrian refugees to enroll in the adult education system soon after their arrival in Canada? Why/why not?

Annex 4 Questions to practitioners

A. Support workers:

1. Could you please introduce yourself and your role and responsibilities within the school?
2. Do you have experience of working with students from refugee backgrounds?
3. What is the process for a student to access your services in the school? Would you say it is an effective process? Why?
4. What sort of support are you able to provide students? What is your level of satisfaction about it? Why?
5. What is the profile of students who usually access your services?
6. What is the profile of students who do not usually access your services?
7. Have you received trauma informed training (how to identify, how to respond, and trauma informed care)? If so, when and how was this received?
8. Do you refer students to services outside of the school environment? If so, how often does it happen? Is there a follow-up process to it?
9. In your opinion, what would help you better support students to complete school? What are the reasons for it?

B. Teachers:

1. How long have you been working as a teacher in adult education?
2. What subjects do you teach?
3. Have you taught students from refugee backgrounds? Particularly those with disrupted education? If so, how is teaching/supporting these students different from other students?
4. In your experience, what are the greatest challenges that refugee students face in starting, continuing and completing adult education?

5. Are any of those challenges particular to Syrian refugee students? If so, what are they?
6. Do you have particular strategies to support those students who are struggling in the classroom? If so, how have you acquired and built those strategies?
7. Do you have particular strategies for those students who excel in understanding but struggle with language? If so, what are they?
8. Do you have particular strategies to support students who are struggling to manage work and home responsibilities with study requirements? If so, what are they?
9. When a student has been identified by you as requiring extra support, and this support should be provided outside of the classroom---- what is the next step in your school? Who do you reach out to in the staff body?
10. What are the support services available to students in your school? Would you describe these as informal or formal supports?
11. In the time you have been working in adult education, have you seen a change in the sorts of support services students can access?
12. How would you describe this change? Positive or negative? More accessible, more related to student needs?
13. In your experience, do students make use of the support services?
14. In your experience, are the support services meeting the needs of students?
15. What would you say is the level of satisfaction of refugee students with the support services accessible to them?
16. In your opinion, what kind of support service for refugee students needs to be reinforced/changed/optimized by the government? Why?

C. Principals:

1. In your experience, what are the major challenges that refugee students face in your school?
2. How many support staff do you have in your school? Do you consider this amount enough?
3. What sort of support services do you offer to students in your school?
4. Are these services regularly used by students? If so, would you say they are satisfied with the support given/offered to them?
5. What is the profile of the sort of student who would use these services? What is the profile of the student who would not use these services?
6. What strategies do you have to reach students who do not come forward themselves? Have these been successful? Why?
7. What do you perceive to be the barriers to students accessing these services? Why?
8. Do you think there are more appropriate services to address student issues in your school?
 - a. If yes, what are the reasons why such support services are not offered?
 - b. Are these support services developed within the school or a requirement of the school board or ministry?
9. Does your school refer students to support services outside of the school? ie settlement services, *Emploi Québec*, psychologists, social workers? What is the process for that referral? How often does it occur?
10. How much of the school budget can you and do you allocate to complementary educational support services? Are you satisfied with that amount?
11. If you were able to allocate funding from the Ministry, where would you increase resources at your school? Why would you make that decision?

12. What has been your experience with students from refugee backgrounds? Do they face the same or different challenges as other students? If so, what are they?

13. Have any of your staff undertaken training on how to recognise trauma, how best to respond to trauma, and how to provide trauma-informed care? If so, when and how was it provided?

Annex 5: Consent form for students

A. Interview:

Department of Integrated Studies in Education

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN AN INTERVIEW

We would like to invite you to be in a study conducted by Professor Ratna Ghosh (Department of Integrated Studies in Education) and Professor Srividya Narayanan Iyer (Division of Social and Transcultural Psychiatry) of McGill University. The purpose of the study is to learn about the experiences of Syrian refugee young adults in the adult education system in Québec. We will be speaking with students as well as staff. The study is funded by the *Fonds de recherche société et culture* (FRQSC) and has received ethics approval from McGill University under REB file 228-1018

We would like to interview you for approximately one hour. During the interview, we will ask you a series of questions on your experience in adult education in Québec. You can answer in either Arabic, English or French. In case you opt to participate by answering in Arabic, a translator will be present.

To thank you for participation, you will receive a \$25 gift voucher.

The interviews will be audio recorded.

The research team (principal investigator, researcher assistants and a translator) will have access to identifiable data during the study. The data that results from your participation will be ID coded. This means that the personal information you

provide will be kept confidential, will not be connected with the answers you give nor will it be shared with other researchers.

The translator will sign a confidentiality agreement to ensure that participants' information will remain private and confidential.

Participation in the study is voluntary. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time for any reason at which point all your data will be destroyed unless you specify otherwise. The code key will be destroyed after three years. If you choose to be in the study, the research team would be pleased to share a summary of the results with you. You will also need to tell us if you are willing to be contacted for further involvement in the study in the coming years.

If you decide not to be in the research, it will not affect your relationship with McGill University, the adult education centre you attend or any other service providers.

If you have any questions, please feel free to speak with the researchers Professor Ratna Ghosh (ratna.ghosh@mcgill.ca, 514-398-4527), Professor Srividya Narayanan Iyer (srividya.iyer@mcgill.ca) or our research assistant Dominique Sherab (dominique.sherab@mcgill.ca).

If you have any ethical concerns or complaints about your participation in this study and want to speak with someone not on the research team, please contact the McGill Ethics Manager, Lynda McNeil, by telephone at: 514-398-6831 or at: lynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca.

Consent

Please sign below if you have read the above information and consent to participate in this study. Agreeing to participate in this study does not waive any of your rights or release the researchers from their responsibilities. A copy of this consent form will be given to you and the researcher will keep a copy.

I am willing to be contacted for further involvement in the research and/or similar future research projects Y or N

Participant's Name: (please print) _____

Participant's Signature: _____

Date:

REB file 228-1018

B. Focus group discussion:

Department of Integrated Studies in Education

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN FOCUS GROUP

We would like to invite you to be in a study conducted by Professor Ratna Ghosh (Department of Integrated Studies in Education) and Professor Srividya Narayanan Iyer (Division of Social and Transcultural Psychiatry) of McGill University. The purpose of the study is to learn about the experiences of Syrian refugee young adults in the adult education system in Québec. We will be speaking with students as well as staff. The study is funded by the *Fonds de recherche société et culture* (FRQSC) and has received ethics approval from McGill University under REB file 228-1018.

We would like to invite you to participate in a discussion with other Syrian young adults in adult education (approx. 1.5-2 hours). During the focus group, we will ask you a series of questions on your experience in adult education in Québec. You can answer in either Arabic, English or French. In case you opt to participate by answering in Arabic, a translator will be present.

To thank you for participation, you will receive a \$25 gift voucher.

The focus group will be audio recorded.

The research team (principal investigator, researcher assistants and a translator) will have access to identifiable data during the study. The data that results from your participation will be ID coded. This means that the personal information you

provide will be kept confidential, will not be connected with the answers you give nor will it be shared with other researchers.

The translator will sign a confidentiality agreement to ensure that participants' information will remain private and confidential.

Due to the nature of focus groups, confidentiality may not be fully guaranteed during the focus group because other participants in the group will be able to hear what others are saying. Knowing this, we ask you to refrain from sharing and discussing information with anyone else outside the group in order to respect the confidentiality of group members.

Participation in the study is voluntary. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time for any reason at which point all your data will be destroyed unless you specify otherwise. The code key will be destroyed after three years. If you choose to be in the study, the research team would be pleased to share a summary of the results with you. You will also need to tell us if you are willing to be contacted for further involvement in the study in the coming years.

If you decide not to be in the research, it will not affect your relationship with McGill University, the adult education centre you attend or any other service providers.

If you have any questions, please feel free to speak with the researchers Professor Ratna Ghosh (ratna.ghosh@mcgill.ca, 514-398-4527), Professor Srividya Narayanan Iyer (srividya.iyer@mcgill.ca) or our research assistant Dominique Sherab (dominique.sherab@mcgill.ca).

If you have any ethical concerns or complaints about your participation in this study and want to speak with someone not on the research team, please contact the McGill Ethics Manager, Lynda McNeil, by telephone at:514-398-6831 or at: lynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca.

Consent

Please sign below if you have read the above information and consent to participate in this study. Agreeing to participate in this study does not waive any of your rights or release the researchers from their responsibilities. A copy of this consent form will be given to you and the researcher will keep a copy.

I am willing to be contacted about future activities and possible involvement in the research.

Y or N

Participant's Name: (please print)_____

Participant's Signature:_____

Date:

REB file 228-1018

C. Student online survey consent:

Department of Integrated Studies in Education

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

We would like to invite you to be in a study conducted by Professor Ratna Ghosh (Department of Integrated Studies in Education) and Dr Srividya Narayanan Iyer (Psychologist) (Department of Psychiatry) of McGill University. The purpose of the study is to learn about the experiences of Syrian refugee young adults in the adult education system in Québec. We will be speaking with students as well as staff. The study is funded by the *Fonds de recherche société et culture* (FRQSC) and has received ethics approval from McGill University under REB file 228-1018.

Our survey includes questions about you (e.g., age, gender); your physical, psychological, emotional and social well-being (including the Kessler-10 and the Mental Health Continuum-Short Form); and how you feel about what is going well and what are some difficulties with being enrolled in educational activities in Québec. Surveys will take from 15 minutes and they will be administered online. You can answer in either Arabic, English or French. You will receive a \$10 e-gift voucher for your participation.

Before proceeding to the study, we will ask you three screening questions to determine your eligibility for the study. You will not be compensated for completing these questions.

The data we collect will be kept confidential, safe and secure. Your survey responses will be labelled with an ID code and only the research team will have access to the code linking your name with the survey results. All such identifying

information will be destroyed (*after 1 year*) which means the data cannot be connected with you and you will no longer be able to withdraw your data. Any public presentations of the study results will not allow for your identification.

Participation in the study is voluntary. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time for any reason at which point all your data will be destroyed unless you specify otherwise. If you choose to be in the study, the research team would be pleased to share a summary of the results with you.

If you decide not to be in the research, it will not affect your relationship with McGill University, the adult education centre you attend or any other service providers.

If you have any questions, please feel free to speak with the researchers Professor Ratna Ghosh (ratna.ghosh@mcgill.ca, 514-398-4527), Dr Srividya Narayanan Iyer (srividya.iyer@mcgill.ca) or Dominique Sherab (dominique.sherab@mcgill.ca).

If you have any ethical concerns or complaints about your participation in this study and want to speak with someone not on the research team, please contact the McGill Ethics Manager, Lynda McNeil, by telephone at: 514-398-6831 or at: lynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca.

Consent

Please agree below if you have read the above information and consent to participate in this study. Agreeing to participate in this study does not waive any of your rights or release the researchers from their responsibilities.

YES / NO

REB file 228-1018

Annex 6 Consent form for practitioner interviews

Department of Integrated Studies in Education

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN AN INTERVIEW

We would like to invite you to be in a study conducted by Professor Ratna Ghosh (Department of Integrated Studies in Education) and Professor Srividya Narayanan Iyer (Division of Social and Transcultural Psychiatry) of McGill University. The purpose of the study is to learn about the experiences of Syrian refugee young adults in the adult education system in Québec. We will be speaking with students as well as staff. The study is funded by the *Fonds de recherche société et culture* (FRQSC) and has received ethics approval from McGill University under REB file 228-1018.

As an adult education practitioner, we would like to interview you about your experiences working with refugee students in the adult education sector. The interview would take approximately one hour to complete and can be conducted in English or French. To thank you for participation, we will offer you a \$25 gift voucher.

The interviews will be audio recorded.

The data we collect will be kept confidential, safe and secure. The data you give will be ID coded. This means that the personal information you provide will be kept confidential, will not be connected with the answers you give or shared with other researchers. Professor Ghosh (principal investigator), research assistants and translator will be the only individuals who have access to identifiable materials.

The translator will sign a confidentiality agreement to ensure that participants' information will remain private and confidential

Participation in the study is voluntary. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time for any reason at which point all your data will be destroyed unless you specify otherwise. The code key will be destroyed after three years. If you choose to be in the study, the research team would be pleased to share a summary of the results with you. You will also need to tell us if you are willing to be contacted for further involvement in the study in the coming years.

If you decide not to be in the research, it will not affect your relationship with McGill University, the adult education centre you teach at or any other service providers.

If you have any questions, please feel free to speak with the researchers Professor Ratna Ghosh (ratna.ghosh@mcgill.ca, 514-398-4527), Professor Srividya Narayanan Iyer (srividya.iyer@mcgill.ca) or our research assistant Dominique Sherab (dominique.sherab@mcgill.ca).

If you have any ethical concerns or complaints about your participation in this study, and want to speak with someone not on the research team, please contact Lynda McNeil, the McGill Ethics Manager, by telephone at: 514-398-6831 or at: lynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca.

Consent

Please sign below if you have read the above information and consent to participate in this study. Agreeing to participate in this study does not waive any of your rights or release the researchers from their responsibilities. A copy of this consent form will be given to you and the researcher will keep a copy.

I am willing to be contacted for further involvement in the research through follow up participation in a workshop and/or trialling of support strategies in adult education. Y or N

Participant's Name: (please print) _____

Participant's Signature: _____

Date: _____

REB File 228-1018

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