



**LIVE, LEARN
& PLAY**

SAFE

REGIONAL INITIATIVE 2014-2016

Protecting Children at Risk in
Egypt, Ethiopia, Sudan and Yemen

“

UNHCR delivers protection to children of its concern by responding to their specific needs and the risks they face. This includes: protecting and advocating against all forms of discrimination; preventing and responding to abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation; ensuring immediate access to appropriate services; and ensuring durable solutions in the child's best interests”

UNHCR, A Framework for the Protection of Children, 2012



Sudan, Kassala, Shagarab camp, Unaccompanied children in a football team.
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The Situation

Displacement and separation increase children's vulnerability to violence, abuse, and exploitation. The protection and developmental challenges faced by refugee and asylum-seeking children in Egypt, Ethiopia, Sudan and Yemen are complex and require a holistic approach to protection.

Since 2008, the UNHCR operations in Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan have seen a steady influx of Eritrean unaccompanied and separated children (UASC). Driven by a variety of complex and interlinked factors, children as young as five years old have taken the perilous journey across the borders, only to find themselves in different situations from what they had imagined.

Many of the children arriving in Ethiopia and Sudan (particularly adolescents) do not remain in the camps for long. Motivated by the desire to find a better future, and lack of alternatives in the camps, these children head to urban centres such as Khartoum or move to Egypt or Libya as they try to reach either Israel or Europe. In desperation, some children also attempt to return to Eritrea on their own. Many of the children who reach Khartoum or Cairo do not register with UNHCR and/or are unable to access basic services and support that meet their specific needs.

Across the Red Sea, another challenging situation involving UASC on the move concerns Yemen. The country received record numbers of people travelling in mixed migratory flows in 2012. These refugees and migrants, mostly from Ethiopia and Somalia, cross the dangerous Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, entrusting their lives to the smugglers and traffickers that operate the boats to Yemen. Trafficking of people, including children, to Yemen and onwards to Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States has increased with the political instability and deteriorating economic circumstances in the country since 2011.

UASC are faced with a host of protection challenges and an uncertain future in the above-mentioned countries. The trafficking and smuggling of people along both of these routes, and the risks of kidnapping, torture, extortion, sexual abuse and other serious human rights abuses are well documented and have received considerable media attention over the past few years.

Ensuring the safety and wellbeing of these children requires the primary response of reunification with their parents or families. Pending such reunification, a range of actions must be undertaken to identify and respond to each child's specific circumstances and needs. These include fulfilling basic subsistence needs, promoting a protective environment, enhancing access to education and livelihoods, providing psychosocial support, and identifying short and long-term care arrangements.

Although such programmes are already underway in all of the respective UNHCR operations, they are hampered by a wide range of challenges, including: the increasing number of UASC seeking asylum; serious resource shortages for basic services for children; limited capacity of partners; low levels of community participation; and lack of engagement in national child protection systems.

Regional Initiative - Response and Outcomes

UNHCR recognises the regional dimension of the protection risks for UASC, particularly those travelling in secondary movements. The regional initiative thus combines both regional and country-specific interventions, building on and complementing existing regional initiatives designed to address smuggling and trafficking in East and North Africa as well as Yemen.

Given that the context and challenges vary between each location, the approaches adopted by the respective UNHCR offices will, by necessity, differ. Detailed country-specific strategies have been developed by each operation. However, their common objectives are summarised below.

Overall, the regional initiative will seek to achieve the following:

- **CHILDREN ARE BETTER PROTECTED AGAINST THE RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH SECONDARY MOVEMENT, TRAFFICKING AND SMUGGLING** through awareness raising and counselling for children, prioritized registration, tracking of missing children, and capacity building of key actors such as the police, security staff, border guards and refugee community members. Victims of trafficking will have access to safe houses, legal aid and psychosocial support.
- **CHILDREN BENEFIT FROM APPROPRIATE ALTERNATIVE CARE ARRANGEMENTS** by making suitable shelter arrangements available to unaccompanied children immediately upon arrival. This involves renovating collective living facilities, training and deploying caregivers, providing age/gender-sensitive counselling and improving case management. Longer term alternative care arrangements need to be enhanced through effective community engagement and better support for willing caregivers. Kinship care with extended relatives will be promoted and suitable foster parents identified and supported.
- **CHILDREN HAVE ACCESS TO TRACING SERVICES AND CAN BE REUNITED WITH THEIR FAMILIES.** Family reunification in the asylum country, third countries or even the country of origin, will be explored and supported where in the best interest of the child. Children will receive appropriate legal assistance, counselling and follow-up support to ensure that family reunification is completed and the children are safe.
- **CHILDREN HAVE ACCESS TO DEVELOPMENTAL AND LIVELIHOODS OPPORTUNITIES** through specific interventions aimed at increasing children's access to education, supporting educational facilities, and training and deploying adequate numbers of teachers. Adolescent girls and boys will have better opportunities to gain vocational skills and receive appropriate livelihood support upon completion of training.
- **CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEMS ARE STRENGTHENED TO ADDRESS THE CHALLENGES FACED BY CHILDREN IN A HOLISTIC WAY.** This requires the active engagement of community networks, capacity building, increasing the involvement of national actors, and establishing effective case management and referral systems. Functioning child friendly spaces will not only enable children to engage in developmental and recreational activities, but will also promote integration between unaccompanied children and other children in the camps and urban areas. Children with specific needs will also be able to benefit from psychosocial services.
- **BETTER OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN THROUGH MORE EFFECTIVE REGIONAL COORDINATION AND COOPERATION**
UNHCR offices and partners will ensure the collaborative efforts necessary to address secondary movements, track and locate missing children, share knowledge, experience and best practices and carry-out family tracing and reunification.



Background

Situated at the crossroads of a migratory route for people fleeing persecution or seeking a better life elsewhere, Cairo is either a transit point or the destination for scores of refugees and migrants from Africa and the Middle East.

In the recent years, UNHCR has documented the arrival of unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) and other persons of concern who have been detained, tortured and trafficked along their journey. Since the beginning of the 2013 UNHCR Regional Office Cairo has registered 681 unaccompanied and separated children and 63 victims of trafficking (VOT). In response, UNHCR, IOM and other partners have sought to address their protection needs, but have experienced difficulties due to lack of funding and the operational context in Egypt.

Unaccompanied children arriving in Cairo are placed in temporary community care or supported independent living arrangements. Once a caregiver is identified the child may remain in such care in the medium term until more appropriate solutions are identified. Separated children often remain with the caregivers who accompanied them to Cairo.

Addressing the protection concerns of UASC and victims of trafficking, aiding their recovery, and identifying durable solutions are key priorities for the operation. As such, this special project seeks to protect and promote children's rights through greatly enhancing the existing services and the provision of safe care, psychosocial support, educational and livelihood opportunities, and legal assistance.

SECONDARY MOVEMENT, TRAFFICKING AND SMUGGLING

NEEDS: ↘ The office fast-tracks registration for children, however, this does not prevent their secondary movement to a safe third country - notwithstanding awareness-raising by implementing partners on the risks of secondary movement.

RESPONSE: ➤ Children at risk, including UASC and victims of trafficking, have access to legal representation, benefit from enhanced case management and coordination, and advocacy.

➤ In coordination with national counter smuggling and trafficking initiatives, specific activities such as supporting security and police staff, border guards and enhancing existing awareness raising programmes will seek to address the wider problem of trafficking and smuggling.

ALTERNATIVE CARE ARRANGEMENTS

NEEDS: ↘ Before registering at UNHCR, unaccompanied children reaching Cairo have limited access to immediate and secure accommodation, resulting in further traumatization and risk of various types of abuse (emotional, physical and sexual) in the community and apartments which are shared by other children and/or adults. Some girls are immediately placed by community members or smugglers in Egyptian homes to work as domestic workers, which puts them at risk of SGBV incidents and dehumanizing behaviour by their employers.

↘ Financial assistance for victims of trafficking is limited to 12 months: nevertheless, without a more structured livelihood project, this allows them little time to psychologically adjust, gain skills, and find employment and to support themselves.

RESPONSE: ➤ For easy identification and prevention purposes, conducting BIA upon registration ensures the timely identification of risk factors. After these are identified, children are referred to implementing partners, which assigns them to community care-givers, and supports them in looking after the children, pending alternative or long-term solutions. The implementing partner is also responsible for the case management for each child.

➤ Identify appropriate family care or support independent living arrangements, and provide adequate financial support to UASC and their care-givers to ensure that the children's safety and basic needs are adequately met.

➤ Provide immediate safe housing for unaccompanied children who are victims of trafficking outside of the community when it is in their best interests, while being supported by dedicated case and psychosocial workers.

FAMILY REUNIFICATION

NEEDS: ↘ Many child victims of trafficking are unable to maintain contacts with their families due to the costs involved, which in turn impedes their recovery and wellbeing.

↘ While the use of family reunification for resettlement is explored, staffing, financial constraints and quotas established by embassies limit the support available for children seeking reunification with relatives abroad, either through ICRC, family reunification procedures and/or resettlement processes. UNHCR cannot return children to their country of origin, or their first country of asylum and the same also applies to their parents.

RESPONSE: ➤ Support unaccompanied children seeking reunification with relatives abroad, through BIDs, family reunification procedures and resettlement processes where in the best interests of the child.



- Establish regular, reliable service to contact family members by telephone via the ICRC for a meaningful period of time on a regular basis.

DEVELOPMENTAL AND LIVELIHOODS OPPORTUNITIES

- NEEDS:**
- Education opportunities are limited because of the Egyptian context and language barrier, with few UASC being fluent in Arabic and/or English. Some language classes are available but unfortunately security concerns, distance and transportation costs often prevent children from attending classes and focusing on their lessons. There is also the misconception among children that if they go school, they will be considered more likely to be reintegrated within Egypt and thus, this will lower their chances for resettlement.
 - There is a lack of motivation among UASC to attend school as there is a lack of promising access to post-education work options other than domestic-related work.
 - Young people, especially those transitioning to adulthood have very limited access to livelihoods opportunities and often do not have the necessary skills to access them. Caritas, an implementing partner has vocational training available, but a good level of Arabic is a prerequisite to joining. They are, however, keen to enhance their capacities through skills and other developmental programmes.

Refugee children play football outside a residential block in Sixth of October City outside Cairo.

© UNHCR / Shawn Baldwin

- RESPONSE:**
- Establishing language and life skills classes in the communities local to the children, and training and employing teachers from the children's own communities will improve access to education.
 - Children transitioning to adulthood will receive help to access livelihoods interventions that will consist of profiling; provision of capacity building; additional language classes, professional skills development and vocational training; job matching; seed grants and legal advice.
 - Improvement of community-based schools, as 13 year-old children are emerging from these schools and are unable to read or write.
 - More awareness-raising among communities regarding the benefits of education and/or vocational training.

CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEM

- NEEDS:**
- Therapeutic services are few and at times, often in inaccessible locations.
 - Many who escape traffickers are traumatised and live in fear, and lack specialized, dedicated psychosocial support services, caseworkers and safe accommodation to meet their specific needs.
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- RESPONSE:**
- Limited psychosocial programmes with dedicated caseworkers, psycho-educational group sessions, sports activities, and contact with their families will support stress reduction, promote recovery, strengthen coping mechanisms, and enhance empowerment and independent living skills.
 - Access to medical services and culturally appropriate therapeutic services will be improved through identifying centres local to where persons of concern live.
 - Dedicated registration, refugee status determination (RSD), resettlement and child protection staff will ensure that the best interest process (BIA and BID) is systematically followed through from the point of identification until the most appropriate durable solution is achieved.

REGIONAL COORDINATION AND COOPERATION

- NEEDS:**
- Limited coordination and cooperation between the offices in Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt, and the lack of a centralised database of registered UASC hampers the ability to track missing children and identify durable solutions through family tracing and reunification.
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- RESPONSE:**
- Increased cross-border cooperation between the UNHCR offices and a centralised database will enable the office in Cairo to assist with tracking missing children, and explore solutions such as family tracing and reunification.

ETHIOPIA

Child Protection Regional Initiative 2014-2016



Background

UNHCR Sub Office Shire is responsible for providing protection and assistance to some 50,000 Eritrean refugees, with a current arrival rate of around 800 to 1000 individuals per month. A particular feature of this caseload is that as high as 70% of the refugee population are young and single men.

The influx of unaccompanied children (UAC) into Ethiopia started in 2008. The group-care programme, which was established in response, cared for some 1,000 children aged between 9 and 17 years as up to 2013 and now cares for about 500 UAC. Around 550 children are living either in community care, kinship care or independently within the camp, while an additional 200 children are being temporarily accommodated at the Reception Centre as alternative care options are being explored in the camps.

Children in group-care and in the camp face a wide range of protection challenges, including physical abuse and SGBV, while secondary movement exposes them to further risks such as kidnapping, trafficking and smuggling.

While the various forms of alternative care programme for UAC and a number of child protection activities are being implemented, the continued influx and onward movement of unaccompanied children requires a significant increase in UNHCR's response efforts. Together with the Regional Project to Address Smuggling and Trafficking, this special project will adopt a broader protection strategy for all refugee children, to ensure that both specific and wider child protection challenges are addressed.

SECONDARY MOVEMENT, TRAFFICKING AND SMUGGLING

- NEEDS:**
- Approximately 500 unaccompanied children (34% of the UAC population) were reported missing between October 2011 and April 2013. But anecdotal information suggests that they may have crossed into Sudan, returned to Eritrea or moved elsewhere within Ethiopia.
 - Moving between Eritrea and Ethiopia or within Ethiopia can result in children facing numerous risks, including arrest and detention. Onward movement to Sudan, Egypt and Libya can lead to children becoming victims of trafficking and smuggling, and the grave dangers these pose.
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RESPONSE: ➤ Information campaigns, awareness raising, individual counselling, establishing children-based awareness groups and community structures, training of judicial and law enforcement actors, increased monitoring, and advocacy, together with the other targeted activities outlined in this strategy will help reduce secondary movement and mitigate the risk of trafficking and smuggling. All activities will be coordinated with national counter smuggling and trafficking initiatives.

ALTERNATIVE CARE ARRANGEMENTS

- NEEDS:**
- In 2013, the group care shelters for unaccompanied children became overcrowded and provided little safety or privacy. With the reduction in the number of UAC sent to group care, there are now 5-6 UAC per shelter as compared to 8 as in the period immediately following the establishment of the group care. One refugee incentive worker with limited training looks after as many as 24 children, but even this limited care and supervision is not provided at night. In the community care and guardianship, there is 24 hour supervision by the families living next to the UAC.
 - The 200 children that are accommodated at the Transit Centre, are being cared for and monitored by one Social Worker from the government and one UNHCR staff.
 - Identifying community and family-based care arrangements has been difficult due to staffing constraints especially with the partners, the sheer number of new arrivals each month, limited community involvement, the single/youth dominated demography of the refugee population.
 - While children receive basic supplies in the camp, items such as clothing and sanitary items are inadequate to meet the children's needs. This affects their hygiene and overall well-being.
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RESPONSE: ➤ The safety and protection of unaccompanied children will be ensured through the rehabilitation of existing shelters, the timely construction of additional shelters, an increase in the number and skill levels of refugee social workers supporting these children and supporting families to care for UAC.

➤ Introducing improvements in children's meals and other basic supplies will ensure that their needs are adequately met. Extending assistance to other children at risk within the camps will avoid creating a gap between the community and the children in group-care, kinship or foster care.

➤ Efforts to identify alternatives to group-care will be prioritised through mobilising and training community structures with a target of some 850 children under kinship, community or foster care arrangements by 2015.

➤ Monitoring and follow-up of these care arrangements, as well as the group-care programme, will be strengthened to provide children with adequate protection and individualised care-plans.



FAMILY REUNIFICATION

- NEEDS:**
- ✘ Although spontaneous family reunifications take place within the camps, elsewhere within Ethiopia or in third countries, UNHCR's role has been limited due to staffing constraints. Resettlement opportunities are also limited.
 - ✘ The political tension between Eritrea and Ethiopia does not currently allow the return of refugees to their country of origin and similarly local integration is not available.

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- RESPONSE:**
- Family tracing and reunification efforts will be greatly enhanced for both relatives in Ethiopia (camps and urban areas) and abroad. Resettlement referrals and support for reunification with families in third countries will be pursued where it is deemed to be in the best interest of the child. A dedicated staff member will manage this process.
 - UNHCR will continue to engage with other actors to explore the potential for supporting the return of UAC to their country of origin (where this is found to be in the best interest of child).

DEVELOPMENTAL AND LIVELIHOODS OPPORTUNITIES

- NEEDS:**
- ✘ The lack of proper facilities, supplies, teaching aides, textbooks, recreational inputs, and trained teachers affects the quality of education and leads to significantly low enrolment and retention rates.
 - ✘ Adolescents have little or no access to vocational and skills training, while opportunities for income generation are limited upon completion of training.

- RESPONSE:** ➤ Improving the educational facilities, providing educational materials to unaccompanied children and other vulnerable families, ensuring the availability of trained teachers, and creating safe learning environments will increase children's access to education and development.
- Increased vocational training and livelihood opportunities for adolescents will enable them to acquire skills for the future, develop a sense of purpose and support themselves.

CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEM

- NEEDS:** ➤ Limited awareness of child rights and available services means violations such as physical abuse, SGBV or other harmful practices are likely under reported. Even when cases are reported, lack of training for law enforcement, judicial and medical actors impedes appropriate response.
- The limited number of child friendly spaces and youth programmes inhibits opportunities for play and recreation, as well as the identification of children at heightened risk.

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- RESPONSE:** ➤ Awareness raising activities, enhancing cooperation and coordination amongst actors, capacity building, promoting meaningful participation of children, and improving the case management system will help address the protection risks faced by girls and boys.
- Establishing and improving child friendly spaces will provide children the opportunity to engage in play and to receive psychosocial support. These child friendly spaces will also promote integration between unaccompanied children and the rest of the refugee children in the camps.
- Children with specific needs will receive increased attention and targeted support, while focused activities will ensure schools and other public spaces are accessible and usable to persons with disabilities.

REGIONAL COORDINATION AND COOPERATION

- NEEDS:** ➤ Limited coordination and cooperation between the offices in Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt and the lack of a centralised database of registered UASC hampers the possibilities for addressing secondary movement, tracking missing children, and facilitating family tracing and reunification.

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- RESPONSE:** ➤ In-country and cross-border cooperation between UNHCR offices will be strengthened, and the possibility of establishing a centralised database will be explored in an effort to address the protection risks to children in secondary movement and facilitate family tracing and reunification.

SUDAN

Child Protection Regional Initiative 2014-2016



Background

Eastern Sudan has been hosting refugees and asylum seekers for over four decades. It continues to receive a steady influx of asylum seekers at an average of 600 individuals per month. Predominantly of Eritrean origin, the new caseload is young and single, and nearly 80% leave the camps shortly after arrival.

The arrival of unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) since 2008, and subsequent secondary movements, have created a new dimension to the protection challenges in the region. Children falling prey to trafficking and smuggling, the lack of education and livelihood opportunities, and the risks they are exposed to are of serious concern to UNHCR.

The unaccompanied children arriving in Eastern Sudan are first accommodated at a Transit Centre in Shagarab camp. However, difficulties in identifying appropriate solutions have resulted in some of the children staying at the Centre for several years. Although a high number of Eritrean unaccompanied children are suspected of transiting through Khartoum, very few are identified by the Office and support available for them in 2013 was very limited.

In addition to the UNHCR-IOM Regional Project to Address Smuggling and Trafficking, UNHCR has also been implementing a number of limited child protection activities in the eastern camps and in Khartoum. However, the particular child protection concerns in the operation requires the adoption of an enhanced strategy, including focus on protecting UASC's basic rights, enhancing the protection environment for all children, and identifying durable solutions.

SECONDARY MOVEMENT, TRAFFICKING AND SMUGGLING

- NEEDS:**
- ✘ In 2013 alone, as many as 80% of registered unaccompanied children departed from the Centre on secondary movement, some their next destination is known (mostly transiting through Khartoum), for others they are reported as missing as their whereabouts are unknown. The final destination of most of these children are unknown, but information gathered from focus group discussions suggest that most are intended to cross into Libya, Egypt, or return to Eritrea.
 - ✘ Secondary movement increases the risk of children becoming inadvertent victims of trafficking and smuggling: this puts them in grave danger of being held for ransom, raped, abused, tortured, and/or having had their organs harvested.
 - ✘ Victims of trafficking have limited access to protection and support services, including psychosocial support. Children arriving in Khartoum are often not identified by UNHCR or its partners and are frequently exposed to a host of protection risks.
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- RESPONSE:**
- The activities outlined in this strategy will improve the protection and care of unaccompanied children and help reduce secondary movement, which exposes children to the risks of trafficking and smuggling.
 - Specific activities include supporting security and police staff, border guards and enhancing existing awareness raising programmes. All activities will be coordinated with national counter smuggling and trafficking initiatives.

ALTERNATIVE CARE ARRANGEMENTS

- NEEDS:**
- ✘ In spite of hosting up to 600 children each year, the facilities at the Centre for UAC offer little safety and dignity for girls and boys and provide only limited counselling. Case management remains weak and age/gender-sensitive supervision is inadequate, particularly at night.
 - ✘ Separated children, children in foster care and those transitioning to adulthood are not receiving adequate monitoring and follow-ups due to insufficient staff and resources.
 - ✘ Most unaccompanied children arriving in Khartoum do not approach the Office and services available to support them are very limited. Unaccompanied and separated children inside the camp and in urban areas are at risk of being exposed to sexual abuse and exploitation as they feel compelled to seek work opportunities to supplement the services provided by UNHCR.
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- RESPONSE:**
- Improving the Transit Centre includes enhancing the case management system, upgrading the facilities, ensuring age/gender-sensitive supervision, and providing psychosocial counselling will enhance the protection and safety of girls and boys and reduce their exposure to risks.
 - In Khartoum, the establishment of a safe house with trained counsellor and social workers will ensure that children victims of trafficking receive appropriate care and psychosocial support.
 - Establishing and strengthening community-based child protection networks, recruitment and training of staff, increasing engagement with national actors, and training and supporting willing caregivers will help increase the options for kinship care (with relatives) and foster care arrangements in the camps and Khartoum. This will also enable adequate monitoring and support of these care arrangements.



Refugee children in a school in Shagarabs camp, Eastern Sudan
© UNHCR

FAMILY REUNIFICATION

- NEEDS:**
- Support for children seeking family reunification both within Sudan and for third countries, has been slow due staffing constraints and long procedures required for sponsorship cases.
 - The search for durable solutions, particularly safe return to Eritrea for family reunification, has been constrained as very few humanitarian actors can undertake family tracing inside Eritrea.

- RESPONSE:**
- A network of actors will be established to enhance family tracing and expedite family reunification for children within Sudan.
 - Family reunification in country of origin will be facilitated where this is found to be in the best interest of the children.
 - Reunification for unaccompanied children with family members in third countries, resettlement and the facilitation of safe return to Eritrea will be supported where it is found to be in the best interest of each child. A dedicated staff member will manage this process.

DEVELOPMENTAL AND LIVELIHOODS OPPORTUNITIES

- NEEDS:**
- Children have limited access to education and vocational training opportunities. The few children who do complete skills training each year receive little support to engage in productive livelihoods activities. The lack of such opportunities has prompted some of the children to consider secondary movement as they try to seek a better future elsewhere.

- Children's access to education will be increased through the provision of direct assistance, support to schools, training of teachers and advocacy.
- Adolescent girls and boys will benefit from increased opportunities to participate in vocational training programmes, with follow-up support for livelihoods and income-generating activities.

CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEM

- NEEDS:**
- Children have little space for recreation and social interaction, with most unaccompanied children, particularly adolescents, spending their days in idleness, boredom and frustration.
 - The absence of cohesive community-based child protection networks in the camps and urban areas, the limited capacity of national actors and partners, and insufficient number of staff mean that the current response strategy lacks a long-term component that is fundamental to addressing these complex child protection challenges.

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- RESPONSE:**
- Reinforcing child protection systems by building the capacity of national, NGO and community partners, will help address the known risks to UASC, develop coordinated preventive and response mechanisms, and establish referral pathways to ensure appropriate and timely support is available for children.
 - Access to recreational activities and children's social and emotional well-being will be improved through establishing and supporting Child Friendly Spaces in the camps and urban areas. This will also promote integration between unaccompanied children and other refugee children as well as serving as an outreach mechanism to identify other children at risk in the community.

REGIONAL COORDINATION AND COOPERATION

- NEEDS:**
- Limited coordination and cooperation between the offices in Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt and the lack of a centralised database of registered UASC hampers the possibilities for addressing secondary movement, tracking missing children, and facilitating family tracing and reunification.

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- RESPONSE:**
- In-country and cross-border cooperation between UNHCR offices will be strengthened. The possibility of establishing a central database will be explored in support of the regional effort to address the protection risks to children in secondary movement and facilitate family tracing and reunification.

YEMEN

Child Protection Regional Initiative 2014-2016



Background

Yemen hosts nearly 240,000 refugees, primarily Somalis (95%) with sizable communities of Ethiopian, Iraqi and Eritrean refugees. Most refugees live in urban areas, such as Sana'a and Aden, while a minority reside in Kharaz refugee camp in Lahj Governorate.

As of 31 December 2013, an estimated 65,319 economic migrants, refugees and asylum seekers were recorded as having sailed from the Horn of Africa to Yemen, including over 1318 UASC and 167 children at risk. Overall, there was a 39% decrease in the number of arrivals sailing to Yemen from the Horn of Africa as compared to 2012 when 107,532 migrants from the Horn of Africa were recorded as having sailed to Yemen. While the anti-smuggling and anti-trafficking engagement by Yemen authorities coupled with an expulsion of thousands of migrants from Saudi Arabia are likely to have contributed to a decrease in the number of African migrants journeying to Yemen, the evolving geo-political situation in Somalia and Ethiopia may also have contributed to this decrease.

Persons make this journey across the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea in search of safety, protection and economic opportunities. They often arrive dehydrated, malnourished and in shock. Almost 80% of the new arrivals are of Ethiopian origin and only around 15% of all new arrivals register with the Yemeni Government or UNHCR.

In 2013 UASCs and children at risk make up 6.1% of the total new arrivals, their numbers have decreased due to the reasons indicated above. The majority of these children (as with other new arrivals) do not remain in Yemen, using it only as a transit stop en-route to other countries in the region.

Trafficking activities have increased and victims are subject to serious human rights abuses during their journey to Yemen, or while transiting to Saudi Arabia, or when sent back to Yemen from Saudi Arabia's border. These risks are higher for children, particularly unaccompanied children, and the Office continues to identify children victims of trafficking.

UNHCR has adopted a strategy that focuses on enhancing the protection environment for all children (asylumseekers, refugees and others at risk) and improve existing services that are put under strain by the increasing number of beneficiaries.

In early 2013 UNHCR Yemen conducted a child protection needs assessment in both urban and camp areas with the aim of assessing the protection risks for refugee children and gaps in service provision. More than 900 individuals were interviewed in all locations and 35% of participants were children. Based on the priority areas identified by the respondents, UNHCR Yemen has identified the following needs:

SECONDARY MOVEMENT, TRAFFICKING AND SMUGGLING

- NEEDS:**
- Child trafficking was raised as the main protection risk for children identified in the 2013 assessment. Trafficking activities have increased both during their journey, upon arrival or while transiting to Saudi Arabia (as well as other Gulf States), as well as those deported from Saudi Arabia back to Yemen. New arrivals are often abducted by traffickers while disembarking along the Yemeni coast and forced to pay ransoms, and those who cannot pay face serious humanrights abuse including rape, abuse, detention and torture.
 - Victims of trafficking have limited access to protection and support services including psychosocial support. This is particularly the case for those who do not approach UNHCR to register as asylum-seekers. UNHCR and Government of Yemen Registration Centres need to strengthen the identification of UASC who are victims of trafficking and improve access to services, including fast-track registration, RSD and psycho-social support.
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- RESPONSE:**
- All activities outlined in the strategy will improve the protection and care of unaccompanied children and other children at risk and help minimise secondary movement.
 - Specific activities include capacity building and support to security and police staff, borderguards and enhancing existing awareness raising programmes. All activities will be coordinated with national counter-smuggling and trafficking initiatives.
 - Capacity-building for Government Immigration staff will enhance the identification and registration of UASC, including victims of trafficking and improve access to fast-track procedures.
 - Increasing the number of RSD staff and identifying specialised staff to process children at risk cases will facilitate fast-tracked decisions and improve the quality of BIA / BID reports.

ALTERNATIVE CARE ARRANGEMENTS

- NEEDS:**
- UNHCR arranges for group accommodation or foster care for UASC; however, the ability to provide adequate monitoring or consistent follow-up particularly in the dispersed urban areas is low due to limited staff and resources.
 - To supplement the limited support that is provided, UASC are at risk of sexual abuse and exploitation as they may be compelled to seek inappropriate work opportunities.
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- RESPONSE:**
- In Yemen, the support of two government safe houses with trained counsellors and social workers through MoUs will ensure that children at risk, including victims of trafficking, receive appropriate care and psychosocial support to facilitate their reintegration into their community.
 - Establishing and strengthening community-based child protection networks, advocacy with both refugee and host communities on child-protection, increasing engagement with national actors, and better support for willing caregivers, will help increase the potential for kinship care (with relatives) and foster care arrangements.



- Support for alternative care arrangements for UASC by increasing the number of social workers and improving their skill levels through additional trainings to improve the quality of monitoring of alternative care arrangements.

FAMILY REUNIFICATION

- NEEDS:**
- Support for children seeking family reunification in the country of asylum and in third countries is slow due to the lack of documentation, staffing constraints, and long procedures required for sponsorship cases. Also, many UASC coming to Yemen are in transit to Saudi Arabia and do not want to be reunified with their families.
 - The security situation in Somalia, particularly south-central Somalia, does not currently allow the return of UASC to their country of origin.

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- RESPONSE:**
- A network of actors will be established to enhance family tracing and expedite family reunification for children within Yemen.
 - Building the capacity of UNHCR and IPs in the BIA/BID process and case management will enhance family tracing and reunification.
 - Reunification for unaccompanied children with family members in third countries, resettlement, and the facilitation of safe return to their country of origin will be supported where it is found to be in the best interest of each child. A dedicated staff member will manage this process.

DEVELOPMENTAL AND LIVELIHOODS OPPORTUNITIES

- NEEDS:**
- ✘ Although education is free for all children in Yemen under the national system, UASC have limited access to education due to language barriers, lack of documentation and secondary costs associated with learning (e.g. learning materials, transport, uniform etc). At present, there is no data available on school enrolment, retention or safe-learning procedures and a school monitoring system tool needs to be developed.
 - ✘ There are few vocational and skills training opportunities available to adolescents and youth due to funding constraints, and opportunities for income generation are limited upon completion of training due to the poor economic situation in the country.
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- RESPONSE:**
- Children's access to education will be increased through the provision of direct assistance, support to schools, training of teachers and advocacy.
 - Adolescent girls and boys, including UASC, will benefit from increased opportunities to participate in technical and vocational training programmes, with follow-up support for livelihoods and income-generating activities.

CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEM

- NEEDS:**
- ✘ Children have little space for recreation and social interaction, particularly adolescents and Youth.
 - ✘ Identifying UASC is difficult as many do not approach UNHCR or Government registration processes and continue travelling onwards.
 - ✘ The absence of cohesive community-based child protection networks, the limited capacity of national actors and partners, and the insufficient number of staff, challenge the ability of the operation to make a long term improvement to the protection needs of children.
 - ✘ Children of women at risk, neglected children, street children and children of survivor sex workers are at high risk of abuse and exploitation. These children have been supported through counselling, financial & material support and referral for education, medical services and safe shelters. Non-formal education, skill training, recreational activities and more staff to support and monitor these children and work with their families is needed.
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- RESPONSE:**
- Reinforcing child protection systems by building the capacity of national, NGO and community partners, will help address the known risks to UASC, develop coordinated preventive and response mechanisms, and establish referral pathways to ensure appropriate and timely support is available for children.
 - Access to recreational activities and children's social and emotional well-being will be improved through supporting Child Friendly Spaces. This will also promote integration between unaccompanied children and other refugee children as well as with Yemeni children in the urban areas.
 - Support will be provided to MoE staff and teachers to enhance the protection of children in schools and to promote a safe learning environment for refugees and local children.

- Children with specific needs will receive increased attention and targeted support, while focused activities will ensure schools and rehabilitation centers are accessible to children with disabilities.
- Children of women at risk, neglected children, street children and children of survivor sex workers will be provided psychosocial support, friendly spaces, language & computer courses, recreational activities, pre-school education and closed follow up through a community based community center that engage other refugee and host community children.

REGIONAL COORDINATION AND COOPERATION

NEEDS: ➤ Limited coordination and cooperation between the different regional Stakeholders and the lack of a centralised database of registered UASC hampers the possibilities for addressing secondary movement, tracking missing children, and facilitating family tracing and reunification.

RESPONSE: ➤ In-country and cross-border cooperation between UNHCR offices and local governments will be strengthened. The possibility of establishing a central database will be explored in support of the regional effort to address the protection risks facing children in secondary movement and facilitate family tracing and reunification.

For more information on this initiative or other UNHCR child protection initiatives, please contact Monika Sandvik-Nylund, Senior Adviser (Child Protection), sandvikn@unhcr.org



UNHCR
The UN
Refugee Agency

Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia and Yemen

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