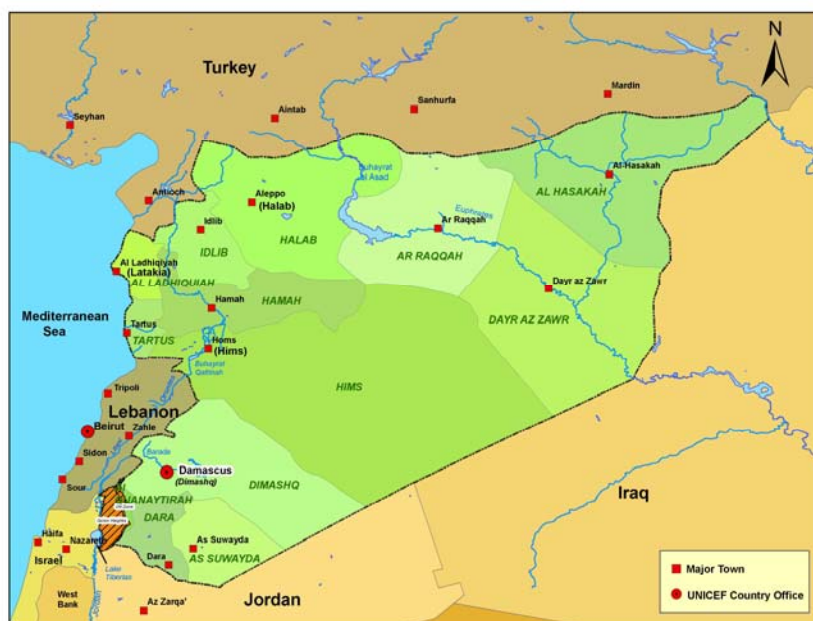


UNICEF HUMANITARIAN ACTION

SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

IN 2007



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

CORE COUNTRY DATA

Population under 18 (thousands)	8375
U5 mortality rate	15
Infant mortality rate	14
Maternal mortality ratio (1990-2005, reported)	65
Primary school enrolment ratio, 2000-2005, net (male/female)	97/92
% U1 fully immunized (DPT3)	99
% population using improved drinking water sources	93
Estimated no. of people (all ages) living with HIV, 2005 (thousands)	n/a
%U5 suffering from moderate and severe underweight	7

Source: *The State of the World's Children 2007*

Summary of UNICEF financial needs for 2007

Sector	US\$
Health and nutrition	235,400
Education	235,400
Child protection	192,600
Project coordination and documentation	74,900
Training on emergency preparedness and response	32,100
Total*	770,400

* The total includes a maximum recovery rate of 7 per cent. The actual recovery rate on contributions will be calculated in accordance with UNICEF Executive Board Decision 2006/7 dated 9 June 2006.

1. CRITICAL ISSUES FOR CHILDREN

Since the 2003 Gulf War, a silent and steady exodus has made the Syrian Arab Republic the host to the largest number of Iraqi refugees in the region, estimated at approximately 450,000, half of which are children under the age of 18. Most of these refugees have settled in the capital Damascus and rural Damascus and are increasingly facing aggravated difficulties related to their ambiguous legal status and unsustainable income. A recent UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP joint assessment on the conditions of the Iraqis mostly living in the areas of Sayyeda Zaynab, Jaramana and Masaken Barzeh indicated that there is low vaccination coverage among children (65 per cent for measles and 75 per cent for polio/OPV3) and a rather high prevalence of diarrhoea amongst under-five children (19 per cent during previous two weeks to assessment). Iraqi families' access to public hospitals and clinics has been limited, except for emergency cases. Maternal health is also an area of concern, with around 15 per cent of pregnant Iraqi women not receiving antenatal care and, more importantly, 40 per cent not being vaccinated against tetanus.

Although Iraqi children have the right to go to Syrian schools, as many as 30 per cent aged 6-11 years are not enrolled. Poverty and their insecure legal status are main causes for families not sending their children to schools. Complex registration procedures and administrative requirements as well as cases of children being downgraded to lower classes are also contributing to low enrolment and high drop-out rates. In addition, Iraqi children face difficulties adapting to a new school environment and different curriculum. There are an estimated 1,500 families living in poverty and both girls and boys from these families often work in order to supplement family income. They typically work long hours for as little as SYP 50 (approximately US\$ 1) a day, with boys working in market places and girls as housemaids.

While not yet a widespread phenomenon, information from the qualitative assessment indicates that 12-year-old girls are involved in sex work. Evidence was also collected that girls and women are being trafficked by organized networks or family members. Moreover, clear cases of traumatized families and children were identified. These currently receive very little or no care. The causes of their trauma range from exposure to war and insecure situations in Iraq to long-lasting feelings of material and social insecurity since leaving Iraq.

In addition to the above, some 600 Palestinians from Iraq, half of which have crossed the Syrian borders, were placed in Al Hol camp (north-east of Syria) while the rest are trapped in a no man's land (Al Tanf) between the Syrian and the Iraqi borders since mid-May 2006. The latter are living in very precarious conditions, in tents made of blankets (in one case, 70 people were living in a small room), lacking adequate water, sanitation and hygiene conditions, particularly for children and women, and with garbage piling up near the tents in the absence of a disposal system. Medical support is inconsistent and, as children remain in the outdoors under the sun, most of them have untreated sun burns. Recreational or educational resources at the disposal of children and adolescents are scarce. Finally, an increasing level of aggression and distress among the refugees is leading to cases of disputes, serious marital problems and, in some cases, domestic violence.

2. KEY ACTIONS AND ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2006

As an initial response to the situation of Iraqi refugees in Syria, UNICEF supported, in collaboration with UNHCR and WFP, a comprehensive assessment of the situation to develop appropriate responses to the refugees' immediate and medium-term needs. (Funds covering the assessment were provided by UNICEF Iraq in the amount of US\$ 30,000.) UNICEF also ensured water and sanitation services for approximately 300 Palestinians from Iraq placed in al Hol camp, providing hygiene items, clothes for children as well as school-in-a-box kits.

UNICEF Syria was fully mobilized by the Lebanese emergency. In close collaboration with the Syrian Government, local and international NGOs and other UN agencies, its humanitarian response was twofold: assisting the estimated 180,000 Lebanese refugees in Syria and providing logistical support to Lebanon in view of Syria's strategic position for the delivery of humanitarian relief.

In order to prevent disease outbreaks among the refugees placed in Syria's hosting sites, all children under 15 years were immunized against measles and 80,000 under-five children vaccinated during a catch-up campaign aimed at completing vaccinations. The result was 100 per cent coverage. Health staff were trained on health and nutritional assessment and an awareness campaign on breastfeeding and supplementary feeding was organized in collaboration with WHO. UNICEF also ensured access to safe water and appropriate sanitation conditions through the maintenance/construction of sanitation facilities in temporary accommodation centres and on the borders. Personal hygiene items were distributed to 64,000 Lebanese refugees and recreation kits to some 4,500 children. Volunteers from the Syrian Arab Red Crescent received training on psychosocial assessment and support. Together with the Syrian Planning Association, they were also trained on the set-up and management of four child-friendly spaces which provided children with recreational, education and counselling services. Upon the return of Lebanese refugees, UNICEF contributed to a returnee package, distributed by UNHCR and SARC at border crossings, with more than 40,000 sachets of oral rehydration salts and 75,000 leaflets to raise awareness among returnees about the danger of unexploded ordnance. UNICEF also facilitated the transit and local procurement for Lebanon of more than 12 tons of essential drugs, first aid kits, family water kits and personal hygiene kits, 30,000 baby hygiene kits, 2,000 recreation kits and 400,000 schoolbags for the Lebanese back-to-school campaign.

3. PLANNED HUMANITARIAN ACTION FOR 2007

Coordination and partnership

UNICEF works closely with the Syrian State Planning Commission, relevant ministries (Education, Health, Social Affairs) as well as with NGOs, raising issues and coordinating support in its relevant mandated areas, including health, education, child protection and water and sanitation. Coordination is also ensured on a bilateral basis with emergency teams within relevant ministries, as well as through the national government task force set up on an emergency case basis. A UN emergency thematic group has been established whereby emergency focal points meet on a regular basis focusing on emergency preparedness issues.

Regular programme

The current and forthcoming Syria Country Programme (2007-2011) focuses on improved access and quality of services in the areas of health, education and protection in the most deprived urban (also sometimes informal) suburbs as well as on enhanced institutional outreach capacity (of both the Government and NGOs/community-based organizations). Development- and participation-focused programmes are targeting adolescents, with special emphasis on those living in difficult areas, with the aim to facilitate their integration. Prevention-related work is ongoing to protect children from violence and exploitation (child labour and sexual exploitation). The Palestinian programme component also targets the Palestinians living in Syria, in collaboration with UNRWA, who are facing similar conditions.

Health and nutrition (US\$ 235,400)

In response to an increasing concern regarding the lack of access to health facilities and the low level of vaccination coverage among children, UNICEF will support, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and NGOs running local public health facilities, the following key activities:

- Vaccinate all children and pregnant women in the targeted areas; support both public and NGO-managed health centres with a focus on child immunization and other child preventive

care, including the provision of supplies (syringes, cold chain, medication supplements); print vaccination cards for immunization campaigns;

- Provide to at least 1,500 families most at risk information on child and maternal health-related issues, such as breastfeeding, hygiene and child immunization (with emphasis on the importance of regular antenatal visits and tetanus toxoid vaccination for pregnant women); train relevant health and social workers on primary health care services, health education and outreach; support home visits by 'health visitors', and organize awareness-raising sessions in health centres;
- Establish a network of community volunteers in the targeted areas and strengthen their outreach capacity to meet the needs of underserved populations;
- Support the implementation of a health and nutritional surveillance system.

Education (US\$ 235,400)

In this initial phase, support will be focused on facilitating Iraqi children's integration in Syrian schools and on assisting drop-out children/children who have never been enrolled in school through the following activities:

- Enrol in school at least 1,000 children from families most at risk and cover the costs of education-related supplies (uniforms, scholastic materials);
- Improve the equipment of 10 primary schools and enhance their capacity to receive and integrate Iraqi students by providing them with educational resources and equipment; train teachers and social workers to facilitate the integration of Iraqi students;
- Undertake educational projects for at least 1,500 out-of-school children from families most at risk; help increase the education level of 5,000 children to match the Syrian curriculum; in cooperation with a network of volunteers from NGOs/community-based organizations and youth unions, set up special education and recreation spaces to assist targeted groups of children with difficulties, especially in mathematics, physics and languages;
- Establish a network of community volunteers to reach out to 1,500 families with out-of-school children and raise awareness about opportunities for children's enrolment in schools;
- Pursue dialogue with the Ministry of Education to ensure a more adequate and effective integration of Iraqi children in Syrian schools.

Child protection (US\$ 192,600)

Children and adolescents most at risk of violence and exploitation, particularly those from poor and distressed families, will benefit from the following activities:

- Provide counselling services to at least 1,000 children at risk of sexual exploitation or involved in child labour and to 1,500 distressed children; support the training in psychosocial counselling skills of experts and volunteers from NGOs/community-based organizations already engaged in the prevention of child prostitution and child labour, and support the cost of psychosocial counselling services to children and families;
- Set up and equip educational and recreational spaces for at least 1,000 working children and adolescents with the aim to keep them off the street, to detect/respond to trauma and abuse cases, and to run development and participation activities targeting adolescents;
- Establish information and counselling hotlines for children and families to be managed by counsellors and legal experts;
- Reinforce outreach through the establishment of a network of volunteers able to detect trauma cases among the families;
- Ensure that health centres and NGOs/community-based organizations in the targeted areas are equipped with counselling skills;
- Facilitate the establishment of an effective network of actors in the field of child protection together with relevant government agencies and ministries as well as with NGOs/community-based organizations, leading among others to the set-up of a team of experts able to work with distressed children.

Project coordination and documentation (US\$ 74,900)

Good coordination in the field and documentation are essential to the success of the proposed interventions. A national professional will be hired and with the support of UNICEF technical, she/he will ensure continuous presence in intervention sites and link with partners, such as the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, the State Planning Commission, Caritas, The Syrian Arab Red Crescent, The Syrian Family Planning Association, local NGOs and youth unions. Other activities will involve regular monitoring visits and field assessments to evaluate the situation related to the influx and to the evolving needs of refugee children and mothers. Advocacy materials will be produced, such as video clips and human interest stories.

Training on emergency preparedness and response (US\$ 32,100)

Lessons learned from past emergencies and, more particularly, the recent Lebanon crisis, a persistent unstable environment as well as high government staff turnover show that there is a clear need for regular emergency preparedness and response training of relevant government counterparts and partners, as well as of UNICEF staff. The recent Lebanon crisis highlighted shortfalls, particularly in terms of coordination, regular updating of national sector-based contingency plans, maintenance of information systems and provision of logistical support.