



MAINSTREAMING REFUGEES IN NATIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEMS

WHY IS MAINSTREAMING OF REFUGEES IN NATIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEMS RECOMMENDED?

- ➔ Encourages governments to assume their responsibility for refugee protection and rights under the 1951 Refugee Convention, Convention on the Rights of the Child and Sustainable Development Goal 4 to “ensure inclusive, equitable quality education for all” as well as relevant national legal and policy frameworks and UNHCR’s Refugee Education Strategy 2012-2016;
- ➔ Certification of studies for refugee learners through accredited examinations;
- ➔ Quality assurance of teaching and learning through national system;
- ➔ Access to accountable education services and opportunities to promote social cohesion between refugee and national children;
- ➔ Sustainability: Investment in existing systems strengthens partnerships with all education actors for increased access and quality for all.

 This briefing note has been produced by the Education Unit, Division of International Protection, for field operations and partners as a quick reference note on key thematic education issues.



DOES THE NATIONAL LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK ALLOW REFUGEE CHILDREN ACCESS TO THE NATIONAL SCHOOL SYSTEM?

NO

- **Begin or continue advocacy with national Ministry of Education** and government refugee authorities on the importance of inclusion of children in national systems with emphasis on: international obligations (1951 Refugee Convention, CRC, SDGs) and potential benefits for national systems (enhancement of national capacity through construction of classrooms, etc.). Highlight the long term challenges of unregulated parallel services, including an analysis of the longer-term costs and protection implications;
- **Engage advocacy and other support from UNICEF, UNESCO and other education and development partners;**
- **Advocate for access to national examinations** to allow certification of refugee learners, at a minimum.
- **Align curriculum, examinations and school systems as closely as possible with the national education system** where NGO or community-based schools for refugees are necessary, either because refugees are excluded from national schools or because national schools are not available. This alignment paves the way for inclusion in the national system, and also opens the door for official registration and engagement with the Ministry of Education.

YES

- **Plan mainstreaming in close collaboration** with the Ministry of Education at national and local levels, the government department of refugee affairs, UNICEF, UNESCO and other relevant partners. Consider the following planning suggestions:
- **Assess national capacity:** Map national schools that are physically accessible to refugee community – is capacity adequate to absorb refugee children or are schools already full or overcrowded? If so, at what levels?
- **Enhance national system and school capacity to mainstream refugees:**
 - **Establish system to recognize certification and assess/place refugee students** by academic level (avoid placing students in lower levels due to language barrier);
 - **Establish double shift system or construct classrooms** to increase school capacity;
 - **Train national teachers** on refugee background and protection needs, including strategies to address academic, linguistic, psychosocial, and social cohesion issues;
 - **Place refugee teachers/teaching assistants in classrooms** to support with language/translation needs;
 - **Train school administrators** on refugee education policy, documentation waivers, certification, placement, systems to liaise with refugee parents and community;
 - **Orient school community (teachers, students, parents)** on refugee background and policies, potential benefits of refugee inclusion, and how they can help to support inclusion of refugee learners;
 - **Promote programmes** that support both national teachers and students, as well as refugee children and families – this could include ongoing training for teachers, academic/language support for refugees, parent meetings, youth and sports clubs;
 - **Establish mechanisms**, including SOPs, with communities and school administration to address school-related protection issues as they emerge, always safeguarding confidentiality.



→ **Prepare refugee children and adolescents for mainstreaming in national schools:**

- **Assess refugee concerns** associated with mainstreaming in national schools through a participatory assessment and other forms of engagement with communities. Findings should inform planning for inclusion. Analyse the “winners and losers” of mainstreaming – who will benefit and who will not? How can planning address the needs of both groups?
- **Assess language needs and begin or continue language classes** as soon as possible;
- **Orient students** on new curriculum, classroom culture, expectations and social cohesion;
- **Orient parents and community** on education system requirements, legal obligations, documentation policies for admissions, certification, academic concerns, school liaison systems, etc.
- **Ensure language, academic and protection support** is readily available to students and parents throughout transition;
- **Ensure that transport, fees and associated schooling costs** are not barriers to access.
- **Encourage cost-sharing and technical support to national partners:** Engage MoE, government refugee authorities, UNICEF, UNESCO and other development partners to provide technical and financial resources to support the mainstreaming of refugees; ensure that refugee education is accounted for in national education sector plans;
- **Planning and resource allocation:** Ensure that costs associated with mainstreaming are included in country-level refugee education strategies as well as operational planning; also work towards inclusion of refugee education in district and national education sector planning as well as other relevant planning frameworks such as UNDAF;
- **Monitor:** In collaboration with MoE, establish a system to track refugee student and teacher needs to ensure successful inclusion and transition, as well as general enrolment, attendance and completion data. Periodically assess barriers that out-of-school children face and try to address them through programming;
- **Anticipate repatriation:** Where feasible, promote cross-border recognition of certificates as well as refugee access to additional subjects (country of origin language, culture, history, etc) in preparation for repatriation.