

No Education Without Protection

RedR Australia in the Middle East, 2016-17

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RedR Australia contributed to the establishment and strengthening of education and protection programs for vulnerable children and young people in the Middle East, through six strategic deployments with three UN partners during 2016-17.

Through the deployment of highly experienced education and protection specialists, RedR's deployees have helped to reduce the protection risks of children within the region, allowing them more opportunities to develop and flourish. These deployments were funded by the Australian Government as part of its increased commitment to stabilisation in the region.

Duty Station	UN Agency	Job Title	Months
Beirut, Lebanon	UNRWA	Youth and Adolescent Development Specialist	12
Beirut, Lebanon	UNICEF	Child Protection Officer	7
Zahle, Lebanon	UNICEF	Education Specialist	6
Amman, Jordan	UNICEF	Education in Emergency Specialist	3
Amman, Jordan	UN Women	Psychosocial Support Specialist	3
Gaziantep, Turkey	UNICEF	Child Protection Specialist	3

The war in Syria has continued to deprive communities of their protective environment, stretching family resilience and exposing boys and girls to unprecedented suffering. *The 2017 UN Humanitarian Needs Overview*¹ estimates that 13.5 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance in Syria, 5.8 million of whom are boys and girls, with 2.83 million children living in hard to reach locations. The influx of Syrian refugees into neighbouring countries since the beginning of the conflict has put enormous pressure on these governments who lack the physical, financial and human resources to provide an adequate response to the ongoing humanitarian crisis. With further challenges emerging due to the protracted nature of the emergency, the sheer scale of the refugee population, a lack of data, donor fatigue and staff burnout, support to UN agencies and government institutions will remain vital.

1. <http://hno-syria.org/>

“For an organisation that is not used to change, I try to ensure that people get to know me so that they don't fear change... and learn to understand the new operational workings of the organisation.”

- RedR Youth and Adolescent Development Specialist, UNRWA Lebanon

“Though three months is a relatively short time to have an impact on an organisation, the deployee succeeded in transferring knowledge... without a doubt, if the opportunity arose I would seek to work with him again.”

- UN Supervisor, UNICEF Jordan

RedR has led sustainable change at the individual level, with evidence that deployees have consistently prioritised the mentoring aspects of their deployments through 'leading by doing' and working closely with their colleagues to provide technical support. This is particularly critical in a protracted context such as Syria and neighbouring host countries, where national staff can be exhausted and morale can be low. Through modelling best practice in effective communication and relationship management, strategy and report writing, RedR deployees have played an important people-focused role in their host agencies.

In Jordan, RedR deployed an **Education Specialist with UNICEF** who mentored national staff on how to undertake meaningful monitoring visits to program sites. On mission to Marj Al Haman, the deployee and his colleagues identified physically disabled children who had been excluded from local schools. In one case, a "... boy's mother reported that the principal of a nearby private school rejected her son's enrolment application on the grounds that the school could not cater for his needs". Following this mission, the boy's case was referred to an appropriate UNICEF program and a wheelchair and formal school enrolment was arranged. This exemplifies the way in which deployees have consistently advocated for protection through education, even in cases where this seems unmanageable.

In addition to strengthening the capacity of their national colleagues, RedR deployees provided leadership for the development of organisational systems that led to very practical change. In many cases, these systems will continue to be used for the life of the program, long after the deployee has departed. Deployees created new resources, tools and processes to better capture and monitor education and protection-related data. For example in Lebanon, a **RedR Child Protection Specialist with UNICEF** improved the coordination mechanism by leading structured, regular meetings between program teams and through the creation of new tools and resources for her team. These systems resulted in the *development and implementation of meaningful, harmonised tools for the sector to use to improve the quality of the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan*.²

In Zahle, eastern Lebanon, RedR deployed an **Education Specialist with UNICEF** who established a database to track complaints and issues with transportation of children to second shift schools.³ Through this new process to analyse data, there is now a greater understanding of the situation on the ground, including the 'roadblocks' that prevent children from participating in school.

This will ensure more families can be targeted with the correct education programming, including those with disabilities and other vulnerabilities.

This review found that the **intersection between education and protection** is where RedR, as an agile actor in the region, has had greatest impact. Education traditionally receives strong donor support. However, children and young people most in need often cannot meaningfully access education, or participate at all, for reasons including lack of reliable transport to schools and other protection-related factors such as child labour, disability, mental health issues and family violence. *No Lost Generation (NLG)*⁴ is an ambitious initiative to prioritise the protection and education of Syrian children and youth, which is co-led by RedR's partner UNICEF and supported by over one hundred humanitarian actors, including the Australian Government. NLG research lays bare the distinct vulnerabilities of this demographic and the consequences of inaction:

*As the crisis in Syria rages on, approaching its seventh year, an entire generation of children is being shaped by violence, displacement and a persistent lack of opportunity - and could be lost forever - with profound long-term consequences for Syria, the region and beyond.*⁵

Our approach to the Syrian crisis is aligned with NLG's mission, recognising that **significant protection gains can be made through targeted education and that, similarly, vital education gains can be made when we prioritise protection**. Getting this right will also have the flow-on effect of helping to stem a rise in violent extremism among young Syrians and other at-risk youth, something that is of increasing concern as the crisis wears on.

RedR deployees brought vital technical expertise and experience from other emergency contexts to our UN partners in the Middle East and meshed this with the technical, contextual and cultural knowledge of their colleagues. The coming together of the two reflects a people-centred, sustainable approach to supporting the region's most precious resource: the next generation.

Written by Felicity Mascetta and Kylie Harrington/RedR Australia.

2. Excerpt from Deployee Performance Evaluation Review (PER)

3. Due to Lebanon's policy that all children residing in the country have access to free education, the Ministry of Education, through the Reaching All Children with Education (R.A.C.E) Plan, is committed to providing education to displaced Syrian children and other vulnerable children through 'second shifts', whereby public schools offer two school shifts per day, increasing their capacity to accommodate the arrival into Lebanon of Syrian and other vulnerable children.

4. <http://nolostgeneration.org>

5. Ibid.

Imagining a Future for Young Palestinians in Lebanon – RedR Deployee in Action

As the Syrian civil war has escalated, the impact of which has reverberated across the region, Palestinians have continued to be the victims of a protracted crisis that began almost 70 years ago.

Most Palestinian refugees in Lebanon have been there since they fled their homeland after the 1948 Israel-Arab War or are descendants of those refugees; others are recent arrivals from Syria where they had sought a safe haven, but have now fled the Syrian conflict. Estimates of the Palestinian refugee population in Lebanon hover between 175,000 - 300,000 but regardless of the numbers, their collective experience has largely been characterised by uncertainty, vulnerability and exclusion.

Today, the majority of Palestinians in Lebanon live in one of 12 official refugee camps. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) is responsible for supporting Palestinian refugees in five countries, including Lebanon, until there is a solution for their plight. Young people can be particularly vulnerable as they lack access to educational and vocational opportunities during what is a critical life stage.

RedR Australia, with funding from the Australian Government, deployed a Youth and Adolescent Development Specialist to UNRWA Lebanon for one year to support the agency to re-imagine the future for young Palestinians in the country. The deployee helped to coordinate a national youth assessment of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, which investigated youth's perception of existing resources and opportunities available to young Palestinians, a group that had already been identified as falling through the cracks.



Photo credit: UNICEF

"The assessment identified a lack of opportunities as the most pressing issue as perceived by Palestinian youth. This includes opportunities in education, employment and health," the deployee explained, adding that she established a youth unit for UNRWA and developed a youth strategy for the agency that would address these issues.

"This age is crucial if we want young people to become contributors and change-makers in society. Lebanon is still a developing country that requires assistance from the international community. The economy has suffered a lot and the jobs that are available are few and far between. The Palestinians are a group of people for whom UNRWA is the only agency that helps them and only a number of national and international NGOs are working with them."

"Once Palestinian youth in Lebanon finish school, they can go to UNRWA's vocational institute but if they are not wealthy and don't win a scholarship, they can't go to university," she said, noting that the fees are prohibitive for most in the community. Under current local laws, Palestinian refugees cannot work in 39 professions in Lebanon that are reserved for Lebanese citizens and they pay fees to access universities.

"The youth strategy I've developed involves a targeted plan for youth with a number of elements, some of which will be to have equitable access to all services and be enabled to set up businesses, be change-makers and able to communicate with the powers that be on their needs and concerns," she said.

Our deployee has also been instrumental in negotiating with UNICEF the construction of two innovation labs. These are multi-purpose learning and working centres where young people have the opportunity to develop their creative, digital and entrepreneurship skills. She has been involved in planning, construction and set up of the innovation labs, provided technical advice and mentored the innovation lab coordinator. This capacity development, combined with improved coordination through regular meetings, planning, workshops and monitoring visits has given the innovation labs a fighting chance of success.

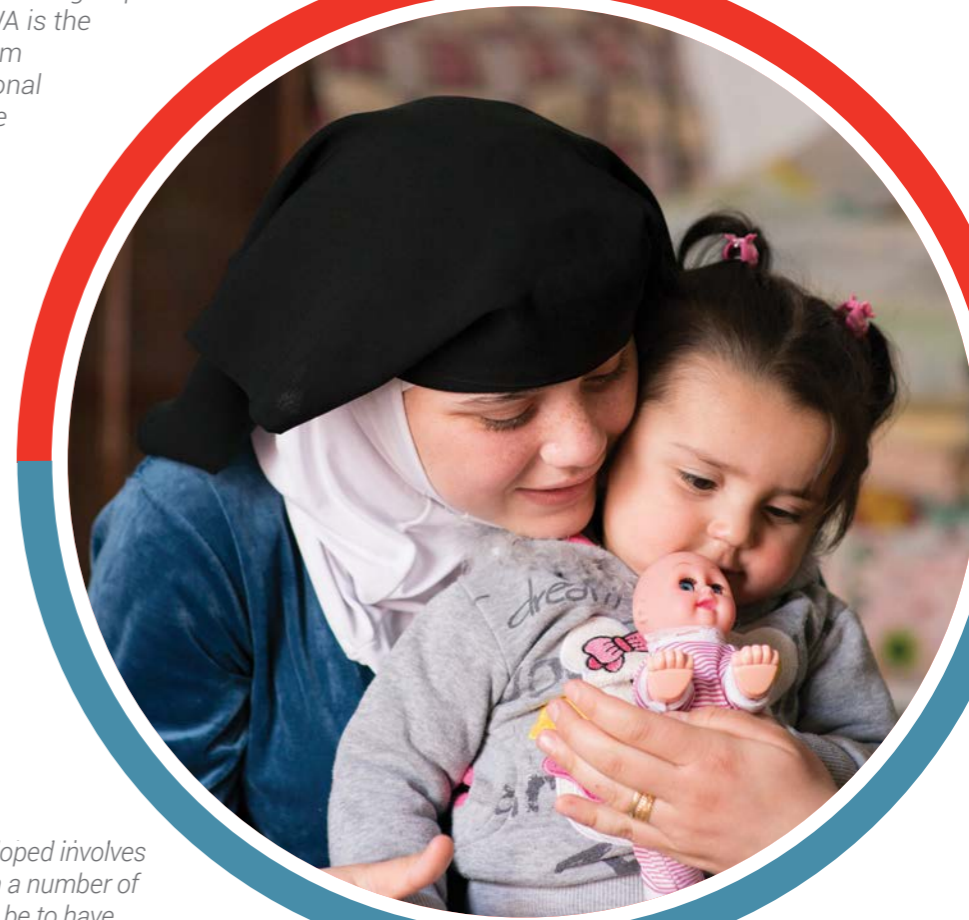


Photo credit: UNICEF

According to our deployee, "The international community and everyone else talks about prevention of violent extremism and wants to put money into youth programs for this reason, but if you give these young people the same opportunities as others have, then we wouldn't have to be preventing extremism or developing special programs to prevent it... because they won't be attracted to it."

As a member of the UN Standby Partnership, **RedR Australia** would like to acknowledge our United Nations partners:



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Photo credit: UNICEF



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