

PRESS RELEASE

As refugee crisis escalates, Syrian children in Jordan need urgent support

AMMAN, August 27, 2012 – UNICEF is urgently appealing for additional funds to meet the emergency health, protection, and water and sanitation needs of the growing numbers of Syrian refugee children and their families arriving in Jordan.

Some 17,000 people – half of them children – are sheltered at Za’atari refugee camp in the north of Jordan, but numbers are increasing daily with hundreds of new arrivals from Syria.

There was a significant increase in the number of arrivals at the camp this last weekend with more than 2,000 people crossing the border in a single night. This number is nearly 80 per cent higher than the previous largest number of Syrians crossing into Jordan within a 24-hour period.

“We expect to have 70,000 people at Za’atari camp by the end of this year,” said UNICEF Jordan Representative Dominique Hyde. “We must act now because it is children who continue to suffer most. So more funding is urgently required to scale-up our emergency response activities.”

Conditions at Za’atari camp are harsh, with scorching temperatures, no natural shade, and frequent sandstorms that rip through the camp.

UNICEF is leading the emergency water and sanitation response, trucking in enough water to provide 50 litres per person a day. With new families continuing to swell the camp population, UNICEF is constructing a well as a more sustainable water source. The installation of new toilets, showers and taps in the camp is also underway.

As the number of children increases, so does the risk of disease outbreaks. This week, UNICEF is partnering with the Ministry of Health and the World Health Organization to immunize children under five, many of whom will have missed routine vaccinations due to the violence in Syria. UNICEF is working with partners to establish a regular vaccination programme at the camp.

UNICEF is also supporting distressed children who need special care after experiencing extreme levels of violence in Syria. UNICEF supports 10 Child Friendly Spaces where children can play, learn, restore their routines and receive psychosocial support. UNICEF is also identifying and caring for children who fled Syria without their parents or family.

“Children fleeing violence in Syria are at risk of suffering long-term distress without appropriate care,” said Hyde. “Right now, the Child Friendly Spaces are sufficient for 2,500 children in Za’atari. In just a few months, we expect as many as 35,000 children will be at the camp, so we urgently need to provide additional safe places and other support to protect these children who have already suffered so much.”

UNICEF is appealing for \$54 million USD to cover the emergency needs of Syrian refugees sheltering in Za’atari camp and surrounding communities in Jordan.

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About UNICEF

UNICEF works in 190 countries and territories to help children survive and thrive, from early childhood through adolescence. The world's largest provider of vaccines for developing countries, UNICEF supports child health and nutrition, good water and sanitation, quality basic education for all boys and girls, and the protection of children from violence, exploitation, and AIDS. UNICEF is funded entirely by the voluntary contributions of individuals, businesses, foundations and governments. For more information about UNICEF and its work visit: www.unicef.org

For more information, please contact:

Simon Ingram
UNICEF Chief of Communications, Middle East and North Africa
singram@unicef.org
+962 79 590 4740