

Syrian Arab Republic

Update on the context and situation of children

A decade of humanitarian crisis and hostilities has had a profound impact on the situation of children in the Syrian Arab Republic. This year, over 11 million people, including 4.8 million children, continued to require humanitarian assistance, and 6.1 million people remained internally displaced[1]; their vulnerability has worsened by the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The scale, severity and complexity of humanitarian needs have increased due to the economic downturn, the rising cost of commodities, the devaluation of local currency; all compounded by the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 and ongoing hostilities which has created devastating consequences for already-vulnerable populations nationwide, displaced populations and returnees in northwest and northeast Syria. For most of 2020, Syria's economy has experienced an unprecedented downturn with the sharp decline in the value of the Syrian pound by 74 per cent compared to 2019. In November 2020, the Syrian pound (SYP) depreciated by 11 percent in the informal exchange rate market and reached SYP 2,638/USD. Families across Syria have largely faced crumbling employment opportunities, skyrocketing prices, shortages of basic goods and services and widespread deterioration of household coping mechanisms. The price of an average food basket[2] in November 2020 was SYP 99,243, an increase of 251 per cent over the past year.

COVID-19 has brought severe disruption to basic services, affecting already vulnerable population in Syria the most. Moreover, the government closed all schools as a preventative measure between 14 March and 13 September. Health and nutrition preventative and surveillance activities faced major challenges, notably with vaccination coverage for children which fell by about 40 per cent[3]. Concerningly, the number of mental health consultations tripled during the period of March - May compared to the same period in 2019. Despite UNICEF and partners' efforts to keep basic services available, movement restrictions, limited capacity for wide-scale remote services, and the need to maintain physical distancing posed challenges. According to a socio-economic impact assessment, child labour increased by 7 per cent and only 4.5 per cent of surveyed households indicated that their children had access to e-learning platforms during the school closures, while about 70 per cent used at least one form of distance learning[4] as of April/May 2020.

Reported COVID-19 cases in Syria continued to rise despite relatively low numbers, limited testing across the country and other epidemiological characteristics, such as the vast majority of confirmed cases could not be linked to a known case, indicating widespread community transmission[5]. The prevention of COVID-19 in schools has been a priority for UNICEF and education sector partners. According to the Ministry of Education (MoE) report from 29 December 2020, 2,050 cases have been confirmed among students, teachers and administrators since the school opening in September[6], a sharp increase from the beginning of November (399 cases[7]). This highlights the challenges of preventing transmission in schools, primarily due to overcrowded and often poor or damaged infrastructure which makes adequate physical distancing difficult, but also owing to insufficiently qualified teaching personnel[8] and challenges in changing behaviours.

Grave violations of children's rights continued. The Secretary-General's Report on Children and Armed Conflict showed that between January and December 2019, the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism verified grave violations affecting 2,292 children, including 1,454 children killed or maimed, and other issues of concern[9].

In the northeast, 64,619 people remain in Al-Hol camp[10], 94 per cent of whom are women and children and 53 per cent are children under the age of 12. In addition, about 2,370 people, including children in Al-Roj camp continue to require urgent humanitarian assistance[11].

In the northwest, ongoing hostilities encroach on population areas, leading to higher civilian casualties [12]. Since December 2019, over 940,000 people, of which 194,000 are women and 566,000 children, have been displaced in northwest Syria, adding to the 2.7 million people who were already displaced. Of the four million people living in the northwest, 2.8 million are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance[13].

In the southern region, the overall security situation was fragile and volatile, characterized by insurgency attacks. Over 750 major security incidents resulted in over 500 fatalities and 730 injuries, and at least 13 children were killed and 19 injured. The UN remained without access to settlements of 12,000 people in Rukban area on the Syrian-Jordanian border since September 2019. A total of 38 groups with 19,975 people left Rukban and transited through five shelters in Homs city since March 2019[14]. People spontaneously returning home urgently require critical assistance and the restoration of basic services in heavily destroyed communities.

Above mentioned deteriorations of the external environment negatively impacted children's wellbeing and resulted in reduced access to basic services in the country: 2.5 million children aged 5 to 17 years are out of school ; some 10.7 million people require access to WASH services; half a million children are chronically malnourished and 137,000 children under 5 years are suffering from acute malnutrition, heightening their risk of contracting a preventable illness and even death.

[1] UNOCHA, Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), 2020

[2] WFP: Food basket is a group of basic goods providing 1,930 kcal per day for a family of five for a month. WFP Syria Country Office, Market Price Watch Bulletin, November 2020

[3] SEIA

[4] SEIA

[5] Syrian Arab Republic COVID-19 Response Update No. 12. As of 9 November 2020. OCHA and World Health Organization.

[6] Ministry of Education. As of 2 December 2020.

[7] Syrian Arab Republic COVID-19 Update No.13. OCHA and World Health Organization. As of 9 December 2020.

[8] Ibid.

[9] UN Secretary-General's Report on Children and Armed Conflict (Ref: A/74/845 S/2020/525) issued in 9 June 2020. Periodic Monitoring Report for 2020 has not been published at the time of reporting.

[10] Syrian Arab Republic: North East Syria: Al Hol camp. As of 11 October 2020. OCHA.

[11]

https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/REACH_SYR_Factsheet_NES_CampProfile_Roj_November-2020.pdf

[12] Recent Developments in Northwest Syria - Situation Report No. 22 - As of 18 November 2020. OCHA.

[13] 'Syria: 2020 Humanitarian Needs Overview' (draft).

[14] UN Secretary-General's Report on Syria, S/2020/401 May 2020

Major contributions and drivers of results

In 2020, UNICEF continued providing life-saving humanitarian assistance to vulnerable children and women to address their urgent needs, while ensuring sustainable programming throughout the pandemic and protracted crisis. Through its field presence and partner network, UNICEF remained abreast of the situation of children in Syria, responding to their evolving needs. UNICEF demonstrated the impact and value of its programmatic work, actively promoting advocacy priorities by strong

engagement and communication with key stakeholders at different levels, including at senior UN and regional levels, addressing critical areas for the protection, survival and development of children. Despite the tenth year of crisis, strategic and innovative communication materials were produced and disseminated, receiving positive feedback from donors.

Health and Nutrition

Closely coordinating with the health sector led by WHO and with the Ministry of Health (MoH) and other ministries, UNICEF played a critical role responding to COVID-19, including through ensuring protection for front line health workers and proper prevention and control measures, and through supporting efforts to re-start services through risk communication and community engagement (RCCE). UNICEF procured 26 million personal protective equipment (PPE) items, which also served health workers in MoH hospitals and university hospitals as well as other material for infection prevention and control (IPC). UNICEF also supported the isolation centers with supplies to ensure infection prevention, while supporting the establishment of a field hospital in Damascus' Al-Fayhaa Sport City to serve COVID-19 patients in need of oxygen treatment only, in order to keep intensive care units accessible for critical cases.

Efforts towards RCCE were successful in reaching out to almost 14 million people with prevention messaging, yet immediate results in behavior changes remain a challenge. Syria Country Office (CSO) has been successfully reviewing the approach to strengthen the RCCE component.

UNICEF supported restoration of primary healthcare facilities through the installation of 36 prefabricated clinics where no prior functional health centers existed, and in communities severely affected by conflict with a large number of returnees. The prefabricated clinics were installed in six governorates (Aleppo, Hama, Deir Ezzor, Rural Damascus, Dar'a and Quneitra).

Despite the pandemic's challenges, UNICEF was able to continue its work on maternal, newborn and child health and nutrition, reaching over 1.4 million children and women with pediatric and maternal health check-ups and treatment, and almost 1.3 million children and women with nutrition screening to date. Vaccination services expansion reached 368,482 children (50 per cent girls) with DPT3[1], including the most vulnerable communities in northeast Syria and areas of internally displaced persons (IDPs)/returnees in the south, thanks to support from GAVI and The Vaccine Alliance, among others. Moreover, over 2.6 million children (50 per cent girls) received the polio vaccine with integrated provision of Vitamin A, through the national immunization days which started in October.

In the nutrition sector, UNICEF continued preventive interventions for women and children to improve Infant and Young Child Feeding with a focus on complementary feeding and promotion of diet diversity. Over 785,000 caregivers benefited from community outreach and awareness-raising sessions, local media campaigns and social mobilization activities. In 2020, 1,378,220 children and women were screened for malnutrition including in the most vulnerable communities in northeast Syria and areas of IDPs/returnees in rural Damascus and the south, and over 6,553 children under the age of five (55 per cent girls) affected by severe acute malnutrition without complications received life-saving treatment. In the northeast, 232,882 children under the age of 15 received outpatient consultations inside camps and in urban and rural communities, and 901 children under five were admitted for severe acute malnutrition treatment, of which 596 reside in Al-Hol, Areesha, Al-Roj and Mahmoudli camps.

In 2020, UNICEF continued playing an instrumental role as Nutrition Sector Lead at the national and subnational levels, and ensured timely and effective coordination, including in six hubs at local level to provide a comprehensive package of nutrition services to affected populations. In 2020, the sector trained 307 health staff in community-based management of acute malnutrition (CMAM) programming in the context of COVID-19. All CMAM reporting health facilities have met the SPHERE[2] standards, an industry benchmark of quality for interventions reducing malnutrition

mortality.

Education

Throughout 2020, UNICEF focused its attention on maintaining the capacity of schools and temporary learning spaces to deliver services despite the ongoing ten-year crisis, newly-surfacing economic turmoil and the forced closure of schools due to COVID-19. Approximately 7,185 schools (3.5 million children) benefited from safe-school protocol and support packages (designed in gender-sensitive manner), including capacity building on safe school protocols for 50 doctors, training 857 MoE health educators, who then replicated training to 12,482 health supervisors. Furthermore, 2538 school principals and janitors of Curriculum B[3] (CB) schools received training in COVID-19 precaution measures during CB summer classes in 1337 schools in all governorates. Essential hygiene materials, cleaning kits and communication materials were distributed in formal schools and temporary learning centers. In addition, 416,404 COVID-19 learning games were distributed to households in collaboration with WFP's distribution of food baskets during the lockdowns. Additionally, UNICEF supported the re-opening of CB classes in August 2020, whereby 74,137 children were provided with CB classes and hygiene materials tailored to the specific needs of girls and boys. While the MoE announced the national examination of ninth and twelfth grades during the summer, UNICEF and partners ensured that school-based examination facilities and accommodations were supported with COVID-19 prevention measures. 522,235 students, including 260,619 girls sat exams. This included 15,177 children from hard to reach areas, of which 3,253 children stayed for two weeks in specially-arranged accommodation centers funded by UNICEF and education sector partners, where remedial, exam preparation support and psychosocial support services were provided.

UNICEF and partners reached over 2.1 million children with non-formal and formal education materials including textbooks and education supplies. UNICEF assisted 281,705 out-of-school or at-risk children so they can pursue learning despite lacking access, and other socio-economic barriers. UNICEF also supported the light rehabilitation of 104 schools and 127 early childhood education classrooms, and 9 prefabricated WASH facilities.

Additionally, in 2020, the standards for inclusive school infrastructure were completed and the Guidelines for Child-friendly Schools were adopted, which resulted in a strengthened baseline on child-friendly school rehabilitation across education actors nationally. UNICEF completed a study "Out-of-School Children in Syria: Charting a Path Toward a Solution", a study prepared by government request.

UNICEF, as the Education Sector Lead, continued to coordinate a platform of 89 national and international education service provider agencies. Partners received training on INEE Minimum Standards. Besides the sector-wide coordination of COVID-19 protection measures, the sector helped to formulate the School Reopening Framework which was subsequently used for mobilizing partner resources for supporting the reopening of schools in a coordinated manner after the lockdown. Within this framework, four thematic groups on 'Safe Schools', 'Learning', 'Child Protection' and 'Incentives' have been established to harmonize the partners' interventions. Throughout 2020, UNICEF has supported the development of partners' project management capacity through consultations and joint implementation of contractually agreed outputs.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

In 2020, UNICEF delivered timely and effective WASH humanitarian assistance, contributing to mitigating the degradation of services that has resulted from the physical destruction and reduced maintenance of water and sanitation infrastructure. This was accomplished by strengthening the enabling environment for WASH, conducting light rehabilitation of WASH infrastructure, supporting operation and maintenance of WASH services and providing lifesaving WASH services in IDP

locations and other emergency settings, despite the COVID-19 outbreak. Throughout the year, about 1.2 million people benefited from improved access to water supply; 818,335 people benefited from emergency lifesaving WASH services, and around 4.3 million people reached with critical WASH supplies (including hygiene items).

In 2020, UNICEF introduced the first Water Safety Plan (WSP) in Syria, a comprehensive risk assessment and risk management approach that encompasses all steps in a drinking-water supply chain, from catchment to consumer. WSP had been implemented in Syria for the first time following a pilot introduced at the rehabilitated and renewed network in Al-Kisweh in Rural Damascus. This has led to the development of an operational improvement and control plan with Standardized Operating Procedures to ensure water quality in Al-Kisweh. This first experience acted as a ‘proof of principle’ that accepted to be replicated in at least four other towns in 2021.

In terms of investing in capacity building and sector strengthening, UNICEF, in coordination with the Government of Syria, finalized the WASH Bottleneck Analysis Tool (WASH BAT) Action Plan, which contributes to identifying the root causes behind the lack of access to water and sanitation services and the main determinants, which will provide a strong foundation for evidence-based programming.

In line with gender mainstreaming guidelines, measures to prevent GBV and to avoid harassment and abuse were ensured and provided safer access to facilities for women and girls, including the provision of lighting and separate latrines for men and women in camp settings and rehabilitation of school sanitation facilities.

In 2020, UNICEF, in its capacity as the WASH Sector lead and in partnership with WASH sector partners, optimized available resources for delivery of quality WASH services while remaining accountable to the affected population. In 2020, the WASH sector reached 4.4 million people through resilience-focused interventions, and 2.6 million people through humanitarian-focused interventions.

Child Protection

In 2020, in coordination with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour (MOSAL) and the Syrian Commission for Family Affairs and Population (SCFAP), UNICEF is developing a national model of case management, which can serve as a basis to provide multi-disciplinary protection services for children and women survivors of violence. An inter-ministerial committee is overseeing the work, and a new conceptual framework was developed in Syria that will form the basis for the complete case management system to be piloted in rural Damascus. This aims at setting a standard approach and procedures among all actors in Syria in collaboration with other UN agencies, as well as monitoring and evaluation framework to track results.

UNICEF also continued with a multi-faceted approach to reducing violence against children and its impact on children’s psycho-social well-being. In 2020, technical assistance was provided to the development of the Domestic Violence Law that aims to curb all violence against women and children at home. Also, to inform policy development, UNICEF and SCFAP began the preparation for the first national study on all types of violence against children in all settings. UNICEF also began the development of a parenting programme to promote positive, non-violent discipline and developmentally appropriate and stimulating childcare and rearing practices among parents and caregivers, as a strategy to end violence against children. Child protection programmes have been designed to ensure safe and equal access to inclusive and non-discriminatory provision of protection services. Over 1.1 million children received child protection services including MHPSS, case management for VAC, GBV, UASC and child labour; in addition to prevention awareness programmes on EORE and protection issues.

In 2020, UNICEF continued to lead the coordination of the child protection Area of Responsibility in Syria, with gaps analysis, strategic planning and a more cohesive response while also contributing to greater sector visibility and accountability.

Social Policy

In 2020, UNICEF reached nearly 318K most vulnerable children (51 per cent girls) through its humanitarian social protection response in areas most affected by crisis. Over 307,294 vulnerable children were supported with cash transfers and non-food items through the Basic Need Support Programme (52 per cent girls for NFIs and 50 per cent girls for cash). In total, 87,403 children in impoverished urban areas benefited from the cash component of the programme. In addition, in remote communities where there are no competitive markets, in IDP and resettlement camps, including in northeast Syria, the programme reached over 255,000 children (52 per cent girls) with winter, summer, and newborn kits to protect against harsh weather conditions. There was a significant improvement in the timeliness of the winter clothes distribution, with 87 per cent of children receiving the clothes during the critical winter months in comparison to 29 per cent in 2019.

The Cash Transfer Programme was quickly adapted to respond to the socio-economic impact of COVID-19. Increased coverage of the programme reached 10,700 children (40 per cent girls) living with severe disabilities in comparison to 8,900 in 2019 (over 20 per cent increase). Furthermore, the programme has expanded to Hama governorate, bringing the total number of governorates reached by the programme to seven out of 14 governorates. The quality of the case management component has also improved with additional case managers; the average number of children per case manager decreased from 70 to 30/35, which led to more personal and dedicated support. Through the case managers, many children gained access to a disability card, allowing their integration into the national social protection system. As demonstrated through the post-distribution survey, for which results were disseminated this year, 65 per cent of children gained access to specialized health care due in large part to the programme.

The Social Protection Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) is being rolled out. In addition, extensive monitoring of the humanitarian social protection interventions continued to be the cornerstone to enhance accountability, social cohesion and quality assurance. As a key pillar of a functioning social protection system, the IMIS, once fully rolled out in the long term, will allow better linkages and integration of all social protection interventions nationally. To date, the new IMIS has already registered over 234,000 people living with disabilities.

Adolescent Development and Participation

In 2020, UNICEF continued to invest in the personal development of adolescents and youth (10-24 years old) and to contribute to enhancing resilience and social cohesion in their communities, reaching over 170,000 young people. UNICEF worked to ensure equitable access to a comprehensive package of services and opportunities for adolescents and youth, especially the most vulnerable, by promoting social and digital engagement of young people. Among other services were COVID-19 response activities and cross-sectoral interventions, including dissemination of accurate messages and youth-led outreach awareness-raising, including online challenges such as Design a Face Mask Challenge, which was implemented with the Communication for Development Team. UNICEF supported 800 Syrian youth to participate in the Generation Unlimited Global Competition, which resulted in two groups reaching the final stage of the competition and victory for one of the groups.

Coordinating with Ministry of Cultural (MOC), UNICEF selected 11 Cultural Centers to provide children and youth (10-24 years old) with multiple pathways to continue their learning journey and acquire skills to smoothly transition from education to work. Capacity development of the cadre and the improving the enabling physical environment of these spaces continues.

[1] Combined vaccine for Diphtheria, Pertussis and Tetanus.

[2] The Sphere Minimum Standards for Healthcare

[3] Curriculum B- is a learning modality, where lessons are taught through existing printed materials (textbooks, exercise books, supplementary resources) combined with instructions and monitoring shared through WhatsApp messaging. It is being implemented efficiently, especially during this year, given restrictions posed by the pandemic. It is a formal programme which allows out-of-school children to combine two academic years in one to catch up to their peers.

UN Collaboration and Other Partnerships

Given the new reality shaped by COVID-19 and the additional need for preventive measures, UNICEF continued to play a key role in the Humanitarian Country Team and its efforts to support the national response. In addition to leading the education, nutrition, WASH and the child protection sectors, UNICEF supported the health sector in the procurement of PPE for 5,971 public and university hospital health workers, in addition to other materials for infection prevention and control. Additionally, as the lead for risk communication and community engagement for COVID-19 response, UNICEF, in cooperation with WHO, supported the government to survey public perception and knowledge and gauge the level of adoption of precautionary practices. UNICEF extensively contributed to an inter-agency Socio-Economic Impact Assessment, by reviewing the impact on children in the areas of health, nutrition, protection and education.

A joint visit of UNICEF and World Food Programme (WFP) Executive Directors in March resulted in increased agency collaboration, including high-level advocacy with the government, particularly regarding the need to scale up social protection interventions, preventative nutrition interventions, community-based management of acute malnutrition, and school-feeding programme to support children to return to learning.

The bilateral partnership also helped UNICEF immediately capitalize on WFP's network and its established beneficiary-targeting mechanism for the COVID-19 response. As a result, over 1.4 million households in vulnerable communities benefited from the provision of soap alongside key risk-communication messages as part of monthly food distribution, demonstrating value for money with equity. This partnership also enabled prompt delivery of activity kits for children, provided during the school closure, to over 200,000 families.

For the first time, with joint support of UNDP and UNICEF, CreaDeaf, a Syrian team comprised of two young women and three young men, participated in Generation Unlimited Youth Challenge, a global contest with 15 million participants. CreaDeaf won the Equity and Empowerment category for their idea to promote equitable access to education and employment and improve engagement in society of youth living with disabilities. The collaboration between the two agencies will continue to expand in 2021, in accelerating area-based, integrated programming.

In coordination with WHO and the MoH, UNICEF conducted an effective vaccine management assessment last year, which led to the Vaccine Management Improvement Plan of 2021-2023. This will be implemented with support from GAVI, The Vaccine Alliance, and in coordination with MoH, WHO and other partners. Effective vaccine management has become increasingly important in light of the pandemic and COVAX, the vaccines pillar of a global alliance around COVID-19 tests, treatments, and vaccines. Syria has been selected as one of the 92 countries who will benefit from the COVAX Facility and UNICEF made extensive efforts to support the planning and preparedness for Syria to ensure equitable access to eventual COVID-19 vaccines.

Lessons Learned and Innovations

UNICEF Syria Country Office (SCO) contributed to the global evaluation of UNICEF's work for children in cities led by the Evaluation Office. The WASH programme, specifically its network rehabilitation model in humanitarian context, was selected as a case study.

The case study concluded that the model has been key to ensuring equitable access to water and sanitation services, linking humanitarian efforts to longer-term sustainable results by building on pre-existing water and sewerage networks in urban areas and focusing on strengthening the capacity of

local service providers for better management of these services. The use of severity scales to identify those in need, both by geographical location and by indicators, highlights the type of intervention needed by the most vulnerable. The case study also noted that “UNICEF leadership has earned the organization credibility within the local government, which has been instrumental in facilitating access to hard-to-reach areas”, and also “facilitated strong inter-sectoral coordination with other entities, contributing to the overall effectiveness of the model”.

SCO also completed the evaluation of Back to Learning initiative in Syria. Key findings included that the population receives information about schooling directly from schools and the directorates of education, and people were aware of the benefits of education in general. This calls for the need to refocus the messaging of the community mobilization and communication campaign and prioritize emerging challenges such as non-formal education and preventing dropouts. The evaluation also concluded that “the challenge of bringing children back to learning in Syria remains with the education supply side” and “strengthening resilience and community systems approach to enhance enrolment and retention is critical” to reduce the number of children out of school and to ensure that every child can learn in a good quality system.

Both evaluations suggest a need for stronger links between humanitarian action and more sustainable results, as well as the need to strengthen resilience building on existing systems at community levels. Experiences from nationwide campaigns on immunization and back-to-school efforts also highlight the importance of mobilizing government systems and networks at community levels to achieve widespread reach. Furthermore, emerging threats, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, demonstrate the need for a systematic approach to overcome society-wide challenges and to reach out to vulnerable children at scale. It is of utmost importance for UNICEF, and the UN in general, to find a balance in ensuring effective and equitable support at scale to the most vulnerable children and communities in the complex and sensitive context.

Considering the prioritized attention to the COVID-19 response this year, SCO conducted a light After Action Review to re-evaluate learning and identify immediate corrective actions to improve the response. Lessons included that existing mechanisms and platforms greatly contributed to the timely coordination and response, such as the UN Humanitarian Country Team and the implementation of the MoH’s Preparedness and Response Plan supported by UNICEF and WHO. Furthermore, the SCO’s initial focus on the continued primary health services at community level, combined with advocacy and specific guidance, was found relevant and appropriate. Finally, it was noted that, while management called for continued humanitarian action and response, staff safety and duty of care were equally prioritized.

SCO, in close coordination with the Regional Director, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, other UN agencies and Regional Office, continued to advocate with the government on various issues, such as for greater access to data and evidence. This has led to consent from the government to initiate discussions towards conducting a multiple indicator cluster survey (MICS), a household survey that covers a variety of topics, focusing on issues that directly affect the lives of children and women. With previous MICS conducted in 2006, the next round will provide valuable, updated data on children and women. Discussions are ongoing with the Central Bureau of Statistics at the time of reporting. Towards the last quarter of 2020, complex child protection issues and access to quality and accredited education and water were addressed at senior levels, including the issue of Alouk water station and other options in northeast Syria to find a longer term approach and more sustainable solutions.

While the COVID-19 pandemic caused unprecedented challenges, it also presented an opportunity. Capitalizing on the discussions around the United Nations Strategic Framework as well as the Inter-agency Socio-Economic Impact Assessment of COVID-19, UNICEF worked closely with sister agencies, namely UNDP, UNFPA and WFP, to develop a vision paper for an improved, coordinated and integrated social protection system in Syria. While the paper is being finalized at the time of

reporting, it lays out three pillars for possible UN support, namely, (1) policy development and institutional capacity development; (2) programme design, integration and administrative reforms; and (3) service delivery and community engagement. As an immediate way forward, the participating agencies agreed to conduct a mapping exercise to better understand existing programmes and initiatives, as well as capacities, opportunities and gaps. This mapping will inform a refined scope of the UN and UN Country Team engagement on enhanced social protection in Syria for 2021 and beyond.