



House of Commons  
International Development  
Committee

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# **Syrian refugee crisis**

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**First Report of Session 2015–16**





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**First Report of Session 2015–16**

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relating to the report*

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## International Development Committee

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## Summary

The conflict in Syria has given rise to perhaps the most severe humanitarian crisis since the Second World War. Countries of the region were minor recipients of UK bilateral aid prior to the start of the conflict, yet the Government has responded impressively by contributing over £1.1 billion to the relief effort which receives our full backing. Despite the UK's relief efforts, we are concerned by the failure of other donors, particularly major European countries, to show similar commitment. This has exacerbated the present refugee crisis. We are seeing a reduction in basic humanitarian assistance and without a substantial increase in funding, the suffering of Syrians will worsen and more will risk their lives making dangerous journeys to secure a future in Europe. The Government should use all available channels to press other donors into making adequate contributions to the fund.

We would also like to stress the importance of directing a greater share of funding towards the most vulnerable refugees. This is particularly important for those who reside outside official camps: while they may be the most difficult to reach, they are often the most in need.

We received strong representations that Syrian refugees should be allowed to work in neighbouring countries. We recognise the fragilities in host-country labour markets and the inherent difficulties in absorbing Syrian workers. There must be international support for sustainable employment solutions that provide income, dignity and future prospects to Syrian refugees and members of host communities alike.

We heard evidence that approaches which seek to provide sustainable solutions to protracted crises are difficult to implement in the context of the current global humanitarian architecture. We urge the Government to use the World Humanitarian Summit in May 2016 to press for an approach to humanitarian crises that better coordinates short-term assistance with longer term development objectives such as education, healthcare and livelihoods.

We welcome the Government's expansion of the Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (VPRS) to resettle Syrian refugees, and commend the commitment to identify and assist the most vulnerable refugees through the scheme. We are concerned that the present processes may fail to include some vulnerable groups such as refugees from the LGBT community, refugees with disabilities, and Christians and other religious minorities. We recommend that the UK Government and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) monitor resettlement referrals and take action if these minorities are insufficiently represented among the cases received. We commend DFID on its efforts to ensure that aid reaches those who are most directly affected by the conflict in Syria itself. With the escalation of the UK's role in the conflict, DFID should form a central part of planning processes to ensure that the humanitarian situation within the country does not deteriorate further.

# 1 Introduction

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1. Prior to the outbreak of conflict in Syria, the Middle East region was a minor recipient of UK development assistance. Yet the civil war and the consequent humanitarian crisis have resulted in a substantial increase in the share of UK Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) spent in the region. In 2011, countries in the Middle East region received less than 0.3% of total UK bilateral ODA, compared with 8.2% in 2014.<sup>1</sup> Of the estimated Syrian population of 21.5 million, 4.3 million have fled to neighbouring states and depend on the support of these countries and the international community to survive. Within Syria itself, 13.5 million are in need of immediate humanitarian assistance.<sup>2</sup> It has been estimated that Syria's development has been set back by almost four decades as a direct result of the crisis.<sup>3</sup>

2. The situation in the region has been widely labelled as the greatest humanitarian crisis since the Second World War<sup>4</sup> and is likely to worsen with displacement continuing within Syria and throughout the region.<sup>5</sup> The UK has reacted with its largest financial response to a humanitarian crisis in history, allocating over £1.1 billion since 2012.<sup>6</sup> As such we decided that scrutinising the UK's response was a major priority for this Committee in its first report of the Parliament.

3. In September 2015, the Government announced that it would accept up to 20,000 Syrian refugees to be taken directly from the Middle East for resettlement in the UK over the course of this Parliament with 1,000 received by the end of 2015. The announcement signified a substantial scaling up of the pre-existing programme, the Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (VPRS), which was established in March 2014, and by mid-2015 had accepted 216 Syrian refugees for resettlement.

4. Our inquiry follows on from the previous Committee's inquiry into "UK Support for Humanitarian Relief in the Middle East" in 2014, with the key difference being the focus on resettlement of the most vulnerable.<sup>7</sup> We invited written evidence on the following issues:

- Are UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) processes effective enough to ensure that the most vulnerable are identified and relocated to the UK?
- Whether the focus is and should be entirely on children, or whether others, e.g. women who have been subject to sexual violence or minority groups, should be included
- Whether the camps from which refugees will be relocated are a true representation of the most vulnerable Syrians
- How "camp" is defined for the purposes of selecting refugees

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1 DFID, [Statistics on International Development 2015](#), Table A4b

2 John Ging, Director of Coordination and Response Division, OCHA ([SRC0033](#))

3 UN OCHA, [2015 Syria Response Plan and 2015-16 Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan](#)

4 World Food Programme ([SRC0025](#)) para 1

5 DFID, [Syria Operational Plan 2011-2016](#)

6 DFID, [Syria Crisis Response Summary](#)

7 International Development Committee, First Report of Session 2014-15, [UK Support for Humanitarian Relief in the Middle East](#), HC 248

- Clarification that no changes are proposed in what funding for refugees is categorised as ODA (Official development assistance) and counts towards the 0.7% ODA target
- What can be done to ensure that donors provide more funding for refugees in Jordan and Lebanon?

## 2 Funding, livelihoods and the humanitarian architecture

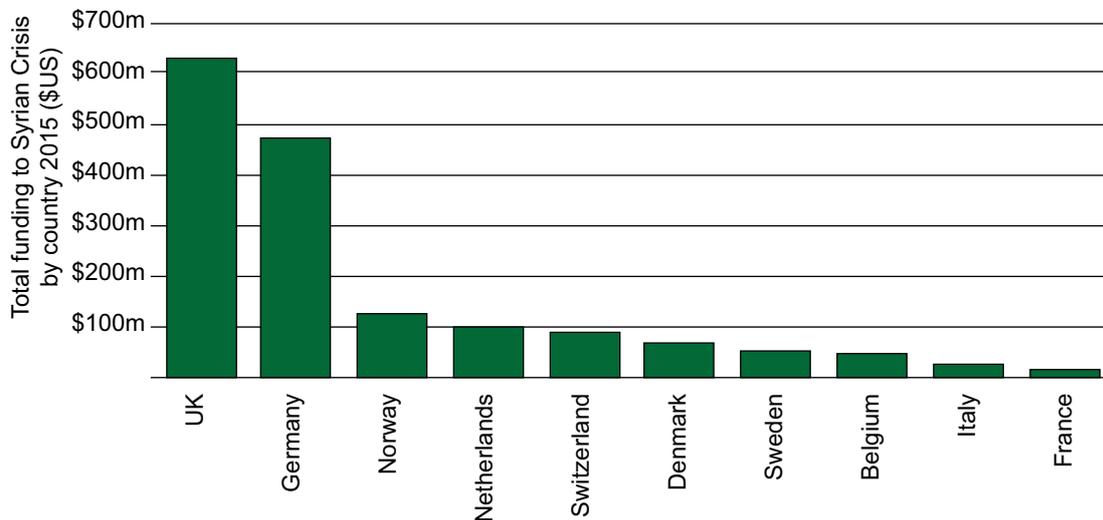
### Cuts to funding

5. Since the Syrian conflict began, DFID has allocated over £1.1 billion to support those affected, making the UK the second largest bilateral donor to the crisis. While the UK was widely commended for its funding contributions in evidence to our inquiry, concerns were also raised regarding the current status of the total global fund for the Syria crisis, with only half of the 2015 requirement fulfilled.<sup>8</sup> This shortfall is due to the under commitment of the UK's donor partners, and many Syrian refugees have cited reductions in humanitarian assistance as a major factor driving them towards Europe.<sup>9</sup> Analysis by Oxfam suggests that the UK is the only G7 country that has contributed its 'fair share' in funding. Whilst the UK has generously contributed 229% of its fair share, France, for example, has contributed 22%, Japan 24% and Italy 21%.<sup>10</sup> We are deeply concerned about the lack of financial support from the UK's partners, particularly European countries and members of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC).

Fig 1: Total funding to Syria Crisis, 2015 (\$US)

**"If all OECD countries met the goal of delivering 0.7% of GNI as ODA, and assuming a standard 10-15% of ODA were committed to humanitarian assistance, the current \$10.3 billion gap between humanitarian needs and humanitarian assistance would be met."**

*John Ging, Director of Coordination and Response Division, UNOCHA*



Source: UN OCHA, Financial Tracking Service (accessed 7 December 2015)

8 UN OCHA, [Financial Tracking Service](#) accessed 28 November 2015

9 World Food Programme (SRC0025) para 21

10 Oxfam, [Solidarity with Syrians \(October 2015\)](#)

6. The humanitarian situation has worsened over the past year and conditions for Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries continue to deteriorate.<sup>11</sup> A lack of adequate funding is likely to further exacerbate these conditions, especially for the most vulnerable. The World Food Programme (WFP) has been forced to reduce its overall food assistance by 30% in 2015 due to cuts, with over 355,000 vulnerable refugees in Jordan and Lebanon losing their assistance entirely, and those designated extremely vulnerable receiving only half the food assistance that they did at the end of 2014.<sup>12</sup> This has directly contributed to the increase in the proportion of Syrian refugees in Lebanon living below the poverty line from 50% in 2014 to 70% in 2015.<sup>13</sup>

7. Refugee families are resorting to behaviours such as begging, child labour and commercial sex work to help them cover rent, food and other basic needs in the face of reduced assistance. We are concerned that early and forced marriages of girls as young as thirteen has increased as funding has been cut.<sup>14</sup> George Graham of Save the Children explained:

It is because their parents are desperate and because they see that as a way to “keep them safe”, or, frankly, to have one less mouth to feed.<sup>15</sup>

8. Children have also been withdrawn from school and sent to work in efforts to make ends meet. In Jordan, the proportion of under-aged children in work increased from 5% before September 2015 to 29% now, and in Lebanon, the share of those removed from school has doubled since 2014.<sup>16</sup> DFID has taken steps to address this problem, in particular through the No Lost Generation Initiative, which Minister of State Desmond Swayne MP described as “our principal offering”.<sup>17</sup> Yet if underfunding by other donors endures, this global effort to minimise the adverse impacts of the crisis on Syrian children is likely to fail.

## Host community pressures

9. The vast majority of Syrian refugees—around 90% according to some—live in local communities rather than camps, placing immense pressure on local resources and services, including health and public education systems.<sup>18</sup> Lebanon’s population is now close to the levels previously projected for 2050, with the refugee influx the equivalent to the UK accommodating nearly 14 million refugees.<sup>19</sup>

10. At a national level, concerns have been expressed by Syria’s neighbours about the fiscal sustainability of accommodating so many refugees. The total fiscal impact of the crisis on Jordan in 2015 is expected to stand at around US\$2.07 billion.<sup>20</sup> The Jordanian Embassy has highlighted the impact of Syrian refugees on the economy as Jordan’s principal challenge and concern.<sup>21</sup>

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11 World Food Programme ([SRC0025](#)) para 2

12 World Food Programme ([SRC0025](#)) para 8

13 World Food Programme ([SRC0025](#)) para 18

14 CAFOD and Caritas Lebanon Migrant Centre ([SRC0023](#)) para 2.6

15 Q30

16 World Food Programme ([SRC0025](#)) para 13

17 Q67

18 Q13

19 UNHCR, [10 Shocking Facts on the Syrian Refugee Crisis in Lebanon](#)

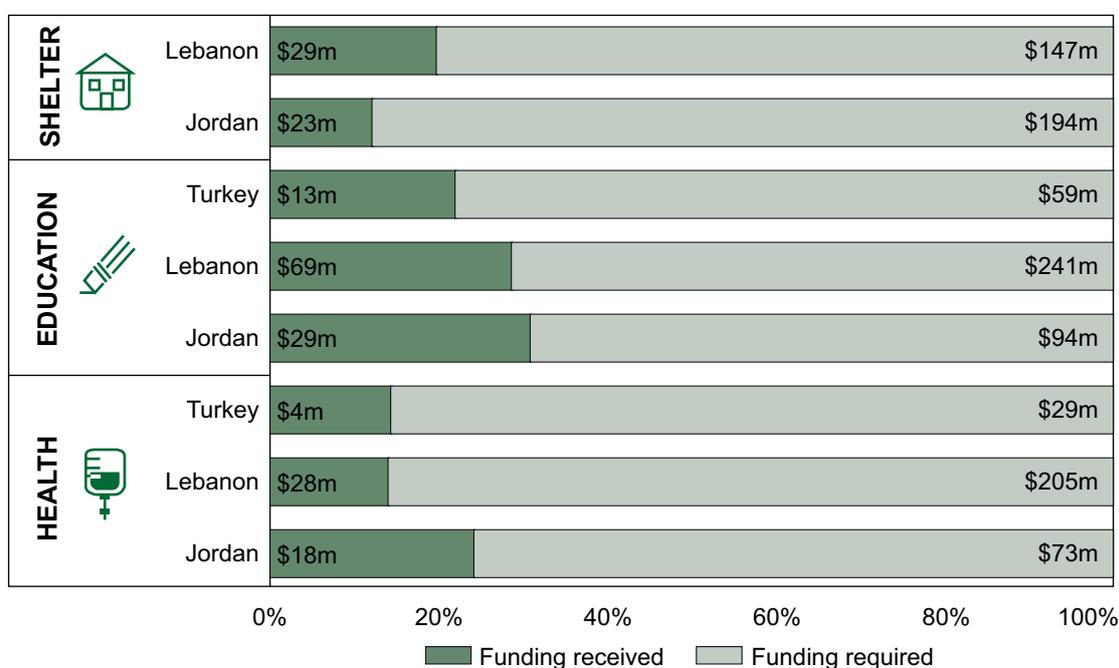
20 Embassy of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan ([SRC0030](#)) para 11

21 Embassy of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan ([SRC0030](#)) para 6

11. Refugee-hosting countries, particularly Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq, are at the forefront of the crisis and continue to bear the brunt of its political, economic, social and security consequences. Turkish authorities alone have spent almost US\$8 billion on services to support Syrian refugees so far, while contributions from the international community have amounted to US\$417 million—a situation which we have been told is simply unsustainable.<sup>22</sup>

12. Easing the pressures on local services in refugee-hosting countries should be a key priority. An important instrument to achieve this is the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP)—a model to better coordinate national plans and channel assistance into the sectors where it is urgently needed. In addition, the 3RP combines humanitarian support for refugees with development assistance to hosts, yet it is useless without adequate funding. The 3RP is just 56% funded for 2015, and as figure 2 indicates, key sectors of particular concern to us are severely underfunded.

Fig 2: Regional funding status of key sectors through the 3RP (US\$)



Source: adapted from 3RP, [Regional Progress Report: June 2015](#)

13. **We strongly commend DFID for setting an exemplary standard in its commitment to funding humanitarian assistance to address the Syrian crisis. We are very concerned at the lack of financial support from other donors. Wealthy countries again committed to the goal of spending 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI) on Official Development Assistance (ODA) this summer at the Financing for Development conference in Addis Ababa, but are not being held to account for delivery against this commitment. This is a serious problem in the face of increasing humanitarian needs. Evidence indicates a link between the reduction in assistance and increases in dangerous onward migration from the Middle East to Europe.<sup>23</sup> We urge the Government to apply more pressure on other donors to meet their 0.7% commitment and direct an appropriate proportion of ODA towards the Syrian crisis. Efforts should be focused towards meeting the full financial requirement of the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP), in order to**

<sup>22</sup> Turkish Embassy in London ([SRC0005](#)), para 5

<sup>23</sup> World Food Programme ([SRC0025](#)) para 21

***support Governments of the region through a coordinated strategy to strengthen basic services in these countries, ease host-community pressures, and help prevent dangerous migration journeys.***

14. The crisis has also taken its toll at the community level, as a high influx of refugees has been destabilising for host countries: it has generated significant social tensions between refugees and locals, largely due to increased competition for resources and for work.<sup>24</sup> Chatham House highlighted the risks of the situation and stated that local frustrations with the perceived inaction of the Government and international community are already on the rise. If not addressed, these tensions could boil over into serious social unrest and contribute towards further regional instability.<sup>25</sup> One way to help diffuse host community pressures may be through the use of cash programming.

**Box 1: What is cash programming?**

Humanitarian assistance involves transfers to individuals affected by conflicts or natural disasters. Such transfers can be provided either in-kind, in the form of food, shelter materials, or blankets, or it can be provided in cash (including voucher schemes), enabling people to decide what to buy based on their own needs. Research shows that cash-based assistance can have numerous benefits, particularly with regards to efficiency. A larger proportion of the total budget goes to beneficiaries (85% for a project in Somalia compared with 35% of in-kind food aid), it can increase the number of people reached with the same level of funding (by 18% in Lebanon), and can reduce fraud risks.<sup>1</sup>

While there has been an increase in the use of cash programming globally in recent years—from less than 1% of humanitarian spending in 2014 to around 6% now—it still represents a relatively small proportion.<sup>2</sup> DFID has identified scaling up the use of cash as a key priority, reflected by the recent High Level Panel on Humanitarian Cash Transfers it convened to look at the barriers to moving towards a more cash-driven response to crises. It recently allocated £15m to a UNHCR programme in Jordan which provides a monthly cash grant to the most vulnerable refugees.

1 Overseas Development Institute/Centre for Global Development, [Doing Cash Differently](#) (September 2015), p19-20

2 Overseas Development Institute/Centre for Global Development, [Doing Cash Differently](#) (September 2015), p9

15. Perhaps the most important benefit in the context of the Syria crisis is the ability of cash transfer programmes to better support local markets. Poorly directed in-kind assistance can flood local markets, disrupt local supply chains and discourage production. Such disruption to local economies can have a negative impact on communities and generate hostility towards refugees. Greater use of cash transfers can help to reduce these tensions by enabling refugees to support local markets for goods and services.<sup>26</sup> As Minister of State Desmond Swayne told us:

if those people come to market with money to spend in your shops, they are going to be a whole lot more welcome than if they had been sent a food parcel and do not go shopping.<sup>27</sup>

24 Coffey International Development ([SRC0009](#)) para 7

25 Chatham House ([SRC0027](#)) para 4

26 Overseas Development Institute/Centre for Global Development, [Doing Cash Differently](#) (September 2015), p14

27 Q66

16. The economic benefits of cash assistance can be substantial. In Lebanon, cash has been shown to have a multiplier effect of 2.13, meaning that one dollar provided in humanitarian assistance generates \$2.13 for the local economy.<sup>28</sup> The US\$51 million in cash-based humanitarian assistance injected into the economy in winter 2013/14 generated additional income of US\$109 million for the local population. Cash based interventions are particularly effective in urban settings, which is where the majority of Syrian refugees reside.<sup>29</sup>

17. As the Minister of State indicated, refugees have a better understanding of their own needs than any aid agency.<sup>30</sup> Cash programming can better link the humanitarian response with these needs by allowing them to buy things themselves, rather than being given things they might not require.<sup>31</sup> Cash-based assistance is particularly relevant for the most vulnerable as aid agencies often lack the detailed data required to understand the nature of their vulnerabilities. In particular, evidence suggests that there is under-reporting of conditions by refugees with disabilities.<sup>32</sup>

**18. We are gravely concerned about the increased tensions between host communities and refugees, particularly given the risk that such tensions might further contribute to regional instability. We have received strong evidence about the need for a new approach to humanitarian assistance. Research suggests that cash programming may provide a valuable means of delivering support in a way that offers dignity for refugees and facilitates peaceful co-existence with host communities by benefitting local economies. We recommend that DFID build upon its existing efforts and scale up the use of cash-based assistance in the region. It should use the recommendations of the High Level Panel on Cash Transfers as a blueprint for how to do so, and strive to make cash its default means of delivering humanitarian assistance. This is particularly important for targeting the most vulnerable, as refugees with specific needs will have a better understanding of how to meet these needs than aid agencies. We are also gravely concerned about the overall impact on the economies of host countries, and urge DFID to work with the World Bank and other institutions to ensure that they receive the necessary long-term support which is vital to their economic survival.**

## Support in the region

19. The UK Government's strategy has focused on helping refugees in Syria and elsewhere in the Middle East, yet other donors have been directing resources towards resettling refugees and supporting them in their own countries. While we recognise that resettlement is the most appropriate option in certain circumstances, we also received representations that for most refugees it is not in their best interests. As George Graham of Save the Children told us:

it is in the interests of the majority of refugees to stay relatively close to where they come from because they would ideally like to go back to where they came from.<sup>33</sup>

28 Venton, C., S. Bailey and S. Pongracz, *Value for money in cash transfers in emergencies* (February 2015), p26

29 UNHCR, *An Introduction to Cash-Based Interventions in UNHCR Operations*, p5

30 Q66

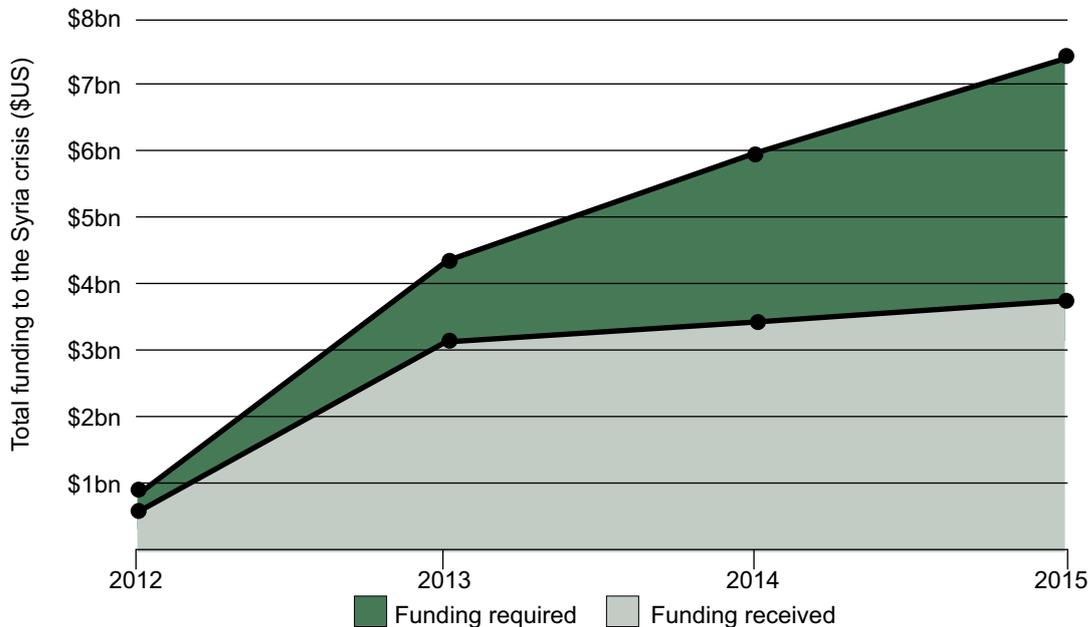
31 Overseas Development Institute/Centre for Global Development, *Doing Cash Differently* (September 2015), p13

32 Q33

33 Q34

*Whilst the UK Government strategy has focused on helping refugees in Syria and elsewhere in the Middle East, many of the British public appear unaware of the extent of this. The Government should ensure that the public are aware of both the extent of its support and the benefits of supporting refugees in their own country.*

Fig 3: Total funding for Syria Crisis, 2012 to 2015



Source: UN OCHA, Financial Tracking Service

20. Ensuring the best possible outcomes for the majority of refugees requires helping them stay near their homes, yet this in turn necessitates investments *in the region* to provide an adequate standard of living and the prospect of a better future. John Ging, Director of the Operational Division, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) told us that such investments are far less costly than providing for refugees in Europe:

The dramatic increase of refugee flows into Europe entails huge costs for the countries generously receiving refugees - many multiples of the cost of early investment in meeting basic needs and bolstering public services in host countries in the region.<sup>34</sup>

We commend the Government's support within the region for three reasons. Firstly, evidence suggests that despite the operational challenges of delivering assistance in the Middle East, it is more cost-effective to support refugees in the region than it is to direct resources towards resettling them in the UK. Secondly, we heard that it is actually in the best interests of the majority of refugees to stay closer to home, though they require adequate funding to support this. Thirdly, one of the key factors driving refugees towards dangerous trips across the Mediterranean is cuts to humanitarian assistance, which in turn is driven by insufficient funding from donors.<sup>35</sup> This suggests that sufficient funding to help humanitarian organisations support an adequate standard of living in the region will deter many more refugees from risking their lives

<sup>34</sup> John Ging, Director of Coordination and Response Division, UN OCHA ([SRC0033](#))

<sup>35</sup> World Food Programme ([SRC0025](#)) para 21

**in this way. As John Ging of UN OCHA wrote, it is only the prospect of a better future that will prevent refugees from leaving the region.**<sup>36</sup>

## Jobs and Livelihoods

### *Impacts of labour market restrictions*

21. One of the recurring themes that emerged in this inquiry was legal access of Syrian refugees to host country labour markets. The vast majority of Syrian refugees have no, or limited, legal access to work. Yet as humanitarian assistance decreases, it is inevitable that increasing numbers of refugees will be depending on work opportunities to survive.<sup>37</sup>

22. The lack of access to legal work means that refugees are forced into jobs in the ‘informal’ (i.e. non-legal) sector, which is often associated with poor employment conditions and increased poverty.<sup>38</sup> It is the desperation of their circumstances that forces refugees to seek such employment opportunities despite the lower wages, harsher conditions and fewer rights. With such a large influx of refugees, the structure of host country economies and the nature of economic security has changed—a change which the host countries are struggling to manage. As Nicholas Grisewood, Crisis Migration Technical Specialist at the International Labour Organization (ILO), said:

The unfortunate thing is that, with what has now become a protracted crisis, these issues are now becoming structural.<sup>39</sup>

23. Children are also directly affected by host country labour market policies in a number of ways. Firstly, informal economies often escape regulation: for example, children as young as six have been found to be working in Lebanon.<sup>40</sup> While Syrian refugees in Lebanon were initially permitted to work, restrictions were introduced in late 2014 and those caught working illegally are subject to fines, detention or even deportation.<sup>41</sup> Some parents have said that as a result they send their children to work because they are less likely to be checked for licenses by employers and authorities and subsequently punished.<sup>42</sup> Secondly, in countries where there are few opportunities for work, returns to education are limited. The lack of foreseeable benefits from education through future wages means that there is less rationale to incur the cost of schooling now. As a result, parents are more likely to remove their children from school.<sup>43</sup>

### *Possible solutions*

24. We recognise that the need to allow refugees to work is a complex issue unfolding in an incredibly complicated environment. Prior to the crisis, unemployment in Jordan was high at 12.7% and, as the size of the labour force has grown, employment generation has

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36 John Ging, Director of Coordination and Response Division, UN OCHA ([SRC0033](#))

37 ILO, *Regional Dialogue on Labour Market Impact of the Syrian Refugee Crisis in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt* (July 2015) p2

38 ILO, ‘[Informal Economy](#),’ accessed 1 December 2015

39 Q48

40 World Vision ([SRC0018](#)) para 13

41 Norwegian Refugee Council, *No Place to Call Home (June 2015)*, p13

42 World Vision ([SRC0018](#)) para 13

43 ILO, *World Report on Child Labour in 2015* (June 2015), p xviii

not kept pace.<sup>44</sup> These pressures have been exacerbated by the influx of Syrian refugees, and the concerns of host country governments are understandable.<sup>45</sup> We would not recommend a disorderly opening of labour markets to refugees. As Nicholas Grisewood of the ILO told us:

simply opening a labour market is likely to lead to further chaos in what is already a relatively chaotic environment.<sup>46</sup>

Demanding that host countries absorb Syrian refugees into their labour markets without support is unlikely to be a sustainable course of action.

25. In response to a report by our predecessor Committee and in oral evidence to this inquiry, DFID referred to discussions with host country governments on the issue of refugee employment.<sup>47</sup> In his oral evidence the Minister of State described such discussions as “a work in progress”.<sup>48</sup> **We welcome the Minister’s statement that he hoped to bring forward a proposal early next year,<sup>49</sup> and emphasise that such a proposal must move beyond short-term employment responses towards finding areas of economic growth that can create sustainable employment solutions. This should involve the provision of education beyond primary school age to include skills training. We see a coordinated and carefully planned effort to address this issue as essential to the long-term sustainability of refugees’ presence in host countries.**

26. In his evidence, Nicholas Grisewood referred to a number of sectors of the Jordanian economy as opportunities for employment creation, including transport, alternative energy sources and recycling. Not only can investments in such areas provide short-term employment, but also jobs in the long-term through the improvement and maintenance of new and existing infrastructure.<sup>50</sup> Mr Grisewood also commented on the need for a knowledge base of opportunities, saying:

We need to find areas of economic growth and we need to do that through broader economic data analysis, and that is something that has not really happened so far. We lack data. We lack knowledge. We lack understanding in terms of where potential opportunities are.<sup>51</sup>

27. **As the refugee crisis has become increasingly protracted, the need for legal employment opportunities for Syrian refugees has grown. Evidence suggests that they want to work, yet legal restrictions mean they are forced to remain reliant on humanitarian assistance or find work in the informal sector. This model is unsustainable in the long-term and has a particularly negative effect on child refugees. DFID can help develop employment opportunities in host countries and put the Syrian refugee crisis response on a more sustainable development footing. Given that other countries are making considerable investment commitments in Jordan, we recommend that DFID engage with the Jordan Investment Commission and other partners to explore**

44 ILO, *The Impact of the Syrian Refugee Crisis on the Labour Market in Jordan: A Preliminary Analysis* (April 2014), p8

45 John Ging, Director of Coordination and Response Division, UN OCHA ([SRC0033](#))

46 Q51

47 International Development Committee, Third Special Report of Session 2014—15, *UK Support for Humanitarian Relief in the Middle East: Government Response to the Committee’s First Report of Session 2014–15, HC 673*

48 Q55

49 Q55

50 Q49

51 Q49

*opportunities to leverage these projects to create jobs for refugees. We recommend that DFID use its expertise in the field of economic development and works with suitable partners to identify and develop opportunities for investment, economic growth and sustainable job creation to the benefit of Syrian refugees and host communities alike. Specifically it should extend its inclusive growth diagnostic exercise to refugee hosting countries in the Middle East.*

28. We see the identification of long-term opportunities to create jobs in countries hosting refugees as a key response to the crisis. *DFID should make use of CDC Group's expertise in private sector investment and should discuss CDC's remit with the CDC board and allow it to invest in countries hosting refugees. In addition, DFID should provide CDC with specific funds for it to invest on DFID's behalf in sustainable job-creating businesses in those countries.*

## The global humanitarian system

29. Francois Reybet-Degat, Deputy Director of UNHCR for the Middle East and North Africa Region, told us: "Today, the global aid architecture is unfit for purpose for what we are witnessing".<sup>52</sup> This is a view that much of the evidence to this inquiry has echoed.

30. When gaps in essential services emerge in conflict or disaster-affected countries, humanitarian organisations are forced to step in, often becoming the default providers of these services.<sup>53</sup> Once affected populations are reliant on humanitarian assistance for the provision of such services, it is difficult to withdraw support. This is demonstrated by the fact that nearly 90% of humanitarian funding from OECD Member States is spent on countries that are in long-term crisis such as Syria.<sup>54</sup>

31. Responses to the Syria crisis have involved repetitive, short-term actions to meet the immediate needs of refugees. While meeting these needs is undoubtedly important, such an approach cannot evolve into a long-term solution without carefully considered planning and effort. John Ging, Director of the Operational Division at UN OCHA illustrated the implications of the current system in written evidence, saying:

Humanitarian funding can help those in the greatest need to survive the impacts of displacement and conflict over the short-term, but it is only the prospect of a better future – of education for people's children, of adequate healthcare and livelihoods opportunities – that will prevent people having to make the difficult choice to risk their own lives and those of their families by leaving the region.

32. **The global approach to protracted crises should be a key topic at next year's World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul. We are concerned about the lack of a comprehensive, long-term strategy to deal with such crises and shift funding from a reliance on humanitarian assistance towards a more development-centred approach. We recommend that DFID focus its efforts at the Summit on this issue in three respects. Firstly, promote early investment in public services and economic infrastructure which can yield long-term dividends that a narrow focus on immediate humanitarian needs**

52 Q14

53 John Ging, Director of Coordination and Response Division, UN OCHA ([SRC0033](#))

54 John Ging, Director of Coordination and Response Division, UN OCHA ([SRC0033](#))

*cannot. Secondly, negotiate commitments to provide humanitarian and development funding over multi-year timeframes, enabling the response to be better managed and more strategic. Thirdly, focus on developing areas of economic growth which will create sustainable employment solutions and ultimately help a country from aid dependency.*

### 3 The needs of the most vulnerable refugees

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33. The issue of vulnerability lies at the core of resettlement decisions. As Francois Reybet-Degat of the UNHCR told us:

resettlement is one of the three durable solutions along with voluntary repatriation and local integration. It is a very important durable solution insofar as it targets the most vulnerable. It is a sensitive one not just because of the vulnerability, but because it is one that is only available to a minority of the refugees.<sup>55</sup>

34. Given that the 20,000 quota is around 0.5% of the total number of registered refugees in the region, it is all the more important that those receiving refugees act in accordance with UNHCR processes and target resettlement towards the most vulnerable refugees. Sanjayan Srikanthan of the International Rescue Committee (IRC) warned that the risk for the most vulnerable, particularly women and girls, is that they are often forgotten when it comes to assistance. **The challenge for the Government and its partners, chiefly UNHCR, therefore lies in ensuring that the processes for identifying and assisting the most vulnerable refugees are robust enough to reach those most in need.**

#### The most vulnerable among those left behind in Syria?

35. While the focus of this inquiry has been on refugees within reach of the resettlement scheme in neighbouring countries, we acknowledge that the majority of the worst affected and most vulnerable are those within Syria itself. In addition to the direct threat of the conflict—over 240,000 people have been killed, more than a third of them civilians<sup>56</sup>—basic services are in a state of collapse. The water infrastructure in particular has come under repeated attack and the health system is struggling (an estimated 60% of hospitals have been damaged).<sup>57</sup> The economy has contracted by an estimated 40% since 2011 affecting livelihoods, depleting savings and increasing dependence on aid.<sup>58</sup> As a result, some 13.5 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance—10% more than at this time last year.<sup>59</sup> In written evidence, the International Committee of the Red Cross told us:

The escalating conflict, and new conflict patterns are triggering, and will continue to trigger, displacement - some of which will mean more refugees - but those most vulnerable will remain in Syria itself.<sup>60</sup>

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55 Q1

56 International Committee of the Red Cross ([SRC0029](#))

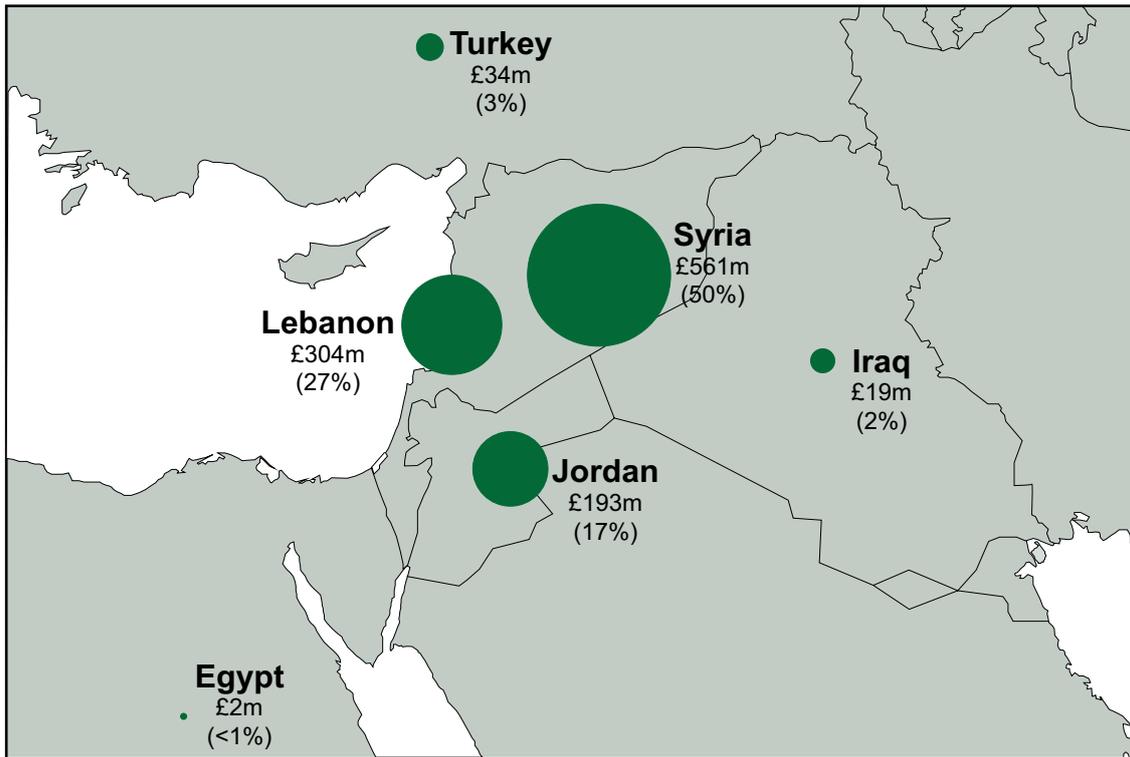
57 International Committee of the Red Cross ([SRC0029](#))

58 UN OCHA, [Updated Overview: 2015 Syria Response Plan and 2015-16 Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan \(March 2015\)](#), p2

59 John Ging, Director of Coordination and Response Division, UN OCHA ([SRC0033](#))

60 International Committee of the Red Cross ([SRC0029](#))

Fig 4: DFID funding for activities in Syria and the region by country since 2012



Source: adapted from DFID Annex A ([SRC0032](#))

36. 50% of DFID’s aid to the crisis has been spent within Syria,<sup>61</sup> with around £128 million being provided to the World Food Programme alone to help combat food insecurity and malnutrition.<sup>62</sup> We commend DFID’s efforts to ensure that assistance reaches those in need within Syria despite the significant operational challenges in doing so.

37. In written evidence, John Ging of UNOCHA told us that inaccessibility is a major barrier to providing necessary levels of support. Some 4.6 million people, including 2 million children, live in hard-to-reach locations and so far this year, only around a quarter of those in need in these areas have been reached each month—some of whom have not even had all their basic needs met.<sup>63</sup>

38. Matthew Wyatt, DFID Deputy Director for the Middle East discussed the operational challenges associated with access:

The problem in reaching the most vulnerable is when they are in those areas where there is either active conflict or where parties to the conflict, particularly ISIL [Daesh], just make it impossible to work. That is the biggest constraint that we are facing<sup>64</sup>

61 DFID, [Syria Crisis Response Summary \(October 2015\)](#)

62 DFID Funding table, Appendix 1

63 John Ging, Director of Coordination and Response Division, UN OCHA ([SRC0033](#))

64 Q64

39. We note the Resolution of the House (2 December) supporting action against Daesh in Syria, including through air strikes.<sup>65</sup> We warmly welcome the House’s support for the Government’s humanitarian assistance to Syrian refugees. The recent escalation of military efforts will have an impact on conditions faced by civilians in Syria, and may well make it more difficult for DFID and other agencies to deliver humanitarian aid. *The UK must do all it can to mitigate the risk of worsening the humanitarian situation. The potential humanitarian consequences of protracted military engagement must be a driving force for The UK Government in pressing for ceasefire and political settlement through the vehicle of the Vienna talks.*

### Addressing the needs of the most vulnerable in camps and host communities outside Syria

40. While it is difficult to ascertain precise figures, Francois Reybet-Degat told us that across the region around 90% of Syrian refugees reside outside of camps in urban and rural areas.<sup>66</sup> Moreover, the majority of the most vulnerable are outside camps.<sup>67</sup> Various organisations expressed concerns regarding the unique challenges faced by refugees not based in camps, including but not limited to:

- Unequal access to assistance from UNHCR and other agencies;
- The requirement to pay rent which places a huge financial strain on refugee families—in Lebanon refugees often pay as much as \$200 per month in rent, representing up to 90% of their monthly income;<sup>68</sup>
- Severe water shortages, particularly in Jordan which is the world’s fourth poorest country in terms of water;<sup>69</sup> and
- Poor sanitation which poses health risks including the threat of cholera and polio.<sup>70</sup>

Sanjayan Srikanthan told us that:

The reason refugees select urban settings where they are less visible is very much that reason of dignity, and about trying to return to some sort of normality as they had before the conflict. [...]The risk, particularly for the most vulnerable, and particularly for women and girls, is that they are often forgotten when it comes to aid and risks of exploitation.<sup>71</sup>

41. In its written evidence, World Vision acknowledged the challenges of assessing refugee vulnerabilities, particularly in host communities, but asserted that this should not be a rationale for focusing on camps in identifying resettlement cases.<sup>72</sup> Francois Reybet-Degat reassured us that this is not the case:

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65 HC Deb, 2 December 2015, [col 323](#)

66 Q13

67 Q12

68 CAFOD ([SRC0023](#)) para 2.4

69 Embassy of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan ([SRC0030](#)) para 9

70 Mercy Corps ([SRC0010](#)) para 2.1

71 Q12

72 World Vision ([SRC0018](#)) para 28

The question of the location of the refugee does not come as a prime criterion. Actually, a minimal amount of submissions for resettlements come from people residing in camps.<sup>73</sup>

This was confirmed in UNHCR's written evidence, which stated that of all Syrians that have been submitted by UNHCR for resettlement consideration, 1.1% were camp-based while 98.9% were based outside of camps.<sup>74</sup> This is a strong indication that the reach of UNHCR resettlement referral processes extends beyond the camps and into the host communities which we commend.

42. UNHCR's resettlement criteria focus on vulnerability. The fact that almost 99% of resettlement referrals come from host communities suggests that this is where the most vulnerable are concentrated. UNHCR told us that approximately 45% of its expenditure in Jordan is for Syrian refugees in camps, despite hosting only 17% of the Syrian refugee population.<sup>75</sup> We are concerned about the implication that the most vulnerable refugees, those based in host communities, are receiving a disproportionately low share of UNHCR funding.

43. In 2014, our predecessor Committee recommended that DFID ensure that an appropriate share of aid reaches host communities.<sup>76</sup> **We welcome DFID's approach of directing approximately 75% of overall humanitarian assistance towards host communities.**<sup>77</sup> However, major aid agencies such as UNHCR, which are a conduit for much of the UK's financial support, should be doing the same. *DFID should press all UN agencies and NGOs, particularly the major UK aid recipients, to ensure that vulnerable refugees outside of camps receive an appropriate level of support. This must include directing resources towards refugees in host communities because they are the most vulnerable and have disproportionately suffered from cuts to humanitarian assistance.*<sup>78</sup>

## Vulnerable Groups

44. Most Syrian refugees will have some degree of vulnerability given the situation that they have fled, and it is important that the definition of vulnerability not be limited to any particular group or set of groups. Chatham House warned that a group-based, rather than individual needs-based, approach to resettlement would have serious implications for the UK's reputation in Syria and the wider region.<sup>79</sup> UNHCR strongly emphasised their "strictly needs-based and non-discriminatory approach" both in written and oral evidence.<sup>80</sup> However, much of the evidence we received indicates that vulnerability is not evenly spread across all refugees, and that certain groups are subject to conditions that heighten the risks they face.

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73 Q13

74 UNHCR Annex A ([SRC0028](#))

75 UNHCR Annex A ([SRC0028](#))

76 International Development Committee, First Report of Session 2014–15, [UK Support for Humanitarian Relief in the Middle East](#), HC 248

77 International Development Committee, Third Special Report of Session 2014–15, [UK Support for Humanitarian Relief in the Middle East: Government Response to the Committee's First Report of Session 2014–15](#), HC 673

78 World Food Programme ([SRC0025](#)) para 1

79 Chatham House ([SRC0027](#)) para 7

80 UNHCR ([SRC0026](#))

45. For this inquiry, we looked at four sub-groups of Syrian refugees that face particular challenges in the region: refugees with disabilities, refugees from the LGBT community, Christian and religious minority refugees and children. While this is not an exhaustive list and there are a number of other groups subject to high vulnerability, these were the most prevalent groups emerging from the written evidence submitted to the inquiry.

### **Access to Support Networks**

46. Some Syrian refugees, particularly those from the LGBT community, are vulnerable because they do not have access to emotional and financial support networks. These networks are key in maintaining a refugee's physical and mental well-being.<sup>81</sup> The criminalisation of same-sex sexual acts in host countries, for example Lebanon's 'morality laws', contributes to the prevalence of homophobia and transphobia. There is evidence that this can result in LGBT refugees being ostracised from these vital sources of support.<sup>82</sup>

47. While most refugees can count on support from their friends, family members and neighbours, Haley Bobseine from Human Rights Watch told us that many LGBT refugees face continued persecution from other members of the refugee community and their families. She also commented on barriers that LGBT refugees face in accessing basic services—refugees in Lebanon can often face discrimination when accessing health and other services.<sup>83</sup> There have been initiatives by organisations and ad hoc groups to assist LGBT refugees who are lacking in support. Evidence suggests that access to these specialised services may be limited because, particularly in Turkey, such services are concentrated around major cities and are not provided in rural areas where many refugees are located.<sup>84</sup>

### **Camps and registration**

48. We heard that the fear of persecution, particularly among Christians, leads many refugees to avoid refugee camps.<sup>85</sup> In her evidence, Zoe Smith of Open Doors UK stressed the nature of this fear and explained the reasons that many Christians do not feel safe entering camps:

Syrian society, whilst it was rightly celebrated for its pluralism, was also quite structured and there were quite a lot of conflicts between the different groups in society. [...] The UNHCR camps generally have a Sunni majority, so they tend to dictate the culture of the camps, which is not a bad thing per se, but if your culture is different then you stand out and you are more easily a target, which makes you nervous to go there.<sup>86</sup>

Barnabas Fund argued that there is a history of militant groups “dominating and controlling” refugee camps in past regional conflicts, and that this adds to the feeling of danger perceived by Syrian Christians.<sup>87</sup> As we have noted, not being within a camp does

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81 Heartland Alliance, [No Place for People Like You](#) (December 2014), p31

82 Heartland Alliance, [No Place for People Like You](#) (December 2014), p31

83 Q22

84 Q27

85 Tearfund ([SRC0011](#)) para 6

86 Q23

87 Barnabas Fund ([SRC0031](#))

not exclude refugees from consideration for resettlement. However, evidence suggests that refugees in host communities are less visible to the relevant authorities.<sup>88</sup>

49. Save the Children stressed that the problem lies not just in the avoidance of camps but in the under-engagement in the UNHCR registration process altogether. Under registration is particularly problematic among certain groups - the most vulnerable are often not registered with UNHCR and there is significant confusion and distrust of the registration process.<sup>89</sup> While figures are unreliable, estimates and media reports suggest that there may be as many as 200,000 to 400,000 unregistered Syrian refugees in Lebanon alone.<sup>90</sup> Evidence from Lebanon suggests that under registration arises from barriers to access, including: lack of information, misconceptions about the process, and physical access due to issues with transport and mobility. Crucially, it seems that these barriers may affect some groups disproportionately.<sup>91</sup>

50. Under registration—coupled with an under reporting of circumstances that may characterise vulnerability—is a particular concern as regards refugees with disabilities. A Handicap International (HI) survey in 2014 found that 20% of refugees in Lebanon suffered from some sort of impairment (6% with a severe impairment), while just 1.4% of UNHCR-registered refugees in Lebanon were recorded as having a disability.<sup>92</sup> Aleema Shivji of HI told us that this disparity reflects the difficulties inherent in reporting certain types of disabilities, such as intellectual impairments, mental health problems, or hearing impairments.<sup>93</sup> As Ms. Shivji succinctly put it:

They are hidden, they are not visible and they are not picked up in registration systems.

Despite the difficulties in doing so, recognising and recording such disabilities at the point of registration is essential to ensuring refugees receive due care. This represents a key facet of addressing the needs of vulnerable refugees.

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88 Q12

89 Save the Children (SRC0016) par 2.2

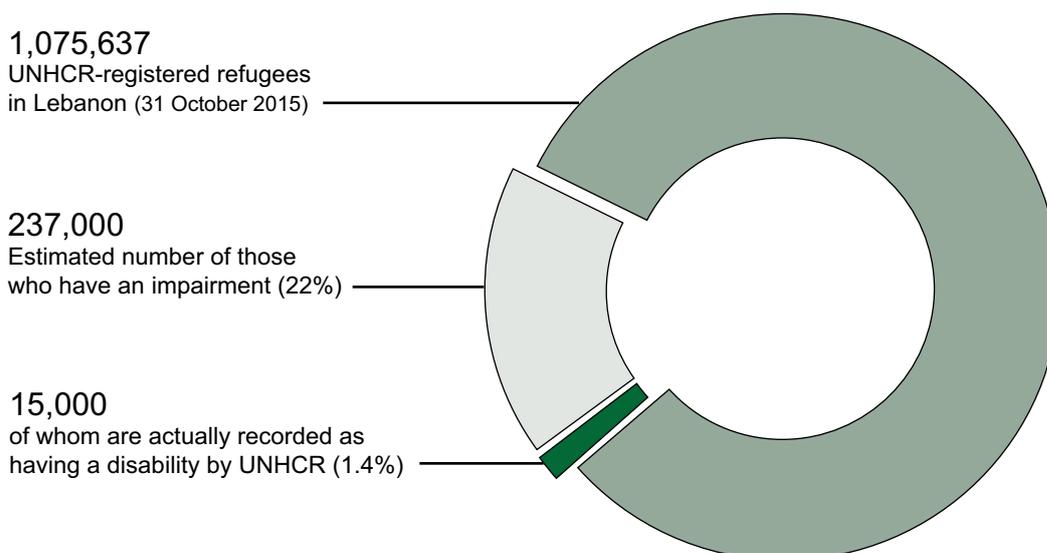
90 Lebanon Humanitarian INGO Forum, *Background Paper on Unregistered Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (July 2014)*, p3

91 Lebanon Humanitarian INGO Forum, *Background Paper on Unregistered Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (July 2014)*, p11-13

92 HelpAge International/Handicap International, *Hidden victims of the Syrian crisis: disabled, injured and older refugees (April 2014)*, p6

93 Q33

Fig 5: Under-reporting of Disabilities



Source: UNHCR Inter-agency Information Sharing Portal and Handicap International/Help the Aged International

51. Richard Harrington MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State jointly at the Home Office, the Department for Communities and Local Government, and the Department for International Development, told us that, as part of the resettlement programme, UK officials receive a daily report of the people going through the system detailing any vulnerability categories they belong to.<sup>94</sup> The Minister also identified the potential for the UK Government to contribute to and improve the work of UNHCR, as he told us in reference to its processes:

We have a good relationship with UNHCR and I believe they really are doing their best, but if there are gaps in it, it is not like they are going to tell us to go away.<sup>95</sup>

52. **The risks faced by anyone that has been forced to flee their home are substantial. However, in the context of the Syrian crisis, certain groups are affected in ways that heighten their vulnerability. For these people resettlement is an appropriate and durable solution. We commend the UNHCR and their commitment to ensuring that processes for identifying the vulnerable are robust in an extremely complex environment with significant operational challenges. Yet evidence indicated non-registration by certain vulnerable groups, who prefer to stay outside official UN camps, is occurring and that, despite best efforts, it appears that under-registration may well also be an issue. We recommend that the Government continue to carefully monitor the profiles of cases referred for resettlement, including, where possible, demographics, sexuality, religion, disability status, and the location from which refugees have been selected and whether from within or outside official UN camps. Such monitoring outputs should be fed back to UNHCR to identify any groups that are underrepresented in referrals and establish and execute action to remedy this, thus ensuring that UNHCR's principle of equal access is realised.**

53. We are seriously concerned about the Government of Lebanon's decision in May 2015 to ban UNHCR from registering Syrian refugees. As a result, refugees crossing the border

94 Q136

95 Q141

into Lebanon in the last six months have been unable to access international assistance and protection, making them more vulnerable and less identifiable.<sup>96</sup> Minister Harrington told us:

We are asking the Lebanese Government if they will allow renewal of registration. If people are not registered, we do not want them to be discriminated against because they are not registered.<sup>97</sup>

54. Lebanese authorities have stated that the ban would remain in place until a new mechanism for the registration of refugees is established.<sup>98</sup> Yet in the meantime, the number of registered Syrian refugees in Lebanon has actually fallen by over 100,000 since its peak in April 2015. We are gravely concerned about the fate of these missing refugees as well those who have been denied registration and thus access to support.<sup>99</sup>

**55. We are concerned about the ban that has forced the UNCHR to stop registering new refugees in Lebanon and the implications this has for refugees' access to support. We urge DFID to press the Lebanese Government harder to allow the resumption of registration processes. Given that it has ordered the ban until a new registration mechanism is established, DFID should consult with Lebanese authorities to identify any objections to the previous processes and ensure that solutions are identified so that registrations can resume as soon as possible.**

**Box 2: Refugee Voices - Subhi Nahas, Gay refugee from Idlib, Syria**

My name is Subhi Nahas. I am from Idlib, Syria, a small city of one and a half million residents north of Damascus. I am a refugee and I am gay. In 2011, at the start of the uprising in Syria, government media launched a campaign accusing all dissidents of being homosexuals. Soon after, authorities waged systematic raids on locales where gay people met. Many were arrested and tortured. Some were never heard from again.

The arrests and executions continued unnoticed by the outside world. Then in 2014, after ISIL [Daesh] took over, it stepped up the violent attacks on suspected LGBTI people, publishing images of their exploits. At the executions, hundreds of townspeople, including children, cheered jubilantly as at a wedding. If a victim did not die after being hurled off a building, the townspeople stoned him to death. This was to be my fate too.

Two months later, I seized the chance to escape to Lebanon, where I stayed for six months. I then moved to Hatay, Turkey, where I worked as an interpreter for other Syrians. As a refugee and a gay man, I am proud to be assisting LGBTI and other vulnerable refugees.

Source: Subhi Nahas ([SRC0034](#))

96 Save the Children ([SRC0016](#)) para 3.9

97 Q127

98 Amnesty International, *Pushed to the Edge: Syrian Refugees Face Increased Restrictions in Lebanon* (June 2015), p5

99 UNHCR, [Syria Regional Refugee Response: Inter-agency Information Sharing Portal](#), accessed 2 December 2015

**Box 3: Refugee Voices - Khaldoon Sinjab, Quadriplegic refugee from Ain Tarma, Syria**

I am Khaldoon Sinjab, a quadriplegic Syrian refugee who breathes depending on electric ventilator. I left Syria in 2013 when the war reached my town of “Ain Tarma” near Damascus. I am an IT developer and a server administrator. Using my mouth, the only muscle working in my body, I have been working for several companies through the internet since 1999.

After the rebels took over the town, “Ain Tarma” came under siege and bombardment. Electricity was cut off and my diesel generator stopped working so we had to leave for Lebanon. I need daily care by a trained person to feed, clean and give me a bath. I also need daily physiotherapy. Caring for me, is a very hard, time consuming and expensive task.

The situation is difficult here in Lebanon for my family as Syrian refugees and for me as a quadriplegic and ventilator-dependent. In Lebanon, electricity, communications and healthcare, which are critical for my survival, are not at all adequate. As a family with special, exceptional circumstances, we are looking for a permanent solution to our on-going sufferings. Therefore, I am seeking to live in a developed country that can provide me with an adequate environment. My dependence on both electricity and internet to survive makes Lebanon a country that cannot provide even the basic needs for my survival. All I want is an adequate environment to breathe and live.

Source: Khaldoon Sinjab ([SRC0035](#))

**Children**

56. Children have been consistently identified as one of the refugee groups most at risk. Around 7.6 million Syrian children (within and outside the country) need humanitarian assistance, close to 80% of Syria’s child population.<sup>100</sup> George Graham of Save the Children described increasingly prevalent effects of displacement that characterise children’s vulnerability. These include child labour (with its associated health and education risks), early marriage (which often exposes girls to violence, sexual abuse, risk of early pregnancy and dangerous births), and access to education.<sup>101</sup>

57. We welcome the education of Syrian child refugees being identified as a priority for the Government, as well as the broader focus on children through the No Lost Generation Initiative (NLGI). DFID informed us that its funding has helped to provide education for a quarter of a million children, both within Syria itself and in the refugee-hosting countries.<sup>102</sup>

58. We welcome DFID’s efforts but have also heard evidence that as of March 2015, approximately 752,000 (57%) school-age Syrian refugees are still not participating in either formal or informal education.<sup>103</sup> It is not only the immediate impacts of the crisis on children that are of grave concern to us, but equally the potentially lifelong effects. The longer these children spend out of school, the more likely the crisis is to undermine their future life opportunities. While this is a significant challenge, it is one that can be

100 World Vision ([SRC0018](#)) para 9

101 Q22

102 DFID ([SRC0024](#)) para 4

103 Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan, [Regional Progress Report \(July 2015\)](#), p19

overcome with appropriate strategies and adequate funding. As George Graham phrased it:

there are children who have not been in school for nearly five years, and that has just destroyed a generation. [...] no child should be out of school for more than a month as a consequence of the crisis, because it is just a technical problem; it is fixable.<sup>104</sup>

In the absence of adequate education provision, seemingly short-term effects of the crisis on children can turn into lifelong vulnerabilities. This must not be allowed to happen.

59. Even in situations where refugees do have access to education, there are concerns about its quality, particularly beyond primary level. In written evidence, Professor Dawn Chatty of the University of Oxford referred to youths dropping out of high school due to the poor quality of education.<sup>105</sup> Jordanian families have expressed concerns about decreased quality of education for their children as a result of shortened class times and overcrowded classrooms, and this has been a source of tension between refugees and host communities.<sup>106</sup> Chatham House emphasised that the vulnerabilities faced by young Syrians, coupled with limited future prospects due to a lack of quality education, increase the appeal of radicalisation.<sup>107</sup> Education is a key preventative measure against radicalisation.

60. We heard of major concerns regarding the legal status of children, particularly those who have been born to refugee parents who cannot register them because they lack the necessary paperwork.<sup>108</sup> UNHCR estimate that of over 36,000 children born to Syrian refugee parents in Lebanon between March 2011 and September 2014, 70% of them lack official birth certificates, effectively rendering them stateless.<sup>109</sup> Beyond the vulnerabilities inherent in their immediate situation, these children are likely to suffer from ongoing vulnerability throughout their childhood and potentially their lifetimes. Elsewhere in the world, for example the situation of the Rohingya in South East Asia, experience indicates serious implications of statelessness for refugee children: a lack of legal status makes it difficult for parents to access healthcare and education on their children's behalf. This exacerbates disadvantage as the impact of malnutrition, illiteracy, lack of access to labour markets and healthcare, vulnerability to violence and abuse, insecurity and risk of forced migration, becomes greater.<sup>110</sup> The lack of registration or legal recognition of the offspring of refugees is a serious threat to the lifetime development of these children and the matter should be given due attention, particularly in light of the UK's commitment to the NLGI.

61. UNHCR have recorded over 800,000 sea arrivals of refugees/migrants in European countries so far in 2015 - almost a four-fold increase on the total figure for 2014 - of which, around 20% have been children.<sup>111</sup> According to the Italian Ministry of Labour and Welfare, 13,000 unaccompanied children arrived in 2014, of whom almost 4,000

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104 Qq31, 47

105 Professor Dawn Chatty (SRC0003) para 3

106 REACH, *Evaluating the Effect of the Syrian Refugee Crisis on Stability and Resilience in Jordanian Host Communities: Preliminary Impact Assessment (January 2014)*, p10

107 Chatham House (SRC0027) para 2

108 Save the Children (SRC0016) para 3.8

109 UNHCR Lebanon, *Statelessness Update* (September 2014), p1

110 Equal Rights Trust, *Equal Only in Name: The Human Rights of Stateless Rohingya in Thailand* (October 2014), p18

111 UNHCR, *Refugees/Migrants Emergency Response - Mediterranean*, accessed 15 November 2015

subsequently disappeared.<sup>112</sup> These children are clearly some of the most vulnerable refugees this crisis has created. We are concerned that those that have disappeared may have been the victims of people traffickers who force them into prostitution, child labour or the drugs trade. Save the Children commented:

From the moment they leave their country of origin or refugee camp, throughout their journey to Europe, their situation is one of ongoing vulnerability.<sup>113</sup>

Not all of the vulnerable children that arrive in Europe are Syrian. Yet the vulnerabilities that affect many Syrian children also affect those that have come from other places, and these children are no less deserving of adequate humanitarian protection.

62. Save the Children have led calls for 3,000 unaccompanied refugee children in Europe to be resettled in the UK in addition to the 20,000 Syrians accepted under the VPRS. Following the announcement of the expansion of the VPRS on 7 September 2015, the Prime Minister announced that the Government will “continue to discuss” the Save the Children proposal.<sup>114</sup> In reference to the proposal, Minister for Syrian Refugees Richard Harrington MP said in evidence on 24 November 2015 that:

It is under discussion. [...] At the moment, I cannot report any further progress on it, but we are very aware.

63. **We are gravely concerned about the situation for Syrian child refugees and we commend DFID’s commitment to helping them, both within the region through the No Lost Generation Initiative and through resettlement. However, we are very concerned about the plight of unaccompanied refugee children in Europe, particularly as reports suggest they are falling prey to people traffickers. We urge the Government to come to a quick decision on the proposal by Save the Children as this is a matter of utmost urgency. We would welcome a decision by the Government in favour of resettling 3,000 unaccompanied children, as recommended by Save the Children, and in addition to the current commitment to resettle 20,000 refugees from the region.**

## Resettlement in the UK

### *The resettlement process*

64. In his speech announcing the expansion of the VPRS, the Prime Minister stated that the 20,000 refugees would be accepted “over the rest of this Parliament”, without mentioning details on the timing of the arrivals.<sup>115</sup> When questioned on the timing, Minister for Syrian Refugees Richard Harrington MP highlighted the need to ensure resettlement was well organised:

I know it is in everybody’s interests, not least the people from Syria, to make sure they are brought here in a proper, well-ordered and decent way.<sup>116</sup>

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112 Save the Children (SRC0016) para 3.18

113 Save the Children (SRC0016) para 3.16

114 HC Deb, 7 September 2015, [col 41](#)

115 HC Deb, 7 September 2015, [col 24](#)

116 Q113

We agree with the point that rushing the resettling process without first making the appropriate preparations is not in refugees' best interests, particularly given their vulnerabilities. Minister Harrington acknowledged the desirability of swift action, but emphasised that refugees awaiting resettlement are under humanitarian protection:

Your instinct, when you see people over there, is to want to get them here as quickly as possible, but, given that they are under UNHCR protection, with shelter and food, etc, it is better just to do it properly.<sup>117</sup>

65. **We have heard evidence that a reduction in available funding from international donors other than the UK has reduced the capacity of multilateral organisations to deliver humanitarian protection.<sup>118</sup> In the context of mounting pressure on limited humanitarian resource in the region, there is a case for delivering resettlement quickly. *The Government should be prepared for the possibility that the speed of resettlements may take on greater urgency. The Government should also explore urgently how to better harness the substantial goodwill and offers of support for Syrian refugees, from local community groups within the UK seeking to support refugees settled here.***

66. Other key issues for the resettlement process include matching refugees to the local authorities that have the capacity to support their needs, and helping them to integrate once resettled. Paul Morrison, Director for the United Kingdom Syrian resettlement programme, assured us that refugees are selected on the basis of their vulnerability, not their potential to integrate, and that support for integration is a key part of the resettlement scheme.<sup>119</sup>

67. In his evidence, Minister Harrington made several references to employment for refugees on arrival, suggesting that as resettlement processes develop, refugees' skills could be matched to the skills demand in local areas.<sup>120</sup> The Minister also identified English lessons as an important feature of integration efforts, as he told us:

It is absolutely top priority, for employment, integration, kids at school—everything.<sup>121</sup>

Despite the Minister's emphasis, evidence suggests that Government funding for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses have been substantially cut, leading to long waiting lists around the country.<sup>122</sup> **We support the Minister's proposal of a skills matching scheme to help refugees transition into working life in the UK, but we are concerned about cuts to ESOL funding. The long waiting lists are evidence that demand already outstrips supply. *We urge the Government to reconsider the cuts to ESOL funding as we believe that they are counterproductive to integration plans.***

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117 Q112

118 World Food Programme ([SRC0025](#)) para 8

119 Q79

120 Q114

121 Q135

122 Demos, [On Speaking Terms \(August 2014\)](#), p11

### *Sources of funding for resettled refugees*

68. The Government has stated that it will use the aid budget to support resettled refugees in their first year within the UK, an approach that is in full accordance with internationally agreed rules set out by DAC.<sup>123</sup> We were reassured by Minister of State Desmond Swayne MP's assertion that the Government will continue to operate within these rules.<sup>124</sup> We agree with the Minister that the rules must be followed to maintain the UK's international credibility.

69. Under the resettlement scheme, Syrian refugees are to be assigned a humanitarian protection visa which affords them five years leave to remain in the UK. We were assured by Minister Swayne and Minister Harrington that, despite ODA support only being eligible for the first year, the Government will continue to fund local authorities in their support for Syrian refugees beyond their first year in the UK.<sup>125</sup> **We welcome the news that support will continue beyond the first year, particularly given the financial pressures that many local authorities are under.**

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123 HC Deb, 7 September 2015, [col 24](#)

124 Q89

125 Qq90, 132

# Conclusions and recommendations

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## Host community pressures

1. We strongly commend DFID for setting an exemplary standard in its commitment to funding humanitarian assistance to address the Syrian crisis. We are very concerned at the lack of financial support from other donors. Wealthy countries again committed to the goal of spending 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI) on Official Development Assistance (ODA) this summer at the Financing for Development conference in Addis Ababa, but are not being held to account for delivery against this commitment. This is a serious problem in the face of increasing humanitarian needs. Evidence indicates a link between the reduction in assistance and increases in dangerous onward migration from the Middle East to Europe. (Paragraph 13)
2. We urge the Government to apply more pressure on other donors to meet their 0.7% commitment and direct an appropriate proportion of ODA towards the Syrian crisis. Efforts should be focused towards meeting the full financial requirement of the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP), in order to support Governments of the region through a coordinated strategy to strengthen basic services in these countries, ease host-community pressures, and help prevent dangerous migration journeys. (Paragraph 13)
3. We are gravely concerned about the increased tensions between host communities and refugees, particularly given the risk that such tensions might further contribute to regional instability. We have received strong evidence about the need for a new approach to humanitarian assistance. Research suggests that cash programming may provide a valuable means of delivering support in a way that offers dignity for refugees and facilitates peaceful co-existence with host communities by benefitting local economies. (Paragraph 18)
4. We recommend that DFID build upon its existing efforts and scale up the use of cash-based assistance in the region. It should use the recommendations of the High Level Panel on Cash Transfers as a blueprint for how to do so, and strive to make cash its default means of delivering humanitarian assistance. This is particularly important for targeting the most vulnerable, as refugees with specific needs will have a better understanding of how to meet these needs than aid agencies. We are also gravely concerned about the overall impact on the economies of host countries, and urge DFID to work with the World Bank and other institutions to ensure that they receive the necessary long-term support which is vital to their economic survival. (Paragraph 18)

## Support in the region

5. Whilst the UK Government strategy has focused on helping refugees in Syria and elsewhere in the Middle East, many of the British public appear unaware of the extent of this. The Government should ensure that the public are aware of both the extent of its support and the benefits of supporting refugees in their own country. (Paragraph 19)

6. We commend the Government's support within the region for three reasons. Firstly, evidence suggests that despite the operational challenges of delivering assistance in the Middle East, it is more cost-effective to support refugees in the region than it is to direct resources towards resettling them in the UK. Secondly, we heard that it is actually in the best interests of the majority of refugees to stay closer to home, though they require adequate funding to support this. Thirdly, one of the key factors driving refugees towards dangerous trips across the Mediterranean is cuts to humanitarian assistance, which in turn is driven by insufficient funding from donors. This suggests that sufficient funding to help humanitarian organisations support an adequate standard of living in the region will deter many more refugees from risking their lives in this way. As John Ging of UN OCHA wrote, it is only the prospect of a better future that will prevent refugees from leaving the region. (Paragraph 20)

### Possible solutions

7. We welcome the Minister's statement that he hoped to bring forward a proposal early next year, and emphasise that such a proposal must move beyond short-term employment responses towards finding areas of economic growth that can create sustainable employment solutions. This should involve the provision of education beyond primary school age to include skills training. We see a coordinated and carefully planned effort to address this issue as essential to the long-term sustainability of refugees' presence in host countries. (Paragraph 25)
8. As the refugee crisis has become increasingly protracted, the need for legal employment opportunities for Syrian refugees has grown. Evidence suggests that they want to work, yet legal restrictions mean they are forced to remain reliant on humanitarian assistance or find work in the informal sector. This model is unsustainable in the long-term and has a particularly negative effect on child refugees. DFID can help develop employment opportunities in host countries and put the Syrian refugee crisis response on a more sustainable development footing. (Paragraph 27)
9. Given that other countries are making considerable investment commitments in Jordan, we recommend that DFID engage with the Jordan Investment Commission and other partners to explore opportunities to leverage these projects to create jobs for refugees. We recommend that DFID use its expertise in the field of economic development and works with suitable partners to identify and develop opportunities for investment, economic growth and sustainable job creation to the benefit of Syrian refugees and host communities alike. Specifically it should extend its inclusive growth diagnostic exercise to refugee hosting countries in the Middle East. (Paragraph 27)
10. We see the identification of long-term opportunities to create jobs in countries hosting refugees as a key response to the crisis. (Paragraph 28)
11. DFID should make use of CDC Group's expertise in private sector investment and should discuss CDC's remit with the CDC board and allow it to invest in countries hosting refugees. In addition, DFID should provide CDC with specific funds for it

to invest on DFID's behalf in sustainable job-creating businesses in those countries. (Paragraph 28)

### The global humanitarian system

12. The global approach to protracted crises should be a key topic at next year's World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul. We are concerned about the lack of a comprehensive, long-term strategy to deal with such crises and shift funding from a reliance on humanitarian assistance towards a more development-centred approach. (Paragraph 32)
13. We recommend that DFID focus its efforts at the Summit on this issue in three respects. Firstly, promote early investment in public services and economic infrastructure which can yield long-term dividends that a narrow focus on immediate humanitarian needs cannot. Secondly, negotiate commitments to provide humanitarian and development funding over multi-year timeframes, enabling the response to be better managed and more strategic. Thirdly, focus on developing areas of economic growth which will create sustainable employment solutions and ultimately help a country from aid dependency. (Paragraph 32)

### The needs of the most vulnerable refugees

14. The challenge for the Government and its partners, chiefly UNHCR, therefore lies in ensuring that the processes for identifying and assisting the most vulnerable refugees are robust enough to reach those most in need. (Paragraph 34)

### The most vulnerable among those left behind in Syria

15. We note the Resolution of the House (2 December) supporting action against Daesh in Syria, including through air strikes. We warmly welcome the House's support for the Government's humanitarian assistance to Syrian refugees. The recent escalation of military efforts will have an impact on conditions faced by civilians in Syria, and may well make it more difficult for DFID and other agencies to deliver humanitarian aid. (Paragraph 39)
16. The UK must do all it can to mitigate the risk of worsening the humanitarian situation. The potential humanitarian consequences of protracted military engagement must be a driving force for The UK Government in pressing for ceasefire and political settlement through the vehicle of the Vienna talks. (Paragraph 39)

### Addressing the needs of the most vulnerable in camps and host communities outside Syria

17. We welcome DFID's approach of directing approximately 75% of overall humanitarian assistance towards host communities. However, major aid agencies such as UNHCR, which are a conduit for much of the UK's financial support, should be doing the same. (Paragraph 43)

18. DFID should press all UN agencies and NGOs, particularly the major UK aid recipients, to ensure that vulnerable refugees outside of camps receive an appropriate level of support. This must include directing resources towards refugees in host communities because they are the most vulnerable and have disproportionately suffered from cuts to humanitarian assistance. (Paragraph 43)

### Vulnerable groups

19. The risks faced by anyone that has been forced to flee their home are substantial. However, in the context of the Syrian crisis, certain groups are affected in ways that heighten their vulnerability. For these people resettlement is an appropriate and durable solution. We commend the UNHCR and their commitment to ensuring that processes for identifying the vulnerable are robust in an extremely complex environment with significant operational challenges. Yet evidence indicated non-registration by certain vulnerable groups, who prefer to stay outside official UN camps, is occurring and that, despite best efforts, it appears that under-registration may well also be an issue. (Paragraph 52)
20. We recommend that the Government continue to carefully monitor the profiles of cases referred for resettlement, including, where possible, demographics, sexuality, religion, disability status, and the location from which refugees have been selected and whether from within or outside official UN camps. Such monitoring outputs should be fed back to UNHCR to identify any groups that are underrepresented in referrals and establish and execute action to remedy this, thus ensuring that UNHCR's principle of equal access is realised. (Paragraph 52)
21. We are concerned about the ban that has forced the UNCHR to stop registering new refugees in Lebanon and the implications this has for refugees' access to support. (Paragraph 55)
22. We urge DFID to press the Lebanese Government harder to allow the resumption of registration processes. Given that it has ordered the ban until a new registration mechanism is established, DFID should consult with Lebanese authorities to identify any objections to the previous processes and ensure that solutions are identified so that registrations can resume as soon as possible. (Paragraph 55)
23. We are gravely concerned about the situation for Syrian child refugees and we commend DFID's commitment to helping them, both within the region through the No Lost Generation Initiative and through resettlement. However, we are very concerned about the plight of unaccompanied refugee children in Europe, particularly as reports suggest they are falling prey to people traffickers. (Paragraph 63)
24. We urge the Government to come to a quick decision on the proposal by Save the Children as this is a matter of utmost urgency. We would welcome a decision by the Government in favour of resettling 3,000 unaccompanied children, as recommended by Save the Children, and in addition to the current commitment to resettle 20,000 refugees from the region. (Paragraph 63)

## Resettlement in the UK

25. We have heard evidence that a reduction in available funding from international donors other than the UK has reduced the capacity of multilateral organisations to deliver humanitarian protection. In the context of mounting pressure on limited humanitarian resource in the region, there is a case for delivering resettlement quickly. (Paragraph 65)
26. The Government should be prepared for the possibility that the speed of resettlements may take on greater urgency. The Government should also explore urgently how to better harness the substantial goodwill and offers of support for Syrian refugees, from local community groups within the UK seeking to support refugees settled here. (Paragraph 65)
27. We support the Minister's proposal of a skills matching scheme to help refugees transition into working life in the UK, but we are concerned about cuts to ESOL funding. The long waiting lists are evidence that demand already outstrips supply. (Paragraph 67)
28. We urge the Government to reconsider the cuts to ESOL funding as we believe that they are counterproductive to integration plans. (Paragraph 67)
29. We welcome the news that support will continue beyond the first year, particularly given the financial pressures that many local authorities are under. (Paragraph 69)

# Formal Minutes

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**Wednesday 15 December 2015**

Members present:

Stephen Twigg, in the Chair

Fiona Bruce

Pauline Latham

Dr Lisa Cameron

Jeremy Lefroy

Nigel Evans

Albert Owen

Helen Grant

Virendra Sharma

Fabian Hamilton

Draft Report (*Syrian refugee crisis*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

*Ordered*, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 69 read and agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

*Resolved*, That the Report be the First Report of the Committee to the House.

*Ordered*, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

*Ordered*, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available (Standing Order No. 134).

[Adjourned till Monday 11 January at 3.15 p.m.]

## Witnesses

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The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the Committee's [inquiry web page](#).

### Thursday 29 October 2015

*Question number*

**Sanjayan Srikanthan**, Director of Policy and Practice, International Rescue Committee UK, and **Francois Reybet-Degat**, Deputy-Director, Regional Bureau for the Middle East and North Africa, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

[Q1–21](#)

**Zoe Smith**, Head of Advocacy, Open Doors UK, **Haley Bobseine**, Lebanon Researcher, Human Rights Watch, **Aleema Shivji**, Director, Handicap International UK, and **George Graham**, Head of Conflict and Humanitarian Policy and Advocacy, Save the Children

[Q22–47](#)

### Tuesday 17 November 2015

**Nicholas Grisewood**, Technical Specialist, Crisis Migration, International Labour Organisation

[Q48–54](#)

**Rt Hon Desmond Swayne TD MP**, Minister of State, Department for International Development, **Matthew Wyatt**, Deputy Director Middle East North Africa, Department for International Development, and **Paul Morrison**, Director, UK Syrian Resettlement Programme

[Q55–107](#)

### Tuesday 24 November 2015

**Richard Harrington MP**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State jointly at the Home Office, the Department for Communities and Local Government, and the Department for International Development

[Q108–153](#)

## Published written evidence

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The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the Committee's [inquiry web page](#). SRC numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

- 1 Aid to the Church in Need ([SRC0004](#))
- 2 Amnesty International ([SRC0022](#))
- 3 APPG for International Freedom of Religion or Belief ([SRC0007](#))
- 4 Barnabas Fund ([SRC0014](#))
- 5 Barnabas Fund Annex A ([SRC0031](#))
- 6 Bishop Anba Angaelos ([SRC0015](#))
- 7 CAFOD and Caritas Lebanon Migrant Centre ([SRC0023](#))
- 8 Chatham House ([SRC0027](#))
- 9 Coffey International Development Ltd ([SRC0009](#))
- 10 Department for International Development ([SRC0024](#))
- 11 Department for International Development Annex A ([SRC0032](#))
- 12 Embassy of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan ([SRC0030](#))
- 13 Freedom from Torture ([SRC0012](#))
- 14 Health Poverty Action ([SRC0019](#))
- 15 International Committee of the Red Cross ([SRC0029](#))
- 16 International Rescue Committee ([SRC0021](#))
- 17 John Ging, Director of Coordination and Response Division, OCHA ([SRC0033](#))
- 18 Mary Creagh ([SRC0008](#))
- 19 Mercy Corps ([SRC0010](#))
- 20 Michael King O.B.E. F.R.C.S. and Mrs. Elspeth King Ph.D ([SRC0001](#))
- 21 Mr Khaldoon Sinjab ([SRC0035](#))
- 22 Mr Subhi Nahas ([SRC0034](#))
- 23 Professor Dawn Chatty ([SRC0003](#))
- 24 Raed Al Saleh ([SRC0006](#))
- 25 Refugee Council ([SRC0020](#))
- 26 Rethink Rebuild Society ([SRC0017](#))
- 27 Save the Children ([SRC0016](#))
- 28 Tearfund ([SRC0011](#))
- 29 Turkish Embassy in London ([SRC0005](#))
- 30 UK All Party Parliamentary Group on Population, Development And Reproductive Health ([SRC0002](#))
- 31 Unhcr Annex A ([SRC0028](#))

- 32 Unicef UK ([SRC0013](#))
- 33 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees ([SRC0026](#))
- 34 World Food Programme ([SRC0025](#))
- 35 World Vision UK ([SRC0018](#))

## List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

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All publications from the Committee are available on the Committee's website at [www.parliament.uk/indcom](http://www.parliament.uk/indcom)

### Session 2015–16

First Special Report	The Future of UK Development Co-operation: Phase 2: Beyond Aid: Government Response to the Committee's Tenth Report of Session 2014–15	HC 339
Second Special Report	Jobs and Livelihoods: Government Response to the Committee's Twelfth Report of Session 2014–15	HC 421
Third Special Report	DFID's bilateral programme in Nepal: Government Response to the Committee's Fourteenth Report of Session 2014–15	HC 422
Fourth Special Report	Department for International Development's Performance in 2013–14: the Departmental Annual Report 2013–14: Government Response to the Committee's Fourteenth Report of Session 2014–15	HC 420