

HIGHLIGHTS

- Over 300 young Syrians, Lebanese and Palestinians fight prejudice through art.
- Reported rise in child labour and sexual exploitation of Syrian refugees.
- New water networks for 5,000 people in Tripoli's conflict-scarred neighborhoods.
- 10,000 Syrian and Lebanese children receive WFP school meals for next six months.

FIGURES

# of refugees	1,055,984
52.5 %  47.5 %  53 % 	
# of returnees	35,000
# of Palestine Refugees from Syria (PRS)	40,807
# of Palestine Refugees from Lebanon (PRL)	277,985
# of targeted host communities	1,500,000
Total Lebanese population	4.4 M

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Children at an informal settlement in the Bekaa. Source: OCHA/Todd Lavine

In this issue

- Youth challenge prejudice through art P.1
- Refugees face exploitation and abuse P.2
- Water project helps families in Tripoli P.3
- Funding updates P.4
- Silvia's story P.5

Youth challenge prejudice through art

Young Syrians, Palestinians and Lebanese build peace together

Political leadership to prevent and end conflict is one of the five 'Core Responsibilities' listed by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in his [Agenda for Humanity](#), ahead of the [World Humanitarian Summit](#) that will take place in Istanbul on 23-24 May.

But conflict prevention and resolution is not solely the responsibility of political leaders: communities, individuals and local organizations also have a key role to play, and Lebanon's civil society is rising to the challenge.

Several initiatives are bringing young people together in Lebanon to build a more peaceful future in which violence is not an option. 'Better together' is one of these projects: international NGO Search for Common Ground (SFCG) has partnered with two local organizations – Development for People and Nature Association (DPNA) in the South, and Lebanese Organization for Studies and Trainings (LOST) in the Bekaa – to implement this EU-funded peacebuilding initiative.

"It is where I found a home"

The two-year project engaged 320 young Palestinians, Lebanese and Syrians in constructive dialogue and taught them to challenge stereotypes through art. The youth crossed community divides to produce music, plays, films and paintings together, guided by a team of Syrian, Palestinian, and Lebanese artists. 'Better Together' ensured a safe space for these youth to talk about their fears and challenges, learn about non-violent conflict resolution, and build strong ties across their different communities. "Better Together' was my support and gave me the courage to become a leader influencing my community. It is where I found a home," says Khalil, a teenage Palestinian refugee who founded 'Qalam Rasas' ('pencil'), a magazine about life in the Palestinian camps.



Youth from diverse backgrounds take part in the 'Better Together' project. Source: SFCG

Refugees face exploitation and abuse

New reports say Syrian refugees risk serious abuse in Lebanon

Two recent reports from the [Freedom Fund](#) and [Amnesty International](#) point to serious allegations of abuse, exploitation, and in some instances slavery of the Syrian refugee population in Lebanon.

Around 1.1 million Syrians are registered as refugees in Lebanon, and the Government of Lebanon estimates that the real number of refugees could be as high as 1.5 million. Regulations imposed since May 2015 prohibit new refugee registration of Syrians in Lebanon – the most recent in a series of policies limiting Syrian refugees' access to formal employment. Since January 2015, all Syrians who enter Lebanon and register as refugees have been required to sign a 'Pledge not to Work'. In addition, many previously-registered Syrian refugees are unable to renew their residency cards every year, as refugee families cannot afford the renewal fee of US\$200 per person. The outcome: Syrian refugees – registered or otherwise – seldom have the legal paperwork necessary to reside or work in Lebanon.



Ahmad, a teenage refugee at an informal settlement in the Bekaa.
Source: OCHA/Todd Lavine

Child labour is on the rise, with up to 70 per cent of Syrian refugee children reportedly working in some areas.

The April report from the Freedom Fund contends that these constraints on legal movement and employment for Syrian refugees in Lebanon have created an environment conducive to forced labour, child labour, early marriage, survival sex and sexual exploitation – acts that the Freedom Foundation asserts are tantamount to slavery. The report adds that these legal constraints contribute to a culture of impunity for the perpetrators, and of continued abuse and exploitation of refugees.

Child & forced labour on the rise

The Freedom Fund report alleges that child labour is on the rise, with up to 70 per cent of Syrian refugee children working in some areas, as reported by an NGO operating in the Bekaa valley, one of Lebanon's agricultural hubs. This increase is attributed to increasing economic vulnerability and perceptions that children are less likely to be questioned or detained by authorities, among other factors. This finding is consistent with a July 2015 report by [UNICEF](#) and [Save the Children](#) which indicates that Syrian refugee children are sustaining households' survival as partial or sole breadwinners, as well as the first 2016 [Interagency Quarterly Dashboard on Child Protection](#) which notes that "the prominence of child labour as a coping mechanism among Syrian refugees continues to be a primary protection concern". Concerns about being detained at checkpoints are also corroborated by a January 2016 [IRC report](#) which highlights that Syrian men are the most frequent targets of raids, arrests and checkpoints in Lebanon.

Women face sexual violence, early marriage and trafficking

Refugee women face specific risks in Lebanon. The Freedom Fund report, as well as a February study by [Amnesty International](#), argues that their uncertain legal status puts women refugees at increased risk of violence, harassment and exploitation. Women are most at risk when they are newly displaced: the [LCRP](#) found that 87 per cent of sexual violence reported in the first half of 2015 occurred shortly after arrival in Lebanon. The

Freedom Fund highlights that five years into the Syria crisis, early marriage is increasing as young girls are married off to relieve the rising financial burden on their families. The report adds that girls and women are increasingly being exploited through 'survival sex' as they exchange sex for food, rent or a job.

Sex trafficking of Syrian women is also a growing concern in Lebanon, as evidenced in March when a trafficking ring was dismantled near Beirut, freeing 75 Syrian women who were being forcibly sold for sex (see the [March Humanitarian Bulletin](#)).

Given their irregular legal status in the country, many survivors are often unable to report abuse to the authorities for fear of reprisal – thus exposing them to further exploitation.

More funding needed for GBV response

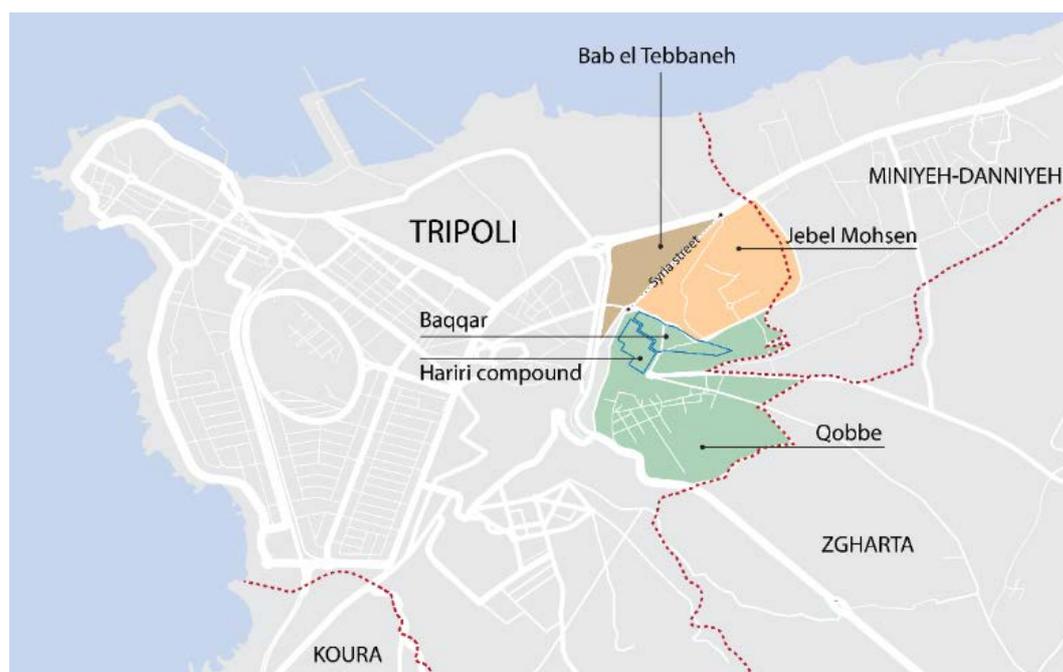
Survivors of trafficking and sexual exploitation may suffer long-term harmful effects including physical, mental, emotional, and sexual trauma; HIV, AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases; unwanted pregnancies and forced or unsafe abortions; and social stigma. Sexually exploited and trafficked women and children are subjected to extreme violations of their human rights including the right to liberty, the right to dignity and security of person, the right not to be held in slavery or involuntary servitude, the right to be free from cruel and inhumane treatment, the right to be free from violence, and the right to health. In response to cases of sexual-based violence, [GBV partners](#) in Lebanon are working with the Ministry of Social Affairs to ensure immediate response plans for survivors. However, given the long-term impact of gender-based violence, responders need more predictable and sustainable funding for GBV strategies and initiatives in order to maximize the effectiveness and cost efficiency of the response. More predictable and sustainable funding will not just help save lives and protect the dignity of GBV survivors, but also build sustainable systems for service provision to survivors which will last beyond the Syria crisis response.

Reports suggest an increase in early marriage, survival sex and sex trafficking among refugee women and girls.

Water project helps families in Tripoli

HC visits communities rebuilding after years of conflict

A water project is giving new hope to 5,000 people living in several conflict-scarred neighborhoods of Tripoli, in northern Lebanon. The project by the NGO Lebanese Relief Council (LebRelief-LRC) kicks off in May 2016 and will provide 500 water tanks to vulnerable families, along with improved wastewater infrastructure for 12 large buildings.



The \$250,000 initiative, which complements an earlier UNICEF-supported project, is financed by the [Lebanon Humanitarian Fund](#).

The project targets parts of the most vulnerable neighborhoods in Tripoli – Amerkan, Baqqar, Tanak, Hariri Compound and other areas – whose 5,000 inhabitants were strongly impacted by armed clashes between communities from 2008 to 2014. The violent conflict centered on rivalries between the Alawite area of Jebel Mohsen and the surrounding Sunni neighborhoods, including Qobbe and Bab el Tebbaneh, which supported opposing sides in the Syrian war. As the crisis flared up in Syria, the clashes in Tripoli became increasingly violent, killing 200 people and wounding more than 2,000 between 2013 and 2015.

“Conflict prevention mechanisms are a priority for peace, security and stability in Jabal Mohsen and Bab el Tebbaneh,” the HC remarked during his visit.

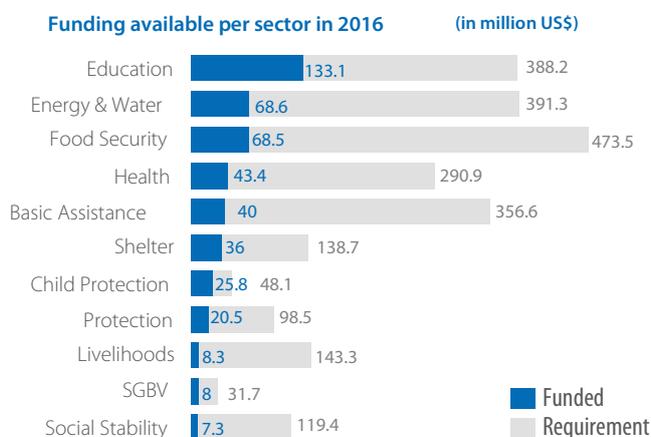
Stability has gradually returned since 2015, with relations between the communities slowly improving and humanitarian agencies helping to rebuild the neighborhoods. However, the strong military presence attests to the continuing tension in the area, and conflict continues to erupt sporadically. The LebRelief-LRC project, like many other initiatives in the area, promotes coexistence by integrating conflict sensitivity into programming and ensuring that projects support both communities.

The LebRelief-LRC water project is one of several initiatives that Humanitarian Coordinator Lazzarini visited on 20 April in Jabal Mohsen, Qobbeh and Bab el Tebbaneh. He also visited two clinics supported by Médecins Sans Frontières, a women’s livelihood centre run by the Safadi Foundation, and the “Cultural Café” that was recently opened by MARCH NGO to bring together conflicting communities on Syria Street, the former epicenter of the conflict. “Conflict prevention mechanisms are a priority for peace, security and stability in Jabal Mohsen and Bab el Tebbaneh,” the HC remarked as he visited these key initiatives to build peaceful coexistence in Tripoli after years of unrest.

Funding updates

As of the end of April 2016, resources received and committed for the humanitarian response in Lebanon totaled \$1.15 billion. Of that total, \$468 million has been allocated in support of the [Lebanon Crisis Response Plan](#), covering 19 per cent of the Plan’s overall requirements. In addition to this, UN agencies, NGO partners and the World Bank have reported a carry-over from 2015 of approximately \$333 million.

During the [Spring Meeting](#) held in April 2016, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank provided Lebanon and Jordan with initial grant contributions of \$140 million for the Concessional Financing Facility as well as \$1 billion in concessional loans, which will generate additional grant contributions. The exact amount to be provided by the concessional finance scheme is to be determined.



Total Carryover from 2015: \$333 million

Funding received in 2016 and not yet allocated: \$9.2 million.

Silvia's story

WFP starts school feeding programme

“The snacks are super tasty and my little sister Malak thanks me whenever I bring a portion home for her,” says eight-year-old Silvia, a Syrian refugee attending the second shift at a Lebanese public school in Sed el Bauchrieh, Beirut.

Silvia is not the only one to share her snack with her siblings. Her classmates enthusiastically join the conversation to tell you that they have proudly done the same. The children are given the snacks during the break, and their laughter and chats fill the room the moment they start drinking their juice and enjoying the cookies.



Schoolgirls enjoying their snacks. Source: OCHA/Manal Sarrouf

In March, WFP started distributing school meals to a total of 10,000 Lebanese and Syrian children in 13 double-shift schools in Lebanon.

In early March, the World Food Programme (WFP) started distributing school meals to around 10,000 Lebanese and Syrian students across 13 “double-shift” public primary schools in Lebanon – schools that host Lebanese schoolchildren in the morning and refugee children in the afternoon.

The snacks consist of milk or juice, along with a muffin or a cookie and a fresh apple on some days. The International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC), the organization implementing and monitoring the project, has also conducted awareness sessions for the children on the benefits of milk and other food groups.

“The children are very happy with these snacks, which unfortunately some of the students were unable to afford,” says one of the teachers. She recounts how some refugee children would come to school in the afternoon without having had any meal during the day. The teachers would offer them small sandwiches.

WFP is partnering on the project with UNICEF, UNHCR and the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE).

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