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Child labour within the Syrian refugee response

2020 Stocktaking report

May 2021

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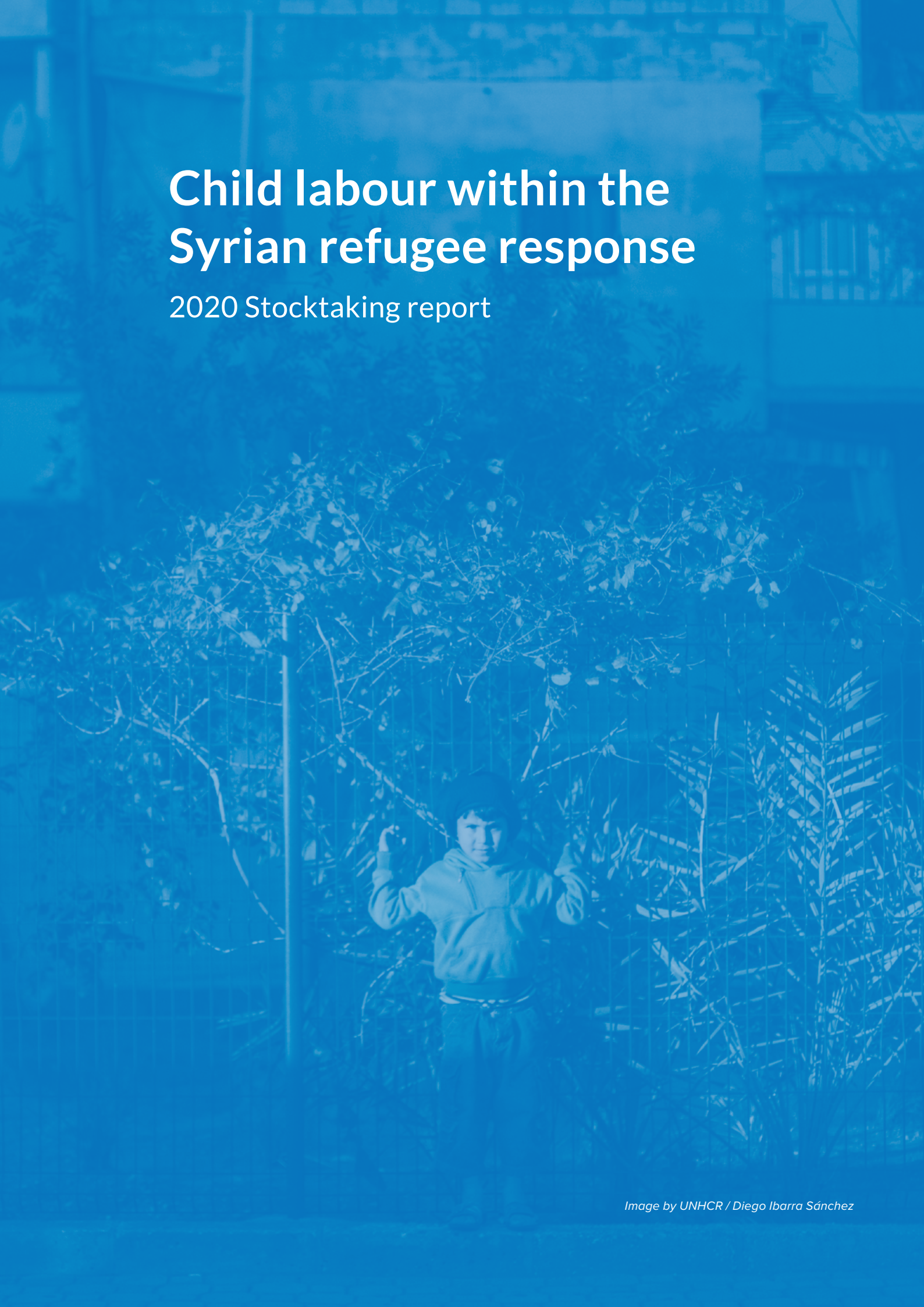


Image by UNHCR / Diego Ibarra Sánchez

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List of abbreviations

ACPHA	Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action
AoR	Area of responsibility
CLM	Child labour monitoring
CLIE	Child Labour in Emergencies
CLTF	Child Labour Task Force
CPiE	Child protection in emergencies
CPMS	Child protection minimum standards
CPRA	Child protection rapid assessment
CPWG	Child protection working group
CSR	Corporate social responsibility
DRR	Disaster risk reduction
ECD	Early childhood development
GBV	Gender-based violence
ILO	International labour organisation
IOM	International organisation for migration
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
SOP	Standard operating procedures
TVET	Technical vocational education and training
UASC	Unaccompanied and separated children
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WFCL	Worst forms of child labour

Summary

This report builds upon a stocktaking initiative¹ commissioned by UNHCR, UNICEF and ILO in 2016 to inform development of the 2017 publication, *Child Labour within the Syrian Refugee Response: A Regional Strategic Framework for Action*, henceforth referred to here as the 2017 Framework.

Using key informant interviews, an online survey, and a literature review, the 2020 research sought to measure progress in the past three years toward recommendations in the 2017 Framework. This report provides recommended follow-up actions on the implementation of the 2017 Framework through taking stock of good practices, gaps and challenges, including areas of priority actions per country, to support the mainstreaming of programmatic approaches to prevention, mitigation and reduction of the risk of refugee child labour.

Due to the scale of the refugee crisis in the region, in addition to economic decline, conflicts, and the COVID-19 pandemic, child labour rates continue to increase. Turkey, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Iraq, the countries that fall under the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP, <http://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/>), continue to face various challenges in implementing effective, quality child protection programmes, with child labour being one of the major gaps.

The most at-risk groups are similar across countries: children with disabilities, street-involved children, and children working in invisible or irregular work that is likely to be controlled by criminal groups, and accompanied by physical, emotional, and sexual abuse.

Four of the five countries now have national action plans on child labour. Several national assessments have been conducted to understand the nature of the problem; and specific positive changes have been made to child-labour related law and policy in the individual countries.

Many of the factors contributing to child labour risk have worsened in recent years, especially in the light of COVID-19, which exacerbated harmful coping mechanisms. During the pandemic, it is more difficult to identify child labour cases, many schools are closed, and household socio-economic vulnerabilities are on the rise, all of which may result in the potential for increased child labour. According to the interagency Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon, children between the ages of 5 and 17 years who are engaged in child labour almost doubled since 2019, reaching 4.4% in 2020.²

Some progress has been made in service availability, legislation, and capacity levels in various sectors since 2017. This progress has been uneven, however, with some countries advancing more quickly than those where capacity and infrastructure are more limited. Stakeholders in all five countries are concerned by the a lack of human resources, and high staff turnover that hinder progress. Many respondents are of the opinion that child labour should be prioritized.

All actors acknowledge that prevention and response to child labour must address family poverty holistically, working across education, livelihoods / economic strengthening, nutrition / food security, and social protection including cash-based assistance. However, such integrated responses are mostly at small scale thus far. Coordination between different child labour stakeholders remains the most important; some stakeholders report that they have established closer linkages between sectors since 2017. While most prevention work happens on the supply side with schools and families, fewer investments are made on the demand side, working with the private sector.

To varying degrees by country, respondents note that the child labour effort suffers from lack of funds, capacity, and will, and that the issue may require further prioritization.

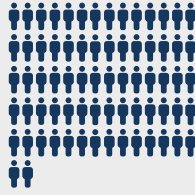
Opportunities, challenges and recommendations are presented for each of the five countries. Overall recommendations include a call to take advantage of existing regional interagency initiatives as platforms for regional advocacy around child labour law and policy, sharing of expertise across borders, and tracking regional child labour trends and program outcomes.

Capacity development and resources are needed among actors in all relevant sectors. Child labour data may need support to harmonize their systems and increase data evidence. Investments are needed to develop the social service workforce in all countries, as well as to build teachers' protection capacity.

¹ Matz, Peter, (2016). Child labour within the Syrian refugee response: Stocktaking report

² UNHCR/WFP/UNICEF, (2021). Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon

TURKEY



3,665,946
Syrian refugees under temporary protection

3,665,946
projected Syrian refugees under temporary protection by December 2020

3,665,946
estimated total number of Syrians

1,800,000
number of impacted host community members

LEBANON



855,172
registered Syrian refugees

800,000
projected registered Syrian refugees by December 2020

1,500,000
estimated total number of Syrians

1,500,000
number of impacted host community members

IRAQ



243,890
registered Syrian refugees

255,000
projected registered Syrian refugees by December 2020

245,810
estimated total number of Syrians

231,938
number of impacted host community members

JORDAN



665,404
registered Syrian refugees

633,314
projected registered Syrian refugees by December 2020

1,300,000
estimated total number of Syrians

520,000*
number of impacted host community members

EGYPT



131,235
registered Syrian refugees

136,000
projected registered Syrian refugees by December 2020

500,000
estimated total number of Syrians

804,480**
number of impacted host community members

REGIONAL TOTAL

5,593,304**
registered Syrian refugees

5,459,724
projected registered Syrian refugees by December 2020

7,181,220
estimated total number of Syrians

4,856,418
number of impacted host community members

* Numbers are based on 2020 figure

** The Regional total includes 31,657 Syrian refugees in North Africa

Figures as of end-March 2021
Source: [3RP Regional Strategic Overview 2021](#)

Background

Since the onset of the Syrian crisis in March 2011, more than 5.6 million Syrians³ have fled their country, seeking protection mostly in Turkey, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Iraq.⁴ While refugees may have found safety from the immediate dangers of the conflict, they still face difficulties in accessing services, impacting their ability to provide food, housing, health and care, and other basic needs for their families.

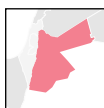
Half of these refugees are children, whose well-being, protection and development is profoundly impacted by the crisis. One of the major child protection concerns is the persistent issue of child labour among refugee children and vulnerable host communities. In addition to poverty, refugee children are also affected by other determinants of child labour, such as the breakdown of the social fabric of families and communities, economic crises, the disruption of education and training, and most recently, the onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic. In Lebanon specifically, the 2020 Beirut explosion created yet another risk factor overlaying the others.

In order to consolidate knowledge and inform the future strategic response to child labour among Syrian refugees in the 3RP countries, this report aims to take stock of existing approaches and initiatives, and review current promising and good practices, needs and challenges for UNHCR, ILO, UNICEF, and other NLG partners, with the aim to scale up collective efforts for prevention and response to child labour in the Syrian refugee response.

Namaat (11)

Syrian Refugee living in Jordan

Namaat is only 11 but has the daily responsibilities of an adult. Her family fled Homs in 2013 and their dire financial situation has seen Namaat take on household duties.



³ In addition to these Syrian refugees, tens of thousands of Palestinians and other nationals also fled Syria.

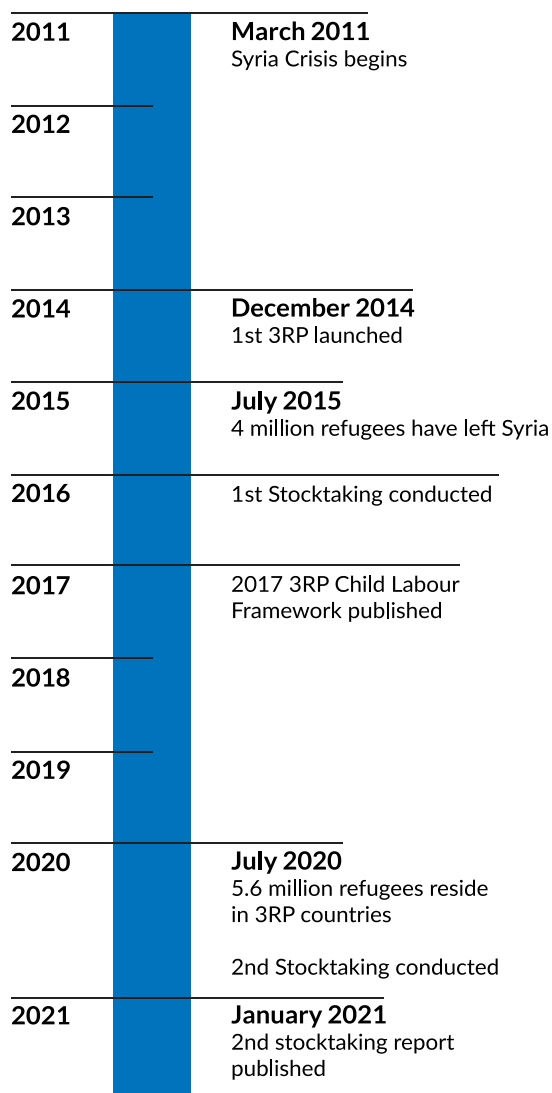
⁴ UNHCR, (2020). [The Syria Emergency](#).

Scope and methodology

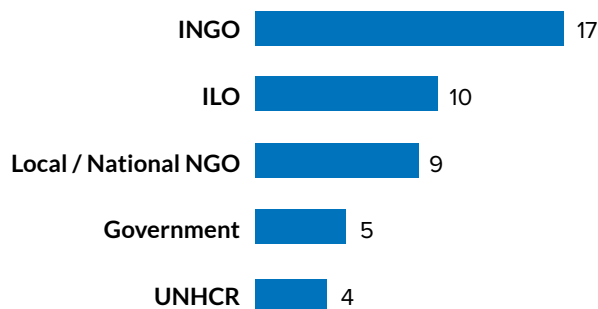
The study focused on child labour⁵ among Syrian refugees in the five 3RP countries of Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, Turkey and Egypt. Building on research conducted for the 2017 Framework, the 2020 report drew on five new sources of data: a desk review (conducted in October-November 2020), a quantitative online survey (November 2020), 35 stakeholder interviews (September-November 2020), written feedback on the draft open to all key informants (December 2020), and verbal feedback collected in a pair of online validation meetings (December 2020).

The desk review drew on regional and national child labour literature published after the 2017 Framework, including approximately 70 assessments, guidelines, studies, and workshop reports from child protection, education, labour, and CBI/livelihoods actors.

The online survey asked respondents from all five countries and regional offices the extent to which their agencies were able to respond to the recommendations from the 2017 Framework. [Full survey responses can be accessed here](#). In total, 46 persons responded.



Please indicate the agency for which you currently work



Of these, 55 per cent of respondents indicated they were responsible for a protection portfolio, with the remainder indicating they were responsible for labour (15 per cent), education/TVET (15 per cent), and social protection/CBI/social policy (15 per cent).

The 35 key informant interviews with UNHCR, UNICEF, ILO, NGO and INGO staff in the five countries were all conducted remotely. The main questions pertained to existing approaches and initiatives on child labour; lessons learned, emerging practices, and tools used; key gaps and recommendations, including what kind of follow-up process might help to achieve further gains. Where quoted below, key informants' names and titles have not been used. A full list of interviewees is included as Annex 2.

⁵ As defined in Annex 2: Child Labour Key Concepts

National legal frameworks on child labour

By 2016, all five countries had ratified ILO Conventions 138 and 182, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and all five had a list of types of hazardous work that are prohibited for children, which can help to inform the work of labour inspectors, case managers, and other front-line workers.

National legislation defines the minimum age for employment and hazardous work as follows.

Country	Minimum age	Light work ⁶	Hazardous work	List of hazardous work	Laws on minimum age for employment and hazardous work	Comments
Jordan	16	--	18	2012 rev.	Article 73 of Labour Code (1996); Article 74 of Labour Code, and Article 2 of Ministerial Order of 2011	In 2014, Jordan adopted a Child Law that expanded the definition of "juveniles in need of protection" to include child laborers, such as street vendors and garbage collectors. The Child Law gave MoSD the responsibility for protecting children in these categories and for establishing a new Child Labour Unit to work in coordination with MoL's Child Labour Unit.
Lebanon	14	13	18	2013	Article 22 of the Labour Code (1996); Article 1 of the Decree No. 8987 (2012)	The compulsory education age (12) is lower than the minimum age for work. Lebanese law is not consistent in its treatment of children working in begging. Article 610 of the Penal Code criminalizes begging. However, Articles 25 and 26 of the Delinquent Juveniles Law stipulate that child begging endangers children and that such children are entitled to protective measures.
Iraq	15	--	18	2004	Article 7 of the Labour Law (2015); Articles 95 to 105 of the Labour Law	The compulsory education age is lower than the minimum age for work in Iraq (12), with the exception of Kurdistan Region of Iraq (15).
Turkey	15	14	18	2013	Article 71 of the Labour Act (2003); Articles 71-73 of the Labour Act; Regulation on Methods and Principles for Employment of Children and Young Workers (2004) Child Protection Law (2005)	As stated in Article 4 of the Labour Act, the provisions of the Labour Act do not apply to children working in agricultural enterprises employing 50 or fewer workers, in small shops employing up to three persons, or in domestic service. These gaps in the law leave children vulnerable to exploitative conditions. The Child Protection Law defines a child in need of protection as 'Any juvenile whose physical, mental, moral, social or emotional development and personal safety is in danger, who are neglected or abused, or who are victims of crime', which includes children working in various settings. Establishes protective and supportive measures (education, health, counselling, care measures).
Egypt	15	12	18	2003	Article 64 of the Child Law (2008); Article 1 of Ministry of Manpower and Migration's (MOMM) Decree 118 (2003)	Although the Child Law also includes a minimum age provision, given exclusions in the Labour Law, it is not clear whether the minimum age protections apply to children working in agriculture and domestic work, as this is not explicitly specified

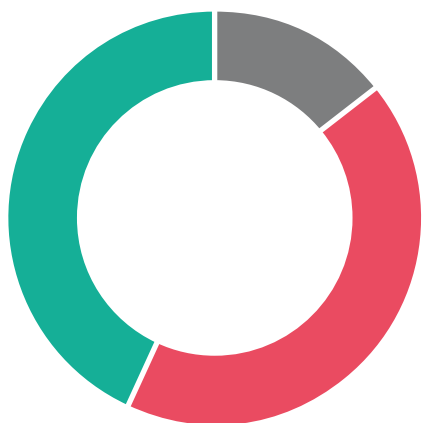
⁶ According to ILO Convention No. 138, "light work" is defined as work that does not interfere with the child's education. In practice, this might be non-hazardous work of up to 14 hours per week.

Overview of the child labour phenomenon among Syrian refugees

Law and policy.

Has the regulatory framework around child labour been strengthened since 2017?

- YES (42.86%)
- DO NOT KNOW (14.29%)
- NO (42.86%)



Refugee children have been found working in various sectors, occupations, and activities, which vary by location, and these can be fluid in contexts which are rapidly changing.⁷ Around 90 per cent of the working children in the region work 6-7 days a week and for more than 8 hours per day on an informal and illegal basis.⁸ Hazardous forms of child labour appear to be widespread. In Turkey, a 2018 assessment found that among Syrian refugee working children, more than 45 per cent are predominantly working in harsh agricultural jobs.⁹ While child labour affects various nationalities of refugees as well as host community and IDP children, the majority of child labourers in 3RP countries are Syrian. An earlier ILO study found that 70 per cent of the street-based children in Lebanon are Syrian refugees.¹⁰

Often, refugee children work alongside other family members, contributing their wages to support the household. However, there are many cases of adult coercing children into work. In agricultural areas across the region, specialized labour contractors supply workers, some of them children, to farmers on a seasonal basis. In informal tented settlements in Lebanon and Jordan, many camp owners (known as the “Shawish”) line up work for children and receive the child’s wages from the employer before returning a portion to the child. Alternatively, some Shawish may also “hire out” children living in their camp to nearby farmers, restaurants, auto repair shops or other employers.¹¹

Disaggregated, comprehensive, comparative data on the exact extent of the problem should be supported. Interviewees indicated that the results of existing national surveys may underestimate the problem. The picture is further clouded by COVID-19; all respondents said that they assume child labour rates have climbed during the pandemic, undermining progress that may have been achieved in recent years.

⁷ Terre des Hommes, (2016). *Child labour report 2016: Child labour among refugees of the Syrian conflict*.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour & UNICEF. (2018). *A Child’s Work Makes a Day’s Wage: Agricultural Intermediaries and Child Labour in Agricultural Production in Turkey*.

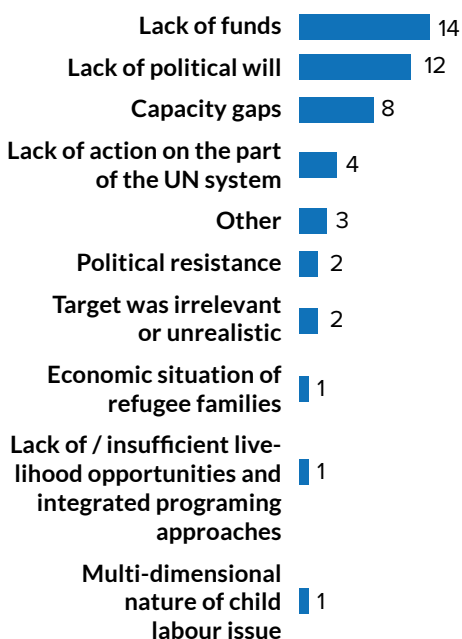
¹⁰ ILO, UNICEF and SCI, (2015). *Children Living and Working on the Streets in Lebanon: Profile and Magnitude*.

¹¹ Freedom Fund, (2016). *Struggling to survive: Slavery and exploitation of Syrian refugees in Lebanon*.

Overview of programmatic responses

Challenges.

What have been the main challenges to progress on child labour in your country?



“I don't think you're going to find money for regional child labour work, or a fund for that purpose. I don't see donors going for anything like that.”

UN respondent, global level

“We can make all these wonderful tools and case studies, etc., but we never have funding for training. That's always the gap.”

INGO respondent

The research for the 2017 Framework found a growing commitment by humanitarian actors to address refugee child labour, with certain countries making more progress than others among the five countries.

In some countries, stakeholders noted the difficulty to prioritize child labour, alongside so many other pressing protection priorities.

Agencies are encouraged to take a mainstreaming approach to the issue, raising awareness of child protection issues and interventions among generalists, as has been done in several other areas.

From the perspective of the global Child Labour Task Force, the MENA region is the locus of some of the best-quality, best-tailored responses that exist, yielding many case studies that will help the field. Some of these will be highlighted in the 2021 MENA regional toolkit on child labour. It is worth acknowledging the 3RP as a regional protection framework which reinforced the protection messages for the Syrians, including those in child labour, displaced in the region.

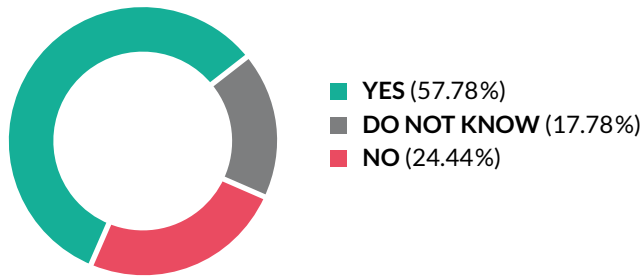
Child labour is still commonly addressed as part of a stand-alone child labour initiative, even as respondents acknowledge the need to work through child protection systems, and in the context of other protection concerns.

Key informants and the literature align around the need to approach child labour through child protection systems, and in the context of other protection concerns such as violence against children; child and forced marriage; unaccompanied and separated children; etc. However, child labour is said to be often addressed as part of a stand-alone child labour initiative. When complementary interventions are delivered together, one or more programme components will often terminate before the others, with the end of a specific grant.

It appears from the survey responses that some stakeholders have managed to establish closer linkages since 2016 between protection and other sectors including education, livelihoods/economic strengthening, nutrition/food security, and social protection including cash-based assistance.

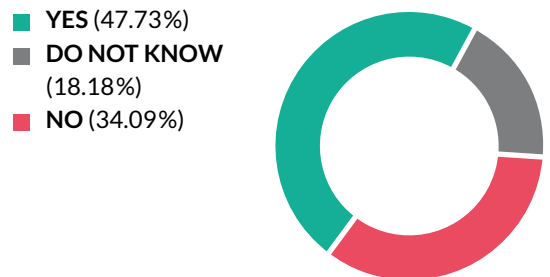
Coordination.

Have effective multi-sectoral coordination mechanisms been established since 2017?



Knowledge management.

Would you say that a strong knowledge base on child labour has been generated across agencies working in your country?



Even as they acknowledge that integrated approaches are essential, many key informants cited concerns on lack of funding, institutional reluctance, and lack of capacity for multi-sectoral responses.

Increased engagement with the private sector including business roundtables, labour federations, government inspectorates, farmers' unions, labour contractors, and examining the child labour phenomenon along supply chains could be the way forward. Engagement with development actors on the issue could be useful.

The following section provides an update on the context, opportunities and challenges at regional level, by sector, as they relate to child labour issues.

Child protection

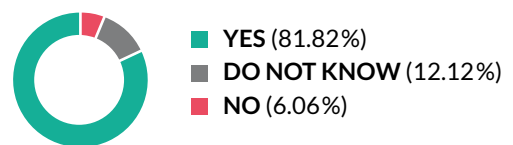
Context

The increasing economic and social vulnerability of children, their families and households, and specific constraints limiting refugee children's access to education can contribute to an increase in the protection risks for refugee children and host communities. Meanwhile, the availability and quality of national child protection systems varies considerably across the various countries, as does the degree to which refugees have access to these systems.¹²

Reporting on child labour from case management has improved, and specific awareness-raising materials have been developed. However, child protection capacity for staff, awareness-raising also for government officials, community-based approaches, child-led initiatives, community labour monitoring (CLM), and peer networks could enhance the current effort.

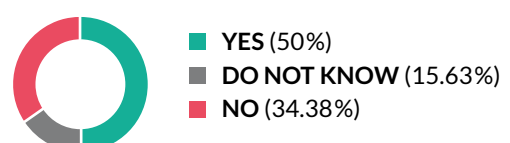
Information management.

Do case management information management systems monitor and report on child labour?



Capacity.

Do all case workers have training on child labour, the legal framework, including child labour among refugees, and referral?



¹² UNICEF and UNHCR, (2015). *Child Protection Syria Crisis Regional Interagency Workshop Report*.

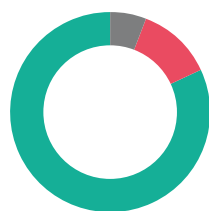
Opportunities

The legal and policy framework for child labour in the region has improved since 2016 (see Section 3). SOPs for case management have now been developed by agencies or child protection working groups (CPWGs) in all five countries, and most survey respondents say their SOPs include child labour.

In all countries, specific interventions to address child labour have been developed, generating case studies that fed into the forthcoming MENA toolkit.

SOPs.

Do standard operating procedures for CP include a section on child labour?



- YES (81.82%)
- DO NOT KNOW (6.06%)
- NO (12.12%)

Challenges

Most of the child protection challenges identified in 2016 are evident in 2020. National child protection services have been overwhelmed by the scale of the crisis. External actors are not always sufficiently linked to national child protection coordination structures, and national actors are not sufficiently engaged in CPWGs. The perception that child labour is the sole responsibility of the child protection sector is persisting, with limited involvement from other stakeholders.

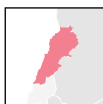
Barriers to access national child protection services include legal barriers, distance to the service providers, safety and security threats, lack of household resources, and lack of awareness among others, and the barriers are often highly gendered.

COVID-19 has exacerbated harmful coping mechanisms and is assumed to have raised child labour rates, as many caregivers have succumbed to the virus and/or lost their livelihood, and schools are closed. During the pandemic it is also more difficult to identify child labour cases due to the risks for case workers.

Bakr (13)

Syrian Refugee living in Lebanon

Thirteen-year-old Syrian refugee Bakr works in a supermarket and delivers food to support his family in Barja, Lebanon. He dropped out of school and started working two years ago, putting on hold his dreams of studying architecture.



Education

Context

Child labour remains one of the key barriers to education for Syrian refugees, and lack of access to education; poor quality of education; and peer bullying and social tension among refugee and host communities can also be push factors into child labour. In the 3RP countries, the number of children of school age (5-17 years) is over 2 million as of May 2021.¹³

In Lebanon, interagency research from 2020 found that most students did not attend school, not even remotely due to lack of internet. In 2019, over 35 per cent of children were not enrolled in school in the 3RP countries.¹⁴ The situation of adolescents and youth is of particular concern, with very few having access to secondary and tertiary education, vocational training, or non-formal education opportunities.

Looking across the five countries, survey responses about whether access and quality have increased since 2017 were evenly split. On the positive side, respondents do report an increase in access to child labour prevention and response services linked to education.

Services.

Compared to 2017, do families with children in, or at risk of, child labour have increased access to the following services?

Services	Do not know / Lack of evidence	No	Yes
Case management services	1	1	7
Cash assistance	1	2	6
Focused PSS activities for learners experiencing distress	-	2	7
Help with school fees, transport costs or uniforms, school materials	-	3	6
Livelihood programmes	1	2	6
Referrals for tailored support for learners missing school	1	2	6
school meals / snacks	-	4	5
Total	4	16	43

Opportunities

Recent research in some 3RP countries has offered a better understanding of the reasons children and youth are out of school, which are not limited simply to lack of facilities, but also include a host of protection and economic issues. Looking at education and its clear linkages with child labour, the following seem to be receiving increasing attention among stakeholders involved in the refugee response, including national governments and donors:

- Quality of education
- Secondary education
- Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

The focus on accredited non-formal education can provide an opportunity for children in child labour to transition back to school and/or learn basic skills needed to continue mitigate the risks. Child labour can also be mainstreamed in ongoing efforts to provide grants for refugee children, teacher professional development, and the promotion of life skills and citizenship education.

¹³ UNHCR, (2021). *Total Persons of Concern by Country of Asylum*. As of May 2021, the number of Syrian children (aged 0 to 18) under Temporary Protection in Turkey is more than 1.2 million. <https://www.goc.gov.tr/gecici-koruma5638>.

¹⁴ 3RP, (2021). 3RP Regional Needs Overview (RNO).

Challenges

Across the region, enrolment and retention rates were improving before COVID-19, but still refugees in the region had very low comparative levels of schooling, particularly in Iraq. Relative to host country nationals, refugee children face many gendered challenges related to access to education, particularly at the secondary level, as well as discrimination, bullying and violence in school, language barriers, documentation and certification, and more recently COVID-19, which has led to the closure of most of the schools in MENA. COVID-19 is also exposing a lack of digital infrastructure. Many refugee children do not have access to the internet, a computer or tablet at home, with which to

engage in online learning and many refugee families also have limited digital literacy.

Adolescents are especially vulnerable to the worst forms of child labour, and girls and boys are affected differently. In addition to formal schools, a variety of non-formal education facilities are needed, designed to be accessible and appropriate, and cater to the specific needs of female and male adolescents at risk of child labour. As part of this effort, violence and discrimination against refugees in school needs to be addressed, if schooling is going to be a tonic for child labour.¹⁵

Livelihoods/economic strengthening including cash-based interventions (CBI)

Context

Globally, livelihoods activities are the most common and successful part of programming aimed at responding to the worst forms of child labour.¹⁶ Cash transfers, technical and vocational education and training (TVET), income generating activities, employment and microenterprise training and support, and referrals into social welfare and social protection schemes all contribute to improved income for families and children at risk of child labour.

Opportunities

While the response rate was low for these particular questions, survey respondents make clear that access to CBIs in particular has increased in all five countries. However, informants consistently called for greater coverage of refugees with CBIs, ideally linked to national social protection schemes. Globally, the evidence base around children's outcomes from CBI is much stronger than it was in 2016, with robust studies showing that cash is more cost effective and at least as impactful as any other economic strengthening modality in addressing the drivers of child labour when associated also to

case management and as part of a comprehensive response.¹⁷

Challenges

The loss of family income is still the most significant risk factor contributing to children becoming involved in child labour. This is likely to continue to be the case given the protracted nature of the region's crises, and given what may be a long recovery period from COVID-19. Capacity and funding to implement CBI and livelihood interventions is uneven among 3RP countries. Cash transfers are not always enough to prevent households from taking their child from school or resorting to child labour,¹⁸ and coverage needs to increase in all 3RP countries. In particular, adolescents above the legal minimum age for employment but under the age of 18 are in need of access to such programmes. Respondents say that CBIs alone, or the common approach of a CBI linked to protection alone, are not sufficient to keep children out of child labour in a sustainable way. Further linkages are required to education, health, etc.

¹⁵ MoSD Jordan and UNICEF, (2018). Rapid Child labour Assessment.

¹⁶ Child Protection Cluster, (2015). *Responding to the worst forms of child labour in emergencies*.

¹⁷ UNHCR, (2018). *Summary of Findings: Impact of Cash Based Interventions (CBI) on Protection Outcomes*.

National approaches and initiatives

Jordan

Context

The socio-economic situation of Syrian refugees in Jordan is dire, as the COVID-19 crisis increased poverty by around 38 per cent among Jordanians, and by 18 per cent among Syrian refugees, noting that refugees started off at a higher rate of poverty at baseline.¹⁹

The country continues to have a complicated work permit process that results in children working while adults try to move through the system.²⁰ Since the Jordan Compact in 2016, the Government of Jordan incorporated a 15 per cent Syrian refugee quota in the specialized economic zones and made work permits more accessible.

Access to education is free for refugee children in Jordan. They go to school in shifts and 25 per cent of secondary school-age Syrian children were not in school according to a study in 2020. Vocational training and accelerated learning are still missing. There is a great opportunity for donor funding and programming to address this cohort and to channel them into nonformal education or vocational activities.²¹

An assessment conducted in Za'atari Camp indicated that 13.3 per cent of those surveyed (the sample size of 212 persons) were involved in child labour, and majority were boys (94 per cent).²² About 74 per cent of children reported health problems from work and almost 40 per cent reported injury, illness or poor health.²³ Types of work that children are mostly observed in include cleaning, shop work, food service, garbage collection, construction, mechanics, carpentry, domestic work, street selling, and agriculture.²⁴

Opportunities

Respondents applauded the work of the National Council for Family Affairs, headed by HM Queen Rania and consisting of key ministries and NGOs, which has been active on child labour issues. A new Child Labour Unit within MoSD has also been created. Stakeholders have worked with government ministries in recent years to develop various tools for addressing child labour risk, including a manual on identifying hazardous labour (MoL), a training for social workers on child labour (MoSD), as well as a manual for education actors (MoE).

Drafts of a new Child Law and a new Juvenile Law have recently been submitted to the Prime Minister's office for approval. As of 2019, GoJ also increased the number of families able to participate in the National Aid Fund program, which initiates a cash transfer for children attending school, and includes refugees.²⁵

Coordination around child labour is said to have improved. A National Framework against Child Labour and national SOPs have recently been developed, although in order to implement the Framework, infrastructure and human resources for coordination, labour inspection and M&E need to increase. Stakeholders report having a better understanding in 2020 of which actors are doing what, where, and conversations have started to establish a common database for coordination.

A national child labour survey has been published, and stakeholders report having a much clearer picture of the child labour phenomenon than in years past.

¹⁸ ACPHA, (Forthcoming 2021). Multi-sectoral services for children in child labour and their families in Jordan; and WVI, (2018). [Impact of Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance on Child Labour Among Syrian Refugees in Beqaa, Leb.](#)

¹⁹ 3RP Syria, (2021). Regional Needs Overview 2021.

²⁰ Matz, Peter, (2016). [Child labour among refugees from Syria in the 3RP countries.](#)

²¹ Human Rights Watch, (2020). ["I Want to Continue to Study" Barriers to Secondary Education for Syrian Refugee Children in Jordan.](#)

²² UNICEF and Save the Children, (2014). Baseline assessment of child labour among Syrian refugees in Za'atari Camp.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ UNHCR, (n.d.). The Future of Syria: Children at Work.

²⁵ Bureau of International Labour Affairs, (2019). [Child Labour and Forced Labour Reports: Jordan.](#)

5.1.3. Challenges

Syrian refugees continue to be restricted in which sectors they can work, which limits their economic potential and puts upward pressure on child labour rates. This is only compounded by COVID-19, which has deeply affected refugee caregivers' access to jobs and ability to work safely. Refugees state that the specialized economic zones are located far from the areas where they reside, and that working conditions are poor. Investments are needed in livelihood/economic strengthening including CBIs, education and health for families to reduce child labour risk. Syrian adolescents in particular need better access to formal and non-formal education and TVET.

Service providers complain that much of the agricultural-based child labour happens in remote areas, where there may be little or no humanitarian funding, making service provision intermittent or non-existent. There is a clear need to scale up the use of mobile units for protection activities, such as those supported by ILO, as well as adapted schooling or NFE for children who work with their parents in agricultural fields.

Lebanon

Context

Over 1.5 million Syrians are estimated to live in Lebanon, which is more than a quarter of Lebanon's 4.3 million population.²⁶ Of these, 879,529 are registered refugees.²⁷ The crisis has resulted in unprecedented restrictions on Syrians entering Lebanon. Compounded by the recent political uprisings, economic loss, the 2020 Beirut explosion, and the COVID-19 pandemic, Lebanon is handling many crises at once. At present, Syrian refugees have to sign a "pledge not to work" when renewing their residency status, making any kind of income generation activity illegal for them. Syrian refugees rely, almost exclusively, on temporary and informal work. Those Syrian refugees who work do so in low skilled activities, primarily in services and the traditional sectors using Syrian labour, such as agriculture and construction. 91 per cent of Syrian refugees live below the minimum expenditure basket (MEB) and 88 per cent below the survival minimum (SMEB) thresholds.²⁸

Children in Lebanon are found in street-based activities, workshops, restaurants, hairdressing, construction, and garbage collection, though most children work in the agricultural sector.²⁹ 82 per cent of working children in the Beqaa region are not enrolled in school due to the need to support their families and inability to afford school fees and access to transportation. A child labour assessment of Beqaa in 2017 found that about 75 per cent Syrian children worked in agriculture under dangerous conditions, and 30 per cent reported being harmed on the job.³⁰ A report on street-involved children found that half of them were 10 to 14 years old, and that they work on average 8.5 hours a day, six days a week, including night work.³¹ Street-based children are subject to several occupational hazards, including the carrying of heavy loads (39 per cent) and involvement in various forms of traffic accidents (30 per cent). Some 6 per cent report being victims of sexual assault or rape in the workplace.³²

²⁶ Paragraph draws from UNICEF/WFP/UNHCR, (2017) Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon 2017.

²⁷ 3RP, (2021). 3RP Regional Needs Overview (RNO).

²⁸ UNHCR/WFP/UNICEF, (2020). Key Findings of the 2020 Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon.

²⁹ Terre des Hommes, (2016). Because we struggle to survive: Child labour among refugees of the Syrian conflict.

³⁰ Ministry of Labour, Republic of Lebanon, (2017). Survey on Child Labour in Agriculture in the Beqaa Valley of Lebanon: The Case of Syrian Refugees.

³¹ ILO, UNICEF, Save the Children, and Ministry of Labour, (2015). Children living and working on the street: Profile and magnitude.

³² Ibid.

Opportunities

A Technical Working Group has been established to support implementation of National Action Plan (NAP) against Child Labour with new goals and a timeline, which lays out plans for national and local NGOs to engage with municipalities and other local actors. The NAP has not been endorsed by the government, but stakeholders continue to implement child labour programs with limited GoL support and coordination. Many important recent accomplishments and innovations were noted in spite of the challenging context of Lebanon.

- The country's referral information management system is seen as exemplary, overcoming the bottleneck in effective referrals to services observed globally.³³

- Of particular note is that FAO and ILO are working together to support the government in addressing demand side risk of child labour, which is not often prioritized in the region, even as the need for such approaches is widely acknowledged.

5.1.3. Challenges

Better coordination is needed between stakeholders in education, child protection, food security and livelihoods, CBI, and those working on the demand side engaging the private sector. A high-level National Steering Committee on Child Labour exists, but a technical working group is needed with dedicated resources. The respondents also described challenges in leadership and engagement in GoL with regard to working with refugees, including on child labour issues. The government's stance on refugees' right to work in particular leads directly to more child labour among Syrians.

Very few MoL inspectors are available to cover the national inspection caseload, and since the majority of micro, small and medium-sized businesses are unregistered, monitoring is seen as "nearly impossible."

Law and policy changes are needed that address the age of compulsory education and the working age, to make them uniform. The legal minimum age of work remains at 14, below the norm for the region. However, stakeholders say they have not had much success in advocacy with the government in recent years, and tend to focus their efforts elsewhere.

Several gaps were identified:

- Stakeholders need to coordinate with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) to get education to rural areas and hard to reach places.³⁴

- Greater investments are needed on reducing child labour risks through greater engagement with families and communities, including addressing household poverty.

- There is a need for more in-depth information, especially with regard to the drivers; the main source of data on child labour is the child protection information management system.

- There is a need to incorporate the Shawish into child labour response as they are the main actors recruiting and hiring children in some areas.

³³ ILO, (Forthcoming 2021). Global review of child labour responses [Actual title unknown].

³⁴ FAO and UNICEF, (2019). Child Labour in Agriculture: The Demand Side.

Turkey

Context

Turkey continues to host the largest registered refugee population in the region with close to 4.1 million refugees, including 3.6 million Syrians under temporary protection in addition to approximately 320,000 international protection applicants and status holders.³⁵ The country is working to minimize child labour practices and encourage education, however, it is still facing challenges due to severe financial insecurity of refugee families, social norms, and barriers to education.³⁶ In 2019, a total of 720,000 host and refugee children were working. Nearly 30 per cent of child labourers are female and 70 per cent are male. 45.5 per cent are in the service sector, including working on the streets; 30.8 per cent in agriculture; and 23.7 per cent in industrial manufacturing, particularly in small and medium scale enterprises.³⁷

Out of one million school age refugee children, 36 per cent are out of school, according to the MoE. Turkey is looking to strengthen refugees' inclusion in existing formal and non-formal education in accordance with children's best interests.³⁹

Nevertheless, Turkey enjoys many social, political and economic advantages relative to its neighbours in MENA. Turkey maintains strong national ownership regarding protection and assistance to Syrians. Refugees can legally access formal employment, and the Government has integrated assistance to vulnerable Syrians into its national social welfare system. Turkey has launched an Accelerated Learning Program for children ages 10-18 who are experiencing education gaps, and supports their education as a separate cohort.

Still, both host communities and refugees continue to suffer from limited resources. Families often resort to child labour to make money and to minimize the number of dependents. In metropolitan provinces, youth can find informal livelihoods opportunities easier than adults.

5.3.2. Opportunities

Turkey appears to have made more progress in combatting child labour due to advantages of infrastructure, economy, human capacity and political will. Respondents credit some of the country's recent progress to the fact that 2018 was declared the year to combat child labour in Turkey, bringing together government ministries and business groups.

The law and policy context is relatively favourable; Syrian nationals under temporary protection (TP) in Turkey have the right to work, and there are various types of work permits refugees can apply for. However, the number of work permits delivered to Syrians are very low; they need to find a willing employer to apply on their behalf. Employment opportunities for refugees are mostly in the informal economy, where they suffer

from fewer protections, lower wages, and greater instability. Under the National Employment Strategy, an action plan was implemented from 2017-2019, strengthening the connection between education, employment and social protection, increasing flexibility of the labour market, investing in particular economic sectors and prioritizing vulnerable groups including refugees.

A National Child Labour Response Plan is in place, and the country has also begun to implement a time-bound Framework on the Elimination of the WFCL initiated and led by the government in terms of planning, implementation and resource mobilization.⁴⁰ The Ministry of Interior's current strategy as well refers to strengthening efforts towards migrants' access and

³⁵ 3RP, (2021). 3RP Regional Needs Overview (RNO).

³⁶ UNICEF, (2018). Turkey Country Report, 2018.

³⁷ Turkish Statistical Institute, (2020). Child Labour Force Survey 2019. Press release of 31 March 2020.

³⁸ Turkish Education Ministry. (n.d.) [PowerPoint presentation].

³⁹ ACPHA CLTF, (2020). Centre-based services and cash assistance to address child labour in Turkey.

⁴⁰ ILO, (n.d.). Time-Bound Programmes.

participation to formal education, as well as developing social support programmes inclusive of migrants and strengthening the coordination between all institutions and organizations. Turkey's education ministry has an inclusive policy on refugee enrolment, which offers major advantages for combatting child labour. Under the country's Child Protection Law, even refugee children engaged in child labour can benefit from educational measures, issued by the Juvenile Courts and followed up by the national education authorities.

On the demand side, the government and international stakeholders have several ongoing investments aimed at eliminating Turkish goods made with child labour.⁴¹

- Capacity-building and awareness-raising on child labour for Employers' Organisation and Chambers of Commerce is ongoing.

- UNICEF supports a labour inspection workforce of approximately 900, who monitor child labour.

- UNHCR has a project with the Fair Labour Association, under which information materials on child labour were produced for employers, in collaboration with the government.

5.1.3. Challenges

There is a need for engagement with development actors, international finance institutions and the private sector.

Continued external support to government services remains necessary; with high numbers of child protection cases from both refugee and host communities, resources of the national service providers are stretched.

As in the other 3RP countries, an updated national child labour assessment is needed to account for the pandemic, disaggregated by refugee / host.⁴² There is also room to further strengthen information dissemination and awareness-raising activities targeting refugee communities against child labour.

⁴¹ Fair Labour Association, Stop Child Labour Coalition and UNICEF, (2017). [New Report Identifies Ways to Tackle Child Labour Risks in the Turkish Cotton Sector.](#)

⁴² UNHCR, (2016). Vulnerability assessment of Syrian refugees in Istanbul.



Iraq

Context

Many of the challenges and recommendations identified in the 2016 stocktaking are still applicable today. There are currently 245,953 Syrian refugees in Iraq.⁴³ Simultaneously, the central government in Baghdad is responding to the needs of a large internally displaced population.

The approach to Syrian refugees entering Iraq has been different depending upon if refugees resided in the Kurdistan Region or elsewhere in Iraq. Refugees in Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) can acquire residency permits, right to work, and freedom of movement. Refugees in the rest of Iraq and KRI are also able to access free education and the same health services as nationals.⁴⁴

Refugee children have been found working in street-based work, restaurants, hotels, agriculture, industries, plastic recycling, and steel factories. Public awareness of refugee rights is low, and working refugee children are subject to physical and verbal abuse in public. There has been an increase in the need for services supporting children demobilized from armed groups, who are especially vulnerable to child labour.

5.4.2. Opportunities

Child labour was one of the standards selected from the Child Protection Minimum Standards in 2018 by the child protection actors in country. The inter-agency SOP on case management might provide another opportunity to integrate standardized guidelines on identifying and responding to child labour cases. The early recovery and livelihood sector in KRI is said to be well-organized, and may provide another good entry point for interventions. The draft Child Rights Law for KRI provides for protection against child labour.

ILO is newly present in Iraq as of 2020, and can work to fill the gap around livelihoods/economic strengthening. In KRI, an activated Child Labour Task Force of the Child Protection Sub-Cluster in Iraq has rolled out a well-regarded model working with municipal police, governorate authorities, and federal Ministries, which ILO intends to support and build upon.

5.4.3. Challenges

Iraq still lacks a national action plan on child labour though ILO plans to support the development of one. Child labour capacity is lacking among all stakeholders, including UN agency staff, government officials and labour inspectors, and implementing partners. Livelihood opportunities for refugees remain limited, and the few available CBIs are seen as unsustainable. Responses instead come mostly through child protection actors, and livelihood actors to a lesser extent. On the demand side, there has been very little work with the private sector in terms of awareness-raising, standard-setting or enforcement, and the labour inspection workforce in Iraq is tiny compared to the caseload. Respondents say there is an urgent need to systematize the links between sectors and government actors.

⁴³ UNHCR, Fact Sheet Iraq, (2021), <https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/Iraq%20fact%20sheet%20April%202021.pdf>.

⁴⁴ Durable Solutions Platform, (2019). [Far from Home: Future Prospects for Syrian Refugees in Iraq](#).

Image by UNHCR / Shaza Shekfeh

Egypt

Context

Current protection and operational challenges include residency issues, limitations in the national child protection mechanisms, insufficient funding, and the impact of the COVID-19 situation on refugees' and asylum-seekers' self-reliance, among others.⁴⁵

As of November 2020, a total of 130,085 Syrian refugees were registered with UNHCR.⁴⁶ The previous year, 17 per cent of Syrians were identified as having specific needs, including children at risk: children exposed to child labour, child spouses, child-headed households, child parents, and currently 4,067 unaccompanied and separated children (UASC).^{47/48}

While the Government of Egypt has provided access to public education for all Syrian, Sudanese, South Sudanese, and Yemeni refugee and asylum-seeking children on an equal basis with nationals, accessing schools and high-quality education still remains a challenge, particularly during the COVID-19 situation. Additionally, refugee and asylum-seeking children from certain countries, such as Iraq, Somalia, Eritrea and Ethiopia, do not have access to public education. The legal and administrative barriers to formal work mean that adult refugees in Egypt, even those that have received higher degrees in their home countries, normally only have access to employment opportunities in the informal economy, which heightens vulnerability to exploitation.⁴⁹ The workforce also includes children who drop out of school to contribute to the household income,⁵⁰ especially due to the challenges in ensuring protection against exploitation.⁵¹

5.5.2. Opportunities

Egypt has formally adopted both a National Plan of Action Against the Worst Forms of Child Labour and Supporting Family, and a National Strategy on Childhood and Motherhood. UNHCR continues to advocate for the inclusion in public education for refugees and asylum-seekers of all nationalities.⁵² In addition, the national SOPs for 'Children on the Move' (umbrella term to cover refugee, asylum-seeker children, victims of migrant smuggling and trafficking) was adopted in 2020 by the national CP counterpart, National Council of Childhood and Motherhood as an instrumental step towards inclusion of refugee and asylum seeker children in quality national protection systems.

Livelihood opportunities for Syrian refugees are emerging through linkages with the private sector, supported by UNHCR, Plan International and other partners. Currently, around 16 per cent of the refugee population in Egypt receives monthly multi-purpose cash grants through the Egypt Post Office to meet their basic living expenses.⁵³

There is a need for capacity building materials on child labour for partners (webinars, e-learning, etc.), as well as for awareness-raising packages in Arabic that can be disseminated in refugee communities.

UNHCR reports that child labour cases identified are routinely referred for case management and support to child protection case management partners. Work is ongoing to ensure inclusion of refugee children in the national child protection system, jointly with the national authorities, as currently most child protection services are provided by humanitarian partners. Training is provided for partners on child labour issues, particularly in the North Coast region where this protection risk is more prevalent.

⁴⁵ UNHCR, (2019; 2021). *Egypt: Global Focus*.

⁴⁶ 3RP, (2021). 3RP Regional Needs Overview (RNO).

⁴⁷ 3RP, (2019). 3RP 2019 Annual Report.

⁴⁸ 3RP, (2021). 3RP Regional Needs Overview (RNO).

⁴⁹ 3RP, (2021), 3RP, <https://www.unhcr.org/eg/wp-content/uploads/sites/36/2020/10/3RP2021EN.pdf>.

⁵⁰ 3RP, (2021), 3RP, <https://www.unhcr.org/eg/wp-content/uploads/sites/36/2020/10/3RP2021EN.pdf>.

⁵¹ Egypt Foundation for Refugee Rights, (n.d.), *Refugees in Egypt*.

⁵² UNHCR, (2020). *Egypt Factsheet*, November 2020.

⁵³ UNHCR Egypt, (2020). *Cash Assistance*.

Image by UNHCR / Pedro Costa Gomes

5.5.3. Challenges

The livelihood and education dimensions continue to challenge prevention efforts; high-level advocacy is needed for refugees to access the formal labour market, and for all refugee nationalities to have access to public schools. Labour legislation also needs to be updated; the Egyptian labour code does not consider adolescents 14-17 to be in child labour when they work in agriculture.⁵⁴

There is no inter-agency database for child protection case management, although key data on child protection cases are shared among partners through the Child Protection Sub-Working Group to avoid duplication. A common information management system is currently used by all partners distributing CBI, and it can also be adapted to strengthen a coordinated response

Coordinated health response for refugees represents a crucial investment toward child labour prevention. At the same time, better linkages are required between education and livelihoods actors to help mitigate and respond to child labour risks.

There is a clear need for investments in CP mobile outreach that could include child labour prevention and response. This includes the need for increased child protection case management capacity, which is currently overstretched given the high number of children at risk, including unaccompanied and separated children (UASC).

⁵⁴ League of Arab States, International Labour Organization, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Arab Labour Organization and Arab Council for Childhood and Development, (2019). [Child Labour in the Arab Region: A Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis](#).



Image by UNHCR / Pedro Costa Gomes

Case examples: Interventions on child labour among Syrian refugees

Integrated urban child labour response: TdH Foundation Lebanon⁵⁵

Terre des Hommes (TdH) Foundation is using the model of drop-in centres for children exposed to child labour—mainly children working in the streets. TdH organizes recreational and sensitization activities in the places that children work, engaging with their employers and providing safety equipment for children exposed to hazardous work. The organization educates

and engages a network of employers to influence other employers that are not aware of the risks and consequences of child labour. Target audiences include municipal police, faith-based actors and community leaders to identify and refer cases to child protection actors.

Conditional Cash Transfer for Education (CCTE) for Syrians and Other Refugees in Turkey⁵⁶

The program provides cash payments to families on the condition their child attended school at least 80 per cent of the time with no more than 4 absent days per month. There was a special focus on retaining and maintaining girls' attendance and keeping students enrolled through the transition to high school. The child protection program was deployed in 15 provinces. The combination of cash and protection allowed for financial and non-financial needs of the family to be met.

There was a need for greater resources and capacity for the child protection team, as they were not able to offer all the services they identified as necessary for families nor could they visit every child who had an absence. The evaluation found a promising relationship between child protection visits and school attendance, with families feeling more supported, emotionally and financially, and more aware of the benefits of education.

⁵⁵ Redacted from an email from TdH Foundation, Lebanon, December 2020.

⁵⁶ Redacted from: UNICEF, (2020). Program Evaluation of the Conditional Cash Transfer for Education (CCTE) for Syrians and Other Refugees in Turkey

UNICEF Lebanon's Integrated Child Well-Being Programming⁵⁷

UNICEF Lebanon utilizes five interventions and referral services to support high-risk, out of school children. Non-formal educational opportunities, GBV and protection services, welfare support, and skill development are offered to those in most severe hardships. The program integrates numeracy and literacy, child protection, case management, psychosocial support, community outreach and referrals, social assistance, and community engagement. Children ages 10-14 who have never received education are prioritized.

The program targets between 8,000-10,000 children and launched online supportive services about health, messaging, psychosocial support, and continuing education. Participants received voice messages, recorded videos, and phone calls from program partners and received a psychosocial support (PSS) Kit to support mental wellbeing during the lockdown. UNICEF also increased the amount of cash transfers to each family in an attempt to combat the devaluation of the Lebanese pound and ensure the child's basic needs are met.

Hajati cash assistance for vulnerable children in school in Jordan⁵⁸

An unconditional cash transfer program was initiated to keep children in school and to work against harmful coping mechanisms such as child labour and early marriage. The Hajati program supported 10,000 students throughout the 2018-2019 academic year. The unconditional cash transfer supported children's education, socioeconomic wellbeing, and minimized the risk of child labour and early marriage. Families receive equivalent to \$28USD/month for children to attend second shift schools.

Some families could no longer receive financial assistance due to funding cuts and the impact of the intervention is captured by:

- 78 per cent of children receiving Hajati attended school regularly compared to 25 per cent of children who are no longer receiving the cash transfer.
- Children enrolled in Hajati are 25 per cent more likely to have secondary education plans.
- The risk of child labour increases 26 per cent for children no longer receiving Hajati.

An unconditional subsidy for the family to use at their discretion to support their livelihoods proved effective in keeping the most vulnerable children in school.

⁵⁷ Redacted from: UNICEF, (2020). [Wellbeing programme and distance learning techniques.](#)

⁵⁸ Redacted from: UNICEF, (2019). "Hajati cash assistance effective at keeping vulnerable children in school."

Tools for responding to child labour⁵⁹

Tool	Country	By	Comments
Child Protection in Humanitarian Action Competency Framework (2019)	Global	ACPHA CLTF	Includes child labour competencies for use in job descriptions, etc.
Child Labour in the Arab Region: A Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis (2019)	Regional	League of Arab States, ILO, FAO, et. al.	-
MENA Toolkit for child labour in emergencies (2021)	Regional	ACPHA CLTF	Forthcoming 2021, title unknown. Adapted to MENA from the global toolkit.
Protection monitoring tool (2021)	Iraq	UNHCR	Forthcoming 2021, title unknown
Responding to the Worst Forms of Child Labour in Emergencies (2016)	Global	ACPHA CLTF	(English, Arabic)
Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Service Workforce for Child Protection	Global	UNICEF	-
Digital Learning Resources List	Global	UNHCR	Compilation of links to educational media, many of which have been used in low-resource settings. Includes resources in Arabic.

⁵⁹ <https://www.goc.gov.tr/gecici-koruma5638>

Recommendations

Data

Immediate

- Agencies should take advantage of the rich data and analysis found in the 2019 landmark publication *Child Labour in the Arab Region: A Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis*,⁶⁰ which covers all the 3RP countries except Turkey.
- Baseline data should be collected on hidden forms of child labour and the unconditional worst form of child labour such as trafficking, smuggling, sexual and economic exploitation, and child recruitment and use.
- UNHCR has information on child labour in its CPIMS that the agency should be systematically reporting on to stakeholders at national level.

Medium-term

- Where feasible and relevant, stakeholders could forge agreements with labour inspectors to get data on child labour from their systems.
- Any child labour survey conducted should disaggregate data by refugee/host/IDP.
- Any multiple indicator cluster survey (MICS) should include child labour.

⁶⁰ League of Arab States, International Labour Organization, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Arab Labour Organization and Arab Council for Childhood and Development, (2019). *Child Labour in the Arab Region: A Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis*

Legal and policy framework

Medium-term

- There is a need to amend legislation on child labour in agriculture, where many refugee children work.
- Governments should ensure enforcement of existing legislation through policing and judicial means.
- Complicated work permit procedures may hamper the economic sustainability of refugee households, pushing children into work. They should be made refugee-friendly.
- All countries need to improve their coordinating mechanisms on child labour among the government entities and the organizations working on child labour issues; coordination was among the most discussed challenges among interviewees.

Long-term

- The minimum age of work should be raised, to be in alignment with the age of compulsory schooling (Lebanon, Iraq).

Capacity-building

Immediate

- Agencies should prioritize mobilizing funding for training of their staff and partners, trade unions and agricultural cooperatives on child labour, which has historically been scarce.
- Awareness of child labour risk, prevention and response among technical staff is needed at all levels, among all stakeholders, both in child protection and other sectors, especially on the worst forms of child labour. In the words of one global CLTF member, “We have all these excellent tools and research, but when we present a webinar, it’s clear that [local and national actors] aren’t familiar with even the basic concepts.”
- Child labour capacity development must be inclusive of more staff than simply a designated child labour focal point.

Medium-term

- Agencies should prioritize inclusion of child protection core competencies in their staff training and job descriptions, building on the [Child Protection In Humanitarian Action Competency Framework \(2019\)](#).

Case management

- In all countries the sections on child labour within SOPs should be revised periodically, not only for child protection, but in SOPs for cash, nutrition/food security, education.
- Across the region there is a need for a government social service workforce development initiative(s) as well as for the civil society organizations. In particular, respondents lamented the lack of available female case workers. Links will need to be made with national colleges and universities to fill this gap. In 2019 UNICEF published its [Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Service Workforce for Child Protection](#).



Image by UNHCR / Lilly Carlisle

Livelihoods/ Economic strengthening including CBI

Immediate

- Cross-referrals should be made between CBIs and protection services--multi-purpose cash assistance should be complemented by protection services.⁶¹
- Vulnerability assessment criteria should include an assessment of child labour.
- Targeting for livelihood programming should consider prioritising families of children at risk of the worst forms of child labour.

Medium-term

- Advocate that refugees be included in national social protection systems that are child-sensitive and disability-inclusive.
- A lightweight process should be devised to bring individual countries' CBI and child-sensitive social protection expertise, sharing of practices with the rest of the region.
- Adolescents' access to internship and apprenticeship programmes should be facilitated in line with national legislation and consideration of the best interest of the child.

Long-term

- Private sector partnerships should be established and firms should be provided with accurate information on child rights and the risks of child labour.
- Governments should be supported to increase inspection at workplaces, identify child laborers and refer them to national social protection mechanisms.

Education

Medium-term

- Refugee adolescents' inclusion in non-formal education opportunities should be increased in accordance with their best interests.

Long-term

- Greater investments are needed in increasing refugee access to secondary education and tertiary education via complementary pathways, as the opportunity costs of education increase for children involved in or at risk of child labour.
- Likewise, the role of TVET in providing skills for decent work should be strengthened.

⁶¹ UNHCR. (2020). UNHCR MENA Research Project: Protection Impacts of Cash-Based Interventions with a Focus on Child Protection.

Decent work and labour standards

Medium-term

- Regulation of Syrian workers in the labour market should be strengthened by increasing refugee access to job placement mechanisms and measures improving working conditions (wages, occupational hazards, etc.), and monitoring the effects on child labour rates.⁶²

Long-term

- Ministries of Labour, Commerce, etc., organized labour, and the private sector (firms, chambers of commerce, etc.) should agree to certification standards that products for export are free of child labour, as they do for chemical residue on agricultural produce. Lessons may be drawn from the experience in Turkey's cotton industry.⁶³

Regional coordination

Two existing initiatives have emerged as possible candidates for follow-up interagency work on child labour in 3RP countries, perhaps by including tracking of indicator(s) on WFCL:

At the beginning of 2020, UNHCR and UNICEF developed a two-year Blueprint for Joint Action. The Blueprint is a commitment to accelerate joint efforts under a transformational agenda in line with the Global Compact on Refugees.

The Partnership for Improving Prospects for Forcibly Displaced Persons and Host Communities (PROSPECTS, 2019–2023) was launched with the support of the Government of the Netherlands that brings together the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the International Labour Organization (ILO), UNHCR, UNICEF and the World Bank to:

- foster an enabling environment for socio-economic inclusion;
- improve access to education and protection for vulnerable children on the move; and
- strengthen the resilience of host communities.

⁶² ILO Update, (2016). The ILO response to the Syrian refugee crisis.

⁶³ Fair Labour Association, Stop Child Labour Coalition and UNICEF, (2017). [New Report Identifies Ways to Tackle Child Labour Risks in the Turkish Cotton Sector.](#)



Image by UNHCR / Hannah Maule-ffinch

Annex 1: Persons interviewed

Global and regional levels

Peter Matz, Consultant for the UNHCR study/the Framework
Amanda Melville, UNHCR
Amit Sen, UNHCR
Simon Hills, ILO*
Lotte Claessens, Plan International*
Silvia Oñate, Plan International*
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*Also members of the ACPHA Child Labour Task Force

Jordan

Tayba Sharif, UNHCR
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Marta Alberici, TdH
Suzan Kasht, UNICEF

Lebanon

Jelena Vujanovic, TdH
Rose Habchi Daher, Himaya
Annabella Skof, Consultant
Amelia Charles, Save the Children
Anne Triboulet, UNHCR
Faten Adada, FAO
Monica Martinez, Save the Children
Jackline Atwi, UNICEF

Turkey

Stefano Battain, War Child
Elmar Bagirov, UNHCR
Dilek Karagoz, UNICEF
Emre Uckardesler, UNICEF
Nejat Kocabay, ILO
Derya Koksall, UNHCR

Iraq

Salifu Jarsey, UNICEF
Lawen Hawezy, ILO
Nawres A. Mahmood, Save the Children
Miriam Ambrosini, TdH
Sara Rashid, Kurdistan Save the Children
Nuray Inal, UNHCR
Marianne LaSour, UNHCR
Jessica Caplan, UNHCR

Egypt

Jessica Anderson, UNHCR
Ahmed Okasha, UNHCR
Dejan Kladarin, UNHCR
Ethar Sawan, UNHCR
Nesreen El Sady, UNHCR

Annex 2: Key concepts related to child labour

Children in employment

All children’s work falls under the umbrella term “children in employment”. This includes:

- Child labour as defined below, and;
- Work that is appropriate to both age and development and does not affect their health and personal development. Work that does not interfere with learning and can provide children and young people with skills and experience, helping to prepare them to be useful and productive members of society during their adult life, as well as contributing positively to their development and welfare, and the welfare of their families

Child labour

Child labour is work carried out to the detriment and endangerment of the child, in violation of international law (such as ILO Conventions Nos. 138 und 182, and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child) and national legislation. It either deprives them of schooling or requires them to assume the dual burden of schooling and work. Child labour to be eliminated is a subset of children in employment. It includes:

- Work done by children under the minimum legal age for that type of work, as defined by national legislation in accordance with international standards.
- Hazardous work: Work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.
- “Unconditional” worst forms of child labour, such as slavery or practices similar to slavery, the use of a child for prostitution or for illicit activities.

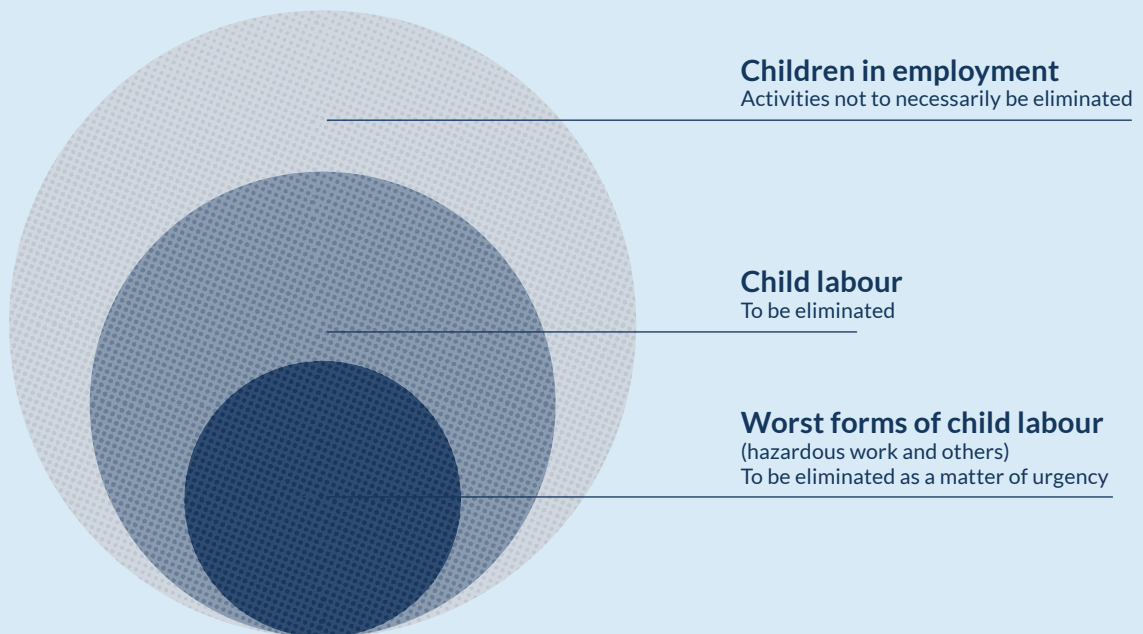


Photo:

“I have to support my parents and my brothers. They don’t have anyone else but me.”

Syrian refugee Naamat sweeps the floor at home in Amman, Jordan. Naamat is only 11 but has the daily responsibilities of an adult. Her family fled Homs in 2013 and their dire financial situation has seen Naamat take on household duties.

As of March 2021, the Syria Crisis remains to be the biggest refugee crisis worldwide, with more than 5.5 million refugees registered in neighbouring countries and 6.7 million internally displaced. Millions of refugees like Naamat’s, in countries like Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, are sliding deeper into poverty.

*Image by UNHCR
/ Diego Ibarra Sánchez*

