

Key Figures

408,579	children registered in Lebanon
76%	registered children are under 11
23%	identified as children at risk

November Developments

- 25 UNHCR registration staff in all four registration centres was trained on child protection principles to enhance identification and referral of high risk children. This included training on monitoring and reporting mechanisms on grave child rights violations.
- Through IRC, peer-to-peer coaching sessions for social workers working with refugee children were held in Qobayat, Zahle, Tripoli and Mount Lebanon to discuss challenges in managing child protection cases and share best practices. This new initiative will strengthen the quality of child protect assessments and individual case planning for children exposed to abuse and violence.
- UNHCR and partners immediately responded to the influx of over 18,000 refugees to Aarsal in the second half of November by establishing a protection desk for the identification and referral of unaccompanied and separated children, and those at risk of exposure to violence. Psychosocial support was provided in child friendly spaces.
- UNHCR worked to raise awareness on the importance of birth registration through a number of initiatives, including training of partners on birth registration procedures, and the distribution of information leaflets for the refugee population. Additionally, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education confirmed its support for a national campaign to raise awareness on the importance of birth registration in 2014.

Needs

Many refugee children have specific psycho-social needs due to traumatic events they may have witnessed in Syria and suffered at such a young age. Access to educational opportunities is a critical need among refugee children, and increases in importance as displacement in Lebanon lengthens and they lose years of their education. Educational opportunities and other organized activities for children are important as they can protect refugee children against negative coping mechanisms and a wide range of child-specific protection risks. These risks include child labor, early marriages of girls, and pressure to return to Syria to fight, in particular among adolescent boys.

Other specific needs of refugee children include the need of newborns to be registered at birth, and those of children who arrive in Lebanon unaccompanied or separated from their families or caregivers. These children need safe living arrangements, and assistance to help locate and reunite with their families, whenever possible.



Syrian refugee child forced to work in an automotive repair shop to help support his family @ UNHCR / S.Baldwin

Challenges

Dispersed refugee population:

Since refugees live in close to 1,600 different locations in Lebanon, outreach to refugee children to identify and respond to their needs is both a challenge and priority. Outreach is crucial to ensuring that refugee children are registered with UNHCR and have access to basic services. It is also important in ensuring that parents register the birth of newborns, and that school-aged children living in remote areas and those with specific protection risks have access to education, health care and other services.

Protracted displacement:

With limited access to livelihood opportunities, and dwindling resources, some families resort to child labour and other negative coping mechanisms such as child marriage. As their time in displacement prolongs, the lack of educational opportunities for the majority of school-aged Syrian children presents a significant challenge. Currently, there are over 200,000 school-aged refugee children who lack access to age-appropriate education due in part to the fact that the capacity of the public education system is overstretched.

Fragile national child protection system:

National child protection systems are struggling to cope to assist refugee children in need of their services. The Union for the Protection of Children is mandated by the Ministry of Justice to investigate cases involving child abuse and violence. UNHCR works together with implementing partners to provide support to both refugee children and national institutions providing services to refugees.



Syrian refugee children play inside an unfinished school which is now a collective settlement for refugees @ UNHCR/S.Baldwin

Strategy

UNHCR works to ensure that refugee children at risk and/or victims of violence have timely access to appropriate services by:

- Improving outreach to ensure identification and safe referral of children at risks and victims of violence through training of partners and others providing services to refugee children;
- Building capacity of child protection actors to better prevent and respond to child protection needs particularly through the establishment of a coaching mechanism for social workers;
- Strengthening child protection response mechanisms for provision of emergency care for children at high risks, referral to existing services such as psychosocial support and legal counselling;
- Mainstreaming child protection into all activities carried out within refugee and host communities especially within the health, education and shelter sectors;
- Advocating for expanding access to services for both refugee and Lebanese children;
- Contributing to the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism on grave child rights violations committed in Syria;

UNHCR co-leads the inter-agency working group on child protection together with the Ministry of Social Affairs and UNICEF, and works to ensure the complementarity of interventions benefiting refugee children.

UNHCR implementing partners

Caritas Lebanon Migrants Center (CMLC), Danish Refugee Council (DRC), International Medical Corps (IMC), International Relief and Development (IRD), International Rescue Committee (IRC), INTERSOS, Amel Association-Lebanese Popular Association for Popular Action (AMEL), Makhzoumi Foundation, Restart Centre for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence and Torture, Social, Humanitarian, Economical Intervention For Local Development (SHEILD), Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA), Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE).