

UNHCR Lebanon

Child Protection Update

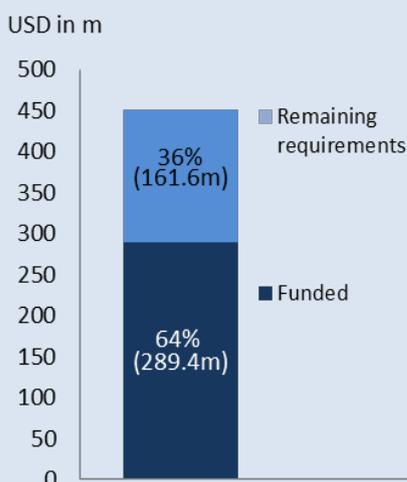
December 2014

Key Figures

619,172	registered refugee children
77%	of registered children are under 11
25%	of registered refugees are children at risk

Funding

UNHCR total requirements:
USD 451 m



December developments

Outreach

- A five month youth outreach initiative was successfully completed through the establishment of a youth club where refugees and locals organize and participate in activities including sport and photography classes as well as information sessions on topics such as conflict resolution, leadership and communication skills. Beneficiaries reported that the project had a positive impact on their self-confidence and increased their awareness of the importance of connecting with the host community. Many expressed the wish to share what they learned with others and UNHCR is planning to scale up this the youth initiative in three other locations, Mount Lebanon, Qobayat and Tyre in 2015.

Training/coaching

- 20 staff from NGOs, the Ministry of Social Affairs and UPEL (Ministry of Justice) participated in a two-day training, where they learned about UNHCR's Best Interest Determination process and its linkages with the national child protection system. In order to reinforce participants' ability to assess and analyze complex cases, practical training sessions were integrated in the two-day programme. The training was part of the national child protection coaching programme to enhance the capacity of local actors.

Identification and referral of children-at-risk

- Throughout the year, UNHCR has increased its efforts to identify and assist children at risk. During the month of December, 323 children at high risk, including unaccompanied minors and separated children, were identified and provided with support, including psychosocial counseling by specialized case workers of UNHCR's implementing partners. Child labour remains a major challenge which UNHCR will continue to address through both advocacy and direct interventions whenever possible. Feedback received from caregivers revealed that children who benefited from case management services have gained self-confidence and self-esteem and became more interested in participating in recreational activities offered by NGOs. In addition to providing direct assistance to children at risk, throughout 2014, UNHCR and partners sought to increase the capacity of local actors and to harmonize the response activities.

Achievements: January - December

Activity	reached Jan-Dec	2014 Target
Identified children at risk referred and assisted	3,212	1,515
Training for persons working with refugee children (# individuals trained)	739	600

Needs

Many refugee children are in need of psychosocial support due to their exposure to violence and other forms of traumatic events. Refugee children who need assistance require proper identification and safe referral. Their needs include prevention and response to physical violence, verbal harassment, exploitation or pressure, particularly among adolescent boys to return to Syria to fight. Refugee children subject to sexual violence, child labour and early marriage also require proper identification and referral for appropriate assistance by trained professionals. Separated or unaccompanied children need safe living arrangements and assistance to help trace and reunite them with their families, whenever possible.

Educational opportunities, support to parents, activities targeting adolescents and youth can contribute to protecting refugee children against negative coping mechanisms and a wide range of child-specific protection risks.

Challenges

Fragile national child protection system: The national child protection system is struggling to provide appropriate care and services to refugee children at risk of abuse and exploitation and child 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.

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 to the fact that the capacity of the public education system is overstretched.

Dispersed refugee population: Since refugees live in over 1,750 different locations in Lebanon, outreach to refugee children to identify and respond to their needs is both a challenge and a 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.

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 risk and victims of violence through training of refugee outreach volunteers, frontline workers 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 national child protection system to ensure emergency referral and provision of adequate care for children at high risk, and reinforce 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.



Abdallah, 17 from Damascus teaches other children how to grow plants in a community centre in Mount Lebanon.
UNHCR/D.Khamissy/2014

UNHCR implementing partners

Amel Association-Lebanese Popular Association for Popular Action (AMEL), Caritas Lebanon Migrants Center (CMLC), Danish Refugee Council (DRC), International Medical Corps (IMC), International Relief and Development (IRD), International Rescue Committee (IRC), INTERSOS, 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).

Contact: Elsa Laurin (laurin@unhcr.org)