

# Child Protection in Emergencies

## Rapid Needs Assessment

### LEBANON



Syrian refugee children standing in an informal tented settlement in the Bekaa valley (F. Juez – Oct/2012)

Child Protection in Emergencies Working Group - Lebanon

January – February 2013

## Acknowledgements

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The conflict in Syria began over two years ago, resulting in refugee displacement into surrounding countries, including Lebanon. As the crisis continues, Lebanon faces an increasingly overwhelming challenge. The country is hosting the largest number of Syrians of any affected neighbouring country, with over 520,000 registered refugees by mid-July, over half of whom are children. It is estimated that by the end of 2013, over one million children in Lebanon including Syrian refugees, Palestinians from Syria, returning Lebanese and children from vulnerable host communities will be affected by the Syrian Crisis. Consequently, the capacities of marginalized Lebanese host communities in impoverished areas are being stretched to the limit.

Children are paying the heaviest price for the on-going conflict. Children arriving from Syria have fled for their lives, often separated from their families, with nothing more than clothes on their backs. These children have experienced and witnessed unspeakable atrocities: the death or injury of relatives, neighbours and friends, or been exposed to harrowing scenes of violence and destruction. The longer the conflict drags on, the higher the risk of having a “lost” generation of children who will carry physical and emotional scars of this conflict for many years to come.

### **Rationale for the child protection rapid needs assessment**

A number of assessments including those with child protection components have been conducted in Lebanon since the start of the conflict, identifying areas of concern related to psychosocial distress and violence against children<sup>1</sup>. Although these assessments produced relevant findings, the Child Protection Working Group identified the need for a joint Child Protection Rapid Assessment to better understand other child protection risks affecting Syrian refugee children in their displacement, so as to inform a more comprehensive response.

The Child Protection Rapid Assessment (CPRA) focuses on a number of significant child protection concerns identified at the initial stage of the response including separation and unaccompaniment, gender-based violence, worst forms of child labour, and looks at the coping mechanisms being utilized by children to cope with displacement. Given the scale of violence children in Syria are likely to have witnessed, UNICEF has commissioned a separate report on psychosocial distress which will be published in parallel to this document. As such this report does not attempt to address this child protection concern. Furthermore, due to sensitivity, child recruitment into armed forces and armed groups and child trafficking were not specifically included as part of this assessment

The CPRA provides a snapshot of urgent child protection related needs and acts as a stepping-stone for a more comprehensive process of assessing the impacts of the Syrian Crisis on the Syrian refugee children in Lebanon. This report highlights the main findings

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<sup>1</sup> *Lebanon Child Protection Assessment*, Save the Children, June-July 2012 and *Psychosocial Assessment of Displaced Syrians at the Lebanese- Syrian Northern Border*, International Mercy Corps, June 2012

from the assessment and provides recommendations to support inter-agency prioritization and planning in response to the impact of the Syrian crisis in Lebanon.

### **Child Protection in Lebanon and Government's response**

Since 2000, a number of legislative measures relating to child welfare have been introduced, most importantly Law 422 of 6 June 2002 on 'Protection of Minors in Conflict with the Law or At Risk'. This law represents the first and most significant effort to create a legal framework for the delivery of protective services. Essentially, the law establishes judicial processes for dealing with serious abuse, violence, neglect and exploitation perpetrated against children. For the first time it establishes the powers of children's judges and social workers to make protective orders for children at risk. However, Law 422 has a number of important limits and barriers especially that the law focuses more on children in conflict with the law and does not provide a series of welfare service measures, but creates a 'last resort' response mechanism for children already in crisis. Professionals operating under Law 422 have received limited specialized skills-based training for applying the law's provisions. On a more operational level, the lack of standard operational procedures for applying the provisions of the law remains a major obstacle. In the absence of supplementary protocols and guidance, those responsible for applying Law 422 often do so based upon personal intuition and experience than by professional codes.

At the Government institutional level, child protection issues are coordinated mainly through the Department of Protection of Minors and the Higher Council for Childhood, within the Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA) and the Department of Juveniles in the Ministry of Justice. To respond to the wave of Syrian refugees entering Lebanon, an emergency team was formed within MOSA including a child protection in emergency officer. Since, the Ministry of Social Affairs has been working with international humanitarian agencies on protection issues, through and the overall coordination of the emergency response and its participation and co-leadership of the Child Protection in Emergencies Working Group (CPIEWG), established in Lebanon in 2010 as an off-shoot of the Child Protection Working Group created in 2006. The Ministry of Social Affairs is currently providing child protection services to Syrian refugees through 27 of their 230 local Social Development Centres<sup>2</sup> and through contracted non-governmental organisations.

At the Government level, child protection issues are coordinated through the Department of Protection of Minors and the Higher Council for Childhood, within the Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA). To respond to the wave of Syrian refugees entering Lebanon, an emergency team was formed within MOSA. Since, the Ministry of Social Affairs has been working with international humanitarian agencies on protection issues, through participation and co-leadership of the Child Protection in Emergencies Working Group (CPIEWG), established in Lebanon in 2010. The Ministry of Social Welfare is providing child protection services to Syrian refugees through 27 of their 230 local Social Development Centres and through contracted non-governmental organisations.

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<sup>2</sup> With support from UNHCR and UNICEF, 27 SDCs have been identified by MoSA to respond to the Syrian crisis in 2013 and located in the most affected areas in Lebanon hosting refugees' communities. The plan is to scale up to reach a total number of 50 SDC's

Although there are numerous national NGOs with a focus on children in Lebanon and who have experience in emergencies, few have the experience and capacity to respond to the overwhelming child protection in emergency needs as an increasing number of refugees seek refuge and protection in Lebanon.

The Child Protection in Emergencies Working Group (CPiEWG) is co-led by MOSA, UNICEF and UNHCR. It brings together relevant actors under one platform to coordinate child protection activities and to represent the best interests of children. As of July 2013, the CPiEWG consists of 5 UN organisations, 17 INGOs and 9 national NGOs who aim to prevent and respond to abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence against children affected by emergencies. Activities of members are focused on provision of psychosocial support, to all child populations affected by the Syrian crisis including Palestinian refugees from Syria, Lebanese returnees and the most vulnerable children amongst the affected host communities.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The child protection needs assessment was a joint initiative by 17 members of the Child Protection in Emergencies Working Group and with the support of the Ministry of Social Affairs. It targeted both registered and non-registered Syrian refugees in both rural and urban sites across Lebanon from 14 January to 02 February 2013.

**Assessment tool** – the Child Protection Rapid Assessment tool developed by the Global Child Protection Working Group was adapted to the Syrian refugee context for the assessment. An extensive desk review of needs assessments, field reports and other relevant documents was conducted to inform the methodology development and adapt the assessment tool.

**Assessment team** - The assessment team comprised of an international child protection specialist and 33 Lebanese surveyors from members of the CPIEWG including, Abaad, Amel, Arc en Ciel, Blue Mission Organisation, Danish Refugee Council, Intersos, International Rescue Committee, KAFA, Mercy Corps, Norwegian Refugee Council, Save the Children, Terre de Hommes, UNHCR and World Vision International. Assessors were selected on the basis of their experience with children, Arabic language skills and were provided with a one day training on the assessment tool and methodology, in addition to child protection concepts and techniques to conduct the assessment.

**Assessment location** – The needs assessment was carried out in 36 municipalities in 5 districts throughout all 5 governorates of Lebanon (see annexe 1). These were selected based on the concentration of Syrian refugees<sup>3</sup>, their accessibility, security and child protection needs.

At the time of the assessment there were approximately 145,000 registered refugees living in 813 locations, with the majority in rented apartments or living with host Lebanese families. As of mid-May, 2013 there are 375, 624 registered refugees and a further 95,000 awaiting registration in Lebanon.

**Data collection methods** – Qualitative methods, primarily focus group discussions, direct observation and interviews with key informants were the main methods used by the team to collect data for the assessment. 106 key informants were interviewed and 16 focus group discussions were conducted for the assessment.

All participants were briefed on the purpose of the assessment and the manner in which the information will be used and were asked to give verbal consent to proceed. Informants were advised that they were under no obligation to answer all questions and could discontinue the interview at any stage.

*Focus Group Discussions:* 16 focus group discussions were conducted; three with adolescent boys, four with adolescent girls, four with female caregivers and five with male caregivers. Both the children and adults groups were segregated by gender to increase the

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<sup>3</sup> based on UNHCR registration data. For the selection of districts, it was assumed that non-registered refugees are concentrated in the same district as those who are registered.

likelihood of sharing of information culturally only discussed with others of the same sex. The sex of the interviewers was also matched with the sex of participants in the focus group discussions.

One FGD was discontinued when the proposed group of adult refugees expressed fear at information being shared beyond the humanitarian community. During the course of interviews, 04 child protection cases reported by children were referred to relevant NGOs working in the area and appropriate actions taken.

*Key Informant Interviews:* 106 interviews were carried out, three in each municipality, with equal numbers of men and women who work directly with children on a regular basis, hold roles of authority over the refugee community and/or people engaged in service provision to refugees. These included social workers, health monitors, teachers, refugee leaders or focal persons, UN or NGO field staff, local authorities and school directors.

**Verification of assessment data** – Despite the evolving context with hundreds of refugees arriving in Lebanon on a daily basis, the assessment team made considerable efforts to ensure the quality and credibility of information collecting the assessment. This included a daily review of data amongst the assessment team and conducting a verification of findings with as many respondents as possible through in-depth interviews as well as through direct observation. It must be noted however, that due to logistical and time constraints it was not always possible for the team to fully verify all the assessment findings.

**Limitations of the assessment** – The assessment was carried out under challenging circumstances, which placed constraints on the collection and analysis of research findings. These include:

*Identification of Key Informants (KI):* Identification of Syrian KI who hold roles of authority or who were able to represent or speak directly on behalf of the refugee community was challenging. Only ten refugee liaison persons, who act in a role of liaison between the refugee and humanitarian community, were identified and able to be interviewed. Furthermore, given the diffused displacement of refugees, identifying local teachers, health and social welfare actors working on a daily basis with refugee children also proved challenging. Therefore a number of national Lebanese staff from UN agencies and NGOs working directly and regularly with refugee children or households were selected as KIs, hence the findings are to be viewed through this lens.

*Limited capacity of assessment team:* Some of the assessors had limited assessment experience or exposure to child protection in emergencies, and there was insufficient time to provide extensive training which may have impacted the quality of information collected.

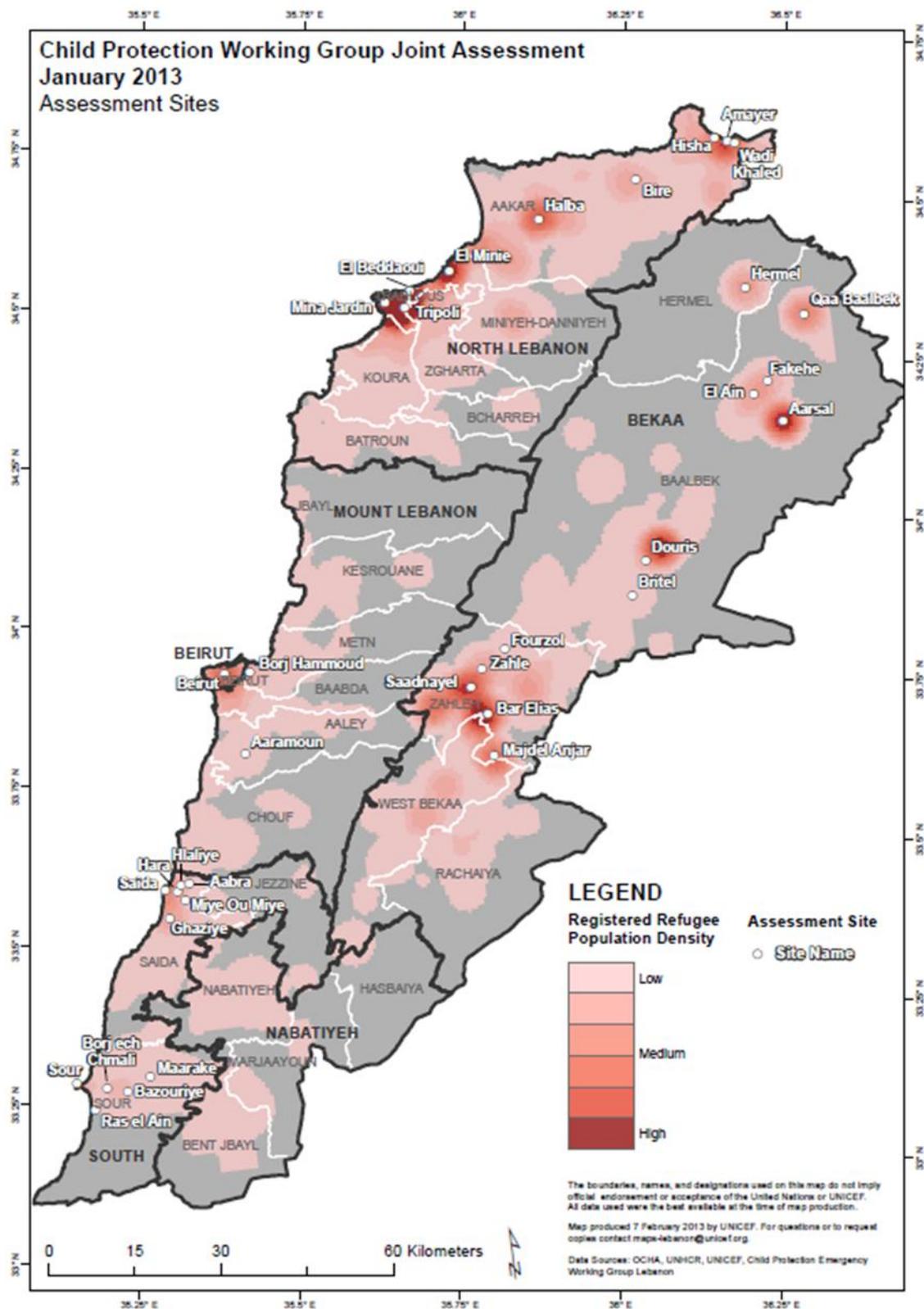
*Translation:* Information was collected in Arabic and translated into English and some inconsistencies or discrepancies may have occurred during the translation process.

*Participation of children under thirteen:* The assessment did not aim to fully capture information from children below the age of 13 years. Although the focus group discussions

with parents partially filled this information gap, the assessment does not claim to capture a holistic picture of their needs.

Due to these limitations and the evolving humanitarian situation in Lebanon, some of the findings within this report may now be out of date. Nonetheless, a number of provisional conclusions can be drawn from the assessment research to provide guidance for the development of further child protection programming for the Lebanon response to the Syrian Crisis.

**Child Protection Working Group Joint Assessment**  
**January 2013**  
**Assessment Sites**



### 3. KEY FINDINGS

The child protection needs assessment highlighted a number of significant concerns facing Syrian refugees beyond psychosocial distress caused by children's exposure to conflict. These include:

- Separation of children from their families
- Physical violence and verbal harassment
- Sexual violence against children
- Child labour
- Limited capacity and access to child protection services

As the crisis continues and the number of Syrian children crossing into Lebanon rises daily, these concerns are becoming increasingly urgent due to the prolonged displacement of Syrian families and the strain on host communities and local service providers.

#### 3.1 Separation of children from their families

Separation and unaccompaniment takes several forms in Lebanon; examples exist of children separated during displacement, at the border, and as a means for families to cope during displacement. The most common times for separation were reported to be during the conflict in Syria and between six months to one year after displacement.

In focus group discussions, women provided two examples of children being sent across the border from Syria unaccompanied - in one example the family followed a year later. Women also advised that they were encouraged to leave their homes before being able to locate all their children. Conversely, the men's focus groups denied there were separated or unaccompanied children, stating that they "always travel as a family".

In the majority of locations, children were identified as living with families who were not related to them. For instance, separated children were living with Syrian families that they were not related to, with other children or with Lebanese families who were not their own.

The most common reasons for separation were due to population movement, the need for children to work, a lack of space in accommodation and family tension.

The main risks identified by key Informants for separated and unaccompanied children could include psychosocial distress and trauma, abuse and rape, exploitation, child labour, drug use and begging.

Instances of adult members of the refugee community providing support to unaccompanied children included; helping them to access basic services, taking them to an agency or NGO and finding someone to care for the children.

Commonly reported ages of unaccompanied children ranged from 6 to 14 years for both girls and boys.

### ***Recommendations***

In order to ensure the protection of children separated from their families, it is recommended that:

- Awareness raising on the risks of further separation of children from their families is conducted with key actors, including the Ministry of Social Affairs, humanitarian agencies and communities;
- A comprehensive case management system is developed in partnership with MoSA to help identify and respond to the needs of vulnerable boys and girls separated from their families as a result of the conflict. This would include the development of inter-agency SOPs for the identification, documentation, tracing, verification and reunification of UASC;
- Child Protection monitoring is carried out to assess the number of ‘missing’ children from conflict zones and the numbers of separated and unaccompanied children in Lebanon;
- Joint inter-agency information sharing protocols on UASC are to be agreed upon and used by CPIEWG members - including regularity of information sharing, focal points and reporting formats;
- UNHCR Best Interests Determination processes is introduced and scaled-up;
- Interim and long-term alternative care/shelter options including relevant community actors who are caring for vulnerable children are identified, supported and monitored to provide appropriate levels of care.

### **3.2 Physical violence and verbal harassment**

While the assessment did not set out to measure the scope or scale of intimidation of Syrian refugee children by members of the host community, many raised the issue spontaneously during focus group discussions. All of the boy’s groups mentioned that Lebanese boys had started arguments or physical fights in the streets with Syrian boys.

The boys advised that they did what they could to avoid fighting, citing fears of groups gathering against them and of arrests leading to deportation back to Syria. Strategies included ignoring harassment and avoiding answering questions from strangers about political beliefs.

All focus group types reported bullying from the host community towards Syrian boys and girls in schools (by teachers and students), as well as in the street.

### ***Recommendations***

In order to prevent and respond to the increasing level of violence and harassment in schools, it is recommended that:

- Violence mitigation programmes in schools is developed in cooperation with the education sector;

- Adolescent out of school programmes that encourage participation by Lebanese and Syrian adolescents are established;
- Children and families affected by the conflict are provided with necessary psychosocial support and parents, teachers and community workers are provided with the necessary skills to protect and support children.

### 3.3 Sexual violence

In focus group discussions the refugees spoke of sexual violence and exploitation against girls and women, but not towards boys or men. This is despite key informants advising that they were aware of boys who had experienced sexual violence and exploitation. Participants provided general comments that girls were the targets of sexual harassment and assault, with three focus groups advising they knew of girls who had been raped or sexually assaulted.

Due to fears of girls being subjected to sexual violence, adults reported that they kept girls at home to protect them from kidnap and rape. Conversely there was little suggestion that adolescent boys should be kept at home.

In 75% of municipalities assessed, respondents reported knowledge of incidences of sexual violence towards refugees in Lebanon. Types of sexual violence occurring in Lebanon were reported to include sexual harassment, rape, transactional sex and verbal harassment.

Key informants were asked to advise how many refugee girls they knew of who had suffered from sexual violence. Notably, respondents in 19% of municipalities assessed knew of more than 10 incidents. With regards to sexual violence against boys, the number of incidents was lower, but more than a third of sites knew of cases of sexual violence against boys.

Sexual violence was reported to most likely to occur on the way to the shops, at home, while working or on the way to school. Other areas reported include at distribution areas, in public places, on the streets, in transport areas, on the edge of villages and at the border by taxi drivers.

The main perpetrators of sexual violence were reported to be family members, Syrian community members, Lebanese community members and aid workers<sup>4</sup> (noted in 5 municipalities in North Lebanon and Bekaa).

Both boys and girls who survived an incident of sexual violence were most likely to seek help from a family member, with other responses being seeking help from an NGO, Police, community leaders, religious leaders, or not to seek help at all.

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<sup>4</sup> The term 'aid worker' refers to any person providing relief support to the affected population, thus does not necessarily refer to workers falling within the UN coordination structure/mechanisms. Nevertheless, the UN and GoL take these allegations seriously and are thus taking measures to prevent, mitigate and respond to such issues through the establishment and initiatives undertaken by the inter-agency Protection of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (by UN and related personnel) Network led by the UN Resident Coordinator.

The focus group discussions with men and women commented on prostitution or sexual exploitation of women and girls with offers of money for unaffordable items such as clothing and food. Those who were exploited were identified as mothers who were married, divorced or widowed.

Notably, refugees identified that one of the ways that some people in Lebanon harass girls and women is to refer to them as prostitutes.

Reasons given for the increase in the incidents of sexual violence and exploitation amongst informants included socio-economic difficulties, crowding and cheaper prices for sex.

### ***Recommendations***

Although it was not possible to determine the prevalence of sexual violence against children, the accounts of witnessed rape and abuse was alarming. On this basis it is recommended that GBV prevention and response activities are urgently implemented to ensure the protection of girls and boys against sexual exploitation and abuse. Recommendations include

- Establish an inter-agency taskforce that aims to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse with code of conduct and complaints mechanisms.
- Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse training to be delivered to all staff of humanitarian agencies working in Lebanon and each agency to ensure their code of conduct explicitly prohibits their staff from engaging in sexual violence or exploitation.
- Establishment of a confidential pathway to respond to incidents of GBV and implementation of confidence-building measures to ensure its use by communities;
- Capacity building of relevant actors including social workers, community volunteers, teachers, health workers and parents to identify and respond to incidents of GBV;
- Working with children, families and communities, key sexual violence prevention messages are disseminated and awareness is raised;
- Background checks on health and education professionals working with children are conducted;
- Public awareness raising campaigns on services available for survivors to be carried out including at registration points;
- Livelihood programmes with an aim at preventing sexual exploitation to be enhanced;
- Shelter options for refugees are improved to avoid overcrowding which can increase risks of sexual violence.

### **3.4 Child Marriage**

Child Marriage is a common practice in Syria, with more than half of the sites reporting that the most normal age for girls to get married was between 12 to 15 years, followed by 16 to 18 years. The most normal age for boys to get married in Syria was reported to be between 19 and 25 years, followed by 16 to 18 years.

Conflict and displacement often has the effect of changing patterns of child marriage. Observations by key informants varied, with some noting that the age of marriage had increased since displacement and others reporting it had decreased. However, the majority reported that there has been an increase in marriage of under-18 year olds since the beginning of the displacement to Lebanon, especially for girls. Less expensive dowries and fewer conditions on marriage was also noted as a change in the patterns of child marriage which were attributed to poverty and protection from vulnerability.

Key informants attributed the increase to poverty, security and stability and the lack of work. Those reporting a decrease attributed it to a lack of Syrian men.

Reasons for marriage of children under 18 were reported to be financial, custom and family honour as well as to provide stability in Lebanon and to provide protection. Marriages were most commonly reported to be facilitated largely by known contacts, then religious leaders, people approaching refugee households and matchmakers.

There are reports of Syrian children marrying non-Syrians – predominantly Lebanese, but also Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Palestine and Iraq nationals were also identified. Key informants were asked to note their knowledge of child marriage to non-Syrians. Cases of girls marrying non-Syrians were much more prevalent, with respondents in 17% of municipalities knowing of 11 to 30 cases, compared to 3% of municipalities assessed knowing of 6 to 10 cases of boys marrying non-Syrians.

For the most part it was reported that children who had been married remained in Lebanon, mostly in the same area, whilst respondents from a couple of sites noted that married children were living in Turkey, the United Arab Emirates and Jordan.

There was a low response rate to a question regarding the voluntariness of child marriages. Focus group discussions revealed differing views amongst refugees.

### ***Recommendations***

Given that there are reports of an increase in child marriage and some reasons given are related to coping with displacement, it is recommended that:

- Livelihood support programmes for refugees be increased;
- Joint inter-agency messages on child marriage and positive coping mechanisms to be developed and targeted towards religious leaders, families and boys/men using existing service providers;
- Social networks and peer groups for adolescent girls to be supported;
- Access to education, remedial and accelerated learning classes for adolescent girls to be increased.

### **3.5 Child Labour**

The cost of living in Lebanon is reported to be considerably higher than in Syria. Given such disparity, households need to make difficult decisions about how to increase their income, including strategies that they would not ordinarily consider. All key informants noted that there was a need for refugee children to contribute to household income during displacement.

In the focus group discussions, while there was acknowledgement that it was the responsibility of the parents to provide food and shelter, circumstances during displacement were such that they believed their children (male and female) needed to work in order for the family to get basic necessities. Both men and women downplayed concerns about children working: “we only send them to work where we know they will be safe” and “we won’t let the boys work in the quarries – it’s too dangerous”.

The money earned by children was predominantly reported to be used to buy food and pay for rent. Other uses reported included to pay medical bills, to pay transportation, to pay back debt and to send money to family members.

Several groups acknowledged that children left school in order to work, that children often worked long hours, that many employers paid children substandard wages or did not pay for the work done. Boys often started working from the age of 10 years and some are travelling long distances to cities or outside of the country in order to find work. Men and boys acknowledged that at times children are beaten and insulted in the workplace while positing that difficulties were endured because the pay was needed.

Almost all focus groups posited that boys worked for wages. The most common types of paid employment for boys reported were selling goods, working in construction (including working from an external swing outside a building) and working in agriculture. In comparison, it was posited that most girls are expected to work at home rather than work for others for wages. However, of those who do work, the most common types of paid work reported were cleaning, selling goods and working in agriculture. Begging was reported by respondents as a common means of raising income for both boys and girls whilst getting married and sexual transaction was an alternative means for girls to raise income for their families.

Boys were more commonly reported to move away from their families to work, or to find work.

#### ***Recommendations***

Given the noted need for children to work and that income earned is used to pay for basic needs, it is recommended that:

- Child-headed households, female headed households and households with no adult male breadwinner receive target assistance packages;
- Livelihood programmes targeting refugees who choose not to register be offered to vulnerable families;

- Awareness raising campaigns on preventing the worst form of child labour are conducted;
- Increase coordination and cooperation with all assistance sectors including local actors, municipalities and religious structures to identify and support those requiring assistance;
- Advocacy to employers on not using child labour to undercut the pre conflict wage bands is conducted;
- Children of working age who are involved in, or at risk of becoming involved in worst forms of child labour access adequate support to strengthen their livelihood or economic circumstance;
- Children involved in, or at risk of worst forms of child labour take advantage of learning opportunities;
- Organise or engage in information-sharing opportunities on the worst form of child labour;
- Risks of child trafficking are identified and mitigated through working with communities;
- Ensure that key interventions combatting child labor support the implementation of the National strategy and Action Plan to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labour in Lebanon 2013 – 2016 elaborated by the Ministry of Labor and supported by ILO.

### **3.6 Additional concerns related to Child Protection**

#### Access to information

Given the disparate, wide scale displacement, access to information and services could be expected to be a challenge in Lebanon. The remoteness of many locations increases the need to have appropriate information sharing modalities, so that refugee children can feel connected and informed. The assessment highlighted that respondents considered access to information important as it supported access to services.

The most important sources of information reportedly come from Syrian family/friends/neighbours followed by aid workers then Lebanese family/friends/neighbours. Fewer respondents reported public or mass media channels (internet, TV, radio) as a means to access information on services.

Of the messages broadcast to or about Syrian children, informants were mainly familiar with messages related to access to services, how to ensure good health, how to ensure physical safety and to a lesser degree where to get work and where to access required legal documents (14% of municipalities assessed). The most helpful information for children was reported to be how to look after your mental health.

#### Access to services

Barriers for Syrian refugees accessing services were reported to include distances to services being too far, the lack of awareness of services available, not disaggregating services by

gender, the behaviour of service providers discouraging refugees, fear of stigmatisation and identification and transport costs.

It was noted by key informants in the South and North Lebanon governorates that the lack of separation between boys and girls in service provision has a greater impact on girls, where a lack of female staff was seen to inhibit access to services for girls.

Through focus group discussions refugees groups provided information about the struggles that they are having in meeting their basic needs for habitable shelter, sufficient food and water, clothes and water. Recurrent themes of other issues identified included children were experiencing difficulties in either enrolling or remaining in schools in Lebanon and difficulties for children to access medical care.

With regards to exclusion from services, rates of exclusion were reportedly higher for those who recently arrived, persons with physical disabilities, female headed households and persons with mental disabilities. When asked to specify other excluded groups, recurrent answers included non-registered refugees, those discriminated against for ethnic or reasons, elderly and girls living alone.

The behaviour of some organizations and individuals was reported to be impeding access to humanitarian assistance, with complaints from refugees that “there was a lack of dignity in requesting aid”. Some examples include:

- Sellers requiring money additional to vouchers in order to get diesel for heating
- Children setting off firecrackers when refugees approach distribution centres
- Medical staff being too busy to treat children taken to clinics
- UN employees lacking sensitivity to the needs of refugees when they ask for help
- Women being beaten by people who were meant to be aiding food distribution
- Children being beaten by teachers and classmates

Discussions in focus groups regarding registration highlighted the long waiting period for registration and raised concern that undocumented refugees are unable to register because of lack of documentation. One group advised that a prominent political group discouraged its members from registering.

#### Coping strategies and risks

The focus groups gave insights into the strategies that refugees use in order to cope with the difficult situations they find themselves in. Adolescent girls advised that they spoke with their friends, although they'd also like to have adults other than their parents to talk to. Boys spoke of avoiding fights and arguments with the host community, mostly through ignoring harassment and spending time at a child-friendly service offered by an NGO. The women and men's group spoke of protecting their children from harm by keeping them at home, especially the girls, and were grateful for recreational activities offered to children by NGOs.

A number of coping mechanisms being employed are related to managing the economic challenges of displacement in Lebanon. Coping mechanisms directly affecting children included child marriage, resorting to child labour and begging. The movement of children away from families was reported in 61% of sites to remove the burden of children on the household. Refugee boys move away from their families to work and find work whilst refugee girls mainly move for marriage or to live with other relatives. Anecdotal information from two municipalities, suggests that the selling of body organs was another, although extreme, coping mechanism option.

Key informants notes that the greatest risks to children as displacement continues and the scale increases were sexual violence and exploitation, psychosocial distress, lack of care and neglect, homelessness, security, use of drugs, child labour and crime.

### ***Recommendations***

Given the importance of community level information networks, noted barriers to access services and reports of child exclusion recommendations include:

- Existing child protection and GBV services are mapped to identify gaps and the capacity of existing organisations and other relevant actors to deliver quality services is analysed;
- Access to services is monitored and modalities of delivery are changed if service access is limited by the manner in which the service is delivered;
- Referral pathways are identified, documented and shared with child protection actors;
- Communication strategies for Syrian refugees are improved so that they are aware of what is available and reduce barriers to access services;
- Agencies ensure an appropriate balance of male and female field staff, and in particular sufficient numbers of trained female staff for case management.
- Humanitarian staff are trained by their agencies in appropriate interactions with affected populations and sign a code of conduct for which agencies develop SOPs for managing breaches of the code of conduct.
- Develop complaints mechanisms for affected populations in regard to discrimination and inappropriate behavior of humanitarian workers.
- Programmes for refugees who choose not to register and refugee children with disabilities to be increased;
- Ensure information gathered by the affected population includes excluded groups and is separated out to identify special characteristics;
- SOPs on information sharing and confidentiality of protection data are developed;
- Use of schools and CFSs to disseminate information is improved;
- Information dissemination is conducted on a systematic basis, for example at registration centres and distribution points;
- New arrivals programming is expanded so that access to services and information is assured to newly arriving refugees.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS & KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings from the child protection rapid needs assessment indicate that there are significant child protection concerns for Syrian child refugees in Lebanon. While limitations of the research methodology do not allow the drawing of any definitive conclusions, information collected through the assessment can help to broadly highlight emerging child protection concerns.

*Conclusions on the central protection risks facing children as a result of the Syria crisis;*

- Voluntary and involuntary separation of children from their families due to conflict and the economic challenges of displacement;
- Perceived and potential risk of sexual violence to children by families and members of the community;
- Risk of physical violence and tensions rising between Syrian refugee children and host community children
- Use of child labour and child marriage as a coping mechanism to deal with the socio-economic difficulties of prolonged displacement;
- Gender barriers to access child protection services, particularly for girls;
- Gaps in the provision of information to children and their caregivers to improve care for children and link them to basic services;
- Exclusion of children with disabilities from services;
- Limited capacity and reach of service providers to identify and respond to the child protection concerns of a highly dispersed refugee population; lack of an adequate case management system and the absence of a functioning referral pathway;

*Recommendations for responding to the identified child protection concerns include:*

- Awareness raising campaigns and information sessions to highlight the risks for children during displacement are provided within conflict-affected communities;
- Community based child protection mechanisms are established to identify report and raise awareness about child protection risks to children;
- Short and long term capacity building of the Ministry of Social Welfare social workers;
- Development of a comprehensive case management system with MoSA, and humanitarian actors to identify and respond to the needs of all vulnerable children. As a starting point this would include a mapping of child protection services and actors and the development of strong referral mechanisms;
- Advocacy and coordination with assistance sectors to ensure that vulnerable groups, particularly women and girls are targeted to receive assistance packages to reduce their protection risks and maintain their dignity;
- Provision of child friendly activities to children and youth including play therapy, recreational games, creative art work, sporting activities and education on self-protection to affected children and parents are needed. These activities should aim at helping children regain their normal life routines and to avail an opportunity for

continued development of children and boost their self-esteem, confidence and resilience;

- Development and dissemination of key messages to families and communities on available services and key child protection issues, including the risks of family separation;
- Development of initial family tracing and reunification activities. Through a case management system ensure that separated and unaccompanied children are identified, documented and placed in suitable family based care with follow-up support provided and (where appropriate) family reunification facilitated.
- Conduct child protection monitoring activities to identify child protection cases including those related to the involvement of children in armed conflict and child trafficking;

## 5. ANNEX

### Annexe 1: Assessment Sites

Governorate	District	Municipality
Beirut	Greater Beirut	Beirut
Bekaa	Baalbek	Baalbeck Al Four Douris Aarsal Fakeh Brittel Qaa El Ain
		Majdal Anjar Batr Elias Saadnayal Zahle
	Hermel	Hermel
Mount Lebanon	El Metn	Bourj Hammoud
	Aley	Aramoun
North	Akkar	El Birreh Amayer Halba Hisha Wadi Khalid
		El Minieh
	Tripoli	Bedawi Central Municipality Mina
South	Saida	Haret Saida Hilaleya Ghaziya Saida Meye w Meye
	Sour	Bazoreyeh Marraki Daik Kanan Ras El Ain Tyre Abra Borj Al Chamali
<b>5 Governorates</b>	<b>9 Districts</b>	<b>36 Municipalities</b>