

PRESS RELEASE

Statement by Yukie Mokuo, UNICEF Representative in Lebanon

UNICEF calls on all stakeholders to put children first and ensure their safeguarding in these times of crisis in Lebanon

Beirut, 10 January 2020 – “As the new year begins, it is time for all of us to put children first and ensure their safeguarding in these times of crisis in Lebanon. All of us –national and international institutions, civil society, private sector, communities, families— must act now to protect girls and boys from the impact of the deepening economic crisis. The situation is deteriorating and increasing the challenges for all children, especially those in families already living in poverty.

According to the available estimates, more than one in four Lebanese families live in poverty, and the crisis is now impacting many families, and much more so children than adults. Exacerbation of poverty is also expected among other vulnerable households in Lebanon.

Increasing poverty can affect girls and boys in many ways, including harming their nutrition, education and health, as well as having long-term impacts on their emotional and social development, future potential and wellbeing. Such crises can lead to an increased risk of abuse and neglect, and higher levels of child labour and child marriage. Young people face reduced opportunities to continue to learn, build their skills and find dignified work.

In such a situation, girls and boys must be the first to be protected and safeguarded by all stakeholders, especially since they will be the foundation of Lebanon’s recovery, and the limited public resources in the national budget should be used to protect and prioritize children and young people.

UNICEF is adjusting its strategies to expand our reach to the most vulnerable girls, boys and young people by scaling-up our new Integrated Programme for Child Wellbeing, increasing programmes for adolescent and youth skills development, and providing cash support to 100,000 of the most vulnerable families. While Lebanon’s social protection system struggles to effectively respond to the ongoing crisis for now, UNICEF continues to support access to basic social services and development of national social assistance and calls on all actors to rapidly expand social assistance to poor families. UNICEF-supported programmes continue to address Lebanese children and other children living in Lebanon, and we work with partners and donors to deepen our programming and ensure its funding to expand our support to children and families at risk of falling into poverty in these times of crisis”.

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About UNICEF

UNICEF works in some of the world’s toughest places, to reach the world’s most disadvantaged children. Across more than 190 countries and territories, we work for every child, everywhere, to build a better world for everyone. For more information about UNICEF and our work in Lebanon visit <https://www.unicef.org/lebanon/>

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