

Disaggregating Education Data by Protection Status in National Education Data Systems: UNHCR in Jordan¹

UNHCR and UNESCO in Jordan work with ministries to include disaggregation by protection status in the national EMIS.

Background

Inclusion in national education systems is essential for the protection and empowerment of refugee children and youth, as well as for the social cohesion and resilience of host communities. As laid out in UNHCR's Refugee Education Strategy 2030, inclusion is at the center of the work of the organization and is key for allowing access to quality education for refugee children and youth (UNHCR, 2019).

In Jordan, a major refugee hosting country,² and where refugees are accessing the national education system on par with Jordanian children, the **National Education Strategic Plan 2018-2025 (ESP)** has a goal to improve the quality and use of basic education data for decision making. It also aims to strengthen the Education Management Information System (EMIS, defined in Box 1) to ensure accurate and timely data collection and analysis. EMIS plays an important role in improving the quality of education, and not only helps countries understand the needs of their learners, but also implement policies and programs that respond to these needs.

Educational Management Information System (EMIS)

An EMIS can be defined as “a system for the collection, integration, processing, maintenance and dissemination of data and information to support decision-making, policy-analysis and formulation, planning, monitoring and management at all levels of an education system. It is a system of people, technology, models, methods, processes, procedures, rules and regulations that function together to provide education leaders, decision-makers and managers at all levels with a comprehensive, integrated set of relevant, reliable, unambiguous and timely data and information to support them in completion of their responsibilities” (UNESCO IIEP, 2008).

To ensure that inclusion is effective and that refugees are indeed accessing and learning in national education systems, they must be systematically included in the national EMIS. Furthermore, their protection status needs to be reflected in contexts where it is considered safe to do so, and where no major protection concerns arise in doing so. Working with UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, and UNESCO, Jordan has addressed this issue by working to include protection status in the national EMIS and enabling the monitoring of refugee students' progress in the national education systems.

At the higher education level, Jordan has also made important strides in making refugees visible, through the establishment of the Higher-education Institutions Electronic Connection-System (HIECON). The development of this initiative, also supported by UNHCR, aims to address the critical issue of the lack of accurate data, such as the atomization of certificate accreditation and the challenges faced for scholarships selection, for both national and refugee students in Jordanian higher education institutions. With its focus on both national and refugee students, HIECON aims to ensure the accurate and timely availability of higher education data, facilitating effective decision-making and policy development.

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² Jordan was hosting an estimated 761,804 refugees and asylum-seekers in 2022 (UNHCR, 2023).

Objective

To date, a limited number of countries that host refugees have either effectively disaggregated basic education data by protection status in national EMIS or produced statistics on higher education for refugees.³ The aim of this document is therefore **1) to showcase how UNHCR and UNESCO have worked with Ministry of Education (MoE) in Jordan to achieve the integration of refugee basic education data and disaggregation by international protection status in the national EMIS; 2) to showcase progress undertaken in the collection of higher education data for refugees; and 3) to encourage national Ministries of Education in contexts of refugee inclusion to disaggregate data in their EMIS by protection status and to collect higher education data for refugees.** Jordan's experience can be useful in highlighting the pathways and facilitating factors that have made both disaggregation by protection status and collection of higher education data on refugees possible. In addition, Jordan's good practice can offer valuable insights for countries where there is potential to replicate these efforts.

The brief below lays out the rationale for the disaggregation of data by protection status and the need for higher education data on refugees. It then provides a brief overview of the EMIS in Jordan and HIECON, and details the specific steps that were taken in Jordan to ensure that refugees were visible in both systems. The document concludes with a series of lessons learned in both of these processes.

Rationale

In Jordan, the integration of refugee data⁴ into the national education management information system and the collection of higher education data aims at improving the planning and monitoring of the education sector, helping to achieve a series of sub-objectives. As a starting point, including UNHCR refugee data in Jordan's OpenEMIS (see Box 2) can help streamline data collection and management related to refugee students. At the higher education level, HIECON can help address the existing gap of information on refugees in higher education by facilitating the integration of live and accurate data from public and private universities. The availability of this information in turn can improve the allocation of educational resources and ensure that more refugee children and youth have access to quality education considering that information facilitates planning, programming and evidence-based decision-making, leading to the development of policies that address the unique challenges identified.

Secondly, including refugee data can provide better tracking and monitoring of refugee students' educational progress. This can help identify and address learning gaps, ensuring that refugee children receive the necessary support to succeed academically. Third, the alignment between Jordan's OpenEMIS, HIECON and UNHCR refugee registration data can potentially enhance data security and privacy for refugee students, which is crucial for protecting sensitive information and ensuring that personal data of refugees is handled responsibly. Lastly, for refugees who may eventually be integrated into the host country's education system, having their educational records aligned with the national system can ease their transition and ensure that their previous education is recognized.

EMIS in Jordan and HIECON

EMIS Jordan, along with 17 other countries, is using OpenEMIS, an initiative launched by UNESCO. OpenEMIS was conceived to be a royalty-free software that can be tailored to meet the specific needs of implementing countries, without conditions or restrictions for use. "Open" means that the software can be customized to the national contexts and respond to tailored needs. It captures a large set of information from the central, field directorate and school levels (see Box 2):

³ A few countries disaggregate data by a useful proxy (for ex., nationality) (see UNESCO-UIS & UNHCR, 2022).

⁴ The information on refugees is categorized into two groups: Palestinian refugees under UNRWA, and refugees of other nationalities under UNHCR. In this note, we are referencing data on refugees under UNHCR. The data on Palestinian refugees is managed by UNRWA.

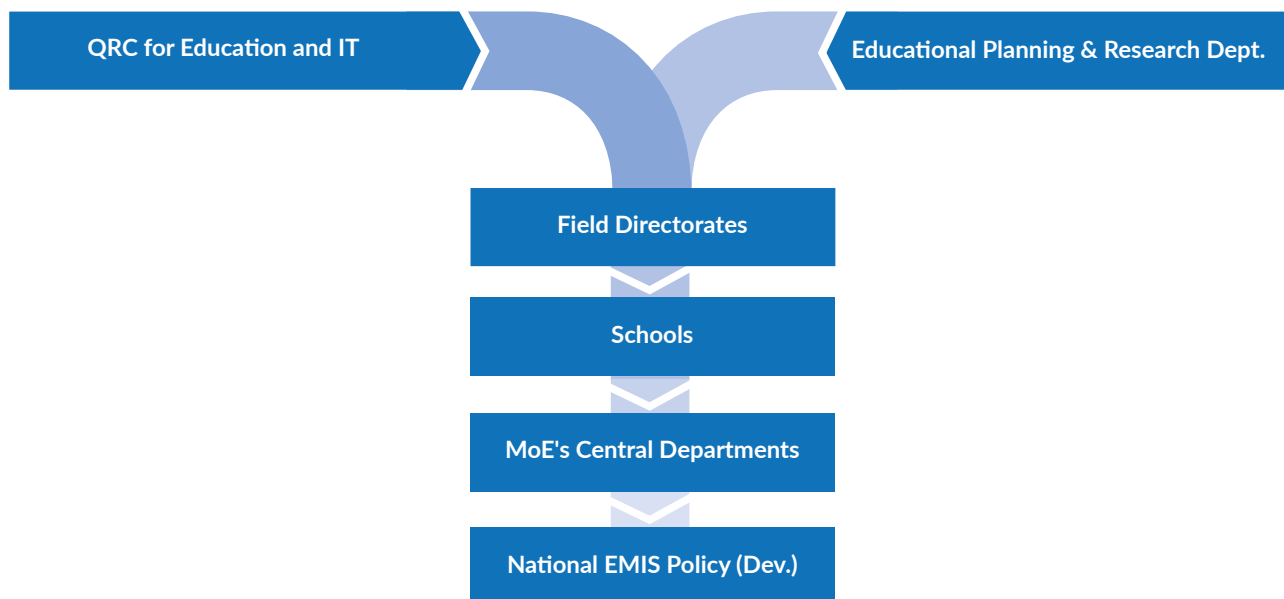
OpenEMIS in Jordan

OpenEMIS complies with international standards for quality management, software development and data security. It captures information on a diversity of areas including:

- Schools (Education Programmes, Classes, Subjects, Textbooks, Positions)
- Students (Academic Profile, Health, Special Needs, Nationality, Identity, Language, Finance & Fees)
- Staff (Professional Profile, Health, Special Needs, Nationality, Identity, Language, Professional development, Qualifications, Finance & Salary)
- Attendance and School Conduct (Students/Staff)
- Performance (Assessments, Competencies, Outcomes, Student report card, MoE marks reports)
- Infrastructures and Maintenance of schools and classrooms
- Additional surveys prioritised by and conducted by MoE
- Rubrics (MoE’s Supervision Tool)
- Other (Transport, Cases, Visits, Counselling, Timetables)

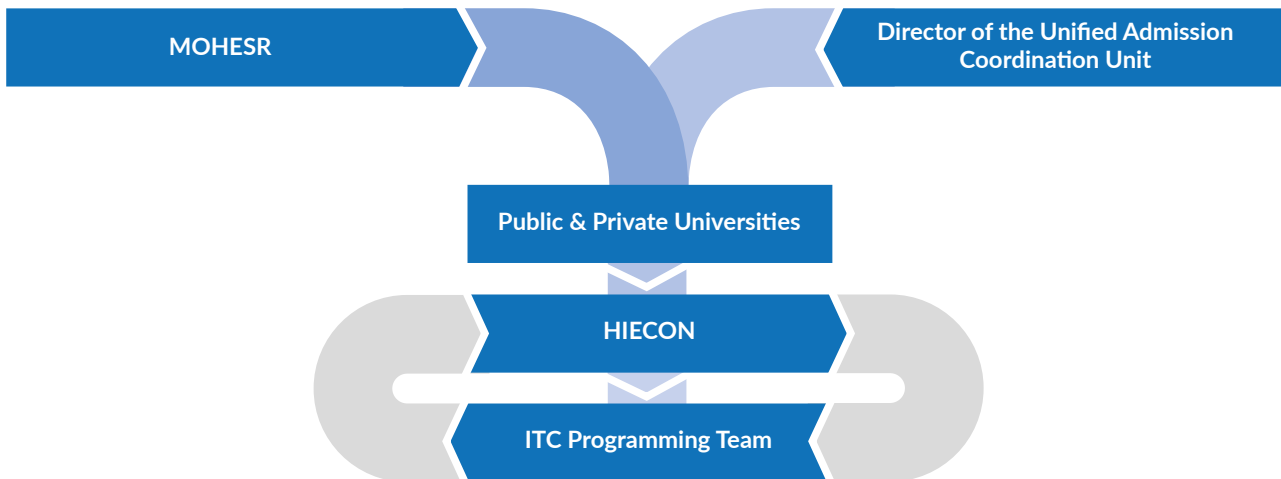
In Jordan, MoE’s Queen Rania Center (QRC) for Education and Information Technology and the Educational Planning & Research Department, manages EMIS. Education actors have different roles and responsibilities that are shared at the central field directorate and school level. For instance, schools have the responsibility of collecting and inputting data into OpenEMIS. Field directorates follow-up and supervise the data collection process done by the schools, while analysis, budgeting, and policy fall under the purview of the MoE’s central departments, in particular the MoE’s Education Planning and Research Department.

At QRC, four teams are responsible for the technical management of the OpenEMIS. These include the (a) system administration team, (b) system development team, (c) help desk and quality assurance team, and (d) data utilization and dissemination team. Education planning aspects of EMIS is the responsibility of the Educational Planning & Research Department. In parallel, the MoE is developing a national EMIS policy to clarify roles and responsibilities at the MoE central level for the departments involved in EMIS Operations, including QRC and the Planning and Research Department. The EMIS policy will also strengthen the link between education data and better-informed decision-making at all levels.



HIECON

HIECON represents a pioneering venture in the field of higher education, being the first of its kind in the MENA region. It stands as a cloud-based system dedicated to the collection, processing, maintenance, and access of live student data within higher education institutions in Jordan. HIECON sits under the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MoHESR).



Activities / Timeline

The section below outlines the process through which the disaggregation of basic education data in the national EMIS was carried out. It then highlights the process involved in the collection of higher education data for refugees.

Disaggregation by protection status in EMIS

2014: Ministry of Education in Jordan selected OpenEMIS as the EMIS platform they wanted for data collection, management, and use. At the request of the MoE, OpenEMIS was first supported in Jordan in 2014 through EU funding and UNESCO technical support, under the UNESCO-Community System Foundation (CSF) (++) global OpenEMIS Framework for Collaboration.

2019-2022: Technical support continued to be provided to the MoE through the implementation of a comprehensive three-year programme entitled “System Strengthening Partnership” implemented by UNESCO with the Ministry of Education, through a Multi-Partner Trust Fund supported by Canada, Norway and Italy. It focuses on strengthening institutional capacities and systems.

UNHCR engagement

2019: UNHCR noted the high accuracy of data on Jordanian children in the system, thanks to its collaboration with the Jordanian Civil Status Department. However, the same level of accuracy was not achieved for refugee children's data. The OpenEMIS system, used in Jordanian schools, could report on non-Jordanian students but had difficulties reporting accurate data on refugee students registered with UNHCR. This was due to the lack of a specific UNHCR identification field in OpenEMIS, highlighting a gap in the system's capabilities.

2020: UNHCR's approach vis-à-vis Jordan's OpenEMIS aimed to customize support and interventions to address the educational needs of all refugee students, irrespective of their nationality.⁵ UNHCR collaborated with UNESCO, MoE, and QRC to enhance OpenEMIS, aiding the MoE in identifying refugee students of various nationalities within the Jordanian education system and generating more precise refugee student data. This was done by supporting the MoE to align the OpenEMIS student module with the refugee identification numbers from UNHCR's registration systems.

⁵ There are currently 52 nationalities registered with UNHCR-Jordan; though only 4 nationalities heavily dominate the number of refugees.

2021 - 2024: UNHCR has held multiple discussions with QRC, MoE, UNESCO, and the developers of OpenEMIS CSF to outline and implement technical measures for integrating the UNHCR Individual registration numbers into the system. This integration aims to accurately reflect the protection status of non-Jordanian refugee students in schools.

Higher education data

April 2023: UNHCR initiated a series of meetings involving the Advisor to MoHESR and the Director of the Unified Admission Coordination Unit, along with the ITC programming team. These meetings focused on needs assessment and project planning. UNHCR supplied MoHESR with the Asylum Seeker Certificate mock-up for software validation, as well as other essential data for monitoring and evaluation purposes.

May 2023: The MoHESR issued a directive to public universities, mandating the inclusion of a 'refugee code' for students possessing a UNHCR Asylum Seeker Certificate into their systems.

August 2023: Fifty percent of public higher education institutions were incorporated into HIECON, constituting phase 1 of the project. The MoHESR issued a similar directive to private universities, requiring the inclusion of a 'refugee code' for students with a UNHCR Asylum Seeker Certificate in their registration systems.

December 2023: The inclusion of 50 per cent of the public institutions was completed. This marked the beginning of Phase 2, which involved private universities.

February 2024: Anticipated delivery of pre-used ICT equipment from UNHCR. This important acquisition, consisting of high-quality, previously used computer machines, will empower the Ministry's programming team in their efforts to enhance the HIECON system. This equipment is key to advancing the overall strength and efficiency of Jordan's higher education system, ensuring better data management and operational capabilities.

April 2024: The HIECON System will be fully deployed, achieving complete data integration across all public and private higher education institutions in Jordan.

Lessons Learned

- Partnerships with governmental entities and ministries for long-term development are crucial.** Collaboration with government bodies ensure that initiatives align with national policies and priorities, which is essential for sustainable development. Working with ministries ensures that the educational needs of refugee students are incorporated into the national education strategy, making the impact of these initiatives more sustainable. For example, the success of the HIECON system was significantly bolstered by the strong partnership with the MoHESR. Their support in integrating the 'refugee code' into university systems highlights the value of collaborative efforts in achieving project objectives.
- Multi-sector partnerships enable collaborative efforts.** Bringing together international organizations, government bodies, and specialized technology centers can lead to innovative solutions to address complex issues like refugee education data.
- Technology can support in addressing social and humanitarian challenges.** The upgrade and implementation of OpenEMIS in Jordan, particularly with the integration of HIECON, highlights the pivotal role of technology in addressing social and humanitarian challenges. This advancement showcases how strategic use of information management technology, especially in the education sector, can significantly improve the lives of vulnerable populations. By enabling precise data collection and management for both national and refugee students, such technological initiatives exemplify the transformative power of digital in enhancing education systems, ensuring inclusivity, and informing policy decisions for better resource allocation and support strategies.
- Accurate data is key for managing and improving education systems.** Accurate data on refugee children's enrollment aids in resource allocation, policy-making, and monitoring educational progress, ensuring that refugee learners are not left behind.

5. **The effective use of existing resources demonstrates the importance of flexibility and resourcefulness in project management.** This includes the use of computers from UNHCR in Jordan unit done for implementing the HIECON system.
6. **These initiatives serve as a model for education inclusion, where access to quality education is monitored effectively.** The focus on enhancing data collection and analysis through e-portals for accurate counts of refugee students emphasizes the critical role of data in informing decisions and shaping effective support strategies.
7. **Early and thorough planning is crucial for these initiatives to succeed:** The initiation of planning and advocacy efforts in early 2022 played a pivotal role in shaping the track of the HIECON project. The needs assessment meeting held in April 2023 further underscored the importance of such early and strategic planning in the effective management and implementation of such a complex project. This proactive approach fostered a more deliberate and comprehensive development of the HIECON system, demonstrating the critical role of foresight and particular preparation in ensuring project success.
8. **UNHCR's role in advocacy and coordination is central:** Active involvement in initiating meetings and coordinating with various stakeholders highlights UNHCR's crucial role in advocating for refugee rights and facilitating collaborative efforts in education.

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