



REFUGEE EDUCATION INTEGRATION POLICY (REIP)

Providing inclusive and quality education for all children
in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq

Students in remedial education classes in Kawergosk Camp © UNICEF/Anmar Rfaat

As of January 2024, there were over 274,000 Syrian refugees in Iraq, most of whom resided in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I). By November 2023, 70 per cent of Syrian refugee children were enrolled in 1,500 public schools in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I).

The integration of refugee children in public schools benefits both refugee and Kurdish communities: It gives refugee children access to quality education on par with local community students, minimizes the need for disruptive, costly and temporary measures to sustain parallel refugee schooling, and fosters social cohesion between refugees and host communities. Refugees' inclusion into public schools will also pave the way for their enhanced economic inclusion, improving their ability to pursue productive and meaningful lives.

KEY MILESTONES

- In 2022, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) partnered with UNHCR, UNICEF, Save the Children and partners to launch the REIP to gradually integrate Syrian refugee children and teachers into the public education system. Previously, Syrian refugee children in camps and urban areas learnt in a parallel education system.
- The implementation of the REIP started with the 2022-2023 academic year for grades 1-4 and was subsequently extended to include grade 5 for the 2023-2024 academic year.
- In December 2023 at the Global Refugee Forum, the KRG pledged to incrementally implement the REIP for grades 5-12 by 2030.
- In January 2024, the Federal Ministry of Education (MoE) announced that Syrian children will be allowed to enroll in public schools in Iraq, regardless of their parents' documents.

The KRG is committed to advancing refugee inclusion and making strides towards achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals on *education for all*, *leaving no one behind*, and *promoting peaceful and inclusive societies*. However, **underfunding has created significant gaps which jeopardize the successful implementation of the REIP.**

2023 ACHIEVEMENTS



49,851 Syrian refugee children enrolled in public schools in the KR-I – an 11% increase compared to November 2022. Of these, 87% are enrolled in basic schools (grades 1-9), and 13% are enrolled at upper-secondary level (grades 10-12).



14,798 refugee children gained access to education through the construction and rehabilitation of schools, and provision of desks, whiteboards and furniture. An additional 4,000 children gained access to education through the provision of new prefabricated classrooms.



26,020 refugee children, parents and teachers provided with remedial and Kurdish language classes to better integrate into mainstream education.



393 Syrian refugee teachers (70% of those employed in the parallel refugee education system) recruited in 2022 by the KRG Ministry of Education were maintained in their positions as lecturers.



Over 25,000 out-of-school children (10,000 girls) reached by the Back-to-Learning campaign, including 2,000 refugee children.

Over 300 refugee teachers received teacher training packages, including Kurdish language courses, to enhance their communication skills, mental health, psychosocial support and classroom management.



32,000 Syrian refugee children (15,000 girls) received textbooks and 10,000 Syrian refugee children (5,000 girls) received stationery.

2024 PRIORITY ACTIONS

UNHCR, UNICEF, Save the Children and partners will continue to support the KRG to expand the REIP to include all refugee students in the public education system. In 2024, partners aim to achieve:

UNHCR | USD 9,000,000

- 6,480 children (3,240 girls) will get a place in public formal schools as a result of the construction of four 18-classroom schools.
- 4,000 teachers, children and parents will receive remedial and Kurdish language classes.
- 29,000 refugee children, parents and teachers will receive learning materials, including textbooks, to support their learning and ensure they acquire the knowledge and skills needed.
- 1,000 teachers will receive capacity-building training.

UNICEF | USD 5,100,000

- 20,000 children (10,000 girls) receive 20,000 textbooks and 10,000 learning kits.
- 2,085 out-of-school children (778 girls) reached by Back-to-Learning campaigns in collaboration with the Directorates of Education.
- 15,000 remedial, catch-up and Kurdish classes will be provided to refugee children at risk of drop out.
- 1,000 teachers will receive teacher training including life skills pedagogy, Kurdish language, classroom management, and mental health and psychosocial support.
- 6,000 will have improved access to education via the provision of desks, whiteboards and new prefabricated classrooms.

Save the Children | USD 4,000,000

- 16,348 children (8,426 girls) will get access to high quality education through the provision of IT equipment, weatherization equipment, tables and other relevant materials to schools.

- 215 teachers (118 women) and 7,000 children and their caregivers will receive Kurdish language classes.
- Risk in and around schools will be assessed through Parent Teacher Association and Safe School Plan initiatives, and renovation measures and school safety will be enhanced.

TOTAL FUNDING NEEDED TO IMPLEMENT REIP PROJECTS IN 2024 USD 18,100,000

CONSEQUENCES OF UNDERFUNDING

If current REIP achievements are rolled back, some **50,000 enrolled Syrian refugee students would no longer have access to public schools** and would have to return to the parallel system. The KRG may also decide to halt the expansion of the REIP. Consequently, some **20,000 Syrian refugee children will remain out of school**. In addition, the **393 Syrian refugee teachers could lose their jobs**. The ability of Syrian refugee children to receive quality education would be compromised, which would limit their ability to achieve economic self-reliance and undermine the social cohesion outcomes that could have been achieved through mixed schooling with host communities.



Suzan, a Syrian refugee in Erbil, teaches refugee and host community children in public schools in the Kurdish Region of Iraq. © UNHCR

A strong integration policy will ensure that any future refugee children can be absorbed immediately into the KRG education system without any delay or educational interruption.

COORDINATION

Since the start of 2023, the KRG MOE has assumed the responsibility of coordinating the Education Sector, which involves all education partners. UNHCR, UNICEF and Save the Children support the implementation of the REIP to promote sustainable solutions for refugees in Iraq. UNHCR and UNICEF have established a global Strategic Collaboration Framework to promote refugee inclusion through strategic collaboration in child protection, education, social protection, water and sanitation, data and ending statelessness. Save the Children oversees the implementation of the Education Cannot Wait - Multi-Year Resilience Programme, involving 13 implementing partners (six national and seven international), which supports children's access to safe, protective, inclusive and high-quality education. UNICEF, in coordination with the Ministry of Education and other UN agencies, ensures that data on Syrian refugees is reflected in the education management information system (E-Parwarda). Support for the REIP also aligns with ongoing partnerships to ensure joint targeting and coordinated interventions for the benefit of refugees, such as the Prospects partnership, funded by the Netherlands.

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