

**CONFLICT IN
SYRIA AND IRAQ**

14

MILLION

**CHILDREN &
ADOLESCENTS
IN THE REGION
AFFECTED**



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**What future for the
children of Syria?**

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Anthony Lake

**SYRIA CRISIS
4 YEARS ON**

14 million children impacted by conflict in Syria and Iraq

12 March 2015 - Some 14 million children across the region are now suffering from the escalating conflict sweeping Syria and much of Iraq, said UNICEF today.

With the conflict in Syria now entering its fifth year, the situation of more than 5.6 million children inside the country remains the most desperate. That includes up to 2 million children who are living in areas of the country largely cut off from humanitarian assistance due to fighting or other factors. Some 2.6 million Syrian children are still out of school.

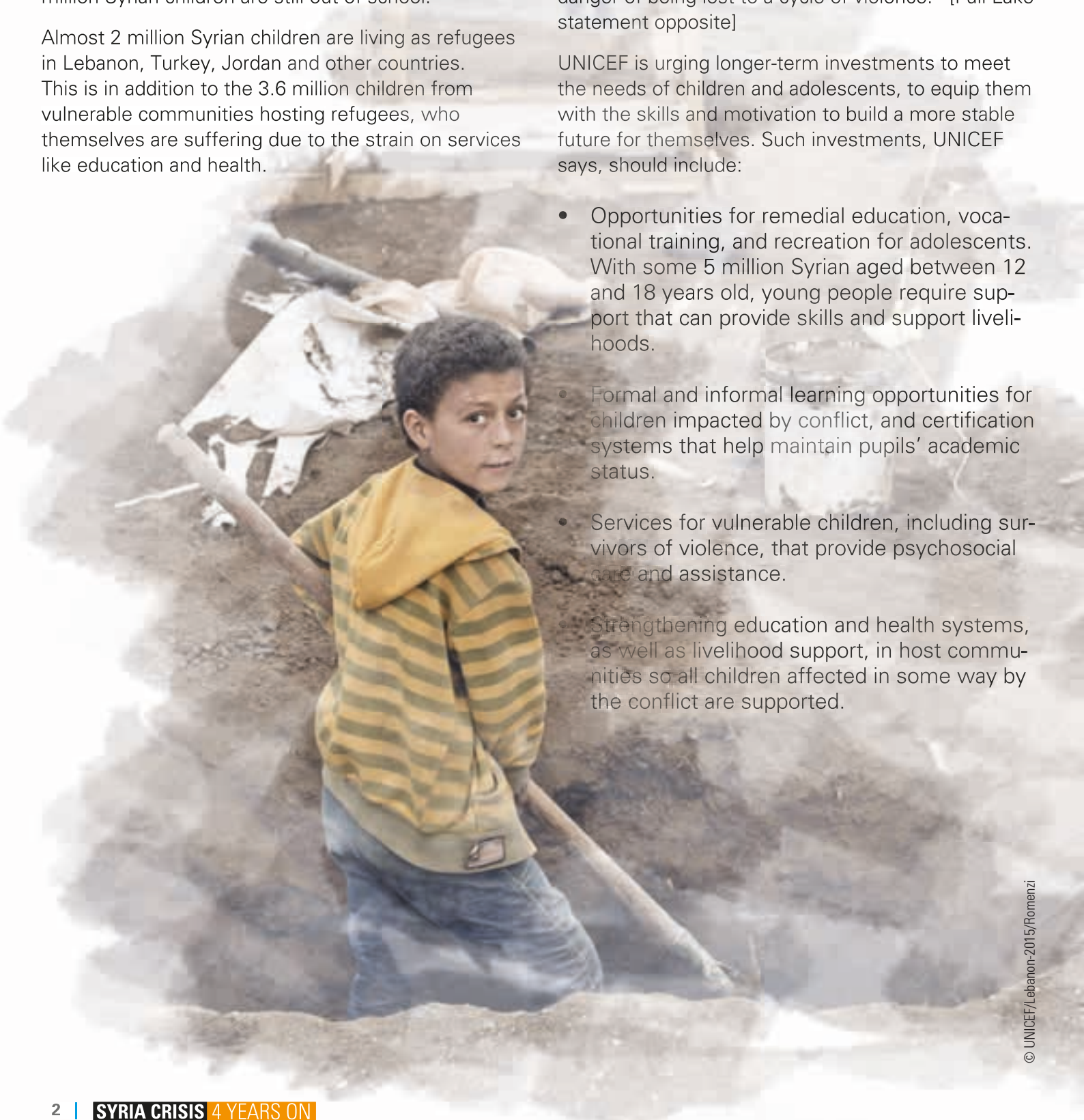
Almost 2 million Syrian children are living as refugees in Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan and other countries. This is in addition to the 3.6 million children from vulnerable communities hosting refugees, who themselves are suffering due to the strain on services like education and health.

Meanwhile, the increasingly interlinked crisis gripping Iraq has forced more than 2.8 million children from their homes, and left many trapped in areas controlled by armed groups.

“For adolescents entering their formative years, violence and suffering have not only scarred their past; they are shaping their futures,” said UNICEF Executive Director Anthony Lake. “As the crisis enters its fifth year, this generation of young people is still in danger of being lost to a cycle of violence.” [Full Lake statement opposite]

UNICEF is urging longer-term investments to meet the needs of children and adolescents, to equip them with the skills and motivation to build a more stable future for themselves. Such investments, UNICEF says, should include:

- Opportunities for remedial education, vocational training, and recreation for adolescents. With some 5 million Syrian aged between 12 and 18 years old, young people require support that can provide skills and support livelihoods.
- Formal and informal learning opportunities for children impacted by conflict, and certification systems that help maintain pupils' academic status.
- Services for vulnerable children, including survivors of violence, that provide psychosocial care and assistance.
- Strengthening education and health systems, as well as livelihood support, in host communities so all children affected in some way by the conflict are supported.



What future for the children of Syria?

This month, the conflict in Syria enters its fifth brutal year.

It is an appalling milestone – marking four years of escalating violence and suffering with no resolution in sight.

Tens of thousands of civilians have lost their lives. Millions have fled. Homes, hospitals, schools, all have come under direct attack. Entire communities have been cut off from humanitarian assistance, from food and water. The violence has spread across borders like an invasive infection.

Now see this horror through the eyes of the children who are living through it. Their homes bombed or abandoned. Loved ones and friends lost. Their education interrupted, or never begun. Their childhoods stolen from them.

In what has become the worst humanitarian crisis in recent memory, UNICEF estimates some 14 million children are now affected in Syria and in neighbouring countries.

For the youngest of these children, it is all they have ever known. Their experience of the world has been coloured by conflict and deprivation.

And for the adolescents entering their formative years, violence and suffering have not only scarred their past; they are shaping their futures.

While young people of their ages in other countries are beginning to make the choices that will affect the rest of their lives, these children are trying to survive. Far too many have been confronted by extreme cruelty. Or pressed to work to support their families. Or forced to marry while still children. Or recruited by armed groups.

What choices will these children make? What choices do they have?

Will they continue to believe in a better future? Or will they simply drop out, in despair – resigning themselves to the limited opportunities of an unstable future?

Worst of all, will they turn to violence themselves – having come to see it as normal?

One year ago, humanitarian leaders warned that we are in danger of losing an entire generation of young people to violence and despair – and with them, the chance of a better future for Syria and the region.

That risk has not diminished.

As the crisis enters its fifth year, this generation of young people is still in danger of being lost to a cycle of violence – replicating in the next generation what they suffered in their own.

The international community has responded to this grim possibility, trying to reach these children with humanitarian assistance, protection, education, and support. But it has not been enough.

We cannot give up on these young people – and we need to reach more of them before they give up on themselves and their futures.

There is still time – and there is still hope. Despite the harm they have suffered, the wrongs they have endured, and the apparent inability of adults to bring an end to this horrific conflict, these children still have courage and determination to build better lives.

Children like sixteen-year old Alaa, who fled his home in the Syrian city of Homs two years ago. His own schooling disrupted, he was fortunate to find a job-training programme – and today, he leads training courses for other children.

Children like ten-year old Christina across the border in the north of Iraq. She is living in a shelter for displaced families, where she helps even younger children with their lessons as she works to keep up her own studies.

Seeing their determination, how can we be any less determined to help them? Knowing that they have not given up hope, how can we?

If we do, then the consequences will be felt for generations to come ... by all of us.

For this terrible crisis has not only affected millions of children. As adults, these children and the choices they make will drive the future of millions – in their countries and their region. Will it be a future of hope and reconciliation – or a future of violence and despair?

The latter is not a future they deserve. And it is certainly not a future we want to see.

Anthony Lake - UNICEF Executive Director

Helping adolescents find their own solutions amid the crisis

16 year old A'laa last saw his home in a neighbourhood of Homs two years ago. That was when the fighting in the city got so bad that his family decided to pack their bags and flee.

That experience – of terrified flight amid chaos – is familiar to countless Syrian children in the four years since their country plunged into brutal civil conflict. Many will remain forever scarred by the horrors they have been exposed to.

That might have been A'laa's fate too. But once his family had resettled in a safer area of Homs, something happened that put his life on a more positive course.

A'laa enrolled at a life skills and vocational training centre for adolescents, run by a local NGO with support from UNICEF. There, he joined a group of teenagers learning ways to improve their critical thinking, communication, and problem-solving skills.

“It showed me ways that I could help my friends and peers deal with some of the bad things in their lives,” says A'laa. “I also became more confident about making new friends, and interacting with other people in general, including my parents and my brothers and sisters.”

Seeking solutions for communities

The idea, according to Veera Mendonca, UNICEF Regional Advisor for Adolescent Development, is to give adolescents and young people the chance to work on identifying – and solving – critical issues in their communities. They discuss their ideas within their teams, and with local community leaders, then develop them into workable solutions that will impact the daily lives of the community.

“Alaa is an example of how young Syrians, with a little training and support, can become empowered citizens, able to think creatively and propose solutions to the often terrible situations they and their peers find themselves in,” says Ms Mendonca.

Inside Syria, adolescents constitute a quarter of Syria's population – around 5 million in all. As the crisis has worsened, these teenagers have missed out on schooling and other opportunities to develop and learn. Many – especially girls – are forced to stay indoors for their safety. Others have to work to help provide income for the family — the case for many adolescent boys.

In this dangerous environment, the absence of choices can lead adolescents and young people into harm's way. Some may end up joining armed groups. Some girls are forced to marry at a very young age.

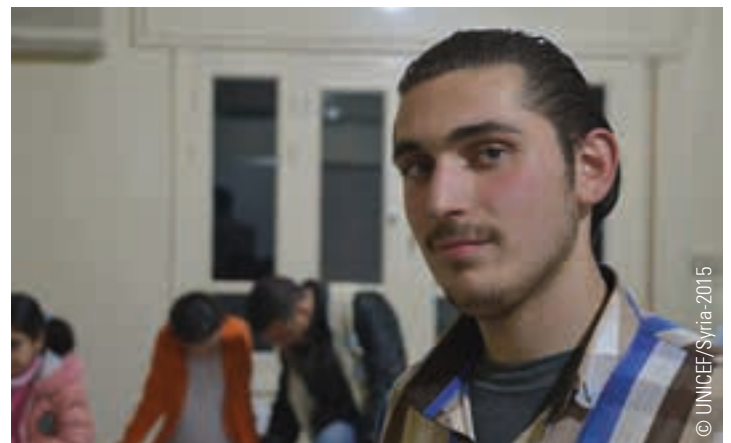
In 2014, within Syria, programmes organised by UNICEF and its partners have reached more than 100,000 adolescents, expanding positive options and choices for adolescents and young people. A total of 19 Adolescent Friendly Spaces have been established in Tartous, Homs, Deir-Ez-Zour, Aleppo, Lattakia, Idlib, Damascus and Rural Damascus.

Meanwhile, outside the country, some 600,000 Syrian refugee children between the ages of 12 and 18 are grappling with equally difficult situations and unmet needs. Similar programmes are operating in Jordan and Lebanon, expanding positive options and choices for adolescents, whether refugees or members of the host communities.

Back in Homs, A'laa is today an experienced peer to peer trainer and reflecting on the difference this role has had on his life.

“For the first time, I started to re-imagine a future of hope,” he says.

In 2015, UNICEF and partners are aiming to expand the programme to reach 165,000 adolescent boys and girls in life skills and vocational training and 150,000 adolescents in psychological support and life skills training.



A'laa is today a peer trainer.

Shielding children from the consequences of conflict

It's a chilling image by any standards: a group of children, assembled in a public square for a screening, not of cartoons or action movies, but of videos showing – in full, excruciating detail -- the execution of human beings.

This event, documented[1] late last year in the northern Syrian city of Raqqa, is just one example of the evolving ways in which children have become the hapless victims of the complex and vicious conflict engulfing Syria and (more recently) much of neighbouring Iraq.

But there have been many others.

In mid-2014, a 17 year-old boy serving with an armed opposition group was killed while filming a propaganda film. Seeking revenge for his death, the boy's 16-year old brother joined the group soon after.

And earlier last year, the UN Independent Commission of Inquiry on Syria reported that pro-government armed groups were using children as young as 13 to stand guard at checkpoints in Aleppo, Dara'a, and Tartus.

"Grave violations have been committed against children since the beginning of the conflict by all parties involved," says UNICEF Regional Child Protection Advisor Laurent Chapuis. "This is affecting very large numbers of children and the situation keeps deteriorating".

Violations of children's rights

The evidence gathered from survivors and witnesses bears this out. Girls and boys have been abducted and detained. They have been killed and maimed, and subjected to torture, ill treatment and sexual violence. They have been recruited and used in the conflict (indeed, there are indications that younger children are being recruited – some as young as eight years old). And – like the children in Raqqa – some are being deliberately indoctrinated.

Painstaking work across several countries – undertaken by UN agencies including UNICEF and other partners – goes into documenting and reporting on six of the worst violations of children's rights^[2]. In 2014, the UN documented more than 2,000 violations against Syrian children, including the killing and

1. Rule of Terror: Living under ISIS in Syria (November 2014, UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria)
2. Killing or maiming of children; Recruitment or use of children by armed forces and groups; Sexual violence against children; Attacks against schools or hospitals; Abduction of children; Denial of humanitarian access for children.



Amira is just 7 years old. After seeing her father killed in Homs, Syria, she went into shock. After seeing more relatives killed, she stopped eating and was not able to walk anymore. She is now a refugee in Lebanon.

"I think about my father all day and night. Sometimes I can't sleep", Amira says. "When we arrived, there was no food. We begged for food on the streets. I have been receiving counselling to help me overcome the horrible experiences I went through. I also get more food now and I feel a lot better. I can walk again but not as before."

maiming of more than 1,100 children.

Over the past four years, the task of documentation has expanded as new actors – such as ISIL – have emerged as parties to the conflict.

"They are not the first ones, they are not the only ones," stresses Chapuis. "But the nature of the use of children by those particular groups is of a different nature, much more public and aggressive about advertising (their use of children.)"

Children who are specifically targeted for indoctrination and exposed to extreme violence are more susceptible to exploitation, death, injury, and long-lasting psychological harm.

But more generally, the invisible scars left on children by exposure to violence, displacement, loss of family members and friends and other experiences has been a critical concern for UNICEF and other agencies since the beginning of the conflict.

Programmes offering psychosocial support and care have been developed and expanded to help children come to terms with all that they have been through. Inside Syria, this work has been complicated by lack of access to many areas of the country due to the conflict. Even so, through a combination of Child Friendly Spaces, school clubs and outreach activities, these services reached nearly 300,000 children in 2014.

Countries hosting large numbers of Syrian refugees have found their own solutions. In Lebanon last year, for example, mobile psychosocial services benefited nearly 350,000 children, while a pilot programme was set up to rehabilitate children formerly associated with armed groups.

More generally, the focus of child protection workers is broadening beyond helping children come to terms with their wartime experiences in Syria to

assisting them as they cope with their new lives as refugees. These issues have escalated as the refugee population has expanded, giving rise to tensions with the communities hosting them.

In trying to cope with their circumstances, refugee families – especially those whose own financial means have become exhausted – have to make tough decisions that are not in their children’s interests. Some may push their sons into taking jobs rather than attending school. Others encourage their daughters to marry early (perhaps in their mid-teens) to reduce the burden on the household budget.

However, as the crisis for children evolves around the region, Chapuis says that the response by the child protection sector is adapting as well.

“What has changed, four years (after the Syria crisis began), is that it has become even more important to work with the host governments, to give them the resources and the skills for national child protection systems that can respond to the needs of host community children as well as refugee children.”

This is seen in Jordan, which has set up specialised police units that work with both Jordanian and Syrian children. And in Lebanon, where a leading university has added a module on child protection in emergencies to the curriculum for students studying social sciences.



Children at a UNICEF supported child-friendly space, Islahiye refugee camp, Turkey.

Education caught in the crossfire of conflict

The attack on Al Hayat Primary School in Qaboun, eastern Damascus in November 2014 killed 11 children and injured many more. The horrific scenes that were shown on television and on the internet sparked widespread revulsion and condemnation.

But the Qaboun assault was just one of at least 68 attacks on schools across Syria between January and December 2014 alone, which caused an undetermined number of casualties among children and staff. All told, since the conflict began, more than 4,200 schools – around 1 in 5 – have been damaged¹⁾, destroyed, or are currently sheltering internally displaced people according to data gathered by UNICEF.

Syria's once-proud education system, its pupils and teachers, has suffered terrible punishment since the country's nightmare descent into crisis and conflict began. International humanitarian law, which declares that schools be respected as zones of peace and safe

havens for children, has counted for little. The long-term consequences for children – and their place in the Syria of the future – can only be guessed at.

“The situation is terrible but we must give Syrian children hope, above all in education,” says Maria Calivis, UNICEF Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa. “We simply cannot allow an entire generation of children and adolescents to be lost to ignorance, exploitation, despair and radicalisation.”

Millions of children are out of school

Inside Syria, two million children and adolescents are currently out of school. The lack of safe and protective learning spaces, coupled with a shortage of teachers, textbooks, as well as adequate water, sanitation and hygiene facilities, have all become obstacles to children's hopes of getting an education.

Outside Syria, more than 50 per cent (600,000) of Syrian refugee children and adolescents are out of school, and this number continues to grow. The local schools that have opened their classrooms to refugee children find themselves under impossible strain.

1. NO Lost Generation Initiative, UNICEF, September 2014



Grade 3 pupils at their school in Damascus, Syria.

Efforts by governments and agencies such as UNICEF to address the crisis engulfing Syria's education system have followed twin tracks.

On one level, yearly "Back to Learning" campaigns have helped bring 2.8 million Syrian children resume their learning in all 14 governorates. The campaigns include distribution of teaching and learning materials as well as school bags with stationary. Similar campaigns have been rolled out in countries hosting refugees.

"When I go to the refugee camps and see the smiling faces of children, then I think we should not give up in the face of difficulties," says Dina Craissati, UNICEF Regional Education Adviser for the Middle East and North Africa. "In education the challenges are enormous because education is a long term process and one does not see the effects right away – so we need to persevere with a long term vision. We need to be creative and bold."

To address the longer-term learning needs of Syria's children, the No Lost Generation Initiative (NLGI) – was launched in 2013. It aims to identify practical ways to provide Syrian children with access to quality

education (whether formal or non-formal), while introducing accelerated learning for children who have lost years of schooling, and creating a safe environment that reduces children's exposure to harm.

But the challenges facing this initiative are daunting. Public schools receiving Syrian children are overstretched. Non-formal education spaces cannot absorb large numbers of students. Teachers are not well equipped to work with stress, overcrowding and difference. Syrian children and adolescents are receiving multiple and dispersed forms of curricula and content that are not adapted to their capacity and needs and that come with enormous challenges in certification and accreditation.

It is this outlook which is driving the efforts now underway by UNICEF and a range of partners to provide a rights-based and sustainable solution to the education of Syrian and host-country affected marginalized children. Several approaches are being introduced to reach more children even those in the toughest situations, for example through mobile and e-learning solutions.



11 years old Khadija is a Syrian refugee living in an informal settlement in Lebanon. Like many children her age she works in the fields but she also goes to school. Her teacher, Amjad, says: "Khadija is an inspiration for me and other Syrian children living in exile."

Supporting a health system at breaking point

On 28 October 2013, the news came that health experts across the Middle East had been dreading. Doctors in north-eastern Syria confirmed that two young children -- a six month old girl named Saja, and Hassan, a nine month old boy -- had contracted the crippling and incurable polio virus. After a fourteen-year absence, a disease most people in the region thought had been banished forever had resurfaced.

A few months later, a single case of polio was confirmed in Iraq. The outbreak had crossed international borders.

In truth, the return of diseases like polio was only a matter of time given the turmoil sweeping both countries, displacing millions of people, and preventing health services from reaching towns and villages where the fighting was most intense.

Four years into the Syria conflict, just one third of its hospitals and health centres continue to function^[1]. The rest have been destroyed or damaged, their equipment smashed or stolen. Doctors and other qualified personnel have fled and many have been

1. Health impact of the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic, WHO. <http://bit.ly/1KVycqz>

killed.

According to Physicians for Human Rights, more than 560 medical personnel have been killed since the conflict began^[2]. In one part of Aleppo, Syria's largest city, 20 doctors remain to serve the needs of about 300,000 civilians^[3].

This collapse in the country's health infrastructure – including hitherto robust routine immunization programmes – has left Syria's children largely unprotected against diseases like measles, polio, pneumonia and diarrhea. Medicine production has fallen by 70 per cent, pushing prices beyond the reach of most of the population^[4].

“We are working to reach every woman and child, even in conflict areas, while rebuilding a health system which has been partially destroyed,” says Dr. SM Moazzem Hossain, UNICEF Regional Health Advisor.

2. Syria's Medical Community Under Assault, Physicians for Human Rights, October 2014
3. Under attack: Aleppo's hospitals, The Lancet, July 2014
4. Millions of Children's Lives at Risk in Collapse of Syrian Health System, Save the Children, March 2014



Mazez, a public health worker and member of a UNICEF-supported mobile vaccination team, with her 11-year-old daughter, Judy, who was seriously wounded by shrapnel from a mortar explosion in Aleppo, Syria.

Children's health under threat

As the Syria crisis has steadily deepened, the health and nutritional status of children and women has become increasingly fragile. Millions of people have been forced to exchange their homes and communities for overcrowded communal shelters and public buildings, where access to safe water and proper toilets is scanty at best.

As health authorities and communities grappled with the effects of this profound crisis, a range of international agencies – including UNICEF – has come to their aid.

The polio outbreak was a particular priority, because of the danger that it might spread far across the region. That risk triggered an unprecedented mobilization of health resources. In 2014, 22.5 million children were immunized in 7 countries, including some 3 million children inside Syria.

Heroism of polio volunteers

That success owed much to the bravery of volunteers and community leaders who delivered polio vaccines to children even in previously inaccessible parts of rural Damascus, Damascus, Aleppo, Hama and Homs. As of today, 36 children in Syria have been confirmed to have polio, but no new cases have been reported since January 2014.

But the danger is not yet over. It is estimated that as many as 80,000 young children remain inaccessible and have missed out on scheduled polio vaccinations. Further immunization rounds will therefore continue in Syria and around the region during 2015.



A child receiving polio drops during a 2014 immunization campaign in Najaf, Iraq.

©UNICEF Iraq/2014/KHUZAIE

The prolonged conflict has crippled the economy and families' livelihoods. It has also sent food prices soaring and cut supplies of food items children need for their growth and development. Many communities that were once self-sufficient are finding it harder to grow or import food.

As a result, nutrition-related illnesses among very young children and pregnant women are in danger of increasing.

To identify and treat children suffering from malnutrition and vitamin deficiency, UNICEF has established nutrition centers in 11 Syrian Governorates. The centres screen children for malnutrition and distribute preventive and therapeutic products.

"We estimate that there are around four million women and children in Syria who need preventative and curative nutrition assistance," says Dr Hossain. "Young children need micronutrients, pregnant women and lactating mothers need counselling and multiple food supplements. We must do everything possible to reach them."

Meanwhile, the task of providing ongoing health care in a country wracked by violence continues day by day. By partnering a number of local NGOs, UNICEF has helped establish 56 mobile medical teams and more than 50 fixed health centres, some of them in opposition-controlled areas. In 2014, the primary health care services they delivered reached more than 600,000 vulnerable children and women in 14 Syrian governorates.



Khaled was born in Aleppo two months before the start of the Syrian crisis. By the age of three, he weighed just 6 kg. He was little more than skin and bones. UNICEF NGO partner, Al Taalouf treated him over seven months. As a result, Khaled's weight increased to a healthy 11 kg.

To read his full story, go to childrenofsyria.info

Providing clean water to a region in conflict

It was in the searing heat of summer 2014 that the people of the war-ravaged city of Aleppo suddenly found themselves without water. A huge explosion – so powerful it left a 40 metre-wide crater -- severed the vital water pipes on which a large part of Syria’s second largest city depends.

“The situation was desperate, taps were dry,” said Hanaa Singer, UNICEF Syria Representative. “The only sources of drinking water were the wells in public parks and in private homes.”

The water crisis in Aleppo – which dragged on for many weeks – was one dramatic example of the extent to which clean water is a central issue for people caught up in Syria’s four-year old conflict – and of how the ongoing war continues to impact the daily lives of civilians in the country.

The systematic damage done to pumping stations and pipe networks has affected urban and rural communities alike. Water availability in Syria is now estimated to be less than half what it was when the conflict began in 2011.

This is especially the case in opposition controlled areas, where families rely on (often costly) private water tankering, small private wells, and surface water of uncertain quality.

Host communities suffer too

In fact, water is a critical issue for families right across this conflicted region: host communities in Jordan and Lebanon have been forced to share their wells and aquifers with an ever growing number of Syrian refugees. The situation has been worsened by drought conditions that affected much of the region last year.

For children, the implications are huge. Without adequate water – especially in the hot summer temperatures – there is an increased risk of water-borne diseases, particularly among young children already left vulnerable by the cumulative effect of years of conflict.

This helps explain why water has been at the centre of UNICEF’s response to the escalating Syria crisis. In Syria itself, that has meant providing thousands of tons of chlorine to water purification plants across the country (including 40 per cent in areas made hard-to-reach due to the conflict). In Jordan’s sprawling Zaatari refugee camp, meanwhile, tanker trucks deliver 3.8 million litres of water daily.

“The day to day business of supplying enough clean water for children affected by this ever-growing crisis gets bigger all the time, as do the costs,” says Pierre Fourcassie, UNICEF Water and Environmental Sanitation specialist. “That’s why we are increasingly turning to more durable solutions that will be more cost-effective over time.”

For example, in Lebanon and Jordan (which now host 1.8 million Syrian refugees between them), the emphasis is on helping host communities reinforce their water and sanitation networks and infrastructure. That way, people from host communities benefit as well as the refugees.

In Iraq, the authorities and aid agencies have struggled to meet the needs of 5.2 million Iraqis who are in need of assistance, half of whom are children, as well as some 235,000 Syrian refugees. Over time, dependence on costly water-trucking has been reduced and replaced by pipe networks, while communal latrines have increasingly given way to household toilets.

Back in Aleppo, the repairs to the water pumping station and pipes went ahead despite the ongoing fighting in the area. It took weeks of negotiations before the work was completed. But the station continues to be subject to closure.



A girl carries a jerry can filled at a water tank built by Oxfam with UNICEF support, in a camp for displaced families in Aleppo, Syria.

Innovation helps meet needs of Syria's war affected children

In a tiny house in the south Lebanon, 11 year old Zeinab Al Jusuf lives with her family who are refugees from Syria. Life is difficult but Zeinab -- who her parents say was always top of her class -- is happy that she is able to learn.

Zeinab is one of the children benefiting from Raspberry Pi, a credit card sized computer drive that is being tested for use in classrooms and informal refugee settlements.

"When we came from Syria, we didn't make it in time to enroll in school. We were upset and mum bought us story books and we started to learn by ourselves", Zeinab said.

The education crisis for Syrian refugee children is huge. Many of the 3 million displaced Syrian refugees are out of school. Ensuring adequate access to learning and other services has been met with tremendous challenges, with schools in Lebanon under huge strain.

UNICEF hopes the Raspberry Pi will demonstrate that even during crises, children can learn skills in numeracy, literacy and computer programming.

The device plugs into a computer monitor or TV, uses a standard keyboard and mouse, and has the processing power of a desktop.

Another example of how innovation is being put to use in tackling some of the long term consequences of the Syria crisis is in Jordan, where UNICEF – instead of providing assistance in kind – now offers unconditional child cash grant for Syrian refugees. These grants are considered a more empowering and dignified form of support for families, with demonstrated multiplier effects on local economies.



The Raspberry Pi - Helping children in crisis learn numeracy and other skills.

Hasna, a 34-year old mother from Syria, lives alone with her 5 children in a damp and cold flat in the Jordanian capital, Amman. She says her biggest goal is to ensure the wellbeing of her children. But her life has become a daily struggle.

"Getting cash is very difficult. If I need something, I don't have money to buy it. Sometimes I can't even buy bread. This is what happens in our life," she says.

Hasna has no family or friends nearby, and relies solely on outside assistance to survive. Under the cash grant system, she receives a text message telling her that money has been added to her account.

The UNICEF child cash grant is intended to cover children's specific needs and associated expenses.



An iris scanner allows Hasna to receive her cash grant from an ATM machine.

It complements a cash assistance programme run by UNHCR.

"Cash assistance provides immediate support to the most vulnerable families and gives them the opportunity to decide and access what they really need", said Claire Mariani, UNICEF Regional Cash Transfer Programme Specialist.

75,000 vulnerable households will receive the monthly child grant. Community-based awareness raising and sensitization activities help ensure the money is used primarily for the benefit of children.

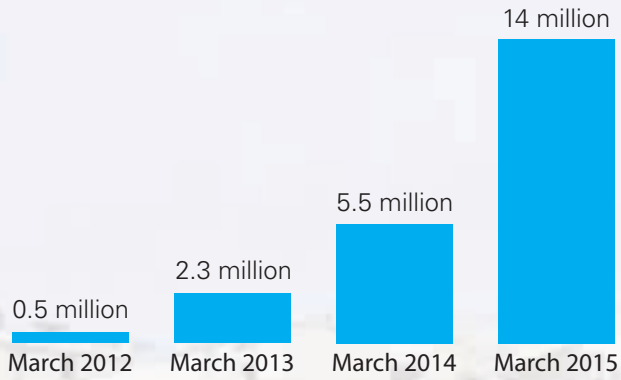
What UNICEF is calling for:

- **End the conflict.** A fifth year of carnage and destruction for the children of Syria is unconscionable. If efforts are not increased to bring a rapid end to this crisis, the painful repercussions for countries around the world – already glimpsed in horrifying fashion over recent months – will surely escalate.
- **More support for learning.** This should include, for example, investment in remote learning and certification so that children who cannot attend physical schools do not fall behind, and have recognised certification to maintain their academic status. Teachers need to continue to be supported with training and resources.
- **More protection for those at risk.** Psychosocial support services need to include mobile child and adolescent friendly spaces, as well as fixed sites. More needs to be done to raise awareness in communities on child protection concerns, including recruitment by armed forces and groups. Community-based child protection initiatives should be supported, while comprehensive services are needed for children at risk and for survivors of violence, including through reintegration support programmes.
- **Stop the direct involvement of children in the conflict.** In the past year the number of groups and militias recruiting children to join the fighting has increased. More active engagement is needed with these groups and those who have influence over them to halt this dangerous trend.
- **More investment specifically in adolescents and youth.** More opportunities need to be created for remedial education, vocational training, and recreation. Youth require particular support to engage them in constructive community-based socio-economic activities that can provide skills and livelihoods.
- **Increased support to host communities.** As the pressures increase on vulnerable families in host communities where large numbers of refugees now live, additional support is needed for children in these communities – to create opportunities for education, better health and livelihoods, and also strengthen local infrastructure and support national development plans. Investments need to meet immediate needs but also focus on longer-term growth and development, so all communities affected by this crisis see the benefits for their children
- **Improved access to children.** A year ago, the humanitarian community called for urgent, regular access to children living in hard-to-reach areas throughout Syria. The number of children now hard to reach has doubled, to 2 million. Renewed commitments are needed from all parties to the conflict to guarantee regular, safe access for humanitarian workers, protection of civilian populations and to allow those populations to safely access assistance.



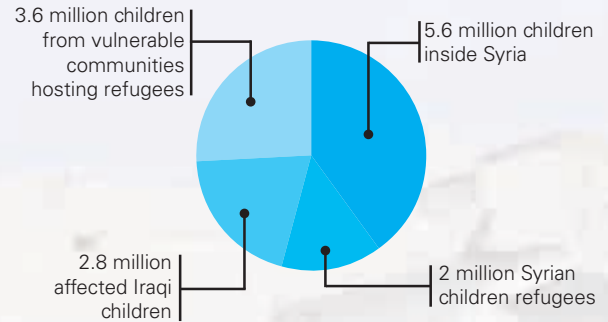
A Regional Children's Crisis - How UNICEF is Responding

Children Affected 2012-2015



2012 - 2014 figures are for Syrian children only.

14 million children affected: How the number breaks down



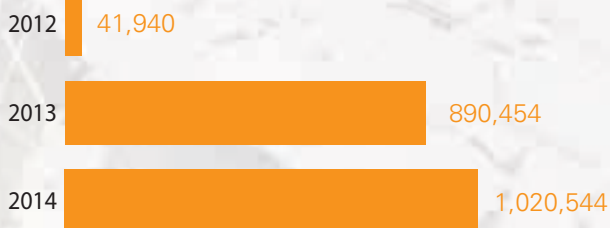
UNICEF's scaled up response



People supported to access safe water



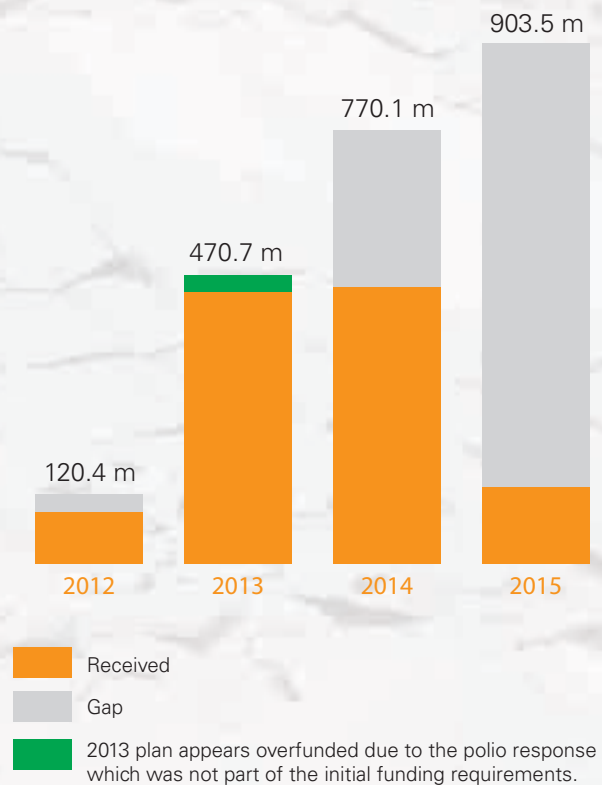
Children reached with psychosocial support



Children supported to access learning



UNICEF funding requirements



Cover Photo:

Children amid war-damaged buildings in Idlib province, Syria. January 21, 2015.

Credit: ©REUTERS/Khalil Ashawi

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