

A Helping Hand

In March 2011, a civil war started in Syria when protests and fighting raged across the country. Anti-government protesters wanted greater freedom and democracy. Nearly three years later, the fighting and unrest continues. Many people are fleeing Syria to seek safety in refugee camps in nearby countries. In this edition of World Watch, OWL takes a look at how organizations, and even some of our readers, are making a difference.

SYRIA FACT BOX



REGION: Western Asia (The Middle East)
CAPITAL: Damascus
POPULATION: 22,530,746
OFFICIAL LANGUAGE: Arabic
CHALLENGES: Access to water, education, and vaccinations is scarce. As the conflict in Syria enters its third year, more than 4 million children have been affected and nearly 1 million children are seeking refuge in neighbouring countries.



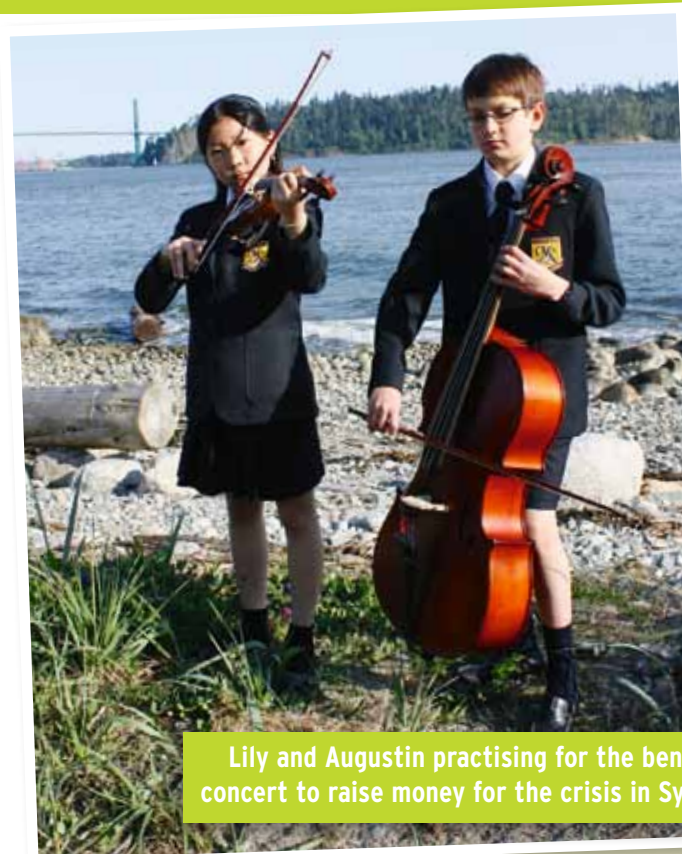
UNICEF volunteers delivering supplies to Syria.

Support by the Numbers

Organizations like UNICEF have stepped up to help the children of Syria. UNICEF's focus in 2013 is to deliver water-purifying supplies and to immunize children against illnesses like polio and measles. UNICEF also provides access to education and other support for affected children in Syria and refugee camps in neighbouring countries.

As of June 2013, UNICEF has:

- provided 421,700 children and women inside Syria with access to essential health services.
- given 270,000 people access to drinking and domestic water in refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon, and Iraq.
- vaccinated 1.5 million children against measles.
- distributed water-purifying supplies that have provided 9 million people with safe water.



Lily and Augustin practising for the benefit concert to raise money for the crisis in Syria.

Making a Difference

Augustin Wright and Lily Yan are from West Vancouver, B.C. Both 10-year-olds have been playing piano and strings for over six years. Since 2011, Augustin and Lily have been hosting a benefit concert to support UNICEF's work overseas. This year, their fundraising supports UNICEF's efforts in Syria.

OWL talked to Augustin and Lily about their fundraising efforts.

OWL: What inspired you to start fundraising for UNICEF?

Augustin: Lily and I started fundraising because we wanted to help when we heard about the tsunami in Japan in March of 2011. We were shocked and we wanted to do something. The tsunami happened while we were on March Break, so we had time to do some research and we planned a benefit concert. We were so happy to have helped and to have made a difference while also having fun!



A Syrian child gets immunized in a UNICEF-sponsored health centre.

OWL: Tell us more about the benefit concert and what it's all about.

Lily: This year, for our third benefit concert, we decided to raise money for the civil war crisis in Syria. We couldn't believe the damage a civil war, even in a small country like Syria, could do. Hospitals and health centres have been damaged, clean water is scarce, and the education system is near complete collapse. Even the basic infrastructure and the public services, such as transit, libraries, and community centres, are being destroyed. After reading about all of this, we couldn't just sit back and do nothing.

OWL: How do you recommend others get involved and make a change?

Lily: I think that you should first pick something that you like to do and then think of a way to organize an event to raise money for a cause using what you like. For Augustin and me, it means organizing a music concert. Plus, the donations we receive go to a good cause, so it's a win-win situation for all of us. We followed our passion, and we recommend that you do the same.

Photos: © UNICEF/NYHQ/2012-1128/Malkam (supplies); Isabelle Roux (Lily and Augustin); © UNICEF/NYHQ/2012-1727/A-Masri (vaccination)