



Education System Responses to Displaced and Refugee Students – Examination of Activity Worldwide and Case Study Analyses

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Following the events of October 7th, large populations from the South and North of Israel experienced displacement, with many of the evacuees, including children and teenagers, who have endured significant trauma. According to data from the Ministry of Education, about 48,000 students were displaced from their homes in the initial months of the war. Over the course of the year, the number of displaced students decreased, and by the beginning of the 5785 school year (2024/25), approximately 16,000 displaced students remained, ranging from kindergarten through 12th grade. School attendance officers are warning of both an observable and hidden dropout phenomenon among 20-30% of the displaced students.

Ofir Marer conducted a literature review of case studies and international research to learn how organizations and countries that have experienced internal displacement (refugees within their own country) have addressed educational challenges. The study aims to provide professionals with tools based on the accumulated experience of other nations and offer recommendations that can be applied in Israel.

Main findings:

- Education serves as a significant anchor and an essential complementary framework for children who have experienced displacement. On the other hand, a disrupted educational routine can harm students' academic, social, and economic development. Nevertheless, in many cases, education is given secondary priority compared to other needs and is seen at most as a supplementary response.
- The risk of harm to the development of girls is five times higher than to boys, as is the likelihood of their dropping out.
- Central challenges faced by displaced populations in the field of education include a lack of available infrastructure (both physical and virtual), safety in the learning environment (both physical and mental), a shortage of teacher training and employment difficulties in the education system, language barriers, and financial costs.
- For displaced students to be present and succeed in their studies, they must receive tools to personally cope with trauma. This includes psychological support through tools to identify the trauma and treat it, fostering a sense of belonging, and enhancing the ability to cope with emotional difficulties and pressures, and to become resilient.
- Building meaningful social connections, family support, and strengthening friendships between students will help them face the challenges confronting them.
- Schools should provide a safe and clear physical and mental environment for students during the crisis, free of pressure, with complete and continuous involvement of teachers and ongoing communication with parents.
- Signs of trauma, such as depression, anxiety, and PTSD, appear in 40-50% of displaced persons and refugees following crises.

Recommendations for Coping with the Trauma of Displaced Students:

- Collecting, tracking, and analyzing student data - personal, familial, and academic - prior to and during displacement, focusing on factors influencing students' ability to cope with the situation.
- Creating a broad community support system within the school space that includes parents, students, community members, educators, and decision-makers, to promote a sense of security. This should include access to mental and social support systems, and healthcare services.
- Developing specialized training for teachers that includes awareness of signs of trauma and ways to address it, developing appropriate emotional abilities, and use of techniques to prevent ongoing secondary trauma, among others.
- Additional actions: prioritizing specific populations, employing displaced educational staff, providing tailored responses for different groups, and offering financial and legal assistance to exercise rights.

