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TECHNICAL BRIEF:

Temporary contract teachers in Jordan: qualitative findings

The Education Research in Conflict and Protracted Crisis (ERICC) Research Programme Consortium is a global research and learning partnership that strives to transform education policy and practice in conflict and protracted crisis around the world — ultimately to help improve holistic outcomes for children — through building a global hub for a rigorous, context-relevant and actionable evidence base.

ERICC seeks to identify the most effective approaches for improving access, quality, and continuity of education to support sustainable and coherent education systems and holistic learning and development of children in conflict and crisis. ERICC aims to bridge research, practice, and policy with accessible and actionable knowledge — at local, national, regional and global levels — through co-construction of research and collaborative partnerships.

ERICC is led by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) with Academic Lead IOE, UCL's Faculty of Education and Society, and expert partners include Centre for Lebanese Studies, Common Heritage Foundation, Forcier Consulting, ODI, Osman Consulting, Oxford Policy Management and Queen Rania Foundation. During ERICC's inception period, NYU-TIES provided research leadership, developed the original ERICC Conceptual Framework and contributed to early research agenda development. ERICC is supported by UK Aid.

Countries in focus include Bangladesh (Cox's Bazar), Jordan, Lebanon, Myanmar, Nigeria, South Sudan and Syria.

A. Study background

For children displaced from conflict, attending school can be a lifeline, providing stability, learning and opportunities for socialisation. In such contexts, teachers become more than facilitators of learning as they find themselves providing social-emotional support and guidance to traumatised students and their families. Yet, teachers of refugees and other vulnerable children are often the least supported, compromising their ability to teach effectively and provide high-quality education to students. This is the case in Jordan where most Syrian refugees are taught by temporary contract teachers (TCTs), who are Jordanian nationals and typically begin teaching with little to no training or classroom experience. Although nearly all hold bachelor degrees, TCTs are precariously employed and usually paid the national minimum wage, which is a fraction of the salaries their permanently employed counterparts receive.

The lack of attention to TCTs and their needs is reflected in the fact that recent national teacher reforms were not made with them in mind nor do they apply to them. The three major reforms enacted in recent years are:

1. The Ministry of Education (MoE) has shifted the **role of supervisors**, changing from largely teacher evaluators to that of supportive coaches for teachers. TCTs are, in theory, supposed to be supported and informally assessed by these supervisors. However, due to their limited number, the capacity of supervisors to do so is stretched and, in practice, evidence suggests that such support is not always given to those teachers.
2. The MoE has developed **a new teacher ranking system** that has replaced the teacher licensing system to clearly set out a pathway for promotions. This new ranking system is not applied to TCTs since they are not considered permanent employees.
3. The MoE has developed **a new multi-purpose evaluation framework for teacher evaluations**, which seeks to link teacher performance with student outcomes. This new evaluation system is not required to be applied to TCTs because they are not considered permanent employees.

This lack of support for teachers of refugees in Jordan stems from the country's struggle to provide adequate education for all residents after receiving approximately 1.3 million Syrian refugees since 2011. While nearly 90% of Syrian refugees reside in host communities, the remaining live in three refugee camps in the remote eastern regions of the country. To increase access to education, the Jordanian government set up second-shift schools primarily for Syrian refugee students in host communities, while schools were established in refugee camps with the support of international donors and aid organisations such as UNICEF. Stakeholders in Jordan commonly acknowledge the poorer quality of Syrian refugees' education due to a lack of resources as well as the exclusive use of TCTs to staff schools. In Jordan, TCTs are recruited by regional education field directorates in second-shift schools and camps. Hence, these teachers are key to providing and improving educational access, quality and continuity for Syrian refugee students. To improve outcomes for both TCTs and their students, policy-makers and other stakeholders in Jordan must consider what can be done to improve support for TCTs, starting with understanding their motivations, challenges and experiences in schools.

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B. Overview of the study, evidence gaps and methodology

This mixed-methods research study aims to investigate: (1) how the current policies and field practices related to the hiring, training and evaluation of TCTs affect their motivation to teach, and (2) how support for TCTs might be improved. The design of the study was informed by a review of the research evidence regarding teachers of refugees, which found that there was little evidence related to: (a) national teachers of refugees, (b) alternative "best practice" models for teacher management in refugee settings, and (c) the perceptions of teachers of refugees. With these evidence gaps in mind, the study addresses all three aspects to varying degrees.

The study's overall research objective was to understand the effects of current hiring, training and evaluation policies and practices on TCTs' motivation to work and their perceptions of teacher management policies, system practices and working conditions in Jordan. The study is primarily descriptive in that it assesses TCTs' perspectives and needs, current practices and possible solutions, laying the groundwork for intervention design and testing in a later phase. The following research questions (RQs) guided the study:

- **RQ1:** What are TCTs' motivations, challenges and experiences with hiring processes (recruitment, selection and deployment) under the current policies?

- **RQ2:** What are TCTs' motivations, challenges and experiences with the application (or lack thereof) of current teacher evaluation and training protocols and practices?

- **RQ3:** What interventions (strategy, policy or programme) do teachers and system-level stakeholders perceive to be desirable and potentially cost-effective and scalable to improve motivation, management and support?

C. Methods

The study employed a large-scale survey of TCTs working in camp schools and second-shift schools across five governorates, four of which have the highest concentration of Syrian refugees living within them. To complement the survey data and gain additional perspectives on the impact of policies and actual practices on TCTs, the study's researchers conducted focus groups with principals and Ministry of Education supervisors who work closely with TCTs. Finally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with key government policy-makers and other education stakeholders to gain their perspectives on the rationale behind current policies and what policy reforms may improve the work-related conditions for TCTs. While an associated technical brief focuses on the quantitative findings[1] of the study, **this brief focuses on the outcomes of the qualitative components of the study** and hence focuses on the qualitative sample and results, which relate to research question 3.

Principals and Supervisors Focus Groups (FGs): For the selection of focus group participants, the study considered the population as the second-shift schools within the four central and northern governorates with the greatest number of UNHCR-registered Syrian refugees (n=661,854), concentrated in Amman (30%), Mafraq (26%), Irbid (20%) and Zarqa (15%). Within each of these four governorates, the data collection vendor hired by the Queen Rania Foundation (QRF) conducted one

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[1] Sarabi, H., Rauschenberger, E., & AlAtari, S. (September, 2024). Temporary Contract Teachers in Jordan: Quantitative findings. ERICC Technical Brief.

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focus group with principals and supervisors from either boys' or girls' schools. A fifth focus group with principals and supervisors was conducted in the southern region (Karak) as requested by the MoE.

Participants	Number
Principals & Supervisors in second-shift girls' or boys' schools (one per priority region & southern region)	5 FGs with 30-40 individuals in total

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs): The key informants for the semi-structured qualitative interviews were identified and selected based on their department's role in the hiring, evaluation and management of TCTs at the central MoE level. The final sample interviewed for the study included the following 10 participants:

- Representative of the Managing Directorate of Supervision and Educational Training, MoE
- Representative of the Managing Directorate of Human Resources, MoE
- Representative of the Managing Directorate of Legal Affairs, MoE
- Representative of the Managing Directorate of Financial Affairs, MoE
- Representative of donors
- Officials from MoE regional Field Directorates (1 from South, 1 from Ramtha and 3 from Zarqa).

D. Qualitative findings regarding potential interventions to support TCTs

RQ3: What interventions (strategy, policy or programme) do teachers and system-level stakeholders perceive to be desirable and potentially cost-effective and scalable to improve motivation, management and support?

The qualitative data shed light primarily on the above research question. It is worth noting that the data collected provided the most insight on ideas for reforms or interventions but provided very limited insight on what interventions would cost or their scalability. The potential interventions identified fall into four categories: (1) improving the hiring process, (2) improving evaluation for TCTs, (3) enhancing motivation of TCTs and (4) leveraging the influence and role of the donor community in supporting TCTs.

1. <u>Improving the hiring process</u>

a. More interaction and transparent selection
Key informants, particularly within the field directorates, raised concerns regarding the current examination process for hiring TCTs, noting that these exams are currently conducted online. They felt that the mode of assessment (online), while efficient, does not fully capture a teacher's practical teaching abilities and classroom management skills. As a result, some voiced the need to arrange personal interviews for applicants with school personnel and others felt that a "teaching demonstration should be required" to increase the ability of field directorates to select only candidates well-suited for teaching roles. Informants also raised the issue of perceived nepotism, or preferential treatment for relatives or friends, in the hiring process. To combat this, participants discussed the need to create a more transparent hiring process, potentially through having the process "centrally managed by the MoE" or, alternatively, having the process "nationally

standardised" with clear criteria set out. These adjustments could, they felt, "prevent misunderstandings and grievances", ensuring a fair and competitive selection process that matches candidates to school needs effectively.

b. *Addressing school allocation challenges*
Initial school assignment decisions for TCTs are made at the field directorate level, where the decision-making process works to address schools' needs rather than a TCT's preferences. The focus groups and interviews highlighted the fact that the geographical spread of schools, especially in remote areas, poses a challenge in hiring, allocation and retaining TCTs. To address this challenge, two suggestions were offered: (1) Developing alternative processes to ensure timely and accurate communication of school needs to field directorates to prevent last-minute hiring or mismatch between TCT candidate and school; and (2) the creation of "job housing", or designated housing, in areas like Azraq camp for teachers commuting from outside the governorate.

c. *Providing higher pay, benefits or other financial support*
From the teacher survey, it is clear that a primary concern for TCTs is their pay, which often does not reflect the complexity and demands of their role. Focus groups often highlighted the need for the Jordanian government to revise compensation structures to better reflect the demands of teaching positions and the cost of living, which they agreed could significantly improve TCTs' motivation. Discussants reported that TCTs often face stress and are demotivated by their financial instability linked to the precarious nature of their contracts. Moreover, the disparity between the salaries in Syrian camps and those in Jordanian schools underscores the difficulty in offering competitive compensation within the existing framework.

Furthermore, many suggested that the MoE could advocate for and implement policies that ensure fair, competitive salaries and benefits for TCTs. For some, this was critically important for "aligning them [TCTs] more closely with those of their permanently employed counterparts". One ministry official felt that providing more benefits may be a possibility, noting "As MOE, we can try to give them health insurance and maternity leave, …it can be a good incentive [for TCTs]." Others suggested that better compensation for TCTs could include "health insurance", "housing allowances" and "commute reimbursements", particularly for those teaching in remote or underserved areas.

d. *Improving contracts through extended duration and class assignment(s)*
While discussants generally accepted the temporary nature of TCTs' contracts, several argued that TCTs could enjoy more job stability through guaranteeing longer school placements with consistent class assignments. Many agreed that extending the duration of TCTs' contracts and school assignments was critical to improving teachers' morale and engagement with students. Yet, turnover rates for TCTs can remain high in some areas and the placement of TCTs in a particular assignment does not guarantee they will remain in that position for the entirety of the school year. While supporting the use of annual contracts and stable school assignment, some supervisors and principals also suggested that TCTs be guaranteed consistency in class assignments as well, noting "ensuring the same teacher remains with a particular class throughout the school year is critical for the learning experience and psychological well-being of teachers… as well as students, especially for younger children… [such as those] in grade 1 through grade 3." With greater time in one school and with particular class(es) of students, TCTs are able to build stronger relationships with students, colleagues and parents. These relationships were seen by discussants as critical to not only providing stability for TCTs but also increasing their

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motivation and learning, allowing them to "reflect on their teaching and interactions and improve their practice".

e. *Wider contractual reforms to attract and retain effective teachers*
Still, most supervisors, principals and MoE interviewees felt that change was needed from other government bodies beyond the ministry to improve the contracts offered to TCTs. At the legislative level, reforms are needed to ensure TCTs have "job security and rights comparable to those of permanent teachers". It was suggested that this could involve revising employment laws to offer better protection for temporary teachers, including "clear contracts", "grievance procedures" and "fair termination practices". One respondent pointed out that advocacy for these changes should involve stakeholders from "across the educational spectrum", including school leaders and government agencies as well as donors and NGOs involved with TCTs in refugee camps.

2. <u>Improving evaluation for TCTs – a comprehensive approach</u>

a. *The need to improve performance evaluation for TCTs*
Insights from focus group discussions revealed support for a multi-faceted strategy aimed at improving the effectiveness, fairness and impact of TCTs' performance evaluations. One supervisor noted, "The evaluation process must be instilled with purpose and significance, communicating to teachers that their performance assessments matter [and]… have tangible implications for their professional advancement and rehire prospects." To accomplish this, stakeholders in the field and in various levels of the MoE had a variety of ideas. One participant highlighted that treating TCTs' evaluations and development as of equal importance as evaluations for permanently employed teachers is a way to promote equity and parity between both groups of teachers.

b. *Developing a comprehensive TCT evaluation framework and tools*
There was general agreement among key informants on the need for a more formalised and standardised "official" evaluation framework specific to TCTs' work. Such a framework would "ensure consistency in evaluating TCTs across different schools and districts and provide clear criteria for assessment", thus making the evaluation process "more transparent and equitable". Relatedly, developing comprehensive evaluation tools that assess TCTS' performance both inside and outside the classroom was seen as part of developing a wider TCT-specific evaluation framework. Supervisors and principals described using evaluation tools designed for permanent teachers but felt this was not sufficiently adapted to reflect and judge TCTs' performance, given their stage of development and challenging assignments. Instead, some suggested developing an official tool to evaluate TCTs' behaviour, cooperation with colleagues and impact on student achievement, to offer a holistic view of their effectiveness. Discussants stressed that ensuring that evaluations are based on "objective criteria and standards" aids in making informed decisions regarding a teacher's performance.

c. *Ensuring both supervisor and principal provide evaluation input*
Several respondents voiced support for mandating input from both the principal and the MoE's subject or school supervisor, to ensure that TCTs' high-stakes formal evaluations are fair and reflect teachers' efforts over time. One MoE official noted, "Systematic end-of-year evaluations [for TCTs] should take into account both principal and supervisor assessments… not just the principal's judgement alone… [so that] areas for improvement or additional training can be identified". However, supervisors in focus groups highlighted that this recommendation might be difficult to implement without additional supervisors. They noted that subject and school supervisors already struggle with heavy loads of teachers and schools to visit and support. Requiring levels of visits

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and support for TCTs similar to those for permanent teachers would logistically require the MoE to hire significant numbers of additional supervisors.

d. Instituting a set number and schedule of TCT evaluations (formal and informal)

Another policy-related suggestion raised in focus group discussions was the need to establish a set number and schedule of formal and informal evaluations from principals and supervisors. Currently, there are guidelines and general understanding of how evaluations and informal assessments should take place. However, since supervisors and principals in second-shift schools find themselves overwhelmed, given their heavy workload, evaluations and supervisor visits often do not take place regularly or at all. Discussants agreed this can be "stressful", "frustrating" and "demotivating" for TCTs, particularly since so much weight is given to evaluation outcomes in their consideration for contract renewal.

e. Developing additional measures for more holistic evaluation

Discussants and key informants suggested that schools be supported in adopting a more holistic and collaborative approach to evaluation. Recommendations on how to do so included a range of measures, many of which in theory were supposed to be incorporated into TCTs' evaluations but often were not. These suggested measures included: (1) structured feedback sessions between TCTs and their supervisors and principals; (2) leveraging peer observations and mentoring programmes to inform evaluations to introduce valuable perspectives from experienced educators to TCTs; and (3) integrating student feedback into TCT evaluations. Others suggested that evaluations consider the trajectory of a TCT's development, highlighting that principals and supervisors should consider TCTs' record of training when evaluating TCTs. If training has not been made available for TCTs, then that fact should be noted in the evaluation and judgement of TCTs' performance, taking into consideration this lack of support.

f. Establishing transparency in the evaluation process

While none of the discussants and key informants challenged the idea that school principals should be empowered with the authority to make decisive evaluations regarding the suitability of TCTs, some highlighted that this authority comes with the responsibility to provide fair and transparent evaluation processes. This theme linked to the results of the teacher survey, in which TCTs expressed frustration with nepotism, or preferential treatment of relatives, friends or other connected individuals, in both hiring decisions and evaluations and their impact. To reduce preferential treatment of connected individuals and promote transparency and fairness, one recommendation was for education authorities to establish a "neutral decision-making body" to oversee and ensure that evaluations are conducted fairly, "based on merit" and "free from biases". Another idea suggested for ensuring transparency and fairness was the creation of an appeal and review process, which one discussant described as "necessary, allowing for a fair contestation of evaluations deemed unjust by the teachers". Such a mechanism could help ensure a balanced approach to authority and "offer teachers a platform for their voices to be heard and considered". Another discussant voiced her support for an ombudsman-type position, noting that "investigating complaints thoroughly and enhancing the confidentiality and professionalism of the evaluation process" are "vital" to protecting and supporting TCTs. Finally, another focus group discussed the need for TCTs to receive "clear and transparent communication about expectations and evaluation criteria" from the start of their contracts. As one discussant pointed out, "just like with students, knowing what is required and expected of them [TCTs] is crucial for their success and engagement, as well as adherence to the criteria".

g. Continuity of TCTs evaluation record

A notable recommendation mentioned by two key informants was for the MoE to institute a system for tracking the performance and pre-employment training of all TCTs. One key informant suggested, "establishing a national registry of temporary teachers that tracks their professional development, achievements and contributions could facilitate their transition to permanent roles". Relatedly, a second key informant suggested that the MoE could explore the use of digital platforms for documenting and tracking evaluations and training over time. The interviewee noted that "creating a digital portfolio for each teacher would streamline the evaluation process", "provide a historical record of professional development and achievements", and "enable informed decision-making regarding temporary teachers' future assignments and professional development".

3. <u>Enhancing motivation for TCTs</u>

Within the focus groups and KIIs, participants emphasised the need for schools to adopt strategies that address both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors.

a. *Recognition of teachers' contributions*
Participants suggested that celebrating TCTs' achievements and providing positive feedback for a job well done can significantly boost a teacher's self-esteem, job satisfaction and efforts, as well as, potentially, attracting talented candidates to the field and retaining them in the profession. On a local level, it was suggested that schools could implement regular recognition programmes, such as teacher-of-the-month awards, showcasing exemplary teaching practices and achievements. Alternatively, on a directorate or national level, the MoE could establish a recognition programme to celebrate excellence in teaching among TCTs, which principals and supervisors noted would be "a powerful motivational tool". Awards could recognise "innovative teaching methods", "contributions to community engagement", or "significant improvements in students' learning or well-being". While recognising teaching efforts and excellence may enhance motivation, some suggested that this recognition could be accompanied by incentives such as "professional development scholarships", "invitations to educational conferences", or "public acknowledgment in MoE communications".

b. *Creating a supportive and collaborative school culture*
Creating a supportive and collaborative school culture was another suggestion some principals and supervisors discussed in the FGs, believing that doing so was critically important for improving TCTs' motivation. It was suggested that a more collaborative and inclusive school climate could be established by "encouraging teamwork [among teachers]", "ensuring peer support" and the "sharing of best practices among teachers". These practices were seen as ways to foster "a sense of belonging and community" within the school community. Another participant suggested establishing mentorship programmes, in which experienced teachers guide and support newer TCTs and can help integrate them into the school community. Such efforts, it was argued, would "make them [TCTs] feel valued and supported". One principal commented that involving TCTs in "school-wide initiatives and decision-making processes" could also foster TCTs' sense of belonging and respect within the school community. In addition to establishing a positive school culture through peer support and inclusive leadership, others stressed the importance of addressing the "practical" concerns voiced by TCTs. As one discussant noted, "addressing the specific needs and challenges of temporary contract teachers is essential". These concerns included a range of issues from job security and fair compensation to working conditions, some of which principals highlighted they could not directly address.

c. Providing clear pathways for career advancement

Two focus groups voiced the need to provide clear pathways for TCTs' career advancement within the school or the wider educational system, to "motivate temporary contract teachers by showing them that their efforts can lead to more stable and rewarding opportunities". Discussants debated how schools could assist in mapping potential career paths and support teachers in pursuing the necessary qualifications or experience required for advancement. Relatedly, some discussants and one key informant supported the idea for a fast-track route into permanent positions, for highly effective TCTs, with one noting that "fast-tracking highly effective temporary teachers for permanent roles, based on performance evaluations and contributions to their schools and communities, would boost teachers' motivation considerably."

d. Prioritise training and professional development for TCTs

Most focus groups and interviewees agreed that a comprehensive strategy was needed to better support TCTs' professional growth, while ensuring the delivery of high-quality education to students. MoE-led training sessions and workshops, and external opportunities for professional development, were both discussed as important for teachers to learn how to improve their teaching. There was also a common recognition that professional development opportunities play a pivotal role in motivating teachers. However, others indicated that providing accessible training and development opportunities was not sufficient. Instead, the point was made that the MoE should be providing "robust professional development opportunities [including training], tailored to the needs of temporary contract teachers". Ensuring that training sessions are "relevant to TCTs' work context" and/or "address their weaknesses as a teacher" will more likely lead to improvements in their skills, job satisfaction and commitment to teaching. Another discussant noted the importance of self-assessment as a motivator to improve practice, observing that "training should foster a culture of reflection and self-improvement among temporary contract teachers". Relatedly, some discussants also supported the idea of "creating platforms for TCTs to share their experiences, challenges and successes" to "foster a sense of community and professional growth".

4. <u>Leveraging the influence and role of the donor community in supporting TCTs</u>

According to key informant interviews, the significant contributions of the donor community towards the salaries of teachers (directly in camps and indirectly via the MoE budget for host communities), have uniquely positioned donors to influence policy related to TCTs. The role of donors, initially focused on addressing school capacity and access needs for Syrian refugees, has evolved to highlight the need for systemic changes in how contract teaching is perceived and integrated within the national education system. Recognising that donors unintentionally made contract teaching seem normal, even though it is not ideal, emphasises the urgent need to reassess job quality and fairness among two parallel groups of teachers who essentially perform the same duties. The donor representative interviewed noted that their organisation and others were advocating for more long-term solutions to remedy the inequities facing TCTs: "by working with the MoE, we and other donors are working to highlight the important work done by contract teachers and push for plans to make their jobs better".

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