



JOINT APPEAL



PROVIDING EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES TO IRAQI CHILDREN IN HOST COUNTRIES

A Regional Perspective

JULY 2007

I- Overview

In the face of ongoing violence in Iraq, the Middle East is confronted with a displacement crisis of huge proportions. Around two million Iraqis have been quietly and steadily moving into neighboring countries, seeking refuge and help, with the Syrian Arab Republic and Jordan, bearing the brunt of the exodus, which continues unabated.



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Iraqi children are the most vulnerable among the displaced and are facing an enormous challenge. With the passing of time, the hope for a peaceful childhood, a stable family life and normal education is being swept away for many of them.

Despite significant support from host governments and local communities, many young Iraqis are out of school and face an uncertain future. It is believed that without a swift, robust and effective response from the international community to support the host countries in providing education opportunities for Iraqi children, the dangers related to the emergence of an uneducated and alienated young generation of Iraqis will become real.

UNHCR and UNICEF are, therefore, requesting US\$ 129 million to set up, in close coordination with host governments, a special regional programme that will proactively encourage and support Iraqi school

aged children to enroll in school, while simultaneously also benefiting the communities hosting them.

II- Basic data

No accurate account of the number of Iraqi children who moved across their country's borders over the last four years exists. However, based on Iraqi demographic data and the most recent estimates of the governments in the region, UNHCR, UNICEF and other UN agencies, nearly half of the two million externally displaced Iraqis are believed to be children, of whom around 500,000 are of school age. Recent assessments show that displaced Iraqi children, for a variety of reasons, have limited access to schools or other educational services.

The resources available to governments in the region that have so far sustained the presence of such huge numbers of displaced persons are being depleted. Similarly, Iraqi families in exile are spending the last of their savings to rent houses and to purchase basic supplies for their survival.

Many Iraqi children in the Syrian Arab Republic, Jordan, Egypt and Lebanon are struggling to learn in over-crowded classrooms. Female headed households are seriously at risk with their children, who are often out of school, sitting in cramped apartments or forced to live in the streets, and are exposed to potential abuse and far-reaching alienation and manipulation. As host governments do not have the resources to meet the educational needs of the increasing numbers of Iraqi youth, UNHCR and UNICEF believe that the international community must provide substantive support to the concerned countries with the aim to offer much needed education to desperate Iraqi children.

III- Challenges to access to education

While Iraqi families seeking safety have benefited considerably from the hospitality of neighboring countries, and their presence continues to be tolerated, many of their children still face enormous challenges in terms of accessing education. Discussions with



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teachers, families, government officials, as well as surveys conducted by UN agencies, concluded that the main reasons for these Iraqi families not sending their children to school or for the low school retention rates are as follows:

- overcrowded schools have turned children away due to lack of space for new students;
- lack of financial resources to cover the costs of uniforms, school supplies and other necessary school items;
- the need to send children to work to support the families given the parents' lack of income;
- the unsettled nature of life where many families live in the hope of resettlement to a third country or return to a safer and more stable Iraq;
- psychological trauma and emotional stress of Iraqi parents and children alike, with teachers noting that a number of children

are traumatized because of the violence they have witnessed in Iraq;

- the lack of school documentation, particularly for secondary students, was cited as one of the major impediments to accessing education due to the fact that many Iraqi families were forced to leave under emergency circumstances and were not able to bring their children's school records;
- fears in relation to the uncertain residence status of Iraqi families was also cited as a reason for many families for not sending their children to school;
- children with special needs face enormous challenges, as their families do not have sufficient resources to send them to schools with the required facilities;
- many Iraqi families are not aware of the possibility of sending their children to school;
- some families find that the curriculum in their host country is challenging for their children and some children have dropped out as a result, and;
- the placement of older students in lower level classes is a discouraging factor that often also leads to children dropping out.

IV- The present situation

The Syrian Arab Republic

For several decades the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic has had a clear policy on allowing all children from Arab countries living in Syria to enroll in Syrian schools, where government schooling is free of charge. According to the Syrian Ministry of Education, 32,000 Iraqi children are currently enrolled in Syrian public schools, in addition to

1,000 in private schools. This represents only a fraction of the estimated 300,000 school age Iraqi children living in the country. The areas where displaced Iraqis have settled in Damascus (Sayda Zeineb, Jaramana, Qadsya, Yarmouk, Masaken Barzah) are extremely over-crowded



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with the infrastructure barely meeting the needs of its original inhabitants. Schools are no exception, with the number of Iraqi children outnumbering their Syrian hosts in some of these areas. This has created further pressure on teachers, students and the community at large.

The Syrian Ministry of Education, UNHCR and UNICEF have agreed on a set of actions that will aim to increase the number of Iraqi children enrolled in Syrian schools during the 2007-2008 school year by 100,000. It was also recognized that achieving this target will require a number of short and long term measures that would, on one hand, increase the capacity of schools to accommodate the increased number of students and, on the other, ensure that Iraqi families are aware of the opportunity to enroll their children.

Jordan

The Government of Jordan estimates that 19,000 Iraqi children are enrolled in public and private schools in the

country. It is also estimated that at least 50,000 Iraqi children are out of school. UNHCR and UNICEF are committed to providing technical assistance and financial support to the Jordanian Ministry of Education with the aim of strengthening and expanding the Jordanian educational infrastructure, both public and private, so that they can absorb as many additional Iraqi children as possible.

Egypt and Lebanon

For many years UNHCR has provided education assistance to displaced persons and asylum-seekers of school age in Egypt and Lebanon, mostly in the form of educational grants. The growing number of displaced Iraqi families requires an enhanced response and specific support to needy families and educational institutions in the two countries to enable them to provide a larger space for the education of displaced Iraqi children. This support will include educational grants, school supplies, books, transportation, school equipment and payment of fees, as well as rehabilitation of existing schools as necessary.

V- Objectives of the programme

UNHCR and UNICEF, in close cooperation with relevant partners, are committed to provide financial and technical support to host countries to strengthen their national institutions and to ensure access to better quality education for displaced Iraqi children, while also potentially benefiting local children as well.

Children whose education has been interrupted because of the war or who, because of their limited resources,

have not had the opportunity to resume their education will receive particular attention.



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This programme, which covers the period of August 2007 to December 2008, will enroll as many as 155,000 displaced Iraqi children in school. The number of Iraqi children to be assisted is as follows:

- Syrian Arab Republic	100,000
- Jordan	50,000
- Egypt	2,000
- Lebanon	1,500
- Other countries in the region	1,500

VI- Strategies for the implementation of the programme

- UNHCR and UNICEF's initial response to the educational needs of Iraqi children started in the context of the appeals launched by the two agencies respectively in January 2007 (revised in July 2007) and May 2007. However, these initial programmes were intended to cover the needs of Iraqi children already enrolled in schools in neighbouring countries. This proposed programme is more ambitious as it targets 155,000 additional children.
- UNHCR, UNICEF, the Ministries of Education and other relevant

partners in the concerned countries will maintain close collaboration in order to develop and implement a multi-pronged plan of action to reach the objectives of this programme. The strategy will be based on immediate and medium term initiatives providing support for:

- a) the expansion of public schools' absorption capacity,
- b) re-integration of school dropouts through community mobilization, particularly for girls and adolescents,
- c) support to poor and vulnerable families, and
- d) community messaging to encourage Iraqis to enroll their children in schools, also with a special focus on girls, as well as children with special needs.

- As an integral part of the implementation strategy, the principle of equity between Iraqi and local children will be observed in the delivery of assistance in schools attended by both student populations. The programme does not seek to establish parallel schooling systems targeting Iraqi children. The present programme will remain under the overall leadership of the educational authorities of the host countries.
- Depending on the needs, the programme will encompass primary, secondary and vocational training, as well as non-formal education, where applicable.
- A number of higher education opportunities will be provided to a selected number of students according to the absorption capacity of the respective universities in the host countries,

while potentially also benefiting host country nationals.

- UNHCR, UNICEF and the Ministries of Education in the concerned countries will establish coordination mechanisms to ensure adequate planning for the implementation of the programme.
- UNHCR and UNICEF will ensure coordination with other partners, such as specialized institutions and NGOs dealing with education related activities, in conjunction with the relevant governmental ministries.
- Recruitment of additional teachers will be done according to local procedures and norms. The ratio of students to teachers will be kept at the national average in each country.
- In order to avoid the establishment of parallel structures, non-formal education or vocational training will be carried out through existing governmental institutions established for this purpose.
- Mechanisms will be developed to allow for the recognition of students' credentials, including testing and proficiency assessment for placement of Iraqi students in the schooling systems of the host countries.



UNHCR/S. Wilkes

VII- Planned activities

In order to achieve the objectives of this programme, UNHCR and UNICEF, through the Ministries of Education of the host countries, as well as national and international operational partners, will implement a variety of activities aimed at facilitating access of Iraqi children to school, while also benefiting local children, in order to build further tolerance towards persons in need of protection.

Depending on the situation in each host country, support to the education sector will focus on a combination of the following activities during 2007-2008:

Strategy 1: Expansion of the educational infrastructures in the host countries.

There is an immediate need to identify possible buildings that could be rented to create temporary school facilities. Upgrading of water and sanitation services will also be part of the rehabilitation process.

Alternatively, other infrastructural support would include:

- a) construction of new schools;
- b) construction of additional classrooms in existing schools;
- c) rehabilitation of existing educational facilities that would improve the functioning and quality of schools; and
- d) set-up of pre-fabricated schools. This will be a priority during the first phase of the project to allow for the quick absorption of as many children as possible before more permanent facilities are built.



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Double shifting

The most immediate option for increased enrolment without major additional infrastructures is double-shifting. The disadvantages of such an option, including wear and tear on the existing facilities and impact on quality of education will need to be monitored and adequately mitigated.

Recruitment of additional teachers

This will be done according to local procedures and norms. The ratio of students to teachers should be kept within the national standards of each country and will seek to avoid overcrowded classrooms.

It is estimated that over 4,000 additional teachers will be required for the targeted 155,000 Iraqi school children. The programme will cover the salaries and training costs of the additional teaching labor force, as well as the additional working hours of teachers who will work under the double-shifting system.

School based remedial education

A set of school-based interventions will be developed to facilitate the re-integration of long-term drop outs and prevention of drop out cases.

School books, uniforms supplies and equipment

The programme will contribute to the efforts of the host governments in providing Iraqi children with school books and supplies under the same conditions as children of the host countries.

Schools will be directly supported in terms of educational resources and teaching aids for the teachers and libraries, School equipment, such as projectors and photocopiers, will also be provided.

Strategy 2: Integration of school drop outs through community mobilization, particularly for girls and adolescents.

Support to community based initiatives

Many children have been out of school for a period of one to three years. These children will be supported through community based initiatives, such as remedial education, summer camps focusing on child rights and child participation, and child friendly spaces. Specific interventions focusing on adolescents, including girls, will be supported through the host

communities, which would also benefit local populations.

Training of school staff

Most Iraqi children have faced traumatic experiences and require support to deal with associated distress. School counselors and teachers will therefore undergo training to allow them to better address the special needs of Iraqi children.

Strategy 3: Outreach to poor and vulnerable families

Some 12,000 Iraqi families, who are in particular need of assistance in order to keep their children in school instead of sending them to work, will be considered as part of community assistance activities.

Higher education opportunities for Iraqi youth will also be supported through scholarships and stipends to allow them to pursue their university studies, which may also be extended to nationals of the host countries.



UNHCR/ J. Wreford



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Strategy 4: Advocacy campaign to encourage Iraqis to enroll their children in schools, with a special focus on girls as well as children with special needs

The success of the programme hinges on the recognition by all of the importance of education in general, but particularly during displacement. In collaboration with the concerned governmental institutions, information campaigns will thus need to be carefully designed.

In addition, cooperation between the Iraqi Ministry of Education and those of the host nations will be sought and facilitated.

VIII- Budgetary Requirements

The attached tables provide the breakdown of the budgetary requirements in US dollars of the programme by agency in charge of implementation and/or monitoring in terms of operations, programme support, including staffing, administrative, as well as indirect costs.

AGENCY	UNHCR			UNICEF		Total
Country/ Strategy	Syria	Jordan	others	Syria	Jordan	
1. expansion of school capacity	50,000,000	23,000,000	1,900,000	8,100,000	5,000,000	88,000,000
2. community mobilization	3,800,000	1,500,000	1,500,000	6,500,000	3,300,000	16,600,000
3. Direct assistance to poor families	2,800,000	1,000,000	1,300,000	0	0	5,100,000
4. Advocacy and communication	500,000	500,000	400,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	3,400,000
5. Agency operational support	2,600,000	1,400,000	300,000	2,400,000	1,700,000	8,400,000
Sub-total Operations	59,700,000	27,400,000	5,400,000	18,000,000	11,000,000	121,500,000
Indirect costs	4,179,000	1,918,000	378,000	1,260,000	700,000	8,435,000
Total	63,879,000	29,318,000	5,778,000	19,260,000	11,700,000	129,935,000
Grand Total	98,975,000			30,960,000		129,935,000