

PROSPECTS Partnership

Iraq: Building Pathways to Inclusion and Opportunity for Forcibly Displaced People

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Country Context

Iraq continues to navigate complex displacement challenges. At the end of 2025, the country hosted more than 340,000 refugees and asylum-seekers – 88% from Syria – with 80% of this population in the Kurdistan Region. Over 70% of refugees live in urban areas, while the remaining displaced population lives in nine refugee camps. Iraq continues to have a significant internal displacement, with 101,850 people living in 20 IDP camps.

While Iraq continues to engage on advancing a comprehensive refugee law, refugees with government-issued documentation can access key public services including health, education, protection and employment opportunities. Challenges remain for IDPs to attain durable solutions, with many remaining in displacement because of concerns related to security, access to housing, critical services, and employment in areas of origin.

This is where the PROSPECTS Partnership plays a vital role – not only by addressing immediate needs, but by strengthening Iraq's legal and regulatory environment by investing in education, economic inclusion and protection systems, while linking short-term assistance to long-term development.



Tojan and Jana, two Syrian refugee students in Erbil, attend catch-up classes alongside other refugee and local children.
© UNHCR/Rasheed Rasheed

PROSPECTS in Iraq

Since 2019, the PROSPECTS Partnership has united the expertise of IFC, ILO, UNHCR, UNICEF, and the World Bank under the leadership of the Netherlands. PROSPECTS focuses on expanding access to national systems for refugees, IDPs and host communities alike.

Guided by joint analysis of Iraq's legal, policy and institutional frameworks, PROSPECTS is supporting national partners in Iraq in promoting inclusive education and learning, access to decent jobs, documentation, and inclusive financial and social protection systems, while simultaneously providing technical assistance so that national actors, as well as the private sector, can deliver jobs and services on the ground. This dual approach ensures that both policy change and service delivery reinforce one another, maximizing long-term impact for displaced and host populations.



Strengthening Protection and Social Protection to enhance child protection, improve access to psychosocial support, and ensure services for survivors of gender-based violence. PROSPECTS also works to extend Iraq's national social protection schemes to support forcibly displaced persons, as well as supporting the government to issue civil documentation to IDPs and returnees so they can access services.



Promoting Employment and Livelihoods to help create sustainable economic opportunities through institutional capacity building for national partners in developing inclusive employment policies, employment services, entrepreneurship support, financial inclusion and job placement programmes. The Partnership works with the private sector to stimulate investment and expand access to decent work opportunities. PROSPECTS also supports social dialogue among government, employers' and workers' organizations to promote inclusive labour market governance.



Expanding inclusive Education and Training. PROSPECTS supports the Refugee Education Integration Policy (REIP) launched by the Kurdistan Regional Government in 2022. This aims to gradually integrate Syrian refugee children into public schools. In support of this policy, PROSPECTS has facilitated the construction of new classrooms, school maintenance, teachers training and support to non-formal education programmes. Vocational training is also linked to labor market demand, providing young people with practical skills for employment through supporting both public and private training providers.



Investing in Critical Infrastructure to rehabilitate and upgrade essential services in displacement-affected areas, including water, sanitation, schools, and health facilities. It also supports the management of IDP and refugee camps, continuing advocacy with authorities to find dignified and lasting solutions for those still living in camps. Outside camps, PROSPECTS is introducing the Public Works Programme (PWP), both at the federal and regional level, based on successful piloting in phase one.

Outcomes and Impact

In a country still navigating the legacies of conflict and economic fragility, PROSPECTS has shown what is possible when humanitarian and development actors work with the government. By linking protection, education, employment and infrastructure, the Partnership has helped strengthen inclusive government services in displacement-affected areas, meaning that both refugees and vulnerable Iraqis can access services, build skills and find pathways to decent jobs.

Protection and Social Protection

- **260,557 individuals** benefiting from legal assistance to obtain access to civil documentation and case management services
- **20,337 young people** voiced their recommendations

Education and Training

- **366,781 children** completed a formal or non-formal education program
- **7,063 youth** completed professional or skills training programs
- **4,396 teachers** completed professional development trainings
- **39,863 children** newly enrolled in formal or non-formal education programmes

Economic Inclusion

- **6,283 new job opportunities** have been supported through wage-employment and self-employment initiatives
- **15,268 individuals** have received career counselling, life skills and employability training

Critical Infrastructure

- **14,034 displaced people and host community members** in targeted PROSPECTS communities will be reached with basic sanitation services

Note: Some activities have relied on multi-donor contributions.

Shekha Akram Salman's Story



Photo: ILO/Elisa Oddone

"Women are not usually offered construction work in our region. Through the Employment-Intensive Investment Programme, I felt safe, respected, and earned an income to support my family."

Shekha took part in the ILO's Employment-Intensive Investment Programme (EIIP), implemented with UNHCR, bringing refugees and host community members together to rehabilitate irrigation systems across more than 50 villages. The program improved water access for 5,000 farmers and 1,000 hectares of farmland through canal cleaning, pipe installation and construction work.

EIIP generated over 19,000 worker-days, with more than half filled by Syrian refugees and over a third by women, supporting income generation, skills development and inclusive participation.