



ADOLESCENT GIRLS **AND** BOYS NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Focus on child labour and child marriage

June 2018

This publication is also available online at: www.plan-international.org

First published 2018 – Text and photos © Plan International 2018

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INTRODUCTION

This Adolescent Girls and Boys Needs Assessment was conducted between November 2017 and February 2018 to assess the prevalence and dynamics of protection concerns affecting adolescent girls and boys, particularly child labour and child marriage, in Plan International's programme areas in Lebanon and to develop programmatic recommendations.

The assessment revealed the scale and nature of child protection and GBV risks for adolescent girls and boys as well as examined the support for adolescents in Lebanese host communities and Syrian refugee communities across North Lebanon (Tripoli and Akkar) and North Bekaa regions.

METHODOLOGY

- 521 individual survey-based interviews with adolescents, including: 259 younger adolescents between 12 and 14 years old (129 girls, 130 boys) and 262 older adolescents between 15 and 17 years old (129 girls, 133 boys).
- 23 Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with a total of 217 adolescents including: 112 younger adolescents between 12 and 14 years old (56 girls, 56 boys) and 105 adolescents between 15 and 17 years old (49 girls, 56 boys), in addition to 63 caregivers (35 females and 28 males)

The interviews and focus group discussions included adolescent girls and boys from Syria (59.1%) and from Lebanon (40.9%), currently living in Akkar (45.3%), Northern Bekaa (32.1%) and Tripoli (32.6%). Most of the 521 interviewed adolescents live in vulnerable and large households, with an average household size of 6.81 members. The highest average number of family members was found in Akkar (7.26) and the lowest in the city of Tripoli (6.35), both surpassed the national average in North Lebanon Governorate¹ at 4.74 members per HH; also, in Northern Bekaa (Baalback District), the average HH size of 6.78 registered much higher than that of Bekaa region² at 4.58 members/HH.

¹ Source: CAS, MoSA and UNDP. 2004. "Living Conditions of Households – The National Survey of Household Living Conditions - 2004".

² Ibid.

MAIN FINDINGS

I. PROTECTION

The assessment revealed high perceived prevalence of protection risks for adolescent girls and boys, both among refugee and host populations. Emotional abuse, physical violence and sexual violence risks were identified. Most risks were identified in the community (64%), particularly outside camps; while lower risks were identified in the family (9%), at work (9%) or in schools (5%).

One-third of all adolescent girls and boys identify emotional abuse as a key risk in their community

A third of all adolescents (33% of boys and 35% of girls) reports to have witnessed emotional violence. Syrian refugee girls and boys experience discrimination, are approached by gangsters, subject to crime, violence and harassment, report car accidents, drugs and alcoholism abuse in their environment, and all kinds of physical and verbal abuses. For some refugees, lack of proper documentation puts them at risk of arrest (especially at checkpoints) and imprisonment. This also makes it difficult for many Syrian refugees to commute freely, to report complaints at police station (if needed), refer to their embassy, etc.

A quarter of all adolescent girls and boys report physical violence in their community

Physical violence was mentioned as a risk by 25% of adolescent girls and 24% of adolescent boys.

16% of all adolescent girls think of sexual violence as a prominent risk to them

Sexual violence was mostly identified as a risk by female adolescents (16%); whereas, a mere 1% of males considered it to a prominent risk to them. When asked what survivors of sexual violence, including rape, would likely do, nearly half of the adolescents thought that survivors of rape would disclose the incident and inform somebody about what happened (49%). This was mostly the case among those from Lebanon (58%), female and older adolescents (53%). 64% of adolescents thought that survivors of sexual violence including rape would seek help. While older adolescent girls, particularly those from Lebanon, were most likely to seek help, older adolescent boys, particularly those from Syria were least likely to seek help.

Parents and caregivers seen as main providers of support, particularly for younger adolescent girls

The most important providers of support identified by adolescents included:

- Parents and/or other family members (80%), especially for younger adolescents (83%) and females (81%). In Lebanon this is most often the mother (84%, compared to 69% among Syrian adolescents).
- Friends (16%), mostly among older and male adolescents (17% and 22% respectively).
- Law enforcement bodies, such as the police (14%). These were rated higher by adolescents from Lebanon (21%).

II. CHILD LABOUR

In Lebanon, the minimum working age is 14 years, while engagement in the worst forms of child labor including hazardous labor are prohibited for any child below the age of 18 years, as stated by Decree No. 8987. Education is compulsory until 15 years. Work performed above the minimum working age that interferes with a child's compulsory education or results in long and heavy days is considered child labour.

Syrian older adolescent boys are most vulnerable to child labour

The results of the quantitative research illustrate that one-third of adolescents in vulnerable communities are currently working (33%). Working children are mostly Syrian, older adolescent boys between 15 and 17 years old.

- 48% of adolescent boys are working, against 17% of the girls and mostly among older adolescents (42% of older adolescents are working compared to 24% of younger adolescents).
- 42% of older adolescents (15-17 years) are working, against 24% of younger adolescents 12-14 years.
- Working adolescents are more often from Syria (41%) than from Lebanon (21%).

Most working adolescents are engaged in the worst forms of child labour

Whilst the sample size of this study was too small to generate reliable child labor statistics, the types of work and the hours and conditions under which most surveyed adolescents work, can be considered child labor.

Whilst the majority of working adolescents are engaged in agricultural work, others work in shops or restaurants, mechanic shops, construction sites or in factories. Girls are mostly working alongside family members, often in agricultural work. Adolescents from Syria commonly perform low-skilled jobs on a temporary basis. Based on analysis of the types of work performed by adolescents, it can be concluded that most are engaging in worst forms of child labour, particularly hazardous types of work that involve physical or psychological hazards and carry high risks to harm. These types of work are prohibited for all children below the age of 18 in Lebanon.

One-third of the working adolescents says to have entered the labour market before the age of 12 years, particularly boys from Syria and those living in the largely agricultural area of Baalback. While adolescent boys more often combine work with education, most working adolescent girls are not in school. Similarly, most Syrian working adolescents did not attend school while working. Almost half of the working adolescents only work on circumstantial basis (47%).

One of the major reasons for adolescent to work is to supplement family income in order to meet basic needs (69%) as they live in poor socio-economic conditions. Main reasons for children to work were high unemployment of caregivers, absence of breadwinners in the family, or lack of documentation of adults family members pushing children into child labour.

Children working on the streets said that they and their peers were prone to learning bad habits and behaviors such as smoking, drinking alcohol and drugs, and that they were at higher risk of getting into criminal gangs and in contact with the law.

Adolescent girls and boys in agriculture are exposed to dangerous hazards and abuse

Through the focus group discussions, adolescents identified serious risks associated with work in agriculture. Girls and boys report to work in extreme weather conditions, in the sun during hot summers, and inside overheated greenhouses. Adolescents work long hours, some (6%) work night shifts or combine irregular hours during day and night (15%).

Several agricultural activities expose adolescents to physical hazards such as:

- Potato picking requires bending for a long period of time which leads to back pain.
- Picking olives increases the risk to skin allergies.
- Eggplant picking exposes children to mosquitoes.
- Tobacco plantains exposes children to lung diseases and dyspnoea which in some cases leads to hospitalization.
- Girls and boys are exposed to chemicals and pesticides as some landowners do not provide children with masks for protection.

Working children are exposed to verbal and physical abuse.

Adolescent girls and boys both report to be exposed to verbal and physical abuse and some report to have been hit by their employers by with hard objects and tools as a punishment. Some girls report that they are always yelled at work, in order to work faster. Some working children complain that employers do not pay them on time or do not pay their full wages. Many adolescents are suspicious of their employers and do not trust them. As a result of abuse and violence in the work place, girls and boys experience distress, and experience feelings of sadness, anxiety and depression.

Refugee children in rural areas at risk of forced labour

A quarter of working adolescents reported that they were recruited by “*Shawish*” brokers in agricultural areas (31% in Akkar, and 30% in Baalback). This was particularly the case for adolescents from Syria (29%) living in informal tented settlements including many of the working adolescent girls. Working under a *shawish* was in some cases marked as ‘forced labour’ as adolescents have to work in order to earn the ‘right’ for their family to live on the *shawish*’s land or property.

Adolescents working in agriculture report to earn about 1,500 LBP (1 USD) per hour, of which 500 LBP (0,33 USD) is to be paid to the *shawish*. The highest share of working adolescents (almost 35%) recorded weekly earnings to range from a minimum of 21 thousand LBP (approx. 14 USD), to a maximum of 50 thousand LBP (approx. 33 USD).

III. CHILD MARRIAGE

No less than 9% of adolescents are married, and Syrian girls are marrying younger

At present, there is no minimum age for marriage in Lebanon. Instead, local and religious laws determine the age based on personal status laws which in some cases allow girls younger than 15 years to marry. In Syria, the legal minimum age of marriage is 17 years for girls and 18 for males; however, local and religious courts can allow girls as young as thirteen to get married.

Out of 521 interviewed adolescent girls and boys between 12 and 17 years:

- 25 adolescents (21 girls, 4 boys) were married, 22 of them are Syrian and 3 are Lebanese
- 20 adolescents (15 girls, 5 boys) were engaged, 14 of them are Syrian and 6 are Lebanese.
- One Syrian adolescent girl who had been married and was now divorced.

The average age of marriage was 16 years; however, Syrian girls were more likely to get married at an earlier age.

- Married at 16 years: 39% of married adolescents
- Married at 15 years: 42% of married adolescents, mainly Syrian girls
- Married at 14 years: 15% of married adolescents, only Syrian girls
- Married at 13 years: one Syrian adolescent girl

One-quarter of married adolescents from Syria were married to spouses who were also under 18.

Almost every married adolescent had dropped-out of school, except for one female adolescent. Two-thirds of adolescents who are engaged, had dropped-out of school.

When married adolescents were asked why they got married, 46% said they got married out of love. About 35% said their marriage had been an arrangement between families, which is considered as a traditional mode of marriage to “sustain the honor of adolescent girls” used as a key justification also used for early marriages. Some adolescent girls and boys reported that the marriage had been arranged to relieve the financial burden on their families or ensure their own future security. Some adolescent girls report to have been forced to marry early.

This was confirmed by many of the caregivers, who, despite not being in favor of early marriage, had approved the marriages of their daughters out of financial desperation or security concerns, particularly those living in informal tent settlements.

60% of married adolescent girls have their first child before the age of 18 years

14 married adolescent girls confirmed that they already have children, and one older Syrian adolescent boy expected his first child at the time of the interview.

IV. SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS (SRHR)

Married adolescents were asked if they are aware of where and how to access information or services related to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) in their community, in particular:

- **Education and counselling regarding SRH:** about 50% of married adolescents (53% Syrian, 100% Lebanese) was aware of such services. Higher share of awareness was recorded in Baalback District (63%); whereas, higher shares of unfamiliarity were found among married adolescents living in Akkar and Tripoli (56%).
- **Voluntary Counselling and Testing for HIV:** only 15% of married adolescents (13% Syrian and 33% Lebanese) was aware of the availability of this type of services, and mostly adolescents from cities and towns.
- **Miscarriage/Post-abortion care services:** only 31% of married adolescents (26% Syrian and 67% Lebanese) was aware of the availability of this type of services, particularly adolescents from Tripoli.
- **Family planning services:** only 15% of married adolescents (4% Syrian and 100% Lebanese) were aware of the availability of this type of services.
- **Periods and menstruation:** around 73% of married adolescents (70% Syrian and 100% Lebanese) were aware of the availability of this type of services; especially in Akkar (89%), followed distantly by Tripoli (67%) and Baalback District (63%).
- **Pregnancy care and delivery:** around 73% of married adolescents (70% Syrian and 100% Lebanese) were aware of the availability of this type of services; especially in Akkar (89%), followed distantly by Tripoli (67%) and Baalback District (63%).

Some 19% of married adolescents did not feel comfortable visiting SRH services facilities due to two reasons: they did not feel comfortable due to the fact that some services like contraception were a taboo, or they had concerns over the privacy and confidentiality of these services.

50% of married adolescents are not aware of contraceptives

When married adolescents were asked if they knew the ways to prevent pregnancy, 50% were not aware of contraception. This is likely related to high socio-cultural and religious barriers to discuss bodily changes and sexual and reproductive health, particularly in Baalback (63%).

V. EDUCATION

Syrian, older adolescent boys are least likely to pursue education

Education enrollment rates were highest among Lebanese adolescents (79%) and lowest among Syrian adolescents (47%). Younger adolescents are more likely to be in school than older adolescents and slightly more girls than boys continue secondary education after completing primary school. Remarkably, 17% of interviewed adolescents from Syria were illiterate and 30% of all adolescent girls and boys interviewed in Tripoli have never benefitted from any kind of formal education. Most adolescents were enrolled formal education, particularly those living in Tripoli (81%), those from Lebanon (78%) and the younger adolescents (70%). A smaller group attends technical and vocational training institutions (21% of those attending school), particularly older adolescents (25%).

Main barriers to education include: high costs of education, financial barriers, lack of availability of schools in vicinity of the community, large learning gaps, violence and harassment in schools by teachers or peers, lack of opportunities to accelerate learning, lack of motivation or confidence to pursue education, differences in curricula (between Syrian and Lebanese schools). Syrian children also mentioned discrimination as a reason to stop going to school. Socio-economic problems, such as parental distress, unemployment or illness, was a common reason, particularly for Syrian children, to stop school and start working or take care of family members.

Girls' education widely supported; yet, only 64% continues learning

Education was highly valued by both caregivers and adolescent girls and boys themselves; however, only 64% of all adolescent girls and only 56% of all adolescent boys transitioned from primary into secondary education. Particularly Syrian adolescent girls and boys were less likely to pursue secondary education.

At the same time, adolescent girls had predominantly positive attitudes about their education; it was seen as essential for girls to strengthen their personalities and gain self-confidence, and to “defend themselves” in their communities. Education was also seen as an important way to find a good job and become financially independent. Girls themselves saw education as a way to become socially involved in society to fulfil their future dreams. Adolescent girls from more conservative families thought that education would help them prepare for their marital lives and assist them in establishing healthy and supportive family relations.

Nearly half of all adolescent boys drop out of school

The study revealed that that only 56% of male adolescents continued learning, in many cases due to financial barriers such as payment of the transportation fees, stationary, school bags and other expenses: “the bus fee is LBP 25 thousand per month (equivalent to around \$16.67); when I don't pay, I have to go to school walking”. Some boys dropped out to seek work while others remained at home, assisting in house chores, or spending the days outdoors.

When asked if they wanted to go to school only 39% said that they would like to go back to school. Two-thirds of drop-outs are interested in apprenticeship or technical vocational training programs (67%); those were mainly from Baalback (85%), females (72%), older adolescents (71%) and from Syria (68%).

PROGRAMMATIC RECOMMENDATIONS

This assessment revealed that Syrian and Lebanese adolescent girls and boys in vulnerable communities in Lebanon are exposed to serious risks and daily stressors that have a detrimental impact on their protection and development. Whether in cities or in rural areas, adolescents experience and witness high levels violence, abuse and exploitation. Nearly all adolescent girls and boys who are not in school, are at risk of or already engaged in the worst forms of child labour or child marriage. The growing concerns over these complex child protection concerns are the result of compounded risk factors including poverty, lack of legal protection, low access to services, poor quality of education and a lack of viable livelihoods opportunities. Many adolescents and their caregivers, particularly those from Syrian refugee families, have limited access to information and facilities that are vital for their protection and well-being. Both adolescents and their caregivers report gender- and age-specific roles to girls and boys, which, exacerbated by poverty and crisis, can push adolescents from an early age in caregiver- and breadwinner roles and into exploitative situations of child labour and child marriage.

This assessment confirms the urgent need for more **intentional, targeted and holistic programmes for adolescent girls and boys** to effectively address their age- and gender-specific needs and rights. Programs should provide adolescent-friendly information, strengthen positive role models and peer support, promote access to services and enhance the family- and community-based social and economic assets that adolescents need during their transition into adulthood. Rather than short-term, stand-alone activities, more comprehensive programs should be designed to offer long-term and holistic (multi-sectoral) and flexible interventions to address more complex issues such as child labour and child marriage.

Promote multi-sectoral programs to address to Child Labour

- Mobilise communities and engage adolescent girls and boys, parents/caregivers, communities, local organisations and employers, including *Shawish*, to prevent and respond to child labour and the worst forms, through:
 - Awareness raising on the legal minimum working age in Lebanon and the worst forms of child labour including hazardous labour, as well as the age for compulsory education;
 - Understanding of the harmful effects of child labour on adolescents' physical, cognitive and psychosocial well-being and development;
 - Awareness raising on referral pathways for child labour and risks of violence and abuse in the work place, including gender-based violence (GBV);
 - Influencing adolescent girls' and boys' own attitudes towards education and the importance of education for their development and future livelihood.
- Promote sustainable and viable alternatives for families to prevent child labour, including:
 - Girls' and boys' right to quality and safe formal or non-formal education, particularly focusing on Syrian adolescents and those at risk of school drop-out;
 - Family livelihood opportunities, in particular for Syrian refugees, to relieve the financial pressure on families and provide alternatives to child labour.

- Provide support to working adolescent girls and boys including in the worst forms of child labour:
 - Target working girls and boys and their caregivers with awareness-raising on the importance of education and advocate for flexible modalities and opportunities for schooling in order to promote continued education;
 - Provide child protection case management services for those girls and boys who experienced violence and those involved in the worst forms of child labour;
 - Provide targeted psychosocial activities for girls and boys to enhance their ability to protect themselves and others in the work place, and cope with distress, in particular Syrian boys;
 - Provide livelihood opportunities to relieve financial pressure on families, build self-reliance of older adolescents or their families, and strengthen access to decent work;
 - Train working adolescents on harm reduction strategies in the work place and provide them with safety equipment.
- Engage with employers to promote safety in the work place and jointly develop harm reduction strategies to address existing risks and hazards.

Design intentional, multi-sectoral programs to address Child Marriage

- Mobilise communities and engage adolescent girls and boys, parents/caregivers, and communities including local civil society, traditional and religious leaders to change norms and practices related to child marriage, through:
 - Awareness raising about the risks and impact of child marriage and early pregnancy on the health, protection and psychosocial well-being of girls;
 - Promoting the importance of education, peer relations and play for the development of girls, including for older adolescent girls;
 - Strengthening life skills and psychosocial competencies of girls to help them access the information, confidence and social networks to prevent child marriage;
 - Promoting gender equality and addressing negative gender norms related to girls' and women's sexuality and value, including norms that justify child marriage to protect family honour, which could lead to gender-based violence;
- Promote sustainable and viable alternatives for families to prevent child marriage, including:
 - Girls' access to quality and safe education, particularly focusing on girls between 11 and 14 years old, girls who attend irregularly, or with low school performance;
 - Family livelihood opportunities, in particular for Syrian refugees, to relieve financial pressure on families and provide alternatives.
- Provide tailored support to engaged and married adolescents, starting at a young age:
 - Target engaged and married girls and boys and their caregivers with awareness-raising on the importance of education and advocate for flexible modalities and opportunities for schooling in order to promote continued education;
 - Promote girls' and boys' access to and use of family planning methods in order to delay first pregnancy and prevent rapid repeat pregnancy, particularly in rural areas and refugee tent settlement with limited access to health services;
 - Provide targeted psychosocial activities for girls and boys to support their ability to protect themselves and others and form healthy relationships, in particular for Syrian refugees in tented settlements;
 - Provide livelihood opportunities to relieve financial pressure on families, build self-reliance through economic independence, and strengthen access to decent work;
 - Support child care initiatives to improve mobility and access to education or work for married girls.

- Provide comprehensive child protection case management services for married adolescent girls and engaged or at-risk girls who have experienced violence.
- Provide spouses of adolescent girls, engaged/married adolescent boys as well as younger adolescent boys with tailored information about:
 - Gender equality and masculinities, addressing negative gender stereotypes in relation to married life and parenting, including roles and (shared) responsibilities in parenting and households, the importance for girls to engage in social, educational and economic opportunities, and prevention of GBV including intimate partner violence (IPV);
 - Livelihood opportunities for themselves, their female spouses and/or other family members to economically empower young couples, including girls and young women.
- Advocate for legislation prohibiting marriage under the age of 18 years.

Education: Promote flexible, quality learning opportunities for adolescent girls and boys

- Enhance adolescents' successful transition from primary to secondary education and put in place monitoring and early warning systems to identify adolescents at risk of drop-out to reduce risks to child labour or child marriage;
- Invest in quality after-school activities for adolescents such as school clubs, homework classes and tutoring to improve school performance and retain adolescent girls and boys in school;
- Support flexible learning modalities for working or married adolescent girls and boys such as home-based or informal learning opportunities.
- Invest in quality and relevant vocational training opportunities for older adolescent girls and boys, with accompanying internships or apprenticeships to help them transition into decent work.
- Support adolescent mothers in accessing education or work, by providing access to quality child care services.

Child Protection: Strengthen the protective environment of adolescent girls and boys

- Provide parents and caregivers with parenting support with focus on self-care, and positive parenting styles specific to younger and older adolescents, particularly girls, adolescents who work or who take on other adult responsibilities.
- Strengthen family economic coping mechanisms through economic strengthening interventions such as cash, income-generating activities or other livelihoods support, as viable alternatives to child marriage or child labour.
- Create safe community spaces with specific programs and (mobile) approaches tailored to adolescent girls and boys, including those who are married, working or living in hard-to-reach areas, to receive information and access integrated services including protection, learning and social activities in a safe environment.
- Strengthen community-based protective mechanisms through mobilizing communities, specifically engaging with traditional and religious leaders, landowners (*shawish*), law enforcement agencies and employers, to prevent and respond to protection violations against at-risk children and adolescents, including Syrian refugees.

- Ensure access to (mobile) adolescent-friendly child protection services, particularly for 'invisible' or homebound girls, working adolescents or those living in hard-to-reach areas.

SRHR: Promote adolescent-friendly SRHR information, services and facilities

- Raise awareness with adolescent girls, boys, parents/caregivers, spouses, and communities on where and how to access SRHR information and services, in particular: family planning, HIV counseling and testing, and miscarriage/post-abortion care services;
- Facilitate direct access to quality SRH services for adolescent girls, including engaged, married and pregnant girls and young mothers, to promote maternal and child health, including: providing transportation, organising group visits to facilities, child care, adapting service schedules around school, work, household or child care responsibilities;
- Raise awareness on the benefits of family planning, including delay of first pregnancy and prevention of rapid repeat pregnancy and promote access to family planning counseling.
- Support access of girls to menstrual hygiene: provide menstrual sanitation materials, inform them on how to dispose materials and improve toilets at schools and tented settlements to ensure safe and dignified access to sanitation facilities.
- Train SRHR service providers to provide (mobile) adolescent-friendly and gender-responsive SRH services, and promote confidential reporting of gender-based violence.



About Plan International

We strive to advance children's rights and equality for girls all over the world. We recognise the power and potential of every single child. But this is often suppressed by poverty, violence, exclusion and discrimination. And it's girls who are most affected. As an independent development and humanitarian organisation, we work alongside children, young people, our supporters and partners to tackle the root causes of the challenges facing girls and all vulnerable children. We support children's rights from birth until they reach adulthood, and enable children to prepare for and respond to crises and adversity. We drive changes in practice and policy at local, national and global levels using our reach, experience and knowledge. For over 80 years we have been building powerful partnerships for children, and we are active in over 80 countries.

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