
Regional Representation of UNHCR in Bahrain

Ensuring sound health and proper sanitation mechanism is a global challenge in refugee camps all over the world. Average levels of water and sanitation provision are acceptable at camp level but many refugee operations are suffering from gaps that cross-cut these sectors; e.g. typically poor sanitation provision is corresponding with lower per capita availability of water. These findings were confirmed at household level with two household surveys undertaken in Bahrain refugee camps; households reporting a case of Diarrhoea within the previous 24 hours collect on average 26% less water than those not reporting any cases. In addition, typically higher levels of morbidity of one infectious agent are also reflected across other infectious agents; this is reinforced by comparing the relationship between morbidity and nutrition status from selected camps. The importance that hygiene, environmental conditions and local settings have on health (both of refugees and also local communities) is underlined.

Interventions to improve indicators across the water, sanitation, health and nutrition sectors rely not only on increased and sustained resources but must entail an integrated approach to simultaneously tackle short-comings across all these vital sectors. The Regional Representation of UNHCR to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries (based in Riyadh) operates remotely in Bahrain. As of 17 July 2016, UNHCR registered 271 refugees and 79 asylum-seekers, of which 161 are women, 189 are men and 57 are children. While the vast majority of refugees and asylum-seekers in Bahrain are Iraqis, Jordanian, Yemenis, Syrians and Somalis. Decades after WHO and UNHCR first introduced guidelines and standards on water and sanitation service provision for the people of Bahrain, Bahrain is still struggling to fully meet the minimum emergency standards for water and sanitation provision for displaced persons.

All agency guidelines stress that 15 or 20 litres per person per day is the minimum need in camp situations and that it should be augmented at the first available opportunity though this is often misinterpreted as 'the estimated population figure is to be multiplied by 15 (or less) to give the daily amount of water to be pumped' with pipeline leakages, spillage, economic usage etc. often neglected. Prime Minister Shaikh Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa said, "It is necessary for governments to entrust to the private sector a basic role in planning, financing and contributing to finding an environment most suitable for living and in the development of new infrastructures." Bahrain aims to bring changes with development programs that are intact and that have had successful outcomes. Bahrain recognizes the negative effects of slums, squatter villages, and refugee camps and acknowledges these problems as global issues. Bahrain aims to improve the settlements through financial and government support.

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The Kingdom of Bahrain has successfully reduced poverty and has brought social justice through providing pure water, proper sanitation, inclusive housing policy, housing finance systems and good urban governance. The Royal Charity Organization of Bahrain has funded a library, health center, and a school for Palestine refugees in Gaza. The UNWRA and The Bahrain Royal Charity Organization have signed an agreement in which Bahrain will finance three reconstruction projects in Gaza. These projects include reconstruction, furnishing, and equipping of health center of the Khan Younis refugee camp, a new library open to the public at Al Fakhoura School in Jabalia Camp, and a new preparatory boys school in Jabalia. Investing in education is a start. Bahrain encourages the committee to spend money wisely investing in children, building schools, buying more books, and adding more teachers. Children are our hope for the future. What better way to improve the world by improving and advancing the people who are in it. Actions of UN in Bahrain regarding this matter:

- Achieve equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all.
- Achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations.
- Substantially increase water-use efficiency across all sectors and ensure sustainable withdrawals and supply of freshwater to address water scarcity and substantially reduce the number of people suffering from water scarcity.
- Implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate.
- Expand international cooperation and capacity-building support to developing countries in water and sanitation-related activities and programmes, including water harvesting, desalination, water efficiency, wastewater treatment, recycling and reuse technologies.
- Support and strengthen the participation of local communities in improving water and sanitation management.

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