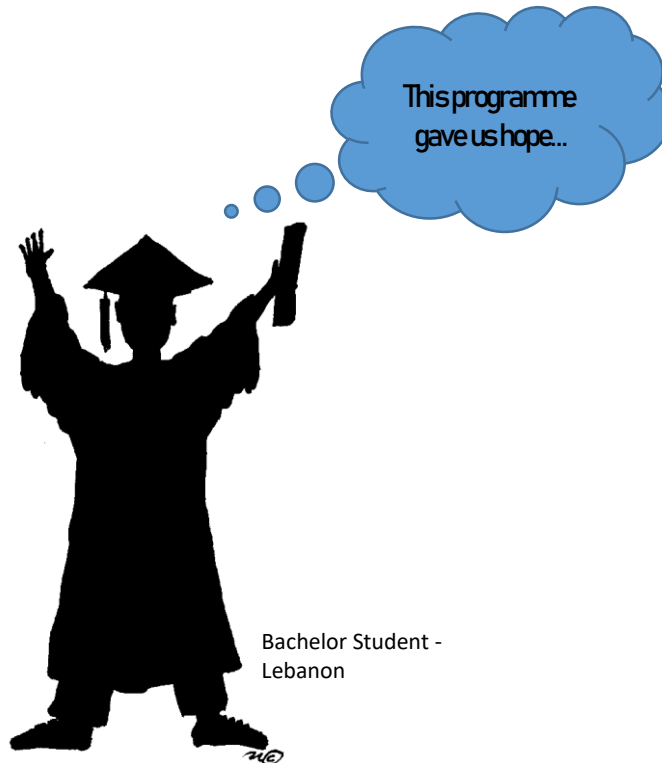Management and Development Associates
شركاء الادارة والتطوير

INDEPENDENT MID-TERM EVALUATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION OF SYRIANS (HES)

spark · ignites ambition

December 2018

This programme gave us hope...

Bachelor Student - Lebanon

An Assignment Conducted by the Evaluation Team of
MaDA

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

EU	European Union
EUTF	European Union Trust Fund
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
HES	Higher Education of Syrians
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
KII	Key Informant Interview
KR-I	Kurdistan Region of Iraq
MaDA	Management and Development Associates
NLMFA	Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs
OPT	Occupied Palestinian Territories
PSS	Psycho-Social Support
SIS	Student Information System
SuTP	Syrians under Temporary Protection
ToR	Terms of Reference
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
WBS	Work Break-down Structure

MAP OF SPARK AREA OF HES IMPLEMENTATION

Adapted from https://www.google.com.lb/search?tbm=isch&sa=1&ei=vfnsW-H4G8SelwShwbXIDQ&q=map+of+Syria%2C+Lebanon%2C+Palestine%2C+Iraq%2C+Jordan%2C+and+Turkey+without+Israel&oq=map+of+Syria%2C+Lebanon%2C+Palestine%2C+Iraq%2C+Jordan%2C+and+Turkey+without+Israel&gs_l=img.3...36527.41950..42252...7.0..0.215.3121.0j21j1......1....1..gws-wiz-img.f0PPYCK8mRc#imgrc=E2JodRZ3cTwdXM

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Higher Education of Syrians (HES) programme was initiated by SPARK in 2015 with the overall aim of furthering the basic rights of Syrian, Palestinian, and local youth affected by crisis or occupation to enable them to enjoy access to higher education and empowerment opportunities. It is based on the fact that SPARK and its partners consider education an important means for refugees to pursue for personal development, wellbeing upkeeping, and to combat political or religious extremism and poverty. The premise of this support is that if refugees from war torn countries are to turn into effective contributors within societies, whether home or host, they need to properly integrate and use the education they obtain as a platform to launch a new life.

SPARK avails higher educational support to all Syrian refugees, members of the host community, and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) to promote their skills and knowledge in concerted efforts to develop infrastructures with the aid of well-educated youth who can support and rebuild communities socially as well as economically. It provides critical equality of opportunity for Syrian refugees and support for their social contribution to help promote their civil society wherever they decide to settle down. Concurrently, ensuring a non-discriminatory approach, SPARK avails its services to youth from the host communities as well as IDPs.

SPARK is one step in a cohesive and complete approach to change a complex and sensitive environment. It looks to build a bridge between the significant achievements of its programme and student ambitions going into the future. The SPARKSPARK program has quality at its heart and is looking at continuous improvement, inclusion and skills learning as seen through the lens of the learner as they are the ones that need to prosper for the rest of their lives.

As part of SPARK's keenness on continuous improvement, a mid-term evaluation process has been initiated. The evaluation concludes that the focus on quality, inclusion and skill-building across all programme components is offering students in the HES programme additional means to continue on to their future. The diverse and challenging goals and objectives of these interventions are tied together by a collective focus on SPARK's mission. Nevertheless, noting that improvement is a continuous process, this evaluation summarizes some main findings and presents key recommendations for the upcoming phase.

1.1 Main Lessons Learnt

- The general perception of the programme under the current communications strategy is that it primarily – and in some contexts only – serves Syrian refugee youth, which is not the image that SPARK would like to illustrate.

- Some programme components, such as the Leadership Development, are more donor-driven (a requirement set by the donor), which is impacting the overall programme effectiveness. Additionally, achieving targets as explained below on page 18 while at the same time maintaining programme quality is challenging. Discussions need to be reinitiated with partners/ donors on priorities, taking into consideration whether focus

should remain on reaching 100% targets versus shifting focus to maintaining quality.

- Dealing with and reporting activities to multiple donors is confusing and challenging to all parties involved (including SPARK team members and students) and should be revisited in terms of process and deliverables as recommended on page 28.

- Follow-up becomes harder when you have agreements with many educational providers in the same country. The administrative work this requires should be weighed against increasing focus on the quality of education being provided. Concurrently, the effectiveness of some tools used, such as the 5C, should be re-assessed as explained under *Section 5.2 on Effectiveness*.

- Correlating majors supported to the market remains weak, as pointed out under Section *4.1.1 Key Issues Addressed in Programme Design,* especially that it is not clear whether guidance should be provided towards majors required for the reconstruction of Syria or majors required and feasible for foreigners in the host country.

- Additional activities implemented by consultants who speak the local language tend to be preferred by students. However, the timing of these activities is crucial to increasing students' active participation.

- The whole process from announcement to student enrollment is time-consuming. Early process commencement is crucial to avoid delays of new intakes and properly plan for it. Additionally, contracts renewal should be sped-up to avoid gaps in support provision.

- The common view held by students is that you don't have to be a high performer to benefit from SPARK scholarship; i.e., scholarship is needs-based rather than merit-based. While acknowledging that education is a right for all, students still should be motivated to perform better.

- Student committees have been formed in Lebanon to improve communication processes. Although it is too early to judge the effectiveness of this practice, it seems to be well-received by all parties involved and should be considered for other countries.

1.2 Main Recommendations

Noting that improvement is a continuous process, and noting that 68% of the students surveyed believe that the HES programme could be remarkably improved, the following key recommendations are forwarded by the evaluation team.

- To increase/ focus more on progamme follow-up to better assess impact, and notably follow-up on graduates to check employability successes and challenges, as well as follow-up on educational providers to monitor quality of the services they are delivering to students.

- To integrate more activities related to the provision of student support services,

especially activities designed to complement/ expand on orientation sessions and academic advising, with increased focus on student guidance to specialties required by the labor market.

- To re-assess the effectiveness of additional activities provided under HES as well as their timings, including the Leadership Development and Economic Empowerment work-packages. Additionally, the feasibility of reaching 100% targets needs to be reassessed as elaborated below on page 18.

- To consider offering specialized training workshops to students depending on their interest and need to better prepare them for the labor market, such as AutoCAD for engineers…

- To re-assess the way the programme is being perceived as focused mainly on Syrians, and to consider changing the programme's name to be more inclusive of host community beneficiaries.

- To revise the replacement policy, further ensuring programme efficiency partly through integrating a process that assesses reasons behind drop-outs and cancellations and partly through calculating the cost-efficiency of replacements.

- To include a clear statement in student contracts across all countries authorizing the sharing of personal data.

- To revisit the student selection process, finding ways to increase focus on serious students only and potentially involving education providers.

- To provide awards or organize ceremonies for high achievers. This would promote SPARK's programme as well as increase students' motivation. Some students reported becoming honors students after receiving this scholarship; however, they feel that their achievement is not being acknowledged.

- To form a consortium of donor/ partners and provide one consolidated narrative as well as financial report to them that clearly shows support.

- To improve internal communication and handover processes to ensure that internal knowledge is not lost.

- To set a student communication policy whereby, although the majority of students report that their emails are promptly answered, many are dissatisfied with the tone of communication.

- To improve/ enhance the internal process associated with processing payments, noting that several delays are occurring in payment settlements for both educational providers and students alike.

1.3 Key Limitations

As with most short-term evaluations, this evaluation had to rely mainly on desk review and on the feedback of a sample of stakeholders collected through Meetings, Key Informant Interviews, Focus Group Discussions, and an online survey rather than a longitudinal observation that can take note of changes over time. Nevertheless, the diversity of stakeholders included offset this limitation to a certain extent and provided insight to key evaluation criteria as targeted.

Another key limitation was related to the fact that primary qualitative face-to-face data collection from students could only be taken from Lebanon and Turkey.

Finally, reaching out to graduates across all degree types, whether Bachelors, TVET Diploma, or TVET Certificate, proved to be hard since it seems that SPARK's continued link to graduates is weak. This affected the extent to which the evaluation was able to track impact.

II. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background and Context

The Higher Education of Syrians (HES) programme was initiated by SPARK in 2015 with the overall aim of furthering the basic rights of Syrian, Palestinian, and local youth affected by crisis or occupation to enable them to enjoy access to higher education and empowerment opportunities. Recognizing education as an engine of social and economic growth, SPARK builds on previous work to provide learners with the skills they need to prosper not just now but also into the future. The primary goal set by SPARK under this programme was to provide eligible Syrian refugees as well as host country nationals and IDPs with educational support through scholarships, stipends, and other supportive tools, as they perceive education as one of the most critical investments the world can make in its future. The underlying assumption is that, as a consequence of growth in higher education numbers, the wellbeing of the youth and their families will improve as the labor market for professionals is ready to take on individuals who have the know-how and expertise in their line of work.

The launch of HES prompted a great deal of interest from the education community on both local and regional levels, enlisting support from a number of donors/ partners, including the European Union (EU) Maded Fund, the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (NLMFA), and the Education Above All Foundation – Al-Fakhoora, who represent key stakeholders in this mid-term evaluation process. Similarly, educators, educational organizations, and community partners were looking forward to being part of this programme. The programme was designed to cover Lebanon, Turkey, Syria, Occupied Palestinian Territories (oPt), Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I), and Jordan. Despite understandable and justifiable variations among countries of implementation, a number of key findings and recommendations remain valid across the programme's areas of implementation, which constitute the focus of this mid-term evaluation report.

2.2 Evaluation Purpose and Scope

While outcomes in the regional education support have shown considerable promises, it is important to continually strive to break down barriers and identify opportunities to implement proven approaches to grant offering and enhance systems processes. Doing so will help ensure graduates are prepared to transition to a better life after this programme ends. Hence, the aim of this mid-term evaluation process is to *assess the extent to which the Higher Education for Syrian Refugees (HES) programme is progressing against its objective and expected results during the period extending from 2015 to mid-2018, and covering programme implementation in all it countries – Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I), Occupied Palestinian Territories (oPt), and Syria - and based on the OECD/DAC criteria.*

The evaluation extended over 8 weeks commencing on the 12th of September 2018 and ending on the 14th of November 2018. As part of this review process, the programme's successes and shortcomings have been outlined and key lessons and recommendations highlighted to feed into

the subsequent phase and help improve the implementation of future programmes. In fact, this midterm evaluation is a further articulation of SPARK's keenness for a system that meets the requirement of students across a range of programmes, builds on and towards success, and forms a chapter in an ongoing narrative of improvement.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Approach

The evaluation process started with a desk review of main documents, and meetings[1] with key staff, mainly via skype. The result was an inception report that outlined the methodology to be adopted and set the guidelines to be used.

Following, different data collection methods were employed in a mixed-methods approach, varying to include qualitative and quantitative methods:

a. Meetings and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with mapped stakeholders, including SPARK team, UNHCR, similar providers, and providers of services for the programme (education and training)

b. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with student beneficiaries

c. Online survey with student beneficiaries using survey monkey[2] and integrating a total of 37 questions ranging to include closed questions, ranking questions, and a limited number of open-ended questions. The survey questions were concurrently provided in both Arabic and English.

FGDs and face-to-face meetings/ KIIs were planned for Lebanon and Turkey, while skype interviews mainly with SPARK team were planned for the other countries of intervention. As planned, among the aims of FGDs and KIIs was to validate the survey findings. However, due to delays in data collection and the time it took for students to respond, this approach has been amended and data collection from all sources went in parallel.

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[1] Please refer to Annex A for a list of meetings, interviews, and focus group discussions

[2] https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SGQRM2N
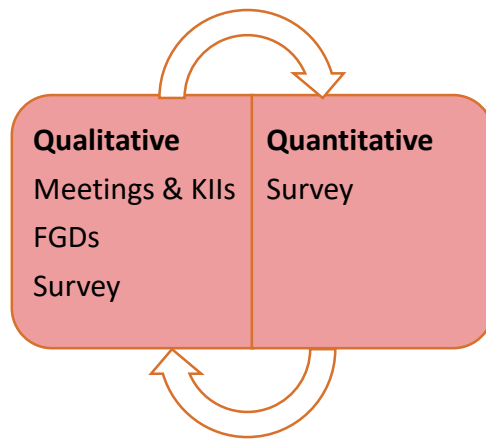
Figure 1: Data Collection Tools

3.2 Sampling

3.2.1 Quantitative Data Sample

To determine the sample, stratified sampling was applied on the basis of two main criteria; country and type of certificate (Bachelor, TVET Diploma, or TVET Certificate). The student status has been accounted for as well, with focus on enrolled and graduated. Numbers targeted have been set at 95% confidence level to ensure that the margin of error in data collected quantitatively does not exceed 5%. Based on figures provided by SPARK team, the sample size was calculated to reach a total of 358 students out of the 6607 students as shown in Table 1. Following the random function in excel was used to generate a random list of students to be targeted with the survey. A first round of emails was sent out centrally to the random list using SPARK's Student Information System (SIS).

Table 1: Student Sampling by Country, Degree Type, and Status

Sample by Country	Bachelor Enrolled	Bachelor Graduated	Diploma Enrolled	Diploma Graduated	Certificate Enrolled	Certificate Graduated	Total
Turkey	35	0	7	0	27	40	108
Lebanon	33	7	19	8	0	38	105
Jordan	2	0	9	10	0	17	38
Iraq	17	0	1	1	0	0	19
OPT	3	0	0	0	0	0	3
Syria	0	0	0	20	0	64	84
Total	**91**	**7**	**36**	**38**	**27**	**159**	**358**

Note that the above numbers have been rounded to nearest tenth.

Due to a number of reasons, reaching the above sample proved to be quite challenging. Limitations included the following:

- The first survey dissemination was opened on the 15th of October 2018 and was encountered with many invalid emails; successful emails were sent out only to 262 students (representing 73% of the targeted sample). As a result, another random sample was generated to reach the needed target sample.

- Noting the low response rate, offices were contacted to enlist their support to contact students. By mistake, the survey link was disseminated to all Turkey students. Responses started flowing in from Turkey with quite a low response rate from other countries.

- After a week passed by with quite limited responses, it was decided to open the survey to all students and then randomly stratify after responses were received. Table 2 presents the overall response rate by country on the closing date of the survey (14th of November 2018). It is worth noting that the average time of survey completion was 13 minutes.

Table 2: Response Rates by Country

Country	# of Targeted Responses	# of Received Responses	Response Rate
Jordan	38	34	89%
Iraq	19	126	663%
Lebanon	105	95	90%
oPt	3	3	100%
Syria	84	39	46%
Turkey	108	572	530%
Total	**357**	**869**	

- Data cleaning commenced, removing responses which filled only the General Information. This process resulted in 671 responses. Following random sampling was initiated adopting the same stratification described above (i.e. by country, degree type, and status). However, this process resulted in low response rate, noting that responses did not come from the targeted sample. Accordingly, and to make maximum use of the survey, it was decided to analyze all results, taking a weighted average approach not to distort findings. Table 3 below presents the final respondents whose answers have been included in the analysis.

Table 3: Responses Used for Analysis by Country, Degree Type, and Status

Sample by Country	Bachelor Enrolled	Bachelor Graduated	Diploma Enrolled	Diploma Graduated	Certificate Enrolled	Certificate Graduated	Total
Jordan	7	0	3	14	0	3	27
KR-I	91	1	1	0	5	0	98
Lebanon	51	2	4	2	20	1	80
oPt	3	0	0	0	0	0	3
Syria	18	1	0	3	3	2	27
Turkey	390	7	23	1	14	1	436
Total	**560**	**11**	**31**	**20**	**42**	**7**	**671**

3.2.2 Qualitative Data Sample

On the qualitative data level, a random sample was chosen for KIIs to cover all mapped stakeholders with focus on convenience sampling (willingness and ability of chosen stakeholders to participate in KIIs).

Additionally, three student FGDs were planned in each of Turkey and Lebanon. However, in both countries, only two FGD participants showed up, which impacted integrating more feedback from the views of graduates into this report.

Both KIIs and FGDs utilizes a semi-structured technique relying on guidelines prepared as part of the inception process and adding questions depending on the setting and stakeholder's interest to provide additional information.

IV. EVALUATION FINDINGS

It is crucial that students experience learning environments which support them to reach their full potential. This means addressing their wellbeing needs as well as providing syllabi and learning outcomes appropriate for current and predicted future skills requirements so that students are fully prepared for the challenges and opportunities they will face in the future.

4.1 Programme Design, Planning, and Implementation

SPARK is providing one step in a cohesive and complete approach to change a complex and sensitive environment. In its programme design, it looks to build a bridge between the significant achievements of its programme and student ambitions going into the future. As designed, the SPARK programme has quality at its heart and is looking at continuous improvement, inclusion

and learning as seen through the lens of the learner as they are the ones that need to prosper for the rest of their lives.
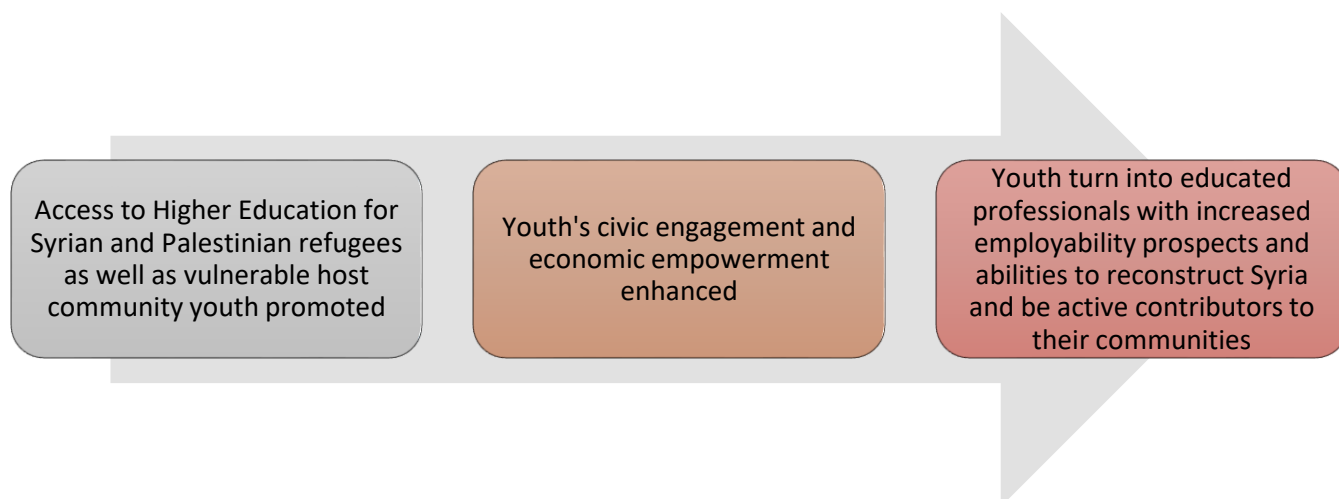
Figure 2: HES Programme Logic as Designed

4.1.1 Key Issues Addressed in Programme Design

The programme's overall design integrated assumptions that attempted to account for the main influencing factors, including the political and security conditions in the countries of target, the labor market demand, and the students' interests. In fact, the design phase attempted to answer three critical questions:

a. What majors to support?

b. Which educational institutions to include?

c. What selection criteria to adopt in choosing students?
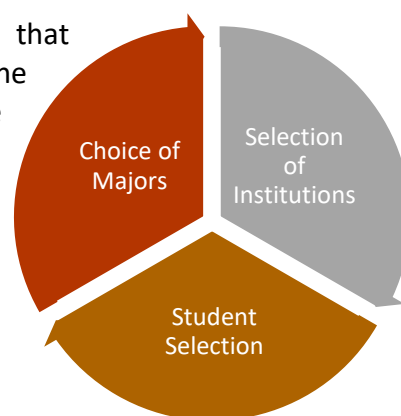
Figure 3: Factors influencing HES Programme Design

a. Selection of Majors

When deciding on the fields/ majors of study to be supported, SPARK relied on a Labor Market Study that was implemented in 2016 involving all countries with the exception of oPt. However, according to stakeholders consulted, the extent to which this study was referred to on the ground varied from one country to another. Rather, key criteria for majors in certain contexts relied more on the availability within the educational institutions selected and the programme of study duration (with four years set as a ceiling for Bachelors).

In general, key majors covered in implementation included Accounting, Administration, Agriculture, Engineering, Nursing, Management, Economics, Computer and Communications, Information Technology, Electricity, Graphic Design, History, Hotel and Restaurant Management, Medical Lab, Midwifery, Pharmacy, Education, Sociology, among others. However, these majors were not necessarily the ones highlighted as relevant majors according to the Labor Market Survey. For example, the study highlighted Agriculture, Education, Business and Entrepreneurship, Engineering, and Languages as key relevant majors for Lebanon. Nonetheless, in addition to those specializations, supported majors included Radio/ TV, Graphic Design, Fine Arts, Law, Decoration, Esthetics, History, and Geography. Likewise, the study recommended focusing on Education, Health, Engineering, Business and Entrepreneurship, and Languages for Turkey. However, Archeology, Cinema and TV, Fashion Design, History, Law, and Physiotherapy were among the additionally supported majors.

It is worth noting that the Survey indicated that the list of majors was not exhaustive, a fact which decreases its effectiveness. Nevertheless, it is the opinion of the evaluation team that the additional majors are not key majors for the reconstruction of Syria.

b. Selection of Educational Institutions

As to the selection of educational institutions, four main factors appear to have been considered at programme initiation; (a) institutional structure in terms of geographic dispersion and number of disciplines offered, (b) number of students that can be accommodated (including willingness to take in Syrian refugee students), (c) price per student, and (d) institution's flexibility in terms of payment terms and method. Although this selection has contributed to efficiency, noting that SPARK successfully obtained remarkable discounts that at times decreased the fees per student by more than 70%, the quality of education offered needs closer monitoring as recommended by students during the FGDs. The evaluation team acknowledges that an attempt was exerted to monitor the quality through the utilization of the 5 Core Capability Approach Assessment, commonly referred to as the 5C. Nevertheless, this exercise was not quite effective, especially that in certain countries implementation of the 5 C was restricted to a two-hour workshop which witnessed the participation of some of the educational institutions.

c. Student Selection

Finally, concerning selection, SPARK has planned for and outlined a four-phase application process that starts with the submission of an online application (or offline where online is not feasible) and proceeds through interviews to end with a leadership assessment and an entrepreneurship aptitude test. The process has evolved and improved over time, and the logic behind it is quite valid; SPARK aims to support active and motivated students who have the potential to play a role in rebuilding communities. According to the online survey, 94% found the application process easy and 88% indicated that selection criteria were clear. Nevertheless, only

59% of the students perceived the selection criteria as fair, while 19% disagreed with this statement and 22% were neutral. Main reasons behind disagreeing was allotted to the fact that the programme set an age limit and at programme's initiation, second year or third year students were not accepted.

Nevertheless, as implemented, different stakeholders expressed some doubt towards the process, with some recommending a greater involvement from the educational institution in selecting students as suggested by the educational institutions themselves. This recommendation may have some validity, noting that the drop-out and cancellation rates tend to be high (accounting to 15% of total awarded across the five countries of operation, excluding Syria). Additionally, as noted in the Scholarship Manual, the selection process takes a long period of time, which at times is causing delays in student enrollment.

Table 4: Drop Out and Cancellation Rates by Country and Degree Type

Country	Bachelor		TVET Certificate		TVET Diploma	
	Cancelled	Dropout	Cancelled	Dropout	Cancelled	Dropout
Iraq	15%	6%	0%	0%	0%	7%
Jordan	5%	8%	1%	11%	1%	17%
Lebanon	10%	13%	0%	0%	19%	11%
oPt	4%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Turkey	19%	2%	1%	5%	1%	1%

It is worth mentioning that, due to the arising conflict in Syria, programs shut down gradually, before any student could graduate.

Additionally, no clear selection process exists to date for the short courses and TVET certificates, although such a process is planned to be outlined by the team in the near future.

4.1.2 Multiple Donor Design and Match Funding

Noting that HES is a multi-donor programme, a somewhat confusing factor in programme design and implementation remains the issue of reporting students to multiple donors. Some students' enrolment and progress is reported to more than one donor, which makes tracking overall numbers challenging and impacts views towards SPARK's transparency. Additionally, having multiple donors within the same programme means that students are eligible to different types of support (such as Civic Leadership and Economic Empowerment), depending on the donor they are reported to. This is creating discrepancy among students, which is translating to some as unfair treatment by SPARK as reported in the FGDs. Moreover, since some "ineligible" students seem to be more interested than some "eligible" students, this issue needs to be revised.

Another key concern is represented by the targets set during the design phase, especially targets related to the number of students who should benefit from Civic Leadership and Economic Empowerment skill-building workshops. Targeting 100% of the students is assessed to be unrealistic for a number of factors, including logistics hurdles caused by the fact that students are located in dispersed geographic locations and cannot be enrolled in joint workshops at times even within the same country. For example, even if 10 workshops are offered across Turkey, this number is not enough to reach out to all students, noting that some areas have only 3 or 4 students enrolled at universities. Concurrently, offering workshops to 3 or 4 students only is not cost-effective nor feasible.

4.1.3 Planned Follow-up

As designed, it is the view of this evaluation that the HES programme did not adequately plan for follow-up and the post-graduation phase. Although the SIS records graduates, no structure has been set-up to report on how graduates are doing and what they are doing. In this respect, it is recommended that SPARK implements a tracer survey to reach out to its graduates and document their achievements. Additionally, a structure for establishing SPARK Alumni should be initiated as soon as possible before it becomes harder to track down graduates. Please refer to the recommendations section for more concrete examples of what the Alumni could do.

4.2 Programme Management

Overall, programme management was found to be aligned to the project design and plan. However, the evaluation team notes the following key findings that at times impacted the efficiency and effectiveness of programme management:

- As stated by one of the stakeholders interviewed, SPARK lacks a "documented institutional memory" or rather this memory is scattered and not easy to find. This is negatively influencing programme management, especially on a more strategic level and in light of the apparent high turn-over rate. To help address part of this challenge, SPARK has been developing a series of manuals which could prove to be beneficial for team members who join the organization at later stages, such as the Scholarship Manual. Nevertheless, the development of such manuals is coming out as part of a lessons learnt process with a potential to ultimately support programme management rather than as a part of a process that supported programme planning. In other words, the manual is a by-product of three years of work rather than a proactive manual that was proposed at programme initiation. Having said this, the evaluation acknowledges the importance of the manual developed in terms of outlining best practices and laying the grounds for a "model of excellence" for higher education support.

- As commented upon by a key stakeholder in one of the countries of operations, SPARK's programme was "detached for months", partly influenced by employee turn-over. This detachment results in communications problems with donors, specifically in Lebanon.

- Another factor impacting efficient resource utilization is the high student turnover in some degree types and SPARK's unclear replacement policy. The focus appears to be once again on reaching targets, which at times is undermining the optimal use of resources.

4.3 Results' Achievement and Progress

This section lists the results as outlined in the programme document and related results chain/ log-frame of the three key donors/ partners; EU Madad, Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (NLMFA), and Al Fakhoora. Next to each result, the level of achievement is commented upon.

Table 5: Achievement Level by Result and Donor

Results of Relevance	Achievement Level and Explanation
Dynamic Future Global Project – Al-Fakhoora	
Access to and successful participation in post-secondary opportunities not otherwise available to target youth (Quality Education)	Although the programme is undeniably providing access to youth in post-secondary opportunities, including bachelor's degrees and TVET certificates, measuring successful participation cannot yet be reported upon conclusively noting that (a) targets have not yet been reached and (b) graduates proved hard to reach. Moreover, drop-out and cancellation rates are relatively high, which is impacting successful participation.
Students effectively supported and empowered to achieve their academic potential (Student Affairs)	Student support services remained limited in scope. For example, the majority of students who took part in FGDs were unaware of the availability of legal support services. Moreover, academic follow-up on achievement remained limited, often restricted to checking transcripts. Furthermore, psychosocial support has not yet commenced in all countries, such as Turkey were implementation is still pending.
Students demonstrating leadership through self-advocacy , civic leadership, and global citizenship through activities in their refugee, host and/or local communities (Leadership Development)	Although it is too soon to measure the impact of this component, and although it is being reported as an important complementary component, as designed, Leadership Development is posing a number of challenges for both students and SPARK team, noting that the target set is 100% and noting that at times the workshops are running in parallel to university classes.

Results of Relevance	Achievement Level and Explanation
Students economic empowerment enhanced (Economic Empowerment)	Similarly, the economic empowerment is posing challenges for students, SPARK team, and the providers, especially in terms of their timing and in terms of the requirement to reach 100% targets.
A model of excellence established enhancing opportunities for underserved youth to reach their potential	Commendable efforts have been placed to establish such a model, including the production of a set of key guiding documents such as the Scholarship Manual. However, the extent to which such a model is practically applicable vary from one context to another, influenced by the process adopted in selecting educational institutions and noting the need to adapt the programme design and implementation to different Government regulations.
EU MADAD Post-Conflict (EU MADAD Regional)	
Access to higher and vocational education provided to Syrian youth and disadvantaged youth in host communities in Turkey/Lebanon/I-KRG/Syria	The programme is undeniably providing access to higher and vocational education to Syrian youth. However, the extent to which host community youth are included is marginal with many youth and educational institutions being unaware of the possibility of access to non-Syrians.
Additional support mechanisms set-up for entrepreneurship, early recovery coaching, livelihood, transport and access to university facilities for the students who are participating in these programmes	Students reported at times conflict between meetings' schedule and their classes. Some students reported feeling "obliged to attend out of fear that their scholarship may be affected" despite the fact that SPARK staff assured the evaluation team that non-attendance will not impact scholarship continuity.
EU MADAD Turkey	
Improved Turkish language skills of SuTP	This output appears to be progressing as planned and is undeniably quite important, noting that students are appreciative of the opportunity to learn Tomer.
Enhanced access of SuTP and Turkish students to BA and TVET level programmes	Through this programme, students (both Turks and SuTP) are being provided with enhanced access to BA and TVET level programmes.
Improved student support services (measured through improvement of university capacities and student well-being and satisfaction surveys)	Measures are being implemented to improve student support services. However, actions taken as a result of satisfaction survey findings are not clearly evident.

Results of Relevance	Achievement Level and Explanation
NLMFA	
Access to higher and vocational education provided in Turkey/Lebanon/Jordan /Syria/ KR-I	With the support allocated from NLMFA, increased access is made possible to students in higher and vocational education
Refurbishment of HE institutions in Syria	As reported, institutions in Syria have been refurbished. Unfortunately, due to the arising conflict, the programme in Syria moved from one area to another until it got recently suspended. Sadly, refurbished facilities got shelled.
Other services	The NLMFA grant is covering the costs of other services, providing complementary and essential support to existing funds.

V. EVALUATION ASSESSMENT

5.1 Relevance

5.1.1 Relevance to SPARK's Mission

As publicized, SPARK develops "higher education and entrepreneurship to empower young, ambitious people to lead their conflict affected societies into prosperity". Noting that HES focuses on youth empowerment in developing contexts, and noting that it mainly targets Syrian refugees, aiming at equipping them with skills needed to rebuild their society, this programme is found to be relevant to SPARK's mission.

5.1.2 Relevance to Donors/ Partners

In general, the HES programme is found to be equally relevant to donors/ funding partners.

- The HES Programme is relevant to the Government of Netherlands in its approach to respond to international challenges and opportunities. In its policy document "Investing in Global Prospects", the Government of Netherlands stresses the importance of education as part of its efforts to tackle root causes of poverty and instability and improve young people's prospects. The policy clearly iterates the Netherlands plan to expand its activities in the field of general and vocational education in the focus regions based on a belief that relevant education increases employment and income opportunities and freedom of choice, while concurrently promoting conflict prevention and decreasing susceptibility to extremism

- Based on the joint conviction that education decreases vulnerability and empowers youth, the HES Programme is relevant to the EU MADAD. The Trust Fund reinforces the integrated EU aid response to the crisis and primarily addresses longer term educational, economic and

social needs of Syrian refugees and overstretched host communities. The Trust Fund is a key instrument to deliver the EU's pledges for the crisis made at the London conference on Syria in 2016 and the Brussels conference in April 2017, and also underpins the **special EU Compacts agreed** with Jordan and Lebanon for assistance this protracted refugee crisis.

▪ The Education Above All Foundation's mission is to "measurably improve access to high quality education for vulnerable and marginalized people in developing countries, as an enabler of broader human development". Under this broad mission, Al-Fakhoora programme is being implemented, providing support to education initiatives in selected countries of the developing world, and namely war-impacted Zones. As such, HES and Al-Fakhoora are found to be aligned.

5.1.3 Relevance to the Needs of the Target Groups

As reflected in the online survey, and as reported in the FGDs, the HES Programme is reported to be highly relevant to students, a view that is equally shared by education providers. 73% of students who participated in the online survey reported finding the programme in general highly relevant to their needs. During the FGDs, a bachelor student in Lebanon said that "this programme gave us hope". Among the benefits reported is increased self-dependence, strengthening personality, pushing ourselves to achieve more…

Despite the undeniable relevance of the overall programme, students' views towards the relevance of complementary interventions, such as the Civic Leadership and Economic Empowerment, varied. In fact, only 63% of the students found the Leadership Development Programme component to be beneficial while 54% found the Economic Empowerment Programme component to be relevant.

5.2 Effectiveness

In general, the programme is progressing towards achieving its planned objectives. The work being done by SPARK field team in this respect, with the support of the Monitoring and Evaluation team is commendable. The various work packages are undeniably contributing to improving access to education for Syrian refugees.

Having said that, it is a key concern of this evaluation that results are being measured by targets achieved in terms of numbers, while at times overlooking quality and inclusion. For example, TVET students in Lebanon reported a gap in follow up on educational institutions and the quality of education being provided, impacting their success rates at the Lebanese official exams. Both in Turkey and Lebanon, reports of less than satisfactory trainings in Leadership Development and Economic Empowerment were conveyed during the FGDs held. Additionally, noting the fact that the workshops are not open to all SPARK students is conveying a sense of exclusion for some. Concurrently, providers of workshops are concerned by the targets set, noting that in countries

like Turkey, students' geographic distribution makes it logistically impossible to reach all.

On the educational quality level, the implementation of the 5C as a tool to evaluate the quality of education providers seems to be in need of improvement and/ or reconsideration as elaborated upon under *Section 4.1.1 Key Issues Addressed in Programme Design*. Additionally, the effectiveness of the TVET certificate courses remains hard to measure noting their short duration and the inability of this evaluation to reach out to graduates.

Finally, several stakeholders (including SPARK team members, donors, educational institutions, and students) questioned the effectiveness of the selection process, which is impacting the view towards SPARK's transparency. Thus, it is a recommendation of the evaluation team that the visibility of the selection process be increased, whether in terms of selecting students or selecting educational institutions.

5.3 Efficiency

The HES programme is attempting to manage resources efficiently. Considerable discounts have been negotiated with education providers, reaching as high as 70%. Nevertheless, despite successes, some issues continue to impact the programme's overall efficiency:

- The high rate of student drop-out and cancellations, reaching 15%[3]. Out of the 671 students surveyed, 11% reported being at the risk of dropping out. Educational providers attribute this to their low-level of involvement, noting that they can provide valuable insight into student selection and performance.

- The lack of a clear replacement policy negotiated with education providers and that can help SPARK avoid incurring further costs.

- The delays in the commencement of certain activities, including TVET certificate courses.

- The delays in contracts' renewal of already accepted students and in general payment processing caused by the time-consuming internal approval process.

5.4 Potential Impact

The impact of this programme on *individual level* is undeniable; 66% of respondents believe that the HES programme helps increase their changes of employment. This response rate increases to become 74% believing that the programme contributes to empowering a workforce for the reconstruction of Syria.

Despite this high percentage, respondents in FGDs and KIIs report that around 70% of Syrian refugee youth outside Syria do not plan to return anytime soon. This raises the issue of whether students should be directed to specialties needed by the labor market in Syria or those needed

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[3] This rate excludes Syria, noting that operations gradually shut down due to security and political considerations.

in the hosts country, a question that was posed by both members of SPARK team as well as educational institutions. In fact, the unclear future orientation makes it harder to measure impact on the societal level, especially that follow-up on students after graduation is quite limited.

It is worth noting that according to KIIs with TVET Diploma providers, TVET Diploma graduates are finding employment opportunities relatively fast. Main sectors they are being employed in include kindergartens, restaurants, and small businesses. One provider employed a SPARK graduate at its own center as a teacher.

Unfortunately, FGDs with graduates were hard to organize; as such, the impact as reported by them could not be tracked by this evaluation.

5.5 Sustainability

Noting that HES mainly provides financial support to students, and noting that it has no source of generating income, the programme remains highly reliant on donors' contribution and cannot achieve financial sustainability.

Nevertheless, HES is investing in youth education and development, ensuring support from enrolment until graduation. What differentiates SPARK's support from other providers is the additional allowances provided on top of the tuition. This support is reported to increase students' self-dependence, helping them focus more on their education. In fact, 80% of online respondents reported that they would recommend HES programme to their friends[4].

Additionally, to varying degrees, HES is investing in building the educational institutions' capacity, which promotes sustainability and differentiates SPARK from other providers of student scholarships.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS AND MAIN LESSONS LEARNT

6.1 Main Lessons Learnt

- Dealing with and reporting activities to multiple donors is confusing to all parties involved; including SPARK team, donors themselves, and at times students, especially when this impacts what services the student is eligible to receive. Complaints were reported by some students who were excluded from participation in Civic Leadership and Economic Empowerment workshops despite their interest due to donor categorization and the services provided under each donor. Concurrently, some students who are required to participate in such workshops are doing so out of a feeling of obligation rather than a conviction; this is affecting their level of participation and commitment. Additionally, this multiple reporting is impacting views towards SPARK's transparency and as such needs to

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[4] Please refer to Annex C for an overview of the survey rating questions.

be reconsidered.

- Some programme components are more donor-driven, which is impacting the overall programme effectiveness. One student reported having to attend the Civic Leadership phase 1 workshop twice because of a change in curriculum. Additionally, achieving targets (100%) while at the same time maintaining programme quality is challenging and at times logistically not feasible due to geographic restrictions as explicitly reported by contracted service providers. Moreover, some students complained that they do not believe the number of hours required of them to participate in such courses is justifiable, noting that at times it conflicts with their classes or takes away time from their assignments. Furthermore, students' interest in such workshops, especially advanced phases, is not uniform. Discussions need to be reinitiated with partners/ donors on priorities, targets, and programme hours.

- Follow-up becomes harder when you have agreements with many educational providers in the same country, such as the case of Lebanon where an average of 13 providers are contracted. The administrative work this requires should be weighed against increasing focus on the quality of education being provided. Concurrently, the effectiveness of some tools used, such as the 5C, should be reassessed. Additionally, the quality of educational providers need to be reconsidered based on lessons learned from the current phase.

- Correlating majors supported to the market remains weak, especially that it is not clear whether guidance should be provided towards majors required for the reconstruction of Syria or majors required and feasible for foreigners in the host country. Furthermore, some majors currently supported appear not to serve the overall objective of enhancing Syria's reconstruction.

- Not all students seem to be equally aware of available student services, the role of such services, and the related benefits (e.g. legal services). Likewise, not all educational institutions seem to be aware of availability of capacity building interventions.

- Additional activities, such as lectures and training workshops, implemented by consultants who speak the local language tend to be preferred by students. However, the timing of these activities is crucial to increasing students' active participation. Efforts should be exerted to ensure that such activities are delivered during students' break or summer vacation.

- The whole process from announcement to student enrollment is time-consuming. Early process commencement is crucial to avoid delays of new intakes and properly plan for it. Some students who are selected never join the educational institution, and this is resulting in wasted time and effort. Some SPARK students are serious and committed; while others are not. Closer student follow-up is needed. Some educational providers reported that students are abusing the system; they are not committed and then they ask for special treatment not to lose the scholarship. Unfortunately, at times providers oblige.

- Additionally, contracts renewal should be sped-up to avoid gaps whereby at times students are staying without stipends for two or three months, which is increasing their chance of dropping out. According to the online survey, 11% of currently enrolled students report that there is a chance that they drop out.

- The common view held by students is that you don't have to be a high performer to benefit from SPARK scholarship. Additionally, there is a debate whether scholarships are merit-based, needs-based, or a combination of both. While acknowledging that education is a right for all, students still should be motivated to perform better and not be contented with achieving passing grades.

- Student committees have been formed in Lebanon to improve communication processes. Although it is too early to judge the effectiveness of this practice, it seems to be well-received by all parties involved and should be considered for other countries.

6.2 Programme-Related Recommendations

Noting that improvement is a continuous process, the following key recommendations are forwarded by the evaluation team.

- To increase/ focus more on progamme follow-up. Follow-up should be done on (a) student graduates to be able to document impact/ potential impact and thus programme's success, and (b) on educational providers to check the quality of services delivered by them. On the students' level, it is recommended that SPARK implements a tracer survey to trace down its graduates and report on their achievements. Additionally, SPARK should start forming Alumni in all countries. Activities implemented under the alumni structure could include the following:

  - Sharing of experiences between graduates and currently enrolled students to help students understand what to expect after graduation (discussion groups, orientation sessions, social media groups…)

  - Sharing of experiences across countries on specific topics of interest (monthly online forums could be organized)

  - Sharing of announcement of job openings at companies where alumni work

  - Additional specialized training workshops in fields related to students' specialties potentially offered by graduates to both alumni members and currently enrolled students, such as AutoCAD for engineers…

  - Recreational trips, clubs, and fund-raising events

- To integrate more activities related to the provision of student support services, including student guidance to specialties required by the labor market. Despite the presence of a labor market survey, it is the general feeling that students are not receiving guidance towards specialties needed by the market. SPARK could integrate orientation sessions to

potential students, directing them towards specialties that have higher employment opportunities.

▪ To re-assess the effectiveness of additional activities provided under HES, including the Leadership Development and Economic Empowerment work-packages, especially that only 55% of student respondents to the online survey report being satisfied with such additional activities. If maintained, it is recommended that the activities be provided to a percentage of students irrespective of under whose support they fall (in terms of donor) rather than being provided to ALL students under one donor. Concurrently, to make sure that trainings are participatory in terms of (a) timing (working around the scholastic calendar), and (b) content/ issues addressed. Additional activities need to be scheduled during summer time when students can attend without impacting their educational institution academic requirements or class attendance, which constitutes their number one priority. A related recommendation is to increase coordination upfront with educational providers to check the possibilities of adopting such courses within the curriculum.

▪ To re-assess the way the programme is being perceived, and to consider changing the programme's name to be more inclusive of host community beneficiaries in addition to Syrian refugee students, noting that many stakeholders (including educational institutions) are not aware that the progamme is accessible to non-Syrians. This recommendation is vital noting that some donors require that the programme reaches out to a certain percentage of IDPs and members of the host community.

▪ To revisit the replacement policy, further ensuring programme efficiency whereby currently resources are being wasted because of the relatively high percentage of drop-outs and cancellations. Drop-out and cancellation rates constitute an average of 21% for Bachelor, 23% for TVET Diploma, and 5% for TVET Certificate respectively. In this respect, as part of the policy, it is vital that reasons behind drop-outs and cancellations need to be further investigated.

▪ To include a clear statement in student contracts across all countries authorizing the sharing of personal data, leaving no speculations in the eyes of all stakeholders, including SPARK team, whether or not SPARK may be violating the Data Privacy Act. Although such information is disseminated view SIS and is included as a statement in students' contracts in some countries, this is not being clearly articulated across the programme in all countries.

▪ To revisit the student selection process, finding ways to increase focus on serious students only. Students weak in the official language of programme teaching should be required to finish the courses before being enrolled in the regular education cycle. Educational institutions could also be brought on board and their feedback sought as part of the selection process, noting that they have expertise in this aspect, and some of them have prior knowledge of students, especially those who enroll in language courses prior to

enrolling in the academic programme. As reported by some educational providers, selection criteria are not consistent and not clear to all; their validity needs to be improved.

- To provide awards or organize ceremonies for high achievers. This would promote SPARK's programme as well as increase students' motivation. Some students reported becoming honors students after receiving this scholarship; however, they feel that their achievement is not being acknowledged.

It is worth noting that 68% of the students surveyed believe that the HES programme could be remarkably improved. Recommendations provided by the students as part of the online survey include:

- increasing focus on quality over quantity, thus decreasing number of students supported while increasing the amount of support provided

- rewarding/ acknowledging the achievements of high performing students

- improving communication and the tone that is used at times with students

- increasing communication and coordination with educational institutions

- initiating a student hot-line

- reconsidering trainers' selection

6.3 Administrative Recommendations

- To form a consortium of donor/ partners and provide one consolidated narrative as well as financial report to them that clearly shows support. This would help improve views towards SPARK's transparency as well as consistency across the programme. Under such an approach, one general report will be submitted to the consortium, indicating support given by each donor, total costs incurred, total number of students supported by country and activity…

- To initiate internal discussions to unify understanding towards "match funding" and "multi-donors" across all areas of operations and all team members, noting that different SPARK team members have different perception towards this multi-donor approach. Such a recommendation becomes even more relevant noting that some donors are adamant that their support should not be viewed as "co-financing" or "co-funding".

- To improve/ enhance the internal process associated with processing payments, noting that several delays are occurring in payment settlements for both educational providers and students alike. Such delays are creating a real burden for some students.

6.4 Recommendations Related to Communications

- To improve internal communication and handover processes to ensure that internal knowledge is not lost. It has been noted that key staff in some countries are unaware of the programme's history, including selection of educational institutions. Thus, despite the presence of a shared Z-drive and some quite beneficial handover reports, better handover, documentation of organizational knowledge, and programme orientation is needed for new team members.

- To set a student communication policy whereby, although the majority of students report that their emails are promptly answered, many are dissatisfied with the tone of communication. When it comes to inviting students to coordination meetings and additional activities, students have the general impression that the underlying tone is somewhat 'threatening'.

- To increase communication with students and improve its quality in terms of following up on students' well-being, sending out encouraging notes for high achievers, … Main communications currently taking place as reported by students is via the email (or SIS). Although SPARK implements a satisfaction survey, what students recommend is to communicate with them via various channels, with more communication focused on following up on their general well-being, problems encountered, …

- To find means and explore platforms for reaching out to and maintaining contact with graduates. Communication with graduates seems to become minimal once their cycle ends, which seems like a missed opportunity. A short documentary film recorded on SPARK's graduates would promote 'igniting ambition'.

- To increase the programme's visibility in terms of the groups it targets, emphasizing accessibility to Syrian refugees, IDPs, and members of the host community. To date, SPARK's website promotes HES as a programme that "is supporting Syrian and Palestinian refugees to enjoy access to higher education and to become community, business and national leaders of the future"[5].

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[5] http://www.spark-online.org/projects/higher-education-for-syrians-hes/

ANNEX A: LIST OF MEETINGS, KIIS, AND FGDS

Meetings and Key Informant Interviews

Stakeholder Role	Stakeholder Name	Person Interviewed	Date
Monitoring & Evaluation Manager	SPARK	Laura Brinks	28 September 3 October
Project Coordinator/ oPt	SPARK	Dina Dina Almasaeid	3 October 2018
Country Manager Lebanon	SPARK	Hiba Hamade	9 October 22 October
Programme Officer Lebanon	SPARK	Samer Zeidan	9 October
Project Coordinator Lebanon	SPARK	Sara Nasr	9 October 2018
Regional Deputy Programme Manager - HES	SPARK	Ceren Genc	15 October 2018
Regional Monitoring and Reporting Coordinator MENA	SPARK	Mukhles Khiarah	15 October 2018
Turkey Projects Coordinator	SPARK	Ibrahim Timurtas	17 October 2018
Program Manager of Education and Social Sector in the European Union	EU Lebanon	Abel Piqueras	19 October 2018
EU Delegation to Lebanon Communication Officer	EU Lebanon	Abdallah Chebly	19 October 2018
M&E Data Officer	SPARK	Laza Lazarevic	19 October 2018
Education Provider - Lebanon	Al Kayrawan	Salma Lababidi, Director	23 October 2018
Education Provider - Lebanon	Al-Shark Institute	Sourayya, Director	24 October 2018
Higher Education Coordinator – KR-I	SPARK	Hoger Bebane	24 October
Programme Manager - Jordan	Jordan	Erica Bijl	24 October
Assistant Education Officer	UNHCR	Agatha Abi Aad	24 October 2018
Quality Manager	Jinan University - Lebanon	Tharaa Haddad	25 October 2018

Executive Director	Jusoor	Grace Atkinson	25 October 2018
Independent Consultant	Trainer – EEP and Civic Leadership	Harout Mardirossion	25 October 2018
Similar Provider	HOPES	Dora Abou Mitri – Education Project Manager Rania Helou – Education Project Manager Mia Debs – Communication and Events Manager Nayla ABi Nasr – Country Manager	29 October 2018
Turkey Projects Coordinator	SPARK	Ibrahim Timurtas	29 October 2018
Turkey-Syria Country Manager	SPARK	Subhe Mustafa	29 October 2018
Syria Education Manager	SPARK	Fatma Kumas	29 October 2018
Syrian Project Officer	SPARK	Shady Haj Hasan	29 October 2018
Regional Monitoring and Reporting Coordinator MENA	SPARK	Mukhles Khiarah	29 October 2018
Regional Finance Manager – HES Programme	SPARK	Mohamed Aldris	29 October 2018
Turkey Project Officer	SPARK	Ola Enis	30 October 2018
Turkey Project Officer	SPARK	Alize Seray Yüksel	30 October 2018
Vice Rector	University of Gaziantep	Prof. Sehmus Demir	30 October 2018
Student Affairs Officer	Kahramanmaraş Sütçüimam University	Ozlen Nalbant	30 October 2018
Orange Focal Point	Orange	Feras Hussein Abdul Rahman Najjar	30 October 2018
Vice Rector	Harran University	Ali Sorizik	31 October 2018
Dean of Faculty of Agriculture	Harran University	Dr. Recep Gundogon	31 October 2018
Coordinator for International Students	Harran University	Rejhon Rohmon	31 October 2018
SIAD Focal Point	SIAD		31 October 2018

DAFI Scholarship Programme - TDH	TDH	Carla Leone – DAFI Scholarship Project Coordinator	29 October 2018
Provider of Economic Empowerment - Lebanon	Injaz	Samar Dani, Executive Director	30 October 2018
Board Member / Director of Entrepreneurship Program	Jusoor	Dania Ismail	1 November 2018
Regional Programme Manager – HES Programme	SPARK	Gemma Bennink	2 November 2018
Regional Coordinator – HES Programme	SPARK	Jeltsje de Blauw	2 November 2018
Ex-Deputy Regional Programme Manager	Ex- SPARK	Islam El-Ghazouly	5 November 2018
SPARK Director	SPARK	Yannick du Pont	5 November 2018
		Gemma Bennink Laura Brinks Jeltsje de Blauw Ceren Genc	22 November 2018

Focus Group # 1 - Turkey – 29 October 2018

First Name	Nationality	Gender	Degree	Major
Ibrahim	Syrian	Male	Bachelor	TV and Cinema
Faten	Syrian	Female	Bachelor	Mid-wife
Rayan	Syrian	Female	Bachelor	Math Teacher
Leen	Syrian	Female	Bachelor	Economics
Mahmoud	Syrian	Male	Bachelor	Civil Engineering
Khalil	Syrian	Male	Bachelor	Optical and Acoustic Engineering
Mulham	Syrian	Male	Bachelor	Civil Engineering
Ahed	Syrian	Female	Bachelor	Teacher
Adeel	Syrian	Male	Bachelor	Civil Engineering
Eman	Syrian	Female	Bachelor	NA

Focus Group # 2 - Turkey – 30 October 2018

First Name	Nationality	Gender	Degree	Major
Ali	Syrian	Male	TVET Diploma	Computer
Abdul Aziz	Syrian	Male	TVET Diploma	Medical Lab
Beyan	Syrian	Female	TVET Diploma	Anesthesia
Sara	Syrian	Female	TVET Diploma	Physiotherapy
Ule	Syrian	Female	TVET Diploma	Anesthesia
Ule	Syrian	Female	TVET Diploma	Logistics
Suzan	Syrian	Female	TVET Diploma	Medical Lab
Mohammad	Syrian	Male	TVET Diploma	Computer
Hashem	Syrian	Male	TVET Diploma	Anesthesia

Focus Group # 3 - Lebanon – 1 November 2018

First Name	Nationality	Gender	Degree	Major
Hasan	Syrian	Male	Bachelor	Digital Marketing AUST
Nermine	Syrian	Female	Bachelor	Education LIU
Noureddine	Syrian	Male	Bachelor	Auditing AUST
Iman	Syrian	Female	Bachelor	Education LIU
Saddam	Syrian	Male	Bachelor	Business LIU
Ahmad	Syrian	Male	Bachelor	Computer Science AUST

Focus Group # 4 - Lebanon – 1 November 2018

First Name	Nationality	Gender	Degree	Major
Hasan	Syrian	Male	TVET Diploma	Accounting
Aya	Syrian	Female	TVET Diploma	Education
Ammar	Syrian	Male	TVET Diploma	Accounting
Ahmad	Syrian	Male	TVET Diploma	Accounting

Houssam	Syrian	Male	TVET Diploma	Accounting
Mhamad	Syrian	Male	TVET Diploma	IT
Radwan	Syrian	Male	TVET Diploma	IT
Abdallah	Syrian	Male	TVET Diploma	IT
Najlaa	Syrian	Female	TVET Diploma	Accounting
Alaa	Syrian	Female	TVET Diploma	IT
Mounzer	Syrian	Male	TVET Diploma	Accounting

ANNEX B: ONLINE SURVEY

HIGHER EDUCATION OF SYRIAN REFUGEES (HES)
Student Survey

Management and Development Associates (MaDA) has been contracted by SPARK as an independent consultant in charge of conducting a mid-term evaluation for the Higher education for Syrian Refugees programme. Part of this evaluation process is collecting input from student beneficiaries, which is the aim of this survey. The survey time shall not exceed 20 minutes. All answers will remain anonymous. It is imperative that you fill all questions; otherwise, the questionnaire will be invalid. Thank you for your cooperation.

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

I agree to the collection and processing of my personal data by Management and Development Associates who are contracted by SPARK, for the purpose of evaluating the HES Programme, as well as of contacting me in the future for further information.

Country of Origin	☐ Lebanon	☐ Jordan	☐ Turkey
	☐ Syria	☐ Kurdistan	☐ OPT
	☐ Other, pls specify: _____		
Date of Birth	____ / ____ / ____ Day/ Month/ Year		
Current Country of Residence	☐ Lebanon	☐ Jordan	☐ Turkey
	☐ Syria	☐ Kurdistan	☐ OPT
Date of Arrival to Current Country (if applicable)	____ / ____ / ____ Day/ Month/ Year		
Gender	☐ Male	☐ Female	

II. FAMILY BACKGROUND

Number of Immediate Family Members	
List of Main Breadwinner(s)	

III. PROGRAMME RELATED – PROFILING INFORMATION

Name of Educational Institution	

Study Progamme Level	☐ Bachelor	☐ TVET Diploma
	☐ TVET Certificate	
Major/ Speciality	☐ Sciences	☐ Business
	☐ Engineering	☐ Technology
	☐ Nursing	☐ Design
	☐ ☐ Other, pls specify: _____	
Expected Date of Graduation	____ / ____ / ____ Day/ Month/ Year	
Support Received from SPARK	☐ Tuition Fees	☐ Transportation	☐ Allowance
Are you currently working? ☐ Yes ☐ No		

IV. ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. How did you come to know about the Higher Education for Syrian Refugees support programme implemented by SPARK?	
☐ Through Friends ☐ Through University ☐ Through Social Media ☐ Through SPARKS's website ☐ Other, pls specify: _____	
2. Did you find the application process easy?	
☐ Yes ☐ No	
If no, please specify why:	
3. Where eligibility and selection criteria clear to you?	
☐ Yes ☐ No	
4. Is there a risk that you drop out?	
☐ Yes ☐ No	
If yes, why?	

V. RATING QUESTIONS

Please rate your agreement with the factors addressed below on a scale from 1 to 5, 1 being the lowest/ strongly disagree and 5 the highest/ strongly agree. Kindly note that although you may have answered similar questions before when filling in the satisfaction survey, these questions feed into an <u>external evaluation</u> process. Feedback you provide will remain anonymous and is crucial to help provide a better overall understanding of the programme and what needs to be improved.

Rating Factor	1	2	3	4	5
In general, I am satisfied with HES programme	1	2	3	4	5
I am satisfied with the support provided to me by SPARK team	1	2	3	4	5

I believe that the programme in general is highly relevant to my needs	1	2	3	4	5
I believe the programme is fair in terms of selection	1	2	3	4	5
I have minimal contact with SPARK except when it comes to payment processing	1	2	3	4	5
I am satisfied with the additional activities provided by HES	1	2	3	4	5
I believe the Leadership Development programme component is beneficial	1	2	3	4	5
The timing of the Leadership Development programme is suitable	1	2	3	4	5
I believe the Economic Empowerment programme component is beneficial	1	2	3	4	5
The timing of the Economic Empowerment programme is suitable	1	2	3	4	5
Accessing SIS is easy and convenient	1	2	3	4	5
I believe the HES programme can be remarkably improved	1	2	3	4	5
I believe the programme helps increase my chances of finding employment	1	2	3	4	5
In my opinion, the programme contributes to empowering a workforce for the reconstruction of Syria	1	2	3	4	5
I would recommend the HES programme to my friends	1	2	3	4	5

VI. CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1.   What are the main challenges you are facing within HES?

2.   What recommendations can you provide to improve HES?

3.   What recommendations can you provide for additional activities to be implemented?

ANNEX C: ANSWERS TO RATING QUESTIONS

Rating Factor	SD/D	N	A/SA
In general, I am satisfied with HES programme	17%	18%	66%
I am satisfied with the support provided to me by SPARK team	16%	12%	72%
I believe that the programme in general is highly relevant to my needs	15%	12%	73%
I believe the programme is fair	19%	22%	59%
I have minimal contact with SPARK except when it comes to payment processing	35%	38%	26%
I am satisfied with the additional activities provided by HES	22%	23%	55%
I believe the Leadership Development programme component is beneficial	18%	20%	63%
The timing of the Leadership Development programme is suitable	36%	24%	40%
I believe the Economic Empowerment programme component is beneficial	20%	26%	54%
The timing of the Economic Empowerment programme is suitable	38%	27%	35%
Accessing SIS is easy and convenient	16%	24%	59%
I believe the HES programme can be remarkably improved	12%	20%	68%
I believe the programme helps increase my chances of finding employment	15%	19%	66%
In my opinion, the programme contributes to empowering a workforce for the reconstruction of Syria	13%	13%	74%
I would recommend the HES programme to my friends	12%	8%	80%

ANNEX D: FGD GUIDING QUESTIONS

HIGHER EDUCATION OF SYRIAN REFUGEES (HES)

Participating Education Providers' Interviews

Guiding Questions

Name	
Position	
Institution	
Date	

1.	What types of services is your institution providing under the HES programme?
2.	How and when was the coordination with Spark initiated?
3.	What encouraged you to participate in the HES programme?
4.	In your opinion, to what extent is the programme, and educational model that it provides, answering to the beneficiaries' needs?
5.	In your opinion, to what extent is this programme contributing to improving access to education for Syrian refugees? Do you think it will contribute to allowing them to find jobs now and later?
6.	Are you aware of the students' selection criteria for HES? If yes, what is your opinion towards such criteria?
7.	To what extent are students being directed towards jobs required by the market?
8.	Who is responsible for reaching out to potential beneficiaries? Did you play a role in reaching beneficiaries?
9.	In your opinion, are vulnerable Lebanese students equally aware that they are capable of applying to the programme?
10.	How is the communication happening between your institution and Spark? How satisfied are you with this communication?
11.	How is the communication happening between your institution and the students involved in the programme?
12.	In general, how would you rate the performance of the HES students? Are they perceived to be among the top achievers?
13.	What type of challenges and obstacles are being faced by this programme? Do they affect programme delivery? What are the possible solutions?
14.	What impact on students can be currently observed on the educational level?
15.	In your opinion, to what extent will this programme carry a sustainable impact on beneficiaries? And on your institution? What is the added-value that the programme carries?
16.	Are you aware of the criteria SPARK is using for the selection of educational institutions? What is your opinion towards these criteria (re-5C Model)?
17.	Will you participate in this programme or other similar programmes again?
18.	What are your recommendations for continuation and in case of replicability?

HIGHER EDUCATION OF SYRIAN REFUGEES (HES)

EU/Donors' Representatives Interviews

Guiding Questions

Name	
Position	
Organization	
Date	

1.	To what extent is the HES programme relevant to your organization's mission and strategy?
2.	To what extent do you believe the programme implemented by SPARK to be well-tailored to reach the intended objective?
3.	Are there areas in the project that you think can be improved? If yes, on which level(s)?
4.	To what extent is the programme contributing to filling the existing gaps for beneficiaries?
5.	What reasons encouraged your organization to fund this programme and what synergies exist?
6.	How effective is the communication mechanisms between all stakeholders and mainly your organization and Spark?
7.	To what extent is the Civic Engagement and Economic Empowerment work-package important? Why?
8.	In your opinion, will the HES programme carry a long-lasting impact? How?
9.	To what extent do such programmes play a role in reconstructing Syria?
10.	What were the main encountered challenges to date? What are your main concerns? How do you propose they should be addressed (if not already addressed)?
11.	How would you rate SPARK's coordination with other similar providers?
12.	In case of replication, what are your recommendations?

HIGHER EDUCATION OF SYRIAN REFUGEES (HES)

Local Authorities Interviews

Guiding Questions

Name	
Position	
Entity	
Location	
Date	

1.	In your opinion, to what extent is the HES programme answering to existing needs?
2.	To what extent do HES progromme's activities fall in line with the Crisis Response Plan adopted by the country and how?
3.	What is the impact that such interventions can leave on beneficiaries? Will they carry any impact on the host community too? Positive or negative and how?
4.	Does the programme promote employability?
5.	What were the forms of coordination implemented by the SPARK team? Did the team collaborate with you to decide majors that are correlated with market needs?
6.	Do you think that such interventions will contribute positively to the reconstruction of Syria?
7.	What are the main challenges that face such interventions?
8.	Do you have any recommendations for continuation or in case of replication?

HIGHER EDUCATION OF SYRIAN REFUGEES (HES)

Similar Service Providers Interviews

Guiding Questions

Name	
Position	
Organization	
Location	
Date	

1. What interventions is your organization implementing (or has implemented) on the level of higher education?
2. What are the objectives and main focus of these interventions?
3. How do you select beneficiaries and what nationalities do you focus on?
4. How do you select education service providers? What facilities are they providing you and your students/ beneficiaries with?
5. What is your approach when it comes to selecting majors to be supported? What is the link to the market need?
6. What are the communication mechanisms with students and how do you reach out to beneficiaries?
7. In your opinion, what is the reason that encourages educational institution to participate in such projects?
8. Do you provide other supporting activities under the same project? If yes, what are these activities and what are their objectives?
9. In your opinion, and from your experience, what resources are needed to implement such a programme?
10. Do you coordinate with local authorities, such as the Ministry of Education and Higher Education? Why or why not?
11. Do you coordinate with other service providers? If yes, who and how? Do you coordinate with SPARK?
12. In your opinion, what impact can such projects carry on the short and long terms?
13. How will such projects affect the future of the Syrian refugees?
14. What are the existing gaps?
15. What are the main challenges you are facing/faced in implementing these projects?
16. What are the main lessons learnt and what would you do differently if you repeat the same or a similar project?

HIGHER EDUCATION OF SYRIAN REFUGEES (HES)

Trainers' Interviews

Guiding Questions

Name	
Topic	
Date	

1.	How did you start working with Spark and when?
2.	What was/is your role on the HES project?
3.	Did you participate in developing the material for the workshops that you were delivering? If not, how satisfied were you with the material and did you receive any training/ guidelines on its use?
4.	Where were the sessions conducted and for how many participants?
5.	To what extent do you think that the sessions were relevant to the needs and interests of the participants?
6.	To what extent do you think that the timing of the sessions was convenient to the participants?
7.	How do you rate participants' participation and how interested were they?
8.	What was the participants' feedback? What were their main comments/ concerns?
9.	What are the benefits of the trainings conducted?
10.	To what extent do you think that the "Civic Engagement" and "Economic Development" have the potential to impact participants' lives and future?
11.	What were/are the main challenges?
12.	Do you have any recommendations/ comments/ lessons learned/ success stories to share?

HIGHER EDUCATION OF SYRIAN REFUGEES (HES)

UNHCR Interview Guidelines

Name	
Position	
Organization	UNHCR
Location	
Date	

1. What interventions is UNHCR implementing (or has implemented) on the level of higher education, in addition to DAFI?
2. What are the objectives and main focus of these interventions?
3. How do you select beneficiaries and what nationalities do you focus on? Do you think that focusing on the Syrian refugees is increasing tension?
4. How do you select education service providers? What facilities are they providing you and your students/ beneficiaries with?
5. In your opinion, what is the reason that encourages educational institution to participate in such projects?
6. What is your approach when it comes to selecting majors to be supported? What is the link to the market need?
7. What are the communication mechanisms with students and how do you reach out to beneficiaries?
8. Do you coordinate with local authorities, such as the Ministry of Education and Higher Education? Why or why not?
9. Do you coordinate with other service providers? If yes, who and how? How do you rate such coordination and is it limited to avoiding duplication?
10. In your opinion, what impact can such projects carry on the short and long terms?
11. How will such projects affect the future of the Syrian refugees?
12. What are the existing gaps?
13. What are the main challenges you are facing/faced in implementing these projects?
14. What are the main lessons learnt and what would you do differently if you repeat the same or a similar project?

HIGHER EDUCATION OF SYRIAN REFUGEES (HES)

Student' Focus Group Discussion

Guiding Questions - Lebanon

Management and Development Associates (MaDA) has been contracted by SPARK as an independent consultant in charge of conducting a mid-term evaluation for the Higher education for Syrian Refugees programme. Part of this evaluation process is collecting input from student beneficiaries, which is the aim of these guiding questions. All answers will remain anonymous. Thank you for your cooperation.

Date: _____   Place: _____

First Name	Nationality	Gender	Degree	Major
		☐ Male ☐ Female	☐ Bachelor ☐ TVET Diploma ☐ TVET Certificate	
		☐ Male ☐ Female	☐ Bachelor ☐ TVET Diploma ☐ TVET Certificate	
		☐ Male ☐ Female	☐ Bachelor ☐ TVET Diploma ☐ TVET Certificate	
		☐ Male ☐ Female	☐ Bachelor ☐ TVET Diploma ☐ TVET Certificate	
		☐ Male ☐ Female	☐ Bachelor ☐ TVET Diploma ☐ TVET Certificate	
		☐ Male ☐ Female	☐ Bachelor ☐ TVET Diploma ☐ TVET Certificate	
		☐ Male ☐ Female	☐ Bachelor ☐ TVET Diploma ☐ TVET Certificate	
		☐ Male ☐ Female	☐ Bachelor ☐ TVET Diploma ☐ TVET Certificate	
		☐ Male ☐ Female	☐ Bachelor ☐ TVET Diploma ☐ TVET Certificate	

		☐ Male ☐ Female	☐ Bachelor ☐ TVET Diploma ☐ TVET Certificate	

1. How did you come to know about Higher Education for Syrians (HES) implemented by SPARK?
2. Who funds this programme?
3. Who can apply to this programme? How are candidates selected?
4. Are you aware of other providers of scholarships? If yes, why did you choose SPARK?
5. Would you advise your friends and family to apply to SPARK or a different programme? Why?
6. Do you know how SPARK selected universities and TVET providers?
7. How are you finding communication with the SPARK team? How helpful are the student support services?
8. To what extent did the programme answer to your real needs? Were there other important needs that should have been addressed?
9. How did you choose the major or the specialty that you studied/are studying? Do you think this major increases your chances of employability? If yes, where (Lebanon, Syria, Europe…)?
10. Did you participate in Civic Leadership and Economic Empowerment trainings? If yes, how did you find them?
11. Are you currently using any of the skills that the programme helped you acquire?
12. What do you plan to do after graduation?
13. What ideas do you have to ensure that the programme continues for other students to benefit?
14. What were the changes that HES programme made in your life? Do you think that these changes will last?
15. What were the main challenges that you faced on all levels throughout the HES programme?
16. Are there specific areas of the programme that could be implemented in a better way? Do you have any recommendations?