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**For information**

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**United Nations Children's Fund**

Executive Board

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**Report of the field visit to Egypt and Lebanon by members of the Executive Board, 21 to 30 March 2017****I. Introduction**

1. The following Members of the Executive Board of UNICEF participated in the visit: H.E. Mr. Gebeyehu Ganga Gayito, Deputy Permanent Representative of Ethiopia to the United Nations; Mr. Tobias Axerup, Deputy Director, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Sweden; Ms. Illa Mainali, First Secretary, Permanent Mission of Nepal to the United Nations; Ms. Karine Tardif, First Secretary, Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations; Mr. Claxton Duberry, Third Secretary, Permanent Mission of Antigua and Barbuda to the United Nations; and Ms. Ekaterina M. Noskova, Third Secretary, Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations. Mr. Nicolas Pron, Secretary of the Executive Board, UNICEF, and Mr. Gilles Fagninou, Assistant Secretary of the Executive Board, UNICEF, accompanied the delegation.

2. The field visit allowed the delegation to gain a first-hand understanding of the work of UNICEF at the country level. More specifically, the visit aimed to demonstrate concrete examples of UNICEF cooperation with the Government and other partners, including the United Nations country team. Furthermore, the visit provided an opportunity for the members of the delegation to better understand the issues and challenges facing children and women in both Egypt and Lebanon.

3. The delegation would like to express its gratitude to the Governments of Egypt and Lebanon for the opportunities for substantive dialogue with senior members of the Governments.

4. The delegation would like to thank the UNICEF country teams in Egypt and Lebanon, as well as the UNICEF Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa, for the very carefully prepared and well organized visit, and for the ready availability of staff throughout

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\*E/ICEF/2017/5.

the visit. The delegation was particularly impressed by the commitment and dedication of government officials at every level and the UNICEF staff in the two countries.

5. The programme of the visit consisted of two main components:

(a) Visit to Lebanon, 21 to 25 March 2017, including meetings in Beirut with the UNICEF country office, senior-level government counterparts and members of the United Nations country team.

(b) Visit to Egypt, 26 to 30 March 2017, including meetings in Cairo with the UNICEF country office, senior-level government counterparts and members of the United Nations country team.

6. In both countries, the delegation had the opportunity to visit UNICEF projects in the field. The delegation met with local government representatives; civil society organizations; users of health facilities; users of social development centres; health and social workers; teachers; school administrators; students; young people; members of community groups; religious leaders; and UNICEF staff.

7. The present report summarizes the briefings received by the delegation and concludes with the delegation's own observations.

## **II. Key issues facing children and women in Lebanon**

8. A key challenge facing Lebanon is the high influx of refugees: according to estimates, the country is host to as many as 1.5 million refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic,<sup>1</sup> including refugees who have not been registered, along with thousands of Palestinian refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic, Lebanese returnees, and a pre-existing population of Palestinian refugees. Tensions between refugees and host communities are exacerbated by an increased demand for services and resources. The deteriorating socioeconomic situation of many refugees as well as vulnerable Lebanese, coupled with limited livelihood opportunities, has contributed to increased child vulnerabilities as families resort to negative coping mechanisms such as child labour, including its worst forms, and child marriage.

9. A large number of children are unable to access formal schooling for a variety of reasons, including the obligation to work, or a lack of school readiness.

10. The delegation was informed that the crisis has meant that greater numbers of poor and marginalized Lebanese and Palestinian refugee children than ever before are at increased risk of exclusion and exploitation. As of April 2017, the mass influx of refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic into Lebanon has amounted to approximately 1.05 million Syrians registered as refugees with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and many more present but unregistered. As a result, the number of people residing in Lebanon has increased sharply by at least 30 per cent since March 2011 – and perhaps by as much as 1.5 million according to government estimates, in a country of just 4 million Lebanese. At the moment, 1 in every 4 residents in Lebanon is a displaced Syrian.

11. The delegation had the opportunity to witness the situation of children and women living in informal settlements, who often lack access to basic health, education, and water and sanitation services, and are exposed to extreme weather conditions, especially during winter. With the support of UNICEF, they receive psychosocial services and improved access to clean water, and learn good hygiene practices.

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<sup>1</sup> Government of Lebanon and the United Nations, Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2017-2020, January 2017.

### **Maternal and child health**

12. The delegation visited a primary health-care centre located in a vulnerable urban community where Lebanese and non-Lebanese vulnerable children and pregnant and lactating women receive basic primary health care. The centre also provides medical consultations, gynaecological and dental services, medications for chronic and non-chronic diseases, and infant and young child feeding services.

13. UNICEF supports the centre in the implementation of immunization, nutrition and consultation services for all vulnerable children and pregnant and lactating women. In 2017 to date, the monthly average number of women and children reached at the centre were as follows:

- (a) 531 children under 5 received consultations
- (b) 177 pregnant women received consultations
- (c) 337 children received vaccines
- (d) 547 children under 5 were screened for malnutrition
- (e) 21 children under 5 were identified as having moderate acute malnutrition
- (f) 6 children under 5 were identified as having severe acute malnutrition.

14. Overall, the aim of UNICEF health interventions in the region is to ensure greater access of refugees and vulnerable Lebanese populations to quality primary health services, including access to routine immunization and nutrition services.

### **Water, sanitation and hygiene**

15. There is a need to provide expanded coverage of essential water and sanitation services to communities beyond the capacity of the existing infrastructure, a need that has been exacerbated by the influx of refugees. The water regulatory institutions focus on addressing critical needs rather than building institutional resilience to current and future shocks. To this end, UNICEF is working with the Ministry of Energy and Water and with water establishments to strengthen and harmonize national and local systems and capacity to increase sustainable access to quality water.

16. UNICEF supports the approach of increasing sustainable access to safe drinking water, improving access to adequate sanitation and promoting hand-washing and good hygienic practices, including in schools. Leveraging its presence before, during and after emergencies, UNICEF provides support to increase access to safe drinking water among children and families in humanitarian situations.

17. In the Bekaa and Baalbek-Hermel Governorates, members of the delegation had the opportunity to witness water supply and storage, latrine construction and sewage desludging, water filter distribution, hygiene promotion, solid waste management and flood-mitigation measures. This informal settlement has received this support to 22 tents, including 24 families made up of 125 individuals.

### **Education**

18. UNICEF supports efforts to provide access to quality education for boys and girls through improved learning outcomes and equitable and inclusive education. UNICEF works

on increasing access and improving learning in primary schools, including in humanitarian situations.

19. In the village of Al Nabi Sheet, the delegation visited an intermediate public school. Delegation members interacted with children and their parents, and they heard from the teachers and school administrators.

20. The delegation visited the Al Mohammara Public School, and saw first-hand how UNICEF support for second shifts in schools can increase attendance and the number of children receiving an education. The delegation also visited the UNICEF Min Ila project, a cash transfer project that aims to help children to stay in school so as to improve their future opportunities. A positive aspect is that if beneficiaries drop out, they do not get removed from the project; instead, they receive a household visit and referral to services to help the children return to school.

21. For the past three years, 2014 to 2016, UNICEF has been supporting the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in Lebanon to promote children's right to education through the Reaching All Children with Education in Lebanon (RACE) Response Plan. The project focuses on subsidizing primary school enrolment fees and structuring of tailored non-formal education programmes. In September 2016, RACE II, 2017-2021, was launched.

#### **Child protection**

22. UNICEF focuses on a holistic "systems" approach to child protection, which addresses the full spectrum of risk factors and underlying vulnerabilities in the lives of children and their families. UNICEF focuses on the complex interaction between social norms, policies and legislation to work with lawmakers and opinion-shapers at the international and national level, while also working downstream with key actors at the community level.

23. Furthermore, UNICEF focuses on providing psychosocial services to Syrian refugees as they have been exposed to traumatic events in their lives. Gender-based violence is another issue on which the organization focuses, because refugees living in unsafe conditions are often subject to sexual violence. UNICEF has worked with partners to minimize the impact of conflict through vocational training, counselling, community-based mobile services, and child-friendly and women-safe spaces.

#### **The role of UNICEF in Lebanon**

24. UNICEF has been working in Lebanon to protect children's rights since 1948. Today, the country office works closely with the Government of Lebanon, United Nations agencies, international and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), Lebanese universities, and other partners to reach the most vulnerable Lebanese children, children displaced by the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, and Palestinian refugee children. To meet the needs of more than 1.4 million vulnerable children in Lebanon, UNICEF is providing interventions across key sectors including: child survival (health and nutrition; water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)); child development (education); child protection; adolescents and youth; and social inclusion (social policy, social protection and community engagement).

### **III. Key issues facing children and women in Egypt**

25. In Egypt, the proportion of people living below the national poverty line was higher in 2015 than in 1990. Poverty impacts children more than adults, and multidimensional poverty is widespread. Regional and socioeconomic inequities are persistent, with Upper Egypt in particular lagging behind in development.

26. While the rate of under-five mortality has dropped, neonatal mortality remains a great concern as its share has grown and it now comprises 52 per cent of all deaths in children under age 5. Equally, stunting in children has remained high, with a rate of approximately one quarter of children stunted. In addition, approximately 16 per cent of children are overweight and/or obese. The combination of undernutrition as well as overweight/obesity among children means that Egypt is suffering from a double burden of malnutrition.

27. Child protection issues are at the top of the UNICEF agenda as violence against children remains very high, including in households and schools. According to the 2014 Egypt Demographic and Health Survey, 93 per cent of children (aged 1-14 years) were exposed to violent disciplinary practices at home, including both physical punishment and psychological aggression. Another area of concern is the increasing numbers of children who are on the move (refugees, victims of human trafficking or smuggling, or internally displaced persons). Egypt has become a country of origin, transit and destination for irregular migration and the children who are affected are particularly vulnerable.

28. In Egypt, violence against girls and women, child marriage, teenage pregnancy and other practices continue to harm young girls, putting them at risk of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C). Egypt remains among the top four countries with the highest FGM/C prevalence rate worldwide. Only a slight decline in prevalence has been noted over the past 10 years, despite the practice being against Egyptian law. In addition, significant national and regional disparities exist with regard to prevalence rates.

29. Egypt has a rapidly growing young population. Approximately 30 per cent of adolescents drop out of school before reaching secondary school, for which the gross enrolment ratio is only 68.8 per cent (Ministry of Education, 2015/16). Most of the dropouts start working in the agricultural or industrial sectors. Education and learning are key challenges in this context. While significant progress has been made in terms of promoting access to education and ensuring gender equality, regional and wealth-related disparities remain and overall learning quality continues to be weak.

### **Maternal and child health**

30. UNICEF is involved in a multi-year partnership with the Ministry of Health and Population that includes the implementation of an Integrated Perinatal and Child Health and Nutrition programme, jointly supported by the United States Agency for International Development and UNICEF. The programme focuses on 269 family health units in 11 of the most deprived districts, and is a model to improve the quality of and accessibility to an integrated package of essential maternal, neonatal, child health care and nutrition interventions.

31. In Manfalout district of the Assiut governorate, the delegation saw evidence of the positive impact of the programme during their visit to a family health unit. UNICEF is helping to improve the quality of services and strengthening the unit's performance capacity through staff training and use of a data system that allows for monitoring, bottleneck analysis and decision making that are geared towards equity-focused approaches. The delegation members interacted with representatives from the Ministry of Health and Population, the head of the Directorate of Health, medical and paramedical staff at the family health unit, and parents and children attending the community activities and the health services of the unit.

32. The delegation noted and welcomed the close collaboration between the Ministry of Health and Population and UNICEF. Ensuring continued local ownership of the Integrated Perinatal and Child Health and Nutrition programme is key to the sustainability of the efforts. The delegation was informed that while access to primary health care had greatly improved, the quality of care remains limited and geographical disparities exist, leaving disadvantaged areas with inadequate human and financial resources.

**Child malnutrition**

33. The delegation witnessed how the Integrated Perinatal and Child Health and Nutrition programme has assisted Egypt in delivering specific nutrition interventions at the primary health level. Considerable efforts have been made to reach women in the antenatal, postnatal and lactation periods, providing them with training and information on the importance of nutrition. Furthermore the delegation was informed of efforts by UNICEF to support the Government of Egypt in translating the national nutrition agenda into a 1,000-day conceptual framework that emphasizes that the first two years of a child's life are critical for the prevention of chronic malnutrition (stunting).

**Education**

34. In the Manfalout district of Assiut governorate, the delegation witnessed an example of UNICEF long-standing cooperation with the Ministry of Education around community-based schools. The delegation visited a school where the Ministry provides teachers' salaries and textbooks that follow the national curriculum. UNICEF supported the school with provision of school furniture, supplies and capacity-building of teachers and inspectors for quality assurance. The school was located within the village to ensure proximity to where the children live. The delegation interacted with children, teachers and school management. The delegation was pleased to learn of plans to scale up the programme within a UNICEF/European Union partnership.

35. At the Mohamed Farid Primary School in the El-Sahel area of Cairo, the delegation witnessed the work of UNICEF work in providing technical assistance and supplies to improve equity in and quality of education. Teachers and school staff are trained on identifying disabilities, child-centred learning, inclusive classroom management, and examinations specifications for children with disabilities. UNICEF has also provided resource rooms that include a wide range of educational materials to support student learning.

**Child protection**

36. In the 10th of Ramadan City, the delegation visited a project that aims to integrate community-based child protection services in the national health system. Through extensive outreach, the project contributes to the mainstreaming of health services for Syrian refugees within the existing national health system. The project also focuses on vulnerable groups from host communities. The delegation met with children and staff from the health facility, and had discussions with a group of Syrian women who have been trained as community health-care workers to conduct outreach activities in the district.

**Adolescents and youth**

37. With adolescents representing approximately 19 per cent of the total population, the UNICEF Country Office in Egypt has given particular attention to expanding its partnership network to sustain youth empowerment, in coordination with the Ministry of Youth and Sports. This cooperation has led to a national life skills and employability programme called Meshwary ("My Journey"). Since the end of 2015 the programme has been adopted and permanently institutionalized within the organizational structure and mandate of the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

38. At the Bani Mor Youth Centre in El Fath district, Assiut governorate, the delegation had the pleasure of visiting a Meshwary project for life-skills support and youth employability. The delegation met with representatives from the Ministry of Youth and

Sports, who demonstrated a clear commitment to and ownership of the project, and with youth centre staff and project beneficiaries.

39. At the same centre, the delegation also witnessed an example of UNICEF-UNFPA cooperation to prevent and eliminate FGM/C. The delegation met with staff from local implementing partners, persons engaged in community outreach and young people participating in the activities. As a result of important work done by the UNICEF country office, collaboration with religious leaders has been established and shows the potential for further growth. Engaging religious leaders, health practitioners as well as other community-based actors is key to prevent and eliminate FGM/C.

#### **The role of UNICEF in Egypt**

40. UNICEF has been working in Egypt to protect children's rights since 1952. Today the country office works closely with the Government of Egypt, other United Nations agencies, international and local NGOs, religious leaders and other partners to reach the country's most vulnerable children.

41. Implementation of the current country programme (2013-2017) has been challenging due to the political turbulence. This has caused delays in programme implementation for all agencies, including UNICEF. The UNICEF country office is currently in the process of submitting the next country programme document (CPD) for Egypt for the period 2018-2022. The development of the CPD started with the elaboration of a situation analysis of children in Egypt and the contribution of UNICEF to the development of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for Egypt, 2018-2022.

## **IV. Observations**

42. The delegation welcomed the opportunity to witness the activities of UNICEF in both countries and, during the field visits, very much appreciated the dedication and hard work of UNICEF staff and their partners. UNICEF is doing impressive work in delivering results on a wide range of issues affecting children, among others WASH, health and nutrition, education, life skills support and youth employability, FGM/C, child marriage and inter-faith dialogue.

43. The choice of two middle-income countries for the field visit provided the delegation with important insights about the challenges and operational context specific to these countries, including high income inequality, a youth bulge and youth unemployment, and an overstretched public service.

44. The delegation appreciated the clear focus of UNICEF on the most vulnerable population groups and the most disadvantaged geographical areas, including refugees, children with disabilities, and children living in rural areas.

45. The delegation is of the view that the UNICEF programmes in Egypt and Lebanon have had a meaningful impact on children and women and require the continued strong country ownership and commitment of the respective Governments.

46. Engagement by UNICEF with partners, civil society, communities and faith-based organizations were good examples of the organization's value added in bringing different partners together.

47. The delegation welcomed, as an important strategy for achieving results for children, efforts made by UNICEF to influence policies, legislation and public spending in favour of the most disadvantaged.

48. The delegation appreciated the critical role played by UNICEF in support of the Governments of Egypt and Lebanon in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and in supporting the protection and fulfilment of the rights of children and women.

49. Recommendations on areas for improvement include:

(a) *Increasing national ownership*: The delegation recommends that UNICEF seeks more involvement by the national Governments at earlier stages of project planning and development of CPDs, as well as UNDAFs. A desire to be consulted earlier and more frequently was expressed by several national government representatives.

(b) *Greater focus on gender equality*: Sex-disaggregated data was sometimes collected, but not always, and there was limited evidence of analysis and use of this data to inform programming. A greater focus on the specific needs and circumstances of girls is needed, not only in dealing with girl-specific challenges such as child marriage and FGM/C, but also in other areas including education, WASH, protection and health and nutrition.

(c) *More focus on the outcome (impact) level*: The result of UNICEF activities was not always measured at the outcome level, but rather at the activities or output level. For instance, learning outcomes are not always measured in schools, and the health impact of the water and sanitation activities in informal settlements are not reported on. The delegation is of the view that reporting at the outcome level provides important information on what the programme is achieving and on improvements needed, and can also contribute to greater resource mobilization.

(d) *Improving coordination with other United Nations agencies*: In both country contexts, coordination with other United Nations agencies was identified as a challenge. National government representatives indicated that United Nations agencies approach them separately and do not speak with one voice. United Nations country team representatives in both countries said that working together is often a challenge, and that insufficient incentives exist for joint programming and increased collaboration. Given the commitment of the United Nations Secretary-General and the Deputy Secretary-General to reform of the United Nations development system, and the fact that the UNICEF areas of work overlap with that of the other funds and programmes, the delegation recommends that UNICEF continue its efforts to increase coordination and identify practical ways at the country level to minimize overlaps and duplication.

(e) *Innovative approaches*: UNICEF should continue to play a key role in implementing innovative projects, especially in the sphere of youth training and employment, and draw on successful experience from other countries, if necessary.

(f) *Focus*: The delegation recommends that UNICEF maintain its focus on supporting the Governments of Egypt and Lebanon in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular the protection and fulfilment of the rights of children and women.



## **Annex**

### **Summary of the programme of the field visit to Lebanon and Egypt**

#### **Lebanon**

*Wednesday, 22 March 2017*

##### **Bekaa/Baalbek:**

- Departure from Beirut to the Bekaa.
- Visit the Nabi Sheet Social Development Centre with the Danish Refugee Council and attend a focused psychosocial support activity in an informal settlement
- Visit Al Nabi Sheet Intermediate Public School
- Visit water, sanitation and hygiene interventions with partner Mercy Corps, and attend a hygiene-promotion session
- Visit the Lebanese Organization for Studies and Training, a local non-governmental organization

*Thursday, 23 March 2017*

##### **Tripoli and Akkar:**

- Travel from Beirut to the Kfarsaroun reservoir
- Visit Makarem Al-Akhlak Primary Health Centre (including talking to the implementing partner and beneficiaries). The centre, as part of the Ministry of Public Health network, is supported by UNICEF, UNHCR and International Medical Corps.
- Visit the Lebanese Relief Council and attend a financial and accounting training session
- Visit Al Mohammara Public School to see the second shift and the UNICEF Min Ila cash transfer project, and focus group discussions with students and beneficiaries of Min Ila.

*Friday, 24 March 2017*

##### **Meetings with high-level officials**

- Breakfast meeting with the United Nations country team (Mövenpick Hotel)
- Walk through the Chatila Palestinian camp and talk to partners
- Meeting with Prime Minister Saad Hariri
- Meeting with the Minister of Education and Higher Education, Marwan Hamade
- Meeting with the Minister of Energy and Water, Cesar Abi Khalil
- Meeting with the Minister of Social Affairs, Pierre Bou Assi
- Meeting with the Minister of Public Health, Ghassan Hasbani

- Meeting with the Minister of State for Displaced Affairs, Mouin Merhebi
- Attend a training-of-trainers session on design thinking for the trainers of the innovation programme, with the Nawaya Network
- Reception with embassies (Liza restaurant).

## **Egypt**

*Sunday, 26 March 2017*

- Working session at the hotel
- UNICEF Representative and Deputy Representative: Introduction; Overview of the mission; Agenda; Questions and Answers
- Ad-hoc United Nations country team meeting
- United Nations Department of Safety and Security briefing
- Working session at the hotel: Country programme document presentation: current and new country programme cycle
- Meeting with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

*Monday, 27 March 2017*

- Working session at the hotel: Briefing with the UNICEF Representative and UNICEF Social Protection Specialist
- Meeting with the Ministry of Social Solidarity
- Meeting with the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood
- Event 1 - Agence Française de Développement/UNICEF signing ceremony for a grant agreement supporting a Ministry of Health and Population primary health-care project
- Reception with diplomatic missions and UNICEF partners.

*Tuesday, 28 March 2017*

- Flight to Assiut
- Visit 1 - Integrated Perinatal Health and Nutrition programme: Manfalout district, Um El Kusour Family Healthcare Unit
- Visit 2 – Al-Sahhara Community-Based school, in Bani Shoqeir village, Manfalout district
- Visit 3 – Meshwary programme, life skills and youth employability: Bani Mor Youth Centre, El Fath district
- Visit 4 - Community-based initiatives for the prevention and elimination of female genital mutilation/cutting, Bani Mor Youth Centre, El Fath district
- Meeting with the Governor of Assiut.

*Wednesday, 29 March 2017*

- Flight to Cairo
- Event 2 - Religious Leaders Initiative: inter-faith workshop with religious leaders, scholars and students from the Bishopric of Public, Ecumenical and Social Services and Al Azhar University
- Meeting with the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics.
- Dinner with the Minister of Education.

*Thursday, 30 March 2017*

- Visit 5 - Inclusive school in Cairo: Mohamed Farid Primary School, El-Sahel
  - Visit 6 - Emergency response to refugees and children on the move: First Health Office of 10th of Ramadan City
  - Meeting with UNICEF staff.
-