



©UNICEF Iraq/2022/Anmar

*Creating a safe environment that protects Syrian refugee children
and enables them to thrive*

Progress Report to the Isle of Man Government

Reporting Period: 1 December 2021 - 31 December 2022

Submission Date: 28 February 2023



**Isle of Man
Government**

Reilys Ellan Vannin

unicef 
for every child

Contents

Project Profile	3
1. Situation update	4
2. Progress against objectives of the project	5
3. Horizon scanning for Year 2	10
4. Changes in Activities	11
5. Changes in plans for Year 2	11
6. Visibility	11

Project Profile

Project name	Creating a safe environment that protects Syrian refugee children and enables them to thrive
Total contribution	£1,411,431
Implementation Period	1 December 2021 – 14 January 2024
Reporting period	1 December 2021 – 31 December 2022
Type of report	Year 1 Annual report
Report compiled by	UNICEF Iraq and UNICEF UK
Contact	Giulia Girardi Head of Statutory Funding UNICEF UK GiuliaG@unicef.org.uk

1. Situation update

The outbreak of the civil conflict in Syria, which started in March 2011, took a heavy toll on hundreds of thousands of children and their families, resulting in large numbers of displaced Syrians seeking refuge in neighbouring countries, including in Iraq.

As of 31 September 2022, over 291,666 refugees are registered in Iraq, 262,024 of whom are Syrian refugees¹. Of these, 60 per cent are residing in urban areas among host communities, while 40 per cent reside in 9 camps across the three governorates of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (Erbil, Duhok and Sulaymaniyah)², with limited immediate return prospects due to continued security and political volatility in Syria. Nearly 68 per cent of the above-mentioned population are women and girls, while children made up 45 per cent of the registered refugee population in Iraq.

Protracted displacement and limited access to livelihood opportunities continue to impact on the physical and mental health, wellbeing, and the capacity for resilience and recovery of Syrian refugee women and children. They are exposed to significant protection risks, including violence, abuse, and exploitation. Nighty eight per cent of Syrian refugees in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq who participated in a longitudinal mental health study reported exposure to at least one traumatic experience, and 87 per cent reported exposure to three or more traumatic events including forced separation from relatives, witnessing explosions and exposure to armed combat³. The same study also revealed that 60 per cent of participants experienced Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and about the same level of participants (59.4 per cent) experienced probable depression, which was associated with gender, age, time spent in the camp as well as the number and type of post traumatic event experienced⁴. Other evidence has confirmed the high prevalence of mental distress among Syrian refugees⁵.

Syrian refugee women and girls continue to be disproportionately at risk of Gender Based Violence (GBV), although men and boys can also be affected. Among the frequently reported forms of GBV affecting refugees and host communities, forced and child marriage, sexual violence, sexual abuse and exploitation, stigma as well as intimate partner and domestic violence are the most common. Women and girls are more socioeconomically vulnerable compared to men and boys and, as a consequence, are more exposed to GBV⁶, which is linked to unbalanced power relations.

The absence of an effective legal framework for refugee protection in Iraq continues to preclude longer term residency rights and other legal benefits for Syrian refugees. The difficult economic situation in Iraq has negatively affected the livelihood opportunities of Iraqis and refugees alike and has stretched existing public services and the capacity of the host government to address refugees' needs.

¹ UNHCR, Iraq Facts Sheet, December 2022.

² ACAPS, Iraq Overview, October 2022: <https://www.acaps.org/country/iraq/crisis/syrian-refugees>.

³ Harem Nareeman Mahmood: Does Time Heal Trauma? 18 Month Follow-Up Study of Syrian Refugees' Mental Health in Iraq's Kurdistan Region; Int J Environ Res Public Health, November 2022, 19(22): 14910. Published online 2022 Nov 12: <https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/19/22/14910>

⁴ Harem Nareeman Mahmood et al (2019): Post-traumatic stress disorder and depression among Syrian refugees residing in the Kurdistan region of Iraq

⁵ Mahmood H.N., Ibrahim H., Goessmann K., Ismail A.A., Neuner F. Post-Traumatic stress disorder and depression among Syrian refugees residing in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, Conflict and Health, 2019;13:51: [Post-traumatic stress disorder and depression among Syrian refugees residing in the Kurdistan region of Iraq | Conflict and Health | Full Text \(biomedcentral.com\)](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11367-019-0051-1)

⁶ GBVIMS, 2021 Annual Report, Refugees.

2. Progress against objectives of the project

In 2022, UNICEF worked with the host government and communities to enhance the protection of vulnerable Syrian refugee children and families in eight refugee camps, urban centres, and host communities through the delivery of child protection and GBV prevention, risk mitigation, and response services. UNICEF also supported the integration of refugee children into the national child protection system through the integration of refugee children's rights in the Child Rights Act as well as through capacity building of the government's social workforce on refugee children's rights, and core competencies for the delivery of preventive and responsive protection services. Overall, a total of 25,668 (14,429 women and girls) from refugees and host communities were reached with child protection and GBV prevention, risk mitigation and response services, against the overall target of 49,995, with support from the Isle of Man Government. Additionally, 145 social workers were trained on refugee children's rights and on core child protection services, against the target of 145 social workers.

The specific achievements reported below are intended to provide an insight into the progress made, against the overall targets of the project during first year of implementation.

Outcome 1: Children (boys and girls) and adolescents have access to age appropriate, focused and structures Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services (MHPSS)

- **Activity 1.1 - Psychosocial support services:** During the reporting period, a total of 6,712 children (3,392 girls) from eight refugee camps and host communities were reached with age and gender-appropriate individualised and group structured MHPSS aimed at promoting the psychosocial well-being and resilience of children and families, against the overall target of 12,500 (representing 53 per



cent of the overall project target). This involved delivery of Child Protection Sub-Cluster⁷ approved MHPSS packages including: (1) Little Fellows for children aged 6-9 years; (2) Win Win Deal child resilience package for children 10-14 years; and (c) Win-Win youth resilience package for children aged 15-19. Group interventions were delivered via both fixed child and adolescent friendly spaces in camps as well as mobile outreach services in out-of-camp locations in host communities, in compliance with COVID-19 restrictions and prevention guidelines issued by the Government.

The Little Fellow programme is specifically designed to help support children 6-9 years gain necessary life skills on constructive and positive peer interactions, conflict resolution and positive coping through group sessions, fun games and storytelling. The Win Win Deal child resilience package and the Win-Win youth resilience package are aimed at enhancing the resilience and psychosocial wellbeing of adolescents and youth. These are delivered through interactive group sessions on topics such as dealing with strong emotions in a constructive way and promoting inter-personal relationships, conflict resolution and respectful relationships. Previous evidence from results monitoring of delivery of these structured psychosocial support programmes showed significant improvement in self-esteem and confidence, positive thinking and optimism and emotional stability among all age groups.

- **Activity 1.2 - Parenting education programme:** To promote positive behavioural change and mitigate protection risks for children, UNICEF also worked with the Departments of Labour and Social Affairs in Dohuk, Erbil and Sulaymaniyah to carry out parenting education in refugee camps and in host communities, reaching a total of 657 parents and caregivers (374 women) against the overall target of 1,200 (representing 54 per cent of the target). The parenting education programme equipped parents and caregivers with the necessary skills for identifying and handling their own stress, as well as improving parenting skills to support, protect and care for children.
- **Activity 1.3 – Community-based child protection awareness programme:** During the reporting period, a total of 8,187 individuals (4,287 women and girls) were reached with community-based child protection awareness education in refugee camps and host communities, against the overall target of 15,500 (representing 52 per cent of the overall target). The awareness raising programme was carried out using key behavioural messages from the parenting education programme to mitigate protection risks for children. These messages focused on the prevention of violence, abuse and exploitation of children, including the prevention of child labour and child marriage. Overall, a total of 89 awareness raising sessions were conducted by the child protection staff in collaboration with child protection community networks and community leaders.

⁷ As part of the Protection Cluster, the UN activated the Child Protection Sub-Cluster (Child Protection Area of Responsibility – CP AoR) in Iraq in September 2014. With that activation, UNICEF assumed the role of Child Protection AoR Co-Lead for Iraq. In this capacity, and in collaboration with Save the Children, UNICEF has been coordinating child protection partners' response to child protection issues being faced by conflict affected children, including through, *inter alia*, the provision of mental health and psychosocial support, legal assistance, civil documentation, case management and legal representation.

Outcome 2: Children (girls and boys) and those at risk are provided with case management and other specialised services that address the individual needs of children.

- **Activity 2.1 - Capacity building:** Funding from the Isle Man Government also contributed to training and capacity building of the social services workforce on case management, parenting education, and alternative care. This enhanced their technical capacity to effectively deliver preventive and responsive child protection services. Topics covered include case management, child safeguarding, and alternative care. Overall, a total of 55 social workers (24 women) were trained against an overall target of 75 social workers (representing 73 per cent of the project target). Following the training, senior social workers provided support, supervision and mentoring, particularly on case management processes.
- **Activity 2.2 - Case management services:** UNICEF worked with implementing partners and supported the delivery of survivor centred, age and gender appropriate specialised child protection services, including case management and referral services. A total of 565 children (289 girls) were reached, against the overall target of 900 (63 per cent of the project target), through static safe spaces in refugee camps and mobile service delivery teams in host communities.
- **Activity 2.3 - Alternative care:** During the reporting period no unaccompanied and separated children were identified, associated with COVID-19 or otherwise. As such, UNICEF proposes to reprogramme the budget for alternative care towards case management and referral services (Activity 2.2).

Outcome 3: The individualised needs of women, girls and boys at risk and survivors of Gender Based Violence (GBV) are addressed through case management and other individually tailored age-appropriate services.

Ensuring that women and children have access to GBV services is a critical priority for Syrian refugees and host communities. During the reporting period, UNICEF worked with Department of Labour and Social Affairs and Better World Organization (a local women-led organisation) to deliver GBV prevention, risk mitigation and response services. Accordingly, the following results were achieved during the reporting period.

- **Activity 3.1 - GBV prevention:** UNICEF worked closely with Department of Labour and Social Affairs and Better World Organization to conduct community-led awareness raising activities on GBV issues. The activities focused on prevention, response and behaviour changes among Syrian refugees and host communities. Overall, a total of 78 awareness sessions were carried out in eight refugee camps and host communities, reaching a total of 7,685 individuals (3,973 women and girls), against an overall target of 15,500 (representing 49 per cent of the project target).
- **Activity 3.2 – Services for survivors of GBV:** A total of 321 women and girls received quality, age-appropriate and survivor centred multi-sectoral survivor GBV response services including case management, counselling, and referral services, against the overall target of 500 (64 per cent of the project target). GBV case management support services included the identification of cases, assessment of beneficiaries needs, delivery of mental health services, legal support, and referral to other service providers, including for health and livelihood support.

- **Activity 3.3 – GBV Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services and life skills education:** Under the GBV component of the project, UNICEF also supported the delivery of mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services for 321 women and girls against the target of 500. Additionally, the life skills education programme reached 2,464 adolescent girls against the overall target of 4,500 (thus meeting 55 per cent of the planned target). The mental health and psychosocial support services were aimed at facilitating the healing, recovery, and resilience of GBV survivors, while life skills education for adolescent girls was aimed at enhancing their capacity and empowering them to protect themselves from violence, abuse, and exploitation.



Output 4: Government relevant institutions, NGOs partners and Community Based Structures have strengthened coordination and technical capacity in the provision of child protection services

Under this output of the project, UNICEF continued supporting the Child Protection Sub-Cluster's efforts to improve the coordinated delivery of high-quality child protection services to meet the needs of affected children and families, including Syrian refugees and host communities. UNICEF also contributed to the delivery of the coordinated capacity building support for government and NGO partners on core competencies. This was achieved through interagency coordination mechanisms, with a focus on training of service providers on the delivery of evidence-based psychosocial support, resilience, parenting, and adolescent girls programming, case management as well as prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA). The following key results were achieved under this output.

- **Activity 4.1 - Capacity building:** During the year, through the Child Protection Sub-Cluster, UNICEF supported coordinated the delivery of capacity building support for social services workforces from the Government, NGOs and community-based organisations on child protection case management and the child protection information management system. Overall, a total of 64 (27 women) staff from 30 organisations were trained and gained enhanced capacity on case management and child protection information management, against an overall planned target of 70 (thus reaching 91 per cent of the target).
- **Activity 4.2 - Strengthened community-based child protection structure:** During the year, UNICEF supported the training of 150 individuals (76 women), to strengthen the capacity of 15 community-based child protection structures, such as the child protection committee and adolescent groups, against the planned target of 15 community-based structures (thus meeting 100 per cent of the planned target) in refugee camps and host communities. This has better equipped and capacitated

community-based structures to identify child protection issues within their communities and effectively respond to the identified needs through direct support or referrals.

- **Activity 4.3- Coordination of child protection cluster:** In early 2022, the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) decided to de-activate the cluster coordination mechanism and transition towards a government-led sector coordination mechanism by December 2022. UNICEF led the process of transition from cluster coordination to child protection sector coordination mechanisms; so far, 12 monthly Child Protection Sub-Cluster coordination meetings were held. UNICEF also successfully advocated for the establishment of a multi-sectoral high-level child protection coordination mechanism led by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. As a result, the Child Protection Sub-Cluster coordination mechanism has now transitioned to Government-led sector coordination mechanisms.
- **Activity 4.4 – Communication plan and campaigns:** In 2022, UNICEF carried out a study on the underlying drivers of domestic violence against women and children using funding from the Government of Germany through KfW. Evidence from this study was used to adapt the Communities Care social norms education toolkit used in training sessions as part of this programme. In 2023, UNICEF will develop and implement a communication plan to undertake a public campaign aimed at addressing underlying social norms that drive violence against women and children, building on evidence generated by the above-mentioned study.

Results Framework			
Activity	Indicator	Target	Result
<i>Outcome 1: Children (boys and girls) and adolescents have access to age appropriate, focused and structures Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services (MHPSS)</i>			
Activity 1.1 - Psychosocial support services	# Children reached with age and gender-appropriate individualised and group structured MHPSS	12,500	6,712 children (3,392 girls)
Activity 1.2 - Parenting education programme	# Parents and caregivers reached with parenting education	1,200	657 parents and caregivers (374 women)
Activity 1.3 – Community-based child protection awareness programme	# Individuals reached with community-based child protection awareness education in refugee camps and host communities	15,500	8,187 individuals (4,287 women and girls)
<i>Outcome 2: Children (girls and boys) and those at risk are provided with case management and other specialised services that address the individual needs of children.</i>			
Activity 2.1 - Capacity building	# Social workers trained on case management, parenting education, and alternative care	75	55 social workers (24 women)
Activity 2.2 - Case management services	# Children reached with survivor centred, age and gender appropriate specialised child protection services, including case management and referral services	900	565 children (289 girls)
Activity 2.3 - Alternative care	# Unaccompanied and separated children identified and provided with alternative care	100	0
<i>Outcome 3: The individualised needs of women, girls and boys at risk and survivors of Gender Based Violence (GBV) are addressed through case management and other individually tailored age-appropriate services.</i>			

Activity 3.1 - GBV prevention	# Individuals reached with community-led awareness raising activities on GBV issues	15,500	7,685 individuals (3,973 women and girls)
Activity 3.2 – Services for survivors of GBV	# Women and girls receiving quality, age-appropriate and survivor centred multi-sectoral survivor GBV response services	500	321 women and girls
Activity 3.3 – GBV Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services and life skills education	# Women and girls receiving mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS)	500	321 women and girls
	# Adolescent girls reached with life skills education programme	4,500	2,464 adolescent girls
Output 4: Government relevant institutions, NGOs partners and Community Based Structures have strengthened coordination and technical capacity in the provision of child protection services			
Activity 4.1 - Capacity building	# Staff members trained on case management and child protection information management	70	64 staff members (27 women)
Activity 4.2 - Strengthened community-based child protection structure	# Community-based child protection structures whose capacity has been strengthened	15	15 community-based child protection structures,
Activity 4.3- Coordination of child protection cluster	# Child Protection Sub-Cluster coordination meetings held	12	12 monthly Child Protection Sub-Cluster coordination meetings
Activity 4.4 – Communication plan and campaigns	Communication plans and public campaigns are developed and implemented at local and national levels promoting child protection services, prevention and response to child rights violations	Yes	No

3. Horizon scanning for Year 2

Due to the uncertain political and security situation in Syria, the prospect of Syrian refugees, who currently reside in Kurdistan Region of Iraq, returning to Syria is minimal. While Iraq continues to recover from the legacy of the 2013-2017 conflict, 1.2 million Iraqis remain internally displaced, and the majority live in Kurdistan Region of Iraq⁸. The enduring effects of conflict, prolonged exposure to extreme forms of violence, protracted and multiple displacement, as well as extended periods of deprivation, have significant consequences for Syrian and Iraqi children's long-term physical and mental health development, as well as on their capacity for resilience and recovery. In 2023, an estimated 664,000 children need child protection prevention and response services⁹, in addition to 262,024 Syrian refugees¹⁰.

The humanitarian coordination mechanism is fully deactivated, and government-led sector coordination mechanisms have been activated. However, for government-led sector coordination mechanisms to function effectively, there is a need for continued technical support to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA), which will continue to be provided by UNICEF. In Federal Iraq, the Government is working on the development of the Child Protection Law, on the establishment of a Child Protection Unit within MoLSA, and on the designation of social workers with clear terms of reference focusing on child protection. The Ministry of Labour in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq has established a Child Protection Unit and activated 38 child protection centers across the region. These offer an opportunity for UNICEF and

⁸ Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Iraq Humanitarian Response Plan, OCHA, 2022.

⁹ UNICEF Iraq, 2023 Humanitarian Action for Children Appeal, 2023.

¹⁰ UNHCR, Iraq Fact Sheet, December 2022.

UNHCR to advocate for the integration of refugee children in the national child protection system, including in legal reforms, social services workforce capacity building, and services delivery.

Therefore, in 2023, UNICEF intends to continue providing lifesaving child protection and GBV prevention, risk mitigation and response services for Syrian Refugees and vulnerable host communities in Dohuk, Erbil and Sulaymaniyah governorates in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. We will also advocate for the integration of Syrian refugee children in the national child protection system, in close collaboration with UNHCR and in line with the global strategic collaboration framework. No major changes in outcomes and objectives are expected.

4. Changes in Activities

No major changes are planned. However, under this project, UNICEF had planned to support safe alternative care for 100 children without appropriate parental care, including unaccompanied/separated children and orphans, due to COVID-19, preferably through extended families or family-based alternative care systems. In 2022, as mentioned above, no unaccompanied and separated children were identified. With significant changes in the COVID-19 pandemic landscape, UNICEF does not expect unaccompanied and separated children to be identified in 2023. Therefore, UNICEF suggests discontinuing Activity 2.3 on alternative care (whose target was 100) and increasing the planned target for case management services under Activity 2.2 from 900 to 1,000. Accordingly, UNICEF proposes to re-programme the budget allocated for Activity 2.3 to support the delivery of case management and specialized child protection services under Activity 2.2.

5. Changes in plans for Year 2

No major changes are expected. As mentioned above, UNICEF proposes to increase the target for Activity 2.2 on case management services from 900 to 1,000 and to discontinue Activity 2.3 on alternative care for separated and unaccompanied children.

6. Visibility

[UNICEF Iraq Facebook - Over the next two years, the Isle of Man Government will donate £1.4 million to UNICEF](#)

[Mobile teams provide these prevention and response services in safe, protected and confidential governmental services](#)