UNHCR Monthly Update

Protection - Child Protection

December 2013

UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

Key figures

429,742	registered refugee children
78%	registered children are under 11
24%	children at risk

Syrian refugee child forced to work in an automotive repair shop to help support his family @ UNHCR / S.Baldwin

December developments

Identification of children at risk and referral of children at risk:

- 34 children and 3 families were interviewed as part of a scoping exercise on street children launched in December through IRC. Only 5.5% of those interviewed attend school. The majority of the children live with their immediate families; a few are from children-headed household or live with their extended family.

- 76 UNHCR registration staff was trained on child protection principles to enhance identification and referral of high risk children.

Training:

- 30 case management actors from South, Mount Lebanon and in the Bekka were trained this month as part of the IRC/UNHCR initiative to coach social workers and case management actors working with refugee children at risk of violence and abuse.

- Follow up peer-to-peer sessions have been conducted in Tripoli and Akkar for 19 participants on complex child protection cases.

- Birth registration material and information on the process has been disseminated in child protection in emergency working groups at field level to enhance birth registration.

Achievements: January – December

Activity	👤 reached January - December	2013 Target
Identified children at risk referred and assisted	2,050	1,164
Child protection training for persons working with refugee children	55	55

Needs

Many refugee children need psycho-social support due to the traumatic events they have witnessed in Syria, and to help them adjust to their new environment. This is particularly true for refugee children who have been separated from their families, or who are subject to physical or sexual violence and verbal harassment. Some children have been forced into early marriages, or to work to help provide for their families. This pulls them away from school and education, and often puts them at heightened risk for mistreatment or abuse. Some boys, particularly adolescents, face pressure to return to Syria to fight. The best way to protect children from these risks is to provide increased educational opportunities, give support to parents, and engage youth in activities. First however, these children need to be identified and referred for appropriate follow up and immediate assistance.

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Challenges

Dispersed refugee population:
Since refugees live in close to 1,600 different locations in Lebanon, outreach to refugee children to identify and respond to their needs is both a challenge and priority. Outreach is crucial to ensuring that refugee children are registered with UNHCR and have access to basic services. It is also important in ensuring that parents register the birth of newborns, and that school-aged children living in remote areas and those with specific protection risks have access to education, health care and other services.

Protracted displacement:
With limited access to livelihood opportunities, and dwindling resources, some families resort to child labour and other negative coping mechanisms such as child marriage. As their time in displacement prolongs, the lack of educational opportunities for the majority of school-aged Syrian children presents a significant challenge. Currently, there are over 200,000 school-aged refugee children who lack access to age-appropriate education due in part to the fact that the capacity of the public education system is overstretched.

Fragile national child protection system:
National child protection system is struggling to provide appropriate care and services to refugee children at risks of abuse and exploitation and children survivors of violence. The Union for the Protection of Children is the only organization mandated by the Ministry of Justice to investigate cases involving child abuse and violence. UNHCR works together with implementing partners to provide support to both refugee children and national institutions providing services to refugees.

Syrian refugee children play inside an unfinished school which is now a collective settlement for refugees @ UNHCR/S.Baldwin

Strategy

UNHCR works to ensure that refugee children at risk and/or victims of violence have timely access to appropriate services by:

- Improving outreach to ensure identification and safe referral of children at risks and victims of violence through training of partners and others providing services to refugee children;
- Building capacity of child protection actors to better prevent and respond to child protection needs particularly through the establishment of a coaching mechanism for social workers;
- Strengthening child protection response mechanisms for provision of emergency care for children at high risks, referral to existing services such as psychosocial support and legal counselling;
- Mainstreaming child protection into all activities carried out within refugee and host communities especially within the health, education and shelter sectors;
- Advocating for expanding access to services for both refugee and Lebanese children;
- Contributing to the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism on grave child rights violations committed in Syria;

UNHCR co-leads the inter-agency working group on child protection together with the Ministry of Social Affairs and UNICEF, and works to ensure the complementarity of interventions benefiting refugee children.

UNHCR implementing partners

Caritas Lebanon Migrants Center (CMLC), Danish Refugee Council (DRC), International Medical Corps (IMC), International Relief and Development (IRD), International Rescue Committee (IRC), INTERSOS, Amel Association-Lebanese Popular Association for Popular Action (AMEL), Makhzoumi Foundation, Restart Centre for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence and Torture, Social, Humanitarian, Economical Intervention For Local Development (SHEILD), Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA), Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE).