

# HIGHER EDUCATION



The Trust Fund promotes access to higher and further education for refugee, IDPs and host communities through scholarship programmes.

While the Trust Fund's initial actions were focused on access to those programmes, recent projects pursue a more holistic approach that includes not only scholarships, but also career guidance, psychosocial support, and labour market-oriented activities.

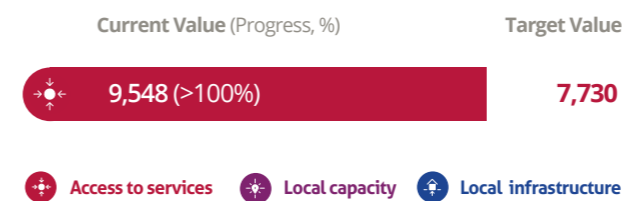
To date, the Trust Fund has supported **11 actions and six lead implementing partners to improve access to higher and technical and vocational training education (TVET)**. The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the German Jordanian University (GJU), SPARK, UNHCR Türkiye and, more recently, GIZ- are contributing to provide access to scholarships for bachelors', masters', and vocational programmes in Türkiye, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, and Egypt. DAAD in partnership with the Luminus Technical University College (LTUC), the Dutch Organization for Internationalization in Education (NUFFIC), and Campus France, GJU and SPARK, are now embarked in

the second phase of their programmes in Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq, respectively. The most recent actions, apart from scholarships, include psychosocial support (SPARK), labour market actions, e.g., training or access to jobs and internships (GJU, SPARK), entrepreneurship support (SPARK,

GJU), promotion of networks among and within universities (DAAD, GJU, SPARK), national advocacy (DAAD), social cohesion activities (GJU), capacity building and infrastructure improvements at vocational training schools (GIZ). Three actions are still being implemented in Lebanon (T04.220), Jordan (T04.215) and in Iraq (T04.218), although the last one (T04.218) has closed its operational phase after March 2024.<sup>9</sup>

Globally, for all higher education actions, the indicator on access indicates a six per cent-increase, during this period compared to the previous results report,

## HIGHER EDUCATION PRIORITY SECTOR OUTPUTS



→ 9. The currently ongoing projects are implemented in Lebanon (DAAD, T04.220) and Jordan (GJU, T04.215). The one in Iraq (SPARK, T04.218) has recently closed its operational phase (05/2024).

## Higher Education disaggregated results

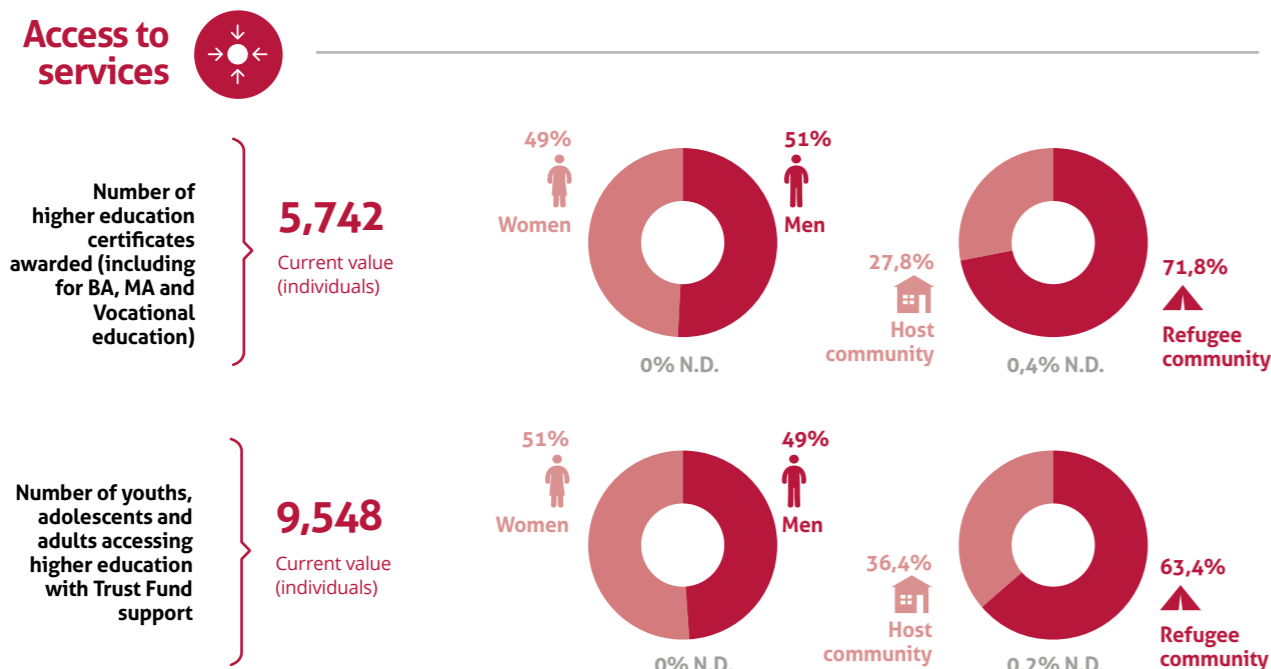


Figure 9: Trust Fund: Higher education results disaggregated by sex and community of origin (as of 31/03/2024)  
\*N.D.: Not disaggregated.

**reaching 9,548 students.** In terms of students accessing scholarships, women represent 51% and Syrian refugees account for 63% of the total.

To date, **5,742 higher and vocational certificates have been awarded** (90% of the planned global target), displaying an increase from 4,819 students reported in the last period. Women (Figure 9) have graduated to a similar extent (49%) than men (51%), and refugees more than host community members (72% vs. 28%, respectively).

At **project level**, T04.215 in Jordan offers potential to improve work opportunities and teacher training opportunities for students in Jordan, promote participation in the Alumni network and career guidance sessions, as well as additional projects to overcome some of the bottlenecks. T04.218 in Iraq, although having closed the operational phase, will measure its contribution to job creation, internships, and work placements during the upcoming reporting period.

## HIGHER EDUCATION OUTCOMES IN LEBANON

Higher and Technical Vocational Training and Education (TVET) outcomes in Lebanon are informed by the final evaluation of higher and further education opportunities and perspectives for Syrians and vulnerable Youth in Lebanon (HOPES-LEB), implemented by **DAAD, Campus France and Nuffic** (T04.220) and the ROM report of **“VTE4all: Vocational and Technical Education for All”**, led by GIZ (T04.231).

HOPES-LEB, implemented by DAAD, Campus France and Nuffic, promotes higher and further education opportunities and perspectives for Syrians and vulnerable youth in Lebanon to improve livelihood prospects. Specifically, the project aims at increasing access to higher education opportunities, improving employability prospects and strengthening higher education institutions, local and regional institutions to provide better support around higher education. The recent **final evaluation (02/24)** highlights the award of 559 scholarships for the public Lebanese University (LU) and the Lebanese International University (LIU), the largest private higher education institution, exceeding the 400-target. Scholarships includes registration and tuition fees, a living allowance, and local transportation. In terms of graduation, the most recent **QIN (03/24)** reports that 72.2% of all students (90% target)

received their diploma, due to a higher dropout rate. Reasons for dropout include leaving the country, failing exams, application for scholarships abroad or work responsibilities. Regarding access to courses to improve employability, 580 students have completed from a total of 987 scholarship awards, showing a 59% (target of 75%) completion rate. According to the evaluation, students in general showed a high degree of satisfaction, appreciating the English competence, specialisation in their field, digital skills, job searching and application skills. Regarding **individual changes**, all students are facing a difficult context, but the possibility of pursuing further educational opportunities and self-development are highlighted in the final evaluation as positive effects. Most of them underline the financial and family situation as main challenges. They state that HOPES-LEB has helped them **“overcome the difficult times and increased future life and career prospects, especially outside Lebanon”** and contributed to their networking with fellow students.

Regarding **institutional changes**, a wide range of 20 projects (target of 18) funded by HOPES-LEB have been implemented to support more than 5,300 students, with a completion rate of 78%, according to the evaluation. The projects aimed at facilitating the transition from secondary to higher and further education, from higher and further education to the labour market and at limiting the risk of students

dropping out. Despite some weaknesses, e.g. high ambition of the projects, the timing or requirements for students in terms of dedication, the evaluation states that those *“short projects contributed to capacity development of institutions involved, not only in terms of project implementation capacity, but also through increasing the teaching and training skills of their staff.”* Another effect of the project activities mentioned are the *“linkages established between the higher education institutions and NGOs and participant’s motivation to work together”*. Other elements of positive impact include *“enhanced fundraising skills of their participants, established connections between the implementing partners, enabled creation of project consortia for future Erasmus+ calls”* or *“further development of partner institutions’ capacities in the provision of customised trainings for vulnerable Lebanese and refugee youth”*.

At **national level**, due to HOPES-LEB, the Alumni network is well established and involves scholarship holders of the DAFI<sup>10</sup> UNHCR programme, HOPES-LEB, EDU-SYRIA and SPARK, networking more than 1,000 participants, where 71% are Syrian, 13% Lebanese and 8% Jordanians. A wide range of activities and training sessions -all very positively assessed- has been organised and attracted a high number of students, although the facilitation of jobs and internships has been limited due to the

situation in the country and limitations in the labour market for Syrian refugees. According to the final evaluation, at sectoral level, the paper developed by HOPES-LEB Higher Education in Times of Collapse (2022) has been broadly accepted by decision making stakeholders in the higher education sector in Lebanon. It has informed the Lebanon Five-Year Higher Education plan 2023-2027 and the Brussels VI Syria conference. Although the evaluation team has not had the chance to interview the Ministry of Higher Education, it reports that *“a considerable dialogue has been established between the HOPES-LEB and institutions”* in the country and at international level. The sustainability of these efforts remains unclear, although it is evident it would be advisable to link the Alumni network to an existent institution.

**VTE4all**, led by **GIZ**, aims at increasing the employability prospects of vulnerable individuals while supporting TVET system strengthening and TVET’s relevance to the needs of the labour market. Regarding **changes at individual level, the ROM assessment (07/24)** reports that 124 Lebanese (59%) and Syrian (41%) students accessed jobs in the construction and renewable energy sector, as a result of the project, exceeding planned targets. Access to employability has not reached expected targets, however, according to the tracer



studies quoted, 42% of them have been provided with a job opportunity. Trainees in the food and dairy products’ sector have improved their skills in a relevant market with high potential to create self-employment opportunities in the future. Some challenges remain here, such as legal work restrictions for Syrian refugees, since they can only work in the construction and agriculture or start a small business, which many cannot afford. In terms of teachers, those trained by the project, have improved their technical skills, and will pass them on to the future generations of students.

Regarding **institutional changes**, VTET4all strengthened training capacities and infrastructure in the

mentioned sectors, such as construction, renewable energies and food and dairy industries. The ROM report highlights the development of Competence Based Training (CBT) curricula, refurbished VET institutes’ workshops, and established public-private partnerships. The project established three production units, for the dairy and the furniture sectors to showcase the articulation of training for students and income generation. The General Direction of Vocational Training and Education (DGVTE) has also benefitted from the trained job-related competences assessors. The project also enhanced School Advisory Boards (SABs) for public private partnerships with training in certifying competencies and liaising with local enterprises.

→ 10. DAFI is the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative scholarship programme, implemented by UNHCR.



Furthermore, the project ensured the link with the International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization (ILO) to train the assessors complying with industry standards to *“enhance vocational education’s relevance and quality”*.

At **national level**, the ROM report informs about a positive impact on the TVET system by “fostering a conducive environment for the implementation of the National Strategic Framework for TVET 2018–2022 and strengthening the TVET system, by *“certifying DGVTE teachers and competence assessors, and establishing SABs to foster public-private partnerships”*. In addition, the CBT approach integrated in the DGVTE’s methodology, has strengthened its capacity *“in developing, revising, and accrediting training modules”*. After integrating practical skills into the curricula, vocational education is now, according to the ROM assessment, more relevant and attractive for young people.

## HIGHER EDUCATION OUTCOMES IN JORDAN

The ROM reports of **vocational Education and Training & Higher Education Programme for vulnerable Syrians and disadvantaged youth from host communities (EDU-SYRIA II –**

**T04.166), and EDU-Syria III (T04.215) implemented by the German Jordanian University (GJU)**, are the basis for the higher education outcome assessment in Jordan.

All phases from EDU Syria aim at providing access to higher and vocational training to the Syrian and disadvantaged Jordanian students. The recent **ROM missions (03/24 and 06/24)** of phases II and III, respectively, assess effectiveness of the programme as *“good”*. In the second phase, the programme had awarded more than 250 scholarships: 43% for bachelor Syrian students, 30% for Jordanian master studies, 8% for Business, Technology and Education Council -BTEC- level 5 to Jordanian students, and 19% for BTEC 5 to Syrian students. At the time of the ROM, 75% had graduated, while 11% were still enrolled and 13% had dropped out. In the recent **QIN (03/24)**, the number of graduates had already exceeded the target of 200. At the same time, the dropout rate was 16%, which is higher than the 10% target that had been set. There are several reasons for this slightly higher rate, such as the effects of the pandemic, limited living allowances, financial challenges, immigration, poor academic performance, or English proficiency, as well as time management issues due to work and family responsibilities. The assessment of the third phase shows that targets are and/or will be largely

met across all the different programmes, such as master (95%), bachelor (100%), TVET and bridging programmes (98%), teachers’ training programme (99%), entrepreneurship training (>100%), or the Bottleneck Alleviation Programmes (100%). The dropout rate, in general, in this phase will continue to be under the target of 20%.

According to both ROM reports, **changes at individual level** after graduation include academic achievement, as well as *“increased motivation, self-esteem and confidence to pursue their education and self-development further”*. In terms of employment, information from tracer studies is still very limited. Graduates from the second phase praise the quality of their studies and the university. In the third phase, a survey of those on the teachers’ graduate programme shows that 72% of graduates were employed or waiting for a placement. Some success stories are highlighted from the start up programme that became internationally successful and from the BAP initiative in niche sectors suitable for Syrians, such as animal vaccination, home care for elderly or training of female plumbers. However, both ROM reports also underline that a growing number of graduates are frustrated with the limited access to jobs. Jordan continues to show high level of unemployment and the BTEC Level 5 diplomas are not always accepted as other bachelor’s degrees. Syrian students face similar challenges





to those experienced by Jordanians, but in a more amplified way since they are affected by additional restrictions in the labour market. This leaves them less options, such as accepting underpaid jobs, work remotely for other companies, migrate or work without a work permit. Some Syrian students have shared challenges during the education journey at all levels due to lack of information about higher education opportunities or limited knowledge of teachers about how to support Syrian refugees. Other types of benefits during the second phase occurred through the cooperation with the National Action Fund (NAF), which reported that 90% of Jordanian graduates' families from EDU-Syria **"stopped receiving NAF's aid due to reaching the minimum income level for a decent life"**. The scholarship is not the only factor than can be attributed to this, but it has likely contributed.

**Institutionally**, the project has strengthened the cooperation mechanism between the consortium members, GJU, Jordan University of Science and Technology (JUST), Luminus Technical University College, and Zarqa University, since 2016. The ROM report shows how all partners have been directly involved in the planning phase so that they were able to **"use their teaching capacities, generate additional income and fulfil a humanitarian part of their institutional mission."** This means providing "discounts on their tuition fees

and taking additional care for students coming from other universities (in case of master's level students) or from the refugee community (in case of Syrian students). This has been praised by the ROM mission as the **"most significant"** strength of EDU-Syria. The cooperation between the consortium, the Ministry of Social Development and NAF has contributed to do effective outreach to disadvantaged Jordanian students. At regional level, the EU Regional Network for Alumni that has 1,000 members, allows EDU-Syria graduates -currently 179 are registered- to benefit from job skills training sessions, events, and a mentoring programme. The ROM assessment of the third phase also highlights the profound cooperation mechanisms established among the consortium partners and its learning process. The new employability activities added to the scholarships resulted from this learning process. EDU-Syria has become a trustful partner of the EU able to implement inclusive higher education projects in the country.

Changes at **national level** are not evident yet at this stage. Nevertheless, a new Higher Education Alliance has been initiated by UNHCR **"to better coordinate and facilitate refugees' access to higher education and technical and vocational education and training opportunities"**. GJU had recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with UNHCR to align their respective scholarship programmes. Furthermore, the success of EDU-Syria

has attracted additional resources, EUR 9 million from the Neighbourhood, Development, and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI – Global Europe) that will be implemented until 2030. The assessment of the third phase of EDU-Syria also acknowledges the cooperation of the project with the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE), UNHCR and NAF and mentions the good relationship with the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MoPIC). A MoU has been signed with UNHCR and one will be signed soon with Tkiyet Um Ali Aid Fund. In both cases, synergies are being generated.