

Children of Syria

A UNICEF update

Malnutrition assessment in Lebanon



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A mother prepares food for her children in the Bekaa Valley, Lebanon.

Beirut –A UNICEF-led, joint nutrition assessment on the situation of Syrian refugees in Lebanon has revealed that malnutrition is a silent, emerging threat.

UNICEF, in partnership with the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), the UN Refugee Agency UNHCR, World Health Organization (WHO), World Food Programme (WFP), and the International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC), conducted the assessment in October and November 2013.

“UNICEF and its partners are concerned about the deterioration in the nutrition status of Syrian refugees in Lebanon,” said UNICEF Representative Annamaria Laurini. “Malnutrition is a new, silent threat among refugees in Lebanon, linked to poor hygiene, unsafe drinking water,

diseases, lack of immunization, and improper feeding practices of young children.”

In the Bekaa and the North of Lebanon, the prevalence of Severe Acute Malnutrition almost doubled in 2013 compared to 2012.

Across the country, almost 2,000 Syrian refugee children under-five years of age are at risk of dying, and need immediate treatment to survive.

Over half of these children suffering from Severe Acute Malnutrition are in the Bekaa, in eastern Lebanon, where most of the makeshift camps are and access to clean water, hygiene, and sanitation are a challenge.

The nutrition situation among refugees in Lebanon could deteriorate rapidly due to aggravating factors, such as the increase in food prices, risk of

food insecurity, increasing numbers and new arrivals of refugees from Syria that could be in worse condition.

Recommendations of the report highlight integrated efforts with the Ministry of Public Health and other partners to build capacity and mobilize health workers, monitor the situation, detect malnourished children, provide treatment, and prevent further cases of malnourished children and women.

This involves screening children and women, treating acute malnutrition through supplementary and therapeutic feeding programs, and raising awareness around appropriate infant and young child feeding practices, as well as prevention of micronutrient deficiencies.

Regional response against Polio outbreak

Amman/ Cairo – Children in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Syria will be the first of nearly 10 million children across the Middle East to receive a dose of polio vaccine this month.

Mass vaccination campaigns were launched in the four countries today, to be followed by a similar campaign in Lebanon from 9 March.

“We need to get two drops of polio vaccine into the mouth of every child under the age of five, regardless of their previous immunization history, every time there is a campaign,” said Khouzama al-Rasheed, a medical worker at a health centre in Qudssaya, rural Damascus, Syria.

The multi-country vaccination campaign is part of a regional response to the re-importation of wild poliovirus of Pakistani origin into Syria. Seven countries across the Middle East are planning to vaccinate more than 22 million children multiple times over six months – the region’s largest-ever coordinated immunization plan.

“Polio doesn’t respect borders,” said Dr. Ala Alwan the World Health



A community health worker gives Polio drops to a child in Za'atari camp, Jordan.

Organization’s Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean. “The detection of polio in Syria is not Syria’s problem alone, but one requiring a regional response. The safety of children across the Middle East relies on us being able to put a stop to polio in Syria.”

On 28 October, 2013, the Syrian Ministry of Health announced that polio had returned to the country for the first time in almost 15 years.

The March vaccination round will be Syria’s fourth since polio was

detected, and rounds in January and February reached all governorates.

“To vaccinate so many children in different countries is a huge undertaking,” said Maria Calvis, UNICEF Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa. “Each country faces its own set of challenges in order to make the campaign effective – above all in Syria – but this is the only way we can ensure children across the region are properly protected against this terrible disease.”

Polio vaccination campaign ends in Turkey

Osmaniye, Turkey – An estimated 1.5 children have been immunised against polio in Turkey during a second round of vaccination.

Launched by the Turkish Republic’s Ministry of Health, in coordination with UNICEF, the vaccination campaign was held to prevent the spread of the disease across the country.

Family doctors and mobile teams

went door-to-door to administer oral vaccinations to all children under the age of 5.

The second round of the campaign, which ran from 17 February to 23 February targeted cities in Turkey’s southern regions not covered by the first phase.

All children in 11 of the border towns and cities were included in the campaign. Syrian refugees aged

five and under were also vaccinated in 70 additional cities.

Turkey’s last case of polio took place in 1998 and the country was declared polio-free by the World Health Organization in 2002. The recent vaccination rounds were prompted by a polio outbreak in Syria’s Deir Azzour province last November.

A school day to remember

Islahiye, Turkey - A young group of children are celebrating at the Islahiye refugee camp in Turkey. Children like Rawan and Mohammed, both four, who have just received their first official school report. "Look how many stars I have!" says Rawan excitedly.

The UNICEF-built school in Islahiye camp is a bright spot in a camp where no child should have to live. There are paintings on the walls, there's a schoolyard and the teachers are nice. "I really love going to school", says Rawan. "The teacher says I'm a smart girl. That's why I want to study. I want to be a teacher and a doctor. I can do both."

Mohammed also has great plans for the future. "I want to be a surgeon because my big brother is still in Syria. When he's wounded, I want to help him."

The school is a safe haven where refugee children can forget their trauma. Here, they can build on their future. Mohammed is determined to succeed saying, "I'll do my very best in class."



4-year old Rawan received her first official school certificate at a UNICEF built school in Turkey. She wants to be a teacher.



4-year old Mohammed also received a school certificate.

Japan increases support for children of Syria

Amman, Jordan – UNICEF has announced a US\$ 19.2 million contribution from the government of Japan to support the agency's on-going humanitarian assistance inside Syria and surrounding countries.

The new funds bring Japan's total contribution to UNICEF's Syria crisis response to \$US 35 million.

The funds will provide support across all UNICEF sectors with the highest proportion going to education. In January 2014, UNICEF and other partners launched the "No Lost Generation" campaign which aims to raise \$US 1 billion to provide education and psychological protection to millions of Syrian

children across the region

The remaining funds will ensure access to primary health care and child protection to 855,000 children and their families inside Syria, and assistance to an estimated 2.5 Syrian refugees in Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan, Turkey and Egypt across all UNICEF supported sectors.

School by day, work by night

The third in a series of stories about children caught up in the crisis in Syria.

Bu Fatima Azzah

Amman, Jordan – Thirteen-year old Adnan is lucky to be alive. He is a survivor of the violence that has devastated his home town of Homs. Almost two years ago, he was shot by a sniper as he played outside his house. He was hit in the arm and rushed to hospital for treatment. After the attack his family decided to stay in Syria, but as the violence escalated, they finally had no choice but to flee to Jordan.

Adnan and his family have been living in the Baqa'a refugee camp, just outside Amman, for the past 18 months. His father was captured and

“I wish I had lots of free time. I would study and finish all my homework, then I would play until I get bored.”

tortured in Syria and is unable to work. So Adnan supports his parents and three siblings by working at a local shop repairing household appliances.

He says, “I work to get money for my family, to help them, but I do not like it. I like to study. When I have some free time, I study, what else can I do?”

After missing out on two years of school, Adnan has recently returned to class. “The first year here in Jordan they did not accept me, as I was not enrolled when the school



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Adnan supports his family by working at a shop near the Baqa'a refugee camp in Jordan.

year started. My mother waited until the next semester and I am now registered. I want to study at university and become an engineer,” he explains.

No time for play

The young teenager has a gruelling schedule. He goes to school in the morning and works in the afternoons. He usually returns home around midnight, by which time he is glad the day is over. He says, “I feel relieved at the end of the day when I finish work. All I want to do is sleep. When we were in Syria, our situation was different. There, I used to study and play. Here, I study and work.”

Adnan smiles at the thought of having more time to play saying, “I wish I had lots of free time. I would study and finish all my homework, then I would play until I get bored.” He used to play at a Child Friendly Centre supported by UNICEF, but now he rarely has time.

Adnan sees his friends at school or on a day off saying, “Sometimes on

Fridays, I have time to play football with my friends or I go to my friend’s house – he has a computer, so we play racing games together.” He also likes to draw when he has the chance.

Adnan left Homs with just the clothes on his back and dreams of everything he left behind. He says, “I only wish I could go back to Syria, back to our home. That’s my wish.”

Refugees by numbers*

Lebanon	944,000
Jordan	578,000
Turkey	624,000
Iraq	226,000
Egypt	135,000
North Africa	19,000
Total	2,500,000

(UNICEF estimates that 50% of these refugees are children.)
 - Figures have been rounded
 *UNHCR registered refugees and individuals awaiting registration as of 6 March 2014