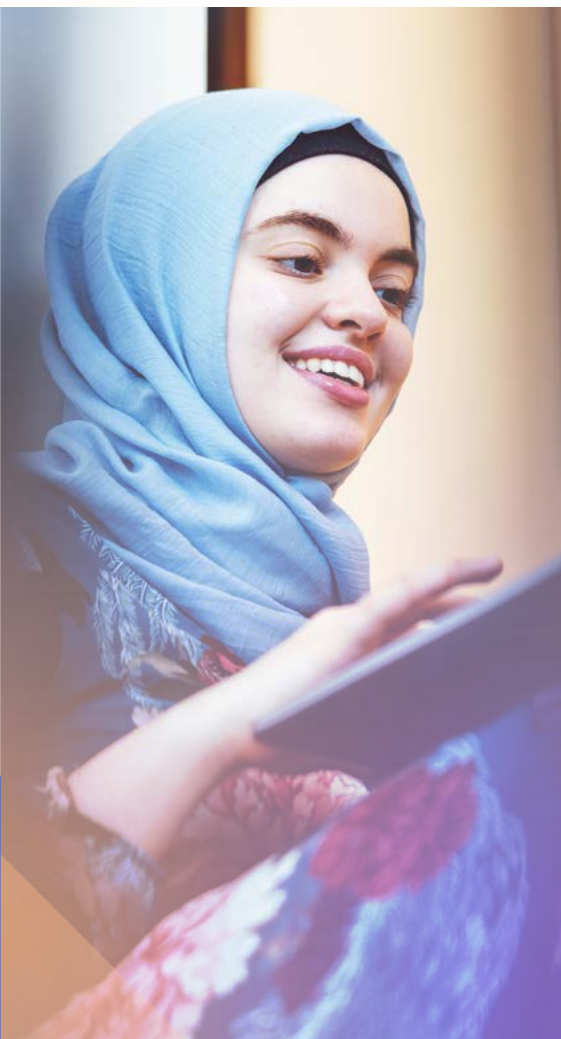




Refugee Education UK

# Inclusive and Sustainable Promising Practices in Refugee Education: learnings from case studies in high-income settings

## Executive Summary



### About the project

Each year, millions of refugees are forced to leave their countries and seek safety and protection across borders. Approximately 40% of the refugee population are children, for whom education is vital.<sup>1</sup> Education is central to refugee children's experiences of resettlement and adjustment; it can provide a stabilising routine that helps them process their experiences, and can rekindle a sense of purpose and hope for the future in a new country.<sup>2</sup>

While the majority of refugees are hosted in low- and middle-income countries, approximately 22% of refugees are hosted in high-income countries.<sup>3</sup> High-income countries have the potential to offer safe, long-term, inclusive models of education that provide access to high-quality education experiences in national education systems.<sup>4</sup> However, the educational experiences of refugee children in high-income countries are frequently overlooked and there is limited learning facilitated across contexts.

In response to this, Refugee Education UK (REUK) established a learning project called Inclusive and Sustainable Promising Practices in Refugee Education (InSPPiRE) to identify and amplify promising practices from case studies of refugee education initiatives in high-income countries. The project incorporates learnings from 29 case studies of initiatives supporting refugee education across 12 high-income settings: Australia, England, Greece, Hong Kong, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Sweden, the United States of America and Wales. This document provides a summary of the promising practices and key learning points that emerged following analysis of case studies.

# Summary of promising practices and learning points



## Theme 1 Access to quality education in the national education system

It is well-recognised that supporting refugee children to access education in the national education system is good practice. Case studies highlighted a number of promising practices in enabling refugee children to access such education in a meaningful way.

### Promising Practice 1

#### Enhancing language learning opportunities for new arrivals

- Intensive host country language learning can enable education integration and progression
- Investment in mother tongue language can enhance learning and smooth transitions into education systems
- Providing accessible opportunities for parent language acquisition supports refugee children's education

### Promising Practice 2

#### Adapting assessment and enrolment to accelerate access to appropriate mainstream learning

- Assessing ability can lead to more appropriate education placements
- Continuous enrolment reduces lost learning

### Promising Practice 3

#### Providing specialist interim provision to bridge delays

- A nurturing education environment builds a sense of safety
- Cultural orientation and welcome can grow belonging
- Links to schools and colleges can facilitate onward access to mainstream provision



## Theme 2 Psychosocial wellbeing and inclusive practices

The approaches and practices put in place by education settings are crucial to the educational experiences of refugee children, who are likely to have experienced trauma and hardship. This includes the way in which psychosocial wellbeing considerations are addressed and inclusion and welcome are promoted. Case studies highlighted a range of promising practices in this area.

### Promising Practice 4

#### Prioritising the provision of psychosocial support for new arrivals within and around education settings

- School-based wellbeing provision supports refugee children within and beyond the classroom
- Specialist partnerships can support refugee children's acute wellbeing needs

### Promising Practice 5

#### Investing in a trauma-informed education workforce

- Trauma-informed training for staff can benefit refugee children and have a ripple effect

### Promising Practice 6

#### Ensuring welcome and representation

- Establishing a clear culture of welcome fosters feelings of inclusion and belonging
- Cultural representation in curriculum and among staff can have a positive impact



### Theme 3

#### Educator training and support

Teachers and educators play a vital role in refugee children's education. The training and support they receive is key, and case studies demonstrated a range of promising practices in this.

##### Promising Practice 7

#### Providing mainstream teachers and schools with targeted training and support

- Teachers need both support to teach about forced migration and to improve outcomes for the new arrivals in their classrooms
- Partnerships and blended learning may improve accessibility and reach of training
- Peer support and learning circles can offer sustainable ongoing opportunities to improve practice

##### Promising Practice 8

#### Recognising hubs of excellence and good practice

- Much existing good practice is not made visible – amplifying excellence encourages staff and enables others to learn



### Theme 4

#### Partnerships for sustainable outcomes

There is a widespread recognition that partnerships lead to stronger and more sustainable outcomes in refugee education initiatives. Case studies provided insights into partnerships with other organisations and institutions and, importantly, young people with lived experience.

##### Promising Practice 9

#### Collaborating with partners to increase scale and improve sustainability

- Multi-stakeholder initiatives can ease budget and capacity constraints
- Collaboration takes time and needs dedicated capacity
- Local authority and government stakeholders play a key role in helping partnerships thrive
- Partnerships between practitioners and academics can build evidence for scaling and impact

##### Promising Practice 10

#### Incorporating lived experience expertise and leadership

- Service design and delivery partnerships with young 'experts by experience' can both strengthen programmes and build skills
- Refugee educators are an under-utilised resource
- Refugee youth have a key role as strategic advisors and leaders

##### Promising Practice 11

#### Education settings as hubs of community support

- Friendship and belonging for entire newly arrived families can be found within school communities







## How we conducted this learning project

InSPPIRE was advised by an expert steering group of refugee education practitioners and academics from Refugee REACH at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, Qatar Foundation International (QFI), Save the Children, Sirius, UNHCR and the University of Nottingham.

A case study approach was adopted to enable a rich understanding of initiatives that support refugee education and respond to the distinct challenges encountered by refugee children on their education journeys in high-income countries. Case studies were either identified through an open call for case study submissions shared widely by REUK and the steering group, or through a combination of purposive and convenience sampling. Information on these case studies was obtained through written submissions and semi-structured interviews. Following the identification of case studies, analysis was undertaken to identify thematic areas and promising practices implemented in response to the challenges encountered by refugee children on their education journeys.

To read more detail about the project's findings and the case studies, please follow the QR code or visit [reuk.org/inspire](https://reuk.org/inspire)



With thanks to QFI for supporting this project.



### Endnotes

1. Figures at a glance, UNHCR (2023), <https://www.unhcr.org/uk/about-unhcr/who-we-are/figures-glance>, accessed 19 September, 2023
2. Bennouna, C., Khauli, N., Basir, M., Allaf, C., Wessells, M. and Starke, L., School-based programs for Supporting the mental health and psychosocial wellbeing of adolescent forced migrants in high-income countries: A scoping review. *Social Science & Medicine*, 239: 112558 (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2019.112558>; Dryden-Peterson, S., Refugee education: Education for an unknowable future. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 47,1 (2017). <https://doi.org/10.1080/03626784.2016.1255935>
3. Classifying refugee host countries by income levels, World Bank (2022), <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/insights/explainers/refugee-host-countries-income-level.html#:~:text=High%2Dincome%20countries%20have%20hosted,%2Dincome%2C%20mainly%20European%20countries>, accessed 19 September, 2023
4. Dryden-Peterson, S., Adelman, E., Bellino, M. J., & Chopra, V. The Purposes of Refugee Education: Policy and Practice of Including Refugees in National Education Systems. *Sociology of Education*, 92(4), (2019), 346-366. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038040719863054> cited in McIntyre, J. and Abrams, F., *Refugee education: theorising practice in schools*. (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2021)

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