

## Lebanon

### Part 1: Situation update in the country

Lebanon started 2018 with optimism at the prospect of general elections and of new pledges from the international community to support stability and bolster its ailing economy. Eight years into the Syria crisis, the impact of the conflict continues to adversely influence political, economic and financial dynamics in Lebanon, with a quarter of the population being refugees.

On 6 May, Lebanon held its first successful legislative elections since 2009, renewing the mandate of the country's democratic institutions. However, by the end of 2018, politicians remained locked in a nine-month long political stalemate and unable to form a new unity Government. It is a complex and fragile process in a country still marked by entrenched confessional-political divisions. The economic and fiscal situation in Lebanon, characterized by low economic growth and one of the highest global debt-to-Gross Domestic Product ratios, is increasingly precarious due to the political impasse, with little space to advance the agenda for children, especially the most disadvantaged. An additional challenge for Lebanon remains its ability to apply its policy of disassociation from regional conflicts, and to manage social stability between refugee and poor communities.

#### Situation of children

As is shown in the 2018 Lebanon Voluntary National Review of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), several institutional, structural, social and economic issues are yet to be addressed to make substantive and sustainable progress toward meeting the 2030 targets. As the report noted, most national strategies and plans need to be adapted, and progress on those goals that are crucial for children's well-being 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.

Child vulnerabilities and child poverty among Lebanese, Palestinians and Syrians arise from different root causes, each requiring varying multi-sectoral response strategies that can range from emergency aid to development assistance. Nearly half of the Lebanese, Palestinian and Syrian populations affected by poverty are children and adolescents. With the Syria protracted crisis, up to 1.4 million children under 18 are currently growing up at risk, deprived, and with acute needs for basic services and protection. Public services are overstretched, with demand exceeding the current capacity of institutions and infrastructure. As Lebanon faces the cumulative impact of its economic downturn, long-standing inequalities among the Lebanese themselves are deepening, and tensions rising, especially between vulnerable communities, frequently over perceived competition for jobs and access to shrinking economic opportunities and services.

Lebanon ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991 and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women in 1997. Despite some legal and constitutional reforms to align its national laws, the country has made only modest progress in promoting gender equality; it is ranked tenth globally in the gender inequality index -137 out of 144 countries surveyed in the 2017 World Economic Forum Survey.

Gender disparities remain prevalent across the country's economic and social landscape. In its last Concluding Observation on the country's gender equality commitments, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed concern that the minimum age of marriage remained at 14 for girls and 16 for boys. It is even younger in certain cases based on religious affiliations, and the Committee recommended that the minimum age be raised to 18 to eliminate child marriage among young girls. The Concluding Observations on the last periodic report on implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women similarly urged Lebanon to address concerns in the education sector. The country was asked to review its school curricula and textbooks to eliminate stereotyped and patriarchal depictions of the roles of women. Gender disparities have been further exacerbated by the Syrian refugee crisis. Child marriage (among girls), child labour and school dropout (mainly among boys) have all increased since the onset of the crisis. Gender inequality is also found in access to health, water and sanitation, and social protection where the privatization of basic services affects vulnerable groups such as female-headed households and people living with a disability.

The Government of Lebanon estimated that by the end of 2018 the country had hosted more than 1.5 million refugees, including around 950,000 Syrians registered with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), 28,800 Palestine refugees from Syria and a pre-existing population of 180,000 Palestinian refugees. Since the beginning of the crisis, the overall population in Lebanon has grown by 37 per cent. There have been some returns of Syrian refugees to Syria in recent months facilitated by the Lebanese General Security Office, but the number remains limited. UNHCR estimates that 14,700 refugees have returned while the Government claims the number to be three-fold greater.

The international community has provided considerable support to the country since the beginning of the Syria crisis. Around US\$6.7 billion has been disbursed in humanitarian assistance since 2011 to support Lebanon cope with the impact of the crisis, while also greatly benefiting the local economy. The 2018 Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees (VASyR) found that the response has had a measurable impact: 69 per cent of Syrian refugees now live under the poverty line, compared to 76 per cent in 2017. The percentage of households under the Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (the minimum amount required to maintain existence and cover lifesaving needs) has significantly decreased, from 76 per cent in 2017 to 51 in 2018. The percentage of food-insecure refugees has declined from 38 per cent in 2017 to 33 in 2018. Birth registrations have gone up from 17 to 21 per cent, which may be explained by the new policies put in place to ease the process for Syrian refugees. It is estimated that one in four Lebanese households also live in poverty and remain largely uncovered by national social protection programmes.

Despite the recent progress, extensive humanitarian needs remain. The humanitarian response faces low visibility on longer-term commitments, with a stark need for flexible multi-year support to Lebanon, particularly to strengthen national capacities. Lack of predictability hampers all actors' ability to plan for more sustainable solutions addressing critical humanitarian and system-strengthening needs.

Water and sanitation services continued to be overwhelmed and unable to meet the needs of those in the country. Even before the population influx, the annual renewable water resources levels in Lebanon, estimated at 926 m<sup>3</sup>/capita/year in 2009, made it a water-scarce country. In addition to increased demand and over-exploitation of natural resources, pollution is widespread and only 36 per cent of the population drink safe water – one of the main findings of the Household Water Quality Survey conducted by the World Health Organization (WHO)

and UNICEF in 2017. Only 8 per cent of all water consumed is adequately treated before it reaches the environment, which is well below the regional average of 32 per cent. A more recent study highlighted that only 3 per cent of all the country's wastewater is properly treated before finding its way into the environment. As a result, more than 50 per cent of the communicable diseases reported since 2014 are water-related, posing a threat to children's health. The majority (91 per cent) of Syrian refugee households used improved drinking water sources, but 46 per cent of those living in informal settlements relied on water trucking mainly subsidized by humanitarian organizations, compared to a national average of 14 per cent.

Some 87 per cent of interviewed refugee households had access to improved sanitation facilities, a share which has consistently increased over the last four years. Per shelter type, the Syrian refugees living in informal settlements were again the most vulnerable, with only 70 per cent accessing improved sanitation. The average total household expenditure for refugees living in settlements was US\$325/month, out of which 4 per cent was used for drinking water; whereas overall refugees were spending 3.2 per cent of their total household expenditure on drinking water.

The deteriorating economy and growing inequalities also affect the accessibility of basic primary health care for the most vulnerable, putting more and more people at risk, especially refugees living in already unsafe conditions. The Primary Health Centres system remained overwhelmed by the dramatic population increase. The quality of care continued to be challenged, and even more so by emerging issues that require immediate attention such as sexual and reproductive health, including gender-based violence care, along with nutrition. Most health services, including birth deliveries, continued to be performed by the private sector, where patients self-finance the services. At the central level, public health policies are not all systematically enforced, due to unclear accountability frameworks and to the absence of sanction mechanisms. Some services are free or subsidized but lack standardization. For example, vaccines are free for all children, but the vaccination is not, leading to the exclusion of large numbers.

During 2018, 933 measles cases were reported out of which 82 per cent were among Lebanese citizens. This underlines the serious problems of inaccessibility to quality immunization across the country, and the heightened concerns for both vulnerable population and refugees. Geographical pockets remain with low levels of routine immunization, and children left out of the system.

Of significance was the high number (11,196) of hospital-based deliveries in 2017 that were the result of adolescent pregnancies (9 per cent of all deliveries), accounting for 28.6 per cent of maternal deaths. Infant and young child feeding practices indicators were also alarming, with exclusive breastfeeding for infants from 0-5 months standing at only 14.8 per cent while the minimum dietary diversity among children aged 6-23 months was not met [12]. Severe malnutrition among under-five children remained marginal, but micronutrient deficiency, overweight and stunting coexist among Lebanese children, thereby indicating a state of nutrition transition that requires surveillance.

In this increasingly bleak scenario, there was positive news. School enrolment rates for vulnerable Lebanese children stayed stable and have increased since 2015 for refugee children. Of the 658,000 refugee children aged 3-18 years in Lebanon, over 45 per cent were now formal education, with a further 11 per cent engaged in accredited non-formal education programmes. This success has been due to consistent donor support for formal education and

to the Ministry of Education taking on a key leadership role in coordinating, with UNICEF, the education sector partners into an outreach and implementation/retention strategy.

Of those not in school or learning, the most vulnerable age-group are refugee youth and adolescents, 81 per cent of whom are out of learning. These children and youth are unable to consistently access and complete education opportunities due to financial, socio-economic, and legal barriers and vulnerabilities.

Those children and youth who were able to sustain attendance in the formal public education system, contend with outdated pedagogical approaches, limited teaching capacity and static curricula which is content-centred instead of competency-based or learner-centred. This, in turn, has negatively impacted the demand for public education, because the system does not adequately equip students with the relevant and employable skills. This is evident in very low enrolment rates for secondary education and vocational programmes, and further in the high youth unemployment rates (17.87 per cent in September 2018).

In response, the Ministry of Education in partnership with UNICEF has taken important steps towards pivoting into longer-term investments to improve the quality of teaching and learning in its public schools and vocational training centres. This included technical and financial investments into revamping the national teacher training framework, introducing the country's first child protection policy, and embarking on mainstreaming children with special needs into public schools.

The informal labour market in general, and the lack of legal residency for refugees, contributed to growing protection issues such as child labour. Girls and boys have increasingly been taking on new responsibilities, often working in the informal market with a higher risk of harassment and exposure to violence. Many households in Lebanon have been forced to adopt negative coping mechanisms, such as withdrawing children from school as they rely on them as breadwinners or resorting to child marriage to ease the economic burden.

Socio-economic vulnerabilities have also translated into high levels of violence against children and women. More than one million children in Lebanon were subjected to psychological or physical punishment within their own household. Child labour prevalence data and available out-of-school data indicate that the actual number of working children with no learning opportunity ranges between 100,000 to 150,000. An additional form of child labour affecting children regardless of their nationalities is their exploitation and trafficking to Syria by armed groups, whether for armed conflict or for localized armed clashes specific to Lebanon.

Child marriage continued to affect a large number of girls in Lebanon, with Syrian refugees suffering from the highest rate of child marriage in the Middle East and North Africa region. Some 27 per cent of Syrian girls aged 15-19 are married or in union, followed by 13 per cent of Palestine refugees from Syria and four percent of both Lebanese and Palestine refugee girls in the same age group.

Since 2016, the Gender-Based Violence Information Management System has been recording cases among women and girls, with around 7,000 reported by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) offering case management to survivors. Other protection issues are prevalent in the judicial sector which does not yet guarantee full realization of the rights of children in contact with the law, neither through its laws nor practices. Children, whether alleged offenders, victims, witnesses, at risk and/or in need of protection, or involved in any

other formal proceedings (for instance custody or inheritance) can be subjected to harm once involved in these proceedings. In general, the system remains retributive and tends to criminalize boys and girls.

## Part 2: Major Results including in humanitarian action and gender, against the results in the Country Programme Documents

### Goal area 1: Every child survives and thrives

Despite a considerable funding gap, UNICEF managed to maintain its strategic support to the Ministry of Public Health, continuing to strengthen the national health system and increase service provision to the most vulnerable children. To support the Ministry of Public Health's capacity-building efforts to bolster stronger governance and monitoring, UNICEF financed 54 ministry positions at district and central levels (information managers, nurses, programme staff). Training sessions for expanded programme on immunisation (EPI) managers were also conducted to reinforce the decentralization process of EPI management.

In addition to the creation of an electronic platform for the EPI registry, UNICEF supported several interventions to generate up-to-date evidence to guide child-focused policies. UNICEF revitalised the baby-friendly hospitals initiative in 12 public hospitals and UNHCR structures; implemented an adolescent mental health project as a contribution to the revision of existing curriculum and guidelines; developed policy briefs to guide a strategy on early detection of developmental delays and disabilities; undertook waste management initiatives in immunization commodities; and completed an external evaluation of the EPI programme and the monitoring of the accelerated immunization activities. Advocacy with the Ministry of Public Health also contributed to the endorsement of a new infant and young child feeding policy – developed with UNICEF's technical assistance - and to the issuance of a decree that made vaccination free for all children in Lebanon.

Throughout the year, UNICEF procured US\$1.36 million worth of vaccines for routine and supplementary immunization at the Ministry's vaccination points, UNRWA clinics and UNHCR's border and reception centres in which UNICEF recruited 27 vaccinators. UNICEF's role was essential in the design and implementation of a strategy for accelerated immunization activities, which includes tailored outreach, screening and referral, in those cadastres where immunization rates are the lowest. The first phase of the strategy saw 260,339 children reached, out of whom 163,280 were identified as defaulters and 70,078 were vaccinated. The second phase, which followed the reporting of the first measles cases, resulted in outreach to 350,026 children, of whom 276,304 were identified as defaulters and 139,385 were eventually vaccinated. The approach proved efficient in bringing back children to the immunization system, and the targeting of low cadastres adapted to the disparities across Lebanon. Due to the collaborative efforts, there were no confirmed cases reported in Lebanon despite contamination risks from the 2017 polio outbreak in Syria, and the measles attack rate decreased from 3.9/100,000 in May (the peak of the outbreak) to 0.1/100,000 in December.

To improve immunization coverage, UNICEF piloted "Behavioural Insights" (known as BI) in Lebanon, through a new partnership with Nudge Lebanon. Behavioural Insights applies psychological insights to human behaviour to steer communities – "nudge them" – towards making better decisions, but without limiting their freedom of choice. Behavioural Insights was piloted to improve the effectiveness of outreach activities, as well as immunizations services at

primary health centres and dispensaries. By end 2018, 240 outreach teams had been deployed to conduct research and outreach, 4,080 frontline workers and ten supervisors trained on how to engage parents in utilizing the tools and nudge the communities to vaccinate their children. The intervention will be scaled up to other programmatic areas if the model's evaluation proves positive.

Severe acute malnutrition remained marginal in Lebanon, but moderate levels of undernutrition continued to be seen, requiring further efforts to optimise infant and young child feeding practices. In 2018, 161,071 children aged between 6-59 months were screened, and 385 subsequently admitted for treatment. Additionally, 10,360 were identified as stunted, and 30,100 children and 10,644 pregnant and lactating women received micronutrients. Through UNICEF's infant and young child feeding (IYCF) programme, an additional 20,628 pregnant and lactating women received advice by community health educators and then referred to lactation specialists.

UNICEF also continued to support primary health centres through the procurement of US\$2 million in supplies for consultations with mothers and children, as well as for use during 158,686 reproductive health consultations (including antenatal and postnatal care) and 259,946 paediatric consultations in 225 centres. UNICEF also worked in partnership with UNRWA to expand the services in its primary health care centres. These cover the 12 Palestinian camps in Lebanon and many informal gatherings, and offer a package of preventive maternal and child care services including antenatal and postnatal care, immunization, growth monitoring, health and nutrition surveillance and development screening. During the year, around 13,000 children and pregnant and lactating women benefitted from this service package at UNRWA's facilities.

Innovative and integrated communication approaches were used as a multiplier effect to expand the outreach to communities, enhance mobilization, raise awareness on good practices and strengthen demand for health services. The implementation of accelerated immunization activities represented an opportunity to reach large numbers of actors. Around 500,000 caregivers were reached out to with tailored messaging on immunization, more than 1,000 community and health workers with training sessions on vaccination screening and referrals of defaulters. UNICEF designed and integrated awareness messages on immunization and IYCF into the accelerated immunization activities regular messaging. Mass media campaigns and global/national events were also used by UNICEF to convey important messages. In February, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Public Health to organize a breastfeeding campaign during which around 675,250 people were engaged through social media. Messaging in conjunction with World Immunisation Week helped facilitate the vaccination of 7,500 children in more than 500 localities across the country. The need for nutrition surveillance also prompted regular communication, with more than 275,000 caregivers targeted with integrated health messages around immunization and IYCF, in collaboration with youth volunteers, mother support groups and community health educators.

UNICEF continued to engage municipalities in the promotion of positive parenting as the foundation of early childhood development. Messaging on positive parenting has shown better results when targeted at couples, as it encourages men and fathers to be active in care practices. As such, UNICEF and its partner worked with 20 couples on a curriculum covering pregnancy, child health, education, and protection issues such as inclusion, gender equality and gender-based violence. Upon completion of the sessions the participants share their new knowledge and "recruit" other couples.

## Goal area 2: Every child learns

The Syria crisis has had far-reaching consequences on children's right to quality education in Lebanon. Poor Lebanese and refugee children face multiple, compounded deprivations that have adverse effects on their right to access quality education and employment. Children who are working, married, stateless, or with disabilities are additionally less likely to be in schools or non-formal education programmes, as poverty makes the opportunity costs of committed engagement in a learning opportunity too high.

During 2018, and through active community engagement, UNICEF and the Ministry of Education supported the enrolment of 213,358 refugee children (49 per cent girls) and 209,409 vulnerable Lebanese children (51 per cent girls) into public schools (Kindergarten to Grade 9). UNICEF's NGO partners provided homework or remedial support to more than 14,000 children (45 per cent female) at risk of dropping-out. UNICEF also supported school retention by providing all children with free learning supplies, heating more than 500 schools in winter, and providing more than 80,000 eligible children's families with cash-assistance for transportation. Remedial programmes were also successful in Palestinian communities in which 3,357 children with special educational needs were supported to complete their school year and improve their grades. For the youth category, UNICEF supported 2,926 students enrol into the Ministry of Education's Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET) public schools, and 1,400 students benefited from formal vocational training in the Ministry of Agriculture's TVET public schools.

For those children out of school, NGO partners provided 38,500 children aged 3-18 years with accredited non-formal education. These included 16,500 children in community-based early childhood education (51 per cent girls); 10,000 in basic literacy and numeracy (46 per cent girls); and 12,000 in the accelerated learning programme (47 per cent girls). Efforts were systematically made to include children with disabilities, for the majority of whom these programmes represent a much-awaited opportunity to re-engage with their wider peer group and subsequently reintegrate into school.

For adolescents and youth, around 8,000 were enrolled in youth basic literacy and numeracy (63 per cent female); over 20,000 (55 per cent female) enrolled in competency-based skills training, including innovation; and an additional 16,346 supported through life skills training. Overall, 30 per cent of the youth reached with skills building programmes were subsequently placed in jobs or income-generation activities or paid apprenticeship or on-the-job training. These programmes have broken gender barriers in the access to training and address discriminatory practices in the labour market; as an example, girls were trained and employed in sectors such as construction. In addition to advancing the rights of the girls to be protected from discrimination, this is an important factor for unlocking women's human capital for economic activities. An additional 1,470 Palestinian youth in camps also participated in sessions on life skills, conflict resolution and healthy lifestyles.

UNICEF also launched or scaled-up several initiatives around innovation and employability. The Innovation Lab Network program and the "GIL - Generation of Innovation Leaders" supported 6,000 marginalized youth with training in design-thinking, social entrepreneurship, and digital skills training, funded or mentored 500 social business enterprises, and supported girls exploring information technology-related careers. UNICEF also developed an impact sourcing platform, known as the "Bridge. Outsource. Transform" or B.O.T. This supports the creation of new income-generating opportunities through an online marketplace for vulnerable

youth to earn an income while they continue learning and enhancing their skills. In the first six months, 125 youth had generated US\$60,000 worth of income through B.O.T.

UNICEF significantly increased its system-level investment into the ministries that most impact children and adolescents' education, training, and employment. Results included:

- Over 10,000 teachers trained on a UNICEF-led national Teacher Training Model to enhance their capacity to integrate the principles of gender-equity, child protection, linguistic, and cultural-diversity in their teaching and interaction with children;
- The Ministry of Education endorsed a standardised Youth Basic Literacy and Numeracy Package, focusing on functional literacy for out-of-school youth aged 15 to 24 years old, including Arabic literacy, numeracy, life skills and English as a foreign language;
- Operationalization by the Ministry of Education of the country's first Child Protection Policy in Schools and opening of the first 30 inclusive schools for children with disabilities. These projects feed into UNICEF's longer-term strategy in Lebanon towards SDG-4 Goal, to provide inclusive and equitable quality education systems, and were part of a key strategic shift for UNICEF in Lebanon;
- The Positive Leadership Module was finalized as part of the Life Skills and Citizenship Education framework. The module was developed to support youth in developing their own self-awareness and leadership skills, and it is intended for use as a stand-alone manual and as a module integrated in other skills building programmes. A total of 100 participants from UNICEF partner organizations, as well as staff from the Ministry of Social Affairs' Social Development Centres were trained. UNICEF also started to promote positive leadership in different departments within UNRWA, training 46 UNRWA staff under 35 years old;
- UNICEF partnered with ILO and the Prime Minister's Officer, to support relevant government ministries (Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Agriculture, National Vocational Training Centre, and Ministry of Social Affairs), key NGOs and the private-sector to develop and launch the "National Strategic Framework on Technical and Vocational Education and Training in Lebanon" (TVET NSF). The TVET NSF contains suggested ministerial-based road maps to increase enrolment and improve quality. This achievement also provided a background for UNRWA's design, with technical support from UNICEF, of a Youth Strategic Framework for Palestinian refugees;
- UNICEF Lebanon supported the Regional initiative "Solutions that Work! The Middle East and North Africa Evidence Symposium on Adolescents and Youth" in coordination with the No Lost Generation initiative. The event supported young people, policymakers, civil society actors, donors, and practitioners take forward the Participatory Action Research, to inform policies related to youth and adolescents in the Middle East and North Africa region.

UNICEF and the Early Childhood Education (ECE) NGO Consortium in the Palestinian Camps spearheaded efforts to expand the access of Palestinian refugees to pre-schooling. The Consortium organized a participatory exercise with the active engagement of the Higher Council for Childhood, the Université Saint Joseph and 69 ECE facilities, to adapt international



standards to the Palestinian context and constraints. This exercise led to the finalization of a phased action plan and manual on ECE minimum standards on improvement in physical environment, teaching methodologies, staff competencies, child protection standards and inclusion of children with disabilities, or developmental/learning difficulties. In 2018, 17 learning facilities in Palestinian camps piloted the initiative.

### **Goal area 3: Every child is protected from violence and exploitation**

UNICEF Lebanon continued direct support to protection services while shifting towards long-term investments in system strengthening and programme integration. The partnership with key ministries was strengthened, resulting in important milestones being achieved, such as the launch of Child Protection Policies by the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health. These new policies provide a foundation upon which institutional capacities and accountabilities for child protection can be built.

The Ministry of Social Affairs equally demonstrated its commitment to child protection and addressing gender-based violence by enhancing the collaboration between its departments, streamlining referral pathways for child protection cases and by embarking upon large reform agendas. These included developing the roadmap on alternative care reform with concrete actions to be implemented in the short and medium term. In addition, a pilot on community-based care models was initiated in September with the Ministry of Social Affairs. The Ministry also demonstrated its commitment by launching the #EndViolence initiative in Lebanon with large social media coverage and local-level conversations mirroring the national launch, including in Palestinian camps and gatherings with the active engagement of the recently set-up and UNICEF-supported nine Child Protection Networks. The focus was on positive parenting and alternative discipline methods - at home, at school and at community level – and the community strategy promoted collective acknowledgment of high levels of violence, as well as collective responsibility to encourage positive discipline. A conference was organized with representatives of key ministries and of local NGOs and schools to create a dialogue on violence against children, one of the many initiatives conducted during the year.

These developments occurred despite the Ministry still finalizing its Strategic Plan for Child Protection and Gender-based Violence. As of January 2019, this new seven-year Plan is in its final drafting stages. It will be accompanied by a costed two-year plan which places emphasis on the institutional and organizational reform of the Ministry and provides a road map for future delivery on its protection mandate for women and children. In parallel, a budget and expenditure analysis of the Ministry of Social Affairs' investment in child protection and gender-based violence is planned. It will serve as an essential tool for the Ministry to assess and advocate for public allocation to the sector.

Furthermore, the Ministry, with support from UNICEF, started the process of drafting the by-laws of the special fund for survivors of domestic violence (Law 293), in addition to a national multi-sectoral strategy to prevent and respond to child marriage in Lebanon. UNICEF remained a close partner of the Ministry of Social Affairs, which has continuously shown high appreciation for the technical expertise brought in the areas of child protection and social protection. The child protection programme is also one of the few programmes providing financial support to selected activities of the Ministry, through procedures following UNICEF's harmonised approach to cash transfers (HACT).

Capacity building remained a key strategy for UNICEF, with new tools and resources

developed and training rolled-out for a broad range of partners, including judges, lawyers, social workers, municipal police, teachers and school counsellors. Efforts to institutionalize capacity building and make training more accessible were realized through the development of an e-course on case management and the launch of the Lebanon-adapted Child Protection Information Management System (CPIMS). While the system was initially designed as a 'Child Protection in Emergency tool', the adaptation and roll-out in Lebanon is a good example of how resources can be adapted to help bridge humanitarian response with longer-term development. Another innovative example of institutional capacity building was the development of a mobile application on clinical management of rape for health practitioners in hospitals and primary health care centres.

While moving into institutional capacity-building and long-term policy work, UNICEF's child protection work also continued to support a large number of children and women with direct services and support in mobile and static safe spaces. During the year, 16,815 girls and women and 1,713 boys accessed and benefited from services. A total of 3,271 children were assisted through child protection case management, while 6,672 "high-risk" children received specialized psychosocial support. The safe spaces continued as a cornerstone of UNICEF's gender-based violence work as they allow women and girls at risk and survivors to receive critical services such as psychosocial support activities, recreation and awareness sessions and case management including referrals to health, mental health, legal and protection services.

Stronger internal programme integration emerged along with UNICEF Lebanon's new strategic direction, for example through a joint child protection/adolescent and youth programme initiative around adolescent safe spaces. Efforts were made to continue build capacities of both local CSOs and Ministry of Social Affairs' staff at local level on gender-based violence risk mitigation and response, providing the participants with an operational framework and monitoring and evaluation tools. UNICEF continued throughout the year to support the Gender-Based Violence Information Management System joint efforts and assisted two new local partners in their contribution to the management system. Significant was the successful integration of gender-based violence risk mitigation across all UNICEF programmes and sectors. Interventions were in line with UNICEF's global commitment to institutionalizing the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's Guidelines on Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action.

Special considerations were given to programme support targeting children with disabilities. Partners were trained and encouraged to include children with disabilities in the child protection activities conducted in communities. At procedural level, a new chapter on children with disabilities was added into the standard operating procedures on case management. This chapter will provide case managers with a better understanding of disabilities, improving the quality of their response via specific considerations, including the participation of children in care planning.

Since the onset of the Syrian crisis, UNICEF has been a strong provider – with partners – of information on services and the sensitization of parents, community-members and children. In 2018, 28,607 children participated in community-based child protection activities and 14,023 caregivers (13,041 female, 982 male) engaged in activities to promote wellbeing and protection of children. Community-based psychosocial activities implemented in Palestinian camps and gatherings reached an additional 23,790 out-of-school (and hence particularly vulnerable) children and adolescents. With the intent of moving beyond information sharing and applying a

longer-term approach, UNICEF shifted emphasis to social normative and behavioural change processes. Together with the Ministry of Social Affairs and other partners, UNICEF commenced development of a strategy for social and behavioural change that will address social norms around child labour, child marriage, violence against women and children at household level. The Strategy builds on recent research, including two studies on child labour, a study on association of children in armed violence and a 2017 knowledge, attitudes and practices study. Appreciating the cross-sectoral drivers of child marriage, child labour and violence, it will be based on positive parenting, along with a life-cycle and multi-sectoral approach as the foundation for social and behavioural change.

Innovative C4D approaches, including edutainment, were used throughout the year to encourage parents and caregivers to take responsibility in protecting and fulfilling children's rights and children to speak up about violations or deprivations. Around 7,000 Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian individuals (out of whom 40 per cent were children) were reached by social messaging through shows and caravan stories collected from boys and girls, including those with disabilities.

UNICEF continued to support mine risk education, leading to a new set of facilitators' training and actual sessions delivered to children by youth and scout associations across Lebanon. Periodic surveys confirmed that mine risk education increases the capacity of children to protect themselves from landmines and explosive remnants of war, not only in the traditionally contaminated South but also in other areas affected by sporadic armed clashes.

As an essential component of a long-standing partnership in Lebanon, UNICEF continued to backstop UNRWA's Child Protection Framework through the reinforcement of their internal capacity. This included financially supporting a gender-based violence officer and a child protection officer, both providing technical assistance and enhancing inter-department and external coordination. In parallel, UNICEF extended support to UNRWA's legal aid services to Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, allowing 344 to benefit from legal awareness sessions.

UNICEF contributed to a joint United Nations Framework for Access to Justice and to a Joint United Nations Approach to address the association of children with armed violence. UNICEF Lebanon played a critical role in facilitating the dialogue with other UN agencies and bringing strong technical inputs into these processes and is now well-positioned for continued UN system-wide collaboration, joint fundraising and as provider of complementary technical support to the Government. UNICEF continued to assure the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism in Lebanon, providing information to the UN Secretary General's Annual report on Children and Armed conflict.

#### **Goal area 4: Every child lives in a clean and safe environment**

UNICEF sustained its systematic approach with the Ministry of Energy and Water to provide an enabling and healthy environment to all people in Lebanon, and to alleviate the strain on the overstretched water and sanitation infrastructure and services. In addition to assisting the Government's coordination of the emergency response, UNICEF actively supported the Ministry's communication strategy aimed at boosting consumer confidence for increased revenue collection. A pilot project in the poorest suburbs of Tripoli produced interesting results with a substantial increase in subscriptions to the Water Establishment.

The 200 gender focal points in the informal settlements WASH committees received

comprehensive and integrated training sessions on health topics such as nutrition surveillance, gender-based violence, disability and education. This aimed to ensure that any suspected case of communicable disease and malnutrition, risk of violence, or any child not attending school would be reported in a timely manner and through the proper channels.

UNICEF continued to financially and technically support partners implementing community mobilization activities in Palestinian camps, to promote WASH safe practices and mitigate any related health risks. In 2018, those activities reached 24,117 people living in Shatila, Burj Barajneh and Burj Shemali camps, including 3,782 children.

### **Goal area 5: Every child has an equitable chance in life**

The Government of Lebanon invited UNICEF to support the Ministry of Social Affairs in the development of a National Social Protection Framework that will mainstream gender, disability and inequities that are specific to Lebanon. It will become the cornerstone of a fully-fledged social protection system, thereby putting an end to programme fragmentation, insufficient coverage and insignificant impact of existing initiatives.

In response, throughout 2018, UNICEF engaged with various stakeholders in the design of a roadmap identifying an institutional set up and the building blocks to the gathering of sound baseline evidence on poverty and vulnerability. A first milestone was reached with the first National Dialogue on Social Protection, which took place on 18 December, to foster national dialogue and forge commitment to move forward. UNICEF's engagement also contributed to the Government taking the lead in the collective reflection on the feasibility of adjusted social transfers in Lebanon and on pilot options. A dedicated social protection coordinator, recruited by UNICEF, was seconded to the Ministry of Social Affairs to support the process and conduct orientation sessions. In parallel, UNICEF worked with the Overseas Development Institute and local researchers on a comprehensive review of the existing social safety net programmes, such as the National Poverty Targeting Programme, and the country's main disability targeted programme.

Additionally, at the macro-level, together with UNFPA, UNICEF significantly invested in furthering inclusive policies for adolescents and youth through renewed technical assistance to the Ministry of Youth and Sports to develop the Action Plan of the National Youth Policy and finalize the prioritization and implementation of its key recommendations. The process was consultative, iterative and participative, with large representation from relevant ministries, which resulted in the inclusion of a strong gender focus, baseline and end-line targets, and a robust monitoring and evaluation plan. Sustaining continuous efforts to improve national budgeting for children, UNICEF Lebanon led a series of workshops on public finance management processes and resource allocation with five ministries. Budget analyses of three social sectors (education, health and social affairs) were conducted to guide and inform policy asks in 2019, and a package of technical assistance to be provided to the Ministry of Finance was defined following consultative discussions.

UNICEF continued to work alongside key UN agencies delivering social assistance, including UNHCR and the World Food Programme (WFP) in humanitarian situations. UNICEF also continued to collaborate closely with the World Bank and with the European Union's Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis, the 'Madad Fund' on the expansion of the Government's National Poverty Targeting Programme. In line with the Grand Bargain commitment to increase cash in lieu of in-kind delivery, as well as with the UN Strategic

Framework, UNICEF Lebanon continued in 2018 to invest in the improvement of inter-agency coordination ultimately aiming at the rapid expansion of the coverage of vulnerable households with social assistance. UNICEF Lebanon was acknowledged alongside WFP and UNHCR as the global lead on strengthening inter-agency UN coordination and effective collaboration of cash assistance in humanitarian contexts, while recent research found that Lebanon demonstrates global best practices in the area.

As a leading agency in the sector, UNICEF provided inputs to several global studies on cash transfers costing and cash plus initiatives, on information systems for cash programmes, as well as general guidance on humanitarian cash assistance. "Min Ila", the only child-focused and gender-sensitive social assistance programme in Lebanon, ended in 2018 after it had reached a yearly average of 50,000 children with monthly cash transfers and a multi-sectoral referral system available to family members in high-risk households. The impact evaluation revealed that through its holistic approach, Min Ila was effective in addressing cumulative deprivations as well as mitigating negative coping strategies such as dropping out of education, child labour, or early marriage for instance. It also highlighted the resulting improvements in school enrolment and attendance, young children's health, food security, and an increased well-being for children and youth. Significantly, approximately 47 per cent of the children reached were girls who faced specific vulnerabilities and that impacts were equally felt by both girls and boys. Due to unpredictable funding and a lack of multi-year resources, financial resources were not available in mid-2018 to continue Min Ila. Given the broader shift to integrated programming, UNICEF Lebanon continued to prioritize the provision of social assistance, but as one of the multi-sector entry points to children that are out of learning, under a new integrated social assistance programme that will start in 2019. Out of the over 47,000 children beneficiaries at its closure, around 20,000 were re-enrolled into the education cash programme (Reaching Schools) and about half the remaining 27,000 continued to receive support from other cash programmes.

Alongside Min Ila, UNICEF implemented and contributed to several cash programmes in 2018, keeping a focus on the most vulnerable:

- LOUISE, the platform streamlining humanitarian cash assistance through a common delivery mechanism across all involved agencies, under which UNICEF designed and put in place the common call centre;
- Winter Cash programme, for the benefit of 63,500 severely vulnerable children, most of whose families had their cash assistance from other UN agencies recently discontinued, and;
- Reaching Schools, which throughout the scholastic year supported the families of 60,000 children, with a focus on children with disabilities, to receive grants for transportation costs.

As vulnerable refugee populations will most likely always need some form of social assistance for some time (likely to be provided by development partners according to the Government's policy) UNICEF Lebanon supported the formation in 2018 of a Social Safety Nets Partners Forum, to promote increasingly sustainable, coordinated and longer-term programming in the sector.

Local authorities play a pivotal role in UNICEF's efforts to leverage resources and build partnerships for children, towards inclusive social development and child-friendly municipalities

in Lebanon. Multiple initiatives were initiated in 2018 to address multi-dimensional vulnerabilities of children and their families at community level. Across the country, consultations were held with children, adolescents and their caregivers to capture the “voices” of children on issues concerning them, on their views and aspirations to ensure reflection in the country programme mid-term review process.

Active engagement with the Municipality of Beirut and the Beirut Governor’s office (where a senior child rights advisor was seconded) resulted in a three-year memorandum of understanding and action plan to address child rights violations in Beirut (for street children in particular), and actual budget allocation for 2018/2019. In Tripoli, following a successful joint programme with UN Women and UN Habitat, UNICEF worked with the municipal social committee on the elaboration of a two-year municipal action plan to reduce child labour by 20 to 30 per cent. In Mina, a gender balanced neighbourhood committee now acts as a liaison platform to promote child rights and raise the voice of children. In Tyre, UNICEF conducted several training sessions with municipal police and staff on child rights and child protection topics while active advocacy led to the assignment by the Governor of child rights Focal Points in 18 municipalities in the South.

A new C4D strategy tackling disability and related barriers to inclusion was developed by several ministries with UNICEF’s support, together with a training manual already used with 148 frontline workers and service providers for cascading the strategy at community level. The strategy aims to reduce high levels of prejudice against disabled people and children in Lebanon. The 2017 knowledge, attitudes and practices study revealed that 82 per cent of respondents believed that children with intellectual disabilities should not go to regular schools.

### **Emergency preparedness and accountability to affected populations**

UNICEF Lebanon put in place clear mechanisms to support the integration of accountability to affected populations across its programme cycle, with a focus on communities’ feedback and transparency. Communities are now involved in programme design through focus group discussions, and new feedback mechanisms were continuously set up throughout 2018. Accountability to affected populations will be strengthened and even further systemized in 2019. Lebanon is also part of the initiative commissioned by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and undertaken by Ground Truth Solutions, where surveys and in-depth research are conducted with beneficiaries and local organisations, including with UNICEF’s partners. The last surveys were conducted in 2018.

As highlighted earlier, substantial humanitarian concerns must be addressed under the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan, including the basic needs of 1.5 million refugees and vulnerable Lebanese children, as well as the ability to respond to smaller-scale acute emergencies such as seasonal disasters, evictions or floods. Lebanon has established sector coordination mechanisms and an inter-agency contingency plan. UNICEF has contingency plans in place at field level. As part of its planning, UNICEF identified five risks and developed preparedness plan as reflected on the emergency preparedness platform for four of them: intercommunal violence between Syrians and host communities; violence between political parties; armed conflict; and epidemics. Politically-triggered emergencies, such as refolement, are not likely at this point, as there is commitment at highest political levels to abide by international legal standards. Whereas the United Nations and humanitarian agencies are not facilitating returns to Syria, discussions around durable solutions are ongoing at inter-agency level and will be intensified in 2019.

## Gender-responsive programming

The interventions implemented by UNICEF in 2018 were informed, among others, by the Gender Programmatic Review conducted in 2016 and by the Mid-Term Review conducted in February 2018. Consequently, all sectoral interventions mainstreamed gender issues, leading to the achievements reported above. To strengthen the office's internal institutional capacity to effectively deliver on its gender equality programming, a gender specialist was seconded to UNICEF Lebanon and six gender focal points designated, with at least one in each programme section. All received ad-hoc training to develop their competencies and skills to strengthen gender mainstreaming across all interventions. UNICEF Lebanon will be conducting another gender programmatic review during 2019 to inform the next country programme.

## Part 3: Lessons learned and constraints

UNICEF Lebanon went through an intense mid-term review process in 2018, assessing the Government of Lebanon/UNICEF Country Programme for 2017-2020. The review focused on the objectives and structures put in place by UNICEF to ensure equitable outcomes for the poorest, most disadvantaged and hardest-to-reach children and families, and by working with partners to address policy, systems, and access to and demand for services at national, subnational and community levels. The current programme aims to respond to immediate humanitarian needs and at the same time, to build resilience to further shocks and address development deficits. One of the main conclusions was that key challenges faced by disadvantaged children and their families had not yet been sufficiently mitigated, and that multiple vulnerabilities and poverty had also increased. Some of these vulnerabilities include increasing poverty levels, household debts and limited livelihood opportunities. These are pushing Palestinian and Syrian refugee families, as well as Lebanese poor families, to resort to negative coping strategies that are harmful to children, such as child labour, child marriage, dropping out of school and decreasing food consumption. This has necessitated a change to the evidence base used for analysis, strategic thinking, planning, and impact assessment.

The most significant change that stemmed from this learning in 2018 was the need for a more significant level of strategic thinking regarding longer-term solutions. In its eighth year, the humanitarian response has seen plateauing of donor commitments and expectations for additional commitments to wane in the coming three to five years. Although institutional development, capacity building and policy change have been part and parcel of the overall approach adopted by all sections and sectors, there is still a clear need for sustainable humanitarian solutions and for a methodology shift to allow for greater ownership by national stakeholders and systems. These solutions need to incorporate and reflect international norms and standards, including a focus on child specific vulnerabilities and needs, inclusion, and other relevant conventions that the Government of Lebanon is a signatory to. The Theory of Change exercise undertaken in mid-2018 allowed for a revisiting of the strategic thinking in each of UNICEF Lebanon's programme areas resulting in Rolling Work Plans for 2019-2020 that will operationalize this new approach.

The increased focus on sustainable solutions and shift to development has also raised important issues, and hence lessons, regarding the nature of partnerships that UNICEF Lebanon is engaged in. For more sustainable solutions as mentioned above, a greater reliance

on, and building capacity of, local and national partners as opposed to international organizations is one obvious lesson that will be more deliberately pursued in 2019. In addition, a more significant level of partnerships with local level duty bearers (including local authorities, civil society organizations, community-based organizations, and youth groups) will be sought with an equal, if not greater, emphasis on rights holders. Partnerships of this nature at community and local levels will remain a focus of the UNICEF Lebanon's overall approach and programmatic methodology.

The review also re-emphasized the need for a key shift to take place to promote programme integration as a multi-sectoral approach to address the complex needs of disadvantaged girls and boys and their families. This requires better coordination across a continuum (from childhood to adulthood) and across sectors (such as water and sanitation, child protection, education, gender and social policy). While vertical integration has already been initiated by UNICEF Lebanon (as exemplified by the development of child protection policies for the Ministry of Health and for the Ministry of Education), horizontal integration is still necessary, with coordination and referral of the multi-sectoral gateways - municipalities, schools, public health centres, social development centres, and civil society organizations as well as duty bearers and children's participation in certain municipalities. UNICEF Lebanon changed its offices' structure accordingly during the latest programme budget review and spent a significant amount of time planning for this new working modality for field offices. The experience of the office-wide shift is expected to be documented and progress regularly monitored by the country management team.

An additional outcome of the review process was the glaring realization of the inadequacy of the incorporation of gender and disabilities in the programmatic approach reflected in the workplans. The concern thus far had been to ensure that UNICEF Lebanon's activities and reporting were cognizant and inclusive of both issues. In 2019, the approach will be refined to ensure both issues are incorporated more meaningfully and explicitly in the entire programmatic cycle, starting from analysis, to planning, monitoring and evaluation. Implementation of the relevant tools such as the gender programmatic review is an essential step to guide the preparation of the next country programme.

There is also a clear need to use the evidence regularly collected for child and gender focussed analyses to more effectively demonstrate and communicate results and impact, advocate for children with various duty bearers, document lessons learnt and share knowledge about the situation of children. Some of the evidence that has been generated are the Vulnerability Assessment for Syrian Refugees with WFP and UNHCR, the UNICEF Household survey, the upcoming multiple indicator cluster survey and the neighbourhood profiles with UN Habitat. UNICEF Lebanon initiated an office-wide Advocacy Strategy and a Knowledge and Innovation Strategy for roll-out in 2019 to follow-up on this recommendation.

An important contribution to global knowledge on social assistance in protracted humanitarian contexts was the publishing in 2018 of the Min Ila impact evaluation, produced by UNICEF's Office of Research and the American Institute for Research. This study provided useful evidence relating to the impact of direct cash transfers on child well-being and child development, including education spending, improved health, and better food security. In addition, it provided evidence of rising optimism among children and youth who were part of the programme's caseload. The findings of the evaluation supported the design of a reduced and integrated social assistance programme for Lebanese and non-Lebanese children, following the same principles. One other key lesson from this UNICEF Min Ila cash-based programme



was the need to effectively coordinate cash transfer programmes to promote discussion and evidence, ultimately reducing transaction costs with UNHCR and WFP, while still allowing flexibility for all agencies to determine the best approach to provide cash transfers in the interests of beneficiaries. As a result, a joint statement by the heads of UNHCR, WFP, UNICEF and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA) was published in December, promoting the importance of working in a coordinated manner, as is done under the Lebanon One Unified Inter-Agency System for e-cards (LOUISE) platform. This approach enhances coordination whilst at the same time upholding the individual agencies' reach and support to refugees' multidimensional needs.

Due to the Syrian crisis, UNICEF consistently had to raise significant levels of donor funding to cover the needs of children and their families in Lebanon. The programme funding used has therefore increased about five-fold since 2013, from US\$56 to US\$335 million in 2018. Lebanon is, however, a middle-income country and as such, the country programme received the unchanged minimal core budget allocation. The longer-term donors' humanitarian funds have furthermore become increasingly earmarked, with little interest to support organizational cost recovery. UNICEF Lebanon's minimal cross-sectoral margin costs have thus made local operations highly volatile and were unable to cover core activities or mitigate the risk of shortfalls. Ad-hoc funds received from UNICEF Headquarters to reduce those risks have been directly allocated to programme implementation and have effectively assisted UNICEF in Lebanon during the past year.

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