Middle East and North Africa

Escalating violence and armed conflict, political instability, human rights crises and protracted humanitarian emergencies continued to haunt children in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) during the closing months of 2012. In several of the 19 countries throughout the region, children face daily challenges in accessing basic life-saving services; while many others are in danger of being abused, detained, exploited or killed in countries that are grappling with persistent conflict. Of the 12 countries officially reporting grave child rights violations to the UN Secretary General, 4 are in the MENA region.

In the Syrian Arab Republic, alarming levels of violence and armed conflict have resulted in an estimated 2.5 million people being in need of assistance within the country; and nearly 400,000 people seeking refuge in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey – half of whom are children. ²

Stunting and malnutrition continues to severely impact the lives of children in the Sudan and Yemen: over 2 million are acutely malnourished, and micronutrient deficiency is widespread. The humanitarian crisis in Darfur is now in its tenth year, with no end in sight; and more than 240,000 people have fled to Ethiopia and South Sudan from fighting in Blue Nile s and South Kordofan states.³

Elsewhere in the region, particularly in Bahrain, Egypt, Libya and the State of Palestine, children continue to be directly or indirectly exposed to violence. Libya remains a concern, as violence and insecurity spiked late in 2012. Moreover, the sudden conflict which erupted in Gaza, Egypt in mid-November is a stark reminder of the persistent fragility of the region and that children bear the brunt of the violence and insecurity.

UNICEF estimates that, in 2013, approximately 8.3 million people throughout the region will be affected by conflict, suffer from severe food insecurity or be deprived of access to social services.⁴ It is expected that 2.85 million of these will be children, either internally displaced or seeking refuge in neighbouring countries, and that this will be partly due to protection concerns in Libya, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen.⁵

Planned results for 2013

Given the continuing instability and escalating humanitarian needs throughout the region, the Middle East and North Africa Regional Office (MENARO) will reinforce preparedness and response capacities in order to address the myriad emergencies currently affecting 9 of the 19 countries in the region. Large-scale displacement and continued violence in many countries also mean that children will be exposed to highly stressful situations, requiring psychosocial support at different levels.

The regional office will continue to lead the sub-regional response to the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic. The office will give ongoing support to countries engaged in an emergency

Results from 2012

The Middle East and North Africa Regional Office (MENARO) originally appealed for US$1,600,000, later revising this to US$2,800,000. As at 31 October, US$968,607 (35 per cent) was received as contributions. This enabled it to provide leadership, technical expertise, and oversight to ensure country offices were prepared to respond to sudden-onset disasters and crises. With the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic significantly deteriorating, coupled with the continuous flow of refugees to the surrounding countries of Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, UNICEF globally designated the sub-regional crisis as a level 2 emergency. This enabled a rapid response to be made to the increasing humanitarian needs.

Under the revised Regional Iraqi Refugee Response Plan, UNICEF sought US$10,404,000 – receiving US$5,623,528 or 49 per cent – to support approximately 1.5 million Iraqi refugees hosted in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic.

MENARO ensured that improved emergency preparedness levels, training, and action plans were rolled out in five countries, including Iraq and the State of Palestine. ¹ All countries in the MENA region were guided and supported to adhere to minimum levels of preparedness. Specific sector emergency training was carried out in education, child protection and WASH for country offices in the region.

The Syrian Arab Republic crisis: MENARO emergency and technical specialists conducted support missions to Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, thereby bolstering UNICEF’s response to the escalating crisis. A group of technical experts in operations, supply and logistics have been recruited, as have information management and fundraising specialists, and a regional hub has been established to support all countries affected by this crisis. A regional nutrition assessment was conducted amongst Syrian refugees. Support was given to immunization campaigns against measles and polio, and the provision of vitamin A, with the aim of reaching almost 240,000 refugee children in Jordan and 1.4 million children in the Syrian Arab Republic.

Iraqi refugees: UNICEF led the education working group to ensure the retention of children in learning spaces, from pre-school to secondary school, and to provide safe spaces and counselling for affected children.

Yemen and the Sudan: MENARO reinforced the nutrition response scale-up with training and support missions to Yemen and the Sudan, enabling improved coverage and updating of information.

Djibouti: MENARO deployed emergency, WASH, nutrition and technical experts to support the country office. Formatting

State of Palestine: MENARO collaborated with the country office in early 2012 to update preparedness plans for a sudden onset crisis, so ensuring a rapid and effective humanitarian response to the crisis in November.
response – including Djibouti, the State of Palestine, the Sudan and Yemen – while also participating in national inter-agency humanitarian plans focussing on the transition to recovery programmes.

Water scarcity throughout the region holds dire consequences for many children and their families. UNICEF country offices will continue to work with the relevant line ministries and government authorities to improve disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation, supported by the regional office. The DRR initiatives developed in Algeria, Jordan, Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Lebanon will continue to be enhanced and supported in 2013. Additionally, countries such as Morocco, the State of Palestine, and Yemen will continue to be supported in the analysis of humanitarian risk. The emphasis will be on integrating peace-building actions into regular programmes, as mitigation measures, to avoid humanitarian crises. Throughout the region, there will be enhanced support for the realization and promotion of child rights in emergencies.

The need for MENARO to strategically improve its rapid response capacities has been highlighted both by the spike in emergency response needs across the MENA region and the implementation of the Inter-agency Standing Committee’s transformative agenda. A priority is to have a trained and experienced core capacity of highly qualified experts who can provide the initial response in times of crisis. This will entail training, coaching and mentoring at the regional level.

To improve UNICEF’s accountability as global cluster lead agency, the regional office will continue to support cluster capacities throughout the region, through revised cluster-coordination training and sector-specific workshops. Finally, country offices will get technical and quality assurance support to assist them in improving their preparedness, for example in planning supplies, human resources, and the readiness of sector coordination mechanisms.

Monitoring and reporting of grave violations against children has emerged as a priority for some countries in the region, and efforts will be made to strengthen existing mechanisms and to create new ones depending upon the country context.

**Iraq**

Violence in Iraq continues across the country: killing and injuring hundreds of civilians, including children and women, every month. A cholera outbreak in Kirkuk and Sulimaniyah in September 2012 has directly affected 5,500 people and put thousands more at risk of contracting the disease. Around 1.5 million Iraqis continue to be internally displaced, often facing eviction and lacking access to basic services. In 2013, UNICEF will focus on responding to these situations while building the government’s capacity to improve its response to children in emergencies.

**Iraqi Refugees**

Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic still host nearly 1.5 million Iraqis as the violence in Iraq continues, although the current crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic has seen the return of over 50,000 people to Iraq.6 Across these host countries, UNICEF has found that the children’s primary need continues to be for the provision of education and psychosocial services. In Jordan, the focus on inclusion of Iraqi children in public and community-based education services will continue; and in Lebanon, there will be an added focus on strengthening social development centres to cater for the psychosocial needs of the children. Integration of these children into the host community is the basis for all the programmes, particularly access to primary health care and nutrition services where required. In the Syrian Arab Republic, UNICEF anticipates providing assistance to 52,000 Iraqi refugees in 2013.

**UNICEF Funding requirements for 2013**

UNICEF 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. UNICEF will also channel specific contributions to countries without a stand-alone appeal. The funding requirement (below) reflects the need to ensure that MENARO is able to support country offices preparing for and assisting populations. Funding requirements for the UNICEF Syria Emergency Hub are reflected in the ‘Syrian Refugees’ chapter of *Humanitarian Action for Children*. Additionally, UNICEF requires US$8,000,000 for Iraqi refugees in Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic; and a further US$5,000,000 for internally displaced Iraqis.
"State of Palestine" was designated for use in all official United Nations documents as of 19 December 2012. It reflects General Assembly resolution 67/19.

UNHCR, November 2012.


Estimates as follows: Djibouti 42,600; Libya, 60,000; the Sudan, 2.6 million; the Syrian Arab Republic, 4 million; Syrian refugees, 1 million; and Yemen, 700,000. These are inter-agency figures as assessed by WFP, UNHCR or inter-agency humanitarian planning discussion.

It is accepted that 46 per cent of internally displaced persons (IDPS) in the Syrian Arab Republic are children up to 18 years old; and approximately 50 per cent of Syrian refugees are children up to 18 years old.

UNHCR, 2012.

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<tr>
<th>Regional Office</th>
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<td>Disaster Risk Reduction</td>
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<td>Emergency Preparedness, Risk Mitigation and Early Recovery</td>
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<td>Iraqi refugees in Lebanon, Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
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