

PRESS RELEASE

Iraq Education Stakeholders Commit to Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies

Erbil, 23 April 2015 – Education experts from Baghdad and Erbil Ministries of Education, international organisations and civil society came together this week to agree on minimum standards for educational access, quality and accountability in emergency settings at a five day workshop ending today.

The Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) Minimum Standards provides tools to enhance the quality of educational preparedness, response and recovery, increase access to safe and relevant learning opportunities and ensure accountability in providing these services.

In contextualizing the INEE Minimum Standards and ensuring they are relevant to Iraqi realities, the stakeholders in the workshop renewed their commitment to ensuring all children are afforded the opportunity to access quality education regardless of past, current and future crises.

“At the onset of a crisis, children across Iraq can be denied access to learning and a prosperous future due to the conflict. They must not be made to wait any longer for an education,” said Tina Yu, Country Director for Save the Children Iraq. “This workshop will help to ensure that all stakeholders in the emergency education response are coordinated and working to the same standards,” she continued.

Mohamed Ali Bile, Head of Education in North Zone Office, UNICEF Iraq, in his opening remarks, mentioned that “The INEE workshop is timely - so much is happening in Iraq that impacts the education of young people, including the large number of IDPs and Syrian refugees whose education was interrupted. This is the time to strengthen collaboration among partners in order to effectively respond to the educational needs of these children”. In addition, he emphasized the importance of standardizing the emergency educational interventions so as to ensure adequate quality standards in educational response during emergencies.

In Iraq, the start of the new school year opened at the beginning of September 2014 with thousands of children unable to return to school because they have been displaced or because displaced families and armed groups are living in their classrooms. As of January this year 130 schools in Iraq were still occupied by armed groups while a further 500 were being used for shelter by those displaced due to violence. As a result, every day across Iraq, learners are being denied access to school facilities.

Today, over 500,000 school-age children in Iraq are displaced and not enrolled in formal education. A prolonged absence from school will likely have serious effects on these children’s future. It also means children are more vulnerable as they are not in the protective and regular environment of a school.

It is hoped that, by agreeing on contextualized INEE minimum standards, humanitarian agencies, the Iraq government and civil society will be able to enhance the effectiveness and quality of their educational assistance, and thus make a significant difference to the lives of thousands of people affected by crises.

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