



*Two children from
Abdullah's family
doing their
homework, Dohuk,
August 2017*

TESTIMONIES

"I used to walk for 45 minutes just to reach the school, and usually I missed the first lecture, but now there are no worries to wake up a little bit late as I go to school on rented bus. I used to wear used clothes, but now my mother bought me new clothes".

Abdullah, from Hasaka, Syria. Now residing in Kurdistan, Iraq with his parents 8 siblings

Of the monthly US\$60 that Abdullah's family receives from UNICEF, US\$45 is spent on school transportation for three children. Abdullah and his sister are benefiting from UNICEF supported cash transfer project and due to that they are enrolled in the primary school. The parents feel more comfortable that their children now are going to school and they hope that what they couldn't have achieved, their children now can.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

THE MAIN HUMANITARIAN CRISES THAT CONFRONTS IRAQ

This crisis has involved an internal armed conflict resulting in massive internal displacement of over 3.3 million Iraqis (July, 2017) and over 2 million returnees. Iraq also hosts 244,235 Syrian refugees and 40,227 non-Syrian refugees (August, 2017). Humanitarian agencies estimate that 50% of the Internally Displaced Population (IDP) to be children; while 43% of Syrians asylum-seekers and refugees in Iraq are children.



Iraqis displaced by the fighting in Mosul carry their belongings as they walk on the outskirts of west Mosul, Iraq, (March 2017)



Extensive destruction of critical infrastructure and property, coupled with falling oil prices, have negatively impacted Iraq's economy since mid-2014. IDPs and returnees are particularly impacted by the dire economic situation. They are subject to movement restrictions which impede their access to livelihood opportunities and government services. Consequently, nutrition, education, health and child protection indicators for children have deteriorated. Thus, some IDPs and returnees (including children) are compelled to resort to negative coping strategies, which place them at heightened risk of exploitation and abuse. Furthermore, many IDPs have serious challenges to establish their legal identity and exercise their rights due to lack of legal documentation.

THE CURRENT STATE OF THE NATIONAL SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEM

The Government of Iraq passed a progressive social protection law in 2014. Under this law the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MOLSA) plans to deliver Social Safety Net (SSN) to over 1 million poor households based on poverty considerations. The monthly benefit level is equivalent to \$178 per household which is calculated based on family nutritional and basic needs.

UNICEF in partnership with MOLSA and the World Bank (WB) is currently designing an incentivized Cash Transfer (CCT) pilot program in Iraq. The aim is to test its effectiveness and appropriateness of the program for addressing education and health outcomes for households below the national poverty line. In Kurdistan, the WB is supporting the regional government (KRG) to reform the social protection system away from categorical to poverty targeting. The government also provides food security to all Iraqis through the Public Distribution System (PDS) which is composed of fixed monthly commodities. The PDS requires reforms to improve administrative system, targeting and supply chain. Furthermore, the Ministry of Migration and Displacement (MoMD) has distributed a grant of IQD 1 million (approx. \$800 USD) for some displaced families that are registered; and a lesser amount for some single IDPs.

Access to civil documentation is an essential prerequisite for Iraqi IDPs and returnees to establish their legal identity and civil status, which enables officials to determine their eligibility for public services and social welfare benefits.

The Refugee Act (Law No. 51, 1971) recognizes the right of refugees to public employment, access to social services, monthly welfare allowances and ability to engage in trade. However, in practice, the majority of refugees and asylum seekers in Iraq do not have access to the services stated by the law. In Kurdistan, refugees enjoy greater access, where coordination between the KRG and UNHCR has progressively resulted more sustainable refugee responses including access to social services.



PROMISING PRACTICES

HUMANITARIAN CASH ASSISTANCE AND POTENTIAL FUTURE SUPPORT FOR SOCIAL SAFETY NETS

Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance (MPCA) programmes in Iraq aim to ensure that vulnerable, conflict-affected populations receive direct financial support in the form of unrestricted cash transfers to meet their basic needs. The cash transfer value is based on a national Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB) contextualized to Iraq. Humanitarian actors engaged in MPCA provide one-off emergency cash transfers to vulnerable displaced families and two additional payments (up to 3 months after first payment) for the extremely vulnerable. The exit strategy from MPCA is to link beneficiaries to the Government's existing social protection platforms.

MPCA is coordinated by the Cash Working Group (CWG), a technical working group within the Inter Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG) to ensure cash-based interventions in Iraq are well-coordinated and follow a common rationale and approach. The CWG is actively attended by over 30 members, including NGOs, UN Agencies and Donors. This 'multi-wallet' solution employs WFP's SCOPE platform for cash based transfers. WFP is also exploring application of its digital solutions to longer term social safety nets in Iraq in support of initiatives developed under the national Poverty Reduction Strategy.

UNHCR is implementing different types of cash-based interventions including MPCA; winterization support, cash for core relief items and cash for shelter to assist vulnerable beneficiaries of concern. UNHCR has increased the efficiency of cash-based interventions based on lessons learnt, as well as building on regional and global best practices and adopting new technologies, such as using mobile money transfers to mitigate fiduciary risks and improvements in data sharing through a pilot database (ASSIST).

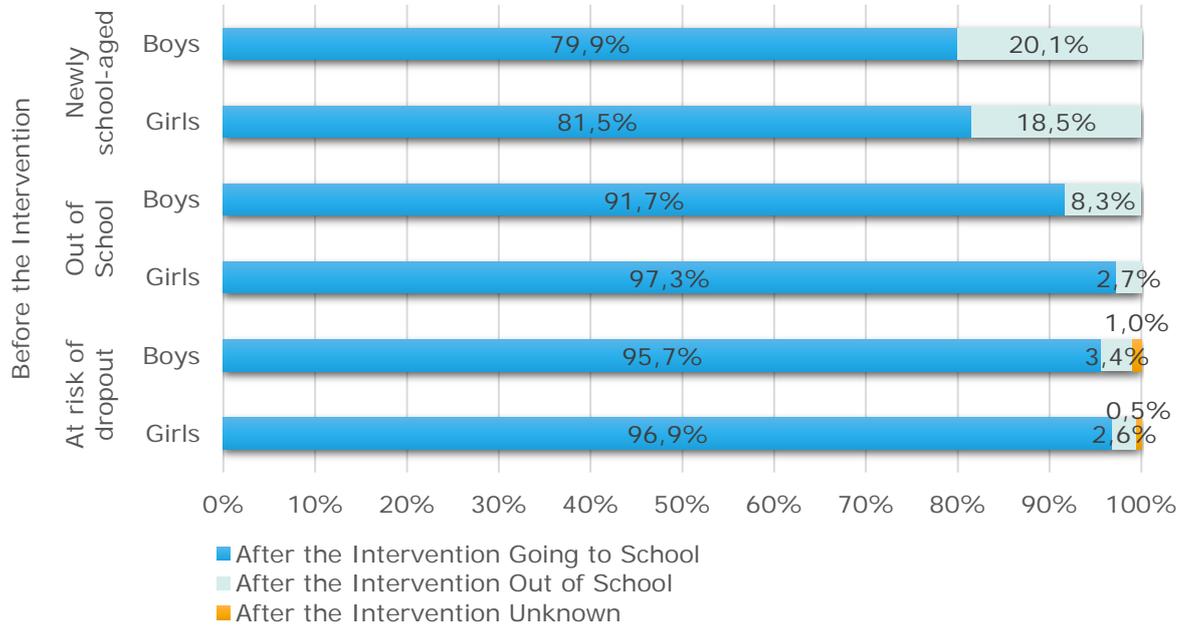
CASH FOR EDUCATION

UNICEF initiated cash for education in Iraq to remove financial and structural barriers to school enrolment and retention among vulnerable IDP, refugee and host-community children. The total caseload during the school year 2016/17 was about 7,300 children. The support will continue during the school year 2017/18.

Evidence from the recent Post-Distribution Monitoring (PDM) of UNICEF's cash for education programme in Erbil governorate conducted in April 2017 reveals of positive correlation between cash assistance and school enrolment and retention. The chart depicts that more than 95% of the children who were at risk of dropout before the intervention are out of risk after the intervention. The program also had a significant impact on out of school children, where more than 90% are enrolled after the intervention.



Students go to class at a school in eastern Mosul after over two years of closure under ISIL control (January 2017)



CHILD GRANT AS FIRST LINE RESPONSE

As part of humanitarian response in Mosel, UNICEF has partnered with UNHCR to use the same implementation modalities to deliver first line humanitarian cash assistance to identified vulnerable displaced households. UNHCR provides multipurpose cash transfers to cover the basic needs that is complemented by a child grant to remove financial barriers that prevent children to access schooling, health care and nutrition needs. UNICEF total caseload is about 3,500 children for six months (July – December 2017). Benefit level is \$30.00 per child for up to four children per household.

CASH PLUS APPROACH

To remove non-financial barriers to access public services, UNICEF’s social protection team partnered with the child protection and education team to develop a case management system for about 1,171 households benefiting from the cash assistance. The children and families who need additional support are referred to different programmes such as psychosocial support, legal support, removing barriers for enrolment in school etc., as per the need.

DOCUMENTATION SUPPORT TO ENABLE SOCIAL PROTECTION

UNHCR in close partnership with the relevant government legal departments provides legal assistance and documentation support to IDPs and returnees’ missing civil documents, or whose documents have expired or been damaged. Through civil documentation interventions, UNHCR and its partners enable IDPs/returnees to establish their legal identity, register vital events (e.g. births, marriages, divorces and deaths), access government social benefits, humanitarian assistance, facilitate freedom of movement, establish compensation packages for returnees whose properties have been damaged and addressing property restitution claims through civil courts. The possession of civil and property documentation is critical for IDPs/returnees to access such benefits or pursue such claims.



SUPPORT TO STATE INSTITUTIONS ON REFUGEE RESPONSE; AND DIRECT ASSISTANCE TO ASYLUM-SEEKERS AND REFUGEES

UNHCR is assisting refugees to access different forms of social protection, while strengthening national health and education systems, and supporting maintenance and rebuilding activities. This activity takes place under the Quick Impact Projects to ensure the availability of primary health care, mental health, primary education and psychosocial services in refugee camps. UNHCR also continues to strengthen social workers' capacity of relevant government institutions on case management and strategies of combating Violence against Women.

MAIN CHALLENGE(S) AHEAD AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION

- Government capacity and political commitment;
- Destruction of many schools and health facilities as a result of the ongoing conflict which limits supply-side access for children;
- Ongoing conflict which resulted in huge displacement (3.3 million as of July 2017);
- Wider access to cash assistance, with linkages to existing government social protection mechanisms;
- Social protection for asylum-seekers and refugees.

USEFUL RESOURCES

[Iraq 2017: Humanitarian Response Plan – January to December 2017](#)