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Chad: 132 new classrooms under construction in Sudanese refugee camps to improve education

Thanks to US Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migrations (BPRM), UNHCR has launched a vast construction project of 132 classrooms to improve learning conditions in refugee camps in eastern Chad.



The construction site of the secondary school in Touloum camp. The mission assesses the progress. Photo UNHCR/I. Diane

Taking advantage of school holidays, the construction works are underway in all 12 camps of eastern Chad where over 319,500 refugees are residing, for over a decade.

The construction project is part of a larger plan to improve the quality of education services offered to children in Sudanese refugee camps and Chadian kids from host communities who choose to go to those schools. It is being done thanks to generous donation from the State Department's Bureau of Population, refugees and migrations (BPRM) following a thorough assessment of the education needs in the protracted refugee situation prevailing in the east Chad.



*Some of the new classrooms being built (centre) and deteriorating ones (right) in the camp of Iridimi.
Photo UNHCR/I. Diane*

In addition to the construction, equipment and furniture of 132 classrooms and other infrastructures including offices, latrines, the project will provide training for teachers, school textbooks and materials, complement teachers' incentives and support to local education authorities.

Some of the infrastructure will replace old and deteriorated schools built early after the arrival of the refugees while others will extend existing capacity and meet some important gaps, especially for secondary school. Due to lack of capacity some school had to split their day between primary and secondary school pupils.



BPRM's Betoudji Mbaïtar talks to these secondary school girls of Iridimi camp

A joint UNHCR/BPRM mission witnessed the start of the construction work in four camps overseen by UNHCR Sub Office in Iriba and Field Office Guereda on 1-4 August 2017. The mission visited construction sites, had discussions with implementing partners overseeing the work as well as some teaching staff and parents of pupils.

“This mission is an opportunity to ensure that all stakeholders of this crucial project have the same understanding of its importance and the standards

required to deliver it successfully”, said UNHCR’s Associate Education Officer, Yanik Yankeu Yankeu, who led the mission. “We also use the opportunity to see how parents are and can be better involved in their children education”, he added explaining that in some camps the community welcoming the project got involved in the construction works.



UNHCR’s Associate Education Officer meets with teaching staff of Iridimi

According to Ibrahim, head of the parent teacher association of one of the primary school of Touloum camp, 17 km from Iriba, “the new buildings will convince parents who blaming their decision not to send their children to school to the lack of infrastructure, to change their mind.

Students also welcomed the construction of the new classrooms. A group of them met in Iridimi camp, 12 km from Iriba, getting ready for a picnic, said they will give more teaching times for pupils of different level who will their own classrooms and learning material.

On their way, back from Iriba to N’Djamena, the mission made a stopover in Abeche where 333 teachers including 128 for secondary school and 205 community teachers for primary schools are going through qualification training.

They are being trained in Chadian Teacher’s Training College in line with the integration process that has seen schools in the Sudanese refugee camps switch from Sudanese education curriculum to the Chadian one since 2014/2015 school year.



Maka Youssouf, a 26-year-old Sudanese refugee is attending a training to become a primary school teacher in her Touloum camp. Photo UNHCR/I. Diane

Started on July 31, the 2-month intensive training will end on September 30, 2017 in time for the new school year and, for some, the new classrooms.

190,752 refugee children including 151,918 Sudanese are at school age in Chad. A total of 94,949 children including some Chadians are enrolled in schools in the refugee camps including 72,416 Sudanese children.

Currently there are on average 97 pupils per classroom built in sustainable material in Sudanese refugee camps. With the new 132 classrooms that ratio will be 80 pupils per classroom. Hence UNHCR calls for more help and actions to improve learning conditions in Sudanese refugee camps. In addition to BPRM, UNHCR is grateful for the support of donors such as Educate A Child, Education Cannot Wait, German government through the DAFI scholarships as well as operational partners such as Good Neighbors which is building classrooms with their its own funds.

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