**Syrian Dialogue Conference Notes**

October 29, 2015

United States Institute of Peace

***Presentation***

Carlucci Auditorium

-Began by explaining the EduApp4Syria Competition: what, why, who behind it?

-Looking for a smartphone app that can increase literacy levels in Arabic and improve psychosocial wellbeing for children (aged 4-10)

-3 million Syrian children out of school

- more than 6 million displaced, 3.9 million have fled the country

-Showed two videos

* INEE: challenges of education in crisis
  + more refugees now than during WWII
  + on average, someone spends 20 years as a refugee
  + less than 50 percent school enrollment (close to 100 percent before the crisis)
* Refugee Interview

-Presented competition, why they're hosting, what they're looking for, and why should you participate

* 2 competition models
  + Design contest
  + Pre-commercial procurement
* Incentives to participate
  + Money (15mill NOK, roughly 1.8 million USD)
  + Offer R&D input from leading experts
  + Ensure high visibility
  + Helping Syrian children

-Played Kahoot!

* Woke everyone up immediately, lots of laughter and excitement from the audience
* Questions about presentation info and opinion questions.
  + 63 percent preferred a design competition format
  + The following percentage of those responding to the Kahoot! poll agreed or strongly agreed that playing a great educational game for 30 minutes a day can have a significant impact on;
    - Literacy (81%)
    - Motivation (82%)
    - Engagement (85%)
    - Ability to concentrate (65%)
    - Levels of sadness (48%)
  + 69 percent thought that "to some extent" apps already exist that can be appropriate for this project
  + 44 percent indicated interest in participating in the challenge, whereas 37 percent answered maybe

***Question and Answer***

Great Hall

(please note that these aren't word for word quotes)

Question from audience: Where will you test the app?

Answer from facilitators: We are still deciding on how we will set this up, but it is very likely that we will be having focus groups and also more rigorous testing involving Syrian children.

Q: Are you concerned about the cost of the app? Or if it will work when it's submitted?

A: We have set aside significant funds for R&D, and the app should be free for users. If the app is more sophisticated and costly, we will not pass that additional cost onto the users. We expect that we will ask participants to deliver an early prototype, and this will be crucial for us in determining whether or not the design can actually be implemented.

Q: Are you looking for any particular features in the app? For example, interactivity?

A: We're not going to say how the app should be done, we don't want to stifle creativity. We hope that it will be engaging and fun. The double challenge is that children will enjoy using the app and learn from it.

Q: What are the property rights?

A: We're still deciding and are keen to get input on this issue from developers. Our preliminary thinking is that we would like the content and technology to have a creative commons (CC) license. The app should be free to use.

Q: Given that the app will be free and available to all, what will be the commercial opportunities for the makers of the app?

A: There could be a possibility for commercializing later versions of the application and to for instance include in-app purchases, which could add value to your product. As mentioned earlier, we are keen to get input on intellectual property and licensing issues from the market.

Q: What's the intended user-age group?

A: 4 to 10 years old, though some might think that's too wide. We would like your feedback on the form for that one.

Q: If you have an existing game, can you still apply?

A: The app's intended effect is the core of the competition, so it could happen that you have an existing app that fits well with what we are asking for or that could be further developed to fit it. However, our anticipation is that further R&D will be needed in order to meet the innovation challenge.

Q: Should the app be made individually? Or by a group/ organization?

A: There is a requirement for the app to be associated with an organization. It could be made by teams of individuals, but there needs to be some sort of organization.

Q: Should the app focus on literacy or psychosocial benefits?

A: Both. It is a question of how high the bar should be set for psychosocial benefits. Stress and trauma can lead to learning difficulties, and the app should take that into account. There is also the possibility that the game could have a positive impact on other measures of wellbeing. The aim of the app is definitely greater than just enhancing literacy, and we believe that literacy and psychosocial benefits can reinforce each other.

Q: Are you going to ensure that the app is accessible for all children, even those who are deaf?

A: It would be great if the app were accessible to as many children as possible. We will aim for an inclusive design in the specifications, and we will also consider ways to improve accessibility when one or more applications are in the process of development.

Q: Should the app be in Syrian or English or other languages?

A: The aim is for this app to be for Arabic literacy. The written language should be standard Arabic and the spoken should be Syrian Arabic.

Q: Has this competition been announced in the Middle East?

A: We're working on reaching out to stakeholders in the Middle East through the networks of the project partners and through a Syrian consultant based in Oslo, but we're not going to have a separate dialogue conference in the Middle East. The recording from the dialogue conference in Oslo has been published on [www.norad.no/eduapp4syria](http://www.norad.no/eduapp4syria) w Arabic subtitles.

Q: Are you assuming refugees have a smartphone?

A: Yes, but we're continuously trying to get feedback and input as to whether this assumption is too optimistic, at least in some areas. We're getting information that 90 to 95 percent of households have smartphones.

Audience comment: Yes, that makes sense. That's similar to numbers in Jordan.