



Protecting a Generation:

Are UNICEF and UNHCR Mandates Meeting
the Needs of Syrian Children?

Report of the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights

The Honourable Mobina S.B. Jaffer, Chair

The Honourable Salma Ataullahjan, Deputy Chair

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Cover Photo: A UNHCR staff member gives a doll to a rosy-cheeked, four-year-old Syrian refugee. The little girl said she likes dolls and used to play with them when she was at home in Syria. UNHCR/A.Akad/2013

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MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

The Honourable Mobina S. B. Jaffer, Chair

The Honourable Salma Ataullahjan, Deputy Chair

and

The Honourable Senators:

Raynell Andreychuk

Nicole Eaton

Art Eggleton, P.C.

Elizabeth Hubley

Nancy Ruth

Thanh Hai Ngo

Scott Tannas

Ex-officio members of the committee:

The Honourable Claude Carignan, P.C., (or Yonah Martin) and James Cowan (or Joan Fraser).

Other Senators who have participated from time to time in the study:

The Honourable Senators Cowan, Frum, Munson, Seidman and Unger.

Parliamentary Information and Research Service, Library of Parliament:

Julia Nicol and Jean-Philippe Duguay, Analysts.

Senate Committees Directorate:

Adam Thompson, Clerk of the Committee, Mark Palmer, Acting Procedural Clerk
Lori Meldrum, Administrative Assistant

Senate Communications Directorate:

Ceri Au, Communications Officer

ORDER OF REFERENCE

Extract of the Journals of the Senate, Tuesday, May 6, 2014:

The Honourable Senator Jaffer moved, seconded by the Honourable Senator Ringuette:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights be authorized to examine and report on how the mandates and practices of the UNHCR and UNICEF have evolved to meet the needs of displaced children in modern conflict situations, with particular attention to the current crisis in Syria; and

That the committee submit its final report no later than December 31, 2014.

After debate,

The question being put on the motion, it was adopted.

Extract of the *Journals of the Senate*, Thursday, December 11, 2014:

The Honourable Senator Jaffer moved, seconded by the Honourable Senator Downe:

That, notwithstanding the order of the Senate adopted on Tuesday, May 6, 2014, the date for the final report of the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights in relation to its examination of how the mandates and practices of the UNHCR and UNICEF have evolved to meet the needs of displaced children in modern conflict situations, with particular attention to the current crisis in Syria, be extended from December 31, 2014 to June 30, 2015.

The question being put on the motion, it was adopted.

Gary W. O'Brien

Clerk of the Senate

Extract of the *Journals of the Senate*, Friday, June 19, 2015:

The Honourable Senator Jaffer moved, seconded by the Honourable Senator Cordy:

That, notwithstanding the orders of the Senate adopted on Tuesday, May 6, 2014, and Thursday, December 11, 2014, the date for the final report of the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights in relation to its examination of how the mandates and practices of the UNHCR and UNICEF have evolved to meet the needs of displaced children in modern conflict situations, with particular attention to the current crisis in Syria, be extended from June 30, 2015 to December 31, 2015; and

That, pursuant to rule 12-18(2)(b)(i), the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights be authorized to sit between Monday, June 22, 2015 and Friday, September 4, 2015, inclusive, even though the Senate may then be adjourned for a period exceeding one week; and

That the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights be permitted, between June 22, 2015 and September 4, 2015 and notwithstanding usual practices, to deposit with the Clerk of the Senate a report, if the Senate is not then sitting, and that the report be deemed to have been tabled in the Chamber.

The question being put on the motion, it was adopted.

Charles Robert

Clerk of the Senate

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since the beginning of the conflict in Syria in 2011, almost 4 million Syrian citizens have been forced to seek sanctuary in other states as refugees and 7.6 million have been displaced within their own country. Children represent almost half of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). To help displaced families cope in their new environments, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) have been working tirelessly with their partners to deliver aid within Syria and the surrounding region. As UNHCR and UNICEF are also working in many other regions of the world helping people displaced by conflict, the question arises: are these organizations institutionally equipped to meet the needs of the most vulnerable displaced people, the children?

On 6 May 2014 the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights (the Committee) received the following order of reference:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights be authorized to examine and report on how the mandates and practices of the UNHCR and UNICEF have evolved to meet the needs of displaced children in modern conflict situations, with particular attention to the current crisis in Syria.

Between 26 May 2014 and 7 May 2015, the Committee received testimony from approximately 20 witnesses including representatives of the Canadian government, United Nations (UN) organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (IRCRCM) and academia. The report that follows highlights the Committee's observations and recommendations for the Canadian government based on this testimony. It is divided into five sections, in addition to a short introductory chapter. Chapter 2 looks at the difficulties experienced by parents displaced by the Syrian conflict and the trickle-down effect it is having on children. While refugee and internally displaced children appear to have many similar experiences, this chapter highlights the differences in those experiences. Though the emphasis is on how children are affected by their new realities as a result of the choices parents are forced to make, the chapter also considers the factors influencing those decisions.

Chapter 3 explores the mandates of UNHCR and UNICEF to respond to the needs of displaced children and their families through the lens of two guiding questions: Have their mandates evolved? Are they equipped to address the many issues faced by children displaced by conflict? Though the testimony was clear about the evolution of UNICEF's mandate, witnesses were divided about UNHCR's – it is sufficient to note that there has been a noticeable evolution over time in UNHCR's work. Most witnesses agreed that both organizations are capable of helping displaced children with their current structures and that no changes to the mandates were currently required.

Chapter 4 outlines the different but complementary roles of UNHCR and UNICEF in helping displaced children. As the response to humanitarian crises is situational, the chapter explains differences between the 'sector' approach used in refugee crises and the 'cluster' approach used in internal displacement situations. Both approaches are utilized to establish the roles of organizations and their responsibilities in the context of humanitarian responses. This section also gives an overview of the programs and initiatives that UNHCR and UNICEF are involved in, such as the No

Lost Generation initiative. The chapter ends with a summary of Canada's contributions, both financial and otherwise, to UNHCR and UNICEF in response to the Syrian refugee crisis.

Chapter 5 discusses the trends and challenges for the humanitarian sector that were identified by witnesses. These include inadequate humanitarian access, the urbanization of refugee flows, the growing recognition of the importance of addressing the needs of refugee host communities, the transition from humanitarian to development assistance, the need for more educational opportunities for children and youth, the need for cooperation and coordination in the humanitarian sector, the importance of effective and sustainable funding mechanisms, and the need for political solutions to conflicts.

The last chapter provides some specific recommendations for the Government of Canada to better support the important work of UNHCR and UNICEF in responding to the needs of children displaced by conflict. The recommendations focus on the areas of promoting humanitarian access, better addressing the needs of youth, promoting innovation in humanitarian programming, the need to ensure that the categorization of individuals is not a barrier to the provision of assistance based on need, and funding.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The conflict in Syria has forced an almost unprecedented number of people to flee their homes and seek refuge in neighbouring communities or countries. Not only are they losing their homes and belongings, but also their livelihoods, their sense of self-reliance and the day-to-day predictability enjoyed by those living in a peaceful society. Since many of the displaced are no longer able to provide their families with the most basic necessities such as water, food and shelter, children are made vulnerable to practices including recruitment into armed groups and early marriage. Driven into compromising roles, they lose their childhood and their dreams.

To help displaced families cope in their new environments, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) have been working tirelessly with their partners to deliver aid within Syria and the surrounding region. As UNHCR and UNICEF are also working in many other regions of the world helping people displaced by conflict, the question arises: are these organizations institutionally equipped to meet the needs of the most vulnerable displaced people, the children?

The Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights (the Committee) received permission from the Senate to examine this question and look at the evolution of UNHCR and UNICEF's mandates to assess these two organizations' ability to address the needs of children displaced by conflict. On 6 May 2014, the Senate passed the following order of reference:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights be authorized to examine and report on how the mandates and practices of the UNHCR and UNICEF have evolved to meet the needs of displaced children in modern conflict situations, with particular attention to the current crisis in Syria.¹

Over the past year, the Committee received testimony from approximately 20 witnesses including representatives of the Canadian government, United Nations (UN) organizations,² non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (IRCRCM) and academia.

Few witnesses identified a need to change the mandates of these two organizations and most saw their evolution as a natural adaptation to the constantly evolving reality of modern conflicts. Much of the testimony focused on UNHCR, so the Committee's report does as well to a certain extent. The report is divided into five sections, beginning with a description of the situation of children displaced by conflict, with a particular focus on the Syrian situation. It then goes on to discuss the mandates of UNHCR and UNICEF generally, and the humanitarian response to the Syrian conflict and associated refugee crisis. Next is a summary of the recurring trends and challenges for the humanitarian sector that emerge from the testimony such as the urbanization of refugee flows, the need to assist host communities and challenges with current funding structures. The last section provides some specific recommendations for the Government of Canada to be able to support the important work of UNHCR and UNICEF in responding to the needs of children displaced due to conflict.

¹ Senate, *Journals of the Senate*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, Issue 56, 6 May 2014.

² For various reasons, UNHCR and UNICEF were the only UN organizations able to testify, though the World Food Programme (WFP) provided a written submission.

CHAPTER 2: STAYING OR FLEEING, WHAT TO EXPECT?

In three years, almost 4 million Syrian citizens have been forced to seek sanctuary in other states; 7.6 million have been forced to abandon their homes but remain displaced within the borders of their own country and, “4.8 million people live in areas classified as ‘hard or almost impossible to reach’”.³ The longer the conflict endures, the further those seeking refuge are forced to go. Already between January and early May 2015, 61,500 have travelled by boat across the Mediterranean, of which 33 per cent are Syrians. Thousands of unaccompanied minors reached Europe in 2014, while hundreds of other children drowned during the crossing.⁴

Many witnesses who appeared before the Committee emphasized the tremendous resilience Syrians have demonstrated since the beginning of the conflict affecting their country. Because of the civil war, many have lost everything. With few resources at their disposal, the international community has a responsibility to assist. The type of aid available to them, however, depends on a number of factors: have they sought refuge in another country? If so, have they registered? Have their children’s births been registered? Are they living among the local population or in a refugee camp? Have they remained in Syria? If so, are they in a government or opposition-controlled area? Did they stay in their community or move to a camp for internally displaced persons⁵ (IDPs)?

Though escaping to another country reduces the immediate security threat to the individual, it is not a viable option for all Syrians, nor is it always a good one. While some might have strong family ties in a neighbouring country or live close to a border, others might have barriers such as mobility issues that make an escape unthinkable.⁶ A number of witnesses who appeared before the Committee worked closely with Syrians living in and outside of the country. The following sections draw from their testimony to illustrate the impact of the choices families are forced to make, as a result of the war, on children.

A. Syria: Same Country, New Reality

Though much of the testimony related to the situation of Syrian refugees living in neighbouring countries, the Committee was able to get a general understanding of the situation within Syria. It goes without saying that the conflict in Syria has dramatically changed the landscape. Once a middle-income country with a relatively stable social infrastructure, Syria is now in the midst of a civil war; while the government is fighting to maintain or win back territory from the various armed opposition groups, Syrian civilians are caught in the middle.⁷ Many are targeted as a result of their ethnic or religious identity.⁸ Since the start of the conflict, 210,000 Syrians have been killed, at least

³ UNICEF, *UNICEF Response to Information Request from Senate of Canada Standing Committee on Human Rights*, 7 May 2015 [UNICEF response] (written submission).

⁴ Senate, Standing Committee on Human Rights, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 7 May 2015 (Furio De Angelis, Representative in Canada, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees).

⁵ IDPs are people that have been displaced but have not crossed an international border.

⁶ Senate, Standing Committee on Human Rights, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 7 May 2015 (Mark Gwozdecky, Director General, Middle East and Maghreb, Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada).

⁷ Senate, Standing Committee on Human Rights, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 9 June 2014 (Andrew J. Tabler, Senior Fellow, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, As an individual).

⁸ *Evidence*, 7 May 2015 (Gwozdecky).

840,000 have been injured,⁹ and; “depending on the estimates, up to half of Syria’s population has been displaced.”¹⁰

Children have been seriously impacted by the war. They make up almost half of the 7.6 million IDPs in Syria. Ten thousand children have died.¹¹ Syria’s children have experienced serious physical and psychological trauma. UNHCR’s representative in Canada told the Committee:

[Children] have witnessed unspeakable horror, which they struggle to forget. Bombs and missiles have destroyed their homes, communities and schools. Friends and family members were killed, sometimes before their own eyes. Children suffer from trouble sleeping, horrifying flashbacks, bed-wetting and even speech problems.¹²

1. On their Own, Working and Fighting Wars: Children inside Syria

The Committee was told that UNHCR’s three primary concerns with regards to displaced children within Syria are: unaccompanied or separated children, the recruitment of children into the conflict and child labour. Some of the most vulnerable children are those who are unaccompanied or have been separated from their parents. Thousands of children fall into this category, with over 8,000 arriving at Syria’s borders without their parents in 2014.¹³

All children, especially unaccompanied or separated children, are susceptible to recruitment by armed groups both within Syria and the surrounding region. Leslie E. Norton, Director General of International Humanitarian Assistance at Canada’s Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (DFATD), informed the Committee that children within Syria are more at risk of “being recruited by different armed groups on both sides of the conflict... Children under 18 years of age have been used in both combat and support roles, such as loading bullets, delivering food and evacuating the injured.”¹⁴ UNICEF informed the Committee that, in 2014, the recruitment of boys by extremist groups increased significantly:

Reports indicate that training camps for children have been established by ISIL [Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant]. Children have been used as suicide bombers, as shields, have been forced to kill, have been abducted and imprisoned, tortured and/or forced to work for armed groups.¹⁵

⁹ UNICEF response.

¹⁰ *Evidence*, 9 June 2014 (Tabler).

¹¹ UNICEF response.

¹² Senate, Standing Committee on Human Rights, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 2 June 2014 (Furio De Angelis, Representative in Canada, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees).

¹³ Senate, Standing Committee on Human Rights, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 26 May 2014 (Leslie E. Norton, Director General, International Humanitarian Assistance, Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada)

¹⁴ *Evidence*, 26 May 2014 (Norton).

¹⁵ UNICEF response.

Some adolescent boys are also tempted to join armed groups voluntarily. One boy in Syria told the NGO Mercy Corps, “I want to grow up and become the leader of an armed group. I want to get used to bearing arms to protect my mother and siblings.”¹⁶

In an effort to protect young Syrian males from recruitment, families are restricting their movements. Consequently, adolescent girls are fulfilling tasks traditionally performed by young males, which places “them at heightened risk and exposes adolescent girls to a greater degree.”¹⁷ Throughout the region, girls are at greater risk of sexual exploitation, sexual abuse and early marriage. They are more likely to face physical and social isolation.¹⁸ Child marriage has also increased, from one in five girls under eighteen being married prior to the conflict to three in five.¹⁹

Child labour is another significant problem within Syria. Furio De Angelis, Representative of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Canada, told the Committee that this issue is directly linked to the survival of families, as children are working to help pay for rent and food. The Committee was told, for example, “that 10 per cent of children in collective shelters in Damascus are working in carpentry, factories and food delivery.”²⁰

2. Schools and Healthcare

Children also face challenges accessing educational opportunities and healthcare services. The education system inside Syria has been devastated by the conflict. UNICEF reported that “school attendance has dropped more than 50 per cent,” as 2 million children inside Syria are unable to receive education. Twenty-five per cent of schools in Syria have been damaged, destroyed or are being used as shelters.²¹ Not only are they indirect casualties of the war, but schools and teachers are being deliberately targeted.²²

Similarly, the Syrian health system has been severely affected: “An estimated 5.7 million children do not have access to appropriate health services as only 43 % of hospitals in Syria are fully functional.”²³ Syria is no longer able to provide the same standard of care it once did. Furio De Angelis and Dr. Yasmine Ali Haque, Deputy Director of the Office of Emergency Programmes at UNICEF Headquarters, both stated that doctors were deliberately targeted. As one witness stated:

The collapse of the health system is a stark illustration of the urgent need for greater access. Today children are dying not just from bullets but from a lack of basic medical care. Prior to this conflict, Syria was a middle-income country with a functioning health care system that provided a consistent standard of care, including high vaccination rates for children, universal coverage of skilled birth

¹⁶ Senate, Standing Committee on Human Rights, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 30 October 2014 (Matt Streng, Senior Youth Development Advisor, Mercy Corps).

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Senate, Standing Committee on Human Rights, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 7 May 2015 (Dr. Yasmin Ali Haque, Deputy Director, Office of Emergency Programmes, UNICEF Headquarters).

²⁰ *Evidence*, 26 May 2014 (Norton).

²¹ UNICEF response.

²² Senate, Standing Committee on Human Rights, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 2 June 2014 (Dr. Yasmin Ali Haque, Deputy Director, Office of Emergency Programmes, UNICEF Headquarters).

²³ UNICEF response.

attendants and institutional delivery. The picture of maternal, new-born and child health in Syria today couldn't be more different.²⁴

Witnesses informed the Committee that humanitarian aid organizations are also having difficulty accessing areas within Syria, particularly in areas not controlled by the government (see chapter 5 for more on this topic). With the majority of the population in biggest need located in opposition controlled areas, the delivery of food, shelter, water, health and education is severely limited.²⁵ In order to meet their basic needs, many Syrians have been forced to leave the country.

B. Seeking Refuge: A New Struggle

As the conflict continues and the situation within Syria deteriorates, many families are forced to seek refuge in another country. While refugee camps are a viable option for many, they are not viable or available to others. Some countries, such as Lebanon, do not have any. Moreover, after surviving the traumas of war, many refugees are seeking a sense of security. They want to work and provide for their families as they did back home. With that in mind, “at least 75 per cent of the refugee population are accommodated not in camps but have taken up residence in cities, towns and villages across the region, living alongside the Egyptian, Iraqi, Jordanian, Lebanese and Turkish people.”²⁶

The Syrian refugee crisis is being called the worst since the Second World War.²⁷ UNICEF estimates that almost “4 million Syrian refugees (including over 2 million Refugee children) are living in Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Turkey and Egypt.”²⁸ As one witness pointed out, the situation in Lebanon is equivalent to “if the entire population of Canada had moved to the United States in little more than 36 months.”²⁹

Away from the war and immediate danger, refugees “now fac[e] a day-to-day struggle where they may lack community and family support, may not speak the language or have access to basic services or a secure place to live.”³⁰ Witnesses have described the lives of refugees as a constant struggle. Cristy McLennan, Senior Adviser, Humanitarian and Emergency Response, Save the Children Canada, for example, explained that, “when someone moves from Syria into neighbouring countries, in many ways their situation goes from acute to chronic.”³¹ Another witness described it as “tragic and miserable.”³²

²⁴ Senate, Standing Committee on Human Rights, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 9 June 2014 (Cristy McLennan, Senior Adviser, Humanitarian and Emergency Response, Save the Children Canada).

²⁵ Senate, Standing Committee on Human Rights, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 5 February 2015 (Stephen Cornish, Executive Director, Doctors Without Borders Canada).

²⁶ Senate, Standing Committee on Human Rights, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 30 October 2014 (Jeff Crisp, Senior Director for Policy and Advocacy, Refugees International).

²⁷ *Evidence*, 5 February 2015 (Cornish).

²⁸ UNICEF response.

²⁹ *Evidence*, 30 October 2014 (Crisp).

³⁰ *Evidence*, 9 June 2014 (McLennan).

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Senate, Standing Committee on Human Rights, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 23 April 2015 (Zaid Al-Rawni, CEO, Islamic Relief Canada).

Families who seek refuge in another country must decide whether to live in a refugee camp or among the local population. While some might find it comforting to have some of their basic needs taken care of in a camp, one witness referred to them as a “sort of catch-22; it is a dead end... there are not many opportunities there.”³³ Furthermore, UNHCR informed the Committee that refugee camps in particular “may increase critical protection risks such as sexual and gender-based violence, child protection concerns and human trafficking.”³⁴ Some families are ‘splitting the risk’ (part of the family will remain in a camp while others live among the host population) but they appear to be the exception.³⁵

1. Host Communities: Adapting to Refugees

After four years of crisis, most refugee families have run out of savings and are at the mercy of what money they can make or that host communities and the humanitarian aid system are able to provide. Countries in the surrounding region, however, are overwhelmed by the sudden influx of population. According to Jeff Crisp, Senior Director for Policy and Advocacy with Refugees International, with the majority of Syrian refugees outside camps, there is evidence that wages are decreasing in neighbouring countries because Syrian refugees (both adults and children) are willing to work for pay below market rates.³⁶

A number of witnesses expressed concern that tensions among the local population and refugees may rise as a result.³⁷ Organizations such as Mercy Corps are “trying to avert tensions and conflicts, knowing that the tension is rising and the stress on basic services and utilities will only continue to rise.”³⁸ Some countries have enacted policies to counter these effects. In Jordan, for instance, the government requires that 25 per cent of aid goes to the “poorest Jordanians ... to make sure ... [they don’t] suffer from this massive influx of Syrian citizens.”³⁹

2. Refugee Families: A Reversal of Roles

As refugees work for low wages, legally or illegally, they struggle to pay for shelter and basic necessities. To compensate, families resort to negative coping strategies. Girls are sometimes married at a young age to alleviate the financial strain and provide them with protection, while boys are often sent to work for very little in demanding and dangerous jobs.⁴⁰

UNHCR informed the Committee that “child labour is directly linked to the basic survival of refugee families.”⁴¹ Furio De Angelis told the Committee that, “a recent assessment found that nearly half of

³³ Senate, Standing Committee on Human Rights, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 5 February 2015 (François Audet, Professor, Department of Management and Technology, University of Quebec at Montreal, As an individual).

³⁴ *Evidence*, 7 May 2015 (Norton).

³⁵ *Evidence*, 5 February 2015 (Milner).

³⁶ *Evidence*, 30 October 2014 (Crisp).

³⁷ *Ibid.*; *Evidence*, 2 June 2014 (De Angelis).

³⁸ *Evidence*, 30 October 2014 (Streng).

³⁹ *Evidence*, 30 October 2014 (Crisp).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*; and Senate, Standing Committee on Human Rights, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 9 June 2014 (Jessie Thomson, Director, Humanitarian Assistance, CARE Canada).

⁴¹ *Evidence*, 2 June 2014 (De Angelis).

households with one or more working family members relied partly or entirely on the income generated by a child.”⁴² UNICEF estimated in 2014 that one in ten refugee children from Syria in the surrounding region was working.⁴³ In Lebanon, for example, a study by the International Labour Organization, UNICEF, Save the Children and the Lebanese Ministry of Labour published in February 2015 “estimates that 1, 510 children live and work on the streets. [The] majority of them engage in begging and street vending. Among them 66% are male, 50% are between 10-14 years old and 73% are Syrian.”⁴⁴ An assessment conducted by the NGO CARE in 2014 “found that 9 per cent of girls in families interviewed, between the ages of 14 and 17, were married, and 7 per cent of girls in the same age bracket were pregnant at the time of reporting.”⁴⁵

It appears that children, the very individuals that parents are trying to protect when seeking refuge in another country, continue to suffer the most. This situation has disastrous consequences. Children are forced into adult roles instead of being in school learning skills that could one day be used to rebuild Syria or contribute to their new communities.

3. A Lost Generation: Educational Opportunities for Syrian Children

The number of out-of-school children and youth generated by the Syrian conflict is alarming. UNHCR estimates that 600,000 refugee children are not attending classes.⁴⁶ The Committee was told by Furio De Angelis in 2014 that “80 per cent of Syrian refugee children in Lebanon and 56 per cent in Jordan were not in school.”⁴⁷ Statistics for youth are even worse. According to Matt Streng, Senior Youth Development Advisor with Mercy Corps, “of the one-in-four Syrian refugees under the age of 18 that are adolescent, only one in 30, or 3 per cent have received vocational life skills, education and/or psychosocial support as of May of this year [2014].”⁴⁸ As with the labour market, the sudden influx of children has proven too much for the system to bear, which is “taxing the infrastructure, the curriculum, the teachers, the quality of teachers and how they run the process.”⁴⁹

While the change is difficult for the host communities, it is especially hard on refugee children. Many have been out of school for as long as three years.⁵⁰ Once they re-enter the education system, their age difference with other students discourages some students from continuing. As one witness pointed out “we have situations of ten-year-olds in classrooms with eight-year-olds. Inevitably, they drop out. It doesn't work.”⁵¹

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ UNHCR, *Information Update on the Syria Crisis*, 7 May 2015, Ottawa [UNHCR Information Update] (written submission).

⁴⁵ *Evidence*, 9 June 2014 (Thomson).

⁴⁶ *Evidence*, 5 February 2015 (Cornish).

⁴⁷ *Evidence*, 2 June 2014 (De Angelis).

⁴⁸ *Evidence*, 30 October 2014 (Streng).

⁴⁹ Senate, Standing Committee on Human Rights, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 26 May 2014 (Dave Metcalfe, Director General, Development Europe and Middle-East, Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada).

⁵⁰ *Evidence*, 9 June 2014 (Thomson).

⁵¹ Senate, Standing Committee on Human Rights, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 5 February 2015 (Emma Bonar, Youth Programme Manager, Norwegian Refugee Council).

The Committee was also told that children and adolescents are losing hope in the education system. Emma Bonar, Youth Programme Manager for the Norwegian Refugee Council in Jordan, was approached by youth and children in a refugee camp who asked her:

What's the point in going to primary school because there's no secondary school to go to afterwards? What's the point in education at all because I can't go to university and be a doctor like I have always dreamed? I might as well just go and work and support my family.⁵²

Another witness told the Committee that “adolescent boys regularly experience humiliation through physical and verbal abuse at school, on the job and in their communities. Many are losing hope and see armed groups as a way to protect themselves and others and gain respect and pay.”⁵³

Financial reasons, negative perceptions of the education system, and security concerns are also keeping refugee children from school. CARE conducted a study in Jordan and found that families “were not sending their children to school due to an inability to pay associated costs, such as transportation and schooling materials; concern over the poor quality of education ... and overcrowding in schools; and harassment, particularly of young girls.”⁵⁴

According to Andrew J. Tabler, Senior Fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy,

Some have lamented these children represent a lost generation of Syrians in terms of human development, with deep implications for regional and world security in the decades to come. Whatever their future, the response of the international community to the war in Syria is now more vital than ever before.⁵⁵

Due to the potential long-term consequences of having so many out-of-school children and youth in Syria and neighbouring countries, humanitarian aid agencies such as UNHCR and UNICEF are working closely with host communities to meet the needs of these children. Chapter 4 provides an overview of these initiatives but, first, the Committee will take a closer look at the mandates of UNHCR and UNICEF to understand their role in assisting children displaced by conflict.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ *Evidence*, 30 October 2014 (Streng).

⁵⁴ *Evidence*, 9 June 2014 (Thomson).

⁵⁵ *Evidence*, 9 June 2014 (Tabler).

CHAPTER 3: MANDATES AND PRACTICES

Responding to the situation of children displaced due to conflict is an important part of both UNHCR and UNICEF's work. In fact, it was part of the impetus for their creation after the Second World War, particularly in the case of UNICEF. As noted by Leslie E. Norton, UNHCR and UNICEF "are critical partners for Canada, meeting the needs of people affected by humanitarian crises, including displaced children."⁵⁶ So what exactly are the responsibilities of these organizations in assisting children displaced by conflict? This section seeks to address this question by providing a brief summary of the evolution of UNHCR and UNICEF's mandates and practices to the present day.

A. UNHCR Mandate

1. The Testimony

There appeared to be some disagreement amongst witnesses as to whether UNHCR's mandate has changed over time and which activities of the agency are actually part of its mandate. James Milner, Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science at Carleton University, outlined a number of mandate changes he felt were significant. These include assisting displaced persons outside Europe, becoming a permanent organization and expansion of the groups for which UNHCR has responsibility.⁵⁷ Professor François Audet from the Department of Management and Technology at the University of Quebec at Montreal felt that UNHCR's mandate was limited to refugee protection, and did not include the provision of direct aid, which is a major focus of the agency's present-day activities.⁵⁸

Jessie Thomson, Director of Humanitarian Assistance at CARE Canada, and Cristy McLennan seemed to say that changes have had more to do with the way the agency works than an actual change to the mandate.⁵⁹ Mike McBride, Professor of Political Science at Whittier College, California, argued that various UN General Assembly (UNGA) resolutions had expanded UNHCR activities but not its mandate as outlined in the *Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees* (the Statute) and the 1951 *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* (1951 Convention).⁶⁰ Professor McBride argued that:

In terms of the overall mandate, what has changed in the 60 plus years of UNHCR's existence is not so much the nature of the mandate itself but the scope of UNHCR's activities to fulfill the mandate, along with significant growth in numbers and categories of people now of concern to the office.⁶¹

⁵⁶ *Evidence*, 26 May 2014 (Norton).

⁵⁷ Senate, Standing Committee on Human Rights, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 5 February 2015 (James Milner, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Carleton University, As an individual).

⁵⁸ *Evidence*, 5 February 2015 (Audet).

⁵⁹ *Evidence*, 9 June 2014 (McLennan & Thomson).

⁶⁰ UN General Assembly, *Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*, 14 December 1950, A/RES/428(V) [the Statute]; UN General Assembly, *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 28 July 1951, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 189, p. 137.

⁶¹ Senate, Standing Committee on Human Rights, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 19 February 2015 (Mike McBride, Professor of political science, Whittier College, California, As an Individual).

The Committee's meetings for this study ended with Furio De Angelis similarly stating that UNHCR's legal mandate has remained the same, but that "operational modalities" have changed to address new realities.⁶²

It appears to the Committee that witnesses may be interpreting the distinction between mandates and activities differently. Where one witness sees an expansion of the categories of people being assisted as a change in mandate, another may not. The various sources authorizing UNHCR's work and the use of UNHCR's expertise in areas that are not necessarily within its core mandate on a fairly regular basis may also explain the differences of opinion between witnesses. One provision that grants particularly broad authority to act is paragraph 9 of the Statute which allows the High Commissioner for Refugees to:

engage in such additional activities, including repatriation and resettlement, as the General Assembly may determine, within the limits of the resources placed at his disposal.⁶³

This provision provides broad justification for UNHCR involvement in assisting populations other than refugees.⁶⁴ Since it is part of the Statute, such work could be seen as part of UNHCR's mandate, but it could also be interpreted as an exceptional activity UNHCR does outside of its normal mandate.

2. The Mandate

For the Committee's purposes, it is sufficient to note that there has been a noticeable evolution over time in UNHCR's work. UNHCR was created in December 1950, became operational in January 1951 and is a subsidiary organ of the UN General Assembly. UNHCR's work is grounded in the authority granted to the organization by the Statute, the 1951 Convention and its 1967 *Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees* (1967 Protocol), along with direction from its Executive Committee and the UNGA.⁶⁵

Professor Milner described UNHCR's origins as "inauspicious," because of the structural constraints that were purposely put on the organization. Its mandate was temporary and limited to individuals displaced before 1951, essentially those displaced because of the Second World War in Europe (refugees and stateless persons). The temporal and geographic limitations on who was defined as a refugee were officially removed by the 1967 Protocol, though UNHCR was involved in providing assistance outside Europe on an ad hoc basis with UNGA approval before that.⁶⁶

Over time, various UNGA resolutions have expanded the scope of UNHCR's activities and the groups for which it is responsible.⁶⁷ The agency started with a more limited focus on refugee

⁶² Evidence, 7 May 2015 (De Angelis).

⁶³ Para. 9, the Statute.

⁶⁴ Evidence, 19 February 2015 (McBride).

⁶⁵ Evidence, 26 May 2014 (Norton); Evidence, 2 June 2014 (De Angelis); UN General Assembly, *Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 31 January 1967, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 606, p. 267.

⁶⁶ Evidence, 19 February 2015 (McBride).

⁶⁷ Ibid.

protection and finding durable solutions, but became increasingly involved with the provision of assistance over time. It is a funder, a coordinator and also has operational functions, providing direct assistance. The organization also now addresses the needs of an increasing variety of groups, such as internally displaced persons.⁶⁸

As Professor Milner said to the Committee:

Over its history, UNHCR has been able to demonstrate its relevance to new dynamics and instances of forced migration. Its growth has been incremental and piecemeal.⁶⁹

a. Women and Children

Though UNHCR has always assisted people of all ages and genders, Professor McBride told the Committee that UNGA resolutions regarding UNHCR began including reference to women and children in the early 1980s. This practice has continued since that time in recognition of their greater vulnerability as refugees and displaced persons. Most recently, in 2014, a UNGA resolution affirmed the importance of age, gender and diversity mainstreaming in UNHCR's work. It also accorded priority to issues including sexual and gender-based violence and women and children's protection needs.⁷⁰ The Executive Committee of UNHCR has also outlined principles to be followed in relation to various issues that affect children.⁷¹

b. Internally Displaced Persons

Though UNHCR has been involved in IDP response since at least the 1970s on an ad hoc basis because of its expertise in responding to refugee crises, its role has been defined by the UN more formally in what is known as the "cluster approach" since 2005. This approach identifies lead agencies or organizations for 11 areas of need (i.e. health, protection, nutrition etc.) globally, nationally and at the local level. UN agencies, NGOs, the IRCRCM and the International Organization for Migration act as leads for various clusters. UNHCR is global lead for protection and co-lead for the shelter/non-food items and camp management/coordination clusters, but is not responsible for overall coordination as it is in refugee situations.⁷² UNHCR's authority to engage in assistance for IDPs is derived from UNGA resolutions and direct requests from affected states. As explained in written submissions from the agency:

UNHCR does not have a specific mandate and sole responsibility for IDPs, in the same manner as it does for refugees. Within the cluster approach, UNHCR has a shared responsibility to ensure that basic standards of protection and assistance for IDPs are met in line with international standards relating to IDP[s]...⁷³

⁶⁸ *Evidence*, 9 June 2014 (Thomson); *Evidence*, 26 May 2014 (Norton); *Evidence*, 5 February 2015 (Milner).

⁶⁹ *Evidence*, 5 February 2015 (Milner).

⁷⁰ *Evidence*, 19 February 2015 (McBride).

⁷¹ *Ibid*; *Evidence*, 9 June 2014 (Thomson); UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), [A Framework for the Protection of Children](#), 26 June 2012.

⁷² UNHCR Information Update.

⁷³ *Ibid*.

Despite this more limited mandate, given the large numbers involved, UNHCR now assists more IDPs than refugees.⁷⁴

c. Changes to the Mandate?

Though most witnesses saw no need to change UNHCR's mandate at this point in time, some witnesses suggested to the Committee that some adjustments could be beneficial. Professor Audet, for example, was critical of UNHCR's role in assistance. He argued that UNHCR should stop providing aid to allow the agency to focus more on its primary protection mandate.⁷⁵ Professor McBride also provided a couple of suggestions:

... I believe the mandate as presented in the statute, the conventions on refugees and statelessness supplemented by General Assembly resolutions, is flexible enough to cover UNHCR's activities with regard to refugees and stateless persons. The areas that may require an extension of the mandate would concern assistance to internally displaced persons, but even there the cluster approach and transformative agenda are providing guidance, and it would be difficult to get consensus among member states on this issue.

Finally, another area that may need attention in the future could be those forcibly displaced by the effects of climate change, who would not fall under the current definition of a refugee or UNHCR's mandate...⁷⁶

Finally, Martin Barber, Honorary Fellow at the University of Edinburgh and Former Director of the United Nations Mine Action Service, made the point that, while the High Commissioner is responsible for refugees, no one is responsible for considering the impact of their movements on others, such as those who are "left behind or the people who are in refugee camps when some refugees try to go further, cross the Mediterranean, reach Europe, et cetera."⁷⁷ He felt that the High Commissioner or another official should be looking at the broader impacts of refugee flows in a more comprehensive manner.

For the most part, however, witnesses did not see UNHCR's mandate as impeding the agency's ability to meet the needs of children displaced by conflict. As discussed further below, there are, however, a number of other barriers negatively affecting assistance to this group.

B. UNICEF

The UN General Assembly has mandated UNICEF to advocate for the protection of children, to assist in meeting their basic needs and to promote the expansion of opportunities for children to

⁷⁴ *Evidence*, 19 February 2015 (McBride).

⁷⁵ *Evidence*, 5 February 2015 (Audet).

⁷⁶ *Evidence*, 19 February 2015 (McBride).

⁷⁷ Senate, Standing Committee on Human Rights, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 23 April 2015 (Martin Barber, Honorary Fellow, University of Edinburgh and Former Director, United Nations Mine Action Service, As an Individual).

reach their full potential.⁷⁸ Or, to put it more simply, in the words of Dr. Haque, it is “to reach children everywhere.”⁷⁹

None of the witnesses who appeared before the Committee expressed the desire to see UNICEF’s mandate changed. Maggie Black, who has written two books on the history of UNICEF and worked for the organization, told the Committee:

I could only say about UNICEF's mandate that I don't see how it would ever be created today, and I think we would meddle with it at our peril. I would like to hope that the mandate of UNICEF, and of the other humanitarian UN organizations, could be protected under all circumstances, because they really represent the global world's desire to do good in the world and to save lives in the world. I think their record, even though we despair sometimes and wish we could do more, is commendable indeed.⁸⁰

UNICEF started with a much smaller sphere of activity than it has today. A relief fund, the UN Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), had been set up through the UN to assist people after the Second World War. However, the U.S. and other Western countries did not want to continue providing general humanitarian aid to Eastern European countries. It was agreed that UNRRA’s remaining funds would go to a new fund for children, which would provide basic relief, such as food and healthcare, to children in Eastern Europe.⁸¹ This fund, originally called the International Children’s Emergency Fund (ICEF) and renamed UNICEF, was created in 1946.

UNICEF’s mandate quickly expanded beyond Europe to Asia and then Latin America in the late 1940s and later to sub-Saharan Africa in the 1950s.⁸² Though originally intended as an emergency relief organization, UNICEF personnel realized fairly quickly that more was required if it was to help children “survive, thrive, develop and to be in an environment that protects and nurtures them.”⁸³

The 1950s and 1960s saw a shift in emphasis within the organization to longer-term programs in public health, education and development more generally to address the needs of children, alongside the earlier post-conflict emergency assistance. In the 1970s and 1980s, UNICEF continued to expand programming areas to include family planning, informal education and specific programs benefitting women and girls, urban children and vulnerable children such as child labourers and child soldiers.⁸⁴ UNICEF is now both a humanitarian aid and development organization (in contrast, UNHCR is a purely humanitarian organization).⁸⁵ In the 1990s, the organization shifted its focus from a needs-

⁷⁸ *Evidence*, 26 May 2014 (Norton).

⁷⁹ *Evidence*, 2 June 2014 (Haque).

⁸⁰ Senate, Standing Committee on Human Rights, [Evidence](#), 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 23 April 2015 (Maggie Black, UNICEF Historian, As an Individual).

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² United Nations Children’s Fund [UNICEF], [1946–2006: Sixty Years for Children](#), 2006, pp. 4–5.

⁸³ *Evidence*, 2 June 2014 (Haque).

⁸⁴ UNICEF, [UNICEF Milestones](#), 2004.

⁸⁵ *Evidence*, 2 June 2014 (Haque).

based to a rights-based approach, after the adoption of the UN *Convention on the Rights of the Child*.⁸⁶

The next section looks more closely at what UNHCR, UNICEF and the broader humanitarian sector are doing to address the needs of children displaced by the conflict in Syria.

⁸⁶ UNICEF, [UNICEF Milestones](#), 2004.

CHAPTER 4: HUMANITARIAN AID – REACHING OUT TO PARENTS TO HELP CHILDREN

UNHCR and UNICEF are working with their partners (other UN agencies, NGOs, IRCRCM and host governments and communities) to prevent a generations of young Syrians from losing hope in their future. They are doing so by promoting resilience and helping families obtain basic necessities to deter parents from making choices that negatively affect their children. The following sections provide an overview of how the humanitarian aid sector is responding to the needs of Syrian families displaced by the conflict, with a particular focus on the roles of UNHCR and UNICEF.

A. UNHCR and UNICEF: Division of Responsibilities

Though UNHCR and UNICEF have complementary goals regarding displaced children, they have different roles in assisting this group. The response to the Syrian conflict is complex, involving aid from many different organizations to refugees, host communities and those still in Syria. Humanitarian assistance is coordinated through two response plans: the *Syrian Strategic Response Plan* (within Syria) and the *Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan* (the surrounding region).⁸⁷ Leadership and coordination is somewhat different in each context, with a “cluster approach” used within Syria, while a UNHCR-led “sector approach,” is used to address the refugee situation given UNHCR’s mandate for refugees. As discussed in more detail in Chapter 5, the cluster and sector approaches are used to identify needs, responsibilities and capacity. Each “cluster” or “sector” relates to an area of need such as shelter or protection.

1. Refugees, IDPs and UNHCR’s Responsibilities

Within Syria, because it is not a refugee response, UNHCR is not responsible for overall coordination. Instead, UNHCR leads the following clusters: Protection and Community Services, Camp Coordination and Camp Management and Non-Food Items/Shelter. The agency is also involved in some aspects of healthcare and education, but not as a lead organization.⁸⁸ In neighbouring countries, UNHCR is responsible for overall coordination of the refugee response, in close collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) which is responsible for coordinating the resilience component which is more development-oriented.⁸⁹ UNHCR also acts as lead of various sectors (varying somewhat by country), and is involved in other sectors as a participating organization. This includes a broad variety of activities, ranging from providing cash to refugees to awareness-raising regarding child protection and sexual and gender-based violence to funding healthcare clinics.⁹⁰ As one witness noted, UNHCR recognizes that many families rely on the income of a child:

UNHCR efforts in order to address this complex problem include the provision of financial assistance to help vulnerable Syrian refugee families cover urgent and basic needs, including medical expenses and rent; the creation and maintenance of a functioning referral system to identify

⁸⁷ *Evidence*, 19 February 2015 (McBride); [2015 Syria Strategic Response Plan](#), December 2014; [Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan 2015-2016: In Response to the Syria Crisis](#), December 2014.

⁸⁸ UNHCR Information Update.

⁸⁹ [Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan 2015-2016: In Response to the Syria Crisis](#), December 2014.

⁹⁰ UNHCR Information Update; UNHCR, *2014 Year in Review UNHCR Jordan* (written submission).

children who face protection risks, manage their cases and refer them to appropriate services; and the provision of social counselling and emotional support by case managers and social workers. All these efforts can prevent families from resorting to negative coping strategies, such as taking their children out of school to work.⁹¹

These varied efforts are coordinated in a five-prong approach:

strengthening evidence generation... strengthening child protection systems through increased awareness, capacity, skills and awareness of service providers; strengthening child, family and community coping mechanisms and self-protection capacities; integrating child protection responses into other sectors, in particular education; and advocating with different stakeholders to influence decisions and actions taken to promote and protect children.⁹²

a. Registration

One of UNHCR's tasks that is particularly important and unique is refugee registration. UNHCR assists governments in registering refugees. As Professor McBride explained, registration is "the entry door to the provision of services", and also "identifies those specific needs and situations that may require some targeted assistance, especially with respect to children, to unaccompanied minors, to families headed by women and certain situations of gender violence."⁹³ With the data compiled from registration, UNHCR is able to prioritize needs.⁹⁴ For this reason, it is important that registration accounts for all refugees.

With 80 per cent of refugees living outside of camps, however, reaching all of them can be a challenge. UNHCR and partners have learned to use technology creatively. In Jordan and Lebanon, for instance, they "have set up websites allowing refugees to communicate directly with the agencies, ask questions and get information about the registration process. Also, [they] increasingly use biometric registration and iris scan technology to make targeted assistance to the most vulnerable more effective."⁹⁵

A secondary registration aspect is that of birth registrations, which also affects service provision, as well as the risk of statelessness. UNHCR and UNICEF have been working to raise awareness of the importance of birth registrations for a child's future. As Furio De Angelis explained, this is as an example of where UNHCR and UNICEF's mandates "successfully overlap":

[R]egistering a child is a basic human right. It is the entry door to the enjoyment of all the rights that come together with belonging to that nation... As UNHCR is also the agency mandated with the prevention and reduction of statelessness, we are seeing, in

⁹¹ *Evidence*, 2 June 2014 (De Angelis).

⁹² *Evidence*, 19 February 2015 (McBride).

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Evidence*, 7 May 2015 (De Angelis).

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

birth registration, also an important and crucial moment for the prevention of statelessness.⁹⁶

2. Helping Children and the Family: UNICEF and the Syrian Conflict

UNICEF is focused on children in need regardless of where they are. As a result, the organization plays a similar role in both the sector and cluster approaches. The Committee was informed that UNICEF is involved in providing health services, education, child protection, water/sanitation/hygiene and nutrition in Syria and the surrounding region.⁹⁷ For example, UNICEF is providing human resources, equipment and medicines to support primary health centres and mobile clinics in the country and supporting polio vaccination campaigns. Over 2.9 million children under the age of five were vaccinated for polio in 2014 and approximately 500,000 women and children were able to access basic health services in Syria.⁹⁸ UNICEF is addressing Syrian refugee health needs in neighbouring countries by strengthening the capacity of national health systems in those countries, including strengthening measles and polio vaccination programs.⁹⁹ While UNICEF is not the lead coordinator within the context of displaced persons, it does lead the response in certain sectors or clusters.¹⁰⁰

Even though its primary responsibility is to assist children, many services are delivered to adults as well. As Maggie Black stated, “UNICEF is primarily about children and therefore is also about maternity and women, but it then ends up also about families, and you cannot support the child without supporting the family.”¹⁰¹

B. The Gender Difference

A number of witnesses underscored the importance of recognizing the differentiated needs of men and women, as well as boys and girls, in programming. As noted above, UNHCR has piloted a program of age, gender and diversity mainstreaming. Professor Milner explained:

This has tried to ensure that all aspects of UNHCR's work have gender-sensitive protection, such that it's not the responsibility of one or two colleagues in the field to respond to the particular needs of women or gender issues but rather the responsibility of all staff.¹⁰²

Other organizations are also addressing gender differences in their programming. Jessie Thomson of CARE Canada told the Committee that her organization provides “sanitary materials to women and

⁹⁶ *Evidence*, 2 June 2014 (De Angelis).

⁹⁷ UNICEF Response.

⁹⁸ UNICEF, *Humanitarian Action for Children- Syria*, 2015 (written submission).

⁹⁹ UNICEF, *Humanitarian Action for Children- Syrian refugees and other affected populations in Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon and Turkey*, 2015 (written submission).

¹⁰⁰ *Evidence*, 7 May 2015 (De Angelis).

¹⁰¹ *Evidence*, 23 April 2015 (Black).

¹⁰² *Evidence*, 5 February 2015 (Milner).

girls as part ... [of its] hygiene kits, recognizing that if you don't provide sanitary materials, often girls have nowhere else to get it.”¹⁰³

Similarly, Save the Children stated that any programming they do “will be designed in a way that boys and girls have separate places.”¹⁰⁴ In reference to Save the Children’s child-friendly and youth-friendly spaces, Cristy McLennan explained that:

Once you see these programs starting up and running for a while, they may look quite different between what the boys are doing and what the girls are doing, and that is based on consultation with what they want to see and what they need...We'll find that, all stereotypes aside, there may be different types of vocational training that interest girls as opposed to boys. At the end of the day, it is really important and critical to take their needs and desires into account, because this is a protective space that is essentially preventing them from engaging in unprotective types of activities, be it child labour, joining armed forces and things of that nature. These spaces need to be a place where they're cared for and that are interesting to them as well.¹⁰⁵

C. No Lost Generation

Education was seen by many witnesses as extremely important in providing hope of a better future to Syrian children and ensuring that they heal from their experiences and avoid repeating patterns of violence. As outlined in Chapter 2, however, Syria children are attending school sporadically or not at all for many reasons, including: security issues, class sizes and age differences. While the education systems in host countries are overwhelmed by the sudden influx of students, they are trying to accommodate refugee children. The governments of Jordan, for instance, instituted double shifts so “Jordanian children are educated in the morning...and Syrian children in the afternoon.”¹⁰⁶

Nonetheless, many remain out of school and the humanitarian aid sector is worried that an opportunity to educate an entire generation of children, whose lives are “being shaped by violence, displacement and a persistent lack of opportunities,”¹⁰⁷ will be lost. Launched in 2013 by UNICEF, UNHCR and other partners, the ‘No Lost Generation’ (NLG) initiative aims to address this issue by taking into account the close links between child education and protection. The general idea is that “if a child is in school and has access to education, quite often, at least we hope, that also means that they're in a protective environment. They have a right to be in a protective environment when they are in school”.¹⁰⁸

As a result, the ‘No Lost Generation’ initiative utilizes education to bring together four important elements: learning, health care, psychosocial and protection.¹⁰⁹ A variety of approaches are being used, including self-learning programs for children who are unable to go to school, regularization of

¹⁰³ *Evidence*, 9 June 2014 (Thomson).

¹⁰⁴ *Evidence*, 9 June 2014 (McLennan).

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Evidence*, 26 May 2014 (Metcalf).

¹⁰⁷ *Evidence*, 26 May 2014 (Norton).

¹⁰⁸ *Evidence*, 9 June 2014 (McLennan).

¹⁰⁹ *Evidence*, 26 May 2014 (Norton).

the status of Syrian refugee teachers and teacher training. Psychosocial support is provided, not only for children but also their families, to ensure that children can live in nurturing environments.¹¹⁰

The one-year review of this initiative found that more than 1 million children received educational support, with 1.5 million receiving school supplies, more than 600,000 children receiving psychosocial support and over 60,000 “adolescents reached with increased opportunities including vocational/life skills training.”¹¹¹

NLG has been well received by the international community and host countries. The campaign is seeking almost \$1 billion.¹¹² The target is to reach 6 million children through the work of the various organizations involved and provide learning opportunities, skills development, a protective environment for children, and increased opportunities.¹¹³ Moreover, it takes into consideration the long-term needs of Lebanon and Jordan by including “development plans on the education side of these countries.”¹¹⁴

D. More than a Donor: How Canada is Contributing to Relief Efforts

Despite UNHCR and UNICEF’s efforts, these organizations depend on voluntary contributions from governments and the private sector donors to fund their humanitarian initiatives. When contributions do not meet actual needs, as in the case of the Syrian humanitarian crisis, “difficult choices” have to be made.¹¹⁵ As Furio De Angelis explained:

we are currently not able to do enough given the magnitude of the needs and the complexity of protection challenges. That is why we continue to appeal for increased and sustained financial contributions. As of April 2014, only 24 per cent of UNHCR's funding requirements in relation to the Syrian crisis has been received. This means difficult choices have to be made and some needs go unmet...¹¹⁶

For this year alone, the humanitarian appeal for Syria and the region is \$8.4 billion.¹¹⁷ As of May 2015, Canada is not only the sixth largest single-country donor to the humanitarian response in Syria,¹¹⁸ but an important partner for UNICEF and UNHCR as well.

1. Donor

Since the beginning of the crisis in Syria, Canada has allocated \$503.5 million to help meet humanitarian needs, of which \$150 million was announced in 2015. This assistance is being

¹¹⁰ UNICEF, *No Lost Generation Initiative: Protecting the Futures of Children Affected by the Syria Crisis, One year Report*, September 2014 [No Lost Generation] (written submission).

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² *Evidence*, 26 May 2014 (Norton).

¹¹³ *Evidence*, 9 June 2014 (McLennan).

¹¹⁴ *Evidence*, 26 May 2014 (Norton).

¹¹⁵ *Evidence*, 2 June 2014 (De Angelis).

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Untitled written submission from DFATD, 14 May 2015 [DFATD submission] (written submission).

channelled “through experienced humanitarian partners to meet the urgent water, shelter, food, health, relief items, emergency education and protection need[s] of conflict-affected Syrians.”¹¹⁹

Canada gave UNHCR \$67.9 million and UNICEF \$88.7 million between 2012 and 2015. DFATD informed the Committee that, with its support in 2014, “UNHCR distributed relief items to more than 3.25 million people in Syria...and UNICEF supported 16.5 million people to access clean water in Syria.”¹²⁰

Canada is also a strong supporter of the No Lost Generation initiative, to which \$111.9 million of its total contribution has been dedicated thus far. More specifically, it “has contributed \$10 million to UNICEF in Lebanon and \$10 million to UNICEF in Jordan in support of the NLG [No Lost Generation] initiative to strengthen the public education systems for Syrian, Lebanese and Jordanian children...”¹²¹

2. Partner

As Canada is a Vice-Chair of UNHCR’s Executive Committee and an Executive Board Member for UNICEF, its contributions are more than financial. Ms. Norton, for instance, informed the Committee that Canada utilizes these positions to “make statements, raise issues and have a lot of bilateral meetings on the side of these boards to raise key issues of concern.”¹²² She also mentioned that Canada’s teams in Jordan, for example, are “actively engaged in fairly frequent meetings with our partners” and they “will go out on monitoring missions and also come back with an evaluation. They will also be in continuous dialogue with the operational folks in the field.”¹²³

Furio De Angelis underscored the importance of Canada’s leadership role in refugee crises more generally:

Canada is a very important global player in refugee affairs. Of course, it is one of the main resettlement countries, together with the U.S. and Australia. Its quota for resettlement has always been an important one within the global quota of resettlement areas.¹²⁴

On 26 May 2014, the Committee was told by Sarita Bhatla, Director General, Refugee Affairs, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), that Canada had committed to resettling 200 government-assisted refugees and 1,100 privately-sponsored refugees from Syria, of which over 130 had already arrived in Canada at that time.¹²⁵ The Committee understands that, since Ms. Bhatla testified, the Canadian government has agreed to take an additional 10,000 Syrian refugees by the

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² *Evidence*, 26 May 2014 (Norton).

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ *Evidence*, 2 June 2014 (De Angelis).

¹²⁵ Senate, Standing Committee on Human Rights, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 26 May 2014 (Sarita Bhatla, Director General, Refugee Affairs, Citizenship and Immigration Canada).

end of 2017.¹²⁶ UNHCR is asking for 100,000 resettlement spots for refugees from Syria worldwide for the period 2015-2016.¹²⁷ The Committee is optimistic that the Government of Canada will continue to generously welcome refugees to Canada as it did with the 60,000 Vietnamese and 20,000 Iraqi refugees that were resettled here, as well as the Kosovar refugees who arrived in Canada through Operation Parasol and the Family Reunification and Special Needs programs.

Mr. De Angelis also told the Committee that Canada is a strategic partner for UNHCR, and commended “the ongoing support that the Canadian government and Canadians have given to the UNHCR’s humanitarian action around the world.”¹²⁸ Likewise, Dr. Haque thanked the government and Canadians:

for the very generous support for the children around the world who have been facing humanitarian crises -- for the support they have been receiving from the Government of Canada. In particular, I think we have really counted on Canada as being a strong ally as we support the children who are in the fifth year of a conflict that shows no sign of abating.¹²⁹

While Canada is contributing generously to the humanitarian sector to help relief efforts for the Syrian crisis, and working alongside UNHCR and UNICEF to further their goals, the sector is still not reaching its funding requirements. As a result, certain needs go unmet. The following section underscores some of the challenges faced by the humanitarian sector, including those resulting from financial constraints.

¹²⁶ Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, *Helping to Protect the World’s Most Vulnerable*, Press Release, 7 January 2015.

¹²⁷ *Evidence*, 2 June 2014 (De Angelis)

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ *Evidence*, 7 May 2015 (Haque).

CHAPTER 5: TRENDS AND CHALLENGES FOR THE HUMANITARIAN SECTOR

While witnesses who appeared before the Committee addressed difficulties for the humanitarian sector as a whole, not just UNHCR and UNICEF, many of their recommendations are applicable to these two organizations given their central roles in the sector. The Committee heard about a number of challenges the UN and other organizations are grappling with to better respond to humanitarian crises. Despite significant efforts to address these difficulties and find solutions, however, the Committee was told that the needs of too many children affected by conflict are not being met.

The main reoccurring trends and challenges for humanitarian actors, including UNHCR and UNICEF, raised during the testimony are outlined below. Though many points relate to assistance for all age groups, they are particularly relevant to children who make up a large percentage of the displaced and face greater vulnerability in situations of displacement.

A. Inadequate Humanitarian Access

One issue that was repeatedly raised by witnesses was humanitarian access. Impartiality in the provision of aid was stressed as a necessity for access to all areas in a conflict zone.¹³⁰ Maggie Black told the Committee that UNICEF, for example, has always provided assistance to both sides in conflicts. Because of their focus on children, they have often been able to have access when other organizations could not, with Ms. Black referring to UNICEF as a “Trojan horse” in providing humanitarian assistance to difficult to access populations.¹³¹ UNICEF was seen by one witness as very experienced and having a good track record in negotiating with non-state actors and able to function in situations where such actors are active.¹³²

And yet, access to populations in need within Syria has been a major obstacle in providing humanitarian assistance in that country, even for UNICEF. Rob Young, Senior Delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross, explained to the Committee that, though there have been successes in reaching opposition areas, even in ISIL-controlled territory, respect for international humanitarian law has often been lacking in Syria. This has made it difficult for people to seek assistance and for humanitarian workers to reach the population.¹³³ The multiple parties to the conflict have also made negotiating access particularly challenging.¹³⁴

Martin Barber told the Committee that President Assad has been “arbitrarily denying consent” to UN agencies to provide impartial assistance to all parts of the country.¹³⁵ Areas outside government control have been particularly affected. The UN is limited in its ability to assist people in those areas and the Assad regime has used its control over access to assistance as part of a strategy to reward the

¹³⁰ See, for example, *Evidence*, 23 April 2015 (Barber).

¹³¹ *Evidence*, 23 April 2015 (Black).

¹³² Senate, Standing Committee on Human Rights, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 19 February 2015 (Joel E. Oestreich, Associate Professor, Political Science and Director, International Area Studies Program, Drexel University, As an Individual).

¹³³ Senate, Standing Committee on Human Rights, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 5 February 2015 (Rob Young, Senior Delegate, International Committee of the Red Cross).

¹³⁴ *Evidence*, 7 May 2015 (Haque).

¹³⁵ *Evidence*, 23 April 2015 (Barber).

population for submitting to its control of the country. Non-UN partners have played a crucial role in accessing opposition-controlled areas because they do not have the same limitations. However, the regime has threatened that organizations that assist people in rebel-held territory will see their access to government-controlled territory cut off.¹³⁶ Islamic Relief, for example, has been denied access to government-controlled areas.¹³⁷

The Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) has been an important actor on the ground, with sixty percent of aid from UN agencies reaching the population through SARC according to Hossam Elsharkawi, Director of Emergencies and Recovery, International Operations, at the Canadian Red Cross. They have paid a steep price, however: 47 SARC volunteers and staff had been killed while performing their duties as of early February 2015.¹³⁸ Despite their efforts and sacrifices, many Syrians are not being reached. Stephen Cornish, Executive Director of Doctors Without Borders in Canada referred to “humanitarian deserts,” in Syria, where essentially no aid is entering.¹³⁹

Martin Barber suggested that when humanitarian aid cannot be provided in territory controlled by all sides of the conflict, assistance should be withheld to ensure that aid organizations are not seen to be assisting one side and legitimising it.¹⁴⁰ On the other hand, Maggie Black urged continued assistance to those who could be reached. These alternatives are an illustration of the choices faced by organizations such as UNHCR and UNICEF when seeking to assist children in conflict situations. Unless military enforcement is an option, “[q]uiet, subtle negotiation on the ground is your only possibility.”¹⁴¹ Even where military support is available, Professor McBride provided a note of caution – the guiding principles of humanitarian assistance such as neutrality, impartiality and humanity can be compromised by such an association, making it a problematic choice as well.¹⁴² There are no easy choices for humanitarian actors seeking access to populations in need in conflict situations like Syria.

B. Move Away from Refugee Camps

Given the harsh conditions in Syria, millions have decided to leave the country, including unaccompanied minors. Though the image conjured up when thinking about refugees is often one of people living in camps, an increasing number of refugees are living in urban centres and informal settlements.

Refugee camps are designed to be temporary arrangements. However, conflicts are increasingly protracted; UNHCR informed the Committee that the average time a refugee is displaced, without being able to return home or find a durable solution elsewhere, is 17 years. In some instances, three generations of refugees have been living in camps.¹⁴³ Though Stephen Cornish stated that more

¹³⁶ *Evidence*, 9 June 2014 (Tabler).

¹³⁷ *Evidence*, 23 April 2015 (Al-Rawni).

¹³⁸ Senate, Standing Committee on Human Rights, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 5 February 2015 (Hossam Elsharkawi, Director, Emergencies and Recovery, International Operations, Canadian Red Cross).

¹³⁹ *Evidence*, 5 February 2015 (Cornish).

¹⁴⁰ *Evidence*, 23 April 2015 (Barber).

¹⁴¹ *Evidence*, 23 April 2015 (Black).

¹⁴² *Evidence*, 19 February 2015 (McBride).

¹⁴³ *Evidence*, 9 June 2014 (Thomson).

funding is dedicated to assisting refugees in the camps than elsewhere, they provide few, if any, livelihood opportunities.¹⁴⁴

Jeff Crisp told the Committee:

Camps were never an ideal approach. There's a lot of evidence to suggest that living in a camp is a very negative experience for refugees, but there was a certain kind of predictability about refugee camps as to how they're constructed and designed and how you provide them with basic needs. When you have such large numbers of people scattered across such large areas of the whole region, this is really requiring the international aid community to rethink how they go about their usual business.¹⁴⁵

Refugees outside camps may seek to keep a low profile and are much harder to find and assist.¹⁴⁶ UNHCR has also faced challenges in addressing the increased urbanization of refugees because host countries in the Global South, where the vast majority of refugees are hosted, generally prefer to keep refugees in camps. As noted above, with the majority of Syrian refugees outside camps, there is evidence that wages are decreasing in neighbouring countries because Syrian refugees (both adults and children) are willing to work for pay below market rates.¹⁴⁷ Because of potential impacts like these on host communities, it has been difficult for UNHCR to change its policies with respect to refugees in non-camp settings. Nonetheless, the Committee was informed that, in 2009, UNHCR issued a new policy on urban refugees that promotes out-of-camp livelihood opportunities, with revisions to the policy made in 2014. The policy only promotes such opportunities in situations where local conditions allow, however, which is a significant limitation that can be used by host communities to justify keeping refugees in camps.¹⁴⁸

Despite the sensitivity of the issue of urban refugees, the humanitarian sector is adapting to this changing reality with creativity, seeking new ways to access and serve them. For example, information for refugees can be sent via SMS or social media for broader reach instead of posted on a poster board in a camp. CARE Canada did an assessment in Jordan that found that “something like 90 per cent of those registered refugees with CARE had mobile phones” so this is an important means of communication.¹⁴⁹ Vouchers and cash grants are being issued using mobile phones or obtained via biometric registration and iris scan technology.¹⁵⁰

C. Meeting the Needs of Host Communities

As refugees are increasingly intermingling with local populations, the needs of host communities are receiving more attention from the humanitarian sector. As Jeff Crisp explained:

¹⁴⁴ *Evidence*, 5 February 2015 (Audet).

¹⁴⁵ *Evidence*, 30 October 2014 (Crisp).

¹⁴⁶ *Evidence*, 9 June 2014 (Thomson).

¹⁴⁷ *Evidence*, 30 October 2014 (Crisp); *Evidence*, 5 February 2015 (Audet).

¹⁴⁸ *Evidence*, 5 February 2015 (Milner); UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), [UNHCR Policy on Alternatives to Camps](#), 22 July 2014, UNHCR/HCP/2014/9.

¹⁴⁹ *Evidence*, 9 June 2014 (Thomson).

¹⁵⁰ *Evidence*, 5 February 2015 (Milner); *Evidence*, 7 May 2015 (De Angelis).

If you only focus your assistance on refugees and ignore the host community, then there's an obvious potential for tension and even conflict between the two groups. This has been predicted widely by many commentators in Lebanon. So far, we are pleased to say it hasn't really happened, but there is always a risk. If you don't pay attention to the host community, then the risk of tension and conflict with the refugee population will certainly tend to increase...¹⁵¹

Professor Milner told the Committee that UNHCR leadership can be critical in ensuring that resentment does not build up in host communities. In discussing the situation of Afghan refugees in Pakistan, he outlined the potential:

There are these examples of where UNHCR has been very aware and engaged at a very local level of the kinds of quid pro quos that are necessary to create the space and the opportunities for self-reliance for refugees, livelihoods for refugees and ultimately solutions for refugees...¹⁵²

Though assistance for host communities could be seen as an expansion of UNHCR's mandate, Professor McBride told the Committee that the General Assembly has provided some authority for this through resolutions asking UNHCR to be conscious of the needs of host communities and stressing the importance of their involvement in decision-making.¹⁵³ This recognizes the reality that refugees are better off where their host country's needs are also being considered.

Jessie Thomson told the Committee that, in the Syrian context, there has been a real recognition of the importance of assisting host communities, and particularly the most vulnerable members of those communities, while also meeting the needs of the refugees.¹⁵⁴ As noted above, in Jordan, the government requires some assistance to impoverished Jordanians, along with the refugees.¹⁵⁵

Hossam Elsharkawi told the Committee that host communities themselves have been providing a significant amount of aid that is not necessarily documented. Though neighbouring countries have been very generous in their assistance to Syrian refugees, there have also been tensions at times due to competition for jobs and a sense that the refugees are receiving more than host communities which may have similar needs; services and utilities are also overstretched.¹⁵⁶ Hossam Elsharkawi noted that, given how long the conflict has lasted, host communities are finding it increasingly difficult to continue providing support to the refugees.¹⁵⁷

The Syrian refugees themselves have the potential to contribute to their host communities. Before the war, Syria was a middle-income country with relatively high education levels. Witnesses told the Committee that many Syrians who fled their country are highly educated and have unutilized skills.

¹⁵¹ *Evidence*, 30 October 2014 (Crisp).

¹⁵² *Evidence*, 5 February 2015 (Milner).

¹⁵³ *Evidence*, 19 February 2015 (McBride).

¹⁵⁴ *Evidence*, 9 June 2014 (Thomson).

¹⁵⁵ *Evidence*, 30 October 2014 (Crisp).

¹⁵⁶ *Evidence*, 19 February 2015 (McBride).

¹⁵⁷ *Evidence*, 5 February 2015 (Elsharkawi).

According to these witnesses, the aid sector has been overwhelmed by the work of meeting the basic needs of so many people, and had limited capacity to consider how Syrian human assets could be used. Host governments have also been reticent to utilize the skills of Syrian refugees because this would result in competition for their own citizens.¹⁵⁸

D. Ensuring a Smooth Transition from Humanitarian to Development Assistance

As assistance to host populations and refugees has become more integrated, the same can be said with respect to humanitarian and development assistance. In the case of UNICEF, this integration happened very early. Though the organization was originally set up with a humanitarian mandate, it became obvious very soon that longer-term assistance was required in many places that were not experiencing humanitarian emergencies in order to meet the needs of children.¹⁵⁹

It is only more recently that humanitarian actors more broadly have integrated development considerations from early in the response to a humanitarian crisis.¹⁶⁰ The Syrian example, in particular, was seen to be innovative because UNHCR foresaw that it would be a protracted refugee situation and involved development actors such as UNDP and the international financial institutions from very early on.¹⁶¹ Furio De Angelis explained the importance of this trend as follows:

Without the assistance of development agencies, emergency response only is not enough. In a moment in which you address an emergency, you have to bring the seeds. You have to plant the seeds for tomorrow's development. Otherwise, you will never get out of emergency mode, and you will always remain in a responsive situation that is not sustainable in the long term or even in the medium term. That's why the cohabitation of development and emergencies concepts and approaches, at the early stage, to responding to displacement crises is absolutely crucial. It has been only a few years that this has been put in practice, but it is surely the way in which the organizations and the UN system at large, together with other international partners, will continue to operate.¹⁶²

Integrating development considerations is important both in host communities, where refugees may remain for long periods of time, and in countries of origin, if refugees are to be encouraged to return home.¹⁶³

Development actors can also assist the short-term humanitarian response, particularly where they have a dual mandate like UNICEF or CARE Canada for both humanitarian and development work. These organizations benefit from their existing development presence in a country, allowing them to respond more quickly to a humanitarian crisis.¹⁶⁴ Jessie Thomson noted that CARE, which has a dual mandate, is always looking for ways to approach refugee situations from a development

¹⁵⁸ *Evidence*, 30 October 2014 (Crisp & Streng).

¹⁵⁹ *Evidence*, 23 April 2015 (Black).

¹⁶⁰ *Evidence*, 9 June 2014 (McLennan).

¹⁶¹ *Evidence*, 9 June 2014 (Thomson).

¹⁶² *Evidence*, 2 June 2014 (De Angelis).

¹⁶³ *Evidence*, 9 June 2014 (Thomson).

¹⁶⁴ *Evidence*, 9 June 2014 (McLennan); *Evidence*, 23 April 2015 (Black).

perspective. She said there is a need for livelihood and self-reliance opportunities, education and training for the dignity of affected individuals and because of the reality that humanitarian assistance is insufficient to meet all the needs. At the same time, Ms. Thomson recognized that development work in relation to refugee situations can be politically sensitive for host governments.¹⁶⁵

Nonetheless, in recognition of the reality that the international aid community cannot meet all the needs of people affected by humanitarian crises around the world, there has been a move to promote the resiliency of locally affected people. There is some concern about this approach in conflict situations, however. Stephen Cornish told the Committee that the aid sector is increasingly relying on local capacity and local governments but that this is not as effective in situations where there is a conflict and local systems and infrastructure have collapsed compared to situations of natural disaster.¹⁶⁶ In contrast, Professor Milner stressed the importance of mainstreaming the needs of refugees into broader development, peacebuilding and political engagement, rather than having refugees remain within a “humanitarian silo”.¹⁶⁷ He also said that:

The answer for refugees is not long-term, unending care-and-maintenance programs. The answer is very much to engage with them as human beings and as agents who are able to play a role in pursuing their own solution...¹⁶⁸

E. Educating the Next Generation

On a more individual level, education and training is one of the key means to improve the situation of displaced children. However, Emma Bonar told the Committee that, though education is identified as a top priority by refugees, it is one of the areas of humanitarian assistance that receives the least funding.¹⁶⁹

A number of witnesses recognized the need for education beyond the primary school level to allow children to become fully participating members of their society and to survive and thrive.¹⁷⁰ However, as Dr. Haque from UNICEF told the Committee, globally, there has been far more success at improving primary school completion rates than higher levels.

Emma Bonar made the case that, “We must provide a complete cycle of education services if we’re going to provide any at all.”¹⁷¹ Otherwise, as noted above, many children and their families do not see the value in staying in school. The Committee was told that youth in particular are falling through the cracks, with those over 18 not receiving targeted services.¹⁷² Emma Bonar argued that:

¹⁶⁵ *Evidence*, 9 June 2014 (Thomson).

¹⁶⁶ *Evidence*, 5 February 2015 (Cornish).

¹⁶⁷ *Evidence*, 5 February 2015 (Milner).

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ *Evidence*, 5 February 2015 (Bonar).

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*; *Evidence*, 5 February 2015 (Audet).

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.* (Bonar).

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

Youth in any society are a crucial group. They're full of potential, ideas, motivation and energy. They're at that age where their personalities are maturing. We need to find positive outlets and constructive activities for these young people.¹⁷³

Without educational opportunities and vocational skills training, youth will be stuck in a cycle of low-wage work, abuse and hopelessness which is dangerous for them, their communities and the region's stability (i.e. the lost generation). Unfortunately, host countries do not have the capacity to provide quality education for everyone. Some non-formal alternatives are being developed to fill the gap, including both academic programs and vocational, employability-related training to meet the needs of Syrian children and youth, but not enough to meet the needs.¹⁷⁴

Given the statistics mentioned above about school attendance and completion, there is concern that, if such efforts do not reach sufficient numbers of Syrian children and youth, an opportunity to educate an entire generation of Syrians will be lost, and these children will be unable to contribute skills to rebuild their country once the conflict is over.¹⁷⁵ A number of witnesses expressed concern about the potential consequences this will have for development and peace in the region.

F. Need for Cooperation and Coordination

The importance of cooperation and coordination for effective aid was highlighted by many witnesses, as was the reliance NGOs and IRCRCM place on the coordinating role of the UN. Cooperation and coordination are necessary at various levels, between UN agencies but also with international and national NGOs, IRCRCM and various levels of donor and directly-affected governments. Information collection and sharing is a critical part of this, according to Cristy McLennan.¹⁷⁶

Though there was mention of turf wars by a few witnesses, the Committee heard that major efforts at improving coordination between UN agencies and partners have been made in recent years.¹⁷⁷ Zaid Al-Rawni said that, in Darfur in 2004, you could have four organizations providing water in a camp and no one providing food or education, for example. Now, there is more concerted effort "to ensure help is spread as widely as possible and as appropriately as possible."¹⁷⁸

The Committee was told that improvements in cooperation were motivated in part by the inability to adequately address the needs of the growing number of IDPs, a group for whom there is no specialized UN lead agency, particularly in the case of Darfur. The huge scale of recent emergencies, and growing donor expectations for efficient use of funds and greater scrutiny of aid programs were also factors.¹⁷⁹

As of 2005, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has provided general coordination for internal displacement crises and natural disasters, while at the country level, a

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.; *Evidence*, 30 October 2014 (Streng).

¹⁷⁵ *Evidence*, 9 June 2014 (Thomson).

¹⁷⁶ *Evidence*, 9 June 2014 (McLennan).

¹⁷⁷ Regarding turf wars, see for example, *Evidence*, 19 February 2015 (McBride).

¹⁷⁸ *Evidence*, 23 April 2015 (Al-Rawni).

¹⁷⁹ *Evidence*, 2 June 2014 (De Angelis); *Evidence*, 9 June 2014 (Thomson).

Humanitarian Coordinator coordinates assistance. UNHCR continues to coordinate refugee responses.¹⁸⁰ According to Dr. Haque, there is a clear division of labour between UN agencies by area of focus (e.g. water and sanitation, camp management, shelter, food, protection). As noted above, this is known as the cluster approach under OCHA and the sector approach under UNHCR. An organization takes the lead and works with others in each sector (UN and non-UN) to map out which organizations are doing what in which locations, to identify any areas where there are no organizations operating and to advocate for that void to be filled.¹⁸¹ As Cristy McLennan explained:

Rather than wondering if other agencies are better placed, it's more discovering who is doing what, where their expertise lies and how that can be put together in a coherent and logical way so that, when the next emergency or conflict happens, we're not struggling in the first days and weeks just to figure out that apparatus. We have that apparatus now, and I think all partners are doing their best to try to make that work.¹⁸²

UNICEF's representative, Dr. Haque, stressed the need to assess comparative advantages to see who is best placed to do what when dividing responsibilities. She also said that discussions are currently taking place to figure out the most efficient and effective way to avoid duplication where there are refugee and IDP populations in the same areas.¹⁸³

Professor McBride noted that cooperation between agencies is most successful in field missions:

[T]here's a lot more tension in New York among the headquarters than you find in the field. In the field people need each other. They have to work together, in part because they're often in situations where they're not safe and they depend on each other. I think you get much more cooperation in the field and much less tension there than you might get with people in New York or Geneva who are worried about the mandate, encroachments on the mandate and who's going to get the responsibility for this or that.¹⁸⁴

Integration of local actors such as local NGOs into this coordination system has been less successful than integration and cooperation between the international humanitarian actors, but a number of witnesses stressed its importance. Martin Barber also argued that local people and diaspora of affected countries are often best placed to assist and should be supported in doing so.¹⁸⁵ Furio De Angelis echoed the importance of collaboration with host governments in order to be able to reach and assist refugees.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁰ Untitled written submission from UNHCR, 13 June 2014.

¹⁸¹ *Evidence*, 2 June 2014 (Haque).

¹⁸² *Evidence*, 9 June 2014 (McLennan).

¹⁸³ *Evidence*, 2 June 2014 (Haque).

¹⁸⁴ *Evidence*, 19 February 2015 (McBride).

¹⁸⁵ *Evidence*, 23 April 2015 (Barber).

¹⁸⁶ *Evidence*, 2 June 2014 (De Angelis).

Government buy-in is crucial for affected individuals to benefit from cooperation amongst humanitarian actors. The Syrian government’s unwillingness to recognize the need for humanitarian assistance had a major impact on coordination in that country in the first couple of years of the conflict. Because of this resistance, the coordination infrastructure and associated personnel could not be put in place and coordination was more ad hoc. Since then, however, coordination has improved.

A number of witnesses did mention the downside of improved coordination, as it can have an impact on humanitarian principles such as impartiality. In attempting to improve coordination, and for security reasons, the leadership of the political and humanitarian arms of the UN have increasingly been brought together. Though this may lead to improved coordination, it can affect the impartiality of aid and humanitarian access may be harmed.¹⁸⁷ As Martin Barber, who worked most of his career in the UN, told the Committee, the system “has become rather more open to a politicized approach” in recent years as cooperation has increased between different parts of the UN.¹⁸⁸ Similarly, Zaid Al-Rawni said that the UN is not seen to be as impartial as it once was.¹⁸⁹

1. Strengths of Different Types of Organizations

Witnesses who testified on behalf of NGOs told the Committee that UN agencies have more influence over policy changes and access to key decision-makers than NGOs. As such, they play an important advocacy and leadership role, though some witnesses felt they could do more.¹⁹⁰ UNHCR’s strength was seen by one witness to be its capacity to mobilize significant funds. Its biggest challenge was seen to be the size of its bureaucracy, which limits its ability to react quickly.¹⁹¹ At the same time, the big bureaucracy can be beneficial in certain cases, especially where mass mobilization of resources is necessary.¹⁹² UNHCR is also relied on “to identify gaps, to identify strategic direction in terms of the response, to prioritize needs, and to coordinate” refugee response.¹⁹³

According to Jeff Crisp, NGOs tend to be “nimble and quicker,” allowing them to respond rapidly.¹⁹⁴ Matt Streng noted that NGOs like his organization are able to negotiate in opposition-held areas where the UN may not be able to go, and that they are well-placed to build the capacity of local partners, such as lower levels of government and local civil society organizations.¹⁹⁵ By being connected to realities on the ground, the Committee was told that NGOs can also be an important source of information for UN agencies in identifying needs.¹⁹⁶

As noted by Zaid Al-Rawni:

¹⁸⁷ *Evidence*, 5 February 2015 (Cornish); and *Evidence*, 19 February 2015 (McBride).

¹⁸⁸ *Evidence*, 23 April 2015 (Barber).

¹⁸⁹ *Evidence*, 23 April 2015 (Al-Rawni).

¹⁹⁰ *Evidence*, 5 February 2015 (Bonar).

¹⁹¹ *Evidence*, 30 October 2014 (Crisp).

¹⁹² *Evidence*, 23 April 2015 (Al-Rawni).

¹⁹³ *Evidence*, 9 June 2014 (Thomson).

¹⁹⁴ *Evidence*, 30 October 2014 (Crisp).

¹⁹⁵ *Evidence*, 30 October 2014 (Streng).

¹⁹⁶ *Evidence*, 5 February 2015 (Bonar).

Everyone faces their own unique sets of challenges. UN agencies and small agencies have their challenges. Medium size agencies, like ours, like Oxfam, Save the Children, UNICEF and others have their challenges... Who is better at delivering? ... In different circumstances we are probably much better at delivering aid. In other circumstances, maybe the UN agencies are far better at delivering aid.¹⁹⁷

Jeff Crisp noted that the key is to draw on the strengths of both types of organizations.¹⁹⁸ UNHCR and UNICEF appear to be attempting to do just that, by collaborating with many non-UN organizations.

The Committee notes that non-UN organizations collaborate closely with UNHCR and UNICEF, both as partners and by implementing projects with funding from the two agencies.¹⁹⁹ The Committee was told that UNHCR, for example, works with 750 NGOs around the world and channels one-third of its protection and assistance budgets through NGO partners. Jessie Thomson described the annual UNHCR-NGO consultations as “fundamental” because they provide the opportunity to discuss regional and thematic issues with senior UNHCR officials.²⁰⁰

G. Effective and Sustainable Funding Mechanisms

Professor Audet told the Committee that organizations’ desire for funding can affect cooperation, since working with others may require sharing of funds.²⁰¹ Professor McBride noted efforts to improve cooperation in relation to funding through coordinated appeals by UN agencies and UN country teams based on the priority needs of the area in question.²⁰²

Jeff Crisp and others acknowledged Canada’s generous funding to UNHCR and UNICEF and that the response to recent humanitarian crisis, such as the Syrian crisis, has been “quite impressive.”²⁰³ However, because of the sheer scale of the problem, global efforts have not been enough to meet the needs that exist. Other conflict areas such as the Central African Republic, South Sudan and Ukraine are sharing the attention of the international community. Mr. Crisp told the Committee that the humanitarian system is stretched to the limit, with insufficient money, supplies, logistical capacity and experienced personnel.²⁰⁴

The lack of sufficient funding can have serious impacts on those seeking assistance. Furio De Angelis mentioned the Central African Republic, where refugees in camps were receiving only 900 calories per day at the time he testified in June 2014 when the minimum is supposed to be 2000.²⁰⁵

¹⁹⁷ *Evidence*, 23 April 2015 (Al-Rawni).

¹⁹⁸ *Evidence*, 30 October 2014 (Crisp).

¹⁹⁹ *Evidence*, 9 June 2014 (McLennan).

²⁰⁰ *Evidence*, 9 June 2014 (Thomson).

²⁰¹ *Evidence*, 5 February 2015 (Audet).

²⁰² *Evidence*, 19 February 2015 (McBride).

²⁰³ *Evidence*, 30 October 2014 (Crisp).

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*; *Evidence*, 30 October 2014 (Streng).

²⁰⁵ *Evidence*, 2 June 2014 (De Angelis).

The Committee was also told that inadequate funding is particularly common in protracted situations like Syria, as they are forgotten in light of new emergencies.²⁰⁶

Efforts to diversify the donor base are being made, including private sector and non-traditional donors such as the Gulf States. Dr. Haque told the Committee that there has been some success with non-traditional donors.²⁰⁷ However, Jeff Crisp noted that the aid of these states is not coordinated with the UN like the aid of more traditional donors. Because of this, though the amounts can be substantial, there is not a clear understanding of where the money is coming from and what it is being used for.²⁰⁸

The Committee heard that, besides increasing the total amount of money available, there are changes to funding practices that could have a big impact in meeting the needs of individuals displaced by conflict, including children. Dr. Haque and others said that there is a need for funding with fewer conditions.²⁰⁹ Several witnesses also criticized the practice of earmarking funds for a specific organization, program or country. When money is earmarked, it cannot be moved to a higher level priority.²¹⁰ For example, money that is earmarked for water and sanitation cannot simply be moved into food where that need might be greater.

DFATD informed the Committee that Canada does not earmark which sector donations are to go to in its humanitarian funding for UNHCR and UNICEF, though it does contribute to special initiatives to meet the needs of specific populations, such as the No Lost Generation initiative.²¹¹ Canada is to be applauded for this choice, which provides flexibility so that funds can be used to meet the most pressing needs as efficiencies are realized or new priorities develop based on the needs on the ground.²¹²

Witnesses also told the Committee of a need for longer term funding to ensure continuity of service and permit longer-term planning.²¹³ The Committee was told by CARE Canada that their funding for humanitarian assistance is generally for one month to a year. For example, CARE has received yearly funding since 1992 for its work in one refugee camp, despite the organization's ability to predict the needs for a number of years in the future. This results in inefficiencies and difficulties retaining staff, and reduces opportunities for organizations to use their resources more strategically. Jessie Thomson saw a move toward multi-year funding as an opportunity for innovation in the sector.²¹⁴

²⁰⁶ *Evidence*, 19 February 2015 (McBride & Oestreich).

²⁰⁷ *Evidence*, 2 June 2014 (Haque).

²⁰⁸ *Evidence*, 30 October 2014 (Crisp).

²⁰⁹ *Evidence*, 2 June 2014 (Haque).

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*; *Evidence*, 19 February 2015 (McBride).

²¹¹ DFATD submission.

²¹² *Evidence*, 19 February 2015 (McBride).

²¹³ *Evidence*, 2 June 2014 (Haque); *Evidence*, 9 June 2014 (McLennan).

²¹⁴ *Evidence*, 9 June 2014 (Thomson).

H. Need for Political Solutions

Though increased funding would permit UNHCR, UNICEF and partners to provide more humanitarian assistance, it will not resolve the conflicts that result in large numbers of displaced persons in many parts of the world. A number of witnesses expressed frustration that political efforts to resolve conflicts are not more successful.

Humanitarian assistance may save people's lives, but it cannot resolve conflicts. Hossam Elsharkawi told the Committee that most refugees want to go home. For this to happen, a political resolution of the conflicts affecting their countries is needed, which requires the commitment of both local actors and the international community.²¹⁵

Jeff Crisp saw great potential for Canada to play a role on the international stage in promoting political solutions so that refugees may return to peace and opportunities at home.²¹⁶ Professor Milner also saw potential for UNHCR to assist in preparing refugees and promoting their involvement in conflict resolution processes. UNHCR has promoted and supported dialogue and voter registration efforts to ensure that any agreement to end conflict is seen as legitimate by the displaced, and not just the warring groups. UNHCR has also promoted coexistence programs to address intercommunal tensions and conflict in refugee communities so that refugees have the skills to resolve conflicts upon their return to their country. In addition, UNHCR has been involved in a number of efforts to prepare refugees to be productive members of their societies upon return to their country. For example, UNHCR supported training of South Sudanese refugees as doctors, nurses and teachers after shortages of these professionals were identified in that country.²¹⁷

²¹⁵ *Evidence*, 5 February 2015 (Elsharkawi).

²¹⁶ *Evidence*, 30 October 2014 (Crisp).

²¹⁷ *Evidence*, 5 February 2015 (Milner).

CHAPTER 6: RECOMMENDATIONS

The work of UNICEF and UNHCR has evolved since their creation, adapting to changing contexts. The great majority of the testimony the Committee heard lauded UNHCR and UNICEF's efforts to meet the needs of children displaced by conflict. Though there was a recognition that more must be done to help children suffering as a result of the Syrian conflict and other wars around the world, there appeared to be general agreement that both agencies are a critical part of the solution.

As demonstrated by the testimony, the humanitarian sector is not only aware of the challenges it faces in addressing the needs of displaced children but is actively seeking solutions. The Committee was encouraged to hear of the many initiatives already taking place. The World Humanitarian Summit²¹⁸ to be held in 2016 provides an important opportunity for the many actors involved in the humanitarian sector to reflect on the current gaps; identify further initiatives to ensure the efficient use of resources; be more accountable for the funds it receives; and become more effective in meeting the needs of affected individuals, including children.

Below are several notable recommendations for action for DFATD to assist UNHCR and UNICEF in their ongoing efforts to meet the needs of children. If implemented, these recommendations could make a real difference in the lives of children displaced by conflicts in Syria and other regions of the world.

A. Access

Humanitarian access is an issue requiring on-the-ground negotiations as well as broader diplomatic initiatives. Dr. Haque told the Committee that UNICEF relies on governments to raise the issue of children's rights in situations of armed conflict and to promote access, recognizing the contribution of the Government of Canada as a "strong ally for children in that cause".²¹⁹ The Committee sees this work as an important contribution from Canada in supporting the work of UNHCR and UNICEF to meet the needs of children displaced by conflict.

Recommendation 1:

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada continue its international advocacy efforts with respect to the needs of children affected by conflict and actively support efforts to negotiate humanitarian access in Syria for UNHCR, UNICEF and other actors through diplomatic discussions with relevant governments at the UN, bilaterally and in other forums.

B. Addressing the Needs of Youth

As noted above, addressing the needs of youth in situations of displacement and conflict requires more attention from the humanitarian sector. This is a group with unique needs but, given its mandate to specifically deal with children, UNICEF is not responsible for youth 18 and older. A

²¹⁸ The World Humanitarian Summit is an initiative of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and managed by OCHA to "bring together governments, humanitarian organizations, people affected by humanitarian crises and new partners including the private sector to propose solutions to our most pressing challenges and set an agenda to keep humanitarian action fit for the future," [About the World Summit](#).

²¹⁹ *Evidence*, 7 May 2015 (Haque).

number of witnesses told the Committee that youth are not receiving services adapted to their particular needs. As explained by Emily Bonar:

In this humanitarian context, youth are falling through the cracks in the response. Part of the reason is that neither UNICEF nor UNHCR is mandated to provide education programs for this age group. That is aside from a minimal number of scholarships from UNHCR to youth. Those over 18 do not have so many services...

This is the group that will go back and rebuild Syria, we all hope, very soon. They're also one of the biggest influencers on children within their communities. Children look up to youth more than to adults. We know this to be true in all communities. We need skills, training programs and higher education for young people.²²⁰

Creative solutions are being explored. For example, online partnerships with universities around the world are being developed to allow youth to continue their studies without having to leave their communities. However, such education is not always recognized by host governments and the Committee was told that there has been little interest from the international community in funding such initiatives.²²¹

Recommendation 2:

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada support initiatives that facilitate UNHCR and UNICEF's ability to specifically address and enable measures of response to youths' unique needs in situations of displacement due to conflict, including through the provision of psychosocial support, education and skills-building programs adapted to their particular needs.

Recommendation 3:

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada continue to promote and support programming for youth displaced by conflict, including educational and skills development programs, in all appropriate forums but particularly through Canada's role as a Vice-Chairperson of the Executive Committee of UNHCR and as member of the Executive Board of UNICEF.

Recommendation 4:

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada continue to work with UNICEF and UNHCR towards greater recognition and promotion of appropriate alternative educational programs, such as programs for students that have missed school to catch up with their age-grade peers and online learning programs. That programs facilitating a continuum of education at all levels (i.e. primary, secondary and post-secondary, including the trades and apprenticeships) be strongly promoted.

²²⁰ *Evidence*, 5 February 2015 (Bonar).

²²¹ *Ibid.*

C. Promotion of Innovation

The humanitarian sector is faced with many challenges and increasingly complex conflict situations. It is currently unable to meet the needs of affected populations with available resources. In this context, innovation is required to reach the most vulnerable and maximize results with available funding. Technical innovations, such as cash transfers by cell phone and e-learning opportunities, are one way of adapting to new realities and meeting the needs of more people. Non-technical solutions such as the No Lost Generation initiative are also necessary, though it is unfortunate that the initiative is underfunded.

Recommendation 5:

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada continue to support the No Lost Generation initiative, consider increasing its commitment to that initiative, work in concert with other funders committed to its objectives and encourage UNHCR and UNICEF to share best practices and success stories from that initiative.

As large bureaucracies with many staff working with hundreds of partners, UNICEF and UNHCR can play a key role in identifying new ways of doing things and promoting innovation in the humanitarian sector. One of UNICEF's strengths is its decentralized structure compared to many UN agencies, which empowers the staff, allowing them to try new things.²²² The Committee heard that UNHCR is also seeking opportunities for innovation, with a website designed to encourage feedback from staff and awards for good ideas.²²³

Recommendation 6:

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada take a leadership role in working in conjunction with other donor countries to identify new areas for innovation in responding to the needs of children displaced by conflict, and share the results with UNHCR, UNICEF and other humanitarian actors at the upcoming World Humanitarian Summit and in other venues.

D. Assistance Provided Based on Need

The Committee has learned that categories and documentation matter a lot in terms of what assistance is available to a specific individual. Was a birth registered? Is someone an IDP or a refugee? Are they of Palestinian or Syrian origin? Which conflict dominates the news and so receives more funding? The answers to these questions have significant impacts on the people involved. Stephen Cornish explained that, even though humanitarian assistance is supposed to be provided based on need, this is often not the case on the ground:

One of the first challenges I will mention is around status of the individuals. The humanitarian system is built on a set of categories that dictate the level of assistance that someone will receive. That assistance level will depend on how we label that person,

²²² *Evidence*, 19 February 2015 (Oestreich).

²²³ *Evidence*, 19 February 2015 (McBride).

whether we call that person a displaced person, a refugee or, as in the cases of many of the surrounding countries of Syria today, only persons of concern...

We found that given the differences in what we call people, they also get different levels of assistance. It seems very odd to us that the principle determinant of assistance is the categorization rather than the actual needs or vulnerability of the people in question. This seems partly a function of legal mandate and of bureaucracy; but in either case, the people receiving these goods are dependent on the category they find themselves in and unable to change it, despite the fact that all people have the same building blocks and need the same building blocks of life in order to survive and to thrive, to care for their children and to take care of themselves...²²⁴

In addition to the categorization by UN agencies, Mr. Cornish told the Committee that host governments also institute categories based on immigration status. He explained how refugees seek legal status, then are left in limbo as they renew it, which can lead to a lack of legal protection and access to services.²²⁵ Martin Barber and others suggested that the only solution is “intense levels of cooperation” between organizations with different mandates to ensure that assistance is provided based on need.²²⁶

UNICEF’s commitment to “every child, everywhere” is beneficial in addressing the issue of categorization. On the other hand, UNHCR’s mandate, creates a challenge because the agency is not meant to assist everyone. Witnesses did not see the solution to be the creation of one mega-organization that would be everything to all people. Jessie Thomson expressed the general sentiment as follows:

[I]t’s not about UNHCR becoming a super organization that does everything from relief and development in terms of this massive piece of work that needs to get done but about how the UN agencies and their partners are working together.²²⁷

Recommendation 7:

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada work with partners, including UNHCR and UNICEF, to improve cooperation and coordination between humanitarian actors to ensure that the categorization of individuals is not a barrier to the provision of assistance based on need.

Recommendation 8:

Given the importance of coordination in ensuring that humanitarian assistance is provided based on need, the Committee recommends that the Government of Canada, through its role as a donor, as a Vice-Chairperson of the Executive Committee of UNHCR and a member of the Executive Board of UNICEF, encourage initiatives aimed at improving the coordination aspect of UNHCR and UNICEF’s responsibilities.

²²⁴ *Evidence*, 5 February 2015 (Cornish).

²²⁵ *Ibid.*

²²⁶ *Evidence*, 23 April 2015 (Barber).

²²⁷ *Evidence*, 9 June 2014 (Thomson).

E. Funding Improvements

The Committee heard many times that funding is insufficient to meet the needs of children displaced by conflict around the world. In 2011-2012, assistance to respond to the Syrian crisis was funded at 70% but that went down to 50% last year. This reflects a more general trend in protracted situations for funding to decrease over time.²²⁸

Canada is an important contributor to both UNHCR and UNICEF, and the government is to be commended for recognizing that donors are not necessarily the best placed to be able to determine priorities for funding and, thus, providing non-earmarked funding. However, more needs to be done. Witnesses repeatedly told the Committee that there is a need for more flexible and longer-term funding arrangements. This would allow for greater efficiencies and ensure that funds go towards the most urgent needs.

While the Committee recognizes the need for flexibility, accountability for funds spent is also important, requiring robust monitoring and evaluation. Creativity will be required, particularly in conflict zones, but promising efforts are already underway. UNICEF, for example, uses local people in communities to reach areas where they cannot go in Syria due to lack of permissions or insecurity. The Committee was informed that 2,000 monitors report to UNICEF from within Syria about the situation of children and the services they are receiving.²²⁹

Recommendation 9:

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada work in concert with other countries to provide funds to help reduce the deficiency in meeting UNHCR and UNICEF funding requirements in Syrian relief.

²²⁸ *Evidence*, 7 May 2015 (De Angelis).

²²⁹ *Evidence*, 7 May 2015 (Haque).

APPENDIX A: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of the conflict in Syria in 2011, almost 4 million Syrian citizens have been forced to seek sanctuary in other states as refugees and 7.6 million have been displaced within their own country (internally displaced persons).²³⁰ Children represent almost half of Syrian refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs).²³¹

To help displaced families cope in their new environments, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) have been working tirelessly with their partners to deliver aid within Syria and the surrounding region. As UNHCR and UNICEF are also working in many other regions of the world helping people displaced by conflict, the question arises: are these organizations institutionally equipped to meet the needs of the most vulnerable displaced people, the children?

On 6 May 2014 the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights (the Committee) received the following order of reference:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights be authorized to examine and report on how the mandates and practices of the UNHCR and UNICEF have evolved to meet the needs of displaced children in modern conflict situations, with particular attention to the current crisis in Syria.²³²

Between 26 May 2014 and 7 May 2015, the Committee received testimony from approximately 20 witnesses including representatives of the Canadian government, United Nations (UN) organizations,²³³ non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (IRCRCM) and academia. The following is a brief overview of the Committee's findings.

MANDATES AND PRACTICES

Responding to the situation of children displaced due to conflict is an important part of both UNHCR and UNICEF's work. In fact, it was part of the impetus for their creation after the Second World War, particularly in the case of UNICEF. The following sections provide an overview of each organization's mandate, as well as their responsibilities in response to the needs of displaced children in conflict situations.

A. UNHCR Mandate

UNHCR was created in December 1950, it became operational in January 1951 and is a subsidiary organ of the UN General Assembly. UNHCR's work is grounded in the authority granted to the organization by the *Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee*, the *1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* and its *1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of*

²³⁰ UNICEF, *UNICEF Response to Information Request from Senate of Canada Standing Committee on Human Rights*, 7 May 2015 [UNICEF response] (written submission).

²³¹ UNICEF response.

²³² Senate, *Journals of the Senate*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, Issue 56, 6 May 2014.

²³³ For various reasons, UNHCR and UNICEF were the only UN organizations able to testify, though the World Food Programme (WFP) provided a written submission.

Refugees (1967 Protocol), along with direction from its Executive Committee and the UNGA.²³⁴ Over time, various UNGA resolutions have expanded the scope of UNHCR's activities and the groups for which it is responsible.²³⁵ The agency started with a more limited focus on refugee protection and finding durable solutions, but became increasingly involved with the provision of assistance over time. It is a funder, a coordinator and also has operational functions, providing direct assistance. In addition, the organization now addresses the needs of an increasing variety of groups, such as internally displaced persons.²³⁶

There appeared to be some disagreement amongst witnesses as to whether UNHCR's mandate has changed over time and which activities of the agency actually fall within the scope of its mandate. It appears to the Committee that witnesses may be interpreting the distinction between mandates and activities differently. Where one witness sees an expansion of the categories of people being assisted as a change in mandate, another may not. For the Committee's purposes, it is sufficient to note that there has been a noticeable evolution over time in UNHCR's work.

For the most part, witnesses did not see UNHCR's mandate as impeding the agency's ability to meet the needs of children displaced by conflict. As discussed further below, there are, however, a number of other barriers negatively affecting assistance to this group.

B. UNICEF Mandate

In 1946, the International Children's Emergency Fund (ICEF) was created to provide basic relief, such as food and healthcare, to children in Eastern Europe;²³⁷ it was later renamed to UNICEF. The UN General Assembly has mandated UNICEF to advocate for the protection of children, to assist in meeting their basic needs and to promote the expansion of opportunities for children to reach their full potential.²³⁸ None of the witnesses who appeared before the Committee expressed the desire to see UNICEF's mandate changed.

UNICEF started with a much smaller sphere of activity than it has today. UNICEF's mandate quickly expanded beyond Europe to Asia and then Latin America in the late 1940s and later to sub-Saharan Africa in the 1950s.²³⁹ Though originally intended as an emergency relief organization, UNICEF personnel realized fairly quickly that more was required if it was to help children "survive, thrive, develop and to be in an environment that protects and nurtures them."²⁴⁰

²³⁴ Senate, Standing Committee on Human Rights, [Evidence](#), 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 26 May 2014 (Leslie E. Norton, Director General, International Humanitarian Assistance, Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada); Senate, Standing Committee on Human Rights, [Evidence](#), 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 2 June 2014 (Furio De Angelis, Representative in Canada, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees); UN General Assembly, [Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees](#), 14 December 1950, A/RES/428(V) [the Statute]; UN General Assembly, [Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees](#), 28 July 1951, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 189, p. 137; UN General Assembly, [Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees](#), 31 January 1967, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 606, p. 267.

²³⁵ Senate, Standing Committee on Human Rights, [Evidence](#), 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 19 February 2015 (Mike McBride, Professor of political science, Whittier College, California, As an Individual).

²³⁶ Senate, Standing Committee on Human Rights, [Evidence](#), 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 9 June 2014 (Jessie Thomson, Director, Humanitarian Assistance, CARE Canada); [Evidence](#), 26 May 2014 (Norton); Senate, Standing Committee on Human Rights, [Evidence](#), 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 5 February 2015 (James Milner, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Carleton University, As an individual).

²³⁷ Senate, Standing Committee on Human Rights, [Evidence](#), 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 23 April 2015 (Maggie Black, UNICEF Historian, As an Individual).

²³⁸ [Evidence](#), 26 May 2014 (Norton).

²³⁹ United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], [1946–2006: Sixty Years for Children](#), 2006, pp. 4–5.

²⁴⁰ Senate, Standing Committee on Human Rights, [Evidence](#), 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 2 June 2014 (Dr. Yasmin Ali Haque, Deputy Director, Office of Emergency Programmes, UNICEF Headquarters).

The 1950s and 1960s saw a shift in emphasis within the organization to longer-term programs in public health, education and development more generally to address the needs of children, alongside the earlier post-conflict emergency assistance. In the 1970s and 1980s, UNICEF continued to expand programming areas to include family planning, informal education and specific programs benefitting women and girls, urban children and vulnerable children such as child labourers and child soldiers.²⁴¹ UNICEF is now both a humanitarian aid and development organization (in contrast, UNHCR is a purely humanitarian organization).²⁴² In the 1990s, the organization shifted its focus from a needs-based to a rights-based approach, after the adoption of the UN *Convention on the Rights of the Child*.²⁴³

C. UNHCR and UNICEF: Responsibilities within the Cluster and Sector Approaches

Though UNHCR and UNICEF have complementary goals regarding displaced children, they have different roles in assisting this group depending on the situation. As the UN's refugee agency, UNHCR leads overall relief efforts in refugee crises (i.e. when displaced persons have crossed a national border) and utilizes a "sector approach." On the other hand, when relief efforts are needed within a country in a conflict situation, such as is the case within Syria, leadership and coordination is determined by the "cluster approach." While UNHCR is not responsible for coordinating the cluster approach as a whole, it leads certain clusters. UNICEF leads a number of sectors or clusters, depending on the context. In essence, the cluster and sector approaches are used to identify needs, responsibilities and capacity and have been created to improve coordination between humanitarian organizations. Each "cluster" or "sector" relates to an area of need such as shelter or protection.

UNICEF and UNHCR are involved in many different sectors to varying levels, sometimes as lead organizations and others simply as a participating organization. Below are the sectors for which they are lead organizations.

1. UNHCR's Responsibilities

- **Within Syria:**
 - Protection and community services;
 - Camp coordination and camp management; and
 - Non-food items/shelter.²⁴⁴
- **In refugee-hosting countries neighbouring Syria:**
 - UNHCR is responsible for overall coordination of the refugee response;²⁴⁵
 - UNHCR assists host countries with refugee registration;
 - UNHCR acts as lead of various sectors (varying somewhat by country).²⁴⁶

²⁴¹ UNICEF, [UNICEF Milestones](#), 2004.

²⁴² *Evidence*, 2 June 2014 (Haque).

²⁴³ UNICEF, [UNICEF Milestones](#), 2004.

²⁴⁴ UNHCR, *Information Update on the Syria Crisis*, 7 May 2015, Ottawa [UNHCR Information Update] (written submission).

²⁴⁵ [Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan 2015-2016: In Response to the Syria Crisis](#), December 2014.

²⁴⁶ UNHCR Information Update; UNHCR, *2014 Year in Review UNHCR Jordan* (written submission).

2. UNICEF's Responsibilities

- UNICEF is focused on children in need regardless of where they are. It plays a similar role in both the sector and cluster approaches.
- UNICEF leads the response in certain sectors or clusters, with some variation depending on the country of operations.
- UNICEF is involved in providing:
 - providing health services;
 - education;
 - child protection;
 - water/sanitation/hygiene; and
 - nutrition.

DISPLACED SYRIAN CHILDREN AND THE UNHCR AND UNICEF RESPONSE

This section briefly outlines the situation for displaced Syrian children, both within and outside Syria, and describes the most significant challenges they face. Where possible, UNHCR and UNICEF's response to the children's needs are outlined, though the Committee did not receive as much testimony about the initiatives that are being implemented as it did concerning the difficult situations in which children are living.

A. The Effects of the Conflict on Children

This section outlines the challenges experienced by children and their families as a consequence of the negative coping mechanism employed by parents due to the war.

1. Unaccompanied Minors

The Committee was told that one of UNHCR's primary concerns is unaccompanied children and those separated from their parents, as they are the most vulnerable. Thousands of children fall into this category, with over 8,000 arriving at Syria's borders without their parents in 2014.²⁴⁷ It is particularly important that these children be registered to ensure that they receive targeted assistance.²⁴⁸ UNHCR makes efforts to ensure that parents know where to report missing children and uses a family tracing and reunification system to reunify children with their parents or, where that is not possible, members of their extended family with UNICEF and other organizations also involved in reunification efforts.²⁴⁹

2. Access to Healthcare

The Syrian health system has been severely affected by the conflict: "An estimated 5.7 million children do not have access to appropriate health services as only 43 % of hospitals in Syria are fully functional."²⁵⁰ Syria is no longer able to provide the same standard of care it once did. As one witness stated, "Today children are dying not just from bullets but from a lack of basic medical

²⁴⁷ Evidence, 26 May 2014 (Norton).

²⁴⁸ Evidence, 2 June 2014 (De Angelis).

²⁴⁹ Evidence, 26 May 2014 (Norton); Evidence, 2 June 2014 (Haque).

²⁵⁰ UNICEF response.

care.”²⁵¹ As part of the healthcare response, UNICEF is providing human resources, equipment and medicines to support primary health centres and mobile clinics in the country and supporting polio vaccination campaigns. Likewise, in neighbouring countries, UNICEF is addressing Syrian refugee health needs by strengthening the capacity of national health systems in those countries, including strengthening measles and polio vaccination programs.²⁵² UNHCR is also providing assistance in the health sector, including donating ambulances and mobile clinics.²⁵³

3. Child Labour

Child labour is a significant problem both within Syria and for Syrian child refugees. UNHCR informed the Committee that “child labour is directly linked to the basic survival of refugee families.”²⁵⁴ UNICEF estimated in 2014 that one in ten refugee children from Syria in the surrounding region were working.²⁵⁵ As one witness noted, UNHCR recognizes that many families rely on the income of a child as they provide financial assistance for urgent and basic needs such as medical expenses and rent.²⁵⁶

4. Recruitment into Armed Groups

Another of UNHCR’s primary concerns is the recruitment of children into the conflict.²⁵⁷ While refugee children also face this risk, children living within Syria and those who are unaccompanied or separated are especially susceptible. Though many are forced to join, some adolescent boys are joining voluntarily. The Committee was told that, in situations where children are being recruited into armed groups, UNICEF and its partners document the grave violations of children’s rights that are occurring and negotiate with the parties to the conflict to “come up with action plans on how to stop these violations and how to release children who have been forced into recruitment by armed groups.”²⁵⁸

5. Risks Particularly Affecting Girls and the Need for Gender Differentiated Responses

In an effort to protect young males from recruitment within Syria, families are restricting their movements. Consequently, adolescent girls are fulfilling tasks traditionally performed by young males, which places “them at heightened risk and exposes adolescent girls to a greater degree.”²⁵⁹ Throughout the region, girls are at greater risk of sexual exploitation, sexual abuse and

²⁵¹ Senate, Standing Committee on Human Rights, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 9 June 2014 (Cristy McLennan, Senior Adviser, Humanitarian and Emergency Response, Save the Children Canada).

²⁵² UNICEF, *Humanitarian Action for Children- Syrian refugees and other affected populations in Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon and Turkey*, 2015 (written submission).

²⁵³ UNHCR, *Information Update on the Syria Crisis*, 7 May 2015, Ottawa [UNHCR Information Update] (written submission).

²⁵⁴ *Evidence*, 2 June 2014 (De Angelis).

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁷ *Evidence*, 26 May 2014 (Norton).

²⁵⁸ Senate, Standing Committee on Human Rights, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 7 May 2015 (Dr. Yasmin Ali Haque, Deputy Director, Office of Emergency Programmes, UNICEF Headquarters).

²⁵⁹ Senate, Standing Committee on Human Rights, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 30 October 2014 (Matt Streng, Senior Youth Development Advisor, Mercy Corps).

early marriage. They are more likely to face physical and social isolation.²⁶⁰ Child marriage has also increased, from one in five girls under eighteen being married prior to the conflict to three in five.²⁶¹

To address these issues, the humanitarian aid community has been working to recognize the differentiated needs of men and women, as well as boys and girls, in programming. UNHCR, for instance, has piloted a program of age, gender and diversity mainstreaming, which “has tried to ensure that all aspects of UNHCR's work have gender-sensitive protection, such that it’s not the responsibility of one or two colleagues in the field to respond to the particular needs of women or gender issues but rather the responsibility of all staff.”²⁶²

6. Education System

The number of out-of-school children and youth generated by the Syrian conflict is alarming. UNHCR estimates that 600,000 refugee children are not attending classes.²⁶³

- **Within Syria:**
 - “[S]chool attendance has dropped more than 50 per cent.”²⁶⁴
 - 2 million children inside Syria are unable to receive an education.²⁶⁵
 - Twenty-five per cent of schools in Syria have been damaged, destroyed or are being used as shelters.²⁶⁶
 - Schools and teachers are being deliberately targeted.²⁶⁷
- **Surrounding region**
 - “80 per cent of Syrian refugee children in Lebanon and 56 per cent in Jordan were not in school” in 2014.²⁶⁸
 - Reasons refugee children are not attending school:
 - Overwhelmed infrastructure given the large number of refugees;
 - Financial barriers
 - Difficulty catching up with their peers after missing years of school;
 - Negative perceptions of the education system; and
 - Abuse, humiliation and safety concerns.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ *Evidence*, 7 May 2015 (Haque)

²⁶² *Evidence*, 5 February 2015 (Milner).

²⁶³ Senate, Standing Committee on Human Rights, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 5 February 2015 (Stephen Cornish, Executive Director, Doctors Without Borders Canada).

²⁶⁴ UNICEF response.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ *Evidence*, 2 June 2014 (Haque).

²⁶⁸ *Evidence*, 2 June 2014 (De Angelis).

B. The No Lost Generation Initiative

The humanitarian aid sector is worried that an opportunity to educate an entire generation of children, whose lives are “being shaped by violence, displacement and a persistent lack of opportunities,”²⁶⁹ will be lost. Launched in 2013 by UNICEF, UNHCR and other partners, the ‘No Lost Generation’ (NLG) initiative aims to address this issue by taking into account the close links between child education and protection. The general idea is that “if a child is in school and has access to education, quite often, at least we hope, that also means that they’re in a protective environment. They have a right to be in a protective environment when they are in school”.²⁷⁰

The NLG initiative utilizes education to bring together four important elements: learning, health care, psychosocial and protection.²⁷¹ The campaign is seeking almost \$1 billion.²⁷² The one-year review found that more than 1 million children received educational support, with 1.5 million receiving school supplies, more than 600,000 children receiving psychosocial support and over 60,000 “adolescents reached with increased opportunities including vocational/life skills training.”²⁷³

C. How Canada is Contributing to Relief Efforts

As of May 2015, Canada is not only the sixth largest single-country donor to the humanitarian response in Syria,²⁷⁴ but an important partner for UNHCR and UNICEF as well.

1. Donor

- Canada has allocated \$503.5 million to help meet humanitarian needs related to the Syrian crisis, of which \$150 million was announced in 2015.²⁷⁵
- Canada gave UNHCR \$67.9 million and UNICEF \$88.7 million between 2012 and 2015.²⁷⁶
- Canada has contributed \$111.9 million of to support projects under the No Lost Generation initiative.²⁷⁷

2. Partner

- Canada is a Vice-Chairperson of UNHCR’s Executive Committee and an Executive Board Member for UNICEF.
- Canada had committed to resettling 11,300 refugees from Syria by the end of 2017.²⁷⁸

²⁶⁹ *Evidence*, 26 May 2014 (Norton).

²⁷⁰ *Evidence*, 9 June 2014 (McLennan).

²⁷¹ *Evidence*, 26 May 2014 (Norton).

²⁷² *Ibid.*

²⁷³ UNICEF, *No Lost Generation Initiative: Protecting the Futures of Children Affected by the Syria Crisis, One year Report*, September 2014 [No Lost Generation] (written submission).

²⁷⁴ Untitled written submission from DFATD, 14 May 2015 [DFATD submission] (written submission).

²⁷⁵ DFATD submission.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁸ Senate, Standing Committee on Human Rights, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 26 May 2014 (Sarita Bhatla, Director General, Refugee Affairs, Citizenship and Immigration Canada); Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, *Helping to Protect the World’s Most Vulnerable*, Press Release, 7 January 2015.

TRENDS AND CHALLENGES FOR THE HUMANITARIAN SECTOR

The main reoccurring trends and challenges for humanitarian actors, including UNHCR and UNICEF, raised during the testimony are outlined below.

A. Inadequate Humanitarian Access

Humanitarian access to populations in need within Syria has been a major obstacle in providing humanitarian assistance in that country. Rob Young, Senior Delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross, explained to the Committee that, though there have been successes in reaching opposition areas, respect for international humanitarian law has often been lacking in Syria. Moreover, Martin Barber, Honorary Fellow at the University of Edinburgh and Former Director of the United Nations Mine Action Service, told the Committee that President Assad has been “arbitrarily denying consent” to UN agencies to provide impartial assistance to all parts of the country.²⁷⁹

B. Move Away from Refugee Camps

An increasing number of refugees (both Syrian refugees and those fleeing other conflicts) are living in urban centres and informal settlements as opposed to refugee camps. This creates added challenges for the humanitarian sector since refugees outside camps may seek to keep a low profile and are much harder to find and assist.²⁸⁰ Despite the sensitivity of the issue of urban refugees for host governments due to impacts on labour markets and cost of living, the humanitarian sector is adapting to this changing reality creatively, for example, using new technologies to reach refugees such as SMS and social media.

C. Meeting the Needs of Host Communities

As refugees are increasingly intermingling with local populations, the needs of host communities are receiving more attention from the humanitarian sector to avoid conflict between the two groups. As Jeff Crisp, Senior Director for Policy and Advocacy with Refugees International, explained:

If you only focus your assistance on refugees and ignore the host community, then there's an obvious potential for tension and even conflict between the two groups. This has been predicted widely by many commentators in Lebanon. So far, we are pleased to say it hasn't really happened, but there is always a risk. If you don't pay attention to the host community, then the risk of tension and conflict with the refugee population will certainly tend to increase...²⁸¹

Jessie Thomson, Director, Humanitarian Assistance at CARE Canada, told the Committee that, in the Syrian context, there has been a real recognition of the importance of assisting host communities, and particularly the most vulnerable members of those communities, while also meeting the needs of the refugees.²⁸² In Jordan, for example, the government requires some assistance to impoverished Jordanians, along with the refugees.²⁸³

²⁷⁹ Senate, Standing Committee on Human Rights, [Evidence](#), 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 23 April 2015 (Martin Barber, Honorary Fellow, University of Edinburgh and Former Director, United Nations Mine Action Service, As an Individual).

²⁸⁰ [Evidence](#), 9 June 2014 (Thomson).

²⁸¹ Senate, Standing Committee on Human Rights, [Evidence](#), 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 30 October 2014 (Jeff Crisp, Senior Director for Policy and Advocacy, Refugees International).

²⁸² [Evidence](#), 9 June 2014 (Thomson).

²⁸³ [Evidence](#), 30 October 2014 (Crisp).

D. Ensuring a Smooth Transition from Humanitarian to Development Assistance

As assistance to host populations and refugees has become more integrated, the same can be said with respect to humanitarian and development assistance. It is only recently that humanitarian actors have integrated development considerations from early in the response to a humanitarian crisis.²⁸⁴ The Syrian example, in particular, was seen to be innovative because UNHCR foresaw that it would be a protracted refugee situation and involved development actors such as UNDP and the international financial institutions from very early on.²⁸⁵ Development actors can also assist the short-term humanitarian response, particularly where they have a dual mandate like UNICEF or CARE Canada for both humanitarian and development work. These organizations benefit from their existing development presence in a country, allowing them to respond more quickly to a humanitarian crisis.²⁸⁶

E. Educating the Next Generation

On a more individual level, education and training is one of the key means to improve the situation of displaced children. However, it is one of the areas of humanitarian assistance that receives the least funding.²⁸⁷ A number of witnesses recognized the need for education beyond the primary school level to allow children to become fully participating members of their society and to survive and thrive.²⁸⁸ However, as Dr. Yasmine Ali Haque, Deputy Director of the Office of Emergency Programmes at UNICEF Headquarters, told the Committee, globally, there has been far more success at improving primary school completion rates than higher levels. The Committee was told that youth in particular are falling through the cracks, with those over 18 not receiving targeted services.²⁸⁹

F. Need for Cooperation and Coordination

The importance of cooperation and coordination for effective aid was highlighted by many witnesses, as was the reliance NGOs and IRCRCM place on the coordinating role of the UN. Cooperation and coordination are necessary at various levels, between UN agencies but also with international and national NGOs, IRCRCM and various levels of donor and directly-affected governments. The Committee was told that improvements in cooperation were motivated in part by the inability to adequately address the needs of the growing number of IDPs, a group for whom there is no specialized UN lead agency, particularly in the case of Darfur. The huge scale of recent emergencies, and growing donor expectations for efficient use of funds and greater scrutiny of aid programs were also factors.²⁹⁰ The Committee heard that major efforts at improving coordination between UN agencies and partners have been made in recent years.²⁹¹ A number of witnesses did

²⁸⁴ *Evidence*, 9 June 2014 (McLennan).

²⁸⁵ *Evidence*, 9 June 2014 (Thomson).

²⁸⁶ *Evidence*, 9 June 2014 (McLennan); *Evidence*, 23 April 2015 (Black).

²⁸⁷ Senate, Standing Committee on Human Rights, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 5 February 2015 (Emma Bonar, Youth Programme Manager, Norwegian Refugee Council).

²⁸⁸ *Ibid*; Senate, Standing Committee on Human Rights, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 5 February 2015 (François Audet, Professor, Department of Management and Technology, University of Quebec at Montreal, As an individual).

²⁸⁹ *Evidence*, 5 February 2015 (Bonar).

²⁹⁰ *Evidence*, 2 June 2014 (De Angelis); *Evidence*, 9 June 2014 (Thomson).

²⁹¹ Regarding turf wars, see for example, *Evidence*, 19 February 2015 (McBride).

mention the downside of improved coordination, as it can have an impact on humanitarian principles such as impartiality.

G. Effective and Sustainable Funding Mechanisms

Given the many ongoing refugee situations and conflicts, global contributions have not been enough to meet the humanitarian needs that exist. Efforts to diversify the donor base are being made, including private sector and non-traditional donors such as the Gulf States. Dr. Haque told the Committee that there has been some success with non-traditional donors.²⁹² The Committee heard that, besides increasing the total amount of money available, there are changes to funding practices that could have a big impact in meeting the needs of individuals displaced by conflict, including children. Dr. Haque and others said that there is a need for funding with fewer conditions.²⁹³

Several witnesses also criticized the practice of earmarking as money cannot be moved to a higher level priority.²⁹⁴ For example, money that is earmarked for water and sanitation cannot simply be moved into food where that need might be greater. Witnesses also told the Committee of a need for longer term funding to ensure continuity of service and permit longer-term planning.²⁹⁵

H. Need for Political Solutions

Though increased funding would permit UNHCR, UNICEF and partners to provide more humanitarian assistance, it will not resolve the conflicts that result in large numbers of displaced persons in many parts of the world. A number of witnesses expressed frustration that political efforts to resolve conflicts are not more successful.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1:

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada continue its international advocacy efforts with respect to the needs of children affected by conflict and actively support efforts to negotiate humanitarian access in Syria for UNHCR, UNICEF and other actors through diplomatic discussions with relevant governments at the UN, bilaterally and in other forums.

Recommendation 2:

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada support initiatives that facilitate UNHCR and UNICEF's ability to specifically address and enable measures of response to youths' unique needs in situations of displacement due to conflict, including through the provision of psychosocial support, education and skills-building programs adapted to their particular needs.

Recommendation 3:

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada continue to promote and support programming for youth displaced by conflict, including educational and skills development programs, in all appropriate forums but particularly through Canada's role as a Vice-Chairperson of the Executive Committee of UNHCR and as member of the Executive Board of UNICEF.

²⁹² *Evidence*, 2 June 2014 (Haque).

²⁹³ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*; *Evidence*, 19 February 2015 (McBride).

²⁹⁵ *Evidence*, 2 June 2014 (Haque); *Evidence*, 9 June 2014 (McLennan).

Recommendation 4:

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada continue to work with UNICEF and UNHCR towards greater recognition and promotion of appropriate alternative educational programs, such as programs for students that have missed school to catch up with their age-grade peers and online learning programs. That programs facilitating a continuum of education at all levels (primary, secondary and post-secondary, including the trades and apprenticeships) be strongly promoted.

Recommendation 5:

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada continue to support the No Lost Generation initiative, consider increasing its commitment to that initiative, work in concert with other funders committed to its objectives and encourage UNHCR and UNICEF to share best practices and success stories from that initiative.

Recommendation 6:

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada take a leadership role in working in conjunction with other donor countries to identify new areas for innovation in responding to the needs of children displaced by conflict, and share the results with UNHCR, UNICEF and other humanitarian actors at the upcoming World Humanitarian Summit and in other venues.

Recommendation 7:

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada work with partners, including UNHCR and UNICEF, to improve cooperation and coordination between humanitarian actors to ensure that the categorization of individuals is not a barrier to the provision of assistance based on need.

Recommendation 8:

Given the importance of coordination in ensuring that humanitarian assistance is provided based on need, the Committee recommends that the Government of Canada, through its role as a donor, as a Vice-Chairperson of the Executive Committee of UNHCR and a member of the Executive Board of UNICEF, encourage initiatives aimed at improving the coordination aspect of UNHCR and UNICEF's responsibilities.

Recommendation 9:

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada work in concert with other countries to provide funds to help reduce the deficiency in meeting UNHCR and UNICEF funding requirements in Syrian relief.

APPENDIX B: SOURCES OF UNHCR AND UNICEF'S MANDATES

UNHCR

- [*Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*](#)
- [*1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*](#)
- [*1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*](#)
- [*1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness*](#)
- Various UN General Assembly and Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Resolutions (for example, regarding UNHCR's role in assisting IDPs, see UN General Assembly Resolution 48/116, 20 December 1993 at para. 12).
- [Executive Committee](#) conclusions and decisions

UNICEF

- [United Nations Resolutions establishing and guiding UNICEF](#) (1946-1948)
- Various other UN General Assembly and ECOSOC Resolutions
- [Executive Board](#) documents and decisions

APPENDIX C – WITNESSES

Monday, May 26, 2014

Citizenship and Immigration Canada:

Sarita Bhatla, Director General, Refugee Affairs.

Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada:

Leslie E. Norton, Director General, International Humanitarian Assistance;

Dave Metcalfe, Director General, Development Europe and Middle-East;

Mark Gwozdecky, Director General, Development, Trade and Diplomacy Middle East.

Monday, June 9, 2014

Save the Children Canada:

Cristy McLennan, Senior Adviser, Humanitarian and Emergency Response (by video conference).

As an individual:

Andrew J. Tabler, Senior Fellow, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy (by video conference).

CARE Canada:

Jessie Thomson, Director, Humanitarian Assistance.

Thursday, October 30, 2014

Refugees International:

Jeff Crisp, Senior Director for Policy and Advocacy (by video conference).

Mercy Corps:

Matt Streng, Senior Youth Development Advisor (by video conference).

Thursday, February 5, 2015

Doctors Without Borders Canada:

Stephen Cornish, Executive Director.

Canadian Red Cross:

Hossam Elsharkawi, Director, Emergencies and Recovery, International Operations.

International Committee of the Red Cross:

Rob Young, Senior Delegate.

Norwegian Refugee Council:

Emma Bonar, Youth Programme Manager (by video conference).

As individuals:

James Milner, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Carleton University;

François Audet, Professor, Department of Management and Technology, University of Quebec at Montreal.

Thursday, February 19, 2015

As individuals:

Joel E. Oestreich, Associate Professor, Political Science and Director, International Area Studies Program, Drexel University (by video conference);

Mike McBride, Professor of political science, Whittier College, California (by video conference).

Thursday, April 23, 2015

As individuals:

Maggie Black, UNICEF Historian (by video conference);

Martin Barber, Honorary Fellow, University of Edinburgh and Former Director, United Nations Mine Action Service (by video conference).

Islamic Relief Canada:

Zaid Al-Rawni, CEO.

Thursday, May 7, 2015

UNICEF Headquarters:

Dr. Yasmin Ali Haque, Deputy Director, Office of Emergency Programmes (by video conference).

Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada:

Mark Gwozdecky, Director General, Middle East and Maghreb;

Leslie E. Norton, Director General, International Humanitarian Assistance.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees:

Furio De Angelis, Representative in Canada.