

Working with Youth



Active



Innovation



Creativity



Change

Peace



UNHCR Syria
Youth Engagement Programs

The current crisis in Syria has affected youth and adolescents physically, psychologically and socially. They are potentially subject to different protection risks including: smuggling, drop out of schools, kidnapping, recruitment, child labor, abuse, neglect and separation from their families. Psychological symptoms, including withdrawal, anxiousness, fear, denial, anger, sadness, restlessness, and regression are especially prevalent among children and adolescents.

As a response to these challenges and in order to give the opportunity and voice to young internally displaced persons (IDPs), UNHCR Syria established a dedicated fund to support initiatives designed and led by young people that address protection challenges they identified within their communities. The initial pilot phase of the 'Youth Initiatives' supported six (22) protection projects in addition to one project supported by UNHCR Headquarters as part of the global Youth Initiative Fund in 2015. Identified protection challenges were addressed through projects that focused on issues such as sexual and gender based violence, peaceful coexistence, education and livelihoods.

The objective of the Youth Initiatives programme is to build on the existing capacities and capabilities of young people, by drawing on the spontaneous community initiatives based on the Syrian tradition of solidarity rather than focusing on vulnerabilities.. The aim of the Youth Initiatives is also to assist young people in unlocking their potentials, to build life skills that strengthen resilience and peaceful coexistence among youth groups.



Introduction

Youth Initiative Fund 2015

UNHCR Syria's proposal for the 2015 "Youth Initiative" funded by UNHCR Headquarters was one of 14 successful proposals out of 92 submitted globally. The initiative brought together 100 young participants from diverse economic, social and cultural backgrounds and provide them with the training and support necessary to become active protection actors within their communities. In particular, it targets the protection of young girls and children. The initiative also provided a platform for youth to promote social cohesion and enable Syrian youth to be engaged in identifying local community needs and jointly devising campaigns to tackle these needs.



The initiative participants gained key transferable skills that will better involve them in raising awareness on protection issues including SGBV, child protection, peaceful coexistence, and livelihoods. A total of 50 young people were trained and involved in facilitating the project with 100 more involved in various activities in order to create a multiplier effect throughout the different target communities.



The activities of the initiative included four phases consisted of:

1) Using awareness methods to shed light on challenges such as child marriage and sexual exploitation faced by IDP women and children through interactive theater shows that were performed in several distribution sites targeting more than 300 IDP women and children.

2) Initiating children's clubs that targeted displaced children to raise their awareness about explosive remnants of war (ERW) such as landmines, UFOs and unexploded ordnance in addition to awareness session on the environment.

3) The third part of the activities included communicating awareness messages to the community through 20 murals

in Dier Atiyah- Rural Damascus around protection issues including SGBV, peaceful coexistence, rights of people with disabilities, environment, and child's rights.

4) The final phase of the initiative included the establishment of channels between the private business sector and university students graduates by creating online index and provide internship, training courses, and job opportunities to university students and unemployed youth.

Youth Engagement programs

Based on the experience of the Youth Initiative Fund supported by UNHCR Headquarters , UNHCR Syria has replicated the programme by designing the 'Youth Initiatives' programme in response to protection challenges identified by youth groups within the IDP, refugees and affected communities.



UNHCR Syria launched the 'Youth Initiatives' programme to support diverse, creative and dynamic Syrian youth groups to submit proposals whose projects are aimed to address challenges they identified within their communities.

The programme supported solidarity initiatives and self-support solutions created by youth groups, and encouraged youth to lead and implement successful protection projects to benefit their communities. The programme has also incorporated a learning



element that helps to develop young people's capacities in areas such as life skills, business and community facilitation.

The projects targeted a) children including homeless, orphans, children with disabilities, and children in juvenile, b) women headed household in self-reliance and empowerment projects, and awareness raising on women rights c) young people in activities promoting education, peaceful coexistence messages.

We print a smile with our hand (recreational activities for children with special needs)

A group of Fine arts graduates designed art activity targeting children with autism, Down syndrome and learning difficulties in 2 local NGOs; the children learned how to paint and print their own art work on their T-shirts, the activity was concluded with an exhibition in the National Opera house with attendance of the children, their parents, and public audience to present their work. The succeeded in spotting the light on the skills acquired by the targeted children and providing a new methods for their caregivers when organizing activities with children with disabilities.



Women's rights initiative

The initiative was organized by a group of graduated Syrian lawyers who identified a need for legal awareness to be drawn on the issues of domestic abuse and prevention of SGBV.. The group worked together to come up with a reader-friendly booklet based on articles from Syrian law and other sources to advocate for women's rights. The group distributed more 700 booklets to IDP women in Rural Damascus, they also organized several awareness sessions that aim to spread awareness targeting IDP communities with topics related to channels of support that are provided by NGOs.

Raising awareness on children's rights Interactive theater initiative

The initiative was designed by a group of youth with the aim of using interactive theater to train more than 100 IDP children on raising awareness on children's rights and the prevention of domestic violence for residents in collective shelters in Damascus and Rural Damascus. Following these trainings, the children performed several Interactive theater shows in several shelters and schools where they highlighted the challenges. The initiative helped in reducing the tension among host and IDP communities through attracting many attendees from both communities to sit together and participate in direct discussions during the performances.



A Step initiative

The initiative came as a response to the concerns raised by youth and related to lack of job opportunities and youth involvement in community work in Mazzeh area. The group designed four approaches to empower the youth in the area, through providing training and capacity building workshops to 90 youth participants on four topics that includes community mobilization, project management, enterprise skills, and community-based media tools. These topics helped the group to mobilize the participants toward identifying self-support solutions to their problems such as establishing community youth support center in their area using the recourses existed in the community.

Mushroom home-cultivation Training of 100 IDP women on home-based farming

The initiative was supported with the aim of improving food security and economic sustainability for 100 IDP women in Saboura area, they were taught and supported to start the farming project in the community. This can serve as supplemental or major source of income, depending on the size of the farming activity and the number of farming houses.

The type of vegetables can be produced within 2 - 4 months and the women can sell it fresh on the local market. The initiative was led and implemented by number of agronomists who wanted to support IDP women in their community.

The initiative targeted 100 IDP women in Al-Saboura area through a training on mushroom home-cultivation. The project was designed by a group of agricultural engineers who supported the women to

“Bikom Nartaki” initiative designed and Implemented by a group of Iraqi and Syrian youth

The initiative was planned and implemented by a group of talented young Iraqis and Syrian called «Bikom Nartaki» and funded by UNHCR’s Group Community Based Initiatives (CBI) program. The initiative came as a response to uplift 85 children spirits and reinforce their confidence as such activities can make them happy and bring them shining memories and strengthen their motivation. The initiative included various activities including cultural activities, recycling, handicraft, painting, and other activities that were designed based on assessment that was conducted with the children.



“Keetab” initiative

«keetab» was the title of a new initiative that was designed by a group of Syria youth targeting children and the community through reading sessions, exchanging of books, and establishing libraries. The initiative was implemented by a team of voluntary youth and supported by UNHCR, the activities are still ongoing as the group established ten libraries in community centers and spaces.

The initiative targeted two age groups that include: children and adolescents: by establishing libraries in community

centers and holding reading and interactive sessions that include activities to encourage the children to develop the reading habit, and young people: by establishing libraries in community spaces. It worth mentioning that the group is still expanding their activities and networking with other voluntary groups and NGOs to expand the impact.

Redline initiative

This initiative was designed as a need by a group of university students to respond to several issues identified among youth in Damascus and Rural Damascus. The initiative included five workshops targeting 200 young participants with topics related to raising awareness on PSS for children, domestic violence, addiction, community work principles. The initiative helped in encouraging more youth to engage in voluntary and community service, which led to the establishment of a new voluntary group in Saidnaya area Rural Damascus. Participants who benefited from this initiative showed interaction to spread the awareness they received among their communities through distributing posters and awareness materials.



Sayar initiative

Sayyar is a group of Syrian youth who formed a new initiative after observing a lot of homeless children in the streets in need for support. The group started their activities on a weekly basis by providing remedial classes and recreational activities to a small group of children who were dropped out of school. On a following stage, the group attracted additional number of children and expanded to cover different areas, hence they sought support to cover the needed items and materials of their initiative through UNHCR under the youth initiatives programme. The provided support enabled the group to expand their activities by conducting hygiene awareness sessions, distributing hygiene kit, school bags and winter clothes to more than 200 homeless children. Additional activities were also supported such as puppet theater show to deliver awareness on the prevention of SGBV to minimize

the risks on those children. The initiative is still ongoing and the group is still networking with concerned actors including MOSA to secure better situation for homeless and beggar children in Damascus.

Clothes recycling initiative

In Homs, a group of youth initiated clothes recycling initiative with the support of UNHCR. The initiative aimed at collecting donated clothing, blankets, and shoes to be distributed the most vulnerable families living in under construction buildings.



For Better Hygiene initiative

The initiative was designed by a group of 20 youth students and graduates of the Fine Arts Faculty. The group consists of 8 females and 12 males who are working together to promote for civilization and hygiene matters. The initiative was designed to promote for the importance of maintaining hygiene in the streets, around the schools and the different facilities. The group based their initiative on raising the awareness of children and people on the importance of hygiene as means for healthier life and as an element of civilization.

Accordingly, the youth have planned to engage school children with drawings they will be using to paint on garbage cans, and have also cooperated with the Municipality in Sweida to facilitate their work. The initiative aims at cleaning the existing garbage cans, purchasing new ones, painting on the cans using the drawings of the school children, in addition to painting hygiene promoting statements encouraging children and passersby to maintain clean streets and neighborhoods and promoting for civilization.





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