Middle East and North Africa

Children across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) continue to face unspeakably difficult humanitarian conditions and human rights deprivations. Their rights to life, liberty and security are denied in the face of escalating violence and conflict that consumes large swathes of the region. Ongoing conflict inside Syria and Iraq, the recent armed conflict in the State of Palestine, political volatility in Libya and Yemen, and a persistent crisis in Sudan, along with the silent crisis of the Saharawi refugees in Algeria, have resulted in a bleak outlook for girls and boys in the MENA region.

In Syria, the sheer numbers of people affected are staggering: over 12 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, including 7.6 million internally displaced persons – nearly 5 million of whom are trapped in difficult-to-reach areas; and 3.3 million Syrian refugees (half of them children) are living in the neighbouring countries of Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. In Iraq, a volatile combination of sectarian violence and conflict between the state and extremist groups is crippling the country, with 5.2 million people in urgent need of humanitarian assistance, including 2.2 million internally displaced persons, and 190,000 Iraqi refugees who have left the country to seek safety. Polio and measles outbreaks in both Iraq and Syria threaten the lives of many children. There is a real risk of a lost generation of Syrian children as they grow up witnessing violence, suffering deep wounds, and enduring hardship at the expense of their education and possibly their futures.

In Sudan, conflicts, natural disasters and disease epidemics make it one of the worst situations for children in the world today with 4.1 million children in urgent need of humanitarian assistance, 2 million boys and girls acutely malnourished and 2.6 million children (aged 6-13 years) out of school. In Djibouti, recurrent drought and extreme poverty has triggered population movements towards the capital, resulting in a high incidence of school-drop-outs, particularly among girls, and increased child labour and violence against children. In Yemen, widespread malnutrition, food insecurity, and conflict combined with a near absence of basic services make this one of the largest humanitarian crises in the region with a total of 14.7 million people in need of assistance. In Libya, a resurgence of fighting threatens an already fragile situation where an estimated 287,000 people have been displaced and 100,000 have fled to neighbouring countries. In Gaza in the State of Palestine, the scale of destruction from the recent escalation of hostilities lasting from July 7 until August 26, 2014 has reached unprecedented levels: 539 children were killed and 3,374 injured, 54,000 children became homeless, and 1,500 were orphaned.

These numbers mask the real tragedy for children in many countries across the region. Whether in the face of continuous conflict or during the onset of a new emergency, children bear the brunt of hostility through death and injury, losing parents and caregivers, and being robbed of their right to learn and other basic rights. In many circumstances, a child’s only reference in life is a refugee or IDP camp. With these increasingly complex humanitarian conditions the MENA regional office will strengthen its capacity to support country offices to rapidly scale-up interventions and to effectively implement emergency interventions through technical assistance, skills-building and training for working in high-threat environments.

Regional Office

2015 Planned Results: In light of the increasing complexities in the region, the regional office will provide technical support and undertake surge missions: when emergencies arise to strengthen humanitarian response, ensure rapid scale-up and contribute to enhanced results for children and their families. It will also provide support to country offices in strengthening their preparedness and readiness for emergency response to natural disasters, conflict and chronic crises through the implementation of a regional humanitarian learning strategy. The learning strategy will include specific training and support on operating in high threat environments, measures to bridge humanitarian and development response through a resilience lens, as well as human rights and international obligations in humanitarian contexts. Included in this learning strategy and as part of the preparedness activities will be to build the capacity of the recently established Regional Rapid Response Mechanism (RRRM), with a focus on the development and roll-out of an emergency response training package for RRM members for their rapid deployment to country offices. Trainings topics will include: multi-cluster/sector rapid needs assessments; international humanitarian and human rights law; cluster and sector coordination in humanitarian contexts; women, safety and security training; first-aid training for frontline responders; and mass casualty training.

2014 Results: The response to the escalating humanitarian and security concerns across MENA dominated the regional office’s (RO) focus during 2014. The RO provided immediate surge support to Lebanon, Sudan, Iraq, Syria and the State of Palestine in response to the intensifying needs of children and their families. Priorities included safety and security support, strengthening readiness and preparedness, and senior coordination of emergency programme response in coordination with other UN agencies, NGOs and governmental bodies — in this way, the RO was often on the forefront of negotiating access for humanitarian relief. Security advice and support missions were conducted to Djibouti, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Sudan, Yemen and the State of Palestine. In preparation for the fourth year of drought, the regional office led a joint mission to Djibouti to strengthen systems and capacities for preparedness and responses to mitigate the effects of the deteriorating nutritional status of the country.
The RO prioritised a range of trainings contributing to effective humanitarian action in high threat environments during 2014, involving UNICEF, other UN agencies and the humanitarian community. These included: Women’s Safety Awareness training in Iraq, Egypt, Iran, Sudan and Yemen; Enhancing Protection for Children in Armed Conflict training for MENARO staff and senior managers in crisis affected countries; First Aid/First Responders training along with Armoured Vehicle training for drivers in high threat countries. Additionally, in enhancing coordination among UN agencies a Multi -Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA) training for all MENA emergency-focused country offices was implemented.

Building the robust Regional Rapid Response Mechanism, a roster of technical emergency experts, accelerated the human resources surge capacity of the RO in response to the burgeoning crises across the region. Over 40 UNICEF internal candidates were identified and an additional 85 external candidates are undergoing screening, specializing in key sectors and emergency coordination.

The RO’s dedicated support to Syria Crisis countries continued in 2014. Technical advice has been provided to country offices in scaling up programmes, and where possible, ensuring integrated approaches are undertaken including through regional workshops and training.

Algeria
In Algeria, Saharawi refugees are living in one of the longest-running refugee situations worldwide, as the crisis reaches its 39th year. The roughly 125,000 refugees are accommodated in five main camps near Tindouf in South-West Algeria in an extremely harsh and isolated environment. UNICEF has focused its efforts on two areas for Saharawi children: health care (Expanding Immunization Coverage (EPI), and maternal and infant mortality) and Education. A lack of meaningful opportunities for youth, high unemployment and continuing instability in neighboring Mali has exposed Saharawi youth to increased vulnerabilities. This has prompted UNICEF to initiate a youth-focused program aimed at promoting a safe environment for the development and survival of the Saharawi youth.

Results from 2014: UNICEF Algeria utilized funds from 2013 (US$190,000) to undertake their emergency response activities in 2014 (as no funds were raised against the 2014 HAC). UNICEF supported the rehabilitation of five youth-friendly spaces in refugee camps near Tindouf, along with providing training to 1,000 youth participants with the aim to reduce harmful behaviours. The participants were also taught skills in project management, budgeting and income-generating activities.

As a critical vaccine provider, UNICEF and partners reached 30,000 Saharawi children (under 2 years of age) with the immunization program and provided support to the vaccine cold chain. Essential drugs and medical equipment were procured and distributed to 27 health structures and hospitals, improving the quality of services for newborns and mothers. On-the-job training was carried out for 181 midwives, increasing their competencies in safe delivery practices. Awareness-raising activities on the protection of mother and child were also conducted.

Additionally, 18 classrooms were rehabilitated in the two main Saharawi refugee camps benefiting some 7,200 school children, and education supplies were procured for the start of the school year for 32,000 children (aged 3-16) and teachers, including early childhood development kits for children aged 3-5.

2015 Planned Results: UNICEF will continue to support the rehabilitation of schools within the five refugee camps near Tindouf, with a focus on ensuring safe and secure environments for both children and teachers. An aim of these continuing school improvements is also to increase community mobilization with plans to reach up to 10,000 children. UNICEF will distribute school supplies and educational equipment to all the 32,000 primary and middle school pupils to ensure a smooth start for the 2015 academic year. In an effort to reduce vulnerability and manage risks, UNICEF will continue to engage and provide support to the youth-friendly spaces and provide life-saving training and other skills-building opportunities for young people, with the possible inclusion of innovative technology, in the form of U-Report in Emergency, in an effort to support increased participation of vulnerable or at-risk youth.

UNICEF will play a critical role in providing vaccines for more than 30,000 Saharawi children. Continuous monitoring and additional training on cold chain management and EPI practices will be also part of targeted interventions in 2015. Neonatal and maternal health care – more specifically, pregnancy and delivery-at-risk – will be addressed through on-job training of midwives, as well as covering gaps in essential drugs and medical equipment.

Libya
The recent clashes in Libya represent the most serious outbreak of armed conflict since the Libyan revolution in 2011. The situation continues to worsen – currently, up to 420,000 IDPs, over half of whom are children (including 50,000 IDPs previously displaced) are in need of immediate humanitarian assistance in areas of health, food assistance, non-food items (NFIs), hygiene kits and mine awareness activities. There are reports of widespread damage to infrastructure and shortages of food, fuel, water and electricity.

Results from 2014: The drastically deteriorating security situation in Libya in 2014 made for an increasingly challenging operational environment. In July, the United Nations evacuated a majority of their staff, making humanitarian response progressively dependent on national counterparts. UNICEF forged partnerships with civil society groups and non-governmental organizations, and completed an evaluation of needs and response capacities in order to strengthen these partnerships.

2015 Planned Results: UNICEF’s planned response in 2015 will be to support Libyan national counterparts to meet humanitarian needs and to advocate for and ensure access to basic social services. Accordingly, UNICEF will focus on the protection and education sectors to support and promote the psychosocial well-being of children affected by the conflict, and enhance the capacity of care givers to respond. Community-based psycho-social support and life skills interventions for the protection of children up to 18 years of age will be implemented in cooperation with key national partners. In Education, UNICEF and partners will address the immediate critical needs by supporting the normalization of school activities and promoting the necessary socialization process. Activities will include psycho-social support, life skills, mine risk education and peace education, with a focus on the most vulnerable and displaced populations.

1 Libya Humanitarian Appeal, 2014
Funding Requirements

UNICEF MENARO requests US$2,500,000 to ensure that women and children are assisted during emergency crises across the region, as well as ensuring that emergency-prone countries are prepared for rapid life-saving responses to disaster, along with an additional US$1,300,000 for Libya and US$1,200,000 for the silent crisis of the Saharawi refugees in the Tindouf province. UNICEF will also channel specific contributions for countries without a stand-alone appeal. Funding requirements for the Regional Support for the Syria Emergency are reflected in separate Humanitarian Action for Children’s chapters for Syria and Syrian Refugees.

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<tr>
<th>Sector (Regional Office)</th>
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<td>Nutrition</td>
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<td>Health</td>
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<td>Water, Sanitation &amp; Hygiene</td>
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<td>Child Protection</td>
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<td>Education</td>
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<tr>
<th>Country Offices</th>
<th>2015 Requirements (US$)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Algeria - Saharawi Refugees</td>
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<tr>
<td>Libya</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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