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Summary of midterm reviews of country programmes

Middle East and North Africa region

Summary

This regional summary of the midterm reviews of the country programmes for Iraq and Lebanon was prepared in response to Executive Board decision 1995/8. The Executive Board is invited to comment on the report and provide guidance to the secretariat.

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Introduction

1. Two countries conducted midterm reviews (MTRs) in the Middle East and North Africa region in 2012: Iraq and Lebanon. The MTRs in both countries took place at a time of ongoing social and political reforms and violence in the region. The Syrian crisis has significantly affected both countries, with Iraq hosting 110,000 Syrian refugees and Lebanon hosting the largest number of Syrian refugees in the region — 359,000 as of March 2013. At the same time, Iraq continues to be home to about 1.2 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), while Lebanon continues to host large numbers of Palestinian refugees in and out of camps. Both countries are middle-income countries with significant disparities, which are further impacted by the displacement and influx of refugees.

2. Overall, both programmes have recorded progress on achieving results for children, as evidenced by the MTR reports and meetings with partners at all levels during the MTR. Both countries have achieved important results in generating new knowledge and data on children, and are working with Government authorities to use this for more inclusive programming and policymaking. New national policies and strategies have been developed and adopted, for example, in Iraq, on education, and in Lebanon, on youth. Humanitarian action efforts have reached thousands of Syrian refugees and other vulnerable populations in both countries.

3. In Iraq, after years of civil unrest and sanctions, political structures continue to evolve, with institutions striving to offer adequate services to the Iraqi population. However, the prolonged years of political upheaval, armed conflict and extreme violence and the deterioration of public services have affected every aspect of life, especially for the most vulnerable members of society, including children and women. While the security situation has improved since the mid-2000s, these challenges are likely to make the path towards recovery and development in the years ahead turbulent. However, improvements in the economic situation and the new National Development Plan for 2013-2017 provide grounds for some optimism about the country's future trajectory and its commitment to equitable development.

4. In Lebanon, the period since the start of the current country programme was marked by regional unrest, internal political instability and the onset of the Syrian refugee crisis. These factors significantly impacted the overall socio-economic situation in Lebanon and the implementation of key planned government reforms in areas such as social welfare and education. The programme had to rapidly put in place service delivery interventions to respond to the emerging needs of displaced Syrian and Palestinian refugees through support to government line ministries and other local stakeholders. This is especially critical given that the majority of Syrian refugees are settling in historically disadvantaged areas of Lebanon, where local social sector services were already overstretched and straining to meet the needs of vulnerable Lebanese.

Midterm reviews

Iraq

Introduction

5. The midterm review of the country programme (2011-2014), which began in mid-2012, was a participatory process that included reviews with staff, an overall programme assessment conducted by an external consultant and formal and informal exchanges with the Government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), members of the United Nations country team and the UNICEF regional office. Meetings with about 110 representatives of different government ministries and other public institutions assessed progress towards results and discussed priorities and required adjustments. The MTR recommendations and findings were endorsed by the Government of Iraq in a Plenary Meeting on 13 February 2013, held under the auspices of the Minister of Planning and facilitated by the Deputy Minister of Planning and Head of the Central Organization for Statistics.

6. The comprehensive process drew on new sources of data on the situation of children and women, most notably the fourth Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS4), carried out from 2009 to 2011. All discussions focused on how UNICEF could work with the Government to more effectively implement the equity approach to deliver greater results to the most deprived children of Iraq.

Update of the situation of children and women

7. After 30 years of conflict and sanctions, the political structures of Iraq continue to evolve, with newly established institutions striving to offer adequate services to the population. However, the prolonged years of political upheaval, armed conflict and extreme violence, and the deterioration of public services have affected every aspect of life in Iraq, especially for the most vulnerable segments of society, particularly children and women.

8. Episodes of violence continue in some parts of the country, with tensions still high between various sectarian and ethnic groups. Similarly, the rate of progress being made by the Government in improving the access to and quality of services and providing opportunities for improved living conditions is not meeting the expectations of the population, as evidenced by protests in some parts of the country. These challenges are likely to make the path towards recovery and development turbulent in the years ahead.

9. In 2012, a multiple deprivation analysis of the MICS4 findings, undertaken by the Government and UNICEF, revealed that 5.3 million children (32 per cent of all children under the age of 18 years) are deprived of multiple basic services and rights, and only 1.7 million children have access to all basic services and rights, confirming that children across Iraq face massive inequities. In addition, more than 1.1 million IDPs continue to live in nearly 400 informal settlements across the country at the same time that increasing numbers of Syrians are seeking refuge in Iraq (some 110,000 as of 10 March 2013).

10. While Iraq is making progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goal targets, if the majority of the Goals are to be achieved by 2015, efforts must be scaled up, with particular focus on providing services to the 5.3 million highly deprived children.

11. Regarding Goal 1, progress is stalled: a total of 23 per cent of Iraqis live on less than \$2.2 per day; some 6 per cent of the population is food insecure; one in four children is experiencing stunted growth due to undernutrition; and 11 per cent of the overall population is unemployed, with a rate of 18 per cent for young people aged 15-24 years.

12. Regarding Goal 2, the net primary school attendance rate increased from 85 per cent to 90 per cent. Gender parity (Goal 3) also increased, with the ratio between the enrolment rate of girls and of boys rising from 0.88 to 0.94 in primary school and from 0.75 to 0.85 in secondary school (2006-2011¹). The net primary school completion rate, however, has stalled at 44 per cent, the same as in 2006, with no change in gender parity. Access to early childhood education also remains extremely limited; it is provided only through kindergartens, and the children who are enrolled are primarily from the two wealthiest quintiles in urban areas. Early childhood learning services are virtually unavailable in rural areas.

13. Regarding Goal 4, the under-five mortality rate decreased from 41 to 37 deaths per 1,000 live births between 2006 and 2011. The infant mortality rate decreased from 35 to 32 deaths per 1,000 live births (36 for males, 30 for females) during the same period. The neonatal mortality rate (which accounts for the majority of deaths among children under 5 years of age) has also decreased, but at a slightly slower pace than the under-five mortality rate (from 22 to 20 deaths per 1,000 live births from 2006 to 2011). There has been improvement for Goal 5, however, with the Government and the World Health Organization (WHO) estimating the 2011 maternal mortality ratio to be at 69 deaths per 100,000 live births; a significant reduction from the 2007 rate of 84 per 100,000 live births.

14. There was significant improvement towards Goal 5, with 91 per cent of the population having access to improved drinking water sources in 2011 (urban: 98 per cent/rural: 77 per cent), compared to 77 per cent in 2006. However, there are frequent interruptions of water supply services and water quality is compromised, with many households using water with insufficient levels of chlorine (less than 0.5 ppm).

15. In the area of child protection,² close to 10 million children experience some form of violent discipline (79 per cent in 2011 compared to 83.7 per cent in 2006) with one third of children (3.3 million) suffering from severe physical punishment. Tolerance of domestic violence is pervasive among women, a majority of whom (56 per cent) believe that a husband is justified in beating his wife for various reasons. In 2011, only 6 per cent of children 5-14 years old were involved in child labour (rural: 10 per cent/ urban: 5 per cent), compared to 11 per cent in 2006. Child marriage remains widespread, affecting one of five young women aged 15-19 years, the same as in 2006. Female genital mutilation/cutting affects 8 per cent of women in Iraq, the majority of them in the Kurdistan region and Kirkuk.

16. Iraq has received approximately 110,000 Syrian refugees (as of March 2013) and 67,067 Iraqi returnees (as of January 2013) from the Syrian Arab Republic. Some of the returnees are registered through the Ministry of Displacement and Migration and receive government support, while others stay with friends or relatives. The majority of Syrian refugees have been registered in the northern

¹ For most Millennium Development Goals data quoted, the latest data available is from 2011.

² Data 2006 (MICS 3) and 2011 (MICS 4).

Kurdistan Region where the border is open to receive a predominantly Syrian Kurdish refugee population.

Progress and key results at midterm

17. The country's first-ever National Nutrition Strategy was completed in 2012 by the Ministry of Health, with support from UNICEF, the World Food Programme (WFP) and WHO. The strategy is important because it provides a vision to improve the overall nutrition status of Iraqis, including by reducing the prevalence of children stunted from undernutrition, from 21 per cent to 10 per cent by 2021. The strategy particularly targets children at risk of stunting in the most deprived areas. This is a major contribution to the programme component result (PCR) of the proposed country programme on the Government having a policy framework for delivery of basic social services and to the PCR on enabling more children and women to have access to quality primary health care.

18. A significant result of the Quality Learning and Development programme was the completion in 2012 of the first-ever National Education Strategy of Iraq by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, with support from UNICEF, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Bank. Contributing to PCR 3, on more children accessing and completing a quality education, the strategy focuses on the provision of high-quality education based on global best practices, including implementing school-based management involving the decentralization of levels of decision-making authority to the school level, and on having high-quality curricula, institutions and resources for the transition to higher education. An education sector functional review, costing study, service delivery model and road map have also been developed and accepted by the Government as part of the public sector reform programme. About 116,000 children have benefited from the Accelerated Learning Programme to catch up on missed years of primary education. A child-friendly schools initiative is being rolled out in 636 schools across the country and will be scaled up by the Government in the second half of the country programme cycle.

19. Contributing to the PCR on improving access to safe water and sanitation, UNICEF supported the Government to develop and adopt policy papers, plans and agreements to improve environmental sustainability across Iraq. These included the development of solid-waste master plans in the governorates of Anbar, Erbil, Suleimaniyah and Thi Qar (about 15 per cent of household members in Thi Qar do not have access to improved sanitation facilities); a water and sanitation master plan for the Missan governorate; the selection of three landfill sites for hazardous waste according to international standards; two memorandums of understanding with the governorates of Babel and Salahaddin to improve the management of waste water (at 20 per cent, Salahaddin has the highest rate of household members not using improved water sources); and guidelines for reverse-osmosis operations.

20. A water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) sector functional review, costing study, service delivery model and road map have likewise been developed with UNICEF support and accepted by the Government as part of the sector reform programme. This will ultimately lead to new legislation for the water and sanitation sectors in Iraq that will reflect the specific needs of children.

21. About 1.2 million vulnerable, rural and emergency-affected people have benefited from sustainable access to safe water, including via new technologies such

as solar water treatment units in rural communities. Some 200,000 school children (40 per cent girls) have also benefited from WASH interventions in primary schools, including rehabilitation and upgrading of facilities and training.

22. Under the PCR on improving access to quality primary health care, a strategy for reproductive health and maternal and child care has been finalized, as has a plan to introduce two new vaccines (rotavirus and *Haemophilus influenzae* type B) into the immunization schedule. This will contribute to combating the major killers of children under 5 in Iraq: diarrhoea and acute respiratory infections. The quality of nationwide primary health care services has been improved through UNICEF support for the Government's procurement of high-quality medical supplies and equipment from the UNICEF Supply Division facilities in Copenhagen.

23. Under the PCR on improving national capacity to implement policies and plans on child protection, an action plan to develop a national child protection policy has been approved by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Regional and federal Child Rights Laws have been drafted and refined by incorporating inputs from regional and national consultations with stakeholders, including children. Significant progress has been made in the sector of Rule of Law, as the federal Juvenile Care Council has been re-activated. This inter-ministerial council is chaired by the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs and is the highest body to address the issues related to children in contact with the law. A total of 443 children in contact with the law (31 girls and 412 boys) were provided with legal aid, and assistance for community reintegration was provided to 482 children and 11 parents.

24. Child protection risks related to Mine Risk Education are better known among stakeholders, especially in communities at risk due to the successful implementation of community-based mine risk education activities, which reached 5,916 people. The integration of mine risk education messages in the school curriculum in the Kurdistan Region has been a major achievement in ensuring that this knowledge is continuously shared. UNICEF strengthened and expanded the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) on grave child rights violations through training of more than 200 new MRM network members in the past two years (which adds to a total of 480 members trained on MRM since 2009). In 2012, 355 incidents were reported of which 143 were verified by the MRM network.

25. New data on the situation of children and related disparities in Iraq is now available following the completion of the MICS4. According to a child-centred methodology developed by UNICEF to identify the most deprived children, major disparities exist among the country's 16.6 million children in terms of access to health care and nutrition, education, water and sanitation, protection, shelter and information services. The survey found that 32 per cent of all children under the age of 18 years — 5.3 million — are deprived of many of these basic services and rights. The survey thus showed clearly where the Government should focus investments in the National Development Plan to improve the well-being of all Iraqi children. This result was a major contribution to the planned PCRs in the sectoral areas, as well as the result related to gender-sensitive and child-friendly research informing policy and programme development.

Resources used

26. During the first two years of the country programme action plan, from 2011 to 2012, the country programme spent more than \$54 million, of which \$4.5 million

was regular resources, \$42.8 million was other resources, and \$7.1 million was other resources-emergency. Half of that amount was planned. From the total amount of other resources-emergency, the largest portion was spent on the WASH programme (\$2.25 million) and the survival and growth programme (\$1.57 million). The WASH programme also utilized the largest amount of other resources (over \$15 million), followed by quality education (\$11.6 million). Under cross-sectoral costs, \$1.9 million was spent against a planned amount of \$900,000.

Constraints and opportunities affecting progress

27. The formal request by the Prime Minister's office that UNICEF support the Government in formulating and coordinating all social policy initiatives creates a unique opportunity to help to consolidate disparate social policy and protection efforts into an overarching child-focused national social policy framework. This takes on added significance in the light of the MICS4 findings that 5.3 million children are deprived of many basic services and rights. It is therefore imperative that the Government, with UNICEF support, steer the framework to target the most deprived segments of the population.

28. The overall resource mobilization environment in Iraq poses a serious challenge to the United Nations system. As a consequence of the global financial crisis and donor fatigue towards funding programmes in Iraq, which is classified as an upper-middle-income/oil-rich country that is expected to afford its own development funding, implementation of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) was impeded by lower-than-anticipated resource allocations to the Iraq UNDAF Fund.

29. Although the security situation in Iraq has gradually improved, the continuing volatile security environment in many parts of the country has kept the operational costs of working in Iraq very high. While the United Nations security posture is becoming more flexible, ever-present security considerations make accessing programme sites to ensure effective implementation and monitoring a challenge. This also represents a challenge for effective engagement at governorate levels. The security environment, combined with difficult living conditions for staff, raises a significant impediment to recruiting the human resources necessary to implement the programme. In spite of these challenges, UNICEF and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) opened a field office in Basra, which will serve as the hub for programme activities in the south.

30. MICS4 was the most important study completed so far in the country programme and was used heavily in the MTR process. Additional analytical inputs to the MTR conclusions included an overall programme assessment conducted by an external consultant and desk reviews of all major UNICEF programme documents.

Adjustments made

31. The MTR recommended the following adjustments to the country programme for 2011-2014 to enable UNICEF Iraq to most effectively capitalize on opportunities, mitigate constraints and respond to the needs of the most deprived children and women. These changes aim to bring a greater focus to the scope of programming while addressing equity across programme areas as a key strategy. In the context of a middle-income country and of increased government capacity in certain areas, the programme will shift towards more policy advisory work. The

revised social policy programme aims to make social protection in Iraq more child-sensitive. Concomitantly, this will also support the Government's vision of strengthening the quality of basic social services. In addition, the Government will be supported in enhancing the quality of sectoral policies and accompanying budgets. To assist IDPs and respond to needs of additional refugees, the country programme has added a new programme component, Humanitarian Action and Resilience-Building.

32. The main overall shifts agreed with the Government of Iraq are:

(a) Increase policy analysis to introduce child-sensitive social protection schemes and measures in the most deprived areas of Iraq. In this process innovative methodologies and approaches will be considered;

(b) Increase the field presence and programmatic focus on highly deprived governorates in the centre and southern provinces and selected areas in the North;

(c) Strengthen monitoring of results for equity by generating new equity-focused data, particularly at the provincial level;

(d) Develop and implement evidence-based communication strategies for changing behaviours of communities, families and children to improve the well-being of children;

(e) Undertake "citizenship education for peace" in highly deprived, conflict-affected governorates in order to promote dialogue, knowledge, skills and attitudes supportive of peaceful conflict resolution, and help to create the social conditions conducive to peace;

(f) Within the framework of the regional response to the Syrian crisis, increase the focus on humanitarian action by scaling up programme interventions that are consistent with the UNICEF Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action (CCCs), and participate in early recovery and durable solutions for displaced people;

(g) Strengthen cross-sectoral integration, synergies and better coordination among the programme components.

33. As a result of the MTR, the programme priorities going forward will be as outlined below.

34. **Child survival and development.** This component maintains its present focus, bringing together the health, nutrition and WASH subcomponents, and combining policy work and local-level interventions. Integration and geographic convergence are expected to improve equitable access to coverage of a set of proven, high-impact and cost-effective interventions, for example: immunization, breastfeeding, integrated management of childhood health, etc.

35. **Education and youth.** This component brings together elements that address education and youth, with a specific focus on gender inequality and disparities. The component aims to: (a) improve access, retention, completion and learning outcomes at the elementary level (ages 4-11 years); (b) address the learning and livelihoods needs of adolescents and youth at the secondary-school level, where girls (ages 12-14 years) are most likely not to attend secondary education; and (c) undertake advocacy to reduce inequity in education and build a system to implement an initiative for citizenship education for peace (ages 12-18 years). The

programme will contribute to engaging youth and adolescents to promote citizenship education, social cohesion and peaceful coexistence.

36. **Child protection.** This programme component focuses on policy and legislative reform, strengthening the State's capacity in monitoring and reporting child rights violations, including the grave violations in the context of armed conflict, and increasing access to justice for children. The partnership with the Child Welfare Commission, which is the inter-ministerial committee mandated to protect and promote the rights of Iraqi children, will focus on using child protection knowledge-management systems to inform the development of policies, legislation and service delivery. The Mine Risk Education programme, supported since 2003, will change direction to develop government capacity, especially of the Ministry of Environment, and to institutionalize Mine Risk Education instead of providing direct support to communities. Services to vulnerable and marginalized girls and boys will be reinforced, including to children living in the disputed areas and displaced, refugee and resettled children.

37. **Strategic communications.** Following the MTR, it has become clear that communications requires more attention, especially communication for development, which is now a key strategy for the remaining period of the country programme. This set of results will be based on four axes: (a) behaviour change communication; (b) social mobilization and interpersonal communication; (c) public communication and media relations; and (d) resource mobilization partnerships. It will focus on developing and implementing family practice communication strategies in priority areas for children and carry out robust public communications to increase support for reducing inequities in Iraq, as well as for the Syrian refugee emergency and other emergencies that may surface across the country.

38. **Policy, advocacy and evidence.** The social policy component will include a strong focus on social protection, including a detailed feasibility study and piloting of social protection interventions, and advocacy for the adoption of a child- and gender-sensitive national social protection programme. In the planning, monitoring and evaluation part of this component, the main strategies will include technical support for the use of results-based planning and management tools to develop national sectoral plans; support to micro-planning at decentralized levels for key equity-focused interventions in selected areas; increased availability of disaggregated data on the situation of children and women, with a focus on the most vulnerable and marginalize; and support to the Government to implement MICS5.

39. **Humanitarian action and resilience-building.** This component was added to the country programme following the MTR (previously, humanitarian action was not a discrete programme component), and will focus on preparing for and responding to humanitarian and emergency situations, particularly the subregional Syrian crisis. It will include provision of basic survival, development and protection services for children and women, in line with the CCCs, and strengthening of resilience-building to prevent and mitigate shocks in the future.

Lebanon

Introduction

40. UNICEF and the Government of Lebanon conducted the MTR of the country programme for 2010-2014 between June and December 2012. The MTR is particularly timely, given the changes in the overall operating context in the last three years, including the effects of the Syrian crisis. In view of these significant socio-economic and regional changes, the MTR highlighted the urgent need for increased focus on the most vulnerable children and women by providing institutional support to government partners and local service providers to provide quality social services.

41. The MTR process included sectoral reviews with government line ministries and other national stakeholders. It built on the MTR of the UNDAF 2010-2014, which concluded in June 2012, and a desk review and analytical report prepared by an external consultant, which provided an update on the situation of women and children and on progress made in government social sector reform.

42. The final outcomes of the MTR process were presented and discussed at a high-level meeting jointly organized by the President of the Council of Ministers and UNICEF on 19 February 2013. The meeting was attended by the Minister of Education and Higher Education and by senior representatives of many government line ministries. The high-level meeting formally endorsed the proposed adjustments to the country programme across all sectors, and in particular highlighted the need, through ongoing cooperation with government partners, to address the needs of all vulnerable children in Lebanon — in Syrian refugee communities and Lebanese host communities alike.

Update on the situation of children and women

43. The most recent (2010) Government progress report on the Millennium Development Goals³ indicated that at the macro level, Lebanon is on track to meet many key targets by 2015 (including milestones in achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality in education, reducing child mortality and improving maternal health). Indicators may demonstrate improvement in absolute terms, but progress is not uniform. In 2012, the Human Development Index ranked Lebanon 72 out of 186 countries, with an index value of 0.745. However, in the “inequality-adjusted HDI”, also published by the United Nations Development Programme, Lebanon fell to 0.575, a loss of 22 per cent.

44. Social services are not accessible equally nor are they of comparable quality throughout Lebanon. Within the education sector there is an uneven distribution of public and private schools across regions. Poorer regions such as Northern and Southern Lebanon governorates have the highest concentration of public schools. The Lebanon Millennium Development Goals report cites data from standardized testing results that show that the performance levels of public school students are 10 per cent lower than those of their counterparts in private schools. Inequities are also based on ethnicity. A 2011 UNICEF-supported study of the Dom community found that 68 per cent of school-aged children had never been to school, suggesting

³ Republic of Lebanon and the United Nations Development Programme, *Millennium Development Goals Lebanon: Interim Progress Report 2010*.

that this vulnerable group faces significant obstacles (legal/economic barriers, discrimination and/or cultural practices) to accessing education. A UNICEF-supported study in 2012 found that outside of main cities, the number of child protection service providers (government or non-governmental) is limited, particularly in North and Nabatieh areas of Lebanon and remote parts of Bekka valley.

45. The 2009 MICS confirmed that better outcomes for children depend on the place where they are born and raised; children from households in Akkar and Minieh Dannieyeh districts (North Lebanon) and some areas of the Bekka Valley are heavily deprived in terms of education, health, and other factors compared to their counterparts in the Beirut or Mount Lebanon region. Inequity in Lebanon also results from structural norms and political and legal systems that deprive children of the basic resources and opportunities to reach their full potential, as noted by the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Particularly vulnerable to social exclusion are refugee children (including Palestinian refugees⁴) and children from various ethnic groups, including migrant workers, Dom communities and non-Lebanese families.

46. The number of HIV/AIDS cases in Lebanon is relatively low, at 1,455 cases in 2011, according to the country progress report for 2012.⁵ Of these cases, 109 were new. However, adolescents and youth have limited understanding of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections (for example, 40 per cent of adolescents and youth who reported having intimate relations did not use a condom or other contraceptive method).⁶

47. The ongoing instability in the country is affecting the implementation of planned social sector reforms. The window of opportunity for social sector reform predicated on political stability and strong economic growth did not materialize. Since 2009, there have been three different Governments and two periods of interim administration, and the economy lost some of its momentum after four years of strong growth (real growth of gross domestic product fell to 1.5 per cent in 2011 from around 8 per cent in 2007-2010, and 2012 growth estimates were revised downward to 1.7 per cent).⁷ Despite the challenges, the Government made some achievements with regard to outlining and implementing reform strategies in education (National Education Sector Development Plan, 2010-2015), youth (National Youth Policy) and social welfare sectors (National Poverty Targeting Programme). However, other key reforms have not moved ahead as planned, for example, the comprehensive National Social Development Strategy outlined by the Ministry of Social Affairs in February 2011.

48. Lebanon has also made some progress against the 2006 concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, including the formal endorsement by the Council of Ministers of the National Strategy for Combating Violence against Children, in December 2012. Other key reforms highlighted by the

⁴ The current MTR process was specific to the Lebanon country programme and therefore does not include a review of the area programme for Palestinian children and women (2011-2013).

⁵ National AIDS Programme of Lebanon, *Country Progress Report — Lebanon (Narrative Report)* (2012).

⁶ Faculty of Health Sciences, La Sagesse University, *Knowledge, Attitudes, Behaviour, and Practices Survey (KABP) among Young People on Reproductive and Sexual Health, STI/HIV/AIDS, and related High Risk Behaviours* (Final draft report, November 2011).

⁷ International Monetary Fund, *Regional Economic Outlook Update* (April 2012).

Committee are still in draft form and waiting review/endorsement by the Government/legislature, including the national human rights action plan and institution, revisions to the child protection law and measures for the protection of women from violence. Importantly, a number of the Committee's central recommendations remain outstanding in such areas as amending personal status laws and incorporating the principle of non-discrimination and protection of all vulnerable children and women.

49. The ongoing conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic has had a direct and increasing impact on Lebanon. Lebanon is currently hosting the largest number of Syrian refugees in the region, more than 359,000 (registered/pending registration) as of 15 March 2013. The Government estimates that there are 1 million Syrians in Lebanon. More than half of all Syrian refugees registered by UNHCR are below the age of 18 years (51 per cent) and are female (also 51 per cent). In addition, more than 54,000 displaced Palestinian refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic have registered and sought assistance with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in Lebanon as of 20 May 2013.

50. According to UNHCR, the majority of displaced people are in the northern (35 per cent) and the Bekaa (34 per cent) governorates of Lebanon, adding to the economic pressure on these historically marginalized governorates. The impact of the Syrian crisis on these already vulnerable Lebanese host communities has been highlighted by the United Nations and international NGOs through a number of emergency assessments. The displaced Palestinian refugees are also being absorbed into the existing marginalized Palestinian refugee population, which in 2010 had the highest percentage of camp inhabitants across all five UNRWA fields of operation. Recent assessments conducted by UNICEF and partners indicate the significant and growing needs of the displaced Syrian communities across the education, child protection, health/nutrition and WASH sectors.⁸ Due to the deteriorating security situation in these areas, a large number of refugees are moving inland, with Beirut and Mount Lebanon hosting an increasing number of refugees.

Progress and key results at midterm

51. Despite the challenging environment, progress towards expected results was achieved in many areas between 2010 and 2012 through collaboration with government and other national stakeholders. The ongoing work of UNICEF and partners on the equity agenda in Lebanon has given sectors more evidence of the causes of structural inequities, consequently allowing for more strategic and stronger programming to address key barriers and bottlenecks for vulnerable groups. Key results include:

(a) New data on children, disaggregated to the district level, is available through the completion of the 2009 MICS3 with the Central Administration of Statistics. The MICS3 provided increased evidence of subnational disparities faced by children and women;

⁸ The source for most of the data on this page is: UNHCR Syria Refugee Response portal (accessed in February and March 2013). Other sources: UNDP, Executive summary of the Rapid Assessment on the Impact of the Syrian Crisis on Socio-Economic Situation in North and Bekaa (July 2012) and UNICEF: The Situation of Palestinian Children in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon (December 2012).

(b) The design and piloting of an ‘integrated education approach’, providing a comprehensive model for improving learning opportunities in impoverished settings. The approach is currently being piloted with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in four public schools in Akkar (Northern Lebanon);

(c) Local planning initiatives for improved child-centred outcomes were designed and piloted with local governments. These include the Child-Friendly Community initiative, which has been piloted in three impoverished municipalities in Akkar (Northern Lebanon), reaching 9,000 children. Three studies were completed under the initiative, including a mapping in the area of WASH and child disability services and a household survey, which provided local data to inform advocacy within the community. Following the midterm evaluation of the initiative (June 2012), the final phase of the pilot project has been redesigned for greater sustainability by strengthening the link between local and central government and taking into account the emerging needs of Syrian refugees;

(d) Comprehensive information on the child protection system in Lebanon now exists, thanks to a mapping of the system done in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Higher Council of Childhood. The mapping resulted in a series of recommendations. These included (i) making available revised and tested standard operating procedures in sentinel areas for identification, referral, case management and follow-up, with selected partners for the most extreme cases of violence against children; and (ii) making available routine information systems with selected statutory agencies in sentinel areas. These recommendations have been endorsed by the Government, and now provide the framework for future policy work at both the national and local levels for the removal of identified barriers and bottlenecks within the child protection system in Lebanon;

(e) As a result of advocacy by UNICEF and partners, the Ministry of Justice is now integrating the funding for the implementation of community services for child offenders as a non-custodial measure (provided by Law No. 422/2002) in the national budget. With this 2011 decision, NGOs providing such services now are funded by the Ministry of Justice, and no longer require UNICEF funding;

(f) The National Youth Policy has been formally endorsed by the Council of Ministers, the result of five years of continuous technical and financial support by UNICEF and other United Nations partners, with the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Youth Forum and MASAR (a coalition of youth NGOs). Key recommendations from the policy are now being developed into an action plan. Adolescent- and youth-friendly services were piloted in four service delivery points (Ministry of Social Affairs social development centres, Ministry of Public Health, Primary Healthcare Centres and NGOs affiliated with the Ministry of Social Affairs) located in the most under-served areas of Lebanon, in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund, the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Public Health. In eight awareness-raising sessions, young educators helped more than 100 of their peers increase their understanding of health-related topics, mainly HIV/AIDS, reproductive health and life skills;

(g) Conflict prevention and peace-building techniques were piloted in 10 public schools, reaching more than 2,000 students. The activities were undertaken under the overall supervision of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education Citizenship Committee within a joint United Nations programme. Impact-assessment questionnaires found a 40 per cent improvement in knowledge on key

violence-management and peace-building principles following the intensive training sessions conducted in the schools. In addition, the pilot programme built the capacity of school staff on communication skills and conflict- and violence-management techniques to facilitate the resolution of inter- and intra-communal tensions;

(h) As part of the humanitarian response reaching Syrian refugees and vulnerable host populations, Government, civil society organization partners and UNICEF began a joint vaccination campaign, which so far has reached 465,000 refugee and host community children with vaccines against measles and polio and providing them with vitamin A supplementation. As of the end of May 2013, more than 22,000 refugee children have enrolled in schools. UNICEF successfully advocated with Education authorities to allow Syrian refugee children to enrol in public school regardless of their registration status with UNHCR. Interventions related to the initial registration also equipped all children with a basic school package for the school year (including Parents Committee fees, uniforms, stationery and school bags). Basic education supplies have been provided to 151 schools and preschools, benefiting a total of 22,147 children as of May 2013. UNICEF has also supported community-based psycho-social activities reaching a total of 30,037 refugee and host community children. UNICEF and partners provided more than 14,000 emergency-affected people with access to safe drinking water, including domestic water, by the end of 2012. The interventions continue in 2013.

Resources used

52. The overall resources planned for five years amounted to \$11,250,000 (\$3,750,000 in regular resources and \$7,500,000 in other resources-regular (ORR)). The total ORR mobilized as of December 2012 was \$7 million, almost 95 per cent of the approved ceiling for the full five-year country programme. In December 2012, the country office received \$4 million from the European Union for the Syrian emergency. Because this was a multi-year contribution from the European Union development aid budget line, the funds were earmarked against ORR, bringing the ORR raised to \$11 million. The country office then requested and received approval to increase the other resources ceiling to \$19,000,000. This particular contribution from the European Union is especially encouraging since it represents *longer-term* funding in response to a humanitarian crisis, which is also a very necessary type of funding but is not always available to crisis-affected countries.

53. By end-2012, 100 per cent of regular resources and 60 per cent of ORR had been spent as follows: (a) social policy programme component, \$5.5 million; (b) child protection programme component, \$2 million; and (c) life skills for adolescents programme component, \$1.2 million.

54. With the Syrian emergency and the increased influx of refugees into Lebanon, the country office has actively pursued and mobilized additional emergency funding from various donors to support the humanitarian response. As of end 2012, \$9 million had been received for other resources-emergency and utilized for emergency interventions in education, child protection, health and WASH.

Constraints and opportunities affecting progress

55. The period since the start of the country programme in 2010 has been marked by instability. Even with this, however, it has become evident that equity provides a

very relevant focus for the country programme in the context of Lebanon, where significant disparities remain.

56. The Government formally recognized the Syrian emergency in December 2012. Lebanon is host to the greatest number of Syrian refugees, with the majority of refugees hosted in the traditionally marginalized and underserved North and Eastern areas of Lebanon. Emergency funding and successful resource mobilization efforts have allowed UNICEF and partners to increase their reach in the most vulnerable communities through expanding activities to these areas. By leveraging funding, UNICEF has been able to broaden and strengthen institutional partnerships to strengthen government services while at the same time providing direct support to vulnerable Syrian and Lebanese host communities.

57. Despite the country's status as an upper-middle-income country, line ministries remain under-resourced. The Government has not approved a national budget since 2005. Because the line ministries are under-resourced, reforms are highly dependent on donor grants. Furthermore, the critical reform agenda has been delayed further because of political instability and the refugee crisis.

58. The Child Protection System mapping has been a significant study completed in the programme thus far. Although a full Situation Analysis has not been done yet in this country programme cycle, a desk review and analytical report was prepared as part of the MTR process, focusing on an update on the situation of women and children, government social sector reform progress and key issues to be taken account in the MTR.

Adjustments made

59. A number of strategic changes to the country programme have been identified based on sectoral review processes and internal and externally facilitated strategic reviews. These were endorsed during the final high-level meeting with senior government representatives. The factors driving these adjustments were: the need to increase focus on equity-informed programming; the ongoing humanitarian response in the country; and the recognition that the quality of education is a key issue for vulnerable children in Lebanon, requiring UNICEF support.

60. The main changes are:

(a) Integrating both 'development' and 'emergency' interventions across all programme components, reaching the most vulnerable Lebanese populations as well as Syrian refugees. The country office emergency response has been prioritized and mainstreamed in line with the CCCs;

(b) Greater focus on equity to support strengthened social services for vulnerable groups, including disadvantaged Lebanese children and women, and Syrian refugees;

(c) The adjusted social policy programme focusing on data collection and analysis of inequities and vulnerabilities among children, with the objective of informing future social policies. The revised country programme will also focus on a few cost-effective interventions that are in line with government priorities for education, adolescents and child protection;

(d) Education will become a core focus area in 2013 and 2014, supporting the first priority of The Ministry of Education and Higher Education: ‘Education for Equal Opportunities’;

(e) Instead of being a distinct programme, youth and adolescents will be integrated into existing social policy, education and child protection programmes, with a particular focus on emergency response for vulnerable adolescents.

61. **Social policy.** The revised social policy programme will focus on improving knowledge on child poverty and disparities to inform policies for children. At a more decentralized level, the programme will build on past experience in decentralized, child-focused planning to support local districts in setting up a one-year, real-time monitoring system. The system will be designed to track changes in child well-being and provide local governments with evidence to develop local plans that integrate issues affecting women’s and children’s rights. The social policy component will continue to provide technical expertise to support the implementation of the National Youth Policy.

62. **Education and adolescent development.** Building on the country programme’s existing work at the decentralized level, this new programme component will: (a) work with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and partners to provide quality education (including preschool) services to vulnerable children, including Syrian refugees, in line with the Government’s Education Sector Development Plan 2012-2015; (b) ensure access to education programmes (both formal and informal) for school-aged refugee children and children from vulnerable host communities; and (c) in targeted areas, improve adolescents’ participation in civic engagement, knowledge of life skills, including HIV/AIDS, and practice of healthy behaviours.

63. **Child protection.** The child protection component will support the harmonization of the national criteria and procedures for early identification of child victims of violence, and increased capacity of caregivers to respond and support these children and their families. The country programme will also continue supporting child protection interventions for children and adolescents in the most vulnerable areas, including those affected by the Syrian crisis. UNICEF will continue to expand its response to sexual and gender-based violence in coordination with United Nations partners.

64. **Emergency child survival and development.** This new programme component will address emergency needs in health and nutrition, WASH and non-food items to benefit Syrian refugee and other affected children. It will be a time-bound component that is subject to regular review as the emergency situation evolves.

65. **Monitoring and evaluation, advocacy and communication.** UNICEF will support the Government and partners to monitor the situation of children and to gather evidence to inform programming and policymaking both at national and community levels. This component also includes the monitoring and evaluation of UNICEF-supported activities. UNICEF, together with the Government and other national stakeholders, will continue its focus on advocacy and awareness-raising on the situation of the most vulnerable girls and boys, and increasing the capacity of government workers on communication for development to improve knowledge and behavioural changes in favour of children.

Conclusion

66. In Iraq and Lebanon, despite significant challenges to programme implementation in both countries due mainly to the impact of the Syrian crisis, the midterm reviews were successfully completed, leading to important strategic shifts in the programmes. The MTRs have resulted in adjustments to better respond to unforeseen external events (Lebanon) and ongoing insecurity (Iraq), while maintaining a focus on achieving results for the most vulnerable children, whether made vulnerable by poverty, conflict or displacement.

67. The equity refocus was confirmed in both MTR processes, as was the need to ensure complementarity and synergy between the development and humanitarian interventions of the country programmes. In both country programmes, upstream engagement to boost capacities of Governments and partners to develop quality evidence-based sectoral programmes and policies, focusing on the most disadvantaged, will continue to be an important focus.

68. Given the various social and political transformations taking place in the Middle East and North Africa region, UNICEF-supported programmes need to be more risk-informed to be adaptable and responsive to the changing needs of children and women. Programmes also need to be more oriented not only to reaching the most vulnerable girls and boys, but also to building their resilience (and the resilience of their families) to further, or as in the case of Iraq and Lebanon — ongoing — shocks and risks to children's well-being.
