

Transforming Education Access through Transportation

for Refugee and Earthquake-Impacted Children in Türkiye


Introduction

In Türkiye, the education sector faces multifaceted challenges exacerbated by the presence of refugees and communities affected by earthquakes. Among these challenges, the lack of adequate transportation infrastructure stands as a significant barrier to accessing education for vulnerable children. Turkish public schools have enrolled over a million foreign children under temporary and international protection, but around 300,000 refugee children still lack access to education. Although the current enrolment rate is 76%, which is an improvement from 68% in 2023, challenges persist.

the education sector response and support to earthquake-affected host communities aims to increase access to safe, protective, and inclusive learning opportunities, while improving education quality.

 **300,000**

Refugee Children Still Lack Access to Education

68% →  → **76%**
2023 **Enrolment Rate** Current

In February 2023, earthquakes hit 11 provinces, impacting nearly 4 million school-age children, including 390,000 refugee and migrant children. In five severely affected provinces, 2,100 school buildings were damaged to varying degrees. Under the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan

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from
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 **2,100**
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The Education sector leads the back-to-school campaign to enrol out-of-school children and address their challenges through sustained coordination and comprehensive approaches, including in higher education. Providing learning materials, supporting transportation to schools, and compensating for learning losses are pressing needs.

This advocacy note emphasizes the critical importance of addressing transportation needs for refugee and earthquake-affected children in Türkiye's education sector, within the framework of the 3RP response. By mobilizing resources and collaborating with donors and sector partners, the sector facilitates and improves education access,



IOM's assistance with school transportation in the southeast region

quality, and define a sustainable exit strategy, ensuring every child can realize their potential through education.

IOM's support to Children Transportation to School in Six Provinces of Southeast initiated in collaboration with the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) since 2014 aims to provide transportation services to vulnerable students from refugee and local communities, addressing a critical need for access to education. Initially focusing on Syrian children attending temporary education centres, the project expanded to include Turkish children as integration efforts intensified in 2017. The collaboration involves yearly protocols outlining transportation terms, with provincial coverage currently including Adana, Mersin, Yalova, and Siirt. However, recent policy changes or budget constraints may result

in downsizing transportation support for Syrian refugee students in the upcoming academic year, potentially impacting access to education, increasing barriers, and affecting enrolment rates, leading to social and psychological impacts. Regular reporting, monitoring, and stakeholder engagement ensure transparency and accountability in transportation operations.

Action Point



ESWG members are urged to tackle the forthcoming deficiencies, particularly in the realm of transportation, which is a crucial area requiring attention on the field.

Children Transportation to Schools: A Vital Link to Education

Transportation plays a pivotal role in determining the educational outcomes of children, particularly those living in remote areas or displaced communities. For refugee and earthquake-impacted children in Türkiye, accessing schools often entails traversing long distances on hazardous roads, facing risks to personal safety, and enduring significant financial burdens. As a result, many children are unable to

attend school regularly, leading to high dropout rates and limited educational opportunities. Addressing the transportation gap is not only a matter of logistical convenience but a fundamental step towards upholding the right to education and ensuring inclusivity for all children, regardless of their background or circumstances.

Strategic Imperatives: Enhancing Education Quality and Access

Establishing Easy Access



Reliable transportation services are essential to overcoming geographical barriers that hinder education access for refugee and earthquake-impacted children. By providing safe and efficient transportation options, we can ensure that children have the means to reach schools without facing undue hardships or risks. This will result in increased school attendance rates, reduced dropout rates, and improved academic performance.

Enhancing Quality of

Education



Transportation interventions contribute to creating a conducive learning environment by fostering regular attendance and punctuality among students. When children can attend school consistently, they benefit from continuous learning experiences, social interactions, and support from teachers and peers. Moreover, transportation initiatives enable schools to offer extracurricular activities, enrichment programmes, and educational resources that enhance the overall quality of education.

Defining an Exit Strategy



While immediate interventions are crucial, sustainable solutions require long-term planning and collaboration with government entities, particularly the Ministry of National Education. By working closely with the government bodies, we can ensure that transportation initiatives are integrated into national education policies, budget allocations, and service delivery frameworks. This will facilitate the institutionalization of transportation services within the education system, ensuring their continuity and effectiveness beyond the scope of emergency response efforts.

Call to Action: Mobilizing Resources for School Transportation

To realize our vision of ensuring education access to all refugee and earthquake-impacted children in Türkiye, we must mobilize resources and forge partnerships with donors and sector partners.

Key actions include:

- ▶ Allocating funding for transportation infrastructure, including the provision of school buses, and related services.
- ▶ Leveraging partnerships with local authorities, civil society organizations, and private sector stakeholders to maximize the impact and reach of transportation interventions.
- ▶ Advocating for policy reforms and funding mechanisms to institutionalize transportation services within the national education system, thereby ensuring their sustainability and scalability.

Investing in school transportation is not only a humanitarian imperative, but also a strategic investment in the future of refugees hosted by Türkiye. By addressing the transportation needs of refugee and earthquake-impacted children, we can break down barriers to education access, empower marginalized communities, and build a more inclusive and resilient society. Let us unite in our commitment to ensuring that every child has the opportunity to fulfil their potential through education, thereby shaping a brighter future for generations to come.

**For further
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