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AMPLIFY CHALLENGE 3 THE SYRIAN REFUGEE EDUCATION CRISIS

Insights, details, and prototypes
from our remote design research.



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I. REMOTE RESEARCH GOALS

As part of Challenge 3, the UK Department for International Development (DFID) allocated additional funding to focus on education innovations for Syrian refugees. To enhance Amplify's ability to develop insight across all of DFID's 28 priority countries, we used this opportunity to explore how we might do design research remotely. Given the Syrian refugee community's vast dispersal, the timeliness of the crisis, and the dangers of the country's ongoing conflict, this population represented an interesting case to test this new approach. To evaluate the insights we collected, we compared our learnings with the findings of Amplify designers who did on-the-ground research in Uganda and Ethiopia, largely amongst South Sudanese refugees.

When developing remote design research, our overarching goals were as follows:

- A. Understand the education crisis and needs faced by Syrian refugees, paying particular attention to the differences and similarities between Syrians and other refugee populations.
- B. Engage a network of Syrian diasporans and stakeholders interested in this topic, in order to drive more and better submissions to the Challenge during Research and Ideas phases.
- C. Make the educational challenges faced by Syrian refugees relatable to the much broader universe of teachers and educators who know a lot about education, but not so much about refugees.
- D. Understand what motivates people to assist our Amplify team in collecting remote research.
- E. Evaluate the differences between what we learned from our remote design research prototypes and what designers could glean from existing reports, news coverage, and on-the-ground IDEO.org design research.

II. TOP-LEVEL TAKEAWAYS

Our overall insights are as follows:

Remote research cuts down on travel costs and time, but still requires a lot of manpower. It's critical to consider budget, strategy, and time needed to synthesize content when deciding which design research method will produce the greatest returns.

Paying experienced journalists to do human-centered storytelling was our most effective prototype. This was primarily because we were able to return to them for multiple rounds of follow-up questions. Doing so enabled us to get highly detailed insights that illuminated the most opportunities for design.

Local storytellers need guidance to be effective proxies for on-the-ground design researchers. The more guidance they get, the better their insights. Carefully consider the desired scope of research and internal Amplify capacity for coaching outside storytellers when choosing whether professional journalists, student journalists, or aid organizations are the best fit for the job.

Remote design research should be done at the same time as on-the-ground research. This will make it easier to use learnings to provide input into design opportunity areas.

Keep the needs of remote storytellers and organizations in mind when developing partnerships. Each organization's mission and motivation for collaboration will be different, so craft your request so it aligns with their goals.

Ask for stories, not answers to questions. Honing in on people's needs, and therefore opportunities for design, is most easily accomplished remotely when people tell a story and have specific prompts to help them do so. This approach generates richer details and stronger narratives for building empathy.

Be visual with storytelling. Ensure that organizations, journalists, and other storytelling partners are collecting photos and visual resources. This will help improve the quality of the story when viewed on OpenIDEO and provides opportunities for more engaging social media content.

Create a template for generating insights (similar to OpenIDEO's interview toolkit) and another for turning research into character-driven stories. This will improve efficiency of story collection and help scale remote design research.

Tap into the OpenIDEO community to help generate research and stories. If a certain location, field of interest, or similar category of research is needed to help understand people's needs, many members of the diverse OpenIDEO community could match these requirements. Targeted email outreach could begin to identify those who might have relevant experience and interest. Then providing chosen candidates with tools listed above would help them create stories and research.

III. SETTING THE CONTEXT

In Syria, the ongoing civil war has caused one of the worst refugee crises since World War II. At least 11 million Syrian people have been displaced, and the UN estimates more than half of them are children.

Because of the scale and magnitude of the crisis, aid organizations and news outlets have already done a considerable amount of work around this issue. For design researchers, these reports and stories are incredibly helpful for gaining an initial understanding of an issue and its context. However, when developing human-centered solutions for specific needs, it's beneficial to have further insights that clearly highlight targeted design opportunities in an easily digestible format.

This conclusion became apparent shortly after starting our research efforts. Pouring over recent reports by UNICEF, UNHCR, Save the Children, and Mercy Corps gave us some insight into the Syrian population. But our understanding was still mostly high-level and general, even after thoroughly reading these fairly dense reports.

The information we learned from existing reports and news coverage began to show us both how similar and different the Syrian population was from other refugee communities. We came across several insights that hinted at similarities to those uncovered by on-the-ground research in Uganda and Ethiopia. These included difficulties establishing a sense of community in foreign countries, psychosocial issues caused by trauma, and uncertainties around opportunities for residence, education, and employment.

Several differences in the Syrian experiences also started to emerge, such as that nearly every child in Syria was enrolled in school before the war began in 2011, the country had a growing middle class, and many young Syrians had ambitious goals, including becoming doctors and academics. We also learned that the vast majority of Syrian refugees did not flee to official camps, public schools in host countries have not been able to absorb all the extra students, and thousands of Syrian children are relying on a range of informal options offered by NGOs.

However, it was still difficult to arrive at concrete opportunity areas without individual stories that reflected how the two million Syrian children stripped of educational pathways have been affected. These stories add a qualitative and human-centered focus to research and increase empathy for those we're designing for. This is why it's necessary to gather nuanced, personal stories with an intentional focus on specific education needs.

IV. SYRIA-SPECIFIC INSIGHTS

Given that some experiences of Syrian refugees overlapped with the Amplify team's comprehensive research in Uganda and Ethiopia, we used our prototypes to get a deeper understanding of the differences for this community. Here are some of the distinct emotional, academic, and cultural needs we identified through our various methods of collecting Syrian refugees' firsthand education stories:

Transportation costs alone prevent many Syrian refugees from accessing education. This is especially critical because they tend to be dispersed far and wide across their new communities, with few nearby schools to absorb them. Their dispersion is somewhat due to a lack of official camps, which means Syrians must pay rent and compete for affordable housing with local community members.

A lack of affordable housing in urban areas interrupts schooling. The Syrian refugee population is highly mobile because of a consistent need to find affordable housing. This transient life interrupts children's schooling. It also makes it difficult for teachers to create consistency in the classroom.

Syrian children face several pressures to work instead of go to school. This not only stems from their families' financial needs, but also from employers valuing this highly educated, inexpensive young workforce.

Lack of Syrian-based curriculum affects identity. Syrians took pride in their education system and curriculum before the war, even viewing it as a piece of their cultural identity. This can create issues for the students who are lucky enough to get into new foreign schools because they struggle to adapt to curriculums that do not reflect their cultural norms, standards, or languages.

Cultural factors influence parents' willingness to send children to school. Cultural differences, such as gender norms, in neighboring countries like Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey, also affect Syrians' educations. For instance, in Syria, boys and girls tend to go to separate schools, but this is often not an option in their new communities, and leads to difficulties, especially for girls. Even if the intent is for programs and facilities to be coed, the presence of boys often means girls will be shut out, either because boys purposely do so, or because girls feel uncomfortable in this new structure.

V. REMOTE DESIGN RESEARCH PROTOTYPE LEARNINGS

Our prototypes established that remote design research can uncover a population's needs in a deeper, more human-centered way than is often contributed by the general OpenIDEO community.

This was confirmed by online community manager Shane Zhao, who said the Research posts we generated "gave our OI community a better sense of the refugee education experience on a one to one level. Most of the [other] research inspirations submitted were coming from third person points of views."

Being able to prototype remote design research provided us with great insights into need-finding, story creation, and engagement techniques with hard-to-reach communities. We still believe the best design research and approach for identifying these opportunity areas comes from on-the-ground observation, immersion, and interviews that center around empathizing with the people we're designing for. But when that's not possible, the next-best option appears to be a combination of building an initial understanding through reports and news coverage and conducting remote, human-centered research methods.

Remote design research can also be a good complement to on-the-ground research, especially if the two occur at the same time. In this case, the team that visited Uganda and Ethiopia team completed their research before we even started our remote efforts. This made it difficult to integrate our findings, as they had a head-start synthesizing theirs. While we definitely had the chance to work with the broader team and inform them of our results, more alignment on timing would make synthesis smoother and improve integration.

We believe remote design research is a successful method because it creates an ideal balance of high-level overview information, detailed reporting, and IDEO's human-centered approach to design. We also think it will help us better harness Amplify's power to create innovative solutions by relaying difficult-to-access, firsthand insights in an engaging, digestible manner to the platform's 75,000-member community.

We hope this document helps inform future design research! Feel free to follow up with any questions by contacting us:

Charla Bear: charla@charlabear.com

Brett Brownell: brettbrownell@gmail.com

V. REMOTE DESIGN RESEARCH PROTOTYPE LEARNINGS

We ran 10 prototypes that tested new ways to remotely collect insights, tell stories, and engage the Syrian diaspora and other communities, while also incorporating learnings from the Global Conversations IVR prototypes in Amplify Challenges 1 and 2. From March 9 to April 24, 2015, two designers in our San Francisco office brainstormed, coordinated, and iterated these prototypes. The total budget spent on these prototypes was \$4,500, which is broken down in the corresponding prototype sections.

- 1. Connecting directly with Syrian refugees and diasporans.**
- 2. Hiring freelance journalists to tell human-centered research stories.**
- 3. Paying a “connector” organization to access on-the-ground research facilitators.**
- 4. Syria microsite.**
- 5. Creating a digestible, eye-catching, and visually-unique overview of the Syrian refugee education context.**
- 6. Personal outreach to people with relevant expertise and / or experience.**
- 7. Providing implementing organizations with storytelling prompts & questionnaires for refugees.**
- 8. Exploring the use of virtual reality movie screenings and online teasers to build empathy.**
- 9. Freelance journalist / video producer board (Storyhunter.tv)**
- 10. Social media engagement and outreach strategy.**

VI. PROTOTYPE COMPARISON

Our remote research prototypes had mixed effectiveness and involved varying amounts of time investment from our design team.

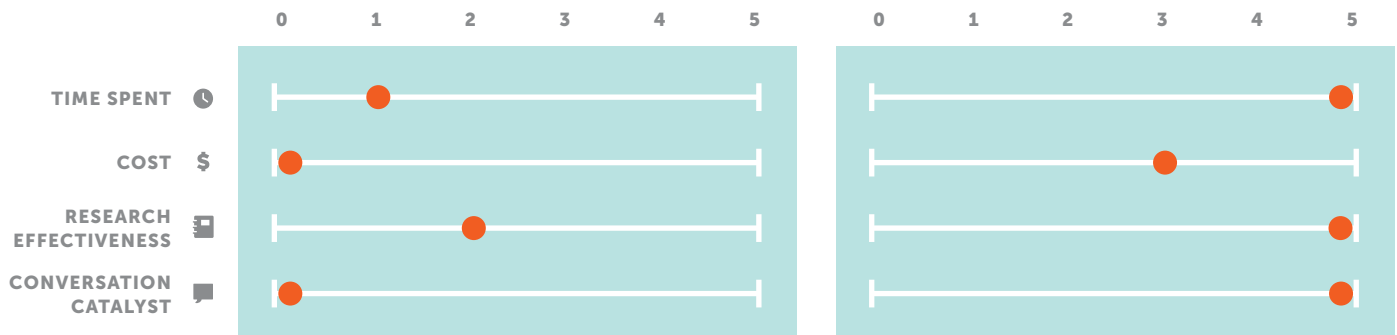
In the infographic below, we've evaluated each of the ten research prototypes on a scale of 0-5 in the following categories:

Time Spent The amount of time that our Syria design team (two people) spent to design and implement each prototype.

Cost The cost to implement each prototype. This cost estimate does not include the cost per hour of employing the Syria design team.

Research Effectiveness This measures the effectiveness of the prototype at providing human-centered design insights that helped our team understand the educational challenges and opportunity areas for Syrian refugees.

Conversation Catalyst In many cases we posted the output from our research prototypes on the OpenIDEO website as part of the Research stage of the challenge. This category measures the effectiveness of the prototype at triggering useful dialogue and conversation amongst the OpenIDEO online community.



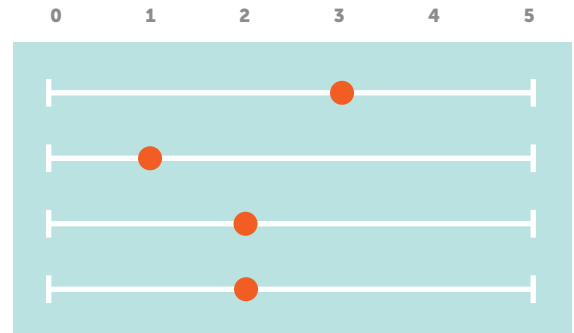
1. Connecting directly with Syrian refugees and diasporans. One of our top goals for this project was to engage those at the center of this challenge. PG 12

2. Hiring freelance journalists to tell human-centered research stories. We used professional journalists as our “ears and eyes” on the ground to tell stories of individual Syrian refugees, focusing on education needs and design opportunities. PG 13

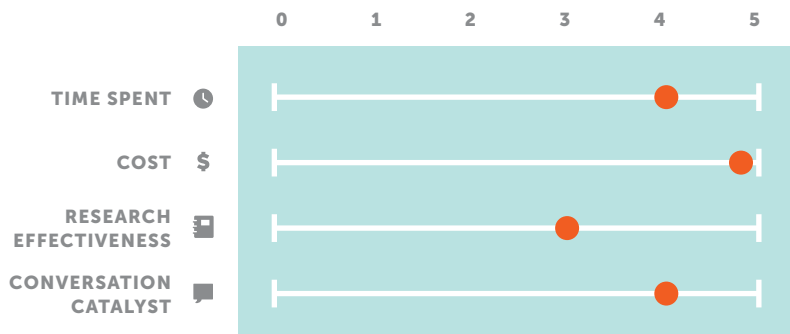
VI. PROTOTYPE COMPARISON



3. Paying a “connector” organization to access on-the-ground research facilitators. [OnFrontiers](#), a New York-based organization that connects clients with developing market experts, helped us speak with refugees. The managing director suggested they try a new approach that enabled human-centered research collection. PG 14



4. Syria microsite. Mirroring the Challenge 3 Squarespace site, we created a [Syria-focused site](#) that collected the stories we generated. We sent the site to all of the stakeholders identified during Prototypes 1 and 2. We received nearly 200 hits, some of which came from stakeholder networks. PG 15

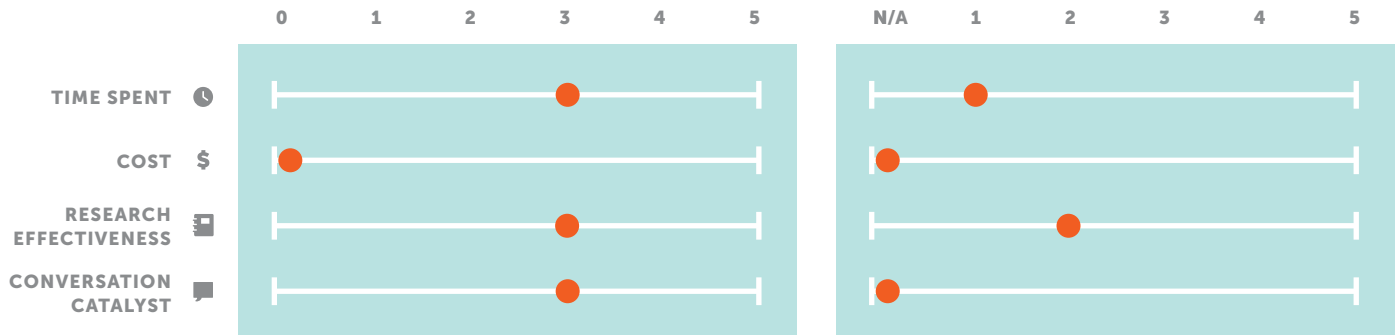


5. Creating a digestible, eye-catching, and visually-unique overview of the Syrian refugee education context. Our goal was to make the Syrian situation resonate with people who may not immediately see the relevance of their expertise. PG 16



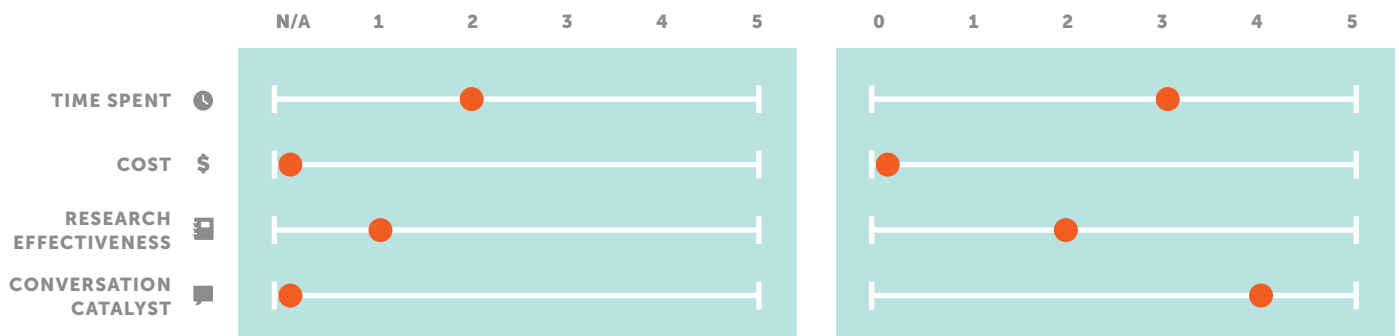
6. Personal outreach to people with relevant expertise and / or experience. Through personal outreach, we hoped to get people with relevant expertise and experience interested in participating in the challenge and partner with individuals or organizations that could help us collect stories about Syrian refugees. PG 17

VI. PROTOTYPE COMPARISON



7. Providing implementing organizations with storytelling prompts & questionnaires for refugees. By providing implementing organizations with questions, prompts, and guidelines, we hoped to identify design opportunities, share human-centered stories, and engage organizations that might participate throughout the challenge. PG 18

8. Exploring the use of virtual reality movie screenings and online teasers to build empathy. Virtual reality has been described as an “empathy machine” by VR pioneer Chris Milk, and we used his VR film “Clouds Over Sidra” as an opportunity to develop design insights. PG 19

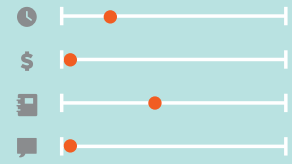


9. Freelance journalist / video producer board (Storyhunter.tv) We tested ways to get journalists to come to us, instead of seeking out individual reporters as described in Prototype 2. PG 20

10. Social media engagement and outreach strategy. Our final prototype was focused on engaging the Syrian diaspora and communities that might be interested in contributing to this challenge through social media. PG 21

1

Connecting directly with Syrian refugees and diasporans. One of our top goals for this project was to engage those at the center of this challenge.



What we did & why

We sent several queries over social media and email asking our personal and professional networks to connect us to Syrian refugees we could have conversations with. This approach mainly relied on third party individuals to make introductions for us.

We were able to successfully connect with a few refugees directly over email. This led to two “interactions” which consisted of us sending open-ended questions to the refugees and receiving a single set of answers. *See Appendix for conversation details.*

What worked & what didn't

We had originally hoped to eventually talk directly with refugees over Skype, but this turned out to be a bigger ask than we thought. The stressful situation most Syrian refugees face, combined with language barriers and time zone differences, made verbal communication difficult.

Email communication proved to be the only effective means of talking directly with Syrian refugees. We benefitted from trust that had already been established between the refugee and someone who had previously met them in person (a journalist in this case). We were introduced, by a different journalist, to additional Syrian refugees through Facebook messages, but neither introductions resulted in a reply. *In Prototype 4 we will explain a different approach for speaking directly to refugees, involving third-party organizations and individuals speaking with Syrian refugees on our behalf.*

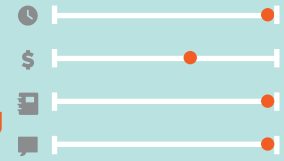
Even though we succeeded at connecting with and receiving answers from two English-speaking Syrian refugees, our direct communication efforts resulted in some of the least detailed research. In addition, there were often multiple days between our outreach and their replies. They told us they did not have time to follow up further because of other priorities like taking care of their family, their health, or living situations. The severity of the psychological strain was also a huge hurdle. For instance, although one refugee was willing to provide some answers to our email questions, she was very honest with us that her precarious housing situation and emotional exhaustion limited further involvement.

Recommendations going forward & scaling

Similar to the IVR prototype conducted during Challenge #2, this approach proved difficult to source reliably rich, in-depth content. Possible solutions could be: 1) Allowing refugees to answer questions in their native dialect and then translate to English using Google 2) Asking refugees to not only answer the questions, but tell a detailed story that makes their answer come to life 3) Work with local organizations to distribute our questions to a broader selection of local refugees (similar to Prototype 7).

2

Hiring freelance journalists to tell human-centered research stories. We used professional journalists as our “ears and eyes” on the ground to tell stories of individual Syrian refugees, focusing on education needs and design opportunities.



What we did & why

Given that journalists are already familiar with much of the basis of design research (interviewing, observation, synthesis, and storytelling), they make natural partners for collecting information in remote areas. However, human-centered design research is a departure from traditional news reporting. Traditional reporters begin by identifying trends, reports, or data, then find individuals to humanize the story, whereas design researchers begin by empathizing with an individual and find design opportunities based on their needs. So, it's important to keep this in mind when working with journalists.

We hired four journalists in two countries (Lebanon and Turkey) and paid them between \$300-\$500 per story, based on the following criteria: A. Prior education coverage of Syrian refugees in key diaspora countries: Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey. B. Recent work with high-quality/high-standard/high-visibility publications, such as the Guardian, Slate, Public Radio International, Vice, etc. C. Multimedia skills (video, print, photo, graphic) D. Geographic diversity to convey the breadth of the Syrian refugee experience.

What worked & what didn't

This approach was our most successful method of collecting detailed insights, finding opportunities for design, and driving social media engagement. The journalists created five Research posts, four of which were among the phase's top 20 most-viewed. After completing their stories, the journalists also fueled conversation in the comments section by thoroughly responding to community members. They also amplified their stories using their own social media channels (Twitter, Medium, Tumblr).

These stories were successful even though their word-count was longer than typical OpenIDEO post. Our emphasis on

digestibility, which prompted us to break up the text with subheads and embed photos within stories, may have helped. *See Appendix for more details about story analytics.*

The main drawback of this approach was the time it took to edit stories and encourage the journalists to include enough detail to highlight design opportunities. Initial drafts were very short and vague, which we think happened because the journalists based their drafts on past challenge contributions. One reporter said the focus on a single person's insights to expose systemic education challenges was difficult because it differed from her usual assignments.

Recommendations going forward & scaling

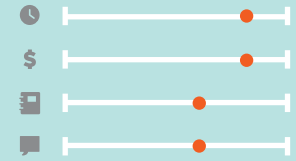
This was a successful approach to storytelling, but going forward and scaling requires considering budget limitations, variety and quantity of story desired, and staff bandwidth to assign, edit, and publish stories. In the future, we could try prototyping a partnership with local journalism schools to get stories at a more affordable rate, and identifying OpenIDEO community members in set locations to help research local stories.

Based on journalist feedback, we suggest providing storytellers with upfront information about IDEO's design research approach. It would also be helpful to identify examples of journalistic stories on OpenIDEO to help reporters explain where the story will go and what the point of it is, as this was difficult for those used to working with well-known media outlets.

3

Paying a “connector” organization to access on-the-ground research facilitators.

[OnFrontiers](#), a New York-based organization that connects clients with developing market experts, helped us speak with refugees. The managing director suggested they try a new approach that enabled human-centered research collection.



What we did & why

By communicating our challenge and design research goals, we were able to get insights from an individual rather than broad, expert-level opinions. OnFrontiers connected us with a refugee education specialist on the ground in Jordan, who then found a Syrian family of nine members willing to speak to us on Skype. The specialist served as interviewer, translator, and later provided an iPhone recording of the interview, which an internal IDEO employee translated from Arabic to English. These services were relatively more expensive than other prototypes, but did allow us to follow up multiple times with the “connector” and ask follow up questions to the family.

What worked & what didn't

Since one of our goals with remote design research was overcoming the distance between us and those we would be designing for, working with a “connector” organization allowed us to bridge the gap. We were able to provide questions to the translator in advance and ask follow up questions during the interview. This prototype enabled us to get immediate insight without waiting for a reply, and provided us with helpful insights about their psychosocial needs and their desire to better connect with their new community. We were able to take what we learned from our interview and turn it into a research post about [adjusting to new schools](#) in foreign lands which became the second-most viewed Research post.

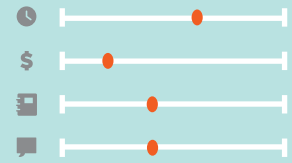
We gave OnFrontiers initial guidelines about what type of family or story we hoped to find, but we were not able to choose between families because OnFrontiers only found one option. We also had difficulty hearing/recording the voices of the family members once the interview was in progress. Because our translator was communicating with us via Skype, we faced issues with internet connectivity, interruptions to the conversation, and may have lost detail in some answers because of translation. To verify the family's answers, we compared a transcript of the call (translated by an internal IDEO employee) to the verbal translation from the mediator which required waiting several days to find out that some details had, indeed, not come through initially.

Recommendations going forward & scaling

1) We recommend either agreeing to have the “connector” organization provide a transcript of the interview soon after, or to identify a translator in advance who can quickly turn around a transcript of the conversation. 2) We also suggest using the chat feature of Skype, or whatever communication service is chosen, whenever follow up questions are needed. This cuts down on time spent repeating or dealing with signal issues. 3) We also recommend providing, in advance, as much insight as possible to the moderator about our design-thinking and research approach. This could be in the form of the HCD Toolkit, or other series of HCD resources. That way the “connector” will better understand our goals, design thinking approach, and type of details needed to create design opportunities. 4) We would also suggest trying a prototype where the connector organization conducts the interview based on our provided questions, and then returns to us with a synthesized report, freeing up more time on our end. However, this would likely cost quite a bit more.

4

Syria microsite. Mirroring the Challenge 3 Squarespace site, we created a [Syria-focused site](#) that collected the stories we generated. We sent the site to all of the stakeholders identified during Prototypes 1 and 2. We received nearly 200 hits, some of which came from stakeholder networks.

**What we did & why**

The Syria-focused site included broad observations about the Syrian refugee crisis told through text and an illustrated story which lived at the top of the site. The site also highlighted some of the similarities and differences we found between Syria and the broader refugee context (as noted in the Top-Level Takeaways of this report).

This collection of stories and Syria-focused research gave us a portal to the challenge that was curated for our audience. Those we sent it to were able to quickly grasp the high-level education needs of Syrian refugees and could begin designing for them based on our curated research

What worked & what didn't

Because we were speaking specifically with organizations and individuals who were focused on Syrian refugees, we thought it would be more effective to direct them to a Squarespace site that presented Syria-focused stories. This approach appeared to work because most individuals and organizations with whom we personally communicated visited the site, according to our analytics. Many of them even shared the site with their networks as well. *See Appendix for analytics details.*

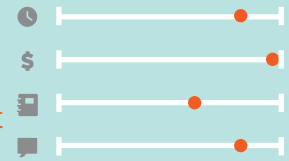
We were able to understand high-level details, such as total visits to the Syria site and where they came from, but because of limitations of Google Analytics to track visitor paths from the Syria site to the challenge, we were unable to learn specifically about how our outreach generated engagement on OpenIDEO.

Recommendations going forward & scaling

Creating a specifically-themed gateway site that serves as an entry point to the challenge appears to be a successful way to engage niche communities. But because of analytics issues, we were unable to confirm whether visitors clicked through to OpenIDEO. It would be best if the micro-site was more directly integrated into the challenge, or at least if better analytics could be created to assess visitors who continued to the challenge itself.

5

Creating a digestible, eye-catching, and visually-unique overview of the Syrian refugee education context. Our goal was to make the Syrian situation resonate with people who may not immediately see the relevance of their expertise.



What we did & why

To help this challenge stand out from the deluge of Syrian news coverage, we thought it would be important to create a visually-stimulating story to catch people's attention. After doing so, we wanted viewers to be able to quickly digest the educational experiences of Syrian refugees with little to no effort. We planned to use this high-level, visual story to introduce the OpenIDEO community to the overarching needs of Syrian refugee children on our Syria-focused micro site. We also thought it would play well on social media (more on engagement in Prototype 10).

We commissioned a comics journalist to do a [series of six pieces](#) that communicated all the data and information to get someone up to speed on Syrian education. We chose San Francisco-based Andy Warner based on his prior work published in Slate, KQED, Vice, and other media outlets. He had also previously covered Syrian refugees and studied at the American University of Beirut.

What worked & what didn't

Andy's illustrations were viewed more than 1,500 times on the OpenIDEO blog and had high levels of activity on our social media channels. The piece(s) were always accompanied by at least one link to Challenge 3. The finale panel contained a call to action for the challenge.

In addition to creating activity on OpenIDEO, Andy's illustrations also created conversations on other platforms:

- They received 152 reblogs/likes on his personal Tumblr.
- He posted the pieces on his Medium account, followed by more than 750. At least two Medium staff members, plus Tim

Brown and IDEO pages recommended the post, because in Katie Clark's words, "Wow, this is incredible."

- Andy also Tweeted and retweeted his illustration five times to his 660 followers.

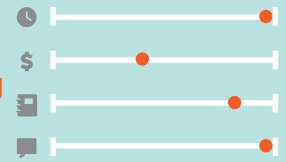
While creating a digestible, eye-catching, and visually-unique story certainly generated online activity, it's unclear how much that led to Research posts. We do know that a few people clicked through to the Syria-focused microsite from Andy's Tumblr and two people signed up for new accounts after viewing his work on the OpenIDEO blog.

Recommendations going forward & scaling

We recommend considering the integration of visually-unique stories in the full challenge. It would also likely be beneficial to do so as early as possible in the challenge to get the most bang for the buck.

6

Personal outreach to people with relevant expertise and / or experience. Through personal outreach, we hoped to get people with relevant expertise and experience interested in participating in the challenge and partner with individuals or organizations that could help us collect stories about Syrian refugees.

**What we did & why**

One method we pursued to understand the education needs of Syrian refugees was to engage those whose efforts and missions coincided with the challenge, whether they work directly with Syrian refugees or not. People we contacted included trained aid workers, child therapists, education technology developers, academics, and teachers.

We developed a master contact list in-house, largely stemming from Jusoor, an annual conference about empowering Syrian youth, that occurred on February 21, 2015. Luisa and Rika from OpenIDEO and IDEO.org spoke at the conference, which created the benefit of a personal connection between the Amplify program and Jusoor attendees.

We initially focused on 60 people identified as high priorities for outreach, out of a total of 250 contacts from the conference. After emailing each contact, we set up Skype conversations where we explained our project and Amplify, then discussed how we might work together. We also sent personal follow up invitations to join the challenge with a trackable link. For anyone on the list whom we did not personally reach out to, we created a bcc email that contained a different trackable link to the challenge.

What worked & what didn't

This method generated several Research posts for Challenge 3 and mobilized well-connected networks of individuals to make introductions for us. We identified participation incentives for all organizations and individuals and tailored our requests to these motivations. Incentives included: interest in the academic aspects of OpenIDEO, overlapping missions to help refugees and children, and personal connections. *See Appendix for more details about collaborators and incentives.*

Nearly everyone we reached out to expressed interest in contributing Research posts, with a few even sending us unsolicited “drafts” to review. In the end, some did not complete a submission. The primary reasons people gave for not submitting Research posts or not finishing their drafts were that they ran out of time or were too busy.

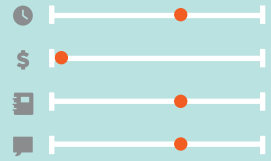
Recommendations going forward & scaling

Because time appears to be the primary hurdle for this prototype, perhaps identifying people/ organizations who are working in related fields at least a month ahead of the challenge date might give them more opportunity to complete a submission. We could also interview these individuals and create Research contributions ourselves. Lastly, this type of engagement seems better suited for the ideas phase because of the contacts’ overlapping goals, but we did not get to test that assumption.

7

Providing implementing organizations with storytelling prompts & questionnaires for refugees.

By providing implementing organizations with questions, prompts, and guidelines, we hoped to identify design opportunities, share human-centered stories, and engage organizations that might participate throughout the challenge.

**What we did & why**

We asked two implementing organizations, International Rescue Committee in Lebanon and Save the Children Jordan, to distribute a short questionnaire to a variety of refugees they work with. We specifically asked them to aim for diversity in age, sex, etc.

What worked & what didn't

Both organizations agreed to facilitate our questionnaires. But only IRC ended up providing replies. Using the answers and photos they collected from 3 teachers and 4 students, we created a [research post](#) that highlighted three creative approaches to educating refugees. It was #13 of the most viewed Research posts and was included in the platform's "weekly highlights."

Referencing what we learned from the IVR prototypes in Challenge 1 and 2, we attempted to craft questions that were open-ended, but also contained a structure that might elicit rich details. We decided on the prompt: "Tell us a story about..." Then we included supporting prompts to indicate the level of detail we were seeking. (See Appendix for sample answers & photo)

The responses were rich with specific needs, settings, emotional responses, problems, and solutions. The implementing organization translated our questions into Arabic and translated the teachers' and students' answers back into English for us.

We initially approached IRC by asking how we might partner with them in a way that aligns with their efforts and helps them tackle improvements they need to make. We think that encouraged them to help us because our goals were aligned. We also think that participants were willing to answer the questions honestly, and be photographed, because they had worked with IRC before and established trust with them.

This prototype was effective in producing responses, but the stories still could have contained more depth. The stories were also told in third person, which made us wonder if someone summarized the stories and may not have included details an individual might have.

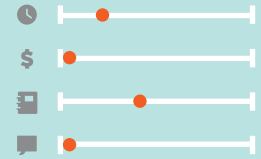
Recommendations going forward & scaling

Starting the ask with the "how might we help you" approach might have helped get both of our organizations to complete the process. Also, asking them to have people tell first-person stories may have produced more human-centered responses. Finally, encouraging implementing organizations to follow up vague answers with clarifying questions may have generated richer details. As for scaling, we would recommend distributing questionnaires to multiple country locations through an organization's central office; however, this would require considering the time needed to synthesis responses from a scaled up version.

8

Exploring the use of virtual reality movie screenings and online teasers to build empathy.

Virtual reality has been described as an “empathy machine” by VR pioneer Chris Milk, and we used his VR film “Clouds Over Sidra” as an opportunity to develop design insights.



What we did & why

“Clouds Over Sidra” is a UNICEF production about life in the Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan. The film was told from the perspective of a young Syrian refugee girl and included scenes in a Zaatari classroom and computer lab. Viewers were able to have a first-person experience of life as a refugee student there.

The director of photography for “Clouds Over Sidra”, Barry Pousman, visited our office to share insights about his experience, and gave us a Google Cardboard viewing device for the film. We brainstormed a variety of ideas for using VR to drive engagement around challenges. These included: organizing an OpenIDEO Meetup group-viewing of the film to generate contributions through observation, having both Barry and the film’s director Chris Milk create a Research post for the challenge, and creating a virtual reality production specifically for an upcoming Amplify challenge.

What worked & what didn’t

While we did not have time to implement our Meetup group-viewing idea, the small internal group of us who watched the film together were able to observe multiple design opportunities within the film. What really seemed to work in this case was the viewer’s ability to fully immerse themselves by turning 360 degrees to focus on whatever details they find most engaging in the scene. It created much more empathy than photography, video, or written stories could do alone.

We also received additional content from Chris Milk’s executive producer that she hoped could be turned into a research post. Although it did not end up in the Research phase, it started the process of working with Milk’s team.

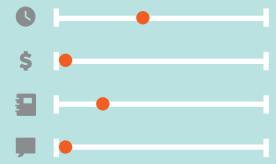
The film only exists on the VRSE app, and requires a large file to be downloaded to a smartphone before watching. This limits the ability to use and scale up this experience. The film is also copyrighted by Chris Milk and VRSE, so it was impossible for us to create alternative opportunities for viewing.

Recommendations going forward & scaling

Virtual reality films are a very effective option for creating empathy, so we should pursue ways of producing and exhibiting our own stories. Google Cardboard viewing devices that attach to a smartphone only cost around \$20, making them reasonably accessible. But we can still consider more accessible ways to view these films, because their file size, format, and method of distribution makes viewing them slow and difficult. Also, advance planning of at least two weeks for a group VR film screening of this type would be necessary to properly organize the group and related design activities.

9

Freelance journalist / video producer board (Storyhunter.tv) We tested ways to get journalists to come to us, instead of seeking out individual reporters as described in Prototype 2.

**What we did & why**

We hypothesized that creating a work-for-hire advertisement would allow us to test the level of interest (response), quality of applicants (reporters), and the strength of story pitches. With that in mind, we posted two requests for stories on [Storyhunter.tv](#), a website that connects organizations looking for storytellers with freelance journalists around the world. One of our advertisements solicited print and photo submissions, the other requested video pitches.

What worked & what didn't

Due to the limited timeframe of the Challenge 3 Research phase and early responses to our Storyhunter trial, we decided to prioritize other research prototypes. Therefore, we did not complete the process of commissioning and producing any stories through this model. However, we felt the prototype was still informative and shows promise for collecting remote design. The response to our Storyhunter post suggests it has potential to source a large number and diversity of potential remote research collaborators. We received 35 pitches over a two week span, 19 from print/photo reporters and 16 from video journalists. See *Appendix for more details*.

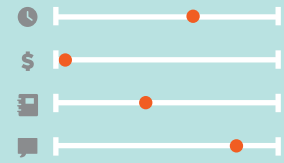
Although we requested story submissions be specifically about refugee education, very few pitches followed these guidelines. It's possible that these "Storyhunters" didn't read our assignment thoroughly, or that they're used to submitting more general story ideas initially. We also received a couple of submissions in foreign languages, despite specifying English.

Recommendations going forward & scaling

This method is a good way to initially source a large pool of storytellers, but appears to require very strong language about what type of journalists and stories are desired. Creating a more restrictive ad would likely cut down the responses, which could be good for reducing the workload of reviewing submissions and make pitches stronger. It may still be the case that handpicking journalists with experience in the subject matter is a better solution. But we think Storyhunter should still be considered when doing remote design research and storytelling in the future. Scaling would depend primarily on budget and the rates each "Storyhunter" charges.

10

Social media engagement and outreach strategy. Our final prototype was focused on engaging the Syrian diaspora and communities that might be interested in contributing to this challenge through social media.

**What we did & why**

To grab people's attention, we inferred media with a different aesthetic than what people typically see in their social media feeds (photos, videos, text) would be most engaging. Our primary test of this assumption was to commission illustrator Andy Warner to tell the overarching story of the Syrian refugee experience. He did so in six illustrated panels that could stand as individual social media posts or be used together as a complete story. We chose Warner based on his portfolio of journalistic comics (published in Slate, KQED, Vice, etc.), his previous coverage of Syrian refugees, and his studies at the American University of Beirut.

To drive people to the challenge, we featured a call to action in the illustrated story and at least one link to the OpenIDEO platform. We also crafted social media messaging about stories generated from our other prototypes that would compel viewers to read the full versions, which required clicking through to the Research phase. We created a Tweet/Facebook post that included an image and highlighted a quote or personal narrative from each story. We asked our reporters to do the same, which many did. A couple even continued to push for contributions throughout the Research phase, including this tweet from Venetia Rainey: "20 hours to add your contribution to @OpenIDEO's #RefugeeEducation challenge. Get involved and be inspired. <https://openideo.com/challenge/refugee-education/research>."

What worked & what didn't

Analytics show that our "visually unique" Twitter post featuring Andy's illustration had a higher engagement rate (favorites, retweets, etc) than other Challenge 3 Twitter outreach efforts.

Our contracted video journalist Mark Esplin's [video](#) about a Syrian father's struggle to access education for his children in Turkey generated nearly as many IDEO.org Facebook views as the challenge launch video (3,286 & 3,850) and brought 327 visitors to OpenIDEO.

We believe our social media efforts contributed to the high number of Research post views generated from our prototypes.

We found social media posts and engagement efforts to be fairly successful, but we would have liked our outreach to be more integrated and coordinated with the overall challenge strategy. There were missed opportunities to maximize the results of our social media and other outreach, such as most of our stories not appearing on Facebook. A coordinated strategy around what time each post was published would have also helped (some Tweets were posted during mid-day US time, which was night time in the middle east)

Recommendations going forward & scaling

In addition to resolving the limitations mentioned above, it would be beneficial to: consider the frequency of social media posts, utilize platforms beyond Twitter and Facebook, ensure that visual content provided (images and videos) is used in social media messaging, and create a better coordination/integration system with overall challenge efforts.

INDEX OF CHALLENGE CONTRIBUTIONS GENERATED

Three surprisingly simple techniques that help refugee kids learn (Charla) <https://openideo.com/challenge/refugee-education/research/three-surprisingly-easy-techniques-that-help-refugee-kids-learn>

Adjusting to school in a foreign land (Brett) <https://openideo.com/challenge/refugee-education/research/adjusting-to-school-in-a-foreign-land>

Informal classes teach refugees academic and emotional skills (Journalist Venetia Rainey) <https://openideo.com/challenge/refugee-education/research/informal-classes-teach-refugees-academic-and-emotional-skills>

Public schools offer second shifts for refugees (Journalist Venetia Rainey) <https://openideo.com/challenge/refugee-education/research/public-schools-offer-second-shifts-for-refugees>

Redefining the meaning of school for Syrian refugees (Journalist Melissa Tabeeek) <https://openideo.com/challenge/refugee-education/research/redefining-the-meaning-of-school-for-syrian-refugees>

Access to school is only part of the solution (Journalist Isabel Hunter) <https://openideo.com/challenge/refugee-education/research/access-to-school-is-only-part-of-the-solution>

A Syrian refugee family searches for education (Video journalist Mark Esplin) <https://openideo.com/challenge/refugee-education/research/a-syrian-refugee-family-searches-for-education>

A Fragile Future (Illustrator / Journalist Andy Warner) <https://openideo.com/blog/a-fragile-future-the-illustrated-story-of-syrian-refugee-education>

Helping newcomers achieve self-sufficiency in the U.S. (Oakland International School's Refugee Transitions project) <https://openideo.com/challenge/refugee-education/research/helping-newcomers-achieve-self-sufficiency-in-the-u-s>

Challenges faced by Syrian refugee and host community adolescents (Mercy Corps' Matt Streng) <https://openideo.com/challenge/refugee-education/research/challenges-faced-by-syrian-refugee-and-host-community-adolescents>

Improving educational outcomes by promoting resilience and healing in trauma-exposed youth (Stanford's Jairo Velez) <https://openideo.com/challenge/refugee-education/research/improving-educational-outcomes-by-promoting-resilience-and-healing-in-trauma-exposed-youth>

Transforming refugees into storytellers (Edraak's Dina Bokai) <https://openideo.com/challenge/refugee-education/research/transforming-refugees-into-storytellers>

Let the children learn by doing (Edraak's Dina Bokai) <https://openideo.com/challenge/refugee-education/research/let-the-children-learn-by-doing>

Insights from using Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) in Refugee Camps (Edraak's Dina Bokai) <https://openideo.com/challenge/refugee-education/research/insights-from-using-massive-open-online-courses-moocs-in-refugee-camps>

APPENDIX

Prototype 1: Email conversations with Syria refugees

Dima Darwish a mother of two living in Turkey. Dima wrote us some details about her story and situation that were informative for our early pre-research. She included aspects of her life such as: the decision to enroll her children in Turkish schools and integrate into society there once her family decided they would not to return to Syria; her family's middle-class lifestyle prior to the war where she was a civil engineer and her husband was a doctor; her financial and emotional worries about the future; the establishment of local temporary Syrian governments (who Hanada below works for and Dima introduced us to).

Possible incentive We were introduced to Dima via email by a Washington Post journalist who previously filmed a video with her and had already established a trusting relationship.

Hanada Alrefai Another Syrian refugee in Turkey, introduced to us by Dima. Hanada was an employee at the local temporary Syrian government Ministry of Education. She also answered a short series of email questions, but detail was limited. She was able to inform us briefly of: the work done by the temp government such as supervision of schools & curriculum; a similar sense of fear about the future like Dima; the challenges Syrians face when trying to integrate into society; also being a comfortable member of the middle-class back home.

Possible incentive We were introduced to Hanada by Dima via email, and Dima also explained our project to Hanada in advance. So by the time we contacted Hanada, trust and familiarity has already been established with us and the project.

Prototype 2: Hiring freelance journalists

Analytics details

Reviewing analytics and activity on OpenIDEO shows the following achievements:

- Lebanon-based journalist Venetia Rainey's contribution about informal classes was the most viewed contribution during the Research phase with more than 800 views. Her post about second shift schools was #16. OpenIDEO community manager Shane Zhao chose them both as either a "featured contribution of the day" or in the platform's "weekly highlights." He explained why: "Those stories gave our OI community a better sense of the refugee education experience on a one to one level. Most of the research inspirations submitted were coming from third person points of views - so it helps to highlight some first hand stories of what it feels like to spend a day inside the camps."
- Venetia Rainey was also a model on the engagements side. In the comments section of her posts, she responded six times and send at least three Tweets about her stories and the challenge to her 1,300 followers.

We did not require her to engage online, but did let her know that her first comment came from one of our “super users.” That may have incentivized her very thorough responses.

- Istanbul-based video journalist Mark Esplin’s contribution about a Syrian family with no access to education was the fourth most viewed post in the Research phase with nearly 600 visits.
- Istanbul-based reporter Isabel Hunter’s piece about the effects of trauma on students and teachers was the #10 Research post with more than 400 views.

Feedback from reporter Venetia Rainey:

“I really enjoyed working with OpenIDEO. It was different from my usual assignments, largely because I was building a story around one person and trying to use their insights alone to expose the challenges and strengths of an entire education system, while simultaneously get to the heart of what made them tick as a teacher. I’m also not used to being asked so many questions or being given the option of two edits to choose from—the usual MO for field reporters like myself is to get edits that tend not to be open to interpretation! I also found it tricky trying to explain where the story I was writing would go and what the point of it was. No one in the field had heard of OpenIDEO and few understood the the collaborative challenge thing.

I really enjoyed interacting with users who left comments, that was a nice change from the ranting diatribes I normally get in the comments section underneath my pieces! This felt a lot more constructive, and I tried my hardest to answer the (enormous!!) amount of questions some comments included. I was motivated to make sure that those involved in the challenge would be armed with as much knowledge as possible. I knew there was no way I would be able to communicate everything I know about refugee education out here in one story, so the comments section was a welcome avenue for me to share more information.

In terms of challenges, I should say that I found it quite hard working with editors on the other side of the world. The time difference and tight deadline made for a lot of late nights and rushed emails on my behalf. I also found it hard that for the first week or so, I wasn’t sure what story I was doing. We spent a lot of time brainstorming and knocking ideas around, which was fun and something new for me but also made it a bit stressful once the deadlines loomed. Luckily it all turned out OK!”

Prototype 3: Paying a “connector” organization to access on-the-ground research facilitators — N/A

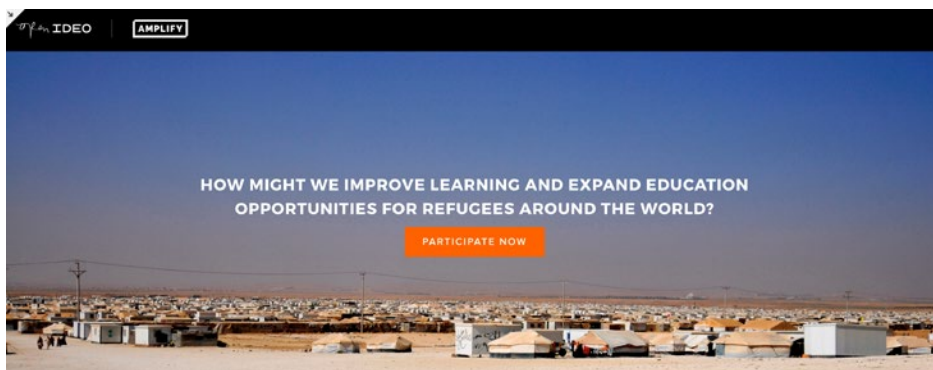
Prototype 4: Mirror site

Analytics details:

We sent a total of 161 emails as part of our outreach efforts, directing people and organizations to the site. Of these, 106 were sent to what we called “hot” leads - people we had personally communicated with during the pre-research phase. And 55 were sent to what we called “cold” leads - those on our contact list who we hadn’t interacted with at all. Between these groups we saw a distinct difference in visits to the site. 67% of the “hot” leads visited the site (71 people) and only 42% of the “cold” leads visited the site (23 people). This shows us that establishing a relationship with people and organizations who are part of the target community greatly increased the possibility for engagement. In addition, the Syria mirror site received a total of 193 unique visitors, which means another 32 people (20% additional) visited the site because the link was shared with them. However, we don’t know how many of these shared visits occurred via hot vs. cold.

For analytics, it would be necessary to find a solution that allows all tracking information to be retained for visitors who enter OpenIDEO via the Squarespace. This could be done possibly by giving the mirror site its own unique URL or researching what is preventing a user’s information from being retained when they click from Squarespace to OpenIDEO.

As for outreach: we worked very hard to generate engagement, but our individualized approach to communication allowed us to create only about 100 “hot” leads. So recommendations for scaling this type of operation include: partnering with the challenge and communication manager to identify more individuals already within the OpenIDEO, Amplify, or IDEO.org mailing lists who could be reached (according to region, country, location, or similar tags) and messaging them as a group using email blasts. Or creating an amplifying strategy that would involve partnering with stakeholder organizations who could do outreach within their own communities, like Edraak and Dina Bokai in Prototype 2.



In the Refugee Education Challenge, we are asking people and organizations around the world to design education solutions that help refugees learn new skills and gain access to a quality education.

Over 50 million people globally have been forced to flee their



Prototype 5: Digestible, eye-catching content

We paid Andy \$250 per piece, for a total of \$1500.

A FRAGILE FUTURE

The Syrian Civil War has led to the worst refugee crisis since World War II. It's been especially devastating for millions of school-age children.

With limited access to education, they are in danger of becoming a lost generation.

The Syrian civil war has taken a heavy toll on the young.

5.6 million Syrian children live in dire conditions within Syria.

2 million Syrian children have fled the fighting and sought refuge in neighbouring countries.

One out of three of these vulnerable kids is not in school.

Even those in school face big challenges. Many have fallen behind after fleeing the war, and their new classes don't have enough resources, space or teachers. And they're often taught in foreign languages.

Syrian refugees in camps have a better shot at a good education. Turkey and Jordan are host to large, UN administered refugee camps.

Most of the kids in camps are in school.

But the vast majority of kids live outside of camps.

Many are forced to work instead of go to school.

Before the civil war, education in Syria was in pretty good shape.

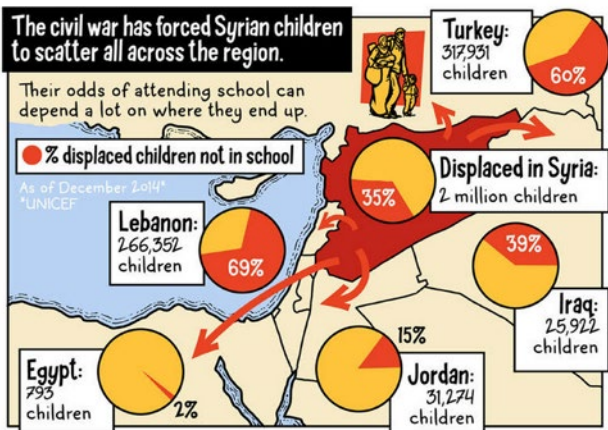
97% of primary-age children attended school.

The country had a growing middle class.

In 2011, right before the war, four out of ten Syrians was under the age of 15.

Literacy rates were well over 90% for both men and women between the age of 15 and 24.

The civil war has completely reversed those gains. And now 1 in 4 schools in Syria is damaged, destroyed or being used as a shelter.



Education is the key to Syria's future.

It will give Syrian children the skills they need to rebuild their future and their country.

This crisis will require innovative solutions.

The Refugee Education Challenge is seeking ideas from around the world to help refugee children gain access to a quality education.

Prototype 6: Personal outreach & engagement with people of relative experience

Course manager *Dina Bokai of Edraak*, a 150,000-person MOOC community, contributed three research posts, including one that became “featured.” She also commented on other submissions. When the Ideas phase launches, she has committed to sending a targeted email to 7,000 people who took an economic development course through Edraak to encourage them to participate.

Possible incentive Initial outreach to Edraak was done by contacting its director, Nafez Dakkak, who knows Tom Hulme, co-founder of OpenIDEO. Nafez has also expressed interest in creating an ambassador program to encourage people to participate in future challenges.

Matt Streng, who works at Mercy Corps HQ in Portland, contributed a Research post, provided us with education context during our pre-research, and facilitated our use of Mercy Corps’ existing photography and stories on the two Challenge 3 microsites.

Possible incentive Mercy Corps’ motivation to participate in this project appeared to be because of the overlap with its mission. Streng, in particular, works on youth development programs.

Nicole Germanov, a volunteer at Oakland International High School for newly arrived immigrants, contributed a post to the Research Phase. She works at Refugee Transitions in San Francisco.

Possible incentive IDEO colleague Katie Alba introduced us to Nicole.

Jairo Velez, a social science researcher from Stanford contributed a Research post about trauma and healing programs being done in East Palo Alto for at-risk and underserved youth.

Possible incentive: Charla used her Stanford email address to contact professors who specialized in trauma research. One of these professors immediately made introductions to his research staff, which likely influenced their participation.

Jamil Wyne, a Jordan-based networker with the Wamda Research Lab, personally introduced us to at least five new stakeholders. At this time, it’s unclear how many contributed directly to the challenge.

Possible incentive: Wyne knew Aisha Sheikh, a contractor who helped to create the master contact list for this project.

Prototype 7: Providing implementing organizations with storytelling prompts & questionnaires

Sample questionnaire for International Rescue Committee story:

Here's what we'd like to ask teachers and field staff members:

1. Please share:
 - Your name (fake is ok, but we'd like to know male/female)
 - Where you live
 - Where you're from
 - Your job title and function
2. Tell us a story about a time you tried to meet the unique needs of the Syrian refugee kids that you work with. Please include:
 - A specific event that happened.
 - How you felt about it.
 - What you did about it. Or, why you couldn't address their needs.
3. Tell us a story about a day when you tried a new way of teaching or working that made a big difference. Please include:
 - A specific event that happened.
 - How you felt about it.
 - What you did and what resulted.

Here's what we'd like to ask kids:

1. Please share:
 - Your name (fake is ok, but we'd like to know male/female)
 - Where you live
 - Where you're from
 - Your age and grade
2. Tell us a story about the most important thing you've learned at the school you go to now. Please include:
 - What your teacher did to help you learn it.
 - How you felt about your learning.
 - What you'll do now that you know this important thing.
3. Tell us a story about a time when it was difficult to learn something new at the school you go to now. Please include:
 - What made it difficult.
 - What would have made it easier.

Sample reply answer & photo from IRC.

Photo: https://www.dropbox.com/s/e1m3tpkpoqe3yel/IRC-IDEO_1.JPG?dl=0

1. Location: Tal Abbas Al Gharbi – 014, Informal Tented Settlement Camp, Akkar, North Lebanon
 Name: Ahmad Abdallah Hamad (Male)
 From: Syria (Deir Al Zour)
 Position: volunteer at the IRC (teaching different subjects in the ITS: Arabic, math, geography, civism, science)

2. Ahmad is a Syrian volunteer instructor in the Education Program-International Rescue Committee in Akkar (North Lebanon), where he faced

multiple obstacles in the classroom, one of them was the multi-grade level. In the same class there were 4 different levels (grade 1, 3, 4 and 5). Dealing with this variety of levels was challenging to him. Hence there was a need to resolve this issue and Ahmad thought that changing the class's seating would be useful so that students from the same level can sit next to each other. A few weeks later the class became quieter than before, students were attentive and he noticed a good improvement in Arabic- reading sessions.

3. During the Arabic – reading classes, he wanted to try a new teaching technique after receiving supplementary reading book sets for the students. Students were happy and collaborated well when he requested higher level students to help the lower ones in reading. Everybody was enthusiastic and feeling productive after this new technique (especially the ones with higher level, they felt empowered helping their colleagues). At the end, Ahmad was satisfied and wanted to try this technique during other sessions for two main purposes: gain students attention and their good behavior.

Prototype 8: Exploring the use of virtual reality movie screenings and online teasers to build empathy — N/A

Prototype 9: Storyhunter freelancers

Submission details:

Storyhunter.tv provided a central place to clearly explain the type of story we wanted (human-centered, focused on refugee education, based on opportunity areas), select the “level” of reporters we’d be willing to work with, and specify the location and media specialty of the journalists. For the purposes of our initial test, we set the minimum rating at 2 out of 5 and did not specify a location preference. We also selected a budget range of \$250 - \$1000, which appears to fall within many of the freelancers’ expected rates.

Of the 19 print/photo responses, three came from journalists in the four primary countries where Syrian refugees live (Turkey, Iraq). Of the 16 video responses, three came from journalists in the four primary countries where Syrian refugees live (1 Lebanon, 2 Iraq). So between the two types of responses, we could have produced stories from three of the four primary countries where Syrian refugees live (all but Jordan).

In addition to offering original story pitches, journalists who were no longer on the ground in those countries offered content from their prior reporting trips to the region. In addition, responses came from Pakistan, Latin America, Europe, Canada, and New York. Also worth noting is that only two included pitches related to education for Syrian refugees, and most did not propose a specific story idea. However, of the two journalists that did pitch specific stories, one journalist had several viable, applicable stories, one of which had been published in Spanish-language outlet El Mundo. Given that his pitch was in English, he appears to be the most likely candidate from the print/photo submissions.

What worked and why details:

The co-founder of the platform and their customer service reps were very quick and helpful with us, allowing us to quickly create and approve our account, and helping us understand how adjusting the rating scale makes a difference with quantity (opening it up to lower ratings increases chances for submissions).

Prototype 10: Social media engagement and outreach strategy — N/A