



Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) Inter-Agency Situation Update Current Operational Environment in Lebanon (January 2022)

In 2022, LCRP partners continue to work together to monitor and analyse the impact of the current situation on all populations as well as the overall operational environment in Lebanon. This Situation Update consolidates this analysis and is used by LCRP partners at national and field level to adapt existing interventions based on needs and to put in place sector-specific mitigation and preparedness measures.

INCREASING VULNERABILITIES ACROSS POPULATIONS

Poverty levels have continued to rise since 2019. Major concerns in 2021 include:



9 out of 10

Syrian refugee households were living in extreme poverty (below the Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket [SMEB]).¹



More than half

the Lebanese population was living below the poverty line.²



87%

of Palestinian refugees from Syria were living below the poverty line³



Almost three quarters (73%)

of Palestine refugees in Lebanon were living in poverty.⁴

The effects of the political, economic and public health crises facing Lebanon and the ongoing impact of the Syria crisis have increased the vulnerability of refugee and host populations supported under the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP). People are falling deeper into poverty due to currency depreciation, high inflation, rising prices and loss of income. The COVID-19 outbreak has exacerbated the situation by reducing vulnerable populations' access to food, livelihood opportunities and basic services. In 2021, gaps in supply chains (including fuel and electricity) continued to impact the operational environment for LCRP partners while they simultaneously faced an increase in pressure from local authorities and communities to provide assistance amid reduced state service provision and escalating needs.

The cost of the revised food Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB) increased by 19 percent between November and December 2021, reaching LBP 2,920,981 per household. The price of the non-food SMEB⁵ rose 12 percent, reaching LBP 1,271,439 per household (Total Non-Food SMEB in DEC was LBP 2,362,576). The total SMEB cost has increased 230 percent since January 2021⁶, and is now equivalent to 921 percent of the average monthly income of a Syrian refugee family.⁷ Nearly all Syrian households are living below the poverty line, with 88 percent now living in extreme poverty (or below the SMEB) and 91 percent living below the minimum expenditure basket (MEB).⁸

The decline in employment opportunities and decrease in incomes, coupled with soaring prices have made the purchase of staple food and other basic goods unaffordable. This has pushed 34 percent of the Lebanese population and 33 percent of refugees of other nationalities into food insecurity.⁹



Lebanese man selling small goods on a street in Al Tall, Tripoli. UNDP 2021.

Employment that pays enough to cover basic necessities is difficult to find and maintain. The majority of Lebanese and Syrian households interviewed in Wave XII of the UNDP-ARK Regular Perception Surveys on Social Tensions (December 2021) reported a negative impact of the recent situation (including economic deterioration and lockdowns) on employment, with the most common impact reported as at least one household member 'losing a job or stopping work without pay' (20%), 'a reduction in salary' (33%) or 'a reduction in hours' (47%).

¹ UNHCR, WFP and UNICEF (2021). *Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (VASyR) 2021*. Accessed from: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/90589>.

² World Bank, UNHCR WFP and Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement (2021). *Update: 2021 Compounding Misfortunes*. Access from: <https://www.jointdatacenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/2021-Update-Compounding-Misfortunes.pdf>.

³ UNRWA (2021). *Crisis Monitoring Report*.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ The revised SMEB food basket is based on a monthly ration per person of 7.02 kg of bread, 1.8 KG of pasta, 1.95 brown bulgur, 2.4 KG of rice, 2.1 KG of potatoes, 0.75 KG of lentils, 0.3 KG of white beans, 0.9 KG of chickpeas, 0.6 KG of powder milk, 0.51L of sunflower oil, 0.6 KG of sugar, 0.6 KG of tomato paste, 0.45 KG of eggs, 2.7 KG of cabbage, 1.5 KG of apples, 0.12 KG of salt, 0.12 KG of tea, 0.6 KG of carrots, and 0.45 KG of canned sardine.

⁶ LCRP National Basic Assistance Working Group, 27 January 2022.

⁷ According to the VASyR 2021 findings, the average income for a Syrian refugee household was LBP 517,564 per month.

⁸ <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000136288/download/>

⁹ LCRP Food Security & Agriculture Sector (2022). *LCRP Sector Operational Response Plan 2022 – Situation Analysis*.

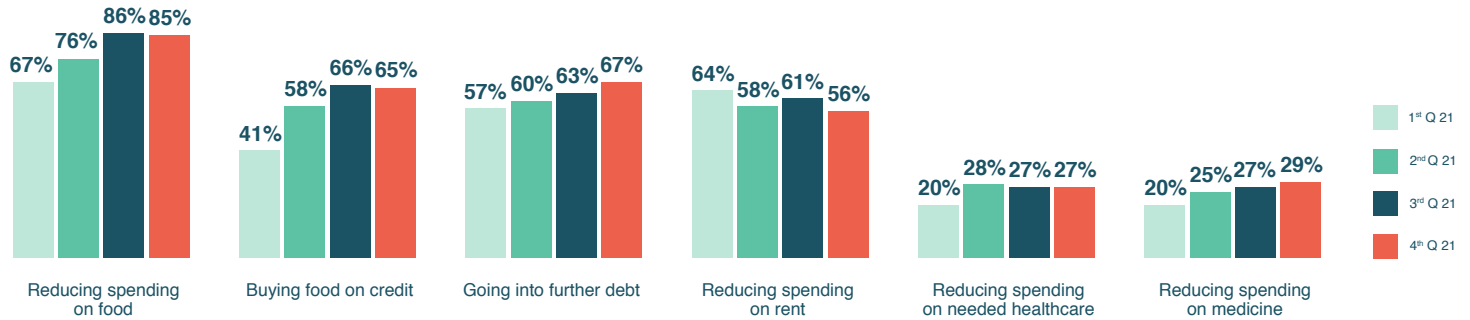


Syrian refugees are increasingly reporting facing challenges buying food and having to reduce their food spending to cope with job losses and declining income. Nearly every Syrian refugee in Lebanon now faces some form of food insecurity, which is exacerbated by a lack of electricity with households struggling to adapt to a lack of refrigeration.¹⁰

Economic vulnerability has a wide range of impacts, including on legal status of refugees which is in turn inhibiting freedom of movement and

access to justice: only 15 percent of Syrian refugee families report to have all their members aged 15 years and older hold legal residency permits during the fourth quarter of 2021 by the end of December 2021¹¹. There is a link between increased economic vulnerability and lack of residency. For example, 84 percent of persons who were unemployed lacked legal residency.¹² Households in which some members lacked legal residency were more likely to report reduced spending on food, to buy food on credit and to enter into debt.

Most widely resorted to coping strategies



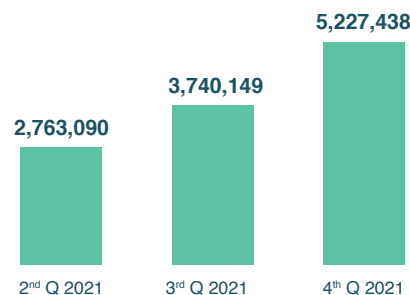
UNHCR Protection Monitoring Findings confirm the increasing debt among Syrian refugee households. In Q4 nearly all refugee households (91%) reported being in debt, with 64 percent reporting having to buy food on credit and 67 percent took on debt to pay for basic necessities. Average household debt grew 40 percent between Q3 and Q4 in 2021, from 3,740,149 LBP to 5,227,438 LBP per household.¹³ So far refugees have been able to avoid extreme hunger and homelessness due to increased assistance from the humanitarian actors and through borrowing. However, with over half (54%) of all respondents reporting losing work and pay in Q4, refugees' ability to repay existing debt is diminishing, and further ability for refugees to borrow will likely decrease in the near future, with an expected aggravated impact in terms of impeded access to food and other basic needs.¹⁴

Among vulnerable Lebanese households, a phone survey conducted by WFP and the World Bank found that more than 60 percent of households were resorting to crisis coping strategies, including reducing expenditure on health and education, withdrawing children from school and selling productive assets.¹⁵

Between August and September 2021, a computer-based Telephone Interview Survey was conducted targeting 1,050 farmers households in 7 Governorates of Lebanon on the impact of the different shocks Lebanon is facing on their livelihoods and food security. While 92 percent of HHs reported experiencing a shock, high fuel and food prices were cited by 84 percent of households, 62 percent of households reported a decline in their main income source and 23 percent reported prevalence of recent moderate or severe food insecurity based on the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES).¹⁶

Maternal, infant and young child feeding and nutrition have also been negatively impacted.¹⁷ Preliminary findings from the 2021 National Nutrition 'SMART' Survey indicate that an estimated 800,000 children are not consuming minimum acceptable diets. Findings also indicate that 1 out of 4 (25.8 percent) Syrian refugee children living in tented settlements have stunting, up from 8.9 percent total stunting in January 2013, which points to an increase in chronic malnutrition among Syrian refugees in these settings.¹⁸

Average household debt (LBP)



¹⁰ UNHCR (2021). UNHCR Protection Monitoring Report – 4th Quarter 2021. Accessed via: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/90852>

¹¹ Ibid

¹² UNHCR, WFP and UNICEF (2021). VASyR 2021.

¹³ UNHCR (2021). UNHCR Protection Monitoring Report – 4th Quarter 2021.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ WFP and World Bank (2021). Lebanon m-VAM Vulnerability and Food Security Assessment, March-April 2021.

¹⁶ Data in Emergencies Monitoring. FAO, 2021. <https://data-in-emergencies.fao.org/>

¹⁷ According to the World Health Organisation, malnutrition refers to deficiencies or excesses in nutrient intake, imbalance of essential nutrients or impaired nutrient utilisation. The double burden of malnutrition consists of both undernutrition and overweight and obesity, as well as diet-related noncommunicable diseases. Undernutrition manifests in four broad forms: wasting, stunting, underweight and micronutrient deficiencies.

¹⁸ Ministry of Public Health and Lebanon Nutrition Sector (2021). National Nutrition SMART Survey Report – Preliminary Results, August-September 2021.



Children experiencing increased violence

A UNICEF study *Violent Beginnings: Children growing up in Lebanon's crisis* published in December 2021 found that approximately 1.8 million children are now assessed to be experiencing multidimensional poverty, up from around 900,000 in 2019. These children are living in households that are more likely to resort to measures like child labour or child marriage to help make ends meet. The number of cases of child abuse and exploitation handled by UNICEF and partners shot up by almost half (44 percent) between October 2020 and October 2021, from 3,913 to 5,621 cases. More than half (53%) of respondents to a UNICEF poll of partner organisations in September 2021 noted child labour as their number one protection concern, up from 41 percent in the three months previously.

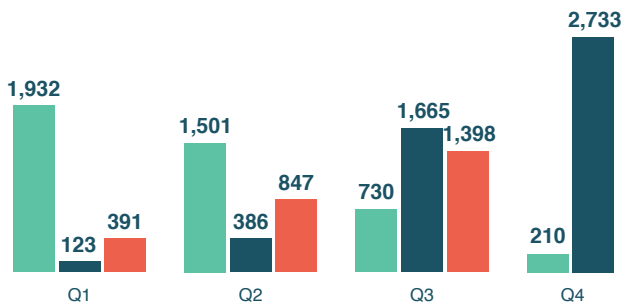


A Syrian woman and her children living in an informal settlement in Lebanon. UNHCR 2021.

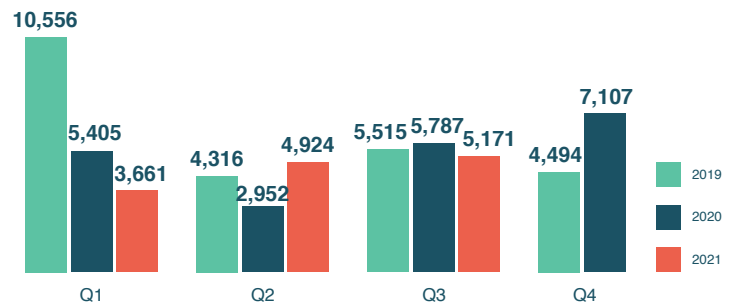
EVICIONS

Eviction are on the rise, in particular for displaced Syrians living in informal settlements and residential areas, leaving many with eviction notices due to their inability to pay rent (since March 2020). Since mid-year 2021, partners have raised concerns over increased eviction threats, eviction notices and pending evictions which could lead to 'mass' or collective evictions. By the end of 2021, 12,231 people were under threat of collection eviction.¹⁹ Some five percent of Syrian refugee households reported having been living under a collective eviction notice.²⁰ Among households who were evicted, 72 percent reported that their inability to pay rent was the primary reason for their eviction (down from 86 percent in 2020).²¹

No. of refugees evicted through collective evictions

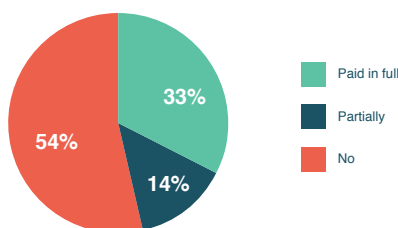


No. of refugees affected by collective eviction notices



With increasing threats of eviction, some families are unable to prioritize rent amid price rises, hyperinflation and allocating their limited financial resources for food and healthcare, which has led to an increase in debt. In addition, key informants have revealed that some landlords are increasing rent due to rumours of refugees receiving high rates of assistance or myths related to US dollar disbursements, which further reduces the capacity of refugees to cover their rent.²²

Percentage of respondents able to make their last rental payment



Another indicator of the housing insecurity situation is refugees' inability to pay rent. Only one third (33%) of refugee respondents were able to make their last rental payment, while over half (54%) did not pay at all and 14 percent made only a partial payment. Refugees who were not able to make their last rental payment were most commonly four months or less behind on their rent; however, 11 percent of households owed more than four months of rent.²³

¹⁹ UNHCR (2021). *Collective Evictions Dashboard – 3rd Quarter 2021*.

²⁰ UNHCR, WFP and UNICEF (2021). *VASyR 2021*.

²¹ UNHCR, WFP and UNICEF (2021). *VASyR 2021*.

²² UNHCR, WFP and UNICEF (2021). *VASyR 2021*.

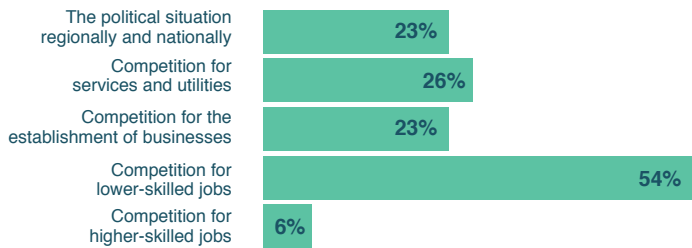
²³ UNHCR (2021). *Protection Monitoring Report – 4th Quarter 2021*.



INCREASING TENSIONS AND COMMUNITY INSECURITY

Inter-communal tensions in Lebanon continued along a negative trajectory during 2021. In December 2021, through the regular UNDP-ARK perception survey, 39 percent of Lebanese and Syrian respondents reported that they perceived relations as negative, an increase from 24 percent in January 2021 and the highest proportion since the monitoring began in 2017. The main cause of inter-communal tensions remains economic vulnerability in a context where people's perception of others receiving more support than them is high, where one-fifth of the population have at least one individual in their household who has lost his or her source of income due to the crisis.²⁴

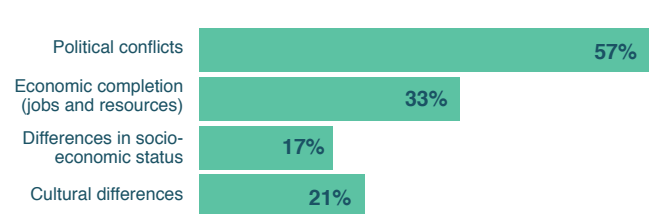
Main drivers of inter-communal tensions



Intra-communal relations are also at an all-time low, with 51 percent of Lebanese respondents now describing relations between Lebanese communities as negative (as compared to three percent in 2018). The main drivers of intra-Lebanese tensions are political differences and socio-economic status.

Since 2021, incidents such as clashes, violence, theft and vigilantism are increasingly reported. Over the summer, such incidents were mainly driven by tensions around access to electricity and fuel. Since January 2021, over 11,000 incidents have been reported across the country. These incidents are mainly related to community insecurity such as theft, or discontent with the political situation such as demonstrations. The majority of incidents reflect the increasingly dire situation in Lebanon. For instance, one trend is increased theft of items that can easily be resold. Despite the fact that such incidents have no correlation with the presence of non-Lebanese residents, there is a high perception that Syrians in

Main drivers of intra-Lebanese tensions



Lebanon are driving insecurity in their area. As of December 2021, those that agreed to the statement 'The presence of many Syrian refugees in this community has contributed to more incidents of crime and violence' were as high as 60% nationally. This was coupled with an all-time high of 72% of the population then agreeing that it is acceptable to impose discriminatory measures such as curfews on foreigners to help keep their area safe.

Monitoring and field reports show growing tensions and hate speech on social media. Anti-refugee sentiments are manifesting with inflammatory messages being shared on WhatsApp and Facebook. There is a significant risk that further deterioration of relations between host communities and refugees could result in a shrinking of the protection space for refugees with increased harassment and violence, including against women and girls.

ACCESS TO BASIC SERVICES

Access to basic services, such as electricity and healthcare, continue to remain key priorities for all populations. However, access to services is becoming increasingly challenging across populations.

Fuel and electricity

Lack of electricity was cited as the main challenge by 53 percent of respondents in the UNDP-ARK perception survey in December 2021, up from 12 percent in January, followed by unemployment and corruption. Only 9.6 percent of Lebanese households had access to an average of 24 hours of electricity per day, including hours from private generator subscriptions. When asked about the removal of subsidies on fuel, 90 percent of Lebanese surveyed said that they were impacted 'a lot', compared to 80.4 percent of Syrians. While it has been established that refugees residing in colder regions of Lebanon have been particularly hard hit by the removal of subsidies on fuel used for heating, the greater rate of concern amongst Lebanese respondents was most likely due to higher likelihood of car ownership.



A Syrian man uses a small stove to prepare his meal and warm himself during winter in Lebanon. UNHCR 2021

Percentage of respondents who are worried about access to basic services



²⁴UNDP-ARK (2021). Perception Survey Wave XII, December 2021.



Medicines and healthcare

Dissatisfaction with health services rose to exceed those observed in any previous wave of the UNDP-ARK perception survey, including at the height of the COVID-19 outbreak, with 65 percent of Lebanese and Syrian respondents assessing the current quality of health services as 'poor' or worse. Some 58 percent of respondents said that they were worried about being able to access medical care or medication.²⁵ Qualitative data reveals that transportation costs is one of the main barriers to access healthcare. Government subsidies on medicines were among the last to be phased out in 2021. Subsidies on some medical devices and medicines remain; however, the anticipated withdrawal of subsidies contributed to widespread hoarding and shortages in the latter half of 2021.

The health sector has found that medicine shortages are reported for those needed to treat emergencies, infections and acute and chronic diseases (e.g., antibiotics, antiaggregant, antidiabetic drugs), including for children (e.g., antipyretics, antibiotics and vaccines). The VASyR found that 59 percent of Syrian households reported having a member that required medications in the last 3 months, with 57 percent of these households unable to find all the drugs they needed.²⁶

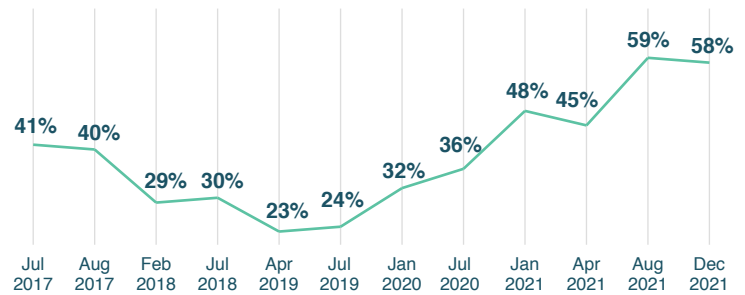
Education

Public school teachers' salaries have lost approximately 90 percent of their value since 2019. eTeachers' strikes continued until February 2022 and contributed to the disruption of learning for the most vulnerable children across populations for the third scholastic year in a row. According to 2020/21 enrolment figures, at least 440,000 non-Lebanese boys and girls between 3 and 18 years of age were out of school. The 2021 VASyR found that among Syrian refugees, the rates of participation in organised learning for children aged 3-5 years and attendance rates in primary schools for children aged 6-14 years decreased by five percent and 14 percent respectively, compared to 2020.²⁷

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) services

National fuel shortages also affected water supply systems across Lebanon in 2021. Wastewater treatment plants are only partially operational due to increased costs attributed to currency devaluation and critical public funding gaps.²⁸ Water Establishments are also facing operational challenges with 50 percent facing severe financial deficits and reportedly unable to operate.²⁹ This has led to increased risk of waterborne illness and service gaps across populations. It is estimated that some 1.9 million people living across 480 cadastres are without access to wastewater treatment services.³⁰ In August at the peak of the energy crisis, 23 percent of respondents to WASH partners rated their access to clean water as 'very poor', up from five percent in April, and 62 percent rated the quality of water services as 'poor' or worse³¹ Palestinian refugees from Syria and Palestine refugees in Lebanon who live in camps and gatherings are also struggling

Concerns reported regarding access to medical care or medication since July 2017



to access clean water, with much of the camp population in coastal areas relying on water with high salinity and poor infrastructures.³²

Operational challenges for LCRP partners

Persistent supply gaps continue to affect partners in all sectors, with a visible effect on health, water, shelter (for emergency response) and protection sectors (including SGBV and child protection), including for critical and lifesaving interventions. In 2021, LCRP partners continued to adapt mitigation measures in line with the **LCRP Business Continuity Plan** to prioritize essential interventions, including: reducing movements and the number of vehicles in use; conducting joint missions and field visits; and making bilateral agreements with fuel stations. Across the response, many partners shifted back to working-from-home modalities to ensure remote follow up and continuity of beneficiary support; however, this came with many challenges related to internet and power supply access and digital literacy issues among beneficiaries. Due to frequent electricity cuts, service providers had immense difficulties in reaching out to persons of concern despite an increase in the number of phone call identifications. This correlates to the need to further support frontline workers with increased communication allowances.³³

IMPACT ON WOMEN AND GIRLS

Women and girls are disproportionately affected by the ongoing multiple crises, including through restricted access to services, such as health services and access to employment opportunities. Evidence suggests that women are deprioritising their healthcare needs due to an inability to pay for healthcare as well as transportation to reach services. As in previous years, rates of legal residency were 4 per cent lower for women than for men. Women are also more likely to borrow food from family and friends and to have school-aged children involved in child labour. The average per capita income of female-headed households is far lower than male-headed households. Unemployment among women (42%) is almost double compared to men (38%). Women and girls are cutting their expenditure on menstrual hygiene products due to the sharp increase in the price of those product and the limited economic resources.³⁴

²⁵ UNDP and ARK (2021). UNDP-ARK Survey Wave XII, December 2021.

²⁶ UNHCR, WFP and UNICEF (2021). VASyR 2021.

²⁷ UNHCR, WFP and UNICEF (2021). VASyR 2021.

²⁸ LCRP Water Sector (2021). Q3 Dashboard.

²⁹ MOEW/UNICEF (2021). Water Establishments Financial Report.

³⁰ LCRP Water Sector (2022). LCRP Sector Operational Response Plan 2022 – Situation Analysis.

³¹ Bonek K. and Wehbe M. (2021). WASH Assessment Platform Update: Water Price Monitoring.

³² LCRP Water Sector (2022). LCRP Sector Operational Response Plan 2022 – Situation Analysis.

³³ Danish Refugee Council (2021). Refugee Information Management System (RIMS) Report: The impact of the fuel crisis in Lebanon on service provision and accountability towards affected communities. Accessed from: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/RIMS%20July%20report_Fuel%20crisis%5B2%5D.pdf

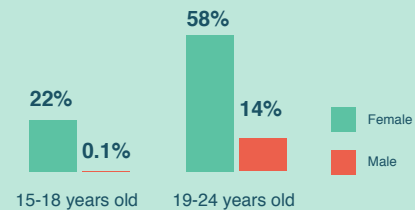
³⁴ UNHCR, WFP, UNICEF and UN Women (2021). VASyR 2021 - Gender Analysis.



Young women not in education, employment or training (NEET)

According to the VASyR, 80 per cent of young women aged 15-24 years were not in education, employment or training (NEET), compared to 52 per cent of young men. The main reason reported for girls for not attending school was marriage.

Not attending school because of marriage



Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is increasing, with women disproportionately affected in particular by intimate partner violence. According to the SGBV Taskforce partners' monitoring, women and girls also face additional risks when finding employment (reporting increasing incidence of sexual exploitation by employers) and renting a shelter (sexual exploitation by landlords).³⁵ In addition, online harassment and hate speech targeting women is reported within the broader context of increasing tensions.

According to LCRP partners, the lack of access to fuel has a negative impact on safe access to cash and in-kind assistance for women, persons with disabilities and elderly people. For example,

increased transportation costs and cash machines frequently out of order or working for only half a day are pushing individuals, often the most vulnerable, to delegate the withdrawal to 'intermediaries'. The involvement of 'intermediaries' often carries additional costs, reduces the total amount of cash assistance available to them each month and might expose them to forms of exploitation. The increased conditions set by third party financial service providers involve having valid residencies or personal documents. Women with legal residency rates declined from 18% in 2020 to 14% in 2021. This is another factor forcing women to assign proxies to get their payments, exposing them to exploitation and increasing their vulnerability.

CRITICAL FUNDING GAPS

- For the Health Sector, only 158 out of the 267 primary healthcare centers are supported and further cuts in funding from 38 centers are expected in the forthcoming months. As a result, there is a dire need to maintain and expand support for the comprehensive package of care in the primary healthcare centers.
- USD 91 M is needed to support 96,480 vulnerable Lebanese and displaced Syrians in accessing temporary employment through labor intensive programmes targeting public, productive and environmental assets.
- Despite the growing needs, the Food Security & Agriculture Sector was under-funded during 2021, receiving less than one-third of the partners' appeal of USD 826 M and presenting more than 30 percent decrease in comparison to the funds received in 2020 (USD 381 M). Funds received are still unequally distributed among the sector's outcomes, with around 78 percent of the funds received in 2021 allocated to cash-based and food vouchers support to beneficiaries versus 22 percent for all remaining activities including agricultural livelihoods.
- Under the Social Stability sector, there remains a large funding gap for support to municipalities as only USD 174,000 out of the USD 85,917,203 target has been invested in 2022 through basic services projects.
- The Shelter Sector remains chronically underfunded having

received only 37%, 33 M USD out of the 88 M USD appeal in 2021. As a result, less than half of the refugees in need received critical and life-saving support and even more concerning only 13% of vulnerable Lebanese, less than 1% of Palestinian refugees from Syria, and 2% of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon benefitted from shelter assistance. The rehabilitation of substandard shelters units in exchange for rent reduction, freeze or suspension requires USD 94 M and is a key priority for the sector that remains largely unfunded. In addition, USD 10.5 M USD is required for Cash for Rent, noting that the Shelter Sector expects an increase in the need due to the deteriorating socio-economic conditions.

- The Basic Assistance sector currently reaches just 50% of the 121,875 targeted Lebanese households with regular assistance given available funding, while this is expected to increase through the scale-up of the National Poverty Targeting Program by mid-year. USD 17.1 M is needed to continue live saving assistance to 30,000 Palestinian Refugees from Syria and 129,000 Palestine Refugees beyond June. Additionally, a funding gap persists for 90,000 extremely vulnerable Syrian households in need of regular multipurpose cash assistance to meet their basic survival needs.

³⁵Lebanon Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) Task Force (2021). Update from the Gender Based Violence Information Management System, December 2021.