

PRESS RELEASE

UNICEF cash assistance to help keep the most vulnerable children in school

Research shows children of families receiving child-focused cash assistance and household follow-up attend more days at school than those provided with buses

BEIRUT, 5 January 2018 – A new cash assistance programme, providing US\$20 per child a month enrolled and attending the second shift at public schools, will support Syrian families to get their children to school and to play a more active role in their education.

The cash programme, implemented by UNICEF working in collaboration with Caritas Lebanon and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, replaces the current school bus operation that over the last years transported tens of thousands of Syrian children to the second shift at 360 public schools.

The cash starts in time for the next school term starting in January 2018 and runs until the end of the academic year.

The criteria for receiving the support focuses on the most vulnerable children who are enrolled and attending second shift schools yet face daily challenges in getting to school, such as disabled children, young children and those living particularly far away from a public school, or in an insecure area.

“The most important thing is to help families to keep their highly vulnerable children in school,” said Tanya Chapuisat, UNICEF Representative in Lebanon.

“For many Syrians, the barriers to school attendance, such as the costs of transportation, are often too high. When children are at school it benefits everyone, not only are children fulfilling their right to education but they are better protected and able to play a more positive role in society,” Chapuisat added.

UNICEF’s shift in approach, from the bus service to cash assistance, comes as research conducted by UNICEF over the past 12 months has shown that households with children who receive child-focused cash support attended 20 more school days per academic year, compared to those in areas where buses were provided.

The cash, in conjunction with direct household follow-up by case workers, empowers parents to make decisions in the best interests of their children and to be more directly involved in their education, including actively organizing transport to take their children to school.

The cash programme will not be active in the Aarsal and Al Qaa area, the bus service will continue to operate in these locations.

UNICEF and Caritas Lebanon staff will monitor the assistance and will follow up with families whose children are enrolled but not turning up to school. The reasons for drop out can then be identified and parents provided with relevant information and referrals to other services when necessary to enable children to return back to school.

“We are constantly trying to improve our support, based on the Lebanese context, in order to reach as many children as possible, and to maximize what’s achievable with the resources available,” Chapuisat said.

UNICEF will continue its broader education support for Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian, as well as other non-Lebanese students across the country in providing school supplies; fuel for heating schools in winter; training teachers; and paying enrolment fees.

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