

## HIGHLIGHTS

- There has been a 100 per cent increase in the enrolment of Syrian refugee children in schools over the last two years, with 158,000 enrolled for the new school year.
- 31,000 refugees evicted so far in 2016.
- New report shows widespread violations against 250,000 domestic migrant workers in Lebanon.
- Poverty deepening for Syrian refugees, with more than 70 per cent living below the poverty line according to a new assessment.



Syrian refugee children in class. Source: UNHCR

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## Refugee children start school year in Lebanon

**Enrolment numbers are on the rise, but many young Syrians are still out of school**

As the new school year kicks off in Lebanon, 158,000 Syrian children have enrolled in Lebanese public schools – more than in any previous school year since the start of the crisis. While this still falls short of the Education Ministry (MEHE) target of 200,000 Syrian children in school, it is an improvement over both the 2015-2016 school year, when 150,000 refugee children attended school, and the 2013-2014 school year, when less than half of that number were enrolled.



The General Director of MEHE and the Education Minister with the UNICEF and UNHCR representatives at the launch of the 'Back to School' campaign. Source: UNICEF

The numbers also show an encouraging increase in the number of vulnerable Lebanese children enrolled in schools, with almost 200,000 enrolled this year, just short of the MEHE target of 269,000.

### Back to School campaign

"Ana Hader" – "I Am Ready" – is the slogan under which MEHE and its partners reaffirmed their commitment to ensure free access to education for all children in Lebanon – both Lebanese and non-Lebanese. The Back to School 2016 campaign was launched as part of MEHE's Reaching All Children with Education (R.A.C.E.) strategy, launched in 2014 with support from donors, UN agencies and more than 60 local and international NGOs. This year, the Back to School campaign will cover the costs of school registration, parent's fund fees, schoolbooks and stationary for all students – both Lebanese and refugees – for the first time in public schools. Registration is currently underway for all Lebanese and non-Lebanese children in all public schools across Lebanon, with 300 schools offering second shift classes – 100 more than last year – to ensure that there are sufficient places for non-Lebanese students.

### Barriers to education

Although enrolment numbers are increasing at an encouraging rate, many children are still outside the educational system. Education partners estimate that approximately half of all school-age Syrian children – around 233,000 – are currently out of school in Lebanon.

## FIGURES

(as of 31 August 2016)

# of estimated refugees	1,500,000
# of registered refugees	1,033,513

52.1 %  47.9 %  53 % 

# of returnees	35,000
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# of Palestine Refugees from Syria (PRS)	40,807
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# of Palestine Refugees from Lebanon (PRL)	277,985
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# of vulnerable Lebanese	1,500,000
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Total Lebanese population	4,400,000
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Challenges to school enrolment for Syrian refugee children include the language barrier, the steep learning curve for children who have been out of school for years, additional costs such as uniforms and transportation, and requirements including identification cards or vaccination booklets.

### Education: a right for every girl and boy

In order to tackle these challenges, MEHE and its partners have launched a pilot Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP) to help children who have been out of school for over two years catch up through an intensive four-month programme, which targeted 30,000 children in 2016. Other initiatives include homework support groups to help children stay in school and overcome curriculum and language challenges. In addition, UNHCR works on community-based solutions to the issues raised by the communities, including barriers to schooling. It also works with the regional offices of the Ministry of Education to inform school directors about enrolment regulations.

“Education is not a privilege or a gift – it is a right for every girl and boy”, said Tanya Chapuisat, UNICEF’s representative in Lebanon.



Syrian children at their desks. Source: UNICEF

In support of this fundamental principle, public opinion is increasingly calling upon the international community to show more solidarity with Lebanon and host communities in the response to the impact of the Syrian crisis.

Millions of people signed the [#WithRefugees petition](#) that was delivered to UN headquarters in New York on 19 September, during the UN General Assembly. One of the petition’s main demands is that governments ensure that every refugee child receives an education.

*Despite the positive trends, about half of all school-age Syrian children are still out of school in Lebanon.*

## Refugee evictions continue in 2016

### Around 31,000 refugees evicted in the first half of the year

An estimated 31,000 individuals (6,200 households) have been evicted across Lebanon in the last six months, according to UNHCR, as they increasingly struggle to find adequate, affordable housing with secured tenancy.

Many of these evictions were linked to government policies that specify the need for refugees to move when security, law and order, or public health are at jeopardy. This has led to the eviction of informal settlements close to military facilities or main roads, as seen recently in the Bekaa and around Tripoli. The highest number of individuals evicted so far is in the Mount Lebanon Governorate (33 per cent) followed by the Bekaa Governorate (26 per cent).

While UNHCR also tallied evictions in 2015, the figures for both years cannot be compared, as the 2015 dataset only covers evictions from informal settlements while the 2016 figures cover all types of evictions, including evictions due to the non-payment of rent.

### Partners mobilize to help evicted families

All evictions, irrespective of their cause, seriously impact the socio-economic situation of affected families. Evictions leave them without a home and considerably increase their vulnerability as they are forced to find a new shelter with very limited resources, and to find

a new dwelling from which they can access the basic services they need. Forced evictions of refugees are a common phenomenon in contexts of protracted displacement, as documented in other settings including Haiti in 2013 and Somalia in 2015.

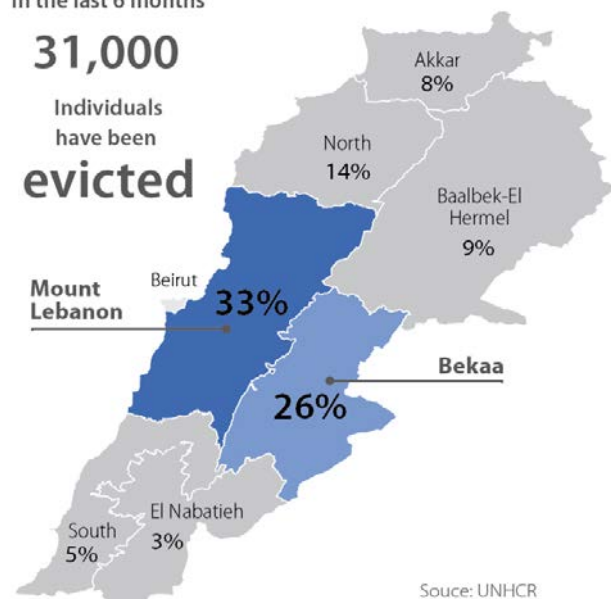
In Lebanon, UNHCR and its partners work to ensure that relocated families receive adequate and timely support to enable them to settle into a dignified life in a new area. The needs of evicted families are jointly assessed, and the response is coordinated through inter-agency eviction committees at the respective field offices.

The overwhelming majority of evicted families find new accommodation among friends and family members, through their own means and networks. Aid partners thus focus on providing material support such as emergency shelter kits and WASH facilities, and assessing whether the eviction has brought the family new socio-economic vulnerabilities that may need to be addressed through cash assistance and other support.

Families are also advised on how to access health care or educational facilities from their new dwellings. Given the nature of the lease agreements, which are rarely written or formal, refugees often have difficulties retrieving any rental payments that they had made for upcoming months. Protection partners try to help them get reimbursed from their former landlords, and to secure lease agreements with more favourable conditions in their new locations.

In the last 6 months

**31,000**  
Individuals  
have been  
**evicted**



*The highest number of refugees evicted so far this year were in the Mount Lebanon Governorate and the Bekaa Governorate.*

### International law governing evictions

A [2014 Fact Sheet](#) by the UN Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR) and UN-Habitat outlines the definition of forced evictions, their prohibition under international law and the obligations of States and other entities. Forced eviction is “the permanent or temporary removal against their will of individuals, families and/or communities from the homes and/or land which they occupy, without the provision of, and access to, appropriate forms of legal or other protection”. The fact sheet shows that forced evictions constitute gross violations of human rights as enshrined in international instruments, including the right to life, freedom from cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, and the right to security of the person, all of which are outlined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The fact sheet notes that under international law, States must take all measures to prevent the occurrence of evictions.

## Migrant Domestic Workers face Challenges on the Margins

### New study shows widespread violations of 250,000 workers' rights

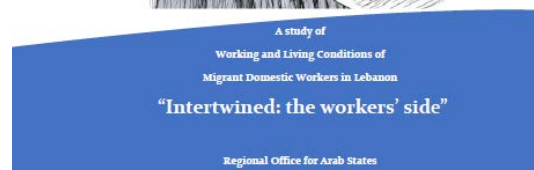
The International Labour Organization (ILO) and the American University of Beirut (AUB) released a worrying [study](#) this month about the living and working conditions of Migrant Domestic Workers in Lebanon. The study shows difficult working conditions for the

estimated 250,000 domestic workers currently living in Lebanon, based on a survey of 1,200 employers. The study highlights practices in contravention of both international human rights and national labour laws, the latter of which do not apply to domestic migrant workers. It also illustrates the alarming situation of the vast network of domestic migrant workers living in Lebanon.

### Poor conditions for migrant workers

The ILO-AUB study first sheds light on the prevalence of migrant domestic workers in Lebanon, estimating that 250,000 persons – or one in 16 people living in Lebanon – is a domestic migrant worker, 85 per cent of whom are women. The three highest countries of origin of migrant domestic workers are Ethiopia, Bangladesh, and the Philippines, in that order. The study pointed to very challenging labour conditions of the employees: 40 per cent do not receive a monthly salary; 25 per cent work more than 10 hours per day; and 57 per cent of employees do not have a day off per week. Also surprising is the high number of employers – 22 per cent – who admitted to locking their domestic worker within the house. A nearly universal abusive and illegal practice was the retention by employers of migrant domestic workers' passports, with 94 per cent of respondent employers engaging in this practice. Over 60 per cent of migrant domestic workers leave their employer within two years. Interestingly, the size and regularity of salary payment, as well as the amount of rest-time, correlated with the migrant worker's nationality, with Filipino workers treated most favourably and Bangladeshi workers treated least favourably.

*40 per cent of employees do not receive a monthly salary, and 57 per cent do not have any days off per week.*



### Challenges for migrant domestic workers across the region

The ILO-AUB study is largely corroborated by a separate study published by IOM in 2015. The IOM [study](#), which was conducted across the Middle East and North Africa (including Lebanon), assesses migrant workers' living and working conditions based on a survey of 162 domestic migrant workers. The IOM survey found that: in 3 out of 4 instances, wages were withheld from workers; work hours were excessive for nearly half of respondents; 87 per cent of respondents were confined to the workplace; 61 per cent of respondents experienced physical abuse, and 73 per cent experienced psychological abuse; and half of respondents reported that food and/or drink were withheld from them in the course of their employment.

### Identifying solutions

The challenges posed to migrant domestic workers in Lebanon culminated in a [migrant movement](#), The Anti-Racist Movement, in the summer of 2016, following numerous reports of serious abuse against migrant workers posted on social media. The ILO-AUB study and IOM report are the first critical steps in acknowledging the problem and documenting its scope. Identifying solutions will require further probing into the source of the challenges facing domestic migrant workers and ensuring the enforcement of national and international laws that govern the employer-employee relationships.



## Refugees' poverty deepens

### New VASyR assessment shows rising poverty and food insecurity

Syrian refugees' poverty levels have increased in Lebanon, according to the preliminary findings of the Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees (VASyR). The assessment, issued by UNHCR, WFP and UNICEF, says refugees' overall economic vulnerability has increased by 1.4 per cent since 2015, with 52 per cent extremely poor and an estimated 70.5 per cent of the refugee population living below the poverty line of \$3.80/day.



A girl in an informal tented settlement in the Bekaa. Source: OCHA

*More than 70 per cent of Syrian refugees live under the poverty line (\$3.80/day), and 52 per cent live in extreme poverty.*

The preliminary findings also indicate a worrying increase in the food insecurity of refugee households, particularly in the North. Across all of Lebanon, 34 per cent of refugee households are moderately food insecure in 2016, compared to 23 per cent in 2015.

### Families cutting expenses

As a result of this rise in food insecurity, refugee households are cutting their spending: 90 per cent of households have reduced their expenditure on food (a 12 per cent increase compared to 2015), 82 per cent have bought food on credit (a 9 per cent increase), and 72 per cent have reduced essential non-food expenditure (up 31 per cent). In addition, 17 per cent of households are selling productive assets – a 113 per cent increase from 2015.

### Resilience eroding

Based on these findings, it appears that while the \$979 million injected into the LCRP has helped prevent many families from falling below the poverty line, poverty levels remain high and the humanitarian situation is precarious for a large number of households. Food insecurity levels are deepening, families' long-term resilience is eroding and households could struggle to manage another shock if it occurs in the coming months, particularly in light of the restrictive policies on employment and residency which make it very difficult for refugees to find sustainable livelihoods. For instance, the percentage of Syrian refugee households with legal residency in Lebanon has plummeted by 66 per cent since 2014 — down 30 per cent since last year alone.

"The economic plight of Syrian refugees did not deteriorate as severely as last year, but we know that this is due to the oxygen of external help," commented Mireille Gerard, UNHCR's Representative in Lebanon. "Syrian refugees in Lebanon are still caught in a debt trap, while remaining highly reliant on humanitarian assistance." An in-depth analytical report on the VASyR findings will be available in October.

## Funding update

### \$1.22 billion disbursed for Lebanon so far in 2016

As of the end of August 2016, available resources for Lebanon stood at \$1.57 billion, with \$1.22 billion already disbursed or committed to be disbursed this year, and \$344 million carried over from 2015 by UN Agencies, the World Bank and NGOs. These overall figures

include \$979 million provided to UN agencies and NGOs in support of activities under the LCRP, which is now 47 per cent funded.

These latest figures show an overall increase of 48 per cent in funding compared to the end of June 2016. This is due to additional disbursements by donors to implementing partners during the third quarter of the year, as well as further information communicated by donors, especially on support provided outside the [Lebanon Crisis Response Plan](#).

The consolidated data shows a continued high level of donor support for Lebanon. Information provided by donors also highlights an additional amount of over \$500 million to be disbursed for Lebanon in 2017 and beyond. “We have achieved a huge amount of assistance thanks to the generous support provided to Lebanon by donor countries so far, but much more needs to be done,” said Humanitarian and Resident Coordinator Philippe Lazzarini. “Host communities have been remarkable providers of assistance to refugees, but the responsibility to address this crisis is collective. We call on all countries to reinforce their international solidarity and continue to help Lebanon cope with the wide-ranging impact of the Syria crisis. Lebanon is at the frontline of a conflict that has brought more than a million people in desperate need of assistance, while having a major impact on Lebanon’s economy, infrastructure and demography.”

## Ahmad's story

### Studying for freedom

“I want to be a lawyer to advocate for all innocent prisoners in Syria and contribute to their freedom.” This is how 9-year-old Ahmad explains why he wants to pursue his education in Lebanon.

Ahmad fled Syria in 2011 with his parents, brother and three sisters after their house in Hamah was shelled and destroyed. He now lives with his family in the village of Kfar Sâlé, near Byblos, in an area that hosts around 15,000 Syrian families. He has never been to school in Syria, as he was still too young for primary school when his family fled. Two years ago, with the help of [UNHCR](#) and its partner [Terre des Hommes](#) (TdH), he started his basic education at Estéphan Juan Assi Public School in Hsarat.



Ahmad studying for school. Source: OCHA

Ahmad is also attending Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) sessions organized by TdH with UNHCR support, to help him with the learning difficulties he is encountering – like many of his peers. One of the ALP centres is run by Ahmad’s mother, who coaches ten children with TdH support. To Ahmad’s parents, education is sacred. “We the Syrians have already been lost, we don’t want our children to get even more lost,” his mother says, adding that her older son Abdullah, who is 15, had to leave school and help his father at work because of their financial situation.

“I love to go to school, I love my teachers, and I have a lot of friends, especially girls”, says Ahmad with a shy smile. When asked about going back to Syria, Ahmad replies: “I will go back to Syria after accomplishing my law degree.”

To find out more and see how you can help, visit the websites of [UNHCR](#) or [TdH](#).

For further information, please contact:

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*“I love to go to school, I love my teachers, and I have a lot of friends.”*

*Ahmad, 9 years old*