

Gender-Based Violence Information Management System

Analysis of an increase in GBV incidents against children

Quarter 3—2021

Background

Throughout 2021, the continued deterioration of Lebanon’s socioeconomic context combined with government stagnation have worsened the overall protection situation for Syrian refugees and refugees of other nationalities and deepened the vulnerability of the Lebanese host community. The ongoing crisis has had an acute impact on the most at-risk groups, including vulnerable children.

This gender-based violence information management system (GBVIMS) report¹ aims to analyze the increase in reports of GBV against children in Lebanon. Increasing poverty levels, barriers in access to education, rising child labor rates and growing family tensions are all considered risk factors for GBV against children. The analysis has been triangulated with other sources, protection monitoring reports, studies, surveys and assessments conducted in Lebanon such as VaSyR 2021 preliminary findings, the situational analysis of the child labor in Lebanon and UNICEF report on Understanding the root causes of violence against children.

Profile of children survivors seeking GBV services

Data from the third quarter of 2021 show that adults accounted for **87 percent** and children accounted for **13 percent of the GBV cases reported through the GBVIMS**. The percentage of adults remains high, similar to the previous quarters, while children made up an average of **9 percent** of survivors seeking GBV services in the first two quarters of 2021. According to field reports, South Lebanon recorded the highest proportion of children seeking services, at **29 percent**.

Most of the children who accessed GBV services were female (9 per cent, while boys were also affected with 10 percent). In terms of child sexual abuse, **18 percent of child sexual abuse cases on GBVIMS were reported by male children**. Risk of sexual violence for girls and boys might often be related to child labor. According to the preliminary findings of the 2021 “Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon” (VASyR)², **5 percent** of children (age 5 to 17) were engaged in child labor in 2021, compared to 4 percent in 2020. The rate of child labor increases as the child’s age increases, reaching **16 percent** for children at the age of 17. The same assessment revealed that boys accounting to **8 percent** are more likely to be engaged in child labor than girls, accounting to **2 percent**.

¹ The data quoted above are derived from only reported cases and do not represent the total incidences or prevalence of GBV in Lebanon. These statistical trends are generated exclusively by GBV service providers who use the GBVIMS for data collection in implementing GBV response activities across Lebanon, with the informed consent of survivors. Thirteen organizations contributed to the trends. These data should not be used for direct follow-up with survivors or additional case follow-up. This information is confidential and must not be shared outside your organization/agency. Should you like to use these data or access more information on the GBVIMS, please contact the Inter-Agency GBVIMS Coordinator, Lamis Delbani (aldelbani@unfpa.org).

² United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, United Nations Children’s Fund, World Food Programme (2021). “Preliminary Results of the Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees.” Accessed at: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/88960>



Additionally, data triangulated from a situational analysis of child labor in Lebanon show that **sexual exploitation and abuse** and the **worst forms of child labor**, including work in construction, drug trafficking, prostitution and other forms of potentially life-threatening labor are currently among the most commonly reported types of abuse faced by adolescent boys in Lebanon, cited by **6 percent** and **9 percent** of boys surveyed, respectively.

Most commonly reported types of GBV incidents against children

Forced marriage, psychological or emotional abuse and sexual assault were the most commonly reported types of GBV incidents against children in the third quarter of 2021, accounting for 30 percent, 23 percent and 21 percent of incidents, respectively.

Psychological or emotional abuse and forced marriage are often linked to incidents of intimate partner violence. The GBVIMS data show that **10 percent of cases of intimate partner violence are perpetrated against children**. Additionally, child marriage incidents accounted for 6 percent of the GBV cases reported in the third quarter of 2021, compared with an average of 5 percent in the first two quarters of the year. According to the preliminary findings of the 2021 “Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon” (VASyR),³ 20 percent of Syrian refugee girls and women ages 15–19 were married in 2021. The same assessment revealed that 46 percent of girls ages 15–24 do not attend school because they are married. After marrying, and due to the traditional gender and social norms imposed by the community, many girls are deprived of opportunities and services that are not directly linked to their spousal role, including education.

Partners noted that displaced families and families severely affected by the country’s compounding crises **may often resort to child marriage as a harmful coping mechanism to deal with economic pressure**. Furthermore, anecdotal evidence from GBV partners shows that due to the economic crisis and the lira’s depreciation against the US dollar, families and employers are recruiting Syrian girls instead of migrants for domestic work and paying them low salaries. As more Syrian children are engaging in domestic work, their risk of sexual exploitation or abuse increases, and this is in line with the field reports of increasing exploitative domestic servitude incidents against working girls whilst having no legal frameworks that can protect working girls against abusive or exploitative behaviors at the workplace.

According to the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) report “**Underneath the surface: Understanding the root causes of violence against children and women in Lebanon**”⁴, many participants in 100 focus group discussions held across Lebanon perceived child labor as a coping mechanism for poor living conditions and structural barriers faced by parents. Moreover, **structural barriers** referring to the quality of shelter and privacy issues resulting from the small size of housing, inaccessibility to health and social services, and the low employment prospects in addition to the **potential gains** of child marriage mainly financial support were found to be the **two most common drivers of child labor**.

³ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, United Nations Children’s Fund, World Food Programme (2021). “Preliminary Results of the Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees.” Accessed at: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/88960>

⁴ UNICEF, “Underneath the Surface.” Accessed at: <https://www.unicef.org/lebanon/reports/understanding-root-causes-violence-against-children-and-women-lebanon>



Perpetrators and places of incident

Similar to Quarter 2 of 2021, **intimate partners were the most common type of alleged perpetrator reported through the GBVIMS in the third quarter of 2021, accounting for 52 percent of cases. Family members other than spouses accounted for 11 percent of alleged perpetrators, and primary caregivers accounted for 9 percent.** These data indicate that home is not always a safe space for children, as partners or caregivers may be resorting to violence as a negative coping mechanism for relieving stress and dealing with their daily struggles.

GBVIMS data also show that most sexual assault cases happen at survivors' homes; this finding has particular implications for children, who may be rendered more vulnerable to GBV at home.

Recommendations

The Sexual- and Gender-Based Violence Task Force offers the following recommendations for safeguarding at-risk populations and responding to survivors' needs based on the data reported through the GBVIMS during Quarter 3 of 2021:

- Advocate for an increased presence of GBV actors in schools to raise awareness and disseminate information about GBV activities and services available for both girls and boys.
- Strengthen timely and safe referrals across sectors, and to the GBV sector in particular, through capacity building on GBV core concepts, including disclosures and safe and ethical referrals.
- Collaborate and promote joint initiatives among GBV actors, child protection actors and the Ministry of Social Affairs in working groups and coordination platforms to mitigate the risk of GBV, especially sexual abuse and exploitation, against children, including adolescent girls and boys.
- Support the implementation of the social behavior change through sensitizing communities and institutional actors on the importance of education for boys and girls.
- Strengthen programming focused on adolescent girls that includes focused, recreational and life skills activities, and work on messaging that shows the importance of education for girls after two years of remote learning. Strengthen programs targeting children younger than 11, including psychosocial support and case management programs.
- Support capacity building efforts for child protection and GBV actors in terms of service provision for children, including for children (boys and girls) survivors of sexual abuse.
- Promote joint activities between child protection and GBV actors to enhance the case management services for children survivors, support caregivers and promote positive parenting.
- Ensure the provision of emergency and recurrent cash assistance for GBV survivors and at-risk individuals as a risk mitigation and preventive measure.
- Raise awareness about GBV to service providers, especially those in direct contact with women and girls such as forensic doctors, nurses, CMR service providers.
- Ensure that GBV is properly mainstreamed in child labor programs, through sensitization on GBV in focused PSS activities and the integration of CMR services within the case management service.
- Ensure further gender sensitive analysis of barriers and challenges children face in accessing support services.