

ALIIM Smartphone Schools Program

If children can't make it to school, we must take school to them

Education is more than a fundamental human right. It is essential to the exercise of all other human rights. By also providing youth with the right tools to understand the world they live in and empowering them to fully and positively take part in the society, education is crucial to achieving global goals. It is the key to a better world.

Yet, more than 60 million children are out-of-school globally, out of which 50% live in a conflict zone. The devastating consequences that war can have on children's education is particularly striking in the case of Syria. Despite the best efforts of host countries in the region, many children have missed out on 2-3 years of schooling and are now verging on becoming a lost generation. With each lost year of schooling, the chance that these youth will return to formal education greatly diminishes, **leaving those who will eventually be responsible for rebuilding their country with little hope for a future.**

Aliim believes that in a world where learning has become mobile, it is possible to fulfill every child's right to education, including those living in conflict zones. With our Smartphone Schools Program, we want to leverage technology and mentors to provide refugees and marginalized youth, starting with Syrian youth, access to *safe, quality, and relevant* education in any situation and from anywhere.

The Smartphone Schools Program

Smartphone Schools Program is a non-formal mobile learning program that delivers a suite of customized educational apps to secondary school aged students on a basic smartphone. The advantage of this program over existing programs is that **students participation is not beholden to one specific location. Whether students decide to stay in their current host country, relocate, or repatriate, they can keep progressing in the program, wherever they may go.**

Program Impacts

Our Smartphone Schools Program is not only about giving out-of-school Syrian youth the chance to acquire crucial knowledge and encouraging them to study further. It aims at empowering the next generation of Syrians, especially girls, to have a positive impact on their new community within their country of asylum. It also prepares youth to become active contributors to both the local and global economy, and eventually participate in reconstructing Syria when the war is over.

Smartphone School's Relevant Curriculum

Based on the results of our needs assessment we conducted in Sidon, Lebanon, we designed our curriculum to include relevant skills, special learning features, and a series of innovative pedagogical tools to make our program unique.

Our survey participants expressed their desire to learn English, Business and Finance “to help them get good jobs”. This is why, in addition to traditional topics such as **numeracy** and **literacy**, we included innovative components to the **life skills** section, such as **citizenship** and **entrepreneurship**. ALIIM believes that these skills become the **building blocks** to **reconstructing individual lives**, helping **communities** get back on their feet, and paving the way for new economic activity to **flourish after war**.

Our English Module

Beyond limited spots for Syrian refugees in public schools, one of the main obstacle for Syrian youth to access education in their host countries is language. This is particularly the case in Lebanon, where education is taught in English and French. Our English curriculum will be designed to prepare students to TOEFL certification in order to facilitate their integration into formal schools. Beyond this aspect, English skills can make a huge difference for Syrian refugees who continue their journey in other countries, especially in Europe, where the majority arrives with little other language skills than Arabic, experiencing crippling communication issues.

Our Citizenship Module

The goal of Aliim’s Citizenship curriculum is to empower students to engage with their new community in a positive way, enjoy and exercise their rights, and to think critically about their surrounding and society, looking to credible information sources to help them in this process. We are convinced that our students could have an even greater impact on their environment by diffusing these values.

Besides lessons on basic Human Rights, the curriculum will include a special focus on tolerance and non-discrimination. The citizenship curriculum will also provide students concrete information on local institutions and organizations in order for them to know who to turn to in case they encounter specific difficulties.

Our Relevant Entrepreneurship Module

The Entrepreneurship curriculum will present foundational business concepts with a special focus on innovation and solution finding. We believe this knowledge will prove crucial to students, and this for several reasons. First of all, the children themselves expressed their enthusiasm about entrepreneurship as they consider that business skills are essential for their future. Furthermore, the economies and labor markets of neighbouring countries are becoming vulnerable, even oversaturated, under the weight of the refugee crisis. Aliim believes that entrepreneurship could be the answer to this problem by enabling refugees to contribute to the local economy by creating jobs for themselves, while also tapping into a larger global economy through Ecommerce platforms. Lastly, the children of today will eventually have the daunting task to rebuild Syria and its economy. For this, they will not only need solid entrepreneurial skills, they will need great inspiration. More than knowledge, this what we would like to provide them with the Entrepreneurship module.

Unique Components to the Smartphone Schools Program

Our International Mentor Network

From our survey, the youth we interviewed clearly indicated that getting individual and personalized support was extremely important to their success. Our Smartphone School program includes interaction with an international network of volunteer mentors that we will recruit from top universities and professional organizations. They will accompany students throughout the nine months, giving them feedback and answering their questions.

We believe that mentoring is an essential aspect of the program. By giving youth the opportunity to obtain the support they need from people all around the world, we intend to create a real community, allowing them to get guidance even after they finish the program, and eventually opening them professional opportunities.

Giving Children a Voice

If we bring school to youth through technology, why not leverage this channel to give them a voice? Our blog "Voices of Peace" will be a platform for students and refugee youth around the world to interact with each other and the global community by sharing poetry, essays, photography, and artwork.

Where We Need Your Help

The program is quick to develop, cost effective, and transferable across borders. Not only can we build the technology in less than three months, but also we can reproduce the program and expand into other countries much faster than it takes to build schools.

Without compromising the quality of education, we minimized the costs of our pilot program to **USD\$300 per student** to complete the 9 month program, so we need a total of \$75,000 to put 250 students through our pilot program. We are currently fundraising to make our Smartphone Schools program a reality. Here is how you can be a part of this innovative program. First, go to our campaign page on Indiegogo and donate so we can reach our goal (<https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/smartphone-schools-program-syrian-refugees-girls#/>).

Then tell all your friends about it on Facebook and Twitter!

About Aliim

Headquartered in New York City, ALIIM is a non-profit that provides innovative educational opportunities to marginalized youth in conflict-affected countries and the developing world.

ALIIM's Smartphone Schools Program is the first mobile learning program that aims to empower Syrian refugee children living in the Levant or migrating to other regions of the world to continue their education and access better economic opportunities through technology and a global network of mentors. We have developed a theoretical framework to contextualize our curriculum in order to better address the specific needs of Syrian refugees—with a focus on girls—and adapt to the resources available in a particular conflict-affected setting.

If successful, our *program model* could also be tailored to *other conflict or emergency contexts*. It could be extended to the MENA the region and developed in Africa and Asia, where the need for education remains huge.

Our Team

From the United States to Lebanon, Germany, Mexico, the Netherlands, and Uganda, Aliim's team members leverage technology to improve access to education for marginalized youth. Combined, Aliim has over 40 years of experience in finance, marketing, management consulting, human rights law, e-commerce, engineering, teaching, curriculum design, programing, strategic planning, evaluations, data analysis, fundraising, and program implementation. Together we **design, implement, and monitor mobile learning programs** that improve access to education and empower marginalized youth to become self-sufficient contributors to the economy and society as a whole.