

## Supporting learning and transition to school for Ezidi refugee children in a rural Australian city

**Somayeh Ba Akhlagh**, University of New England, Australia ([sbaakhla@une.edu.au](mailto:sbaakhla@une.edu.au))

**Margaret Rogers**, University of New England, Australia ([marg.rogers@une.edu.au](mailto:marg.rogers@une.edu.au))

**Background:** A recent study conducted in Australia has identified challenges to the rural resettlement of refugee families. These include securing employment, discrimination, and social isolation. These challenges can affect resettlement outcomes including health and wellbeing, though relatively little research has examined these links. Armidale, a small rural inland city in NSW, is home to a large Ezidi population. Before pre-settlement the children lacked appropriate play environments as they had to play underground quietly to survive ISIS persecution. Therefore, support and investment in early intervention strategies for Ezidi children to improve their wellbeing is necessary.

**Aim:** This planned study addresses the urgent need to support Ezidi children's learning, transition to school, and social engagement with the wider Armidale community. It focuses on building Ezidi parents' capacity to prepare their children for school and build a sense of belonging among Ezidi children in their new community. The effectiveness of the Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY Australia, 2022) that is being implemented by the New England Family Support Service (NEFSS) will be evaluated for its effectiveness with Ezidi families in Armidale. In addition, special culturally and community appropriate resources will be created and piloted to increase the program's effectiveness. The project uses a participatory action research (PAR) approach. This is an approach commonly used for improving conditions and practices in various environments, such as health and education.

This presentation will explore the literature review, the partnership with the New England Family Support Service and the Ezidi community, and some reflections about applying for ethics approval when working with a vulnerable community.

**Implications for children and families:** This project explores the challenges of researching with vulnerable families and the reason this type of research is needed.

**Implications for practitioners:** This project will support practitioners' understanding of the benefits of early intervention projects with vulnerable families.

**Funding:** University of New England internal grant.

**Key words:** refugee families, wellbeing, school transition, parent partnerships, literacy, vulnerable children

**This presentation relates to the following United Nations Sustainable Development Goals:**

- [SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being](#)
- [SDG 10: Reduced Inequality](#)