

One in ten in school:

An overview of access to education for Syrian refugee children and youth in the urban areas of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I)

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Report prepared by NRC Iraq

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1 Executive summary

Given the limited availability of information pertaining to the education needs of Syrian refugee children and youth in the non-camp settings¹ of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I), the emphasis for this assessment was to provide an overview of the situation, rather than an in-depth analysis. This assessment is a snapshot; further monitoring will be required as the refugee population increases, as is expected in the coming months, and as refugees move between the three governorates of Duhok, Erbil, and Suleimaniyah, given changing livelihood opportunities and coping mechanisms.

The findings of this assessment should prove useful to local authorities, UN agencies, and NGOs in the planning of educational activities in urban areas. Further studies should be conducted to better understand specific issues or challenges faced by the Syrian refugee children and youth in the different non-camp settings of the KR-I.

The assessment findings indicate that access to education for the Syrian refugee children and youth in urban, peri-urban and rural areas is inadequate. Roughly 90% of school-aged refugee children and youth in non-camp settings are not participating in formal education. Of those, 76% were attending school in Syria. This gap mainly represents a reduction in the numbers of school-aged children attending primary education. According to this assessment, youth (aged 15 to 24) were largely not engaged in formal education in Syria; however, there is a need to better understand the expectations and aspirations of refugee youth in order to better tailor programs to their needs and interests. Vocational training initiatives will be a key activity for supporting refugee youth in non-camp settings.

Economic considerations, including transport costs and the cost of learning materials, are cited as one of the main barriers to education. As refugee numbers increase economic opportunities are becoming more limited and refugee households are less able to bear the costs associated with sending their children to school. Getting children and youth back to school will require support for transport, learning materials and other education costs, as well as greater livelihood opportunities to increase the overall income of Syrian refugee households.

Language is another major barrier to education. The Syrian curriculum is taught in Arabic, and not the Kurdish languages spoken in KR-I². In Duhok governorate, for example, about 1% of schools teach their lessons in Arabic, with the rest are conducted in Kurmanji (Kurdish). The vast majority of Syrian refugee children/youth in Duhok governorate attend school in Domiz camp, where Arabic is spoken and class registration is reportedly easier. Focus group participants commented on the challenges their children faced in the schools outside of the camp, such as: adjusting to new accents, different levels of schoolwork, and that the certification will not be recognised upon return to Syria. To the greatest extent possible, Syrian refugees should have access to the standard Syrian curriculum, and classes taught in Arabic.

“We currently have no lives here. We live day by day and can’t make decisions. We need a solution to our lives in Iraq.”

¹ For the purpose of this report, non-camp settings refer to urban, peri-urban, and rural areas.

² Kurmanji is the Kurdish spoken in Duhok. Surani Kurdish is spoken in Erbil and Suleimaniyah

Recommendations for local authorities:

- Increase the capacity to deliver basic/primary schools education in Arabic.
- Increase the capacity for student placement evaluations in non-camp settings.
- Schedule catch up classes over the summer break in refugee neighbourhoods so that Syrian children and youth are better prepared for the start of school in September 2013.
- Raise awareness amongst refugee households as to the availability of schools in their neighbourhood, and the registration procedures.
- Ministry of Education to undertake an assessment with school Head Masters to better understand the barriers to education for refugee children and youth, from their perspective.
- Collaborate with international organisations to facilitate school refurbishment activities (where necessary), school awareness campaigns, etc.

Recommendations for UN Agencies and NGOs involved in education activities:

- Work with local authorities to educate teachers regarding the specific learning, psychosocial and emotional needs of refugee children and youth.
- Support local authorities by building temporary learning spaces, and supporting the development of additional teacher capacity in order to accommodate all refugee children and youth in local schools.
- Work with refugee youth to better understand vocational training needs and opportunities in the urban areas of the KR-I.
- Support vulnerable households with transportation for children and youth living far from schools.
- Distribution of learning materials (pens, paper, uniforms, etc.) to vulnerable households to help alleviate financial barriers to education.
- Expand the presence of child and youth friendly spaces in the urban areas of KR-I in order to provide non-formal education and protection activities to children and youth.

Recommendations for the KR-I Education Working Group in Erbil

- Develop a comprehensive education strategy with all education stakeholders, especially local authorities, for the urban, peri-urban and rural areas of KR-I.
- Given limited resources and pressing needs, the strategy should prioritise key areas and set clear objectives for the coming school year.

Recommendation for donors

- Ensure education actors have the necessary resources to support the education needs of refugee children and youth in the urban, peri-urban and rural areas of the KR-I
- Advocate for a consensus-based strategy developed by all education stakeholders.

1.1 Baseline data from the survey

Table 1: selection of baseline data from survey

Key area	Governorate		
	Duhok	Erbil	Suleimaniyah
% of children/youth attending school	15%	9%	5%
Gender breakdown for those in school (girls - boys)	50% - 50%	54% - 46%	56% - 44%
School-aged children: % of 5 to 14 year-olds in school	17%	10%	6%
School-aged youth: % of 15 to 24 year-olds in school	7%	9%	0%

1.2 Assessment results highlights

As this assessment offers a representative sample of refugee households in urban, peri-urban, and rural areas with at least one child/youth, the percentages below can be applied to this demographic as a whole. Further details are available in the findings section.

Individual level

- Only 10% of refugee children and youth in the urban areas of KR-I are currently attending school. Of this 10% attending school, 48% are girls.
- Of the 90% of refugee children and youth that are not attending school in KR-I, 76% of them were attending school in Syria.
- For those attending school, 91% attend classes four to five times per week.
- For those not attending school in KR-I, the main barriers cited are: other (20%), economic (19%), availability of schools (17%), and not accepted (12%).

Household level

- 60% of refugee households with at least one child/youth in urban areas arrived in 2013, versus 38% in 2012.
- 93% of refugee households with at least one child/youth in urban areas are living in rental accommodation.
- 94% of refugee households with at least one child/youth in urban areas are male-headed.
- 90% of refugee households with at least one child/youth in urban areas have one or more household member engaged in paid labour.

2 Background

As of July 2013, UNHCR Iraq had registered upwards of 150,000 Syrian refugees in KR-I. These refugees are found in all three of the KR-I governorates: Dohuk (~100,000), Erbil (~35,000), and Suleimaniyah (~15,000). More than 45,000 refugees alone are located in Domiz refugee camp located approximately 15 km south of Duhok³.

There is no formal Kurdish language education in Syria; all formal education is conducted in Arabic. Therefore, though many Kurdish Syrians speak Kurmanji Kurdish at home, it should not be assumed that they are able to read or write Kurmanji, which is the Kurdish used in Duhok governorate. Surani Kurdish is spoken in Erbil and Suleimaniyah. The education system in the KR-I offers a compulsory nine-year cycle of basic education and three years of secondary education, which are not compulsory.

Table 2: nomenclature for grades and ages

In Syria	In the Kurdistan Region of Iraq	In Iraq
Basic Grade 1-9 (ages 6 to 15)	Basic Grade 1-9 (ages 6 to 15)	Primary Grades 1-6 (ages 6 to 12)
		Intermediate Grades 7-9 (ages 13-15)
Secondary Grades 10-12 (ages 16 – 18)	Secondary Grades 10-12 (ages 16 – 18)	Secondary Grades 10-12 (ages 16-18)

Education: individual right and communal necessity

Education is proven to have a peace building effect on countries in conflict⁴. A lack of education places children and youth at great risk, and a greater likelihood that they may experience exploitation (especially the girl child)⁵. Beyond the fact that education is a human right (even in the midst of conflict or emergencies), it is also an enabling right:

The right to education is a human right and an end in itself: ensuring humans can reach their full potential and claim their other rights; it offers protection and structure in times of instability, aiding children and those most vulnerable to retain a normal life and build the best foundations for a better future. Education is not just about access, but foremost about quality. If children do not learn anything, then enrolment rates have little meaning.⁶

An educated person is more likely to find gainful employment and a sustainable livelihood and is more likely to contribute to community development. Children that are educated grow up to be more active, constructive citizens. It is imperative – for individual children and for the future recovery of Syria - that Syrian refugee children are not denied their right to education.

³ UNHCR Syria Regional Refugee Response Information Sharing Portal: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=103> .

⁴ Smith, A. Education and Peace building: from ‘conflict-analysis’ to ‘conflict transformation’? Last accessed 3 May 2012: http://www.ineesite.org/uploads/documents/store/Smith,_A2.pdf

⁵ See: <http://www.globalcampaignforeducation.nl/!nl/library/download/584078>

⁶ See the Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies: http://www.ineesite.org/post/about_the_right_to_education_in_emergencies2/

3 Methodology

Objectives

The objectives of this education in emergencies assessment are:

1. To better understand the situation of urban refugees with respect to access to education, for both children⁷ and youth⁸ from 5 to 24 years of age; and
2. To better understand the situation in the schools in the urban areas, with respect to number of students, languages spoken, etc.

When defining urban, the assessment set out to better understand the situation of refugees in non-camp settings. This group therefore includes: urban areas⁹, peri-urban areas¹⁰, and rural areas.

Approach

A telephone survey was identified as the most appropriate method for primary data collection, given: the objective of the survey; the scale of the data collection; the nature of the data being collected; security concerns, and time constraints. For Erbil and Suleimaniyah the household level data collection was accomplished entirely through a telephone survey, whereas for Duhok the telephone survey was complemented with field interviews given the shortage of available phone numbers. A representative sample of households would have been very difficult through a 100% field survey, given that the survey would have been biased by field teams going to known areas with refugees.

The primary data collection was undertaken by NRC and was conducted between 12 May and 30 May, and again between 16 June and 20 June, by a team of 19 NRC enumerators in Duhok. The telephone enumeration team was comprised entirely of Syrian refugees to ensure better participation and eliminate potential language barriers. The surveys were conducted in Kurmanji (Kurdish). The telephone survey approach was also used for the school checklists given that the majority of questions pertained to enrolment figures, gender breakdown, number of teachers, etc. For each household contacted the enumeration team collected data for every refugee school-aged child and youth in the household.

Focus group discussions were conducted in Duhok to further explore the reasons that such a high proportion of children/youth are not attending school. These focus groups were facilitated by UNICEF and NRC and took place in Var city, just outside of Domiz camp, 23 to 24 June. Three focus

⁷ Children: all people between 0 and 18 years of age. This category includes most adolescents (10–19 years). It overlaps with the category of youth (15–24 years) (see also definition for ‘youth’ below).

⁸ Youth and adolescents: youth are people between 15 and 24 years and adolescents are people between the ages of 10 and 19. Together they form the largest category of young people, those aged between 10 and 24 years. The end of adolescence and the beginning of adulthood vary. Within a country or culture, there can be different ages at which an individual is considered to be mature enough to be entrusted by society with certain tasks. In emergency situations, adolescents have needs that are different from those of younger children and adults. Youth refers to a period of progression towards independent responsibility. Definitions vary from one context to another depending on socio-cultural, institutional, economic and political factors.

⁹ Definition: A geographical area constituting a city or town. (Source: <http://wordnetweb.princeton.edu>)

¹⁰ Definition: Immediately adjoining an urban area; between the suburbs and the countryside. (Source: <http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/peri-urban>)

groups were conducted with children (age 5 to 14 years old), youth (15 to 24 years old) and caregivers in Var city. In total 12 children, 11 youth, and 10 female caregivers participated.

Representative sample of refugee households with at least one child/youth in urban areas

The UNHCR database indicates that there are 20,118 refugee households with at least one child or youth between 5 and 24 years of age registered in the KR-I. A sample from these households was selected using a simple random sample methodology stratified according to the three main geographical regions, Suleimaniyah, Erbil and Duhok. Assuming a variance of 0.5 (50%-50%) this gives a confidence level of 95% (+/- 1.6 to +/- 3.4). Details of sample sizes and confidence intervals are shown in Table 2 below.

Table 3: survey sample sizes

Location	# of households	% of total	Sample size	Confidence interval (assuming variance of 0.5)
Suleimaniyah	1,550	7.70%	724	95% (+/- 2.7)
Erbil	4,468	22.21%	1656	95% (+/- 1.9)
Duhok	13,920	69.19%	800	95% (+/- 3.4)

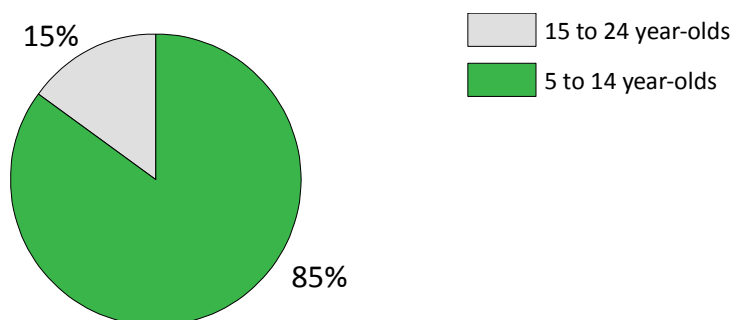
Eliminating erroneous data

Data was collected from 4,390 individual respondents from 3,422 households. Of the data collected from 4,390 respondents, data from 61 respondents was removed from the data set due to reasons such as: erroneous data entry, respondent age outside of target group, etc. This left 4,329 respondents that fit the survey parameters.

Age of survey respondents

The proportion of respondents by category is illustrated below. In virtually all cases, the caregiver responded on behalf of the child/youth. Though this assessment is representative survey of refugee households in urban areas with at least one child/youth, it is not necessarily a representative survey for each age group.

Graph 1: age breakdown for data collected from school-aged children/youth



School checklists

The focus for the school checklists was on the Arabic schools in the KR-I, but Kurdish schools were also surveyed. Data was gathered for a selection of Kurdish and Arabic schools in Duhok and Erbil governorate. The data collection was accomplished using a mix of methods, data sources and perspectives to manage bias and provide quality control on the data and interpretation of the data.

Limitations

- This assessment is a representative sample of households with one child/youth, not of all children and youth. To have randomly selected children and youth and contacted them would have been far more challenging in terms of obtaining the data to contact them.
- Though this is a representative sample of households with at least one child/youth, we can, for example, use these figures and apply them to the demographic of children and youth to provide us with an estimate for the actual number of children/youth not-attending school in non-camp settings.
- Approximately 50% of the contact numbers provided by UNHCR were no longer in service, or were temporarily not available, when the team attempted to contact them. Though there were still ample numbers for Erbil and Suleimaniyah, for Duhok governorate a field component was required in order to respect the sample size.
- Refugee households often had different names for their neighbourhood than the enumeration team, resulting in less reliable neighbourhood data. This was a limitation of the phone survey approach given GPS data could not be collected.
- One aspect of the data collection that was omitted from the report pertained to languages spoken by children/youth. The assessment findings contradicted other means of verification, in that the assessment found that only 40% of respondents spoke Arabic. After discussions with the enumeration team, one theory for the abnormal results was that survey respondents might have felt some pressure to downplay their Arabic speaking ability and to only report Kurdish.
- Data was not collected from schools in Suleimaniyah.

Other areas of concern mentioned by refugee households during the course of the assessment

At the end of the data collection phase, the assessment team were requested to compile any comments or observations that were communicated to them by the survey respondents, outside of the specific education assessment questions. The themes captured are listed below:

- Lack of Arabic schools
- Public schools do not receive refugee students
- The poor economic situation and lack of work for refugees constrains economic capacity to send children to school
- Concentration of refugees in places far from schools, and lack of safe, affordable transportation
- Neglect of children with special needs
- The exploitation of refugee workers by employers (i.e. sub-standard pay)
- High school students and university students are not accepted in local schools and universities

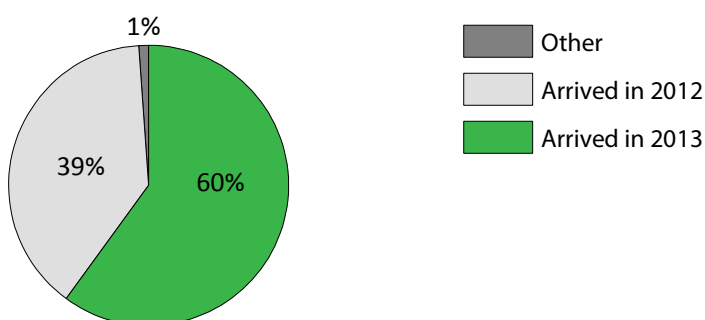
4 Findings: household level

Over-arching information was collected for each household before the education specific questions were asked of the children and youth. These questions focused on the households living and livelihood situation.

4.1 Date of arrival in KR-I

60% of refugee households in the urban areas of the KR-I arrived in 2013, before or during the primary data collection period (mid- to late-May, 2013). 38% of refugee households surveyed arrived in 2012. This finding is corroborated by the *UNHCR Registration Trends for Syrians*, dated 30 April 2013.

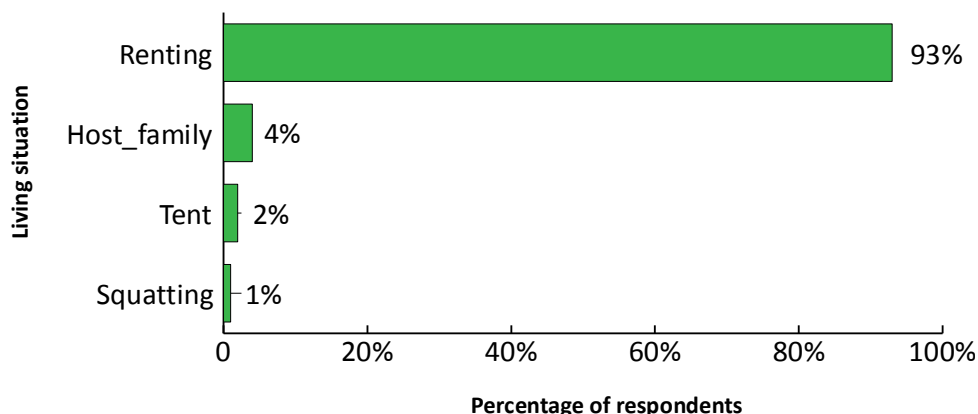
Graph 2: date of arrival in KR-I



4.2 Living situation

The overwhelming majority of households (93%) surveyed stated that they live in rental accommodation, with host-family (4%) situations being a distant second. It is possible that many respondents may in fact pay rent to host-families, thus the large difference between the two categories of renting and host family.

Graph 3: living situation for refugee households with at least one child/youth

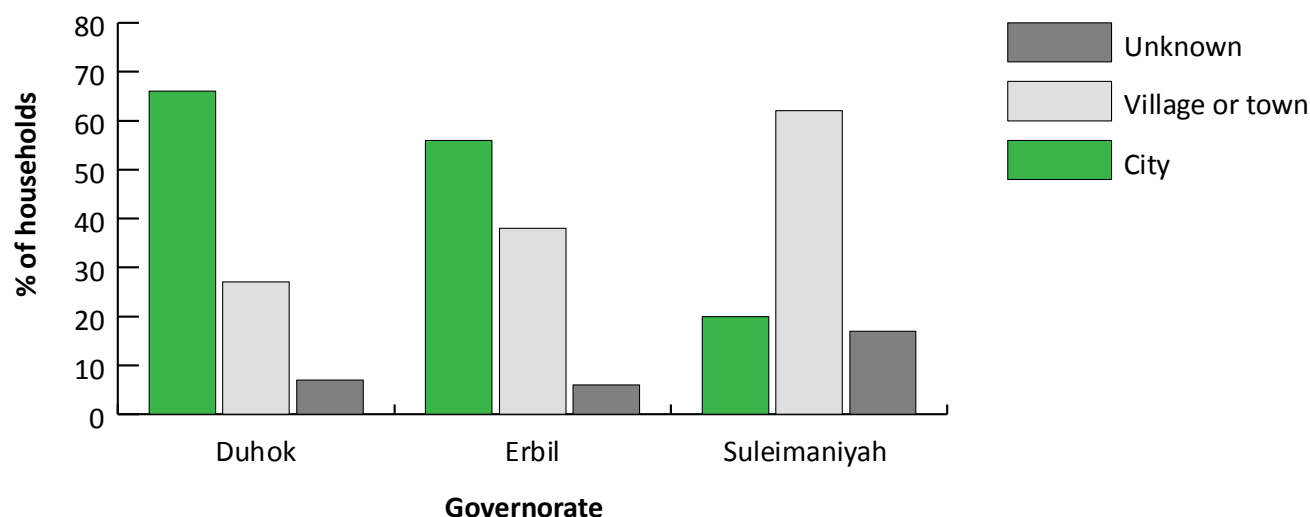


Reduced savings and the continued influx of refugees will make the informal and formal job market increasingly competitive, and jobs more scarce. If children and youth do not have a safe and stable place to live, meeting their education needs only becomes more difficult.

4.3 Relative location of refugee households with at least one child/youth in the KR-I

Although many non-camp refugee households with at least one child/youth live in the larger urban centres (i.e. Duhok city, Erbil city, or Suleimaniyah city.), a significant proportion resides in the smaller villages and towns outside of the main centres. The graph below indicates the living location for refugee households with at least one child/youth in the three governorates. Each grouping is relative to the governorate, and should not be used to calculate overall numbers. For example, there are many more Syrian refugees in Duhok governorate than in Suleimaniyah, but their relative locations are shown for each.

Graph 4: relative location of refugee households with at least one child/youth in KR-I



4.4 Neighbourhoods with the highest number of refugee households (at least one child/youth)

In each of the major city centres, refugee households (with at least one child/youth) can be found in many different neighbourhoods, though many have higher numbers of refugee households. In these neighbourhoods, efforts should be focused on increasing the intake capacity of the schools conducting classes in Arabic, and to encourage enrolment, in order to accommodate more refugee children and youth.

The table below captures the neighbourhoods with the largest number of refugee households with at least one child/youth. As this survey is a representative sample of refugee households with at least one child/youth, the percentages below can be applied to the estimated 20,118 refugee households in KR-I with at least one child/youth.

Table 4: neighbourhoods with highest number of refugee households (at least one child/youth)

Duhok city			Erbil city			Suleimaniyah city		
Neighbourhood	% of households	# of households	Neighbourhood	% of households	# of households	Neighbourhood	% of households	# of households
Nzarke Appartment	0.79%	159	Kasnazan	3.27%	658	Khabat	1.08%	217
Malta	0.41%	82	Badawa	2.13%	429	Sarchnar	0.79%	159
Zirka	0.35%	70	Mamzawa	2.13%	429	Zerinok	0.70%	141

Avro City	0.29%	58	Havalan	1.87%	376	Kurd City 1	0.50%	101
Bedar	0.29%	58	Ainkawa	1.37%	276	Ibrahim Ahmed 38	0.41%	82
Gyrbasy	0.20%	40	Sharawani	1.17%	235	Gule Shar	0.20%	40
Shele	0.20%	40	Berkot	1.14%	229	Kani Spika	0.18%	36
Abasik	0.18%	36	Bahari Nwe/Shadi	1.08%	217	Hawari Taza	0.18%	36
Semalka	0.18%	36	Setaqan	1.05%	211	Baranan 107	0.12%	24
Tal Kabr	0.15%	30	Shorsh	0.88%	177	Awal	0.09%	18
Zanko	0.15%	30	Kurdistan	0.79%	159	Goyzha New 220	0.09%	18
Mahandike	0.09%	18	Hawleri Nwe	0.76%	153	Kosay Cham	0.06%	12

4.5 Villages and towns with the highest number of refugee households (at least one child/youth)

The table below captures the neighbourhoods with the largest number of refugee households with at least one child/youth. As this survey is a representative sample of refugee households with at least one child/youth, the percentages below can be applied to the estimated 20,118 refugee households in KR-I with at least one child/youth. In these villages and towns, efforts should be focused on increasing the intake capacity of the schools conducting classes in Arabic, and to encourage enrolment, in order to accommodate more refugee children and youth.

Table 5: villages/towns with highest number of refugee households (at least one child/youth)

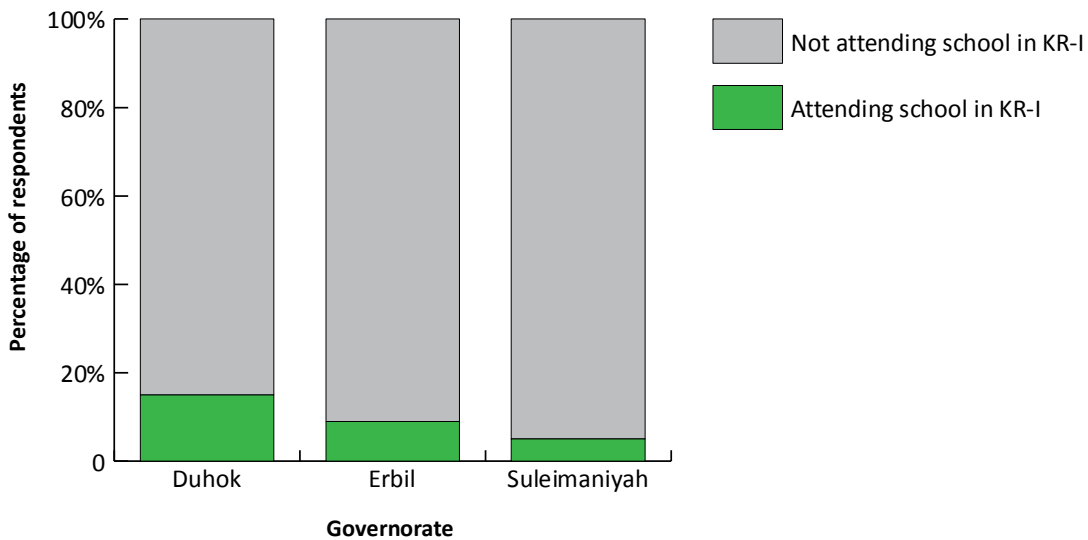
Duhok governorate			Erbil governorate			Suleimaniyah governorate		
Village / town	% of households	# of households	Village / town	% of households	# of households	Village / town	% of households	# of households
Zakho	2.10%	422	Bahrky	3.62%	728	Bazyan	2.60%	523
Domiz	1.75%	352	Darato	3.54%	712	Arbat	1.17%	235
Sumel	0.47%	95	Shawes	1.17%	235	Raparen	0.94%	189
War city	0.32%	64	Shaqlawā	0.88%	177	Saed Sadeq	0.58%	117
Askari	0.23%	46	Koya	0.61%	123	Bakrajo	0.53%	107
Amedi	0.18%	36	Askari	0.56%	113	Bakhtiary	0.38%	76
Shekan	0.18%	36	Ping Hazarruk	0.56%	113	Halabjah	0.38%	76
Bardarash	0.12%	24	Ashti	0.47%	95	Qargeh	0.38%	76
Akre	0.09%	18	Alban	0.44%	89	Razgare	0.35%	70
Millions	0.09%	18	Naslawa	0.44%	89	Ashti	0.32%	64
Sharia	0.09%	18	Bahirkāh	0.38%	76	Jamjamal	0.29%	58

5 Findings: individual level

5.1 Proportion of school-aged Syrian refugees in non-camp settings attending school

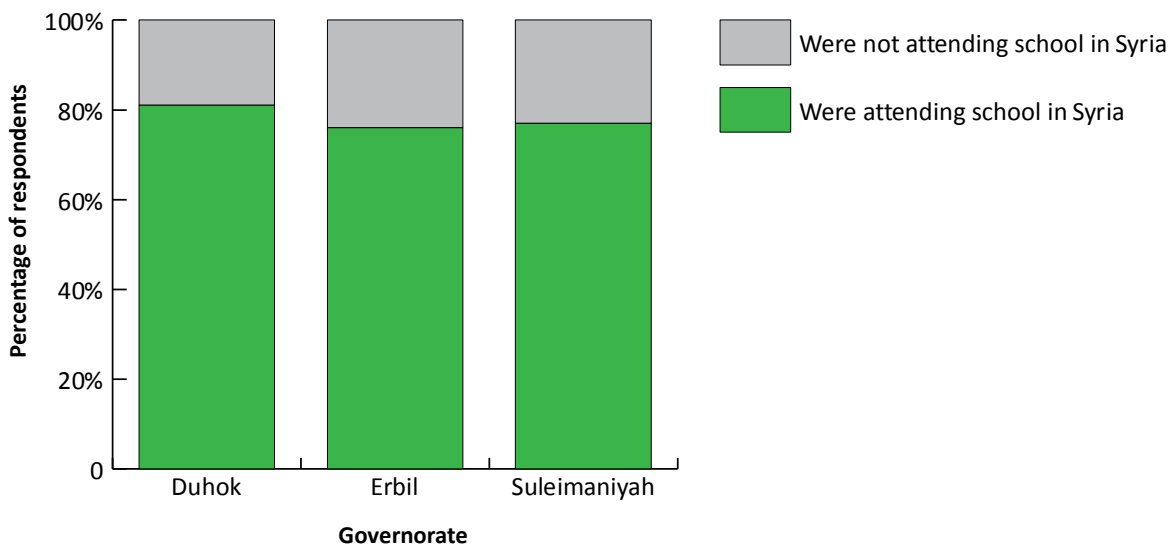
Overall, this assessment found that only 10% of school-aged refugee children and youth living in non-camp settings of the KR-I are attending school. This proportion varies slightly between the three municipalities: Duhok (15%); Erbil (10%); and Suleimaniyah (5%).

Graph 5: % of children/youth in non-camp settings attending school



Though disconcerting, this issue becomes more pressing when we see that of those not attending school in KR-I, on average 76% of them were attending school in Syria. This finding is reinforced by the recent Domiz camp survey conducted by NGO Harikar¹¹, funded by UNICEF, which found that only 12% of survey respondents had not attended school in Syria.

Graph 6: % of children/youth in non-camp settings that were attending school in Syria



¹¹ Report titled: *Creation of awareness on schooling facilities and enrolment drive in Domiz camp* (Harikar, 2013)

As can be seen from the above figures many children/youth were attending school in Syria, but currently are not in KR-I. To the greatest extent possible, children/youth should be matched with the appropriate grade here in KR-I. As such, for those that did not finish the school year in Syria, catch-up classes will be important to ensure that they are positioned in the appropriate grade for the new school year in September 2013.

5.2 Age breakdown of those attending school in KR-I

Table 6: proportion of children/youth in school by governorate

Age group	Governorate		
	Duhok	Erbil	Suleimaniyah
School-aged children: % of 5 to 14 year-olds in school	17%	10%	6%
School-aged youth: % of 15 to 24 year-olds in school	7%	9%	0%

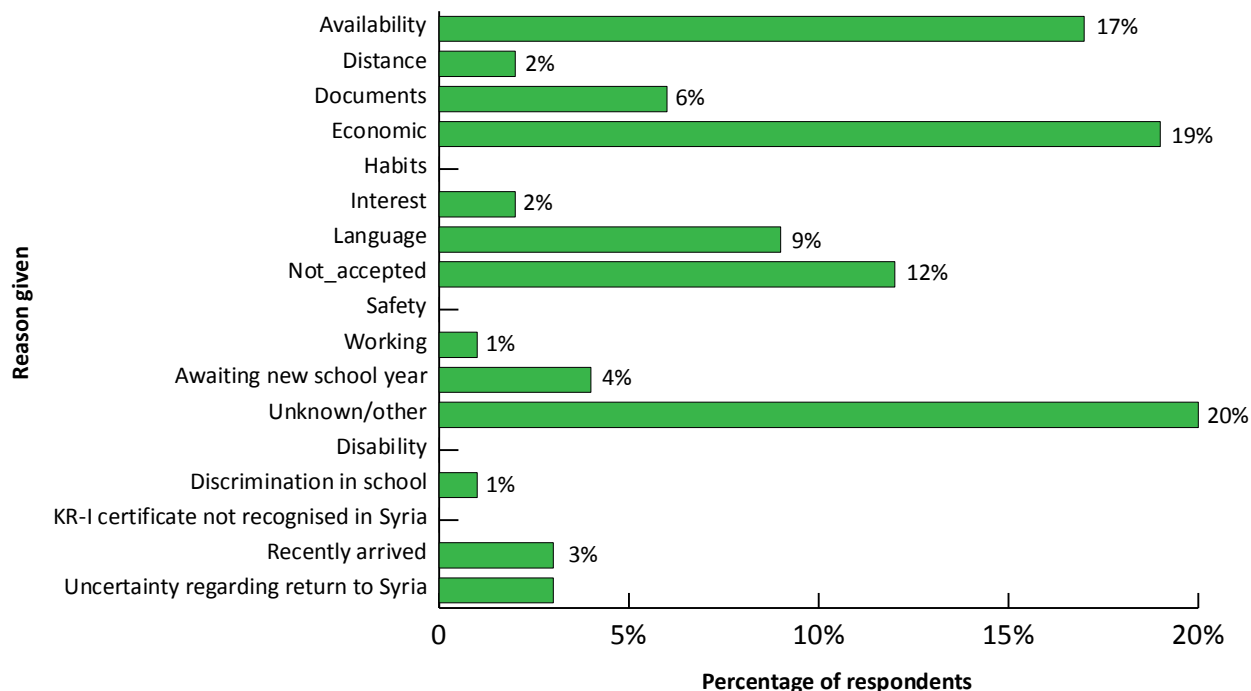
5.3 Reasons cited for not attending school

The top specific barriers cited by the caregivers for why children/youth are not currently in school are: *economic* (19%), *availability* (17%), and that the child/youth was *not accepted* (12%) at the school. Despite the category *other/unknown* (20%) also featuring prominently in the results, much can be inferred from the consistent high scoring of the three before mentioned barriers. Information provided by follow up focus groups reinforced the principal barriers listed above, and highlighted discrepancies between enrolment procedures in non-camp settings and those in Domiz camp. During a recent Education working group meeting in Duhok, 04 July 2013, the representative of the Ministry of Education confirmed that evaluations are currently expedited in schools in Domiz camp, but that in non-camp settings there are a number of required procedures for placement evaluations that take more time.

Barriers associated with children not being interested in attending school (i.e. *no interest*) or where they have had pressure to pursue other priorities (i.e. *working*) scored low in the survey. *Language* as a barrier did not score high in the survey; however in many ways it is linked to the stated top reasons, such as *availability*. For example, *availability* scored high due to a lack of Arabic schools, or capacity to accommodate refugees. There is no formal Kurdish language curriculum in Syria and all formal education is conducted in Arabic; however in the KR-I, the majority of classes are taught in Kurdish, and the minority taught in Arabic. Therefore, access to Arabic speaking classes, at a minimum, remains a priority concern for ensuring access to education for Syrian refugees.

Reinforcing the above findings, the focus group discussion highlighted that those in urban areas feel that there is little information available from education stakeholders with respect to enrolment procedures, availability of schools, etc.

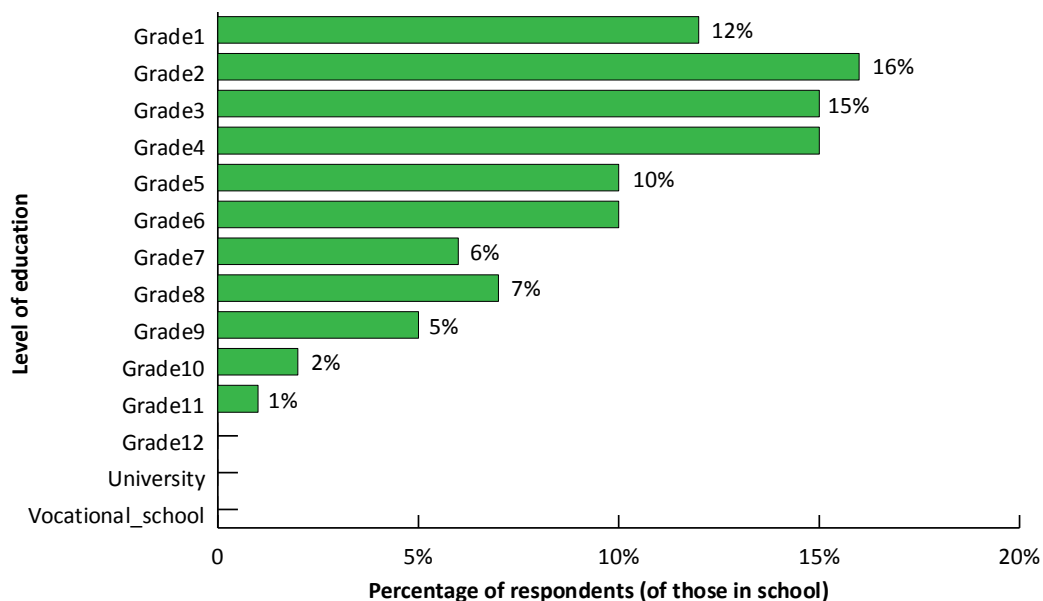
Graph 7: overall results for reason child/youth not attending school



5.4 Grades of those attending school

For those attending school in the KR-I, the breakdown of grades is captured in the graph below. The graph would seem to indicate that children and youth have at least some access to grades 1 to 11, but not to grades 12 and higher. According to this assessment, youth were largely not engaged in formal education in Syria, nor are they in KR-I. A report compiled in 2007 report put the youth enrolment rate in secondary school in Syria at about 45% over the last 40 years¹²; however, the recent developments in Syria may reflect the currently low rate identified in this assessment.

Graph 8: breakdown of grades for refugee children/youth in non-camp settings attending school

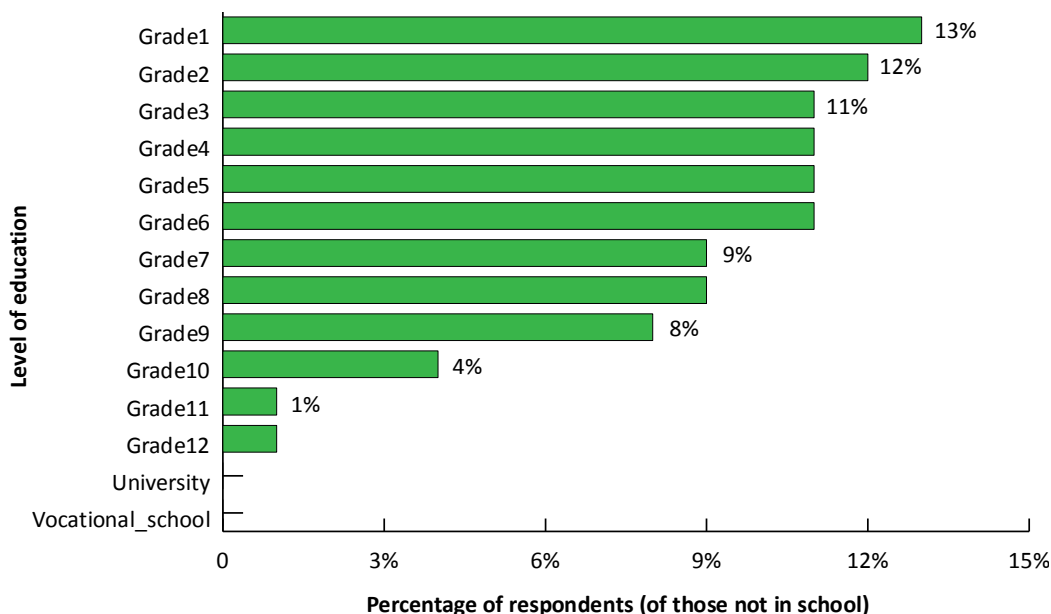


¹² *Youth Exclusion in Syria: Social, Economic, and Institutional Dimensions* (Kabbani & Kamel, 2007)

5.5 Last known grade of those not attending school

For those not attending school in the KR-I, the last known grade they were attending in Syria is captured in the graph below.

Graph 9: last grade in Syria for children/youth in non-camp settings not attending school in KR-I



5.6 Children and youth in paid employment and domestic chores

8% of refugee children and youth in the urban areas are engaged in paid labour, while 21% are engaged in domestic chores on a full-time basis. Of those engaged in domestic chores on a full-time basis, 43% are girls.

“We have no studies, no money; we live day by day without hope.”

- Adolescent focus group participant

5.7 Children and youth with disabilities

6% of refugee children and youth have some form of disability, of which only 15% are attending school in KR-I. The 15% of disabled children that attend school are mainly those with physical disabilities (85%).

One focus group participant highlighted that the issue is two-fold: first, they have trouble locating an Arabic speaking school in their area, and secondly, the school must embrace an inclusive teach approach.

“My daughter dreams of being able to attend school. It saddens her and me that she is unable to do so.”

- Focus group participant and mother of disabled daughter

6 Findings: school level

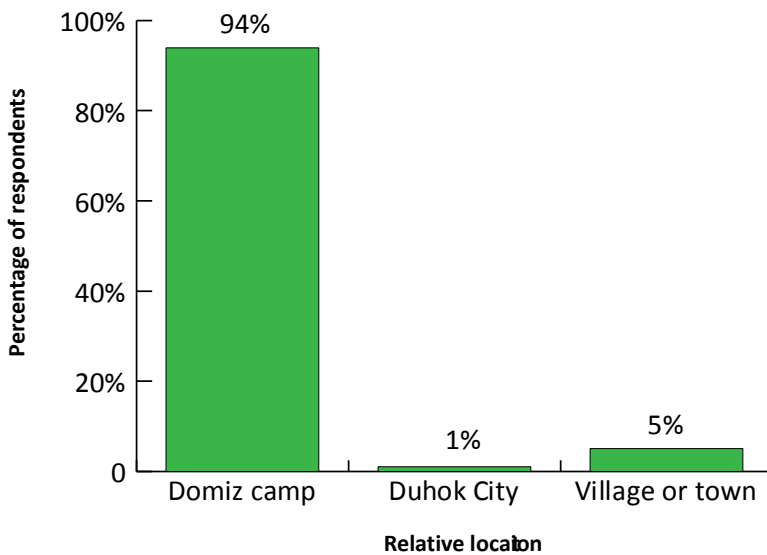
The low school attendance rate of 10% amongst Syrian refugee children and youth is corroborated by the fact that there are very few Syrian refugees actually enrolled in Arabic speaking schools in non-camp settings, and fewer still in Kurdish speaking schools.

6.1 Duhok governorate: number of Syrian refugees in school

Of the 40 schools (in non-camp settings) surveyed in Duhok governorate, the enumeration team identified 240 Syrian refugees enrolled in Arabic schools, and none in Kurdish schools.

In Duhok governorate, 94% of the urban refugee children and youth enrolled in school attend classes in Domiz refugee camp, with the remaining 6% attend school in Duhok city and the villages and towns of Duhok governorate.

Graph 10: where children/youth living in non-camp settings attend school (Duhok)



6.2 Erbil governorate: number of Syrian refugees in school

Of the 20 schools surveyed in Erbil governorate, the enumeration team identified 216 Syrian refugees enrolled in Arabic schools, and none in Kurdish schools. A selection of the detailed information collected from the schools can be found on the following pages.

6.3 Agency support in the school

Of the schools surveyed in Duhok governorate, 35% had some form of assistance from humanitarian or development agencies, with UNICEF alone supporting 28% of schools. Of these 35% of schools receiving support, all were receiving education kits for children and youth.

Of the schools surveyed in Erbil governorate, none were receiving external assistance from either agencies or NGOs.

6.4 Selection of data from the schools surveyed in Duhok

Table 7: selection of data collected from schools in Duhok governorate

Name of school	Relative	Area	Type of school (Kurdish and/or Arabic)	Total number of children in school	# of Syrian refugee children	% of students that are Syrian
Qamshlo	Domiz camp	Domiz camp	Arabic	1430	1410	99%
Jian	Domiz camp	Domiz camp	Arabic	1400	1400	100%
Kar	Domiz camp	Domiz camp	Arabic	747	747	100%
kardokh	Duhok City	shakhki	Arabic	628	12	2%
Behdar	Duhok City	Domiz	Arabic	408	20	5%
Altaaki	Duhok City	Barojka	Arabic	875	4	0%
Ezari	Duhok City	Hai askar	Arabic - Kurdish	725	2	0%
Aradna	Village or town	Amadi	Arabic	68	4	6%
Eshabir	Village or town	Zakho	Arabic	58	0	0%
Haoar	Village or town	Zakho	Arabic	364	30	8%
Abarokh	Village or town	Sumel	Arabic	290	10	3%
Barsafi	Village or town	Zakho	Arabic - Kurdish	333	2	1%
Shangal	Village or town	Mamoran	Arabic	164	0	0%
Soz	Village or town	Zakho - abasika	Arabic	300	17	6%
Jotyari	Village or town	Kadaa Bardarash	Arabic	182	0	0%
Alkosh	Village or town	Alkosh	Arabic	235	2	1%
dajla	Village or town	Zakho	Arabic	515	8	2%
Jdria	Village or town	Tal afara	Arabic	23	0	0%
Sonon	Village or town	Shantal	Arabic	224	0	0%
Talsakef	Village or town	Talsakef	Arabic	247	12	5%
Ranteen	Village or town	Zakho	Arabic	317	15	5%
Zagaroos	Village or town	Akra	Arabic	217	0	0%
Batanaia	Village or town	Talkef	Arabic	92	0	0%
Halo	Village or town	Zakho	Arabic	680	97	14%
Mazi	Village or town	Akra	Arabic	128	0	0%
Eakl	Village or town	Akra	Arabic - Kurdish	655	1	0%
Brdea	Village or town	komalka brdea	Arabic - Kurdish	148	0	0%
Gerkamish	Village or town	Gerkamish	Arabic - Kurdish	82	0	0%
Mantish	Village or town	Zaweta	Arabic - Kurdish	250	0	0%
Barsatha	Village or town	Zakho	Arabic - Kurdish	502	0	0%
Shoha	Village or town	Zakho	Arabic - Kurdish	116	0	0%
Lithoo	Village or town	Zakho	Arabic - Kurdish	105	3	3%
Nav kandal	Village or town	Zakho	Arabic - Kurdish	46	0	0%

6.5 Selection of data from the schools surveyed in Erbil

Table 8: selection of data collected from schools in Erbil governorate

Name of school	Relative	Area	Type of school (Kurdish and/or Arabic)	Total number of children in school	# of Syrian refugee children	% of students that are Syrian
Ainkawa secondary school for girls	Erbil city	Ainkawa	Kurdish	385	0	0%
Akito secondary school for boys	Erbil city	Ainkawa	Arabic	629	15	2%
Alhikma primary school for boys	Erbil city	Ainkawa	Arabic	1978	61	3%
Alkasra primary school for girls	Erbil city	Ainkawa	Arabic	779	51	7%
Alnahreen secondary school for girls	Erbil city	Ainkawa	Arabic	646	62	10%
Bamouk primary school	Erbil city	Bekhtiary	Kurdish	662	0	0%
El Nmrani priamry school	Erbil city	Al Mamostyan street	Kurdish	342	0	0%
El Srzinara primary school	Erbil city		Kurdish	436	0	0%
Junior Hamrin	Erbil city	Ronaka street	Kurdish	368	0	0%
Junior Ronaka for girls	Erbil city	Ronaka street	Kurdish	425	0	0%
Junior trade for girls	Erbil city	Ronaka street	Kurdish	208	0	0%
Karnaval	Erbil city	Temart market	Kurdish	425	1	0%
Khabat elementary school for girls	Erbil city	Ronaka street	Kurdish	474	0	0%
Mullah Fendi elementary school	Erbil city		Kurdish	1125	0	0%
Qandil elementary school	Erbil city	West eye hospital	Kurdish	475	0	0%
Shaiesta secondary school	Erbil city	Ministry of justice	Kurdish	324	1	0%
Shalma primary school	Erbil city	Ainkawa	Arabic	885	27	3%

6.6 Syrian teachers in KR-I schools

Apart from those teaching in Domiz camp, this survey identified only one Syrian teacher in schools in urban areas. Focus group participants commented on how having Syrian teachers helped to overcome certain challenges in the classroom; therefore, more should be done to integrate Syrian teachers into school in areas with Syrian refugee children and youth.

7 Recommendations

Based on the data and findings of the assessment, recommendations for programming and further study are outlined below. These recommendations also appear in the executive summary.

Recommendations for local authorities:

- Increase the capacity to deliver basic/primary schools education in Arabic.
- Increase the capacity for student placement evaluations in non-camp settings.
- Schedule catch up classes over the summer break in refugee neighbourhoods so that Syrian children and youth are better prepared for the start of school in September 2013.
- Raise awareness amongst refugee households as to the availability of schools in their neighbourhood, and the registration procedures.
- Ministry of Education to undertake an assessment with school Head Masters to better understand the barriers to education for refugee children and youth, from their perspective.
- Collaborate with international organisations to facilitate school refurbishment activities (where necessary), school awareness campaigns, etc.

Recommendations for UN Agencies and NGOs involved in education activities:

- Work with local authorities to educate teachers regarding the specific learning, psychosocial and emotional needs of refugee children and youth.
- Support local authorities by building temporary learning spaces, and supporting the development of additional teacher capacity in order to accommodate all refugee children and youth in local schools.
- Work with refugee youth to better understand vocational training needs and opportunities in the urban areas of the KR-I.
- Support local authorities with transportation for children and youth living far from schools.
- Distribution of learning materials (pens, paper, uniforms, etc.) to vulnerable households to help alleviate financial barriers to education.
- Expand the presence of child and youth friendly spaces in the urban areas of KR-I in order to provide non-formal education and protection activities to children and youth.

Recommendations for the KR-I Education Working Group in Erbil

- Develop a comprehensive education strategy with all education stakeholders, especially local authorities, for the urban, peri-urban and rural areas of KR-I.
- Given limited resources and pressing needs, the strategy should prioritise key areas and set clear objectives for the coming school year.

Recommendation for donors

- Ensure education actors have the necessary resources to support the education needs of refugee children and youth in the urban, peri-urban and rural areas of the KR-I
- Advocate for a consensus-based strategy developed by all education stakeholders.

8 Annex: focus group report compiled by UNICEF

Introduction

Three focus groups were conducted with children (aged <14 years), youth (aged 15-24 years) and caregivers in Var city, Duhok governorate. In total 12 male/female children, 11 male/female youths and 10 female caregivers participated. Participants had arrived in Var city from as little as one month to over 24 months ago. All had travelled with family and had family members or friends living in the Kurdistan region including Domiz camp, Duhok, Erbil, Sulimaniya and Zahko.

Barriers to Education

Amongst the children and youths participants all but one had been attending primary, secondary, vocational or tertiary education institutions in Syria. Within the child participants, three were currently attending school at Domiz camp. The remaining children and all adolescents were not engaged in schooling and had expressed a wish to continue with their education.

There were different barriers experienced by the children and their caregivers in enrolling in school to those encountered by adolescents. Some of the caregivers stated they had experienced difficulty enrolling their children in Iraqi schools and were eventually able to enrol their children in a school at Domiz camp. Most caregivers had enquired with several schools in Duhok, some were also looking at relocating to Erbil. Barriers centred on the non-acceptance of the Syrian documentation furnished for their children. For many others, the economic cost of schooling, particularly travel for their children to and from school, school supplies and uniforms was stated to be unaffordable. One caregiver who had 6 school-aged children stated she could not afford their schooling.

Safety and Economic Costs

Safety concerns were expressed by several caregivers for their children travelling unaccompanied in unfamiliar areas and with unfamiliar people. The safety concern was also expressed by the caregivers with children at school. One caregiver described her frustrations that her daughter has had to wait up to 1 hour for the bus to collect and return her to home. In many instances her 9 year-old daughter had to wait outside the locked school by herself and without shelter and exposed to the extreme heat.

Interrelated to these concerns of child safety and economic cost is that there is not a school in close proximity to Var city for the children to attend. In total, there were 28 school-aged children that were unable to enrol in a school.

Contending with Bureaucracy

For the adolescent participants, numerous had attempted to enrol in school programs in Duhok and Erbil without success. Participants shared their feelings of frustration with the education bureaucracy, in which some participants had been in ongoing communication for as many as two years. There was a sense amongst the participants of ambiguousness and unfairness in their interactions with the bureaucracy. Some participants had been told to submit additional documentation for consideration with their application, in excess of requirements for their friends with similar study curriculums and grades, while others had submitted papers and had been told to expect a telephone call when their application had been processed. This waiting period for feedback varied from a few months to many months and years despite repeated enquiries on progress. Many participants were still awaiting feedback.

Some adolescents were not confident the persons they were speaking to were always the appropriate ones to consult or liaise with on their documentation and applications. However they expressed a sense of desperation that talking to anyone may result in progress of their application. The participants stated that they were aware of only a few students from Syria who had been successful in gaining entry to schooling. They perceived their success was due to these students' connections to people within the bureaucracy or to their affiliations with political parties that were able to progress applications. Still yet, some participants held the belief that as Syrians they didn't have permission to study at Iraqi colleges and institutions.

One of the caregivers has a daughter living with a physical disability, her challenges to accessing schooling extends to not only locating a school, but one which embraces an inclusive teaching approach. In Syria, she had experienced difficulties accessing special schooling programs for her daughter and acknowledged barriers were magnified in Iraq. The caregiver stated *"my daughter dreams of being able to attend school, and it saddens her and me that she is unable to do so"*.

The barriers raised by the child and adolescent groups revealed a frustration with their current circumstances in full knowledge they each had been attending schools in Syria prior to the civil war. All participants indicated that having an education was valued within their families. Most had older brothers and sisters who provided inspiration to achieve academically. The caregivers were in agreement that education of their children was valued. Some of the mothers expressed their sadness in seeing their *"children cry and become upset, when they would open a book and realise they were unable to learn without the guidance of a teacher"*. All but one child and youth participant had family located around them, in Domiz camp, Dohuk, Erbil and Zakho, that provided a positive and supportive influence to their aspirations of study.

Living with frustration

For those children and youth not attending school, days were filled with a range of activities. Amongst the children, most spent their days playing, watching television or drawing. Three children described self-learning activities in their homes. Some of the caregivers attempted to conduct home schooling of their children, but struggled with having little time, little money to buy books and teaching materials, and ultimately not possessing the knowledge or skills to adequately teach.

Work was also discussed by participants. One child worked in a family operated restaurant from 6am to 6pm daily. Amongst the adolescents, work in low skilled jobs including kitchen handling in restaurants, driving and cashiering was common. The work wasn't satisfying but provided an income and occupied their time. The adolescents stated that they either worked or were looking for work. Overwhelmingly, the adolescents felt their days were empty. *"We have no study, no money, we live day by day without hope"*.

Need for Information

Participants across the groups made several suggestions to overcome barriers to school entry. There is need for up-to-date, accessible information on the Iraqi education system to guide students and their families to understand and navigate the education system and registration process. Accurate information is important. Lack of information and misinformation contributes to feelings of frustration and powerlessness about participant's present circumstances as well as their futures. For example, there was concern expressed within the groups that any schooling that they

may eventually undertake may not even be recognised on their return to Syria. This real concern requires clarification. It was also suggested the registration process for schooling needs to be more transparent and speedier, extending to feedback for people having submitted applications to study. The caregiver group proposed the upskilling of local community leaders who can act information providers and orientate children and their families on the education system.

The caregivers suggested a local subsidised school bus service would contribute to addressing the economic cost barrier to schooling. For the caregiver with her child attending school, she emphasised the need for the reliability of a scheduled bus timetable for pickup of children to allay her concerns over her daughter's safety. The most consensual suggestion for overcoming existing barriers to attending schooling for children and by their caregivers is the opening of a school of closer location. *"A child without education is nothing, we need our children to be occupied"*

Language / Curriculum

As most children and youth were not engaged in schooling, the experiences of the children attending classes at Iraqi schools were few. The children expressed their initial experiences of Iraqi school classes were difficult. The experiences were new, the Kurdish language being spoken in classes as well as the school and classroom environment were strange. However the children talked about adjusting and enjoying classes. Some aspects of schooling were familiar such as the presence of Syrians working as teachers. The amount of school work and homework was different, with the children feeling that the volume of work they were to master was not as much as in Syria. The concern was raised again that school and curriculums learnt and certificates awarded in Iraq would not be accepted or acknowledged on return to Syria. This concern will require allaying. The events of children that have detracted from their school experience have been described in relation to the unpredictable arrival of transport to ferry children.

Nature of support provided by host communities

The caregivers were asked about the support that the host community gave to them and their children. Whilst the group said that the community was supportive and encouraging in their words and intentions that there was little actual support provided from the community to them. The caregivers understood that people ultimately had their own worries and problems to contend with in their lives.

The caregivers appreciated the benefits that schooling provides to their children. In particular, the structure and stimulation the classes provide. However, the caregivers noted that they had not received feedback on their children's progress at school. They remarked that in Syria, they would attend regular parent and teacher meetings and be given a report on their child's performance in class.

Future intentions

The other caregivers and children in the groups still held hope of enjoying an education and each still held onto dreams of finishing school and, in the words of the children, becoming doctors, engineers, lawyers. This conversation on futures and dreams in turn lead to conversation to their intentions when the conflict ends. Amongst the children, all wanted to return to Syria to finish their schooling, except one who wanted to stay in Iraq. She didn't have a home to return to as it had been destroyed. The caregivers were pragmatic with most participants acknowledging that systems and infrastructure in Syria will take time to rebuild. Others expressed a longing to return to Syria as soon as it was possible. Despite uncertain circumstances and future, the caregivers expressed no hesitation in wanting their children to attend school in Iraq. The caregivers still held

hope for their children. Amongst the adolescents however there was less optimism. Most participants yearned to return to Syria but knew they were unable to return to their homes and studies, especially those from Damascus. The consensus in the room was *“we currently have no lives here, we live day by day and can’t make decisions, we need a solution to our lives in Iraq”*.

9 Annex: modified UNICEF school checklist

Date:

Name of surveyor

1) Name of the school:

2) Type of the school (Kurdish /Arabic):

3) # of Iraqi children at the school – data desegregated (grade/sex)

- Total number of children in the school:

Below complete the grades as per available in school:

- grade – total number:	Number of boys:	Number of girls:
- grade – total number:	Number of boys:	Number of girls:
- grade – total number:	Number of boys:	Number of girls:
- grade – total number:	Number of boys:	Number of girls:
- grade – total number:	Number of boys:	Number of girls:
- grade – total number:	Number of boys:	Number of girls:
- grade – total number:	Number of boys:	Number of girls:
- grade – total number:	Number of boys:	Number of girls:
- grade – total number:	Number of boys:	Number of girls:
- grade – total number:	Number of boys:	Number of girls:

6) # of Syrian refugees at the school – data desegregated (grade/sex)

- Total number of Syrian refugee children:

- Number of boys: Number of girls:

7) # and % of teachers – Ratio- (sex) - (Kurdish /Syrian)

- Total number of teachers in school:

- Number of Kurdish/Iraqi teachers: **# of male:** **# of women:**
- Number of Syrian teachers: **# of male:** **# of women:**

8) **Any attached prefabricate classroom to the school for refugees?** Answer **Yes or No**
If yes how many children the classroom can accommodate? (complete by providing a number):

9) Is the school supported by any agency/NGO/Charity ? Answer **Yes or No**

If yes; **tick:** educational kits, teachers kits, bags, teachers training

Which agency/NGO/Charity? (insert name of the organisation):