

Background



The protracted nature of the Syria crisis that began in 2011 has forced over 250,000 Syrian refugees to remain in Iraq, with 99% living in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). As refugees have been living in camps for more than six years and return is unforeseen in the near future, in 2015, UNHCR launched a “tent-free camp” initiative to ensure that refugees live in more durable, semi-permanent shelters. Living in tents for extended periods undermines the safety, health, and dignity of refugee families. Moreover, the environmental conditions of the KRI are harsh including high winds, rain, snow, and temperatures ranging from below freezing to over 100 degrees Fahrenheit. Thus, the shift to more durable shelter is a priority.

Syrian refugee unemployment in the three urban areas of Duhok, Erbil, and Sulaymaniyah is estimated to be 47%. Not surprisingly, 37% of the Syrian refugee population in the KRI lives below the poverty level. Refugees face disproportionate challenges finding work opportunities outside of the camps. Despite efforts to facilitate refugee employment-seekers, refugees must continuously seek income-generating opportunities to sustain themselves and their families.



Our Approach

In response to the needs, Peace Winds set out to enhance the living conditions of Syrian refugees in four camps around Erbil by providing more durable shelter. Implementation was conducted in four phases:

1 Needs Assessment



Peace Winds began by identifying the most vulnerable households living in the target camps. Households were scored using a Shelter & Vulnerability Assessment tool, and the results were later confirmed in stakeholder meetings.

2 Beneficiary Agreement



Two rounds of orientations were conducted at each camp: one to introduce the project and clarify each party's responsibilities, and the second to explain the technical design of the self-building process. Beneficiary feedback collected during orientations and in focus group discussions informed project adjustments.

3 Distribution • Construction



Construction material and cash distributions were made at each construction stage. Shelter owners were responsible for hiring refugee labor and upgrading their own homes. Peace Winds staff closely supervised the refugees through each stage. Peace Winds also supported tool centers in each camp where refugees could rent tools and equipment and receive training on their use.

4 Handover



The completion of a shelter upgrade was confirmed by the issuance of a handover certificate signed by beneficiary, Peace Winds, camp management (BCF), and UNHCR. Surveys were given to shelter owners and cash-for-work (CfW) laborers to measure their satisfaction with their shelters and work opportunity, respectively.