



Philip Laubner/CRS

As missionary disciples, we are called to urgently respond to the needs of migrants and refugees. Today, a staggering seventy million people are currently displaced, many as a result of conflict and violence. We can lead the way to help those who have been forced to flee their homes, including establishing educational opportunities for children during displacement that help them heal and lead healthier, more productive lives.

School offers stability in displacement

**Ten-year-old Majd (*Mah-jeed*)
Nasser Hassan lives with his family in
Bashiqa, a town east of Mosul in Iraq.**

Like many fifth-grade boys, Majd loves soccer and Mickey Mouse. He also excels in math and wants to become a surgeon so that he can help people.

Five years ago, Majd's life was upended when his family was forced by ISIS to leave their home. Fearing encroaching conflict, the family fled, leaving everything behind. A week's visit with extended family became a 40-day stay in an overcrowded house. Several years in a camp for internally displaced people in Dohuk in northern Iraq followed.

The upheaval affected everyone, especially Majd and his brother, Sam, who were anxious and scared. But along with his close-knit family, the stabilizing force in Majd's young life became a Catholic Relief Services-sponsored school.

More than 3 million Iraqis were displaced due to violence in Northern and Central Iraq in 2014. Recognizing that conflict and displacement disrupt a child's development, CRS originally established seven child-friendly spaces where children could receive psychosocial support and re-establish a sense of normalcy. The child-friendly spaces eventually evolved into schools recognized by the Iraqi Department of Education. As of September 2019, CRS formally serves 37 active schools in Iraq and has touched the lives of more than 25,000 students in grades one through six.

When Majd began to attend a CRS school, he was able to return to a familiar schedule, forge new friendships, and, most importantly, continue his education during the displacement.

The school also benefited Majd's mother, Lamyia, who had studied education. With additional training in child-centered teaching and learning practices provided by CRS, she began teaching at Majd's

school, contributing additional income to the family.

In 2019, an estimated 2.5 million conflict-affected Iraqi children were still in need of assistance to access quality education. Of these, about 800,000 are living in displacement, and over 1.5 million have returned to their areas of origin. Barriers to education across the country include inadequate or war-damaged infrastructures; overcrowding; missed years of schooling; and personnel with limited training on psychosocial support.

Majd's family has recently returned to their hometown, where he thrives at school, and Lamyia continues her career as a teacher.

Supporting immigrants and migrants often means finding ways for people to maintain a semblance of normal life until they can return to their homes. CRS leads the way in offering educational opportunities to displaced children, like Majd, so that their learning will not be interrupted, even when their lives are.

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