

# Education Cannot Wait

## Education on the brink in Iraq

Iraq is facing an unprecedented humanitarian emergency. A surge of violence in recent months between government forces and armed groups has resulted in the displacement of 1.5 million people from central Iraq to other parts of the country, especially to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. 17 million people in Iraq have been affected.<sup>1</sup> Over 500,000 IDPs are estimated to be of school-going age (4-17 years). The new academic year starts in September and all children should be going back to school. A large number of schools are currently accommodating IDP families which poses a challenge for identifying adequate locations for temporary learning spaces. Iraq is also a refugee hosting country, with 218,040 Syrian refugees living in camps and urban areas across Northern Iraq, a quarter of who are children between 6-17 years of age.<sup>2</sup> As the crisis escalates these already alarming numbers continue to increase.

👤 👤 👤 14,000,000

School aged children in Iraq

👤 554,000

Number of displaced school age children since January 2014



**Iraq is a young country:** 50% of Iraq's population is under 20 years of age, and of this 14 million are school aged children<sup>3</sup>. An estimated 45% of those displaced by the current crisis are school aged children<sup>4</sup>.

**Schools may remain shut indefinitely:** Schools are due to reopen in September, but there is a huge concern that they will not. In Dohuk Governorate alone, over 1,300 schools are occupied by IDP families and these numbers continue to increase on a daily basis<sup>5</sup>. The current occupation of schools will have a direct **impact on Syrian refugees, Iraqi IDPs and host community children and families.**

**Schools are being used for Military purposes:** 68 schools are currently being used by armed groups, a direct violation of international law as underlined by the Draft Lucens Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict.<sup>6</sup>

Getting children back into safe, protective learning spaces is vital and will be key starting point for providing much needed psycho-social support, routine and a return to normalcy for conflict-affected children and their families. Children, families, teachers and other education personnel have experienced very difficult circumstances. Creating 'healing classrooms' or enabling learning environments will help school communities to move forward post conflict and avoid the creation of a lost generation.

### Why must education be prioritized now?

**Education is life-saving and life sustaining,** creating 'healing classrooms' will support learners experiencing psychosocial difficulties or facing child protection threats.

### In Iraq, the Humanitarian Education Response is being underfunded.

Despite the unprecedented number of displaced children in Iraq in 2014, Education has received just **9.5%** of funding needs, and received the

<sup>1</sup>OCHA situational report 02-09 2014 Accessible

<https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/OCHA%20Iraq%20Situation%20Report%20no%206.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> UNHCR Syrian Response Dashboard <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=103>

<sup>3</sup> UNESCO Institute of Statistics :[http://data.uis.unesco.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=EDULIT\\_DS&popupcustomise=true&lang=e](http://data.uis.unesco.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=EDULIT_DS&popupcustomise=true&lang=e)

<sup>4</sup> School aged children from 4 - 17 years of age.

<sup>5</sup> Minister of Education (KRG)

<sup>6</sup> Draft Lucens Guidelines: [http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/draft\\_lucens\\_guidelines.pdf](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/draft_lucens_guidelines.pdf)

<p><b>Why must education be prioritized now?</b></p> <p>Education is <b>crucial to the recovery of children</b>. It gives hope for the future and provides a sense of normalcy.</p> <p>Without Education, children face an increased risk of engaging in <b>negative coping strategies</b> and being recruited by military groups.</p>	<p><b>smallest proportion</b> of the amount requested by any sector<sup>1</sup>.</p> <p><b>In Iraq, the Humanitarian Education Response is being underfunded.</b></p> <p><b>Additional funds and resources are urgently needed</b> to respond to the educational needs that are critical to ensure that all children in Iraq have a future.</p>
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## A Call to Action

### **We call on donors to:**

1. **Support** education in emergency programming by investing at least 4% of all humanitarian funding in education in emergencies. The education sector in Iraq is critically underfunded to meet urgent needs.

### **We call on Humanitarian Decision Makers to:**

1. **Prioritize** education as part of the multi-sector humanitarian response, including education cluster representation in all rapid needs assessments.
2. **Advocate** for inter-agency collaboration to support children to regain access to education.

### **We call on the Government to:**

1. **Identify alternative learning spaces** if schools within the vicinity cannot be vacated or/and rehabilitated in time for the new school year.
2. **Use innovative approaches to education, with the support of partners**, such as radio, self-study packs, Mobile Temporary Learning Spaces (TLS), Child to Child approach, and other alternative learning methods.
3. **Identify existing teachers** within the affected populations and address teacher shortages through supporting the Education Cluster to identify volunteer teachers and linking with teacher training institutions.
4. **Ensure** the payment of teacher salaries and education personnel.

### **We call on the all parties to the conflict to:**

1. **Take** all possible measures to safeguard schools and other alternative learning spaces, so that the right to education for all children is protected and ensured.

## The looming education crisis in Iraq

- 📌 Finding alternative accommodation for displaced families, the rehabilitation of classrooms and repairs to WASH facilities may take months. Alternative learning opportunities need to be introduced to ensure children's fundamental right to education.
- 📌 The conflict in Iraq is fluid, with 200,000 people displaced in the first week of August alone.<sup>7</sup>
- 📌 Many areas remain inaccessible to humanitarian actors.
- 📌 Over half of the 95,666 registered teachers in Iraq have been directly affected by the displacement.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Iraq%20Displacement%20Humanitarian%20Snapshot.pdf>