

## Advocacy Note

# Registration Barriers to School Enrollment

## Background

As of September 2023, Türkiye hosts over 1.3 million children under temporary and international protection, with over 1 million enrolled in education, leaving 300,000 out of school. The out-of-school children's profile demonstrated notable variations by level and gender. The overall enrollment rate for children under temporary and international protection was 76.44% (48.86% for girls; 51.14% for boys). Notably, challenges remain with only 50.05% of pre-primary age children and 48.57% upper secondary school aged children under temporary and international protection attended education. While Türkiye's government and education sector organizations have made significant progress in

reducing the number of out-of-school children since the Syria crisis began, various economic, cultural, social, and systemic factors still limit access to education for many children and their families.<sup>1</sup>

The February 2023 earthquakes affected 4 million children, damaging schools, and hindering attendance, especially for refugees. Decreasing accelerated learning opportunities in the form of non-formal education leading to formal education heightens the risk of dropouts. Sustained support from education sector member organizations, particularly for refugees and earthquake-affected populations, is vital for ensuring quality education. Ongoing efforts seek to enhance the reach and impact of education programmes by collaborating with non-3RP actors for improved coordination and outcomes.

Advocacy efforts for comprehensive policy reform are ongoing, specifically targeting the registration challenges encountered by Syrian refugees and other nationalities. While the Presidency of Migration Management (PMM) has implemented inclusive and supportive policies, field-level obstacles may still persist.

**1.3 Million**

Children under Temporary and International Protection



**300,000**



Out of the Education System

**1 Million**

Children Enrolled in Schools



## Education Sector Needs Overviews<sup>2</sup>

The Needs Assessment conducted by the Education Sector Working Group (ESWG) in May 2024 indicated that approximately 14.30% of respondents cited registration challenges as a key reason for their children's non-attendance in education. This

includes difficulties such as lacking necessary identification documents for unregistered persons and encountering challenges related to address registry or data update for those registered, all of which impede enrollment. Syrians (19.01%), Afghans

<sup>1</sup> [3RP Annual Report 2023 .pdf \(3rpsyriacrisis.org\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Education Sector Needs Overview | UNICEF](#)

(12.98%) and individuals from other nationalities (19.66%) specifically mentioned registration hurdles as a barrier to school attendance.

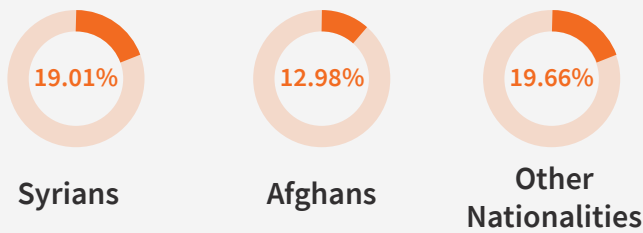
In earthquake-affected region, 14.04% face obstacles during school registration or lack essential identification documents, leading to delays or preventing enrollment. In earthquake-affected provinces, Afghans (32.74%) and Syrians (20.38%), along with other nationalities, cited registration obstacles as the main reason for their children not attending education programmes.

The issue of Inactive IDs in Türkiye has long been a barrier to education for refugee children. Syrian refugees under temporary protection face difficulties with address registry affecting their children's



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### Registration Hurdles As a Barrier to School Attendance



schooling, while international protection applicants, such as Afghans, struggle with both access to registration and documentation, inactivation of ID cards pending a final decision on their status, and address registry/update issues.

The ESWG, led by UNICEF in close collaboration with UNHCR, is working to resolve these issues. However, addressing the major barriers will need involvement from senior government officials at both the ministry and department levels. Some challenges necessitate intervention from the top levels of government, beyond technical approaches.

## ESWG Back to School (BTS) Campaign

Since 2014, the ESWG has run the BTS campaign to help vulnerable children enroll and attend school while gathering data on enrollment barriers.

The ESWG BTS Info pack<sup>3</sup> was shared to member organizations and other sectors to emphasize that facilitating access to education requires collaborative efforts across various sectors. The information pack was provided in Turkish, Arabic, and English to enhance parental awareness, deliver essential information, and promote engagement.

According to the ESWG parent survey<sup>4</sup> for 2023, school registration difficulties (20%) are the second most significant challenge, following financial barriers (30%) for children not attending school<sup>5</sup>.

Over the years, recurring enrollment problems have centered on barriers to registration of asylum applications, inactive IDs and address-related issues. Within the broader category of school registration challenges, a sizeable portion of barriers to school enrollment for refugee children is linked to these issues and can be further categorized as follows:

### Challenges in Registration and Documentation

The registration of international and temporary protection applicants is a key step in accessing rights and services in Türkiye. This process involves the issuance of ID cards to confirm legal status. However, delays or refusals in registration, and the failure to provide ID cards afterward, create significant barriers, particularly hindering school enrollment.

<sup>3</sup> <https://okuladonus.org/documents/2024-bts-infopack-tr.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> PARENT SURVEY: An online survey aiming at identifying the patterns of challenges faced during registration to schools, capturing the reasons.

<sup>5</sup> [Document - Türkiye - Education Sector WG - Back to School Campaign Report 2023-2024 \(unhcr.org\)](#)

### Challenges in Address Registration

Delays in address registration can pose major obstacles to school enrollment if not addressed promptly. The closed neighborhood policy exacerbates this, as families unable to afford rent in areas open for registration or facing address registration issues encounter further difficulties. Additionally, transportation challenges have become a significant barrier, with 18% of parents citing this issue in the 2024 ESWG needs assessment.

### Inactivation of IDs

The inactivation of IDs due to pending data updates, address registration, or initial negative decisions issued for international protection applicants poses significant obstacles to school enrollment.

Peer-bullying, language barriers, financial hardships, expired or lacking rental contracts, overcrowded neighborhoods further create major obstacles.

The 2024 Inter-Agency Protection Needs Assessment Survey (Round 8) identifies key reasons for children being out of school: financial barriers (38%), child labor (17%), and peer bullying (17%).

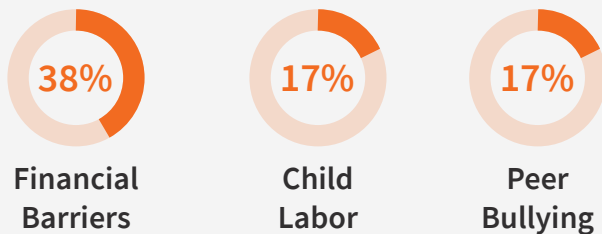
### Delayed Education Measures Requests

Delays in processing education measure requests for refugees, combined with unfavorable court rulings, impact the timely enrollment of refugee children in schools. The July 2024 correspondence from the Ministry of Family and Social Policies, which conditions the submission of documents verifying legal status for accessing services, along with challenges in implementing positive court decisions, further hinder access to education for many refugee children in Türkiye.

Additionally, Social Service Centers face challenges in preparing social investigation reports, as mandated by the Ministry of Family and Social Services further delay the process. Furthermore, school administrations frequently cite the assignment or activation of identification numbers as a critical requirement for enrollment following positive decisions.

The correspondence from the General Directorate of Child Services at the Ministry of Family and Social Services, dated 18 July 2024, indicates that foreign families are required to present documentation from PDMs confirming their legal status, including ID information, prior to the implementation of any educational measures.

### Key Reasons for Children Being out of School



### Recommended Actions

To tackle the persistent school registration challenges faced by refugee children in Türkiye, bilateral meetings in collaboration with UNHCR are taking place with the PMM, hold joint meetings between PMM and MoNE to issue an official circular guaranteeing access to education, and advocate with donors to prioritize school registration in their discussions with the Turkish government.

PMM and MoNE are developing a new migration plan to be implemented next year. As the ESWG lead, UNICEF, in collaboration with UNHCR and its member organizations, will need to explore

opportunities for collaboration to address gaps and strengthen support for the education of refugee children.

#### Note



*The Education Sector in the Southeast has been addressing school registration issues by engaging with local education authorities however policy adjustments at national level are required to address the issues.*

## Advocacy Messages

### Equal Access to Education



Ensure that all children in Türkiye, irrespective of their nationality, can access quality education by eliminating obstacles to school registration and enrollment.

### Systemic Reforms



Enhanced advocacy and cross-sector coordination are crucial to ensuring refugee children have continuous access to education and services. Despite ongoing efforts to improve registration and documentation access, as well as PMM's inclusive policies, field-level challenges persist, underscoring the need for further advocacy and collaboration to guarantee sustained education access for all refugee children.

### Extended and Streamlined School Registration for Refugee Children



The ESWG advocates for a flexible school registration deadline to support refugee children facing challenges with the registration process. We call for simplified procedures, prioritizing school-age children and offering language assistance to remove barriers for refugee families, ensuring timely access to education for all children under international and temporary protection.

### Parental Awareness and Engagement in School Enrollment for Refugee Families



It is crucial for refugee parents to stay informed about the policies and procedures for enrolling their children in school. Timely registration and understanding the required documents, including identification and residency details, are key to ensuring your child's access to quality education. ESWG encourage all parents to actively engage with local authorities and educational organizations, seek guidance, and be aware of any registration deadlines or policy changes.

Together, we can overcome barriers and ensure that all children have the opportunity to learn and thrive. Stay informed, stay involved—your child's education matters!

### Advancing Educational Opportunities for Refugee Children



Continued funding is essential for education sector initiatives and for supporting the Inter-Ministerial Protocol developed with key ministries and CSOs to address absenteeism and early school leaving.

### Remove Financial and Logistical Barriers



Eliminate economic and logistical challenges, such as financial burdens, which prevent refugee children from enrolling in schools and staying enrolled.

### Expansion of Educational Infrastructure



Invest in educational resources, including schools, classrooms, and teachers, particularly in provinces with high refugee populations, to accommodate all children.

### Psychosocial and Cultural Support



Incorporate trauma-informed approaches, counseling services, cultural sensitivity training, and conflict resolution training within the education system to address the varied needs of both refugee and host community populations.

### Collaborative Government and Donor Action



Advocate for joint efforts between the Ministry of National Education (MoNE), Presidency of Migration Management (PMM), and international donors to prioritize and secure education for all children in Türkiye.

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