

KEY FIGURES¹



~ 62,000 Lebanese children engaged in child labour

~ 37,000 Syrian children engaged in child labour

~ 4,500 Palestine children engaged in child labour

The number of children engaged in child labour in Lebanon has increased significantly since the start of the Syrian crisis, as the impact of the war on the Lebanese economy has resulted in worsened economic and social hardship for families. Increasing numbers of children are working long hours for low wages, often carrying out work that is hazardous, exposing them to violence, exploitation and abuse, depriving them of an education, and potentially leading to long-lasting negative impacts on their development. Families are increasingly relying on child labour as a coping mechanism. Eliminating the root cause of practices that are harmful for children, including child labour, child marriage and violent discipline, remains an ongoing challenge.

WHAT IS CHILD LABOUR?

Work carried out by children constitutes child labour when:

- The child is too young;
- The work is limiting the child's education; or
- The work is harmful to the child's emotional and physical well-being and development.

The **worst forms of child labour** are those that harm the health, safety or morale of children. The worst forms of child labour are not permitted for any child. In Lebanon, based on Decree No. 8987, this includes activities:

- with physical hazards (handling weapons, working in/near quarries, wood-sawing, working in poorly ventilated environment)
- with psychological hazards (slavery, domestic work activities, working in streets)
- with moral hazards (sexual or other exploitation, gambling/betting, drug transportation and related activities)
- preventing children from pursuing their right to education (long working times during school hours, work leading to physical exhaustion or psychological stress).

In Lebanon, Decree No. 8987 specifies that some types of hazardous work are acceptable for children above 16 years of age, provided that (1) they are offered full protection for their physical, mental and moral health, and (2) they receive special education or appropriate vocational training. The considerations to determine such hazardous work include:

- Type of activities (building, demolition, excavation and construction activities, etc.)
- Equipment/tools engaged (ergonomic hazards, etc.)
- Work environment (exposure to chemical or biological hazards, hot/cold weather conditions, etc.)
- Duration (long working hours, more than 6 hours per day or without sufficient rest periods)
- Timing (night shifts between 7pm and 7am)
- Distance to work
- Relationship with employer (exposure to verbal or physical abuse)

POPULATION AFFECTED

Based on UNICEF's 2016 Baseline Survey, it is estimated that child labour currently affects some 100,000 children in Lebanon. The number of Lebanese children involved in child labour has tripled between 2009 and 2016. Boys are more likely to be engaged in child labour than girls across all population groups.

Figure 1: Percentage of children aged 5-17 years involved in child labour

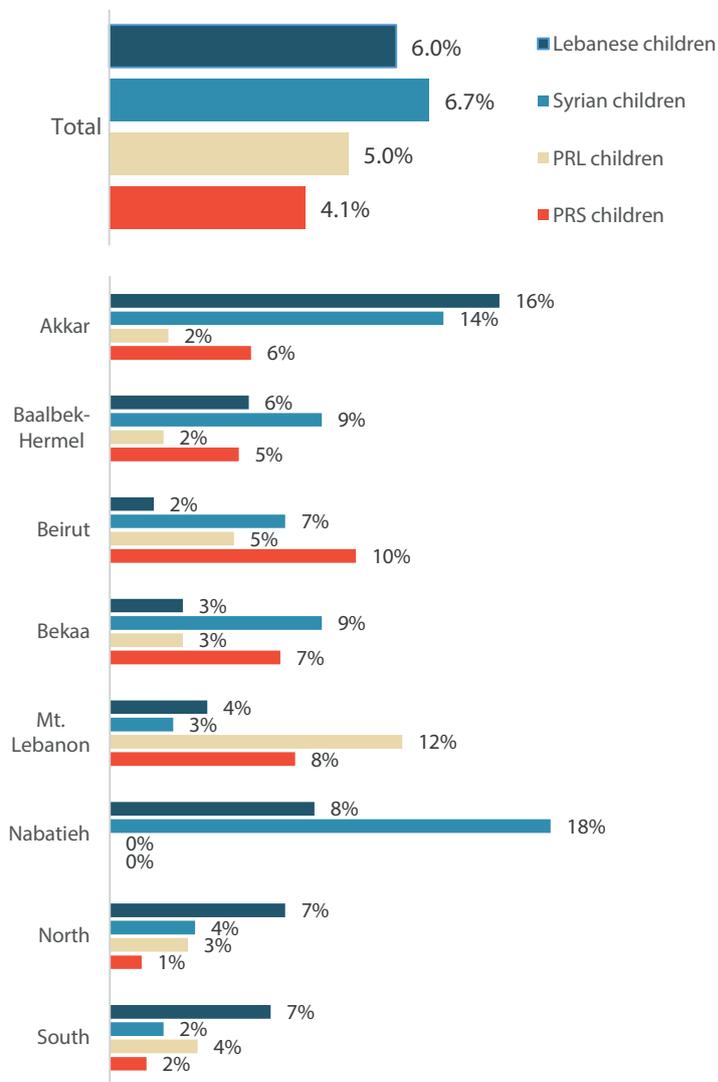
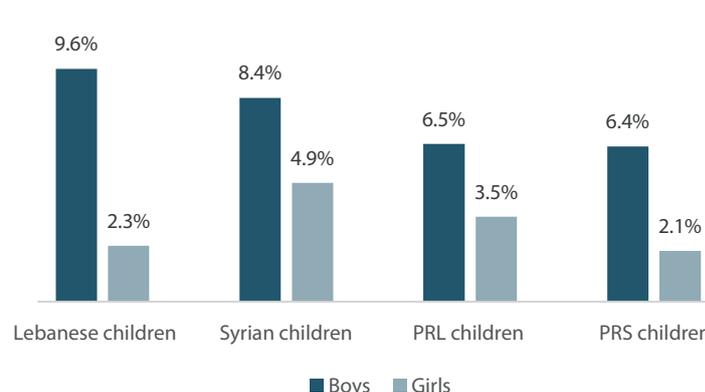


Figure 2: Gender disaggregation of children aged 5-17 years involved in child labour



Source:
UNICEF Baseline Survey 2016²

¹ Calculated based on the 2017-2020 LCRP Population Package.

² Although more current data on child labour among Syrian refugee children is available through the VASyR (see next page), these graphs display data from the UNICEF Baseline Survey from 2016 for all population groups for comparability reasons, as more up-to-date information is not available for child labour among Lebanese, PRL and PRS children.

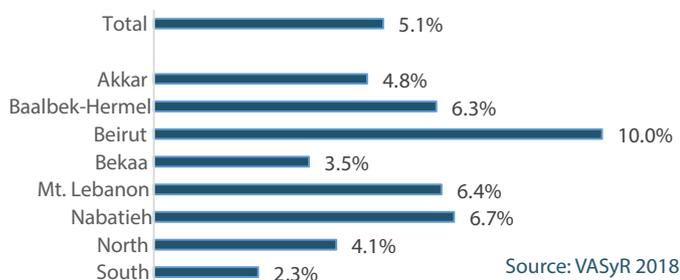
MAIN CAUSES OF CHILD LABOUR IN EMERGENCIES

The main reasons for children having to work are related to:

(1) Lack of income or household resources (due to economic situation or chronic poverty)

Child labour is part of the livelihood coping strategy for many families. The income from a child's work is considered crucial to the survival of these families, as children are often the main income provider. Livelihood opportunities for Syrian refugee families are limited, as work permits are restricted to only three sectors. The lack of legal residency, as well as curfews applicable to Syrian refugees in many municipalities, is exacerbating this situation as it is affecting their freedom of movement and prevents them from working and generating income (especially males working night shifts). This can have negative consequences for children who are then required to work in order to earn enough income to ensure the family's survival.

Figure 3: Syrian households having school children (6-15 years) involved in income generation as a coping strategy



(2) Lack of access to education (or quality of education)

Education and child labour are closely inter-linked. Education allows children to realize their right to education and their right to a safe protective environment, and the lack of it puts them at risk. Education also provides an alternative for children who are at risk of child labour. Children who are not able to access education (for example, because of distance) are more likely to work; they are thus left with incomplete education and with little prospects for decent jobs, leading to a poverty cycle that is perpetuated for the children involved, their families and communities.

(3) Harmful social norms

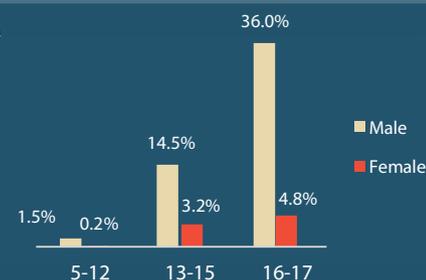
Social norms and cultural attitudes can also play an important role among certain communities, for example shown through the high prevalence of household chores being done by adolescent girls.



2018 VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT OF SYRIAN REFUGEES IN LEBANON (VASyR)³

Gender and age analysis⁴

More than 1/5 of Syrian youth aged 16 and 17 reported working (22%).



Types of work

Economic activities 82%

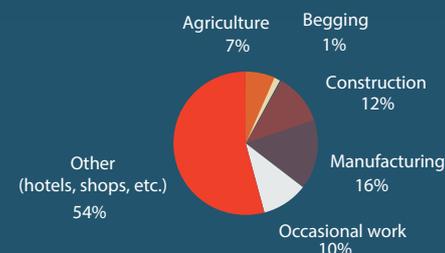


Household chores 18%

Household chores were classified as child labour if carried out for more than 28 hours (ages 5-14) or 43 hours (ages 15-17) during the last week.⁵ Children in child labour worked an average of 55 hours per week on household chores.

Sectors of work

The proportion of girls and boys varied by sector of work. For instance, 61% of girls engaged in child labour were working in agriculture, versus 5% of boys.



"Fun Bus" in Mount Lebanon

The "Fun Bus" is an initiative by the Makhzoumi Foundation, supported by UNHCR, to improve the situation of street and working children (SaWC) in Beirut. The project reaches out to these children, who are unable to come to existing community learning centres or safe spaces in Jnah and Hamra, and involves them in interactive, participatory and educational activities. Support is provided to their parents, to help them develop their parenting skills, encourage them to enroll the children back into school, and provide other support depending on the family's needs.

Launched in April 2018, the "Fun Bus" is circulating around 12 areas in Beirut to reach as many SaWC as possible. It provides a safe area for them, where they can play, interact, and learn with the help of psychosocial workers and outreach volunteers.



Some 120 boys and girls aged 5-17 years -- Syrian, Lebanese and Palestinian -- are targeted during these mobile activities, which include awareness-raising, handicrafts, and basic literacy exercises. This initiative helps these vulnerable children in changing negative thoughts and behaviour, expressing their feelings, and learning new skills. Children have expressed feeling safe and comfortable in the bus, and happy and excited to participate in the activities, having an opportunity to play and learn. A total of 80 children went back to school (2018/2019 school year) after having benefited from activities for SaWC, including through the Fun Bus.

³ The Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (VASyR) is conducted annually, jointly by UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP. Data for the 2018 (sixth) edition was collected from a representative sample of 5,000 Syrian refugee households throughout Lebanon during April and May 2018. The final report will be published in December 2018.

⁴ The 2018 VASyR measured child labour as a child "performing economic activities or household chores during the last week for more than the age-specific number of hours," the result for which was 2.2%. Using the same calculation as in previous years ("working at least one day in the previous 30 days"), the overall percentage would be 4.6%.

⁵ According to UNICEF, four or more hours of working household chores per week is considered harmful to the child's development and has an affect on or hinders school enrolment.

IMPACT OF CHILD LABOUR

On education

Child labour is reported as one of the main barriers to accessing education. Among children of primary school age (6-14 years), 32% were found to be out of school, whereas 80% of children of secondary school age (15-17 years) were out of school. Although the main reason (for all age groups) for not attending school were cost-related barriers (transportation, materials), children aged 12-14 were not attending school because they were working (5.5%) or needed to work (9%), which increased for children aged 15-17 to 9.5% and 17%, respectively.⁶ Studies suggest that child labour hinders schooling opportunities for children, through non-enrollment in school, school drop-out (sharp increase in out-of-school children at age 12 and 13), and/or poor performance.

Recent findings from an ongoing inter-agency study, specifically targeting informal settlements in the Bekaa, showed that 74% of children of compulsory school age (6-14) were out of school, of which 64% were working (primarily in agriculture). The study also confirmed that more than half of children reported work commitments as the main obstacle for school enrollment.⁷

On health

The engagement of children in child labour -- either the worst forms or under hazardous conditions (for example exposure to chemicals), without food, water or rest -- often leads to health problems for them. Children are exposed to abuse and harassment, and they have also reported maltreatment or beatings by employers. Some children even face violence by their parents when falling ill or too tired and unable to go to work. The psychological stress of children feeling obliged or forced to work by their parents, in order to help cover the cost of basic needs such as food and rent, negatively affects their well-being and contributes to mental health issues.

Refugees throughout Lebanon have raised issues relating to child labour as a concern during yearly participatory consultations held since 2012. In addition to being subject to harmful working conditions and health risks, they report not having access to health coverage nor to medical care. Child labour in agriculture in Lebanon has in past years been masked as family work support, but children may in fact be exposed to serious risks to their health and safety. Street and working children are exposed to further harm, including safety and health risks.



⁶ Source: VASyR 2018.

⁷ Forthcoming study led by the American University in Beirut (AUB), FAO, ILO and UNICEF on child labour in agriculture among Syrian refugees in the Bekaa Valley.

From work to school

One year after having fled Syria in 2014, the father of Shaimaa (14) and Aya (11) was no longer able to cover the family's expenses with his job. His wife and daughters had to start working with him in the agricultural field to help and provide for their basic needs. The girls worked an average of eight hours a day, earning LBP 10,000, without using any protection measures or safety tools and without any rest or days off.

Terre des hommes Lebanon (TDH-L) worked with the family to mitigate the risks faced at work and address protection concerns. The initiative -- part of a larger UNICEF/TDH-L partnership -- centres around a comprehensive child protection approach focused on the best interests of the child, which involves individual case management and focused psychosocial support activities. While working on removing children from agriculture work, TDH-L ensures that they are equipped with safety tools (shoes, agricultural hats, gloves and masks) and provided with awareness sessions (highlighting safety at work, protecting themselves at work, and the importance of education). Parents are equally engaged in support programmes and in the process of finding better solutions for the family and children.



In this case, the family was referred for protection cash assistance which enabled the girls to quit agricultural work and be enrolled back in school. TDH-L also supported with transportation fees and with the provision of educational kits, and regularly follows up with the family on the girls' school attendance, which remains stable and successful.

Legal Framework

International

1. ILO Convention No. 138 (1973) on the Minimum Age of Admission to Employment [ratified by Lebanon on 10 June 2003]
2. ILO Convention No. 182 (1999) on the Worst Forms of Child Labour [ratified by Lebanon on 11 September 2001]
3. Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) [ratified by Lebanon on 14 May 1991]
4. Arab Labor Convention No. 18 concerning the employment of minors [ratified by Lebanon on 24 May 2000 (Arabic only)]

National

1. Labour Law, Decree 1946 and amendments:

The responsibility for age verification is with the employer.

Children may work a maximum of six hours (with 1 hour rest after 4 hours). Children are not allowed to work between 7 pm and 7 am, and there needs to be a rest period of at least 13 hours between two work periods.

A medical certificate is required from the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) for any child to work, ensuring that the child is physically and mentally fit to perform the job.

2. Decree No. 8987 (2012) on the prohibition of employment of minors under the age of 18 in works that may harm their health, safety or morals. This Decree includes:

Annex No. 1, listing the worst forms of child labour (works and activities which are totally prohibited for minors under 18 years of age)

Annex No. 2, listing hazardous works (those which are likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children under 16 years of age)

3. National plan of action to combat the worst forms of child labour in Lebanon by 2016 (November 2013). The action plan aims to eliminate the worst forms of child labour as a matter of urgency. An updated version of the action plan, with an annex targeting Syrian refugee children, is pending endorsement by the Ministry of Labour (MoL).

Age limits, according to the 1946 Lebanese Labour Law:

- 13 yrs Light work
- 14 yrs Minimum age
- 16 yrs Hazardous work
- 18 yrs Worst forms of child labour

RESPONSE TO CHILD LABOUR

Main actors



Response activities

- 21% of children supported with case management and/or specialized psycho-social support in 2018 were at risk of, or engaged in, child labour.
- Services aim to better protect children by mitigating risks that children are exposed to, and by supporting children to access educational opportunities and to improve their overall safety and well-being.
- 20,778 caregivers and 19,869 children received information in 2017 on the harmful effects of child labour and how to seek support.
- Resources and training have been provided to frontline workers to mitigate risks and reduce harm, especially for street and working children and for children in agriculture, and support tools were developed for child protection actors to help combat child labour.

Addressing root causes

Actions aimed at the elimination of child labour must address a number of target groups:

- children at risk of, or engaged in, child labour
- parents and/or caregivers
- schools
- community leaders or shawishes
- employers, land owners and workers organizations
- all relevant governmental agencies, law enforcement officers, municipalities
- local and international NGOs and UN organizations.

Public awareness campaigns to promote the understanding of child labour are essential, along with the provision of training and technical advisory services for all relevant actors. In addition, government resources must be committed to better enforce the age-specific stipulations in the Lebanese Labour Law and Decree No. 8987. This can be done through improving intra-governmental coordination, empowering the MoL Child Labour Unit, and strengthening the labour inspection capacity.

Mainstreaming child labour in social policy and promoting social and behavioural change to protect children require a longer-term approach to working with and engaging employers, parents and communities. Sustained, predictable, longer-term and multi-year funding is required to support such interventions to eliminate child labour over the longer term.

CROSS-SECTORAL LINKAGES

Addressing the root causes of child labour and building greater support for children's rights must be undertaken jointly by sectors, as child labour is preventable only through integrated approaches. Cross-sector activities must simultaneously address poverty and inequity and the lack of legal residency, improve access to quality education, strengthen the enforcement of regulations, and mobilize public support for respecting children's rights.



Close cooperation is taking place with legal partners to ensure legal assistance for families, to support in resolving the lack of legal residency, as this is an obstacle to their employment in many cases. Children without civil documentation are also at higher risk for child labour, as they are less likely to attend school. Partners also provide support in cases of juvenile detention (in particular street and working children) and in arbitrary detention of children and family members.



Child labour and other negative coping strategies are commonly found in low-income households and communities. Research suggests that children from households receiving multi-purpose cash assistance exhibit vulnerability but lower levels of protection-specific insecurity, compared to children from households that do not receive such assistance. In that sense, by reducing socio-economic vulnerability, cash assistance has some positive outcomes on child education, child labour, health and psychosocial well-being. Children have indeed requested, during yearly participatory consultations, financial support to be able to stop working. However, cash assistance alone – as a modality – is not the solution, rather it complements existing efforts and interventions to decrease risks that economically vulnerable households witness on a daily basis, including child labour. More research needs to be done to determine cross-sectoral effects and outcomes on child labour of multi-purpose cash programmes aimed at decreasing economic vulnerability.



Engagement with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) and education partners to ensure access to education in underserved areas is crucial. Vulnerable working children out of school must be identified and efforts made to provide them access to the most relevant educational pathway, especially for those children deprived of education for a number of years. Resources must be directed at efforts to keep all children in school and to avoid school drop outs, including assessments of obstacles that prevent children from attending school and tailored interventions to address these. The implementation of safe schools and smart student programmes to improve school enrolment, retention and support the de-stigmatization of working children is also needed.



Hazardous work may only be done by children over 16 years of age, if their physical, mental and moral health is protected and if they receive formal training. The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) should issue medical certificates regarding the "health ability" of the child to work in this case. Strengthened cooperation is required with MoPH and the Ministry of Labour, as both provisions are not being complied with. There is also a need to ensure that working children, especially those engaged in the worst forms of child labour, are prioritized for access to health services. This includes adequate referrals to specialized and mental health services.



Collaboration with the Livelihoods sector would include:

- creating sustainable livelihood and income-generating opportunities for families;
- raising awareness to improve Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) and employment conditions, and
- joint advocacy with employers, workers organizations, land owners, and community leaders to ensure that children are not used as labourers. Livelihood opportunities for adults are also critical for an effective response to combat child labour, as well as interventions to help households offsetting income being earned by children.