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Min Ila

Summary of Education Results After the First Few Months of Implementation

*This policy brief provides a summary of the preliminary education impacts generated by the No Lost Generation/Min Ila cash transfer programme during the first few months of implementation. The Min Ila cash transfer substantively increased **attendance** rates for children in second shift schools in the pilot governorates of Akkar and Mount Lebanon—the schools within which the programme operates. While there is suggestive evidence that Min Ila increased **enrolment** in second shift schools, in line with administrative enrolment data that suggest higher enrolment in pilot areas, we are currently unable to definitively attribute this increase to the programme. The programme impacts on school enrolment appear to be dampened by the limited capacity of second shift schools to register all of the children who wanted to enrol, hence also limiting the number of children who could register for the cash transfer. The administrative enrolment data show that while enrolment increased 41% in 2016–17 in non-pilot governorates, enrolment increased 51% in pilot governorates, even given the supply capacity constraints. In short, more children go to second shift school overall, and of these children, those from pilot areas spend significantly more time in the classroom. These findings are preliminary. More analysis and administrative data are needed to gain a deeper understanding of the programme's effects.*

Context

Lebanon has one of the highest per-capita ratios of registered refugees in the world.¹ Out of a population of 5.9 million, 1.5 million are displaced Syrians. Most Syrians arrived with limited savings and have struggled to earn steady incomes to meet their families' basic needs, such as food, health care, and shelter. These basic needs tend to require immediate attention, which means that Syrian families often forgo education and its long-term benefits in favor of short-term needs. Consequently, more than 2.6 million children are out of school not only in Lebanon but also in Syria, Turkey, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt.²

¹ UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Government of Lebanon, & UN High Commissioner for Refugees. (2014). *Lebanon crisis response plan 2015-2016—year two*. Retrieved from <http://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/lebanon-crisis-response-plan-2015-16-year-two>

² UNHCR. (2016). Missing out: Refugee education in crisis. Retrieved from http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/missing-out-refugee-education-in-crisis_unhcr_2016-en.pdf

This sudden influx of Syrian refugees has created an education crisis in Lebanon that affects Syrian and vulnerable Lebanese children. The Reaching All Children with Education project in the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) has partnered with international donors, the United Nations, and local nongovernmental organisations to implement education interventions to address this crisis. These efforts include introducing an afternoon shift in public Lebanese primary schools for displaced Syrian children—the so-called “second shift.” As a result of these efforts, almost 158,000 children were enrolled in formal education for the 2015–16 school year. The 2015 Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (known by the acronym “VASyR”)—a nationally representative assessment carried out by UNHCR, UNICEF, and World Food Programme (WFP)—found that Syrian children are more likely to be out of school as their age increases, with a particular increase in dropout rates starting around 10 years of age.

No Lost Generation/Min Ila

In the 2016–17 school year, UNICEF Lebanon, in partnership with WFP and in cooperation with MEHE, started Min Ila, a cash transfer programme for displaced Syrian children in the governorates of Mount Lebanon and Akkar. The programme is designed to address the income-related barrier to school attendance alongside existing interventions addressing non-income constraints (e.g., Accelerated Learning Programme for children out of school for more than 2 years). Syrian children aged 5 to 9 years old who live in the Mount Lebanon and Akkar governorates and are enrolled in a second shift school receive a basic monthly education transfer of 20 USD to cover a portion of the indirect costs of going to school, such as school snacks, transportation, and appropriate clothing and shoes. Syrian children aged 10 years and older who are enrolled in a second shift school receive a larger monthly education transfer of 65 USD, which factors in the higher monthly earnings of a working child in this age group. The education transfers continue for the duration of the school year, and payments are made every month on an ATM card (Lebanon One Unified Inter-Organisational System for e-Cards, or LOUISE). While no conditions must be met in order to receive the cash, school attendance is monitored and follow-ups (via household visits) are scheduled if children do not attend school regularly. The purpose of these visits is to (1) record reasons for dropout and (2) refer households to existing complementary services to help children back into school.

The Evaluation

American Institutes for Research and UNICEF Office of Research–Innocenti lead the independent impact evaluation of Min Ila. The purpose of the study is to measure the immediate effects of the programme on displaced Syrian children’s school participation. The study compares beneficiaries in the pilot governorates of Mount Lebanon and Akkar with households that would otherwise be eligible for the programme but live in the neighboring non-programme governorates of North Lebanon and South Lebanon. The appendix to this brief describes the evaluation design in more detail.

The evaluation follows the same 1,456 displaced Syrian households with children aged 5 to 14 over time, with baseline data collected in September and October 2016 and rapid follow-up data collected in February and March 2017. By focusing on households in the vicinity of second shift

schools, the evaluation attempts to isolate the effect of the Min Ila programme on children who can access a school. The rapid follow-up data allow for an immediate assessment of programme impacts on schooling outcomes. The evaluation will investigate impacts on broader aspects of child well-being—including child labor—relying on a final wave of follow-up data scheduled to be collected at the end of the 2016–17 school year.

Impacts on Enrolment

There is suggestive evidence that the programme modestly increased second shift school enrolment. However, school capacity constraints may have dampened this effect. It appears that over half of the second shift schools in the study had reached full capacity during the registration phase, preventing children from enrolling. After the programme started, nearly 40% of the children in the pilot areas enrolled in a second shift school, with another 10% expected to enrol but seemingly unable to do so due to capacity limits at their nearest second shift school. New second shifts were opened in response to the increased demand in other parts of the pilot governorates; however, this change was not captured by the study because the sample was selected from existing second shift schools. We therefore currently cannot report with sufficient confidence on the modest remaining increase in school enrolment.

Aggregate MEHE figures suggest that formal school enrolment rates for displaced Syrian children increased rapidly across the country from the previous (2015–16) to the current (2016–17) school year. This study also found that schooling rates increased in both treatment and comparison areas, from nearly 60% at baseline to nearly 80% at follow-up. School enrolment increases were particularly pronounced for children aged 5 to 9, whose self-reported school enrolment increased from slightly over 60% to nearly 90%.

Impacts on Attendance

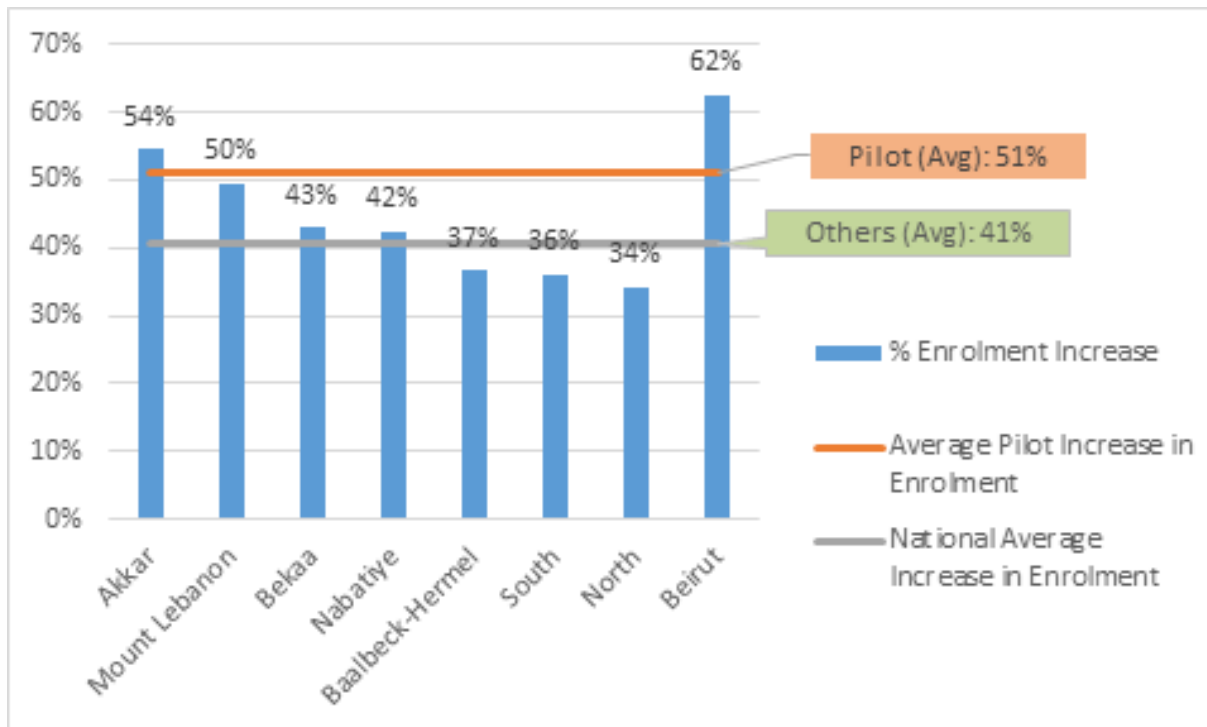
The programme increased school attendance for children who were enrolled in a second shift school by 0.63 days per week on average. In other terms, children enrolled in a second shift school spent roughly 20% more time in school compared to similar children in comparison areas. As a result of the programme, children 5 to 9 years old attended second shift school 0.7 more days per week and children 10 to 15 years old attended second shift school 0.5 more days per a week compared to similar children in comparison areas. Children receiving the Min Ila programme benefits attend school on average 4.1 days per week, which means that they are in school over 80% of the time possible.

Reflections on Study and Programme Implementation

This study was designed to capture programme effects among children living in the vicinity of an active second shift school. The rationale was that these children could readily enrol in a second shift school in response to the programme, allowing the evaluation to capture the impact of increasing the demand for education through a cash transfer programme. However, over half of all second shift schools in the pilot areas of the study reached full capacity while registering children and had to turn

away children who wanted to enrol. While MEHE was prepared to open new second shifts in existing schools to accommodate the increase as was done in previous years, in some areas there were no additional schools in which to open new second shifts. This situation may have created a ceiling effect for the study because it is impossible for the programme to increase enrolment above the capacity of the second shift schools. In other words, the programme cannot demonstrate its full potential to generate enrolment effects due to the limit on spaces to enrol children in second shift schools. Due to the sample being selected from areas with existing schools, enrolment in newly opened second shifts not located near the sampled schools could not be captured. In this scenario, limited impacts on school enrolment do not necessarily reflect a limited impact on schooling outcomes. On the contrary, assuming that addressing the second shift school capacity constraints would increase school enrolment by an additional 10%, the potential for the programme to increase both attendance and enrolment is substantive.

Figure 1. MEHE Enrolment Data



Appendix: Study Design and Technical Explanation of Results

The study uses a geographic regression discontinuity design (RDD) to identify the impact of the Min Ila programme. RDDs can be used to identify programme effects when programmes are allocated based on an assignment variable. Well-known RDD examples include allocation of scholarships based on test scores and allocation of employment and health programmes based on the age of the beneficiary. The intuition behind the RDD is that those who are just below the threshold to receive the programme (e.g., those whose test score is just too low to get the scholarship or those who are just too young to get the health programme) are very similar in all respects to those who are just above the threshold and therefore serve as a valid comparison group. RDDs rely on relatively “mild assumptions” to identify credible programme impacts.³

In our setting, households that are located near the border separating pilot and non-pilot (comparison) governorates are compared to each other. In essence, distance to the pilot governorate border can be interpreted as the assignment variable. Those children who live just outside the pilot governorate border are likely to be similar (on average) to those who live just inside the pilot border and can potentially serve as a credible comparison group.⁴ While a full description of the estimation strategy is beyond the scope and purpose of this brief, the strategy can be illustrated in three figures. A more extensive baseline report established that households living in comparison governorates are an appropriate comparison group. Hence, differences between the pilot and comparison groups after the pilot commenced can be attributed to the Min Ila programme rather than to other differences between the two groups.

Figure 2 shows the spatial distribution of the households in the study, differentiating them by pilot (small dots) and comparison (small triangles) status. The figure also shows the catchment areas (2.5 km radius) around all of the second shift schools near the households (large circles), confirming that study households mostly live in the vicinity of active second shift schools. The households and schools broadly cluster around the borders separating the pilot governorates of Akkar and Mount Lebanon from the comparison governorates of North Lebanon, South Lebanon, and El Nabatieh. The data collected for households in the pilot governorates can be pooled and compared to the data collected for the comparison governorates, as shown in the following figures.

³Lee, D., & Lemieux, T. (2010). Regression discontinuity designs in economics. *Journal of Economic Literature*, 48(2), 281– 355.

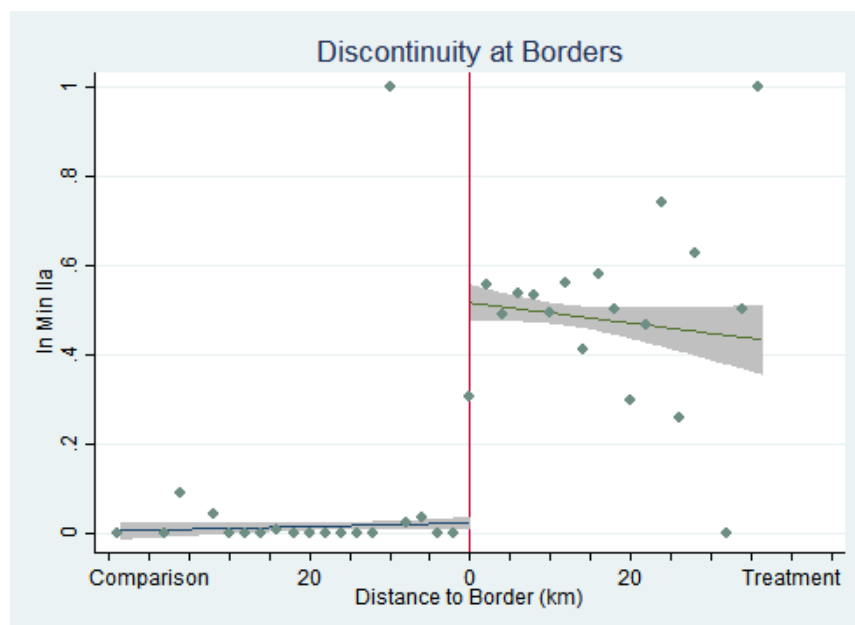
⁴Importantly, this “geographical RDD” identifies the effect of the programme on those households and children living close to the border (the so-called “local treatment effect”), which may or may not be identical to the effect of the programme on the full sample in the pilot governorate.

Figure 2: Map of Study Households and Second Shift Schools



Figure 3 shows that the programme was rolled out as planned, with only households in pilot areas receiving the transfer. The horizontal axis represents households' GPS distance to the border separating pilot and comparison governorates (the border itself is highlighted with a vertical red line). The dots to the left of the border represent clusters of households in the control areas, and dots to the right represent clusters of households in the pilot areas. The higher up the cluster of households is located on the graph, the greater the fraction of households receiving the programme. The households in the control areas (left of the border line) are located at the bottom of the graph, indicating that they did not receive the programme. The households to the right of the border line sit halfway up the graph, indicating that many, but not all of them, received the programme. In part, households did not receive the programme because they sent their children to other school types in which children do not receive Min Ila (primarily first shift schools). However, we suggest that capacity constraints also played a role in incomplete programme take-up.

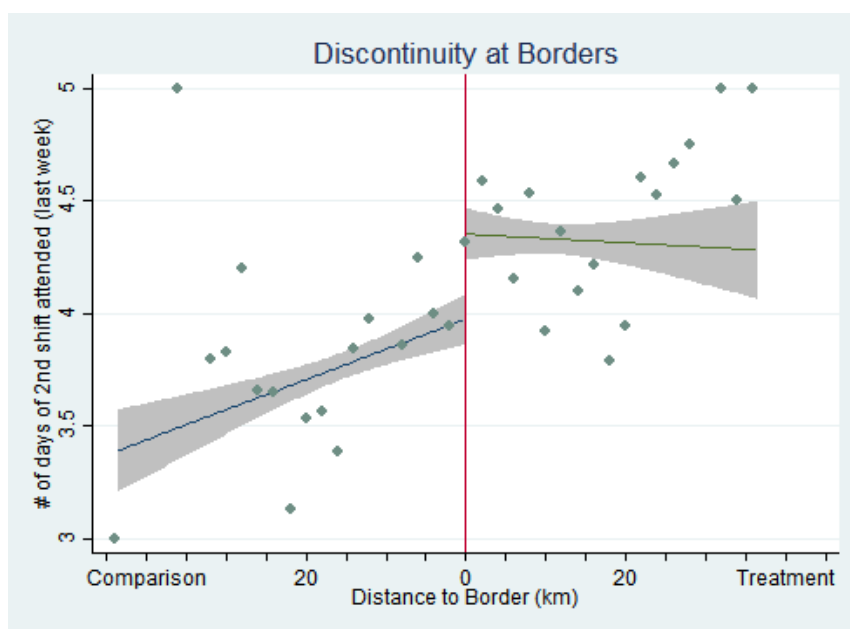
Figure 3: Programme Enrolment by Distance to the Border



Note. The horizontal axis represents distance (in km) to the border separating the pilot governorates (Akkar and Mount Lebanon) from the comparison governorates (North, South, and El Nabatieh). The vertical red line represents the border itself. The vertical axis represents the proportion of households participating in the Min Ila programme, measured based on administrative data. Dots represent local averages for clusters of households. Linear ordinary least squares (OLS) regression lines were fitted to the left and the right of the border. Grey areas represent the 95% confidence interval around the regression line.

Figure 4 shows the programme impact on attendance in the week prior to the follow-up interview. The vertical axis represents the number of days attending school in the last week. Dots represent local averages for groups of households, and the fitted lines approximate average changes in school attendance as one moves away from the border. There is a visible jump in days of school attendance at the border, and the difference between the treatment and control areas increases with distance from the border. The jump at the border represents the effect of the programme, discussed above.

Figure 4: Impact of Min Ila on Second Shift Attendance



Note. The horizontal axis represents distance (in km) to the border separating the pilot governorates (Akkar and Mount Lebanon) from the comparison governorates (North Lebanon, South Lebanon, and El Nabatieh). The vertical red line represents the border itself. The vertical axis measures the number of days of school attendance in the week prior to the rapid follow-up interview by children attending second shift schools. Dots represent local averages for clusters of households. Linear OLS regression lines were fitted to the left and the right of the border. Grey areas represent the 95% confidence interval around the regression line.