Overview

With the new academic year is fast approaching, the Education Cluster has identified a number of key barriers to children accessing and continuing education:

- There is currently insufficient capacity to host children in the existing school facilities. Syrian refugee children must attend schools teaching the KRG curriculum in Arabic. IDP children from south-central Iraq depend on the schools newly established by the GoI MoE, to study the GoI curriculum in the Arabic language.
- There is a shortage of educational materials, equipment, and adequately trained teachers to provide quality learning.
- There is a shortage of Secondary level schools and teachers.
- There are insufficient Arabic language schools in KRI.
- IDP teachers’ salaries are currently not being consistently paid. Not all refugee teachers are on the payroll and there is a shortage of funding for them. This has contributed to the shortage of teachers.
- Some families lack the information needed to register and enrol their children in school. Children with disabilities have specific needs above and beyond other children in Iraq.

To address these issues we would like to reach out to our partners with the following recommendations and provide all children in Iraq with the best opportunity to get back to school this academic year.

To the Government of Iraq, the Kurdistan Regional Government, and their respective Ministries of Education

Urgently:

The KRG has issued a new agreement regarding enrolment of refugee children attending 1-3 grade in KRI host community schools. The KRG MoE should extend the registration period for Syrian Refugees until end of September to allow adequate time to inform the communities of this new decision.

The GoI and KRG MoEs should ensure during the registration period that children who are turned away from schools due to lack of space are given adequate information and support to register in another school.

The GoI and KRG MoEs should continue existing helpful informal practices facilitating entrance to schools, such as allowing displaced children to enrol at school even without all relevant documentation and the provision of new documentation (where possible).

The GoI should ensure a timely and well-coordinated distribution of teaching and learning materials, in coordination with education partners. This should be supported by the appointment of specific liaison focal points per governorate.

The GoI and KRG MoEs should coordinate with the IDP call centre towards sharing pertinent information to allow children to continue their education as relevant to the above objectives.

The MoEs should provide a clear mapping of their current capacity in terms of educational space and related limitations. This will help humanitarian stakeholders to effectively target priority areas/schools and help clarify specific capacity gaps and needs of government and MoEs.

Alternative learning activities (e.g. non-formal Education, accelerated learning programmes, catch-up classes) must be fully integrated in the MoEs’ vision of emergency activities and short/middle term response plans.

Facilitate a process of transition from non-formal to formal education so that children can rejoin the formal education system. This process should be enabled through a clearly formulated policy that is adequately conveyed to the schools and children, and applied in a uniform and transparent manner, to provide opportunities through the school year for children to rejoin the formal system as is feasible for them.

This can be done by allowing children to enrol in schools even without attending kindergarten; enabling children at non-formal schools to take exams at formal schools; and streamlining other policies that currently offer useful exceptions to assist enrolment of displaced children.

A preparedness/contingency plan at government level should be designed as soon as possible, for impending influxes, and long term education needs.

INEE Minimum Standards are already contextualised to the national context and should guide future emergency responses.

Short Term:

- The MoEs should provide a clear mapping of their current capacity in terms of educational space and related limitations. This will help humanitarian stakeholders to effectively target priority areas/schools and help clarify specific capacity gaps and needs of government and MoEs.
- Alternative learning activities (e.g. non-formal Education, accelerated learning programmes, catch-up classes) must be fully integrated in the MoEs’ vision of emergency activities and short/middle term response plans.
- Facilitate a process of transition from non-formal to formal education so that children can rejoin the formal education system. This process should be enabled through a clearly formulated policy that is adequately conveyed to the schools and children, and applied in a uniform and transparent manner, to provide opportunities through the school year for children to rejoin the formal system as is feasible for them.
- This can be done by allowing children to enrol in schools even without attending kindergarten; enabling children at non-formal schools to take exams at formal schools; and streamlining other policies that currently offer useful exceptions to assist enrolment of displaced children.
- A preparedness/contingency plan at government level should be designed as soon as possible, for impending influxes, and long term education needs.
- INEE Minimum Standards are already contextualised to the national context and should guide future emergency responses.
Recommendations:

To Donors

Urgently:

- Fully fund requests for education programming in humanitarian responses.
- Increase the number of appropriate learning facilities and materials.
- Recognizing the long term nature of the crisis, fund education as a long term investment into the development of Iraq.
- Ensure that education programs integrate psycho-social support and have qualified teachers to deliver it, so that children can learn in a safe and protective environment with quality schooling tailored to their needs.
- Fully fund secondary education. Secondary school provision has not been prioritized in the humanitarian response, leaving a significant gap in education opportunities at this level.
- Recognising the strained capacity of the GoI MoE and KRG MoE, consider flexible funding in the short term that allows UN agencies and NGOs to support the government, by paying ‘incentives’ for teachers.
- Fund measures to ensure inclusive access to education of marginalized groups including children with disabilities.

To Humanitarian partners

Urgently:

- The new call centre for IDPs should be maintained with up-to-date and relevant information including location of schools, means of enrolment etc. in close collaboration with the GoI/MoE.
- Ensure that non-formal education programmes/tented schools have a transition plan for children to the formal system, in close cooperation with the relevant Ministry of Education.
- Prioritize secondary and tertiary education to ensure a link with primary education.
- Ensure inclusive access to education of marginalized groups including children with disabilities.

Short term:

- Provision of Kurdish language classes for Syrian refugee pre-school children so that interested students can transition to KRG Kurdish schools for their education needs.
- Ensure provision of learning activities in acute emergency environments using innovative approaches e.g. Mobile Education Units.
- Follow the agreed upon standards and government guidelines ensuring an equitable distribution of services to all beneficiaries, and uniformity in teacher incentives.
- INEE Minimum Standards are already contextualised to the national context and should guide future emergency responses.