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Update on the context and situation of children

2019 was an increasingly challenging year for children in Lebanon. The year began with hope, as the new Government was formed on January 31st 2019, following a nine-month political deadlock with a commitment to address needed reforms. As highlighted during the 2018 Mid-Term Review, the struggling economy, high level of national debt, low GDP growth and decelerating economic activity became increasingly visible, further exacerbating economic disparity in the country, and adversely affecting especially the most vulnerable children and their families. In the last quarter of the year, the discontent against further economic deterioration and the new government's slow actions to manage it, culminated into a broad-based civil unrest and political crisis, accelerating the country's decline towards an unprecedented economic crisis.

The situation of the 1.5 million Syrian refugees and 200,000 Palestine refugees in Lebanon remained precarious. 9 years into the Syrian crisis, the refugees have exhausted their savings and face increasing financial hardship. During the year increasing tensions between Lebanese populations and Syrian refugees were noted as the Lebanese economic crisis was deepening. A severe and longer winter with multiple heavy storms and flooding that stayed in the country until April added to the challenges faced by the most vulnerable children and their families.

In March, the Litani River Authority sued some NGOs alleging the responsibility for water pollution by refugees^[1]. In April the High Defense Council (HDC) adopted a series of decisions which further further restricted refugees' livelihoods, movements and quality of accommodations, through stricter enforcement of existing labor, immigration and housing laws and decrees. This resulted in a significant number of Syrian and Palestine refugees, many of who have no legal work permits, losing employments or cut in wages, closure of businesses, and increased risk of exploitation and the risk of negative coping mechanisms with a direct impact on children and the youth. Further, the decision from HDC led to dismantlement of refugees' accommodations that were considered "hard structures" in Informal Settlements mostly by refugees themselves and in some cases demolition was done by authorities. This added to refugees' sense of insecurity, financial burden and decreasing ability to mitigate the heat of the summer and the rain, snow and cold during the 2019/2020 winter.

Throughout the year, the signs of economic troubles persisted, accelerating in the second half of the year. Various strikes and demonstration continued, as the slowing economy put downward pressure on household incomes and government revenues. The economic deterioration already had seen 6% increase of Lebanese children moving from private to public schools for the 2018/2019 school year. This trend continued for the 2019/2020 school year.

The broad-based protests in October that brought the country to a standstill affected the ability of stakeholders including UNICEF to reach the most vulnerable children. The roadblocks and pressure to support the protests resulted in closures or minimal functioning of many public and private social services for extended periods, including UNICEF supported programmes. Most schools were closed for approximately three weeks, and in some regions extending over thirty days. The disruption of the roads with the banking crisis has meant some projects, particularly those related to construction being delayed as well as increases in costs.

By the end of December 2019, Lebanon had entered a deep political, economic and banking crisis. The main rating agencies downgraded the rating credit of Lebanon. With pre-crisis poverty rates estimated at 28% of the Lebanese population and over 70% for Syrian refugees, a wide additional segment of the Lebanese and non-Lebanese population is at risk of falling below the poverty line. The livelihoods of those already living in poverty are expected to worsen due to inflation, a decline in employment opportunities and potential reduction in the provision of services¹. In a rough estimate derived from the 2012 household data, the World Bank predicted that a 25% currency devaluation will increase Lebanon's poverty rate from 33% to 50%. Given the age distribution of the Lebanese and refugee populations, increases in overall poverty will be more extensively felt by children. In 2012, Lebanon's overall poverty rate was estimated between 27% to 30%, whereas the estimate for child poverty exceeded 40%. This economic pressure and the increase in negative coping strategies will mean that children's rights and wellbeing will likely be significantly impacted in all areas, including nutrition, healthcare, education, protection (child labor, child marriage, juvenile delinquency and violence against children), and quality of water and wastewater services.

At the same time, the government may not be able to continue funding public social services, which are already underfinanced and overstretched, and the private sector will find it more difficult to maintain operations. Demand for public services – education, health, etc. will likely increase as people will no longer be able to afford private services. The move of substantial number of children from private to public schools were reported even prior to the country wide protests. Lack of medication in the country required urgent intervention while private hospitals threatened strikes and some institutions housing children are on the verge of closing down for delayed payments from the government. It will have significant effect on the ability of all children and their families in different way to access basic services in Lebanon. Hereby raising the number of vulnerable and disadvantaged children possibly from 1.3 million to an estimated 1.6 million girls and boys.

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The economic crisis is expected to deepen and will negatively impact progress towards achieving the SDG. Even prior to the economic crisis, the 2018 Lebanon Voluntary National Review of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) indicated that most national strategies and plans need to be adapted, and progress on those goals that are crucial for children's wellbeing and development has been slow and impeded by the broader economic and political context. In addition, no national development framework exists in Lebanon to integrate the various dimensions of the SDGs.

In the midst of this largely negative context, there have also been signs of hope. The political crisis has seen a broad range of participation, especially of adolescents, youth and women. Open discussions and debates led by university students and citizens took place on a wide range of socioeconomic, cultural and political issues. Discussions were citizen-led, participatory, decentralized, and non-violent, focusing not only on political change, but establishing a more inclusive Lebanon, one where youth will no longer passively accept discrimination based on age, sect, gender, or socioeconomic background.

End.

[1] While some of the pollutions could be attributed to the Informal Settlements, it is a small part of a much larger problem, and the sources of pollution were collectively being addressed by UN, NGOs and Ministries.

Major contributions and drivers of results

In response to the ongoing economic crisis, the Country Office has put in a contingency plan to Scale-up existing UNICEF Programmes where possible and within the funding availability and flexibility of donors to include more Lebanese children into our current supported services provision in 263 cadasters through partners; ensuring to reach at least 30% of beneficiaries be Lebanese children and families. Through this expansive programming, Winter Support will be expanded, and contingency Stock will also be doubled, with an assumption that vulnerable Lebanese will need similar support. However, the future response for the affected Lebanese population will need to be addressed comprehensively and not just as a refocusing of existing humanitarian programming. The consequences of not addressing the needs of the local Lebanese population will have a serious impact on the Syrian response and could undermine an already tense relationship between local stakeholders and the refugees as explained above.

In 2019, LCO also focused on the application of the strategic shifts that were initiated in the 2018 Mid-term Review. The four strategic shifts on (1) system strengthening and capacity building, (2) leveraging of resources, (3) integration of equitable and accessible services at the local level and (4) knowledge and learning; all were implemented in 2019 and the experiences are documented below in the relevant sections with the LCO's integrated service delivery (Integrated Wellbeing Package), system strengthening through advocacy and engagement of municipalities and devolved institutions, emphasis on development initiatives in connection with humanitarian programming, social behavior change through further community engagement and Knowledge Management initiatives .

Goal Area 1: Every Child survives and thrives

In 2019, UNICEF's Health and Nutrition Programme adopted an integrated approach focusing on Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health (MNCAH) to reach out to the most disadvantaged communities targeting children, adolescents, women, and caregivers irrespective of nationality and including Palestinian refugees, displaced Syrians, and the most vulnerable Lebanese. The MNCAH package is implemented through a diversified network of UNICEF implementing partners in integration with Child Protection, WASH, and Adolescent and Youth programmes. Furthermore, the MNCAH package is embedded in the national Primary Health Care Programme, through the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) and the Health Core Group Partners including WHO, UNHCR, UNFPA, and other local and international NGOs. UNICEF supported several community outreach activities to promote MNCAH services among caregivers, women, and adolescents in 7 governorates across Lebanon, for increased equitable access to quality services in MoPH-subsidized Primary Health Care Centers.

Infant and young child feeding (IYCF) is a key priority within the Health and Nutrition Programme. In early 2019, four advocacy events were successfully conducted, to discuss the newly launched IYCF Policy and sensitize key actors including pediatricians to leverage support for optimal IYCF practices. In total, 192 health care providers from both the public and private sectors participated and provided key recommendations to actively engage in the implementation of the IYCF Policy through community mobilization and outreach activities. As a result, health messages of integrated IYCF and immunization were disseminated, reaching 30,547 caregivers. Furthermore, one-on-one counselling sessions focusing on IYCF were provided to 7,343 caregivers of children under five year of age through 4 community health educators and 3 lactation consultants nationally.

UNICEF in collaboration with WHO, within the Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI), continued to work in close

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partnership with the government through the MoPH, focusing on increasing immunization coverage rates and stopping the ongoing measles outbreak. Routine vaccines have been provided to over 900 primary health care centers, dispensaries, and supplementary immunization activities at borders and UNHCR registration sites. To stop the ongoing measles outbreak, the Ministry of Public Health with UNICEF and WHO support has undertaken a national multi-antigen immunization campaign for measles, mumps, rubella, and polio targeting the most at-risk age cohort (i.e. from 6 months to 10 years). As a result, Phase 1 was implemented in 9 target Districts across 3 Governorates in December 2019, and Phase is planned in the rest of the country in early 2020.

Goal Area 2: Every Child learns

To support the learning for the most vulnerable children, UNICEF continued to promote quality and inclusive education for all children in Lebanon with evidence-informed policy and programme actions. As such, UNICEF published Lebanon's first Out-of-School Children study, which provided evidence on school exclusion and devised policy options for MEHE. UNICEF furthermore launched two studies on education for stateless children and driving factors behind school violence against children. UNICEF in partnership with Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) supported child-centered education reform by deploying the MEHE's Child Protection Policy in 600 public schools. UNICEF supported the MEHE's Inclusive Schools pilot project by mainstreaming the children with special needs into 30 public schools, thereby commencing the evidence base for MEHE's Safe and Inclusive Education reform. Also, ongoing support to the system of in-service teachers' training continued with improvements in instructional methodology, enhanced the technical capacity of the public teaching corps.

To address the critical education needs of school-age vulnerable Lebanese and refugee children in Lebanon, UNICEF and other sector partners worked closely with the MEHE on implementation of the Reaching All Children with Education Plan. [\[1\]](#) In the 2018/19 scholastic year, the MEHE-UNICEF-Sector partnership has supported the enrolment of children aged 03-14 years into public schools, subsidizing school fees of 205,239 refugee children (i.e., 38% of the refugee population of corresponding age group) and partially covering the costs of 220,178 Lebanese children. The increase in enrolment over the years is partly due to the waiver of school fees for child enrolment in public schools, the enhanced efforts of sector/NGO partners to conduct outreach to children, and the increase in the number of second shift schools (from 88 schools in 2013 to 346 schools in 2019). This is in addition to other interventions such as the provision of school supplies, transportation and heating, as well as cash grants.

Aside from enrolment into public schools, a further 35,000 children, aged 03-18 years (51% girls) were enrolled in accredited non-formal education programmes through the joint efforts of UNICEF and NGO partners in 2019, thereby gaining the opportunity to reconnect to the education system and possibly reintegrate into formal education. UNICEF continues to lead the Education Sector response in the provision of regulated non-formal education to vulnerable refugee children who are still out of school in Lebanon. Also, UNICEF launched the Adapted BLN (ABLN) to reach the most vulnerable children with multiple deprivations, which provides the needed flexibility to cater for the needs of children engaged in work, at risk of child marriage and disability.

Demand for CB-ECE and ALP Programmes increased, far surpassing supply and availability of funding. Due to the active engagement of MEHE, UNICEF, in partnership with the implementing NGOs, engaged in outreach, community and parental engagement strategies to address demand-side barriers to education and increase learning opportunities at the community level.

In partnership with the Early Childhood Education Development (ECED) Consortium of NGOs, UNICEF supported access to preschool interventions. UNICEF supported an overall of 6,571 students at UNRWA schools of grades 1 and 2, who received in-class learning support sessions. A total of 87 special education needs UNRWA students benefitted from subsidies for scholarships at special education institutions, completed their scholastic year in 2019.

A Mid-Term Review of the multi-million dollar Reaching All Children with Education (RACEII) Programme was started together with MEHE and donors by the end of 2019. It will assess the RACE II achievements and results against planned targets and outcomes as well as the effectiveness and efficiency of strategies used for girls and boys to access learning in both formal and non-formal education. UNICEF, in collaboration with DFID, has also initiated the provision of technical guidance and strategic direction to MEHE and the Education Sector with the development of costed models and financial scenarios for the development of the education system (Lebanese and non-Lebanese), taking into consideration the current economic crisis and reform goals of the MEHE.

Goal Area 3: Every Child is protected from violence and exploitation

UNICEF continued its collaboration with key Ministries of the Government of Lebanon in advancing a more effective national

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system so that fewer children and women will experience violence, abuse and exploitation in the future – and to ensure that those who do receive adequate care and support. Legal and policy reform, capacity-building and long term social and behavioural change processes are important to build such child protection system and good progress was made in advancing this long-term objective during the year. At the same time, the Child Protection Programme through partnerships with the Government and civil society organizations ensured that more than 40,000 children victims of violence, abuse and exploitation and women at risk were helped through social welfare support including individual case management, counselling, psycho-social support, safe spaces and other interventions to help address their situation. In relation to prevention of separation of children from families, UNICEF played a pivotal role for advancing the alternative care reform agenda in Lebanon, resulting in reducing the number of new admissions to institutional care. This work will become increasingly critical in the future – especially as Lebanon appears to be heading into economic and financial crisis that may prompt many vulnerable families to consider placement of children in residential care and as state support budget to the institutions holding these children may be shrinking.

In relation to child-friendly policing, a systematic and standardized approach to training of municipal police on children's rights and protection was established for the first time. It was encouraging to see improved collaboration between some Ministries to jointly address violence and abuse of children, i.e the Ministry of Education calling upon Ministry of Social Affairs in handling cases of violence against children detected in the school environment. UNICEF supported the reform of existing child protection legislation while new learning resources were developed and used to ensure child-friendly practices amongst lawyers, social workers and law enforcement actors.

Expansion to the use of the Child Protection Information Management System (CPIMS) to a total of nine organizations catering for around 20% of all child protection cases recorded by the sector, through the enhancement of the ability of state and civil society actors to deal with critical child protection cases.

Through UNICEF support, resilience-building psychosocial support services were mainstreamed in 12 UNRWA schools located in the most disadvantaged camps; parallel to community-based PSS activities conducted by the Arab Resource Center for popular Arts and Medical Aid for Palestinians. UNICEF partners provided focused and specialized Mental Health Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) services to children experiencing developmental delays, disorders and disabilities that warrant further support.

UNICEF shifted its strategy, from raising awareness to addressing social norms and drivers. A new evidence based Social Behavioral Change communication plan aiming at preventing child marriage, child labour and violence against children and women was developed. Coined as the "Qudwa" (i.e role model in Arabic), the Plan is encouraging new behaviors by promoting positive social norms, drawing on the strengths of what is common to all parents and caregivers namely that they want what is best for their children. Such positive change is expected to be brought about through the aid of activities such as parenting activities, community theatre, TedEx Talks, Soap opera, social and traditional media etc.

In line with the 2018 Mid Term Review Strategic Recommendations and the office move towards more integrated programming, the Child Protection Programme enhanced its synergies with other sectors. This resulted in both CP and Adolescent and Youth programme partners reaching, through a dual—approach, adolescent girls at risk of GBV through protection support and vocational skills training. To reduce children vulnerability in a multi-layer approach, CP partners, focusing on child labour and child marriage, collaborated with education partners, focusing on ABLN, as well as cash assistance through UNICEF's Social Protection programme

Lastly, UNICEF Lebanon's new approach to local governance resulted in the strengthening of local alliances and advocacy for rights of the children through the engagement with authorities at multiple levels. The advocacy initiatives within the context of CRC30 anniversary helped with empowerment and engagement (participation) of children and youth to voicing their opinions and ideas with local and regional authorities (Governors). These efforts also created a good momentum for municipalities to create child friendly cities, which led to Lebanon's participation in Child Friendly Cities Summit with a strong delegation including a mayor, a municipal committee member and a youth activist coming from different areas of the country.

Goal Area 4: Every Child lives in a clean and safe environment

For the 9th year, UNICEF engaged in emergency WASH programming to address gaps in service delivery by ensuring the continuity of temporary WASH services for more than 200,000 out of 300,000 Syrian refugees living in Informal Settlements. This included the provision of water storage tanks and water points, delivery of trucked water, installation of latrines, implementation and desludging of wastewater system. 6,873 people with special needs benefited from adapted water or wastewater facilities.

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The worsening socio-economic situation has further jeopardized the capacity of the Water Establishments to deliver water services, for the most vulnerable. Firstly, the Water Establishments have significant difficulties to procure fuel, and operation and maintenance materials due to the shortage of US dollars. In addition to that, customers lost confidence towards governmental entities, including Water Establishments. Media has reported further contamination of irrigation channels and rivers from Informal Settlements, in a country facing an already pre-crisis disastrous wastewater management, with only 8% of the wastewater treated^[3] as a result over 20,000 Syrian refugees are at threat of eviction. In a quest to contribute to reducing social tensions and improve the environmental situations in Lebanon, UNICEF supported Beirut - Mount Lebanon governorates through the rehabilitation of a major wastewater treatment plant and 2.2 km of sewage extension, benefiting over 250,000 individuals (including more than 100,000 children).

In 2019, UNICEF supported MoEW's decision to update the National Water Sector Strategy in the light of impending climate change conditions, the current impact of the Syrian crisis upon the sector and Lebanon's commitment towards the Sustainable Development Goals. The MoEW has presented a draft of the strategy to major donors and plans to finalize the document before Quarter 1 of 2020. By improving transparency in the sector and considering social aspects, the update of the NWW will significantly contribute to conflict mitigation.

In addition, UNICEF with support from KfW equipped Bekaa, South Lebanon and North Lebanon Water Establishments with call centers, mobile application and Facebook pages to facilitate an inter-active communication with customers. These communication tools are critical to rebuild the dialogue between Water Establishments and customers considering the ongoing civil disobedience and mistrust towards public authorities.

In 2019, UNICEF through LebRelief supported "Shankal"/ Human Security Integrated project implemented in the most multi-dimensional deprived neighborhoods of Tripoli, which is greatly affected by local sectarian and political tensions exacerbated by the Syrian crisis. The project addresses the deep causes of vulnerabilities related to several issues including economic empowerment, health, education and protection and it serves as the beacon of an inspiration for integrated programming in other municipalities with children with multiple vulnerabilities. Linked to trying to address these vulnerabilities from a life-cycle approach, a labour-intensive project started. It contributed significantly to the reduction of social tensions within communities as more than 772 jobs (including 11.6% for women) were been created for vulnerable young people (Lebanese and others) in partnership with the Adolescent and Youth section to build WASH reservoirs and rehabilitate springs catchments.

Goal Area 5: Every Child has an equitable chance to life

The recently concluded Knowledge, Attitude and Practices survey showed a significant lack of knowledge on child rights associated to protection from abuse, parental care and support, protection from exploitation, safety during emergency and participation in family and social life. This is being addressed through a number of approaches related to social protection, community engagement and working with youth.

In 2019, UNICEF Lebanon approved and kicked off its first Communication and Advocacy Strategy, with the overall objective of winning the support of decision-makers and other target audiences for the cause of girls, boys and young people, contributing to the realization of UNICEF Country Programme in Lebanon and the global Strategy. The strategy aims at providing strategic guidance and tools that effectively inspire and engage supporters by repositioning UNICEF as the leading voice advocating for all children and delivering tangible results for over 70 years in Lebanon. The strategy includes a variety of interrelated implementing strategies and approaches aligned with the Global Communication and Advocacy Strategy. Global campaigns that have been amplified, such as the CRC30-WCD, and the audience reach registered a significant increase, although the protests that started in October made the CO cancelling many planned events.

UNICEF Lebanon's work on Social Policy in 2019 was characterized by three main achievements: to support the development of a national social protection system, provision of social assistance going beyond cash, and lastly the development of key partners to further promote inclusive development in the country. In January 2019, the Lebanon's first-ever national dialogue on social protection was held to support Government of Lebanon to develop a National Social Protection Policy. With the onset of the current political and economic crisis, social protection is now even higher up the agenda and an even greater priority within national discussions.

Based on the MTR recommendation, to address the multiple vulnerabilities of children in a more comprehensive and integrated approach, UNICEF Lebanon initiated the implementation of Integrated Child Wellbeing Package, that connects social assistance to the poorest and most vulnerable children (both non-Lebanese and also some Lebanese children) with access to programming on non-formal education and child protection. By the end of the year almost 6,000 children had been registered for the children and were receiving a range of services. In addition, delivery of the 2018/2019 winter programme to over 74,000 poor refugee children who received cash grants, plus delivery of winter clothing kits to 25,000 children; as well as preparation to provide contingency cash support to around 15,000 Lebanese families living in extreme

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poverty through the Government's national safety nets.

Lastly, UNICEF developed capacities, partnerships and messaging to create ground upon which to promote an inclusive development agenda within the country. This included the development of national public finance work including a partnership with the Institute of Finance to improve national finance accountability, citizen's budget, analysis of national social budgets, as well as development of taxation analysis on equity of Lebanon's fiscal system. Furthermore, through collaboration with staff in the IMF, UNDP and the ILO, the team completed an analytical paper on the impact of the national capital investments anticipated from donors - though now much delayed - for use in high-level advocacy to promote pro-poor development in Lebanon through greater pro-poor, decent employment.

In 2019, UNICEF continued to work with government ministries to improve their capacity to move towards stronger, more inclusive policy frameworks to address the priorities and aspirations of young people. In cooperation with UNFPA, UNICEF provided technical support to the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MoYS) to finalize the National Youth Policy (NYP) Action Plan. The NYP Action Plan translates to 20 priority recommendations across 5 sectors. The Action Plan was developed with the involvement of 17 ministries and various public entities, civil society organizations, educational institutions, healthcare centers, municipalities and international NGOs, as well as the UN through the Youth Working Group under the UN Strategic Framework. With its anticipated endorsement by the Council of Ministers under the new government, the NYP Action Plan will serve as the government's key policy framework to support youth development under the SDGs.

To complement the system strengthening initiatives at the government level, the Adolescent and Youth programme continued to improve and strengthen its service delivery to meet the needs of young people through an integrated package of services to increase their skills for learning, citizenship, employability and empowerment, and simultaneously, support their transition from learning to earning, improve their physical and social well-being, and provide increased opportunities for engagement in their communities. To this end, UNICEF was able to support courses with the highest likelihood of job placement for its trained youth in the areas TVET NSF programme and in-line with the MoL restrictions on employment for non-Lebanese.

[1] (RACE II: 2017-2021).

[2] <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/67694>

[3] National Water Sector Strategy 2010

Lessons Learned and Innovations

Innovation

Evidence-generation initiatives such as Neighborhood Profiling (jointly conducted by UNICEF and UNHABITAT) helped in bringing more granular data to the attention of local decision makers as well as humanitarian and development actors to identify pressing needs for the most vulnerable families and their children as well as provide baseline for projects and programmes. Developed within an area-based approach, Neighborhood Profiles have also helped partners to design (multisectoral) interventions within defined geographical areas, thus helping minimize redundancy and have helped in leveraging resources. The neighborhood profiling has greatly helped in identifying key municipalities based on multi-dimensional child vulnerability indicators and has enhanced the reach of UNICEF services through partners in an integrated manner to the most vulnerable boys and girls and their families. This has been done by strengthening the connections and cross-referrals for various service providers together with local government institutions that can oversee and regulate such integrated support. Tripoli was the first municipality that has used the neighbourhood profile data for its direct and focused service delivery interventions; which is being replicated in other municipalities which have been mapped with the highest amount of children with multiple vulnerabilities.

UNICEF's emergency WASH programme continues towards the development of an on-site single-tank-based wastewater treatment system that can significantly reduce tensions related to environmental pollution, but also be used by surrounding host communities. Similar innovative initiatives have been identified at community level to provide water and wastewater services benefiting both refugees and host communities: UNICEF continues to advocate for and develop concepts of public fountains and integrated mobile wastewater treatment plants. UNICEF Lebanon also supported the WASH Information Management system improved a monitoring tool "Healthy Camp Monitoring Tool". This tool measures to which extent WASH and environmental health results have been achieved in hundreds of informal Syrian refugees settlements and inform on priority remediation actions by the communities and partners - it uses tablets with KoBo data collection system and online analysis dashboard. The tool "Healthy Camp Monitoring tool" informs programming through a better

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measurement of the impact of WASH intervention, including on a protection angle, as the accessibility of WASH services, lighting, and privacy. It is also used as a monitoring tool for frontline workers, UNICEF staff and TPMs.

UNICEF has been able to make progress in providing support to Ministry of Public Health to further develop the Mobile EPI Registry Application (MERA), for all Primary Health Care centers, dispensaries, vaccination points at UNHCR registration sites and borders. MERA now serves as a national electronic EPI Registry platform. The system was successfully utilized in Measles National Immunization Campaign – phase 1, where it provided timely data that enhanced intra-campaign monitoring. This application is aligned with the MoPH calendar of Immunization, as well as national rules and regulations,

and records vaccination services of children under 18 years of age in Lebanon. It allows the generation of a unique barcode to track the vaccination status of every registered child. Barcodes support community outreach workers to track and follow up each child's vaccination status and alerts caregivers

about any gap in the vaccination schedule. In addition, the MERA allows for stock monitoring of vaccines at all EPI points and is used in nurseries, public schools and primary health care facilities. UNICEF is fundraising to further develop and scale up MERA, to include other health services and to

create a parallel application for caregivers on Immunization and other primary health services.

Lessons Learned

UNICEF's provision of life skills packages is reported to have a multi-dimensional impact on adolescents and youth. Engaging young people from different communities, and nationalities, in joint activities strengthened the social cohesion factor between Syrian and Lebanese youth. UNICEF, through its life skills programme, encouraged the Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian adolescents and youth to improve all aspects of their relationships with themselves and the others, which had eventually reflected on their communities, especially that the different activities focused on non-violent ways to resolve conflicts and address challenges. The life skills programme did not only develop participants' skills, but it had also provided them with a safe space to express their ideas and share their experiences, fears, and emotions.

UNICEF Lebanon, through its various programmes, are working with private companies and private entities that can directly support the Programme. In 2019, the CO has therefore initiated a process to map the private sector and explore its potential for direct support to our programmatic priorities even in these difficult economic times. This exercise should provide us with a clearer idea of who the main stakeholders are, and what the best opportunities for collaboration may be.

The current crisis has also meant that we have had to respond to our own organizational needs with a full application of all the available flexibility that UNICEF rules and regulations would allow. At the peak of the protests and unrest, to accommodate the situation the office widely applied Flexible Working Arrangements. The HR unit further extended its staff counselling services the regional/local staff counsellor. LCO also collaborated proactively on the inter-agency level, particularly on advanced local salary payments and conversion of currency of local salary. Given its strategic location, UNICEF accommodated several other UN agencies to operate from its premises during the peak of the crisis, when the other UN offices were not accessible.

Following the report of the independent task force on workplace gender-discrimination, sexual harassment, harassment and abuse of authority, UNICEF Lebanon country office established a dedicated taskforce. The taskforce aims to compile and analyze information received from the ITF report as well as feedback received from LCO staff on the report. In addition, the taskforce is to enhance and coordinate systematic support to respond to the needs and recommendations of staff following the ITF report. The taskforce will further enhance the creation of a trust and healthy work environment promoting UNICEF values. The task force has since established a detailed action plan addressing the four main pillars of the ITF report along with a timeframe to address the issues relevant to LCO context. Implementation will begin in early 2020 following the endorsement of LCO staff members.