World Vision is the world’s largest international children’s charity. We are a child focused Christian relief, development and advocacy organisation dedicated to working with children, their families and communities to overcome poverty and injustice. We work in 100 countries to improve the lives of 100 million people worldwide.

We welcome the opportunity to provide evidence to the Committee on World Vision’s approach to development work in the Middle East. This submission will primarily address DfID’s regional humanitarian response to the Syria crisis with a primary focus on the work with Syrian refugees and the communities hosting them.

Summary

1. Clarity on the international community’s strategy and allocation of resources to tackle an emerging ‘lost generation of Syrian children’ is vital. For almost three years now Syrian children have been affected by this crisis, some seeing their families killed and schools destroyed.

2. In any humanitarian crisis children and young people are often the most affected yet least responsible. With this in mind, it is essential that they are at the forefront of the international community’s thoughts when it comes to resource allocation and the strategic, long term vision for recovery. This includes when creating greater access to education and health services for the most vulnerable people in society.

3. The Department for International Development’s (DfID) work in the region in response to the Syria Crisis has been commendable. By providing support, funding of over £500 million and encouraging other countries to support the UK Government is demonstrating leadership.

4. Flexible and long term funding is essential if the UK Government is to address the needs of those affected by the crisis in Syria and in the surrounding...
region. World Vision welcomes the UK Government’s efforts to increase the length of grants.

5. Longer-term planning is an important step in order to give the UN, World Vision and other actors the ability to plan for the long term needs of refugees and internally displaced people in and around Syria. The UK should continue its leadership to foster a comprehensive and coherent long-term vision for the global response to the Syria crisis.

Key statistics

- 1.1 million young people are now refugees.\(^1\) In Lebanon alone this number will reach 2 million by the end of 2014.\(^2\)

- 80% of Syrian refugee children in Lebanon are not in school.\(^3\)

- The school dropout rate within Syria currently stands at 35%.\(^4\)

- Conservative estimates put the number of children working to provide financial assistance to their family in Lebanon and Jordan at 200,000 by 2014.\(^5\)

A clear course of action to address the ‘lost generation’

6. With 1.1 million young people now classed as refugees, Syria faces having an entire ‘lost generation’ of children who lose their childhoods. You only get one chance at childhood and there is a real risk of a whole generation of children losing theirs. They do not have access to schools and education, have to work to support their families and do no even have places where they can be safe and play as the children they are. Many of these children have witnessed the

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\(^1\) BBC. ‘Syria’s ‘lost generation of children’. 28 November 2013.
\(^5\) UNICEF. “No Lost Generation”. 9 October, 2013. Pg. 4.
very worst atrocities since the conflict began in 2011 and are separated from family and friends.

7. The international community must recognise that many of the refugees outside of Syria in the surrounding region are unlikely to be able to return home anytime soon. This means realistic, adequately funded long-term plans for neighbouring countries must be a priority, and in particular focus on the needs of this ‘lost generation’.

Education

8. Now is the time to act to save existing schools and rebuild those that have been destroyed in Syria and provide support to students who are suffering from the ramifications of this conflict across the region. If the Syria conflict continues and the number of refugees grows at the current rate of over 127,000 registrations per month in Lebanon alone, the total number of refugee children will reach 2 million by the end of this year\(^6\).

9. Within Syria the picture is a similarly bleak one, with dropout rates currently at 35% due to ongoing violence and displacement. This is due to the fact that functioning schools in Syria are increasingly rare, as one in five schools have now been destroyed, damaged or are being used as shelters for Internally Displaced People (IDPs).\(^7\) In addition to this, many teachers have now fled and even amongst the refugee communities there are not enough trained teachers.

10. In host countries, including Lebanon and Jordan, huge numbers of new students are also placing significant pressure on schools\(^8\). Efforts are underway to enrol tens of thousands of eligible students in education systems in Lebanon, Jordan and other host nations. But public school systems can only have a certain capacity. In Jordan public schools have taken on more than an

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\(^7\)UNICEF. “No Lost Generation”. 9 October, 2013. Pg 2.

additional 83,000 Syrian children with double shifts in 44 schools. In Lebanon 40,000 have been enrolled but this still leaves an estimated 80% of Syrian children in Lebanon out of school.

11. For our part World Vision provides Accelerated Learning Programmes (ALPs) in Lebanon, providing hundreds of out-of-school children with the help they need to enhance their educational attainment and readiness for enrollment in schools when possible. ALPs address the differences between the Syrian and Lebanese curriculums in order to enable Syrian refugee children to more easily assimilate in their new learning environments whenever possible. Programmes such as the ALPs must be encouraged in the region to support schools already at breaking point.

12. If an entire generation of refugee children is to avoid losing out on education a clear course of action must be agreed by the international community, otherwise the ramifications of a failure to act are likely to be felt for generations.

Child Labour

13. Children who are denied access to education, for whatever reason, are far more likely to fall victim to exploitation. Conservative estimates put the total number of Syria child refugees working to provide financial assistance to their family at 200,000 by then end of 2014, with school for many Syrian refugee children now being replaced by work. In some areas, including Amman, the rate of refugee children working stands at 47%.

14. World Vision focus group discussions across Lebanon suggest that child labour is increasingly common as families struggle with high rents and a lack of work, well paid or otherwise. The type of work carried out by refugee

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10UNICEF. “No Lost Generation”. 9 October, 2013. Pg. 4.  
children varies greatly, with some children working unofficially in the agricultural sector, many working casually in the service industry and some children, such as Saad, who is four years old, working in construction:

“I am four years old. I make bricks. I hurt here and here.” – Saad, aged four, as he points to his knees and shoulders. He works with his family to make concrete blocks. They are paid $8 for every 100 they make.

Child Friendly Spaces

15. Child Friendly Spaces (CFSs) offer an oasis where children can play, learn and receive support to deal with the trauma that they have experienced in safety, even in the midst of a humanitarian disaster. These are areas which are safe, have been designed with children in mind and have trained counsellors to help children deal with the real issues they face, from what they may have witnessed to dealing with separation from their family. CFSs take the form of tented areas or cordoned off areas.

16. World Vision supports refugee children in Lebanon and Jordan by providing remedial educational facilities.

17. World Vision currently operates five child friendly spaces to the benefit of over 1,500 refugee children residing in host communities. Many refugee parents welcome these safe places for their children

“Every time she comes from the center, I feel she is happier and happier,” says Laila. “She always brings some kind of drawing or craft with her, and now she wants to take her 6-year-old sister with her, too.” – Lalia, who fled Syria with her two children, aged eight and six, after their father was killed.

A need for a long term approach to the regional crisis

18. As the third anniversary of the crisis approaches and the 2014 regional appeal of $6.5bn remains only 5% funded, the UK Government must continue to use its influence to encourage the international community to take a long term approach to the Syria crisis. Understandably, the crisis has been marked by significant but short-term funding for short-term programmes. These are necessary in the initial stages but clearly these are unable to fully address the needs in the region which are complex and require a sustainable, coordinated response. While this has over the last months seen improvements, there needs to be greater emphasis on longer term programmes, backed by sustained funding.

19. This lack of a collective long-term perspective (in addition, it should be added, to the security situation in the region) from the international community has also created a gap in the availability of comprehensive, nation-wide sectoral need-assessments. There is a substantial (and expensive) data-collection gap, resulting in programmes not addressing the full scale of the challenges facing the different countries in the region. Donors should ensure there are funds available for country-wide need assessments that address the need for educational resources, sources of income for refugees and for host communities that is not dependent on aid and health services, in order to build resilience.

20. Competition among coordinating agencies and varying views on when the crisis moved from being primarily a refugee crisis to a full-scale humanitarian crisis slowed the scope and scale of the response. As one of the very few donors with humanitarian staff based in the region, DFID has played and is playing a constructive role in improving this and related challenges, and should be encouraged to keep doing so.

21. The need for a joint long term vision based on context analysis to guide future development priorities in the region is vital for the relief effort. The UK Government must build on its influence in the region to advocate for a long term strategy and financial plan defined by donors, host governments, UN agencies and the international civil society.
22. Any such strategy should include localised funding and resilience building mechanisms to enable these communities to grow, adapt and transform in order to face the challenges before them. Host communities in neighbouring countries have paid an increasingly high price throughout this crisis. Local inhabitants have seen their home towns and villages double in population, while many at the same time have had their rents tripled and salaries halved, putting strains on local families and contributing to resentment between communities.

23. DFID’s efforts to address this problem by including host communities in programmes and funding conflict-sensitive interventions, should continue alongside efforts to encourage other donors to do the same, and to hold implementing agencies accountable to ensure their programmes are addressing emergency needs and building long-term resilience to shocks and contributing to peace.