



Lutheran Immigration
and Refugee Service

CHILDHOOD INTERRUPTED:

Lost Years for the Children of the Syrian Refugee Crisis



Photo credit: Paul Jeffrey

September 2016

HOPE FOR THE FUTURE FOR 1,000 CHILDREN

New York City is renowned for its dynamism and its cultural riches, rooted in a diversity of ethnicities, races and faiths, fed over centuries by the arrival of immigrants and refugees from all over the world. The desire of New Yorkers—leaders, humanitarians and ordinary citizens—to take a stand for Syrian refugees is an expression of core values and the impulse represents the best of who we are in the United States.

Between 1938 and 1940, the Kindertransport, a series of rescue efforts organized by the British government, refugee aid organizations and individuals, rescued 10,000 Jewish children from Nazi Germany by sending them to Great Britain to be fostered. Today, refugee children from Syria are suffering the horrors of war and conflict, in what the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has called the worst humanitarian disaster since World War II. In light of the historical precedent of the Kindertransport, it seemed self-evident that some number of Syrian children could benefit from the opportunity to grow up in peace, cared for by foster families in the United States.

In the fall of 2015 an interfaith group of humanitarians, led by New Yorker Jack Bendheim, initiated and launched a campaign to rescue 1,000 Syrian children from danger by offering them homes in New York City. The group put into place many of the building blocks for a rescue operation: they secured the enthusiastic backing of the mayor and the New York State governor, and engaged a wide range of actors in the refugee relief and refugee resettlement worlds. They were willing to put significant private resources into the effort, and began exploring the creation of a private sponsorship model.

It became clear that if 1,000 children were to be brought to New York City the vehicle would be the Unaccompanied Refugee Minors program, which resettles children who arrive in the United States with no parent or guardian. The interfaith humanitarian collaborative group decided to fund a mission team to travel to the Middle East (Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey) to assess the needs of at-risk children, and to return with recommendations regarding their resettlement as Unaccompanied Refugee Minors. That mission team was led by Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, and included refugee and child protection experts from Migration and Refugee Services of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, HIAS, the International Rescue Committee and Islamic Relief USA.

Central to the mission's purpose was the question of whether there are, in fact, 1,000 Syrian children who lack the care of parents or loving families, or whether the risks that children face are such that it would justify removing them from their current care situations.

This was not the mission's conclusion. In the three countries visited, the mission found that almost every Syrian child who has been separated from parents or become unaccompanied is either quickly reunited with family or taken in by relatives. Furthermore, although the risks that children face are grave, they do not rise to the level of a genocidal threat and do not, at this time, warrant removing children from loving homes and inflicting long-lasting psychological scars. Rather, the mission found that relieving the severe risks children face warrants a family-based approach, preserving the ties of the heart and the connection to home while providing some hope for the future.

The mission team returned with a wide range of recommendations for future action directed toward nonprofits, individual donors and the philanthropic community. Any of these could give a new and profoundly better future to 1,000 children. Providing medical care, education, and help in securing livelihoods for parents would be transformative. Children arriving in the United States as refugees with their parents also need support to succeed, especially in a climate that can be hostile to Syrians and Muslims.

The report that follows presents the findings of the assessment mission and lays out the recommendations that the mission believes will make the most difference for children in this unique situation and at this historical moment.

The mission and this mission report would not have been possible without the support and contributions of many individuals and organizations. First and foremost, we would like to thank the individual donors whose inspirational commitment to Syrian children launched the effort and provided the resources for the mission.

The members of the mission included Annie Wilson of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, Kristyn Peck of Migration and Refugee Services of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, Melonee Douglas of HIAS, Sandra Vines of the International Rescue Committee and Christina Tobias-Nahi of Islamic Relief USA.

In addition to staff from the five participating organizations the mission was supported by two consultants whose insights and experience were of great value. Ms. Hadil al-Faqih, an educator, mental health specialist and expert on psycho-social support who has

worked in the development field and with Syrian refugees in camps in Jordan, was able to join the mission and provided both technical and cultural counsel. Mr. Everett Ressler of the Konterra Group has a long career in child protection, and in addition to the wisdom he brought to the analysis and development of recommendations, he served as the team coordinator while the team was in the field.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees deserves a special thanks for providing strategic guidance in advance of the mission and opening doors for the mission team. The report details the challenges that UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations face in addressing the needs of Syrian and other refugees in the region and the work they carry out under difficult circumstances.

Several individuals contributed to the editing of the report, including: editor Wendy Healy, Miji Bell, LIRS Director for Communications, Jessica Fisher, LIRS Graphic Design and Creative Services Specialist, who provided the design, and Maren Lundgren, LIRS intern, who developed the bibliography.

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INTRODUCTION

In April 2016 an inter-agency and interfaith mission traveled to Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey to assess the situation of at-risk children who are refugees or are otherwise displaced across international borders in the region. The scale of the Syrian refugee crisis makes it one of the most urgent humanitarian challenges in the world. Half of those forcibly displaced are children. Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey have collectively welcomed millions of refugees from Syria in the last six years, while also hosting many thousands of refugees from Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran and North and East African nations.

The privately funded mission was intended to advise donors and the U.S.-based non-governmental sector of avenues for improving the protection, care and well-being of refugee children with a particular focus on the situation of Syrians. LIRS organized the mission and assembled a collaborative team consisting of representatives from HIAS, the International Rescue Committee, Islamic Relief USA and Migration and Refugee Services of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops. Additionally, the mission was supported by two consultants with particular areas of technical expertise, and received invaluable counsel and access from the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). This report is issued with the full support of the mission team and funder.

One purpose of the mission was to assess the situation of unaccompanied and separated refugee children, who are often at greatest risk in situations of conflict and flight, and to understand the protection needs for this population. The mission also focused on identifying the wide range of risks that refugee children face, whether living with family or supported in alternative care settings, and considered the context of durable solutions¹ that may be available, including the potential need for resettlement through the Unaccompanied Refugee Minors program.

The mission was designed primarily to gather systemic information from organizations and experts involved in addressing children's care and protection needs, rather than undertaking case-level interviews and fact-finding. The mission traveled to cities which host the offices of organizations charged with child protection and assistance to the unaccompanied and separated child population: Amman, Jordan; Beirut, Lebanon; and Ankara, Turkey. Additionally, in Jordan and Lebanon the local partners of Islamic Relief hosted short field visits to nearby programs serving refugees, including to informal tent settlements and urban settings where refugees, including children, live. In Turkey, visits to organizations in Ankara were

supplemented by Skype interviews with organizations located in the southeastern Syrian border region and Istanbul. More than 50 people were interviewed; a list of the organizations with which they were affiliated can be found in Annex III.

This report is based on information shared during meetings, reference and background materials reviewed prior to or following the trip, and follow-up conversations with a few individuals upon return from the mission. It is directed toward nonprofit organizations, donors and the philanthropic community.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The mission returned with a strong sense of urgency regarding the risks that children face. Although recognizing that many organizations on the ground are engaged in responsive and dedicated work that has greatly advanced the care and protection of children, the scale of the Syrian refugee crisis is simply overwhelming.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi calls the Syrian crisis “the biggest humanitarian and refugee crisis of our time,”² and according to a UNHCR report, “worldwide displacement is at the highest level ever recorded.”³ Approximately 7.6 million Syrians are forcibly displaced, representing about half of the pre-conflict population. Many are displaced internally within Syria, and more than 4.8 million have sought protection in the neighboring countries of Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Egypt and Turkey (as of June 2016).⁴

This report is not a comprehensive or detailed study, but rather, offers a broad overview of the situation of children, summarizing the findings of a two-week mission. The situation in each of the countries visited is complex and unique, and the refugee population itself is highly diverse. There are many exceptions to the trends and findings presented here. At the same time, the mission team heard consistent themes throughout the mission, in all of the countries visited, and advances these findings with confidence that these are critical child protection concerns.

Key findings of the report are detailed in the following several pages.

Children and Families at Risk

Throughout the region, the mission team heard that the conditions in which refugees are living put children and their families at severe risk across a number of dimensions. The situation of separated and unaccompanied children and the challenges that refugee children and youth face in securing education are treated as separate sub-sections, below.

The risks to refugee children⁵ are similar in the three countries that are the subject of this report, and many are shared with their other family members. Risks include the lack of a protected refugee status and documentation for those who are unregistered, the lack of full protection by the countries in which they have sought asylum, the lack of a durable solution to their displacement, and severe economic hardship that jeopardizes day-to-day survival. These risks both contribute to and exacerbate risks that are specific to their status as children.

Findings

- In all three countries the most at-risk refugee families, including their children, are living in abject poverty that threatens their basic survival. One factor contributing to dire economic hardship is that the majority of refugees have limited or no right to work legally in the host countries (although rights vary across the three countries with significant progress being made in Turkey and important measures being implemented in Jordan), and face other structural issues limiting access to labor markets. Children in the most disadvantaged families suffer along with other family members, going without meals, appropriate shelter or medical care. Neither humanitarian assistance nor economic development activities are currently adequate to address the dire economic situation in which many refugees live.
- Poverty is driving vast numbers of children into the labor force, where they are often subject to exploitation, abuse, and the worst forms of child labor.⁶ Many children are the primary breadwinners for their families.
- More underage girls are being married, and at younger ages—a cultural practice throughout the region, but one that places girls, especially in the refugee context, at added risk for dangerous pregnancies, abusive relationships, and school drop-out. Some early marriages are entered into for economic reasons, to provide the girl with the customary dowry⁷ or to alleviate the expenses of a

mouth to feed, while others are intended to protect the girl from the sexual abuse directed toward unattached girls or to provide an alternative to idleness resulting from not being in school. In some cases, early marriage is also occurring to assist men in gaining access to countries whose borders are, for the most part, closed to single men.

- The future for refugee children and their families in the region is tenuous. Although they have been welcomed with great generosity, their status is not permanent and all three countries have determined that they are unable to sustain the refugees they host without significant additional support. Recent severe border restrictions have created an increasingly urgent humanitarian crisis for refugees with no option to return to their homes. Furthermore, the regional situation remains highly dynamic, with the potential to further worsen the scale of the refugee situation.
- Tensions between refugee and host populations are a concern, and arise from a number of complex economic and social factors. Actions that undermine social cohesion by providing refugees with benefits that are not available to members of host communities can lead to hostility, harassment, and even violence, and could have long-lasting implications for the stability of the region. Most organizations in the region are taking approaches that advance and protect social cohesion by addressing the needs of host communities as well as refugees.

Unaccompanied and Separated Children

Wide differences exist throughout the region in estimates of the number of children not being cared for by families. Three terms are in usage: “unaccompanied,” “separated,” and “orphaned.” The term “orphan” is used across the region by many actors to include children who have lost one parent or both parents, and orphanages commonly include children who have been placed there for reasons other than the death of the parents, including children without the economic support of their families. This variance in terminology may explain why stories in the media offer a wide range of estimates for Syrian refugee orphans.

One of the important efforts under way in the region is to bring the terminology into greater harmony. Following international child protection usage, unaccompanied children are defined as children who have been separated from both parents and other relatives and are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so.⁸

(Unaccompanied children may be determined to be orphans upon confirmation of the death of both parents, but often the status of the parents or caregiver is unknown.) Separated children are children who have been separated from both parents, or from their previous legal or customary primary caregiver, but not necessarily from other relatives. These may, therefore, include children accompanied by other adult family members. These definitions are applied throughout this report.

Findings

- Family tracing (and therefore subsequent family reunification) for unaccompanied and separated Syrian refugee children has been extraordinarily successful, thanks in large part to refugees' use of social media. This represents a revolutionary shift in the successful reunification of children separated from their families during flight.
- In Jordan and Lebanon, Syrian children who have lost their parents or who need alternative care are most often cared for or fostered⁹ by their extended families, meaning that there are very few children who are without the care of adults. This is likely also the case in Turkey, although the data there are less definitive and the care arrangements may not be formalized. Kinship fostering practices are a cultural strength of the Syrian population, with strong grounding in their faith. Consequently, the number of Syrian children whose best interest would be served by being resettled from these countries as Unaccompanied Refugee Minors (URMs) is quite small. Nevertheless, procedures should be in place to identify the children who would benefit from this program.
- There are potentially large numbers of Syrian children being cared for in institutional settings (i.e. orphanages, primarily in Lebanon and Turkey) but it is unclear if these children have relatives who would be able to care for them if provided with support. The mission team did hear that there are non-Syrian unaccompanied and separated children throughout the region who are in need of the services and protection offered by the U.S. Unaccompanied Refugee Minors program. These children deserve to be assessed and, if appropriate, referred to the program. The commitment and capacity to receive such children should also be increased. Specifically, the team heard of significant numbers of non-Syrian unaccompanied and separated children in Turkey who could benefit from such assessments—and possibly for

resettlement—from countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran, as well as from East Africa.

- Refugees continue to migrate out of the region in large numbers, desperately seeking to secure asylum in Europe. When the topic of migration to Europe was discussed during the mission with organizations, few felt that migration would be prevented by the border-closings and agreements now being put into place; rather, the routes of migration will simply shift, and new and increasingly dangerous coping mechanisms will develop. Children migrating alone or with family members will continue to be jeopardized by this onward migration.
- The desperation of families living in abject poverty is arguably a factor precipitating the separation of children from care-giving adults, tearing otherwise intact families apart. Among the refugees migrating to Europe are tens of thousands of separated children, as well as some who are unaccompanied, many of whom have separated from families by mutual decision to secure a future that is otherwise denied them, and with hopes that they might contribute to the survival of their families.¹⁰

Capacity for Care and Protection

Throughout the region, each country is eager to build capacity and all are making great strides in developing a strong foundation of policies and principles for all children. Nevertheless, the mission team found that public institutions charged with the care and protection of children could benefit from increased capacity to meet the needs posed by their own citizen children, not to mention the children in the refugee population.

Public institutions need more trained staff and increased capacity to fully implement plans to identify and respond to child protection needs, including allegations of abuse and neglect, and to continue the shift they are making away from institutional care models toward family-based care. This will require utilizing a multi-disciplinary approach, building the capacity of professionals in child welfare, medical and mental health, law enforcement, and the courts.

It is essential that public institutions be fully supported in their capacity-building undertaking, but at the same time it must be acknowledged that the practical impact for children may not be felt at meaningful levels in the short- or even medium-term. For years to come, a large number of refugee children are likely to remain at risk of physical and sexual

abuse, neglect and exploitation, and will benefit greatly from additional forms of support from their communities, civil society and non-governmental organizations, as well as United Nations agencies.

Since throughout the region the vast majority of refugees are living outside of camps within host communities, models and approaches that emphasize the identification of risks, family support, and community-strengthening are essential. These models are also important for refugees living in camp settings but are essential for those in dispersed urban, rural and peri-urban contexts. Refugee children and families in the most acute circumstances often live among the poorest and most disadvantaged families in the host community. Assistance directed only to refugee populations, ignoring the needs of the surrounding community, can create harmful divisions that splinter communities and feed bitter resentment against newcomers – and indeed, most current programs within the region are therefore designed to foster social cohesion by addressing community needs in a holistic way.

Findings

- The continuing large-scale influx of children and their families has stretched social service systems to their limits and outpaces best efforts to provide assistance. Child welfare systems in all three countries are building capacity to respond to the needs of refugee children, but this effort will take time. In the meantime, significant numbers of children lack appropriate child protective services and face a wide range of risks in family settings, as well as in wider society.

Education

In all three countries, many refugee children are out of school and—especially for those who have now missed up to six years of schooling—are rapidly losing the ability to catch up. Primary school attendance in Syria was quite high; before the war, almost all of Syria's children were enrolled in primary school and literacy rates were at an impressive 95 percent for 15 to 24 year-olds.¹¹ Now, with the ongoing conflict, an estimated 2.8 million children are no longer in school and Syria is estimated to have one of the lowest enrollment rates in the world.¹²

The loss of schooling for this generation of Syrians, whether refugees or still living in Syria, represents a real step backward in human development. Without education, young people understand that their hopes for the future are circumscribed. Lack of education has long-

term impacts for children, for their families, for future generations, and for the society that must contend with large numbers of unskilled and embittered youth. Children who are not being educated become especially vulnerable for exploitation and recruitment into military activity.

Findings

- The significant number of refugee children not attending school is dismayingly, and has now gone on so long that many children will never catch up unless there is a specific intervention to assist them. The causes are varied, including the shortage of schools, challenges with access to schools, lack of family resources for transportation or supplies, lack of preparation for school due to excessively long gaps in children's educational history, harassment and prejudice, language differences, and psycho-social issues. Some children are not able to go to school simply because the work they engage in is the primary or only source of income for the family.
- Educational alternatives to formal schooling exist and can provide options for children unable to participate in formal schooling. However, informal and non-formal schooling are not available at the scale needed to address the education crisis.

Refugee Resettlement

Resettlement is pursued in the MENA (Middle East and North Africa)¹³ region and Turkey both as a solution and a vital protection tool for the most vulnerable refugees. In 2014, as prospects for a swift resolution of the crisis (and therefore imminent return of refugees) dimmed, UNHCR began to focus more attention on resettlement as a durable solution. Faced with depleted personal resources, cuts to humanitarian aid and increasing difficulties accessing public services, an increasing number of refugee individuals and families began to be identified as at heightened risk and in need of resettlement. Refugees with medical, psycho-social or other special needs as well as large families with many children made up a large proportion of those identified as in urgent need of resettlement. UNHCR acted in response to the rapidly changing realities and began to exponentially increase its submissions of Syrians to the US Refugee Admissions Program and other countries beginning in 2014, and now projects resettlement needs for 477,000 Syrians in 2017, from Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey.¹⁴

The numbers to date of people who have actually departed for resettlement are far short of the UNHCR

target.¹⁵ The UNHCR notes that 13,353 Syrian refugees actually departed from MENA in 2015, an increase over 6,913 departures the year before.¹⁶ The numbers will be even higher for 2016, with 25,000 Syrian refugees departing to Canada alone, but will still not come close to meeting the need. Between October 1, 2013 and July 31, 2016, a total of 7,551 Syrians were resettled to the United States. Departures to the US are expected to increase in the second half of calendar year 2016, reaching or possibly exceeding the target of 10,000.

Findings

- The scale of refugee resettlement needed to alleviate the refugee situation in this region and to prevent further risk-taking by people desperate for solutions, is vastly greater than what is addressed by current resettlement commitments.
- There are no specific targets for the resettlement of children at risk as there are for other categories such as women at risk. Such a target could be of benefit.
- The refugees who will be arriving in the United States through the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program are a particularly vulnerable population with high rates of disabilities, health problems, and behavioral challenges among the children arising from exposure to violence and trauma. Significant support will be required to ensure that refugee families are equipped to meet the care and protection needs of their children in their new setting.
- Urgent medical cases could benefit from a stronger system for connecting individuals with medical needs to resources in countries with advanced medical care, including through humanitarian evacuation.

Recommendations at the end of this report detail a number of actions that private individuals, foundations, or non-governmental organizations should take to respond to the needs of refugee children. Some recommendations address actions to be undertaken in the three countries that were the focus of the mission. Others are focused on support for the refugee resettlement program in the United States and for the children and families who will make new lives in our own country.

JORDAN



Map of Jordan

Jordan is a small upper middle-income Arab country, governed by a constitutional monarchy and recognized as an island of stability in a region wracked by conflict. It is the second-most water-poor nation on earth, and much of the country, including the majority of the northern border with Syria, is desert terrain. There are 9.5 million residents of mixed ethnicities and statuses. Almost 2 million residents are non-citizen Palestinians living under the mandate of the United Nations Relief and Works Administration (UNRWA) – a sizable population whose long-term presence has created demands on national resources and complex political strains. Jordan also still hosts about 130,000 refugees from Iraq, of whom approximately 55,000 are registered with UNHCR, as well as refugees from Somalia, Sudan, Yemen, and other countries.

The estimated 1.2 million Syrians who have arrived since the beginning of the conflict have added to the pre-existing pressures of hosting uprooted populations. 657,159 of the Syrian total are refugees registered with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as of June 2016; and of these, 335,000 are children. The remainder of the Syrian population in Jordan is unregistered.

Positive relationships with the United States and other Western nations, as well as the confidence reposed in the Jordanian administration, have resulted in a relatively strong level of support for refugee operations in the country.

The Jordanian government, which is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol, has taken a lead role in accepting Syrian refugees and in

managing the refugee response. From the beginning of the crisis, the Jordanian approach has been to address refugee needs by extension of public services, with on-site service delivery roles by civil society organizations.

Within that Jordanian governmental framework, the UNHCR leads the U.N. response, in collaboration with UNICEF, the International Organization for Migration, and others. It has played an essential role in the response to the Syrian refugee situation, conducting registration, coordinating assistance through implementing partners, and facilitating a range of capacity-building efforts to support the Jordanian government in its efforts to cope with the magnitude and duration of the challenge. National and international non-governmental organizations were forthcoming in their praise and appreciation for the coordinating role that UNHCR has played, and for the benefits of the case management database that humanitarian actors are able to access. The technology deployed in Jordan to register Syrian refugees and provide continuing case management—unique in a refugee setting—has reportedly greatly facilitated the effectiveness of the response.

Over the first years of the war in Syria, Jordan welcomed fleeing Syrian families with few restraints; more than 80 percent of Syrians are not living in refugee camps but are instead living in the community. The government has extended to the refugee population essential national services, such as health, education, and social services. This has had substantial impacts on services and on host communities, including, for example, skyrocketing rent levels.

However, as the number of refugees has increased and the duration of their stay has grown, more restrictive measures have been imposed. The security situation is also a factor that greatly complicates the response of host countries. Restricted entry to fleeing Syrian families and individuals has resulted in thousands of people being stranded at the Jordanian-Syrian border, in a no-man's land known as the "berm," so known for the bulldozed mounds that demarcate the border. Currently, approximately 57,000 people are trapped without shelter or protection there, preyed upon by criminals and armed actors. Only the most vulnerable in need of protection are being gradually admitted to Jordan, as the broader framework of discussions regarding national and international responsibilities progresses. The solution to this untenable situation remains elusive and the numbers are growing daily.

Although some support is provided to the most vulnerable registered refugees, many people are not reached or cannot access services because they are not officially registered and therefore face considerable risks. Refugees work when they are able to find employment

and obtain work permits. Many, however, are employed in irregular labor or are working in conditions and for wages that are below standards for Jordanians. Work permits are challenging and expensive to obtain (even with a current registration window that waives the fee, and other measures under discussion), and most refugees do not have them. Work is also hard to secure, and for many refugee families, economic survival is a serious concern. Child labor is widely prevalent.

Six years after the onset of the Syrian conflict, only limited international commitments to resettlement exist, and humanitarian assistance—while generous—is inadequate to the immensity of the challenge of sustaining so many refugees in a small nation. Humanitarian organizations are increasingly supporting and advancing development solutions that will aid both refugees and the Jordanian population to improve the integration outlook. Such an approach—part of the international platform for addressing the Syrian refugee crisis for two years now—may greatly help to reconcile the Jordanian population to the long-term presence of Syrian refugees.

Children and Families at Risk

UNHCR estimates that there are more than 12,000 refugee children considered at-risk in Jordan,¹⁷ of which 30 percent are separated children. Although most children are being cared for by families, including non-parental relatives, and thus do not face the risk of living without adult care, the extreme socio-economic vulnerability of many Syrian families in Jordan puts children at high risk for early marriage, child labor, untreated medical needs and disabilities, violence, and limited access to education.

The lack of formal identity documentation, such as birth certificates, poses many risks for children. Such children are not considered citizens of Jordan but also lack proof of citizenship in Syria, creating a range of difficulties in accessing services and benefits, including healthcare and education.¹⁸ Reasons for lack of documentation include the nature of the conflict, which led to many fleeing Syria without birth certificates and/or proof of parents' marriage, as well as other challenges in obtaining birth certificates for Syrian children born in Jordan. UNHCR is working with the Jordanian Civil Registry to address this issue by establishing exemptions to fines (waived for nearly 2,500 cases to date), mitigating requirements for issuing documentation, and instituting a mobile civil registry at the refugee camps at least three times a week.

With many adults unable to secure work in Jordan, or with poor and erratic incomes that place their families

in precarious economic straits, children's work is an important source of economic support for a great number of families. In many, children are the primary breadwinners. Many Syrian children in Jordan leave school at 15 years old to work, and many are engaged in such activities as selling on the street or agricultural labor. Some are reportedly in the worst forms of child labor, where they are vulnerable to abuse, exploitation, and trafficking. Child labor has also resulted in some family separations, as children who are caught working illegally are sent to Azraq Refugee Camp by the Jordanian authorities, and some families who are unregistered are unwilling to present themselves at the camp to secure the child's release for fear that their freedom of movement and access to livelihoods will be limited.

Early marriage is also an issue of serious concern for Syrian refugees in Jordan. Marriage of adolescents under the age of 18 is not permitted under Jordanian law unless special permission is given by a family court. However, that special permission is dependent on the discretion of individual judges and is reportedly not difficult to obtain, even for children as young as 15. Additionally, some marriages are contracted in religious rather than civil ceremonies, thus bypassing the need for family court approval.¹⁹

PROMISING PRACTICE

Started by the Jordanian government and supported by UNICEF, there are 215 centers throughout Jordan serving Syrian and non-Syrian children, providing support in the areas of education, psycho-social adjustment, and life skills. These Makani Centers are a safe space for young people, and foster social inclusion. Although centered on children and youth, the centers also provide assistance to their families, thus reaching into the wider community. This model is proving beneficial for refugee children living in community settings.

Unaccompanied and Separated Children

As of June 2016, there were 4,872 unaccompanied and separated children in Jordan known to UNHCR and UNICEF.²⁰ Of these, the vast majority are separated rather than unaccompanied, and most of those who have been identified as unaccompanied are adolescent boys. Girls

and younger children are highly likely to have caregivers from among their extended family or kinship groups, as Syrian culture places a high value on family and tribal ties.

Family reunification in Jordan has high success rates. Most unaccompanied and separated children entered Jordan with family contact information through social media and cellphones. As noted above, the success rate for family reunification is 69 percent after one month,²¹ and 89 percent after three months.

International non-governmental organizations report that there is sufficient capacity within the Syrian refugee population to provide alternative care for unaccompanied and separated children who cannot be cared for by extended family. For example, there are 274 families in the Za'atari refugee camp available to take children into emergency, transitional, and long-term placements. The International Rescue Committee has also screened and trained families in Azraq camp to provide alternative care.

At present, if any child is identified as unaccompanied or separated, the child protection focal points refer that child to the relevant child protection agency to conduct a home visit and best interest assessment in accordance with Child Protection Standard Operating Procedures and the Interagency Referral Pathways as referenced in the next section.

Based on a study of arriving children, UNICEF indicated the following reasons for unaccompanied and separated children entering Jordan: 15 percent to reunify with their families, 30 percent for safety, 13 percent because of the death of a parent, and 8.4 percent due to forcible separation either in their country of origin or while crossing the borders.²² New arrivals of unaccompanied and separated children have slowed, but the closed border between Syria and Jordan may lead to greater numbers of separations that cannot be resolved, and almost 200 unaccompanied and separated children have been identified among the population at the Berm (the no-man's-land between Jordan and Syria).

Capacity for Care and Protection

Jordan is building capacity in its child welfare system, which will benefit all children residing in Jordan, whether refugees or citizens. In addition to plans for strengthening the child welfare system, the Jordanian government has established a juvenile police department in Za'atari refugee camp, as well as a Shari'a court and the Office of Civil Status Department for issuance of marriage and birth certificates. Resource constraints facing the Jordanian government, and the timeline required to build particular professional skills,

necessitate a continuing level of international assistance to Jordan for some years to come in order to improve outcomes for children needing care and protection.

Since the Syrian refugee crisis began, UNHCR and UNICEF have actively supported national efforts to strengthen the Jordanian child protection capacity, particularly through the Jordanian Ministry of Social Development, the National Council for Family Affairs, and relevant institutions under the Public Security Directorate, such as the Family Protection Department. UNHCR and partners have developed Standard Operating Procedures for child protection, implemented by more than 40 local partners. These procedures include tools for identification and response to instances of child labor and child marriage. They require agencies that come across an unaccompanied or separated child to refer that case to the UNHCR protection team for best interest procedures for the purposes of services as well as a recommendation for a durable solution. The Jordanian Ministry of Social Development has developed a workforce to respond to child protection concerns—there are more than 900 child protection workers across Jordan—and the current need is to continue building the technical capacity of this workforce by improving skills, practices, and procedures.

UNHCR and international non-governmental organizations are committed to assisting the Jordanian government in reaching its objectives of strengthening the different facets of its system for the care and protection of children. UNHCR and UNICEF co-chair a child protection sub-working group under the umbrella of the Jordan Refugee Protection Sector Working Group, and there is a highly collaborative culture among its participating organizations. As noted, the Jordanian government participates in Best Interest Determination panels with the UNHCR.

The UNHCR reports that initially there were backlogs for Best Interest Determination (BID) panels, but that they are now up to date. UNHCR has four BID coordinators and has capacity to conduct a Best Interest Determination within 24 hours. Throughout 2015, and for the first four months of 2016, Best Interest Assessments have been conducted at a rate of approximately 300/month.

Education

In Jordan, basic education is free and compulsory for all through the age of 15. Jordan is one of the few Arab countries to have a very small disparity in primary school attendance rates between urban and rural areas because public financing for basic schooling enables children from all socio-economic backgrounds to attend school.

With an effective national education framework established prior to the crisis, Jordan made strong efforts to accommodate the children of Syrian refugees. Yet, many are not receiving education. As noted above, approximately 20 percent of registered Syrian refugees reside in one of two camp settings, with Za'atari being the largest. Within the camp setting, there are schools available but many children are not attending. Currently, about 30 percent of children living in Za'atari camp are not attending school, and there are slightly better attendance rates at Azraq camp. Barriers include lack of financial resources for school supplies, difficulties with transportation (even inside the camp), and fear of bullying and harassment.²³ In addition, some children have previous or current exposure to trauma that prevents them from effectively participating in an educational setting.

The education situation for the majority of children who are living outside of the camps is equally dismaying. Overall, there are an estimated 85,000 to 90,000 Syrian children out of school (145,458 children out of 231,000 access formal education in host or community settings). Jordan has made a commitment to take an additional 50,000 children into its system by the beginning of the next school year, under 102 new “double-shift” programs (programs that accommodate two different shifts of students in the same classroom each day), and to build new schools to help accommodate the high numbers of students. Even after this significant effort, approximately 35,000 children will be found ineligible to be mainstreamed into Jordanian schools because they have been out of school for more than three years. The Ministry of Education will be offering a catch-up program for these children, and it is hoped that children who have been out of school for three years or more will be enrolled in such programs over the next two school years. UNICEF reported that the cost of the catch-up program will be approximately \$1,000 per year per child, or \$35 million. However, children who are out of school for economic reasons (i.e., working to support their families, or unable to afford ancillary expenses) may not benefit from the addition of placement opportunities, regardless of how many are offered.

A number of programs are helping to bridge the gap for children who have been out of school for a period of time. UNICEF is supporting free informal education centers (Makani Centers) that provide educational and psycho-social support to children, both Syrian and non-Syrian. There are 215 such centers in Jordan. Organizations such as CARITAS and QuestScope help prepare children for mainstreamed education. Additionally, some non-governmental organizations provide preschool education for Syrians that they cannot otherwise readily access as limited spots and wait lists are prevalent even for Jordanians.

Refugee Resettlement

The environment for resettlement in Jordan is the most favorable of all of Syria's neighboring countries. Because registration of Syrians was introduced at the start of the refugee influx and included extensive family composition data collection and the use of risk assessment tools, this good data has proven beneficial for earlier identification of the need for resettlement. Beyond traditional resettlement criteria, socio-economic vulnerabilities and medical conditions have featured prominently in submissions. The referral pathway for children at risk is also well established compared to other countries in the region, and includes four Best Interest Determination panels to serve populations of vulnerable children throughout the country (see also the Annex on Refugee Resettlement).

Despite the favorable conditions for resettlement, there are areas of concern. One is the so-called resettlement gap, or the difference between the numbers of refugees referred to the number of refugees who depart in any given year. (There is also an even wider gap between the number of refugees deemed by UNHCR to be in need of resettlement, and the number actually referred based on a realistic assessment of resettlement commitments and processing timeframes, although highly vulnerable cases are always prioritized.)

Additionally, there are barriers to formalizing alternative care arrangements for unaccompanied or separated children, which can lead to slower referral timeframes if resettlement is determined to be the best durable solution for a child. Admittedly, few cases of children without care have been identified in Jordan, but any such case would be at high risk.

To support the United States' arrival target of 10,000 in the current year, the UNHCR Jordan Resettlement Unit worked diligently to identify Syrian refugees for resettlement. With the cooperation of the Jordanian government, the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program processed approximately 12,000 individuals for resettlement to the United States in a 12-week period, condensing the previous average total processing time of 18 to 24 months down to three months.²⁴ The reduced average processing time was achieved by a substantial surge in human resources which shortened the timeframes between referral, pre-screening, interviews by Department of Homeland Security officers, and medical checks, while maintaining the same rigorous security vetting steps and requirements throughout. Priority was given to high-risk groups such as victims of torture and survivors of sexual or gender-based violence (SGBV); only 144 individuals were referred from the refugee camps.

LEBANON



Map of Lebanon

Lebanon, smaller in territory than the state of Connecticut, abuts the Mediterranean Sea and borders Israel to the south and Syria to the north and east. Lebanon is the most religiously diverse society within the Middle East, almost equally Muslim and Christian in its makeup, and comprised of 18 different recognized religious sects. Severe scars remain from a civil war that lasted from 1975 to 1990, and warring across borders for many decades. Reflecting the political sensitivity in Lebanon over maintaining confessional balance, no official census has been taken since before Independence. The 2014 population was roughly estimated to be 4.5 million, of whom 450,000 are Palestinians whose presence represents a significant long-term responsibility for non-citizens pre-dating the Syrian crisis.

The Lebanese response to Syrian refugees has been complicated by internal issues of sectarian and confessional tension, and by the links between political parties in Lebanon to different parties in the conflict in Syria.

Although Lebanon has not ratified the 1951 U.N. Refugee Convention, from the beginning of the Syrian conflict, like neighboring countries, Lebanon has offered sanctuary and help to fleeing Syrian families. There were 1,048,275 Syrian refugees registered with the UNHCR in Lebanon as of March 31, 2016 of which 53.2 percent, or 557,682, are under the age of 18.²⁵

However, in May 2015, the government of Lebanon issued guidance to the UNHCR to temporarily suspend new refugee registrations.²⁶ The number of unregistered refugees is unknown, although some estimates from non-governmental

organizations put the number as high as 1 million. Estimates of Syrian child refugees in Lebanon, including both registered and unregistered children, are as high as 800,000. In a country of approximately 4.5 million people, the arrival of well more than 1 million Syrians in just a few years has created multiple strains on society and systems.

Although technically a secular country, in Lebanon family matters such as marriage, divorce, and inheritance are governed by the religious courts representing a person's particular faith. Non-religion is not recognized by the state. There is no marriage across faiths unless one spouse renounces his or her faith. (Lebanese who want mixed-faith marriages may do this through civil procedures in other countries and subsequently registering their marriages in Lebanon.)

Children and Families at Risk

In Lebanon, the mission team focused exclusively on the situation of Syrian children, and therefore the needs of non-Syrian refugee and child populations in Lebanon, including Iraqis, Sudanese, and Somalis, are not highlighted in this section.

A growing percentage of Syrian refugees live in precarious and unsafe living situations across Lebanon, putting many children at high risk for abuse, neglect, exposure to domestic violence, and other health risks. UNICEF reported that at the beginning of the crisis, 5 percent of Syrian refugees lived in informal settlements in Lebanon. Now, 20 to 25 percent of Syrian refugees live in informal settlements (i.e. tent settlements, abandoned buildings, etc.) because they have run out of money and goodwill.²⁷ Living situations observed by the assessment team were overcrowded, unsanitary, and unsafe for children. One of the dwellings visited by the team was inhabited by 180 families, totaling 1,000 people, approximately half of whom were children. The only space for children to play was a concrete courtyard next to a busy road. Standing water, which included raw sewage, covered about 1 inch of the floor in one of the common rooms. Children played barefoot; supervision was limited.

A significant portion of the Syrian refugee population in Lebanon struggles to meet basic needs. Levels of family distress are reflected in rising debt levels of Syrian families, created by inability to work, high cost of living and services, and high rent levels. The average debt of a Syrian refugee family has reportedly climbed to \$900 (U.S. dollars), which leaves many Syrians in indentured relationships with the Lebanese families from whom they rent.²⁸

For many refugee families, child labor is necessary for economic survival, particularly because adult refugees are not allowed to work legally in Lebanon and are at risk of detention if they are caught. Children are better able to evade labor and migration enforcement.

Some refugee children work in agriculture, particularly in the Bekaa Valley region of Lebanon, in construction, where many are paid extremely low wages, or as helpers in industrial or retail settings. Non-governmental organizations report that children make substantially more money in street-based work, such as begging, small market sales, and other day-to-day economic survival activities. A recent report issued by the International Labor Organization estimated that 1,510 children might be living and working on the streets of Lebanon;²⁹ UNHCR estimates that the number is “much higher,” as they have encountered 600 children working on the streets in Mount Lebanon alone.³⁰

The younger and more vulnerable a child is, the more earning potential they have as beggars, and the more vulnerable they are to severe exploitation. So-called “street children” are among the most vulnerable population of children engaging in child labor. Many are separated from their families, some are supporting families still in Syria, and street children are particularly vulnerable to exploitation, trafficking, and other abuses.

Challenges for protection of street children include the lack of a child-friendly judicial system and functioning child protection system in Lebanon. Non-governmental organizations reported that child laborers are seen through a criminal lens rather than as victims by law enforcement and judges, and that there is a lack of alternative care programs for children living on the streets. In the absence of such systems, the opportunity for intervention and protection is limited.

PROMISING PRACTICE

The IRC’s Safe Spaces Program

The International Rescue Committee, through its Safe Spaces program and with funding from the UNHCR, provides psychosocial and case management services to street children. This program reduces the risk of harm by providing a temporary reprieve for children who spend their days working on the streets—a safe space for them to engage in play and activities designed to increase their resiliency and talk about their experiences in a child-friendly way.

UNHCR estimates that 65,000 to 70,000 Syrian children have been born in Lebanon since the crisis and that two-thirds are not registered.³¹ Although children are able to attend school and take exams without birth registration, the high number of unregistered births, if not addressed, has the potential of creating a stateless generation of children, which will create a new host of protection issues, including challenges with family reunification and repatriation to Syria when that becomes a viable option. Birth registration is a challenge for refugees in Lebanon, in part due to a complex and challenging process (described as having 13 different steps) including the presentation of the parents’ marriage certificate and proof of residency.

As in many situations of prolonged forced displacement, sexual and gender-based violence, particularly in the form of domestic and interfamilial violence, sexual violence, and child abuse, is prevalent among Syrian refugee families. Children are particularly at risk for sexual and gender-based violence. UNICEF in Lebanon reported a high prevalence of child protection violations—60 percent of children have experienced physical, mental, or psychological violence.

PROMISING PRACTICE

Caritas Lebanon operates a shelter for people who have experienced sexual or gender-based violence. In cases of high risk, individuals are referred to the shelter for three months, and are provided with psychosocial support and counseling. After their time in the shelter, Caritas provides cash assistance to enable people to secure their own living situations.

Early marriage of girls has increased among the Syrian refugee population both as a strategy to protect girls from sexual assault or harassment and for economic reasons. There is no minimum age for marriage in Lebanon established under civil law; marriage law is determined by the relevant religious law.

Refugees and asylum-seekers, and especially women and unaccompanied and separated children, are particularly at risk for human trafficking, due to the vulnerable position that they are in as persons without status or protection. They often lack safe shelter, food, and water; separation from family and other support networks; and may incur high debts for smuggling fees or to meet basic needs.

Non-governmental organizations reported situations of refugee women and children being smuggled from Syria to Lebanon by individuals who subsequently put them into indentured servitude situations. Others reported situations of Syrian street children being picked up for sex trafficking.

The assessment team learned of an incident that was being reported in the news media at the time of the mission. Seventy-five women and girls had been recruited in Syria to come to Lebanon for work. Once they arrived, they were forced into sex trafficking. The hotel where they lived was guarded, and the women and girls were permitted to leave only for abortions and treatment for sexually transmitted diseases. On Easter Sunday, taking advantage of the lighter security on the holiday, some of the women escaped, leading to a raid by the Internal Security Forces. In subsequent reporting from the inter-agency coordinating group in Lebanon, 45 of the women were brought to the police station by the security forces, and all 45 are now under protection and being provided with services and support.³²

There is an anti-trafficking law in Lebanon, but non-governmental organizations reported that without sufficient

mechanisms and programs to identify, protect, and shelter trafficking victims, these cases largely remain hidden.

Unmet medical needs are another protection issue for Syrian refugee children in Lebanon. Refugee children live in overcrowded and often unsanitary living conditions, and despite the programs established to address refugees' medical needs, many families can neither access medical care nor afford care or medications. Medical programs remain underfunded. Some refugees actually cross back into Syria in order to get help for urgent medical problems. Living conditions often lack access to heating, and without protection from the elements, immune systems may be more susceptible to contagious diseases. Children are at risk for skin conditions, upper respiratory infections, and other diseases brought on by poor sanitation, including cholera. Those who have worked directly with Syrian children reported observing high levels of psychological distress in children who witnessed the atrocities of war in Syria and from living in precarious and unstable situations in Lebanon.

PROMISING PRACTICE

Islamic Relief Lebanon has purchased and equipped a mobile clinic to provide Syrian refugees and vulnerable Lebanese communities in South Lebanon with free primary health services, such as medical checkups, medications and vaccinations, in addition to health and hygiene awareness sessions to the targeted beneficiaries. Operating five days per week, Islamic Relief aims to reach and benefit more than 10,000 patients. The work is carried out in collaboration with Lebanese Ministry of Health and Islamic Relief Lebanon has a referral system for cases with UNHCR and other organizations working in the health sector. Islamic Relief's health project officer attends health working groups meetings and the project shares data with UNHCR on monthly basis.

Unaccompanied and Separated Children

In its current assessment of global resettlement needs, UNHCR reports that there are 4,837 unaccompanied or separated Syrian children in Lebanon.³³ UNICEF indicates that less than 200 children are unaccompanied.³⁴

Compared to other global refugee crises, national and international non-governmental actors reported that family reunifications among the Syrian refugee population have been high, although current data have not been available for Lebanon since the borders were closed in 2014. Factors that reportedly contribute to this reunification pattern include that the Syrian crisis is relatively recent and movement in and out of Syria is still fluid, the use of social media tools such as WhatsApp, through which children separated from their families are able to stay in touch, and cultural considerations of family within the Syrian refugee population including kinship fostering practices.

Capacity for Care and Protection

Child protection activities function under the national social services framework in Lebanon, substantively supported by local and international non-governmental organizations. Enhancement of national social service efforts to the Syrians is benefiting both Lebanese and Syrian refugee children, helping to overcome decades of underfunding of social services. Institutional care has been the dominant approach for children who do not have adequate care and protection in their own families, whether for socio-economic reasons or related to the breakdown of the family. Upwards of 40,000 children are reported in Lebanese institutions.

The sheer numbers of refugee children in Lebanon in need of protection stemming from the Syrian crisis prompted the prioritization of capacity-building of the Lebanese child welfare infrastructure to respond to both Lebanese and refugee children. On April 20, 2016, the day before the assessment team arrived in Beirut, the Lebanese Ministry of Social Affairs announced the launch of national standard operating procedures on child protection. The procedures were developed in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), other United Nations and non-governmental protection partners, the University of St. Joseph in Beirut, and funded by the European Union.³⁵ The framework includes legislation, policies, standard operating procedures, and service delivery mechanisms for identifying and protecting children who are victims of abuse, neglect, and exploitation and includes a plan for monitoring the implementation of the plan. Once implemented, consistent with international child welfare best practice, the framework will be responsive to all children residing in Lebanon, regardless of citizenship.

The framework includes a child protection referral system for children identified as being potential victims of violence, abuse, neglect, or exploitation; a judicial review of cases based on an assessment of the case; and movement away from institutional care (the current practice for

placing children in need of out-of-home placements) and towards alternative care (best practice for placing children in need of safe placement in family-like settings). As part of the implementation of the framework, Save the Children is working to standardize the case management tools and referral pathways used by agencies involved in child protection. The plan includes a national case management database for use by all government and civil society agencies working on child protection.

The development of the child protection framework is promising; however, it has yet to be fully implemented. Nongovernmental organizations report the need for longer-term multi-year capacity-building of the child protection workforce to carry out the plan—both in terms of staffing and building technical capacity and expertise—and to this end, the International Rescue Committee in Lebanon with support from UNHCR and Save the Children Lebanon have been involved in training social workers.

Prompting the need for the framework was the absence of a coordinated system for identifying and protecting children, a lack of capacity to remove children from their homes in situations where they are unsafe, a judicial system that is not child-friendly and which contributes to delays due to high rotation of judges, and a lack of child-friendly placement options for children who need to be removed. The Lebanese child protection system still relies on institutionalization and lacks shelter space for Syrian children. (There are only two shelters currently for Syrian children). Although alternative care is included in the framework, government officials report that there are religious and cultural obstacles that need to be addressed for implementation to be culturally feasible and appropriate. In the absence of enabling legal frameworks, communities are relying on informal networks for caring for children. While the willingness of Syrian families to foster children that are not their own can be considered a strength, child protection concerns can be hidden in informal fostering arrangements, which are not assessed or monitored.

UNHCR and UNICEF both work on child protection issues. With regard to UNHCR's role in child protection in Lebanon, it works with more than 23 implementing partners on child protection activities throughout the country. Activities include building capacity of local organizations, government agencies, communities, and caregivers to identify and respond to children in need of protection, educating children on how to mitigate risks and where to go for assistance, coordinating psychosocial and case management services, and conducting and coordinating Best Interest Determinations (BIDs) for children in need of a comprehensive pathway to permanency and/or a durable solution.³⁶

The assessment team noted several challenges for UNHCR in identifying children in need of protection in Lebanon—the high mobility of the Syrian refugee population, the dispersement of Syrian refugees in an urban context, and the fact that many children who are at risk are living with families and therefore their needs may be more hidden. Although volunteer outreach workers contact families living in the community, the frequency of contact may not make it possible to fully identify the protection needs of children. Furthermore, many of the local non-governmental organizations who work with Syrian refugee families are not fully conversant or familiar with UNHCR processes, which could be inhibiting information-sharing about children in need and the referral of cases needing intervention.

For children at risk who are identified, UNHCR works with partners throughout Lebanon to provide case management, psychosocial services, and, in cases of children in need of a durable solution, best interest procedures including Best Interest Determinations (BIDs). BID panels, which are a necessary step in the process of finalizing the BID report required for resettlement of certain cases, are operating in Beirut and in Mount Lebanon. In regions where there are not BID panels, non-governmental organizations report that cases are effectively (although not formally) put on hold and that Best Interest Determinations are not reviewed nor is there a final decision made for a durable solution. This is an issue of grave concern. In the locations where BIDs are proceeding, there is also a need for more training on the criteria for BIDs and on the resettlement context.

UNHCR reports that 1,107 Best Interest Assessments were conducted for the 4,837 unaccompanied or separated children in Lebanon, and 35 Best Interest Determinations. There are 33 BIA/BIDs pending.

Education

In Lebanon, education is compulsory until the age of 14. Along with instruction in Arabic at the primary and secondary levels, either English or French are the mandatory medium of instruction for mathematics and science for all schools and for all children from an early age. An estimated two-thirds of Lebanese students attend private schools. Prior to the current situation, Lebanese students had to pay fees to access public schools but with the influx of Syrians receiving free education, vulnerable Lebanese were granted the same benefit.

Syrian children are able to access the Lebanese public education system at no cost. However, large numbers are not attending school. UNHCR reports that of approximately 472,000 registered Syrian school-aged children (ages 3 to

17), only 157,984 are enrolled in formal education for the 2015-2016 academic year in grades kindergarten to 9.³⁷ These statistics do not include the population of Syrian children who have not registered with UNHCR. Furthermore, the majority of Syrian children are attending second shifts at their schools, which begin after the first shift has ended, and which are shorter in length than the morning shift.

The obstacles preventing children from going to school are numerous and include: school capacity full (in some areas), unfamiliar language of instruction, lack of interest on the part of either parents or children, interrupted education or lack of previous educational experience and familiarity with classroom norms, need to work, need to contribute to household chores, early marriage, documentation issues, bullying and discrimination, perceived quality of education, and risks associated with traveling home in the evenings.

The Lebanese Ministry for Education and Higher Education has been taking numerous steps to improve access to education for Syrian children, including the development of an Accelerated Learning Program. The Accelerated Learning Program targets children between 7 and 17 years old who have missed two years or more of schooling, and prepares them for (re)integration in formal public education. The Accelerated Learning Program was piloted in 2015 and the first official cycle of the Accelerated Learning program started in February 2016 in 32 schools selected by the Ministry.

Simultaneously, the Ministry also launched a homework support program in 123 schools across the country targeting 20,000 girls and boys at risk of drop-out, both Lebanese and non-Lebanese. In addition, by March of this year 165 community venues have been made available to refugee children in “second shift” programs who need help with their homework or simply a safe space to spend time before late afternoon classes start.

Finally, although until very recently the government of Lebanon was not allowing non-governmental organizations to provide informal educational programs because of concerns regarding their varying quality, it is now opening up to allow them to teach their own curricula for the purpose of preparing children for formal school, until such time as the Ministry for Education and Higher Education’s own regulated non-formal education program is finalized and ready to be implemented. The Ministry for Education and Higher Education is counting on non-governmental organizations to implement Basic Literacy and Numeracy, and Community-Based Early Childhood Education, among other programs.³⁸

Unfortunately, access to educational programs alone will provide only a partial solution. For the many children who are out of school because they must work to support their families, education will continue to be out of reach.

Also, as there are limited opportunities for higher education or careers for Syrians post-secondary school, there is some question as to the point of pursuing education for older youth. A reasonable weighing of the benefits could easily suggest that entering the workforce immediately is the better option.

Refugee Resettlement

Refugee resettlement out of Lebanon is very low, with little prospect of a meaningful increase in numbers in the near future. Between 2012 and 2014, UNHCR resettlement submissions of Syrians from Lebanon increased from 17 to 7,318 referrals, and an additional 1,780 referrals of other nationalities were submitted to resettlement countries. In 2015, UNHCR submission rose to 19,516. Unfortunately actual departures from Lebanon did not keep pace, with only 7,109 refugees having departed Lebanon, according to UNHCR Global Projected Resettlement Needs 2017.

From October 2014 to January 2016 the U.S. refugee resettlement program in Lebanon was suspended, and as a result, the UNHCR stopped referring cases to the United States. Now, given the low levels of referrals in the pipeline, only approximately 700 cases/1,820 individuals will arrive from Lebanon to the United States by the end of the current program year.

The suspension is attributed to space constraints during a period of heavy construction at the U.S. Embassy in Beirut. Despite resuming operations, the continuing space constraints of the Embassy compound and the heavy security restrictions on U.S. processing personnel continue to severely constrict the ability of the United States to increase resettlement for refugees from Lebanon to the United States. Additionally, some referral pathways are not functioning at optimum efficiency, even for severe medical cases. As noted above, Best Interest Determination panels are not functioning throughout Lebanon, leaving some child protection cases in limbo without the ability to secure the durable solution of resettlement in cases where this is deemed appropriate.

Further complicating resettlement for refugees out of Lebanon, the government suspended registration of Syrian refugees in January 2016. The government of Lebanon will not grant refugees exit permits unless they are registered, so although these cases are being referred to UNHCR,

resettlement is not being explored and other pathways are sought where possible.

TURKEY



Map of Turkey

Turkey is a large country bridging Europe and Asia, with slightly greater land mass than the state of Texas. The majority of its territory falls on the Asian side of the Bosphorus—the line dividing the continents. Turkey is bordered on eight sides, including Syria to the south and Greece to the west. It is host to more Syrian refugees than any other nation and serves as well as a country of transit for refugees hoping to seek asylum in Europe.

Turkey is an upper-middle income country. The dominant religion is Islam, although many Turks consider themselves secular. The current popularly-elected President, Tayyip Erdogan, is returning Islam to the public sphere after almost a century of governments that embraced a secular ideal. President Erdogan has been consolidating power in the year since the last election, and has accelerated that process since the attempted coup of July 2016.

About three quarters of Turkey's people are ethnically Turkic, speaking the Turkic language, written in a version of the Latin alphabet and mutually unintelligible with Arabic. The remainder of the population is Kurdish and Kurdish aspirations for greater autonomy have caused internal tensions and conflict over many years.

The fate of Syrian refugees living in Turkey has been deeply affected by wider geo-political issues. Relations with Europe are a paramount foreign policy concern for Turkey. The European Union and Turkey struck a deal - now in question given recent political developments - that would provide a significant infusion of resources to Turkey (more than \$3 billion) to assist in support for Syrian refugees, in

exchange for which Turkey would retain responsibility for the Syrian refugees, and take back those who are excluded from Europe. Europe committed to accepting one refugee for resettlement for every refugee who is returned to Turkey. The assumption is that the refugee flow across the Mediterranean Sea will diminish once it is understood that the door to Europe is no longer open. To date, indications are strong that this agreement has not stopped the flow of refugees, but has caused refugees to shift their migration routes to even less safe alternatives, such as the Libya-Italy route.

Turkey signed the 1951 Refugee Convention but not the subsequent protocol, meaning that it retains a geographical reservation and only recognizes refugees from Europe. Despite this reservation, Turkey has admitted more Syrian refugees than any other nation—approximately 2.7 million—and is currently hosting the largest refugee population of any country.³⁹ When the Syrian conflict began, Turkey took on the full responsibility for the refugees that began to flow across its borders, establishing 22 state-of-the-art refugee camps. These camps still exist but now the vast majority of Syrian refugees are living outside of camp settings.

Assuming that the conflict would soon be over and the refugees would quickly return, Turkey took on a wide range of functions including registration, protection of at-risk populations and relief. Syrians were given temporary status as “guests”, entitling them to remain on Turkish territory and to receive certain benefits. Due to this strong lead in responding to the Syrian crisis by the government of Turkey, UNHCR and international non-governmental organizations are not as central in the response there as they are in some refugee situations where national capacity is unable to meet needs. Turkish organizations are, for the most part, the entities providing direct services and on the front lines. The Syrian refugee situation has changed dramatically over the last few years, and the relationship between Turkey and other partners in shouldering the responsibility for Syrian refugees is evolving quickly, and will likely expand further in the context of the agreements with the European Union if these hold in the current uncertain political context.

Because registration of Syrian refugees is carried out by the Turkish government, and under circumstances governed by the understanding that Syrians' stay in Turkey would be short-term, there is less accessible data regarding the Syrian refugee population than would be the case if UNHCR had carried out these functions. (The government of Turkey and UNHCR have agreed to a process of verification of Syrians, which will help to clarify the demographics of the Syrian population.) For now, numbers are frequently hard to come by, or inconsistent.

In addition, discussions regarding at-risk populations such as unaccompanied and separated children are hampered by a lack of common definitions and reliable data. Non-governmental organizations serving the Syrian population may therefore find it challenging to adequately adapt their resources to serve Syrian refugees in Turkey.

As the Syrian conflict has stretched on for over six years, ever larger numbers of refugees have fled to Turkey, where they have been provided sanctuary or transit. Turkey's support to refugees was based on an extension of its national services supported by Turkish civil society organizations. Aid provided by U.N. agencies and international non-governmental organizations has been directed toward supporting the capacity of Turkish efforts.

As in the other countries of the region that are hosting refugees, relations between refugees and the host population are increasingly strained.

Although Syrians comprise the largest refugee population residing in Turkey, there are also several hundred thousand asylum-seekers from Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, and East Africa. These individuals are considered international protection applicants by the Turkish authorities, but have no prospect of local integration or permanent status as a durable solution and many, including unaccompanied and separated children, would benefit from resettlement if additional places were opened up for them.

Children and Families at Risk

Due to the limitations of the data described above, there are no hard numbers on Syrian children at risk in Turkey (although UNHCR does have data on non-Syrian children, and the verification exercise mentioned above will yield data on Syrian children). However, with 2.7 million Syrian refugees in the country, half of whom are children, and the many issues that have been observed (although non-quantified) it is evident that the situation for many children is grave. Some of the risks that the mission team heard about are, by their very nature, difficult to fully bring to light, because they occur in the shadow economy or in the privacy of domestic settings.

One of the most serious problems affecting Syrian and non-Syrian refugees, as well as other vulnerable migrants, is economic hardship. Families are having a difficult time with basic survival. The vast majority are living outside of camp settings and, having exhausted their own savings, need to work to bring in income for food, shelter and medical care. Turkish employers may legally hire non-Turks as up to 10 percent of their workforce but the vast

majority of refugees who are working are not in the formal market and do not have work permits. Many are earning well below minimum wage or are cheated of their wages.

Syrian refugees living in the camps are provided with shelter, free medical care, and other basic goods and services. However, the vast majority of refugees live outside of the camps. Rents in the regions closest to the Syrian border have increased dramatically with the pressure of the increased population, and many Syrians are living precariously in informal tent settlements and substandard housing. Medical care is provided for free from government hospitals and clinics for Syrians registered with the Turkish authorities (registration which, as noted above, entitles them to remain on Turkish territory and to receive certain benefits), and pharmaceuticals are heavily subsidized. Still, many are unable to afford their portion of the cost of drugs. Others remain unregistered because of constraints on residence and do not have access to the services available to those who are registered. As a result, many families and their children go without care unless they can get access to free clinics provided by non-governmental organizations.

Child labor is reportedly rampant in Turkey among refugees.⁴⁰ The income that children can secure, although meager, is essential for the survival of their families. Children work in a wide range of sectors including textiles, restaurants, street vending, shop assistants, and manufacturing. Many are said to work in conditions that include long hours, substandard wages and unsafe workplaces. They are subject to physical violence from employers and other forms of abuse in the workplace and in transit to work. The dependence of families on children's income is the most insurmountable barrier to reintegrating children into schooling, and speaks to the urgent need for adults to have better access to sources of income. In the major cities there are numerous child beggars who present as Syrian refugees and—whatever their nationality—are likely being managed by organized begging rings that hold children in trafficking conditions.

Early marriage is also an issue for Syrian refugees. Although the official minimum age of civil marriage for adolescent girls and women in Turkey is 18 (17 with the permission of the parents, and 16 with the permission of a judge),⁴¹ religious marriages are frequently entered into for girls who are younger. Economics, again, plays a role in some cases, as early marriage brings the bride new resources from her dowry (Mahr) and reduces the number of mouths that need to be fed. Other factors include the lack of options for girl children approaching adulthood, as they are not in school and have few alternative activities, and the risks they face of verbal, physical and sexual violence as unmarried young

women. These early marriages are of particular concern when there are large age gaps between husband and wife, and when the girl's family is unable to gather information about the prospective husband's family or background.

Unaccompanied and Separated Children

The mission team found no consistent accounts of the numbers of children who may be unaccompanied, separated, or orphaned. According to UNHCR, the Turkish authorities, during their registration process, identified approximately 50,000 Syrian children who had lost one or more parents. The UNHCR itself has identified 2,000 non-Syrian unaccompanied and separated children, who have been referred or who have identified themselves by showing up at the UNHCR gate or through other mechanisms, including registration.

Unaccompanied and separated refugee children who are under the age of 16 are placed by the Turkish government in either kinship care or institutional care. Children who are under the age of 12 and placed in institutions are sent to those for Turkish children. There are eight government-run orphanages in Turkey.⁴² Those over the age of 12 who are not placed in kinship care are sent to the institutional care program for Syrians located in the border-area refugee camps. Refugee adolescents between the ages of 16 and 18 may be sent to a shelter program in the refugee camp, or to adult shelters with the approval of the Ministry of Family and Social Policy. The total number of children in residential care, according to the International Organization for Migration, is between 100 and 120 (unspecified if this is Syrian children only or others known to the International Organization for Migration). However, the Turkish non-governmental organization IHH (İnsan Hak ve Hürriyetleri ve İnsani Yardım Vakfı), reports on its website that it will be opening a new group home campus for Syrian orphan children in June with a capacity to serve 990 children, many of whom it says are now living on the streets.

Capacity for Care and Protection

The legal framework of the Turkish child protection system is well-developed with well-functioning courts and representation. The Turkish foster care system is also quite developed, although the country remains heavily reliant on institutional models of care.

Unfortunately, the legal framework does not support most Syrian refugees who wish to act as foster parents, due to the established requirements for fostering. In recognition that the Syrian refugee population in Turkey will likely be present far beyond the temporary period that had been

assumed at the outset of the conflict, changes are now being made to extend child protection to Syrians, including the recent expansion of recognized and supported foster care to Syrian families, many of whom have been engaged in providing informal foster care (i.e., not legally recognized). This change in policy is a positive step.

The UNHCR and UNICEF are working toward the establishment of a Child Protection Working Group that will include relevant Turkish governmental counterparts.

Good data on refugee children who may be at risk is not readily available, particularly for Syrian children, because of the division of registration responsibilities noted above. Because 90 percent of the refugee population is living outside of camps in the community, data collection and monitoring of cases is more challenging. The initial registration carried out by the Turkish government did not fully capture information regarding child protection issues, although UNHCR and UNICEF are now working with the Turkish government to develop this data. For example, unaccompanied and separated children who were being cared for by families other than their own were registered with the care-giving families and stayed registered with those families even if reunification with their own families was subsequently effected.

Alternative care placements for older adolescents do not always follow recognized good child welfare practice. In the city of Izmir, for example, there are no orphanages, so unaccompanied and separated asylum-seeking children from countries other than Syria are being sent to juvenile detention facilities.

In addition to challenges with alternative care, other core child protection practices are weak or lacking in Turkey. The mission team was informed that the government of Turkey does not carry out family tracing,⁴³ and as it holds all of the data on Syrians who are registered, this hampers the process of family reunification. The International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) will conduct tracing for individuals in Turkey when one or more family members has traveled to Europe.

UNHCR is engaged in doing Best Interest Determinations for children who are at risk, but the Turkish Government is not participating in the panels, which significantly weakens the process. Nevertheless, Best Interest Assessments are reported to have been completed for every one of the 2,595 unaccompanied or separated children known to UNHCR, and 1,460 Best Interest Determinations were conducted. 517 BIA/BIDs were pending at the time of the mission; UNHCR reports that this backlog has since been cleared.

Education

Education is under the responsibility of The Ministry of National Education. Refugees in Turkey who are registered as either asylum seekers or temporary guests are eligible for primary and secondary education, early childhood education, and non-formal education, and do not need to pay tuition.

Nine in 10 children residing in the Syrian refugee camps are attending school at registered temporary education centers. Those who live outside of the camps, which is to say more than 90 percent of the Syrian population, are mostly not in any kind of school program. Seventy percent of school-aged children living in the community do not attend school, and many of those who do go receive their education at temporary education centers rather than in regular Turkish schools. These temporary education centers, many of which rely on volunteer Syrian teachers, offer instruction in Arabic and utilize an adaptation of the Syrian curriculum.

School participation is higher for children in the lower grades for a number of reasons. More young children are able to attend Turkish schools as it is easier for younger students to quickly learn the Turkish language and the academic consequences of temporarily falling behind are less severe. Older children, many of whom have already experienced significant gaps in their education, are much less likely to enroll or to attend any school. The barriers to entering education are higher for them, and the labor of older children is often required due to economic hardship of their families.

The challenge to the Turkish government and the Turkish national school system of absorbing an estimated 400,000 out-of-school Syrian children is enormous, particularly in the regions of Turkey where the majority of non-camp-dwelling refugees reside. UNHCR, UNICEF and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) are providing support to assist the Government of Turkey in establishing more second-shift programs in existing schools, sensitizing the Turkish population (including educators) to the needs of Syrian children and reducing inter-community hostility and resistance, expanding the capacity of temporary education centers, and providing more options such as vocational training. The priority is to enable as many children as possible to be mainstreamed into the Turkish education system. Resources for these efforts continue to be a challenge.

Although the Turkish government supports access to higher education, the need for scholarships for eligible older youth has also been identified. UNICEF will be offering cash for education programs (technically

called “conditional cash transfers”) specifically for older adolescents and youth, including Turkish language classes and vocational skills trainings.

PROMISING PRACTICE

UNHCR will offer 700 higher education scholarships in 2016 and has already awarded 82. In addition, in partnership with the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities, UNHCR has awarded 1600 scholarships for a higher education preparation program that provides intensive tuition in academic Turkish to allow students to meet the enrollment requirements of Turkish universities. This program will be expanded in 2016 and 2017.

Refugee Resettlement

The Syrian crisis in Turkey has reached extraordinary proportions in terms of the numbers of asylum seekers and Syrians under temporary protection currently residing in the country. With a Syrian population of more than 2.7 million people, Turkey is the largest refugee host country in the world. According to the UNHCR Projected 2016 Global Resettlement Needs, UNHCR will refer 20,000 of the most vulnerable adults and children in Turkey for resettlement⁴⁴ this year, including some number of Syrians. Between October 1, 2015 and April 30, 2016, 2,692 such individuals, including one unaccompanied refugee child, arrived in the US.

Considerations remain for the identification and resettlement of unaccompanied and separated children. While the government of Turkey is registering all Syrian refugees, and is the first responder for unaccompanied children, UNHCR supports that response capacity. The unaccompanied child may approach one of UNHCR's implementing partners who documents vulnerability in the form of a Best Interest Assessment. There are eight orphanages in Turkey for Syrian and non-Syrian children, as well as special care arrangements for survivors of gender-based violence and those subjected to criminal acts. Kinship care arrangements are used, although as noted above, it is challenging for Syrian families to be formally recognized as foster families.

Before a child can be referred for resettlement, family tracing must be attempted to ensure protection of the rights of the child, and the unique situation of the child must be clearly understood. Some children who are identified as living apart from their immediate families may be doing so either to secure protection benefits or to pursue work. Some may also have the intent of transiting to a European country within the shortest time possible. Children picked up on the streets, registered, and placed in orphanages, may escape from the orphanage to get to Europe or a large Turkish city to earn money and help their families.

To further complicate the situation, registration and data-collection (completed by the government of Turkey) are unable to fully capture the complex realities of children on the move. For example, if a child enters with his uncle and is therefore registered with him, the child is not re-registered (or administratively attached) to his parents when they enter the country (and are registered). Therefore, the child appears in the systems as “separated,” but in reality is not. Furthermore, as noted above, the definition of “unaccompanied child” is not understood in the same way by all parties.

From what the mission team could gather, Syrian children in Turkey are almost always separated rather than unaccompanied, and the best interest of separated children is usually to remain with their current caregivers. However, non-Syrian refugee children, generally from Afghanistan, Iraq, Sudan, and Somalia, are both unaccompanied and separated.

In the situation that a child has been accurately identified as “unaccompanied,” a Best Interest Assessment must be completed for the child. UNHCR does have access to refugee camps and orphanages in the southeast of Turkey to conduct Best Interest Assessments and Best Interest Determinations. However, at the time of the visit, the BID panels did not include the government of Turkey. For non-Syrian children who are unaccompanied or separated, the Best Interest Determinations are conducted and the child can be resettled if that is the determination. In the case of Syrian unaccompanied and separated children, the cases are identified by the government of Turkey, the Best Interest Determination is conducted without government participation and the government has to approve departure if a child is determined to need resettlement. Without the government’s full involvement in Best Interest Determinations for Syrians, it remains challenging to make resettlement a viable option. Discussions regarding government participation are active.

UNHCR stated that third country resettlement is the only option available to Afghan, Sudanese, and Somali unaccompanied refugee children in Turkey, however, the government of Turkey releases these children from orphanages only at the age of 18, perhaps due to the weight of their mandate to protect the children until legal adulthood begins. Another potential challenge to the resettlement of the relatively small number of unaccompanied children is the perception by UNHCR that the number of slots available for the United States is low, as are the approval rates.

RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations are directed toward non-governmental organizations working on behalf of refugees, as well as toward individual donors, foundations and the philanthropic sector more broadly. There are three broad principles that undergird these recommendations:

- In all decisions relating to refugee children, including resettlement, the principle of the best interests of the child should be a primary consideration, and the principle of family unity should be given due weight and consideration.
- Resettlement is not a substitute for strengthening the protective environment for refugee children in countries of asylum, and adequate resources should be mobilized to support national child protection systems that are inclusive of refugees and host communities.
- Programs for resettlement of Children and Adolescents at Risk should include support for children and their families upon arrival in the country of resettlement, which includes access to child welfare, health and education systems, and appropriate accommodation and family-based care and family tracing and reunification for unaccompanied and separated children.

Support should be directed toward national and international organizations working on the ground in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, who in turn are often lending support to the efforts of the host governments, and to refugee resettlement work in the United States.

Children and Families at Risk

1. Advocate with the international community for existing pledges toward humanitarian and economic development assistance in the region to be honored in full
2. Advocate with the international community for additional commitments of both humanitarian and economic development assistance, in line with plans that have been laid out
3. Foster stronger partnerships between refugee relief and development organizations, and promote regional development strategies that include refugees

4. In collaboration with local partners, support local programming for children out of school, and especially targeting adolescent boys not in school with no occupation and homebound girls
5. Provide funding for social cohesion and anti-bullying programming, and target students from all communities, educators and students' families with the programming
6. Fund mobile medical clinics to serve the large out of camp populations
7. Support the temporary deployment of medical personnel to the region, if welcomed by the relevant Ministries of Health in each country
8. Support organizations that are meeting the needs of disabled individuals or that are providing transportation assistance to bring acute cases to medical care in major cities

Unaccompanied and Separated Children

1. Support advocacy for increasing knowledge of the Unaccompanied Refugee Minors program as a viable durable solution, and capacity to implement it
2. Support temporary teams of deployees/secondee to do Best Interest Assessments and Best Interest Determinations in Lebanon and Turkey (i.e. deployed to UNHCR through an international non-governmental organization), to build capacity of local actors in order to ensure sustainability and integration of best interest procedures into national child protection systems

Capacity for Care and Protection

1. Support sustained multi-year technical training and exchange programs for the professional development of social workers, the child welfare system and the judicial sector
2. Provide funding for specialized mental health and psychosocial services, to include assessments for children with disabilities and learning disorders
3. Develop and disseminate educational toolkits for safety planning for children and parents, to include recognizing sexual abuse, positive discipline, parenting and discipline

4. Provide psychosocial support and friendship to children living in institutional care, for example, through a “pen pal” remote program
5. Support increased capacity to monitor alternative care arrangements for children

Education

1. Provide scholarships to youth and young adults for tertiary education and/or vocational training, in the region or out of the region, taking into account protection safeguards
2. Support programs which bridge the gap for children who have had disruptions in their education and who need specialized education services in order to “catch up” to enroll in the public system
3. Support accredited online schooling opportunities for children who are not in school or who have had gaps in their education, offering these through community centers or other accessible venues
4. Support recreational activities offered after school or over vacations
5. Support programs that help to alleviate severe stress, trauma and psychosocial issues that keep some children out of school
6. Support programs that combat bullying, reaching students from all communities, educators, and students’ families
7. Support programs that train parents, educators and others in authority to use positive discipline techniques
8. Support families with school-related expenses such as transportation, school supplies, etc.
9. Support schools that are enrolling refugee children to purchase additional supplies, such as furniture, books, writing supplies, shoes, books, sports equipment, etc.

Refugee Resettlement

1. Support advocacy for significantly increased U.S. commitment to the resettlement of Syrian refugees

2. Support advocacy for significantly increased commitment to the resettlement of other refugee populations in the region, in particular those who are often “forgotten” in prioritization of funding and/or in access to national systems of health and education, such as Afghans, Somalis, Sudanese and Eritreans
3. Support advocacy for the resettlement of an increased number of non-Syrian unaccompanied children from the region, and especially from Turkey
4. Support advocacy for a 10 percent target category percentage for resettlement of children at risk, similar to that for women and girls at risk
5. Facilitate humanitarian visas, transport and medical care for acute medical cases from the MENA region (for cases whose conditions cannot be treated in countries of first asylum)
6. Support children resettled in the United States with medical and special needs and facilitate partnerships with hospitals and volunteer doctors; provide donations of medical equipment to refugee organizations requesting such assistance (i.e. wheelchairs, prosthetics, hearing aids, etc.)
7. Provide funding for mental health and psychosocial support to refugees resettled in the United States (i.e. to include culturally appropriate clinical care as well as less formal interventions that strengthen families)
8. Provide funding/seed money for after-school accelerated learning, tutoring, child- friendly spaces for resettled youth and older adolescents with disrupted educations
9. Provide funding for technical assistance and training for U.S. communities (i.e. schools) preparing to integrate Syrian families (could use existing mechanisms/platforms, existing resettlement agencies, community organizations, outreach through ethnic and faith based organizations)
10. Support the creation of culturally appropriate toolkits for practitioners specific to the needs of Syrian families arriving to the United States using a family strengthening approach
11. Promote and participate in volunteering/mentoring activities with incoming refugee families through local resettlement affiliates

ENDNOTES

- 1] The three durable solutions for refugees are voluntary repatriation, local integration and refugee resettlement. See UNHCR "Solutions for Refugees" at <http://www.unhcr.org/50a4c17f9.pdf>. At present, very few refugees are able to voluntarily repatriate under conditions of safety and dignity. In 2015, only 201,400 refugees out of 21.3 million refugees were able to return home. See the UNHCR report "Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2015" at <http://www.unhcr.org/576408cd7.pdf>. Prospects for local integration are highly variable, depending on local conditions.
- 2] The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), "Syria conflict at 5 years: the biggest refugee and displacement crisis of our time demands a huge surge in solidarity," (March 15, 2016), <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/press/2016/3/56e6e3249/syria-conflict-5-years-biggest-refugee-displacement-crisis-time-demands.html> (accessed on June 2, 2016).
- 3] UNHCR, "Worldwide displacement hits all-time high as war and persecution increase," (June 18, 2015), <http://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2015/6/558193896/worldwide-displacement-hits-all-time-high-war-persecution-increase.html> (accessed on June 2, 2016).
- 4] UNHCR <http://data.unhcr.org/syrian-refugees/regional.php>
- 5] Throughout this report, the word "refugee" references both individuals who have been formally registered as refugees, or legally found to be refugees, as well as others who have been forcibly displaced across international borders but not formally recognized as refugees
- 6] As defined by Article 3 of ILO Convention No. 182:
 - (a) all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict;
 - (b) the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances;
 - (c) the use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties;
 - (d) work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.
- 7] According to Islamic Law, "Mahr" is the appropriate term for the payment paid by the groom or his family to the bride. It is, legally speaking, an entitlement of the bride and not that of her family and/or guardian. Furthermore, the Mahr is only a customary requirement and therefore not essential for the validity of the marriage contract. For more see Sait, S., & Lim, H. (2006). *Land, law and Islam: Property and human rights in the Muslim world*. New York: Zed Books. At page 139.
- 8] See www.un.org/documents/ga/docs/52/plenary/a52-273.htm
- 9] The term "fostering" should be understood to include informal or spontaneous care, as well as formalized fostering that involves the placement of a child by a competent authority, with a family that has been selected, qualified, approved and supervised for providing such care. Good child welfare practice formalizes foster care.
- 10] "Nearly 90,000 unaccompanied children sought asylum in Europe in 2015, fleeing war and poverty in the Middle East and Africa to reach a place of safety. According to the latest EU data, 13 percent of the applicants were younger than 14, traveling without their parents to the EU... Half of the total were Afghan minors, while the second largest group were Syrians, at 16 per cent of the total." The Independent, "Refugee crisis: Nearly 90,000 unaccompanied children sought asylum in Europe in 2015: Statistics agency Eurostat says the number has quadrupled since 2014", May 3, 2016.
- 11] http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/images/The_Cost_of_War.pdf
- 12] An excellent resource on the tragedy of Syrian children out of school is "No Lost Generation: Syria Crisis Education Strategic Paper, 2016". The framework presented in this paper describes what could be done to reduce the number of refugee children denied education, and offers ideas for donors willing to commit funds as well as recommendations for States. See <http://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/NLG-Update-June-2016.pdf>
- 13] A UNHCR term for the Middle East and North Africa, which also includes Turkey
- 14] <http://www.unhcr.org/uk/protection/resettlement/575836267/unhcr-projected-global-resettlement-needs-2017.html>
- 15] Departures sometimes vary greatly from UNHCR referrals; resettlement countries may have lengthy processing timelines that result in backlogs in the resettlement pipeline. For example, UNHCR has referred 119,000 Syrian cases since 2013, but far fewer have departed.
- 16] UNHCR Projected Global Resettlement Needs 2017, <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/protection/resettlement/575836267/unhcr-projected-global-resettlement-needs-2017.html>
- 17] Interview with UNHCR, Jordan office on April 18th, 2016. Notes on file. This refers to cases that have been identified and recorded.
- 18] According to Jordanian Nationality and Citizenship Laws, the overwhelming majority of Syrian refugee children are not entitled to Jordanian nationality
- 19] A study on early marriage in Jordan 2014, [http://www.unicef.org/mena/UNICEFJordan_EarlyMarriageStudy2014\(1\).pdf](http://www.unicef.org/mena/UNICEFJordan_EarlyMarriageStudy2014(1).pdf)
- 20] <http://www.unhcr.org/uk/protection/resettlement/575836267/unhcr-projected-global-resettlement-needs-2017.html>
- 21] Interview with UNICEF, Jordan office on April 19, 2016. Notes on file.
- 22] Ibid.
- 23] http://www.unicef.org/jordan/Joint_Education_Needs_Assessment_2014_E-copy2.pdf
- 24] <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/7541e848938d43f0b2051cc215426b3a/first-syrians-leave-us-under-surge-resettlement-program>
- 25] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). "Syria Regional Refugee Response, Inter-Agency Information Sharing Portal," (updated 31 March 2016). <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=122> (Accessed on May 9, 2016).
- 26] Ibid.
- 27] Interview on April 22, 2016 with UNICEF Lebanon, notes on file.
- 28] Ibid.
- 29] International Labor Organization (ILO), "Ministry of Labour, ILO, UNICEF, Save the Children launch study on plight of working children on streets in Lebanon," 2015, http://www.ilo.org/beirut/events/WCMS_344201/lang-en/index.htm (accessed on May 10, 2016).
- 30] Communication from UNHCR, June 27 2016, on file
- 31] Ibid.
- 32] Shaheen, Kareem. (2016, April 30). "Dozens of Syrians Forced into Sexual Slavery in Derelict Lebanese House," The Guardian, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/apr/30/syrians-forced-sexual-slavery-lebanon> (accessed on May 12, 2016). Also, Inter-Agency Coordination Lebanon, April Update.
- 33] UNHCR Global Resettlement Needs 2017, <http://www.unhcr.org>

org/protection/resettlement/575836267/unhcr-projected-global-resettlement-needs-2017.html

34] Interview on April 25, 2016 with UNHCR Lebanon, notes on file.

35] Relief Web. "Ministry of Social Affairs, Université Saint Joseph, UNICEF, European Union Strengthening Child Protection across Lebanon," 2016, <http://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/ministry-social-affairs-universit-saint-joseph-unicef-european-union-strengthening> (accessed on May 13, 2016).

36] See endnote 1. As noted, the three durable solutions available to refugees through UNHCR are "voluntary repatriation; local integration; or resettlement to a third country in situations where it is impossible for a person to go back home or remain in the host country." United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), "Durable Solutions," <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646cf8.html> (accessed on May 14, 2016).

37] UNHCR Lebanon Back to School, June 2016, <http://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/unhcr-lebanon-back-school>

38] (per CRS).

39] http://reporting.unhcr.org/node/2544#_ga=1.50589737.1695193296.1434378475

40] Interviews with the International Organization for Migration Ankara and UNHCR Ankara, April 26th, notes on file; specific forms of labor and risks noted in reports in the Guardian (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/may/06/war-to-sweatshop-for-child-refugees>), the New York Times (http://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/05/world/europe/in-turkey-a-syrian-child-has-to-work-to-survive.html?_r=0) and many other sources

41] Interview with UNICEF in Ankara, April 25, notes on file

42] Interview with UNHCR Ankara, April 26, notes on file

43] Interview with UNICEF in Ankara, April 25, notes on file

44] UNHCR Projected 2016 Global Resettlement Needs, <http://www.unhcr.org/protection/resettlement/558019729/unhcr-projected-global-resettlement-needs-2016.html>

ANNEX I

RESETTLEMENT: OVERSEAS PROCESSING

Identification and Referral

Most refugees in need of resettlement are identified by UNHCR but can be identified by approved non-governmental organizations or through a U.S. Embassy. Identification of a refugee's need for resettlement can happen as early as registration through the delivery of services or through the development of a protection solution. Prior to the refugee's referral to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, refugees are interviewed by the referring partner (UNHCR, non-governmental organization, or in the case of a U.S. Embassy referral, the Resettlement Support Center) which performs an assessment of the refugee's claim, and the need for protection and a durable solution. Biometric data and, if it is a UNHCR case, biometrics are collected during the resettlement interview. If the case includes a separated or unaccompanied child, a Best Interest Determination (BID) must be submitted with the case to the resettlement country.

Pre-Screen

If referred to the US Refugee Admissions Program, the case is reviewed by an Admissions Refugee Coordinator at the U.S. Embassy and if accepted for onward processing, contacted by a U.S. government-funded Resettlement Support Center (RSC) who sets up an initial pre-screen interview. During this interview, the Resettlement Support Center collects the refugee's identifying documents, creates a file and verifies and compiles information for the interagency biographic security checks. The checks look for indicators that the individual could pose a security risk to the U.S. or that he or she has outstanding warrants, previous immigration claims or criminal violations. It is at this stage that Syrian refugee cases are subjected to an enhanced review process.

Department of Homeland Security (DHS)/U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Interview

After the prescreen interview and if no derogatory information has been uncovered through the biographic checks, an adjudication interview is scheduled with a DHS/USCIS officer. These interviews must be conducted in person. At this interview, the DHS/USCIS officer determines if the individual meets the definition of a refugee according to U.S. law. Additionally, it is at this stage that the refugee's fingerprints are collected by a U.S. government employee and then submitted after the interview for interagency biometric checks. The case can be found inadmissible at this stage based on derogatory information uncovered in the interview or through the biometric checks, or a discretionary denial can be issued by the USCIS/DHS interviewing officer. If not put on hold at this stage, refugees are typically informed about their conditional approval of their case within days of their interview.

Medical Check

If approved for resettlement, refugees must be medically screened for communicable diseases by either the International Organization for Migration or a physician designated by the U.S. Embassy. The guidelines on the screenings are set by the U.S. Center for Disease Control. Cases can be found inadmissible for medical reasons or approved for treatment at this stage.

Assurances

Every refugee is assigned to one of nine refugee resettlement agencies in the United States. These agencies prepare for the refugee's arrival by finding a place for him or her to live and post arrival, assist them in finding employment and integrating into their new communities.

Cultural Orientation

Prior to departure for the United States, most refugees receive, on average, between three and five days of cultural orientation classes. Topics include budgeting and personal finance, cultural adjustment, employment, health care, rights and responsibilities, U.S. laws and refugee status, travel to the United States, and several other issues.

Additional Security Checks

Prior to departure (and continuously throughout the process), refugees are subjected to another security check, and if any derogatory information is uncovered, the case will be put on hold. If all the checks come back cleared, the case is permitted to depart to the U.S.

Arrival

Once the refugee arrives to one of the seven designated airports (or ports of entry) in the United States, the refugee's documentation is reviewed by a U.S. Customs and Border Protection official and an additional security check is run.

Timeline

On average, from the time of referral to the United States to the arrival, the resettlement process takes between 18 and 24 months. There are, however, exceptions to this timeline.

ANNEX II

CHILDREN IN FORCED MIGRATION CONTEXTS

Children comprise half of the forcibly displaced children worldwide (the forcibly displaced population includes refugees and internally displaced persons under the protection of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)).¹

Forced child migration results from social and economic insecurity, lack of access to basic services, forced conscription into national militaries and rebel groups, human trafficking, and persecution from state and nonstate actors. Some children may be seeking to reunite with family members in countries of first asylum or destination countries. Other children may be separated from their families during flight. Refugee children are a particularly vulnerable category with unique needs and are able to access benefits and protections unavailable to other children in forced migration situations.

International humanitarian child protection terminology refers to the following categories of children in relationship to their families:

- Accompanied—a person who is under the age of 18 and lives with one or both of their parents or their legal guardian
- Separated—a person who is under the age of 18 and separated from both parents or their legal guardian but who has other relatives available to care for them
- Unaccompanied child—a person who is under the age of 18 who is separated from both parents and is not being cared for by a legal guardian

In a forced migration context, the term “children at-risk” includes children who are at heightened risk of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)², unaccompanied or separated children, boys and girls associated with armed groups, children engaged in the worst forms of child labor³, children with medical needs that require treatment, children with disabilities, and children living in fragile households.

Child Protection Principles

The “best interest of the child” refers to internationally recognized child welfare principles that guide the decision-making around which services, care arrangements, caregivers, and placements are best suited to meet a child’s short-term and long-term needs and ensure his or her safety, permanency and well-being. Applying the concept of permanency to unaccompanied children means that every effort should be made to prioritize the relational and physical permanency of the child. Physical permanency refers to a home, and relational permanency refers to placement with a consistent, caring adult. This includes both pursuing and prioritizing family reunification, where safe and appropriate to do so, and legal permanency, in the child’s home country, in their country of refuge, or, in a third country—based on a determination of the child’s best interest.

In the United States, the most frequently used guiding principles of best interest determinations include:

- The importance of family integrity and preference for avoiding removal of the child from his/her home,
- The health, safety and/or protection of the child,
- The importance of timely permanency decisions,

1] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), “2014 Global Child Protection, Education & SGBV Strategy Implementation Report,” (2014): 7. http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/opendocPDFViewer.html?docid=5592a6c39&query=child_protection (Accessed May 5, 2016).

2] In the international humanitarian context, gender-based violence (GBV) describes “a spectrum of abuses to which women and girls are exposed to as a result of discrimination against them in male-dominated cultures around the world.” The term Sexual and Gender-based violence (SGBV) is often used to “emphasise the urgency of protection interventions that address the criminal character and disruptive consequence of sexual violence for victims/survivors and their families.” From the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, “Virtual Knowledge Centre to End Violence Against Women and Girls, Terminology and Definitions,” 2012. <http://www.endvawnow.org/en/articles/1474-terminology-and-definitions.html> (accessed on May 16, 2016).

3] International Labor Organization (ILO), “Worst forms of child labour,” Article 3 of ILO Convention No. 182, <http://www.ilo.org/ipec/facts/WorstFormsofChildLabour/lang--en/index.htm> (accessed on May 10, 2016)

- The assurance that a child removed from his/her home will be given care, treatment, and guidance that will assist the child in developing into a self-sufficient adult.

States apply best interest determinations when making decisions about cases of children and families that come to their attention. The safety of the child is paramount, and at times, children are removed from their homes and families to ensure their safety and well-being. However, interventions emphasize strengthening the caregiver's ability to adequately protect and supervise the child through supportive services and skill-building, with the goal of reducing risk for family breakdown and supporting the child remaining with their family as the first priority. The client, therefore, is the family unit as a whole, and decisions made to remove a child, whether on a temporary or permanent basis from their home, are under the jurisdiction of a family court judge.

UNHCR, in its Guidelines on Determining the Best Interest of the Child⁴ and in its Framework for the Protection of Children⁵ builds on the practices of State child welfare systems, providing guidelines on implementation of the standard in practice in countries that lack a robust child welfare infrastructure. UNHCR and the U.S. domestic child welfare system emphasize the input of the child and the family in decisions about their care and custody, and preferring placements with families or in community-based, family-based settings wherever and whenever possible.

Consistent with the best interest of the child, detention of children due to immigration status should be avoided. Children separated from their families due to migration should be included within the country's existing child welfare framework while maintaining a model that is designed for the special needs of the foreign-born child with a forced migration experience. Family reunification efforts should be a priority, and minimum care standards should be in place which allow children the right to be in the care of family members whenever possible. If family is not available to care for the child, interim care arrangements should be in a family-like environment in the least-restrictive setting (i.e. community-based).

The child's family should be engaged in care-planning for the child, regardless of location. All attempts should be made to identify family members through family tracing mechanisms and seek their input in decisions about care arrangements of the child. The child's voice, perspective and participation is integral in his or her care-planning. All tools, procedures and protocols should include the perspective of the child, and the child's perspective should be considered in any decisions made on the child's behalf.

For children who are reunifying with family after separation due to migration, supportive services should be provided to the family to build on its strengths, connections with community resources, and to increase protective factors to adequately care and supervise the child.

When repatriation is found to be in the best interest of the child, safe repatriation and reintegration should be conducted in collaboration and coordination with the child's home government, non-governmental organizations, the child's family, and implementing partners.

Unaccompanied Refugee Minor Program⁶

Community-based care can and should be implemented for unaccompanied children in transit and destination States. This model can be successfully implemented if there is a focus on culturally appropriate care which is small-scale and which allows children access to community resources. Ideally, States should consider accepted domestic child welfare practice for placement of children in the most family-like setting possible. For example, in the United States, alternative community based care models for children in immigration proceedings include unaccompanied children with licensed and trained foster parents from similar countries of origin as the children. These programs provide trauma-informed services specific to the needs of a foreign-born child with a forced migration experience. These services include fostering community integration while preserving the child's heritage culture and religion, independent living skills, English language acquisition, education, and preparation for employment. Services also include continuous efforts to locate the children's parents or other relatives, and when safe and viable, facilitation of family reunification. Children live in community neighborhoods, rather than detained in separate facilities. Unaccompanied Refugee Minor programs follow the same state laws and regulations that govern U.S. domestic foster care.

4] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), "UNHCR Guidelines on Determining the Best Interests of the Child," 2008, <http://www.unhcr.org/4566b16b2.pdf> (accessed on May 16, 2016).

5] UNHCR, "A Framework for the Protection of Children," 2012, <http://www.unhcr.org/50f6cf0b9.html> (accessed on May 16, 2016).

6] United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, "The United States Unaccompanied Refugee Minor Program: Guiding Principles and Promising Practices," 2013. <http://www.usccb.org/about/children-and-migration/unaccompanied-refugee-minor-program/urm-program-ebook.cfm> (accessed May 16, 2016).

ANNEX III

ACTORS INTERVIEWED AND THEIR RESPECTIVE MANDATES

Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (BPRM)

The mission of the United States Department of State's (DOS) Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (BPRM) is to provide protection, ease suffering, and resolve the plight of persecuted and uprooted people around the world on behalf of the U.S. Government by providing life-saving assistance and promoting durable solutions for refugees. While PRM does not give aid directly to refugees, it supports the United Nations and other international and national non-governmental organizations in their provision of life-saving services. Additionally, PRM's U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) coordinates the resettlement of refugees to the U.S. in partnership with the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Resettlement Service Centers (RSCs) and Resettlement Affiliates (RAs). For the purposes of the USRAP, Jordan falls under the MENA region and IOM is the RSC; Turkey and Lebanon fall under the Turkey and Middle East (TuME) region and ICMC is the RSC.

CARITAS

Caritas responds to humanitarian crises that are the result of natural disasters, conflict and climate change through its programs focused on migration, emergency response, education, development, women empowerment, youth, human trafficking and peace-building. Caritas operates in Jordan, providing Syrian refugees with housing, medical, care, education, and food and non-food assistance. Additionally, Caritas Jordan's winterization campaign assists Jordanian families with life-saving services and income-generating projects. Caritas Lebanon provides humanitarian assistance to both refugees and migrants. Its services in Lebanon include medical care, emergency intervention, reconstruction, rehabilitation and economic development.

Catholic Relief Services (CRS)

Catholic Relief Services partners with Caritas, religious congregations and interfaith organizations to address the growing needs of the refugee and host country populations in Lebanon, Jordan and Syria. Through its partners, CRS supports implementation of programs in the health, education, protection and peacebuilding sectors. CRS, from its Headquarters in Baltimore, also oversees the Institute for Capacity Strengthening through which it assists organizations achieve their goals by developing systems and structures for optimal performance.

Danish Refugee Council (DRC)

The Danish Refugee Council implements a broad range of activities relevant to conflict-affected communities and persons. These activities include shelter, distribution of non-food items, food security programs, income generation projects, coordination and operational services, armed violence reduction, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), community infrastructure and services, and education. DRC operates in 8 different countries across the Middle East and North Africa, including Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey. In Jordan, DRC has provided emergency relief services, established three Community Centers, and provides support to vulnerable women, youth and adults in Azraq camp. DRC is also building the local capacity in Jordan, providing livelihood opportunities and addressing critical development needs for refugee-hosting communities. In Lebanon, DRC is focusing on integrated emergency response, solutions to displacement and resilience and stability through targeted programming on protection, collective site management and shelter, community empowerment and livelihoods through cash distributions and small enterprise projects and capacity building with both refugee and host communities. In Turkey, DRC provides emergency response and cash assistance to the Syrian conflict-affected population. Additionally, DRC has established four community centres throughout Turkey where it provides psychosocial activities, non-formal education, legal counseling, and operates a safe space for refugees. It also distributes in-kind non-food items (NFI) and administers livelihood programmes.

International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC)

The International Catholic Migration Commission seeks to protect and serve uprooted people, including refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced people, victims of human trafficking, and migrants. ICMC operates the US Refugee Admissions Program's (USRAP) Resettlement Support Center (RSC) for Turkey and the Middle East (TuME) (which includes Lebanon). Additionally, ICMC partners with UNHCR to increase its affiliate workforce in support of its global resettlement operations. In Jordan, ICMC provides humanitarian assistance and protection and support services to Syrian refugees and host communities.

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is an impartial, neutral and independent organization, whose exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence and to provide them with assistance. ICRC programmes include Restoring Family Links (RFL), helping detainees, economic security, water and habitat, health, etc. The ICRC also endeavours to prevent suffering by promoting and strengthening international humanitarian law and universal humanitarian principles. The ICRC's work is based on the Geneva Conventions of 1949, their Additional Protocols, its Statutes, and resolutions of the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

International Medical Corps (IMC)

International Medical Corps (IMC) is a global, humanitarian organization dedicated to saving lives and relieving suffering through health care training, health interventions and development programs. It seeks to build local capacity by offering training to local populations and medical assistance to people at risk. IMC works to rehabilitate devastated health care systems in an effort to assist them in becoming self-reliant. IMC administers programs in Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Syria and Turkey, where services include health care and mental health and psychosocial support services at static and mobile clinics, with a community health worker focus. Additionally, IMC provides programs focusing on preventing gender-based violence (GBV) and child protection (CP). IMC also implements water, sanitation and hygiene programs for refugees and IDPs (internally displaced persons) in Turkey.

International Organization for Migration (IOM)

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is the leading inter-governmental organization that works to ensure the orderly and humane management of migration, promote international cooperation on migration issues, and provide humanitarian assistance to migrants in need, including refugees and internally displaced people. IOM activities relating to emergency and post-emergency operations assistance focus on life saving interventions, then preparedness, response and recovery and attempt to bridge the gap between the humanitarian and the development services. In addition, IOM provides essential services in support of refugee resettlement through its operation of the USRAP's Resettlement Support Center (RSC) for the MENA region, provision of health assessments and pre-departure treatment and medical clearance for all refugees traveling to all resettlement countries from the MENA region (not only to the USA), pre-departure cultural orientation and movement services for the resettlement program at large.

International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP)

The International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP) provides life-saving legal representation to the world's most vulnerable refugees and displaced persons. IRAP serves children with serious medical emergencies for which local treatment is not available, unaccompanied minors, and the children of women fleeing sexual and gender-based violence at the hands of spouses, security forces, traffickers, and unknown perpetrators. Through affirmative outreach conducted by IRAP's Middle East field staff, as well as referrals from its extensive network of partners, IRAP is able to identify and serve children, and other refugees, who would otherwise not receive help. Following outreach and identification, IRAP teams students from 29 law school chapters with pro bono attorneys from over 75 international firms and multinational corporations to work on urgent cases. IRAP's model ensures high-quality case performance, engages top-tier firms and law schools in refugee advocacy, and trains the next generation of international human rights advocates.

International Rescue Committee (IRC)

The International Rescue Committee responds to the world's worst humanitarian crises and helps people whose lives and livelihoods are shattered by conflict and disaster to survive, recover, and gain control of their future. In Jordan, the IRC provides support to Syrian refugees and vulnerable Jordanians living in harsh and unsafe conditions by providing healthcare, working to protect and empower women and girls, and running economic programs for refugees and strained host communities. The IRC runs centers for women and girls where they offer skills trainings, counseling and recreational activities, provide cash assistance and operate mobile health clinics. In Lebanon, the IRC provides emergency and long-term services for Syrian refugees and the struggling Lebanese communities hosting them. In Jordan, the IRC also operates women's centers, offers cash assistance, skills training, therapeutic activities for children and operates classrooms for Syrian children. In Turkey, the IRC provides services to improve education, economic wellbeing, safety and legal support for these refugees.

Islamic Relief USA

Islamic Relief USA (IRUSA) works for a world free of poverty by providing emergency relief and development aid in communities worldwide. IRUSA provides relief and development in a dignified manner regardless of gender, race, or religion, and works to empower individuals in their communities and give them a voice in the world. Sectors include food security and livelihood; health and nutrition; water, sanitation and hygiene; education; orphan support; and disaster response and preparedness. By working with local community-based Islamic Relief Worldwide affiliates, as well as many other partners, IRUSA can deliver aid quickly and efficiently in places that are difficult to reach. IRUSA works in more than 40 countries, including Jordan and Lebanon, where programs assist communities in need, as well as relieve the burden of caring for large influxes of Syrian refugees. In Lebanon, IRUSA has provided urgently needed items such as food and household necessities to host families strained by caring for refugees. In Jordan, IRUSA has supported school meal programs, supported health-care systems and provided food and winter necessities. IRUSA also offered workshops in Jordan, training community members to become leaders in peace-building.

Lutheran World Federation (LWF)

The Lutheran World Federation, in response to the Syrian refugee crisis, established operations in Jordan in 2012. The Lutheran World Federation is assisting refugees and vulnerable groups in Amman, Zarqa, Irbid, and Mafraq. LWF operates the Peace Oasis program in Za'atari Camp, where it offers conflict mitigation, peacebuilding and recreational activities and life-skills training. The Lutheran World Federation is running projects related to education, WASH, livelihoods, protection, rehabilitation and humanitarian assistance.

Save the Children

Save the Children's mission is to inspire breakthroughs in the way the world treats children and to achieve immediate and lasting change in their lives, by providing opportunities for children, youth, women and families. In Jordan, Save the Children provides young children with access to safe and quality early childhood development services, helps to remove children from exploitative labor, and strives to ensure child-friendly and protective learning environments for all children. In Lebanon, Save the Children delivers an integrated response, and since the start of the Syrian crisis has provided over 771,000 beneficiaries (child and adults) with shelter, education, child protection, food security and livelihoods (FSL) and Water and Sanitation and Health; among the assisted beneficiaries, nearly 434,000 are children. In Turkey, Save the Children has partnered with a Turkish NGO to establish child friendly spaces, distributes winter kits, set up a referral mechanism to match children with trained psychologists, raises awareness on child protection issues and partners with UNICEF to establish informal education centers.

UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was established on December 14, 1950 by the United Nations General Assembly. UNHCR is mandated to lead and co-ordinate international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide in partnership with governments. Its primary purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees, but it also has a mandate to help people without nationalities, and in certain circumstances, internally displaced persons. For more than six decades, UNHCR has helped tens of millions of people restart their lives. Today, a staff of some 9,700 people in 126 countries are helping some 60 million people. Syrian refugees are primarily located in countries within UNHCR's MENA region of Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon and in Turkey, which falls within UNHCR's Europe region. For efficiency, both the Syria and the Iraq refugee responses are managed on a situational basis under the overall responsibility of the MENA Bureau.

UNICEF

UNICEF is the leading global humanitarian and development agency that works to promote the rights and well-being of every child, without discrimination of any kind (race, colour, sex, language, religion, national, ethnic or social origin, disability, birth or other status). Its commitment is to all children in a country, irrespective of their legal status (asylum-seekers, migrants, refugees). UNICEF's rights-based approach focuses on providing support in a range of sectors including health, HIV and AIDS, WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene), nutrition, education, child protection, social inclusion and gender equality. UNICEF works with national authorities and partner civil society organizations in safeguarding the well-being and best interests of all children, collaborating with UNHCR on issues related to refugee children.

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Lutheran Immigration
and Refugee Service

Founded in 1939, **Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service** is nationally recognized for its leadership with and for refugees, asylum seekers, unaccompanied children, migrants in detention, families fractured by migration, and other vulnerable populations. LIRS serves migrants and refugees through over 60 grassroots, legal and social service partners nationwide.

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