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Barriers to Education for Syrian Refugee Children in Lebanon

More than half of the nearly 500,000 school-age Syrian children registered in Lebanon are not enrolled in formal education. Although Lebanon, which is hosting 1.1 million registered Syrian refugees, has allowed Syrian children to enroll for free in public schools, limited resources and Lebanese policies on residency and work for Syrians are keeping children out of the classroom.

Of the Syrian refugees registered with the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) in Lebanon, nearly 500,000 are between the ages of 3 and 18, considered school-aged by Lebanon's Education Ministry. But only 158,000 non-Lebanese children, the vast majority Syrian, enrolled in public schools for the 2015-16 school year, and an additional 87,000 non-Lebanese children enrolled in private and semi-private schools, according to the ministry. An unknown number of out-of-school children are among the estimated 400,000 Syrians in Lebanon not registered with UNHCR, which ceased registration of Syrian refugees in May 2015 at the instruction of the Lebanese government.

I started working when I arrived, in cement and construction. The work here is really hard. I started when I was 13. I've been here five years and have lost five years of my life. Amin, 18, North Lebanon

Baraa, 10, originally from Ghouta, Syria, leaves for school from her informal refugee camp in Mount Lebanon. 2016 Human Rights Watch

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We left our country and our homes and now they don't even have an education or a future.

Jawaher, North Lebanon, December 1, 2015

My children should learn to write their names. It's over for us, should it be over for our children as well?

Rana, Mount Lebanon, November 20, 2015

In Lebanon a country of around 4.5 million citizens almost one in four people today is a refugee. Since the start of the Syria conflict in 2011, 1.1 million Syrians have registered

with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); the Lebanese Government puts the total number at 1.5 million.

Lebanons Ministry of Education and Higher Education has taken several positive steps to enroll Syrian children in formal education. But the system has struggled to keep pace. Five years after the start of the conflict, more than 250,000 children—approximately half of the nearly 500,000 school-aged Syrian children registered in Lebanon—are out of school. Some have never stepped inside a classroom. In far too many cases, as one Syrian woman said, Our children are growing up without an education.

Older children are particularly affected: of the 82,744 registered Syrian refugees aged 15-18 as of August 2015, less than 3 percent enrolled in public secondary schools during the 2015-2016 school year.

This report finds that it is unlikely that Syrian children will be able to realize their right to an education unless Lebanon undertakes reforms that go beyond the framework of its current education policies and receives increased donor funding targeted at improving access to school.

The high number of refugee children out of school is an immediate crisis. Education is a fundamental right. Under international law, all children in Lebanon—including Syrian refugees—have a legal right to free and compulsory primary education, and access to secondary education without discrimination. Education is also crucial to protecting children in situations of displacement, which can last an entire childhood. The longer children remain out of school, the less likely they are to finish their education.

Syrian refugees in Lebanon are taking extraordinary measures to ensure that their children get an education. Parents have moved closer to schools that might let their children enroll and slid into debt to pay for documents, school materials, and transportation. One refugee who was unable to enroll her children in Lebanon temporarily took them back to Syria to do so. It was an easy decision, she said. A 9-year-old girl who was unable to enroll in school after arriving in Lebanon set up a small blackboard under a tree and started teaching the younger children in her refugee camp what she remembered from her first grade class in Syria.

Lost revenue due to the war in Syria and the burden of hosting refugees have cost Lebanon an estimated US\$13.1 billion, and the refugee influx has strained public services and infrastructure, including health, energy, water, waste collection, and education. International donor aid has been insufficient: the \$1.87 billion Lebanon Crisis Response Plan, designed to address the countrys refugee crisis, was only 62.8 percent funded in 2015.

Most refugees rely on Lebanons public education system, which was already weak before the Syria crisis. Only 30 percent of Lebanese students went to public schools, which suffered high rates of grade repetition and dropouts. The influx of Syrian refugees has further strained public schools, with the number of school-aged Syrian refugees far exceeding the 249,494 Lebanese children enrolled in public schools in 2015-2016.

Lebanon has taken important steps to include Syrian children in the public education system. Authorities have allowed refugees to enroll in school without providing proof of legal residency, waived school enrollment fees, and opened up afternoon second shift classes in 238 public schools to provide Syrians with formal education.

In 2014, Lebanon adopted the Reaching All Children with Education (RACE) policy, which has helped Lebanon increase the number of Syrian children enrolled in public schools to 158,321 by the end of the 2015-2016 school year. In 2016, Lebanon adopted a five-year RACE II plan with the goal of enrolling 440,000 Syrian children in formal education by the 2020-2021 school year.

Yet despite these efforts, too many Syrian children are still out of school. Harsh regulations that prevent most refugees from maintaining legal residency or working are undermining Lebanons generous school enrollment policies. Many families are impoverished and fear arrest if caught working or trying to find work. Often, they cannot afford school-related costs like transportation and school supplies, or they rely on their children to work instead of attending school.

Other factors that deter Syrians from enrolling and lead to dropouts include individual school directors imposing additional enrollment requirements; bullying and harassment by other students; safety concerns; corporal punishment; lack of access to sanitation facilities; and classes taught in unfamiliar languages, such as English and French, with insufficient language support. Girls, older children, and children with disabilities face particular barriers to enrolling.

Although the number of classroom spaces has increased, there are still not enough for Syrian refugees in public schools. There were 200,000 places available for Syrians in public schools for the 2015-2016 school year—less than half needed for the 495,910 school-age Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR at the beginning of the year. Yet not all of those spaces were filled because schools with available spaces are not necessarily located in the areas of need, and the barriers identified above prevent children from attending even where spaces exist.

It is in the interest of Lebanon and the international community to avoid a situation in which more than 250,000 Syrian children are denied an education and left less able to coexist with their Lebanese hosts, contribute to Lebanons economy, or play a positive role in the eventual reconstruction of Syria.

Lebanon needs much more international financial support to respond to the educational needs of Syrian refugees, including expanding and rehabilitating public schools, investing in quality education, fully including children with disabilities, training and hiring more teachers, and subsidizing school transportation.

But this alone will not necessarily mitigate the obstacles preventing Syrian children from going to school. Lebanon must also change policies that have limited childrens access to education, and ensure that refugee children can enroll in primary school, continue through secondary school, and have a realistic option of attending higher education or vocational training and earning a living. It should also ensure that its generous enrollment policy is properly implemented and that there is accountability for corporal punishment. The Education Ministry should support non-formal education, at least as a temporary measure until formal education is accessible to all children in the country, and ensure that it is of a basic quality and that students have a certified pathway to formal education.

The government should allow Syrians to maintain legal status by revising its residency requirements and allowing those whose status has expired to regularize. It should also allow Syrians access to the labor market, including by letting qualified Syrian teachers educate refugee children.

Research for this report was conducted in November and December 2015 and February 2016. Human Rights Watch conducted interviews with 156 refugees and families and obtained information on the conditions of 516 refugees between the ages of 3-18. Not all members of each household were present during each interview. The interviewed families were identified through local and international nongovernmental organization (NGO) referrals and contacts within the Syrian refugee community in each area. Human Rights Watch also conducted 45 interviews with local and international humanitarian organizations, school teachers and directors, non-formal education providers, community leaders, and government officials.

Interviews and field investigations took place in Beirut, Mount Lebanon, the Bekaa Valley, Tripoli, and Akkar. We spent multiple days in each governorate, and conducted interviews in multiple camps or locations within each area. Human Rights Watch interviewed families living in both urban and rural areas, as well as families living in both informal tented settlements and rented apartments. The interviewed families originated from Aleppo, Damascus, Daraa, Deir al-Zour, Hama, Hasaka, Homs, Idlib, Raqqa, and Quneitra. We have omitted the family names of all interviewees to protect their anonymity. Additionally, we have used pseudonyms when requested in order to protect vulnerable refugees, many of whom do not have valid legal status in Lebanon. All instances where pseudonyms have been used are referenced in the footnotes. Pseudonyms may not match the religion or sect of the interviewee.

The majority of interviews took place in private homes and tents. Human Rights Watch conducted four interviews at refugee centers run by humanitarian organizations and five interviews by phone. Human Rights Watch was careful to conduct all interviews in safe and private places. All interviews were conducted in Arabic with the assistance of an interpreter.

Human Rights Watch informed all interviewees of the nature and purpose of our research, and our intentions to publish a report with the information gathered. We informed each potential interviewee that they were under no obligation to speak with us, that Human Rights Watch does not provide direct humanitarian services, and that they could stop speaking with us or decline to answer any question with no adverse consequences. We obtained oral consent for each interview and took care to avoid retraumatizing interviewees. Participants did not receive material compensation for speaking with Human Rights Watch.

Interviewees and informal tented settlements were identified with the help of local and international NGOs and refugee volunteers. Since many refugees with whom we spoke were known to humanitarian agencies, many were receiving information and assistance and may not be a representative sample of the refugee population in Lebanon.

We did not undertake surveys or a statistical study, but instead base our findings on extensive interviews supplemented by our analysis of a wide range of published and unpublished materials.

Human Rights Watch met with representatives of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, the Ministry of Interior, and the General Directorate of General Security. We also met with representatives of the United Nations Childrens Fund, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, as well as local and international humanitarian organizations including the International Rescue Committee, Save the Children, the Danish Refugee Council, the Lebanon Humanitarian INGO Forum, Handicap International, Inclusion International, the Youth Association of the Blind, Ana

Aqra, Caritas, and Jusoor.

Human Rights Watch has withheld identification of organizations that requested anonymity in order not to jeopardize their ongoing humanitarian operations.

In this report, child refers to anyone under the age of 18, in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.^[11] The word camp refers to informal tented settlements, which are not officially recognized refugee camps. The report uses an exchange rate of 1,500 Lebanese pound (LBP) to the US dollar.

There are 1.1 million Syrian refugees registered with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Lebanon, a country of an estimated 4.5 million citizens.^[2] Lebanon has not opened formal camps for Syrians, so refugees must find and often pay for shelter, either in rented apartments or in one of the more than 1,900 informal settlements across the country.^[3] Most Syrian refugees in Lebanon are concentrated in the Bekaa Valley, the north, and in the Mount Lebanon region surrounding Beirut, often in areas where poverty was already prevalent and infrastructure inadequate.^[4]

From the beginning of the armed conflict in Syria in 2011 until January 2015, Lebanon maintained a largely open-door policy toward Syrian refugees. On October 23, 2014, the Lebanese cabinet adopted a policy paper that aimed to halt the influx of Syrian refugees into Lebanon and reduce the number of refugees in the country.^[5] The Interior Ministry issued a decree requiring entry permits for all Syrians entering Lebanon, which General Security, the agency that oversees the entry and exit of foreigners into the country, started implementing on January 5, 2015.^[6]

Lebanon also imposed stringent new residency requirements in January 2015 (see section II), which many refugees cannot meet. Humanitarian agencies estimate that more than two-thirds of refugees now lack legal residency.^[7] UNHCR ceased registering Syrian refugees on May 6, 2015 at the direction of the Lebanese government.^[8]

In planning documents and appeals for international financial support, the Lebanese government has estimated that there are 1.5 million Syrians in the country, without providing further information as to the legal status of the 400,000 Syrians not registered as refugees.^[9] This number may include Syrians who have chosen not to register, those unable to register since Lebanon directed UNHCR to stop registration, and those living and working in Lebanon prior to the Syria conflict.^[10]

Lebanon is not a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol. Consequently, although it offers Syrians temporary protection, it does not recognize the refugee status of individuals who qualify for it under international law. Lebanon instead refers to individuals who fled from Syria to Lebanon after March 2011 as displaced.^[11]

However, it is still bound by customary international law on the treatment of refugees, as well as international human rights law including the principle of non-refoulement, which prohibits the return of individuals to a country where they face a serious threat of persecution or harm.

The crisis in Syria and the arrival of refugees has significantly affected Lebanon's economy and strained public services in the country. Lost revenue due to the war in Syria and the burden of hosting refugees have cost Lebanon \$13.1 billion, Lebanese officials said in February 2016.^[12] The crisis has also strained already stretched public services including education, health, energy, water, waste collection, and the country's infrastructure.

Although Lebanon has received \$3.5 billion in international donor support since 2012 to assist Syrian refugees, funding has fallen short of assessed needs. In 2015, donors only funded 62.8 percent of the \$1.87 billion Lebanon Crisis Response Plan although the education appeal sector was fully funded.^[13]

In addition to the Syrian refugee population, an estimated 260-280,000 Palestinian refugees lived in Lebanon in 2010, prior to the conflict in Syria.^[14] A further 44,227 Palestinian refugees from Syria have fled to Lebanon since the beginning of the conflict there in 2011.^[15] As of 2015, approximately 64 percent of school-aged Palestinians from Syria were enrolled in school.^[16]

As the crisis in Syria enters its sixth year, the situation of refugees in Lebanon is worsening. A UN vulnerability assessment in 2015 found that 70 percent of households were living below the Lebanese poverty line of \$3.84 per person per day up from 49 percent in 2014 and that 89 percent of households were in debt, averaging \$842.^[17]

Almost one in three households spent \$400 beyond their income each month, with a mean monthly household income of just \$165.^[18] Just 11 percent of households were considered food secure.^[19] Only 19 percent had permanent work in 2015 and a third of households had no member working in the 30 days preceding the survey.^[20] Refugees are coping by reducing expenditures on food, borrowing money, withdrawing children from school, and relying on their children to earn income for basic needs.^[21]

The education system in Lebanon is overseen by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education.^[22] Prior to the crisis in Syria, 91 percent of children of the relevant age in Lebanon were enrolled in primary education; 70 percent were enrolled in secondary education.^[23]

The Lebanese education system is divided into public, private, and free private schools. Public schools account for only 30 percent of students enrolled in the Lebanese education system, with most schools located in the 250 most impoverished areas in the country.^[24] In the 2015-2016 school year, 249,494 Lebanese children were enrolled in public education.^[25]

Many Lebanese students attend private schools and pay fees. In addition, free private schools, some of which are subsidized by the Lebanese government, are operated by organizations generally affiliated with particular religious groups.^[26] The UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) operates 68 schools for Palestinian refugees, which are also open to Palestinian refugees from Syria.^[27] Residential institutions, funded by the Ministry of Social Affairs, provide education primarily for children with disabilities, orphans, and children from low-income families.^[28]

The public education system in Lebanon is composed of three levels: primary (grades 1-6), intermediate (grades 7-9), and secondary (grades 10-12).^[29] Beginning in grade 7, main course subjects in public schools, such as math and science, are taught in either English or French.^[30] Students must take the state *Brevet* exam at the end of grade 9 in order to enter secondary school, which is divided into scientific, literary, and vocational tracks. School principals select each student's track based on their *Brevet* exam results. At the end of secondary school, students take the state Lebanese *Baccalaureate* exam.^[31]

Even before the refugee crisis, Lebanon had a weak public education system.^[32] The Education Ministry has attributed low enrollment in public schools to an achievement gap due to a shortage of qualified teaching and administrative staff, an absence of the infrastructure required for a suitable learning environment, and a lack of necessary laws and regulations.^[33] Public schools also have high rates of grade repetition and dropouts.^[34]

The Lebanese government has taken important steps to enroll Syrians in formal education. The Lebanon Crisis Response Plan recognizes that all children aged 3-18 have a right to and are eligible to access education, irrespective of their status.^[35]

Syrian refugee families often do not have the money to enroll their children in private schools; most Syrian children enrolled in formal education attend public schools.^[36]

The education system in Lebanon has struggled to keep pace with the growing number of Syrian refugees in the country.^[37] At the end of 2011, just 5,000 Syrian refugees were registered with UNHCR in Lebanon.^[38] By the beginning of the 2015-2016 school year, there were 495,910 registered Syrians aged 3-18, far more than the 249,494 Lebanese children enrolled in public schools that year.^[39] These figures may be an undercount, since they are based only on Syrians who are registered with UNHCR. They also do not capture the number of Syrians who were unable to enroll, have never gone to school in Lebanon, and are no longer of school age.

According to the Education Ministry, 26,829 non-Lebanese students enrolled in public basic and secondary education in 2011-2012.^[40] However, humanitarian agencies estimated that 70 percent of enrolled Syrian children dropped out by the end of the school year.^[41] In 2012, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education issued a memorandum instructing public schools to enroll Syrian refugees regardless of their residency status and to waive enrollment fees.^[42]

In 2012-2013, 51,522 non-Lebanese students enrolled in Lebanese public schools.^[43] However, an estimated 62 percent of primary-aged children and more than 98 percent of secondary-aged children remained out of school.^[44]

In order to accommodate a greater number of students, the Education Ministry opened afternoon second shifts for Syrians in public schools beginning in Aarsal during the 2012-2013 school year.^[45] In schools that operate two shifts, the first shift is generally open to Syrian students so long as there is space for them. The second shift starts between 2:00 and 2:30 p.m., and is for Syrian children only.^[46]

The government incrementally opened second shifts at 88 schools, or about seven percent of public schools in Lebanon, during the 2013-2014 academic year.^[47] According to the Education Ministry, 103,207 non-Lebanese children enrolled in public schools that year.^[48]

In June 2014, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education adopted the Reaching All Children with Education (RACE) policy with the goal of enrolling 470,000 Syrian refugees and vulnerable Lebanese children in formal and non-formal education by 2016.^[49]

The stated objective of the three-year policy was to ensure that vulnerable school-aged children (3-18 years), affected by the Syria crisis, are able to access quality formal and non-formal learning opportunities in safe and protective environments.^[50] The policy has three components: school rehabilitation and enrollment support, improving the quality of teaching and learning, and strengthening national education systems, policies, and monitoring.^[51] The policy aims to address the needs of vulnerable Lebanese children and Syrian refugees, and commits to including children with disabilities.^[52]

In September 2014, the Education Ministry announced spaces for 157,000 Syrian children in public schools: 100,000 in the first shift and 57,000 in the second.^[53] Under the plan, humanitarian agencies contributed \$363 for every Syrian student in the first shift and \$600 for every student in the second.^[54] However, second shift classes that year, opened in 144 schools, did not begin until January 2015.^[55] By the end of the 2014-2015 school year, 105,958 non-Lebanese children had enrolled in public formal education.^[56] The RACE policy also covered fees for 30,933 low-income Lebanese students that year.^[57] However, the 2015 Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, conducted in May and June 2015, found that 48 percent of Syrian refugees aged 6-14 and 95 percent of those aged 15-17 were not in school.^[58]

As of August 30, 2015, there were 495,910 registered Syrian refugees aged 3-18 in Lebanon.^[59] In September 2015, the Education Ministry announced plans to enroll 200,000 Syrian refugees in formal education by opening second shifts in 259 public schools across Lebanon.^[60] By the end of the year, 238 schools, almost 20 percent of public schools, opened second shifts.^[61]

In 2015, Syrians could again enroll for free and without legal residency.^[62] Those aged 13-18 who had finished grade 5 could opt for vocational classes at public technical schools.^[63] For the first time, RACE also covered public school enrollment fees for all 197,010 Lebanese students up to grade nine.^[64] 158,321 non-Lebanese children enrolled in Lebanese public schools during the 2015-2016 school year.^[65] The Education Ministry estimates that an additional 87,608 non-Lebanese children enrolled in private and semi-private schools that year.^[66]

The Lebanon Crisis Response Plan sets a target of enrolling 459,800 Syrian refugees in formal and non-formal education by the end of 2016.^[67] In a February 2016 fundraising appeal calling for \$350 million per year for education, Lebanon announced a more ambitious goal of enrolling all children aged 5-17 in formal and non-formal education by the end of the 2016-2017 school year and of providing early childhood education for all children 3-5 years old.^[68] In 2016, the Education Ministry started developing a five-year RACE II plan, with the goal of enrolling 440,000 Syrian children in formal education by the 2020-2021 school year.^[69]

Non-formal education (NFE) has been a significant part of the humanitarian response in Lebanon since the beginning of the Syria conflict, and is important for many Syrian families who are unable, or choose not, to send their children to public schools.

The non-formal programs that accept Syrian children in Lebanon range from unstructured learning in makeshift classrooms to full-time, non-formal schools run by Lebanese and international NGOs. However, the government does not regulate these schools, and they do not offer recognized diplomas. According to UN agencies, some programs and non-formal schools are not legal in Lebanon and are not recognized by the Ministry of Education.^[70]

In July 2015, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education introduced an accelerated learning pilot program that offered a condensed curriculum for students who had missed up to two years of schooling between grades 1 and 9, in which 5,500 students participated.^[71] In early 2016, it finalized a framework for non-formal education, clarifying its role regulating and standardizing the provision of non-formal education, and announcing plans for early childhood education, basic literacy and numeracy projects, retention support, and bridging programs for older children.^[72]

In January 2016, the Education Ministry rolled out an accelerated learning program for children aged 7-17 who have been out of school for two or more years, with capacity for 18,990 students in 57 schools.^[73] As of March 2016, 4,427 children were enrolled in the program across 32 schools.^[74]

Several factors deprive Syrian refugee children of their right to education in Lebanon by preventing or hindering enrollment, or causing enrolled students to drop out once registered. During the 2015-2016 school year, only 158,321 of the nearly 500,000 Syrian refugees aged 3-18 were enrolled in public formal education, while an additional 87,608 were enrolled in private or semi-private schools.^[75]

These factors include lack of local compliance in implementing the enrollment policy; limiting school ratios and minimums; insufficient support for refugee children adapting to the curriculum and new languages; lack of available space; family poverty pushing children to work instead of attending school; transportation costs; violence, bullying, and harassment; lack of a quality education; lack of access to sanitation facilities; and insufficient psychosocial support. Older children, girls, and children with disabilities face particular barriers to enrolling in school.^[76]

Many of these barriers were identified in a United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) assessment of the 2011-2012 school year. Years later, they continue to prevent Syrian children from accessing formal education in Lebanon.^[77]

Irregularities in the implementation of Lebanon's enrollment policy impede the ability of Syrian families to enroll their children in school.

According to enrollment guidelines, public schools in Lebanon should only ask Syrian refugees for an identification document (ID), two passport-sized photographs for each child, and school certificates for the prior two years.^[78] Refugees are not required to provide valid residency papers or pay school fees.^[79] However, Human Rights Watch found that individual school directors are asking refugees to provide a host of additional documents.

Of the 156 refugee families interviewed for this report who had tried to enroll their children in schools:

Although enrollment in public schools is free of charge for Syrian as well as Lebanese students under Lebanon's enrollment policy, five families said that public schools had also charged fees of up to \$80 for enrollment at the beginning of the 2015-2016 school year.^[80] A UN publication in November 2015 similarly found recurring issues related to school [access] revolve around registration fees, residency papers and vaccination certificates.^[81]

These additional enrollment requirements have been difficult or impossible for Syrians to meet. Obtaining documents such as health records and local attestations of residency entails additional costs for refugees.^[82] Requiring valid residency or UNHCR registration cards is particularly problematic, because most refugees now lack valid residency and an estimated 400,000 Syrians are not registered with UNHCR.^[83] When so many Syrians lack legal status, requiring residency documents can have a chilling effect on enrollment. Kheirieh, 30, tried to register her children in a formal school this year, but the school asked her for valid residency documents. I got scared, I didn't go back, she said.^[84]

Mohammad, who works in a non-formal school in Beirut, told Human Rights Watch:

Mohammad said he visited three nearby public schools after parents told him about the enrollment problems in fall 2015. Each school gave him different enrollment requirements, but all three asked for a valid residency document.^[86]

Huda, 26, who has lived in Beirut since 2014, said attempts to enroll her children in school in Bourj El Barajneh that year failed because of her expired residency. She tried again in 2015:

Parents complained that although the UN sent text messages saying that the school enrollment process would be simple and free, this was not the case. Joumana, 36, tried to enroll her children in school multiple times. She said:

Kawthar, 33, has been living in Lebanon since 2013 with her three school-aged children. Her two older children had attended school in Syria, though they missed a year there because of the war. She told us:

Kawthar then tried to enroll her children in another school in Jounieh.

In two other cases, Syrian families said they had succeeded in enrolling their children, but that school officials then rejected them on the first day of classes for unknown reasons.^[91] Yasim, 37, said she had registered her children, but they came home with a paper saying that they had not been enrolled, without further explanation.^[92]

Rules governing the availability of second shifts further restrict Syrian families access to formal education in Lebanon.

According to the Education Ministry's second shift policy, schools will only open a class for grades 1-6 if there is demand from at least 25 students, and 20 students for grades 7-9.^[93]

Since fewer Syrian children continue to higher grade levels, due to factors including dropouts and child labor, some schools have determined there to be an insufficient number of students to open upper grade classes in the second shift.^[94] In these cases, Syrian students who wish to enroll have no option but to repeat lower grades. As a result, older

students, especially those who have already repeated a grade before, sometimes opt to drop out of school instead of repeating a lower grade.

After a school refused to enroll Kawthars daughter, she was able to enroll her in a different school, but 10 days later found that it did not offer her grade level. Kawthar recalled:

Hboos, 36, came to Lebanon in 2012. Her 13-year-old son, Mohammad, was able to complete 5th and 6th grade in public school there, but she said his school refused to open a 7th grade class because there were fewer than 20 Syrian students. She told us, Because he missed a year, he doesnt want to go back to school. Ive tried everything. Now he is working at a barbershop.[\[96\]](#)

A similar quota policy affects whether the entire second shift at a given school remains open. Under Lebanons second shift policy, if fewer than 250 Syrians enroll in a second shift school, the program at the school may be closed.[\[97\]](#)

Staff at a humanitarian organization told Human Rights Watch:

As Human Rights Watch conducted interviews in November and December 2015, schools were still opening and closing to Syrian students, requiring them to find new schools months after the school year had begun.

Within first shift classes, public schools also impose a maximum one-to-one ratio of Lebanese to non-Lebanese students in each classroom: the number of Syrian children cannot exceed the number of Lebanese children without a waiver from the Education Ministry.[\[99\]](#)

Two humanitarian organizations confirmed to Human Rights Watch that the one-to-one rule was still in effect in 2015, but that the ministry was issuing waivers for individual schools.[\[100\]](#) The rule does not apply to second shift classes, which are only for Syrian children. However, not all schools in Lebanon offer a second shift. In 2015-2016, 238 schools, less than 20 percent of public schools, held second shift classes.[\[101\]](#)

Syrians faced a lack of space in Lebanese public schools despite almost 50,000 unused seats in 2015, because schools with available spaces are not necessarily located in the areas of need. Fifteen refugee families told Human Rights Watch that they had been unable to enroll children in public schools because school officials told them there was no more space.[\[102\]](#)

Syrian children are eligible to enroll in the daytime shift alongside Lebanese students, as long as spaces are available and there are not more Syrian than Lebanese students per class without a ministry waiver.[\[103\]](#) But some school officials have refused to allow Syrians to enroll.

Afaf, 45, has been unable to enroll her children in school in the three years they have been in Lebanon. Her 9-year-old son, Yousef, has never attended formal school. In fall 2015, she tried again to enroll him in public school. She recalled:

I tried to register at three schools. The first told me they were only registering third grade and higher. The second school wouldnt accept him, the director told me No Syrians. I tried to tell him about the new rules, and he said: The UN has nothing to do with us, we know what were doing. Theres no more space. But they were still accepting Lebanese children. The third school told me there was no space. Hes 9 years old and doesnt know how to read and write.[\[104\]](#)

Syrian children face difficulties adapting to a challenging curriculum taught in unfamiliar languages, with limited support. Sixteen families told Human Rights Watch that their children were having problems learning in school because of the Lebanese curriculum. Some children had dropped out as a result. Eight humanitarian organizations said that Syrian children they worked with were having difficulty with the Lebanese curriculum.[\[105\]](#)

In Lebanon, public schools teach core classes in English and French beginning in 7th grade.[\[106\]](#) Classes taught in these languages, with which Syrian children often have little familiarity, are particularly challenging for refugees who receive little or no language support. Of the families with whom Human Rights Watch spoke, 18 said that their children were having trouble understanding classes taught in English or French. Some families who could afford to do so hired private tutors, but others said that their children ended up dropping out of school.

Ramad, 35, said that all her children attended school in Homs before fleeing to Lebanon in 2012. After arriving in Lebanon, she immediately enrolled her 14-year-old son in school. He had received top marks in Syria, but stopped attending classes in Lebanon after two years because it was too difficult to learn the curriculum taught in English. She said:

Hes smart but it was too hard. He was a very good student. It was the foreign languages that were too hard for him.... There was no special help for languages, and no special teachers were affordable for us. Now hes sitting at home.[\[107\]](#)

Moueina, 51, arrived in Lebanon from Idlib in 2011. She immediately enrolled her children in school. Noura, now 17, and Khalid, now 16, eventually dropped out because they could not understand classes taught in French. Moueina told us, They werent learning in school, the curriculum was hard. They didnt understand the French. Khalid dropped out of school two years ago and is working as a carpenter. Noura got married two months ago. Its her third year out of school here.[\[108\]](#)

According to Education Ministry guidelines, scientific classes in the second shift are also supposed to be taught in a foreign language, although teachers can resort to Arabic to explain scientific terms.[\[109\]](#) One humanitarian worker noted that some teachers still taught all second shift classes in English or French. Teachers dont necessarily have the flexibility. They are used to doing things a specific way, she said.[\[110\]](#)

Although Lebanons enrollment policy does not require valid residency for Syrians to enroll in public schools, families told Human Rights Watch that some school directors required them to present valid residency documents as a condition to enroll their children. Lack of residency also restricts Syrian parents movement, and thus their ability to make a living and keep their children in school.

Lebanese authorities have not published any statistics on the number of Syrian refugees without legal status, but the Lebanese Crisis Response Plan, published in December 2015, estimates that two-thirds of refugees now lack legal status.[\[111\]](#) The Norwegian Refugee Council estimates that 70 percent of refugees have lost legal status.[\[112\]](#) Of the 70 families we asked, 61 told us that no family member had valid residency, and only nine said that at least one person in the family had residency. Everyone is irregular here, said Mohammad, 42, who lives in an informal tented settlement south of Beirut.[\[113\]](#)

Syrians in Lebanon must comply with regulations implemented on January 5, 2015, that effectively bar many from renewing their residency permits.[\[114\]](#) The regulations require all Syrians to pay an annual \$200 renewal fee per person, present valid identification and an entry slip obtained at the border, submit a housing pledge confirming their place of residence, and give two photographs stamped by a Lebanese local official (*mukhtar*).[\[115\]](#)

To renew, General Security also requires those registered with UNHCR to submit their UNHCR registration certificate and a notarized pledge not to work.[\[116\]](#) Syrians not registered with UNHCR have to provide a pledge of responsibility signed by a Lebanese national or registered entity to sponsor an individual or family of Syrian refugees. Human Rights Watch has found that some Lebanese nationals charge refugees up to \$1,000 for sponsorships and in many cases, General Security required sponsorship even for refugees registered with UNHCR.[\[117\]](#)

Prior to the implementation of these entry regulations on January 5, 2015, Syrians had the option of temporarily returning to Syria and re-entering Lebanon in order to renew their residency without paying the \$200 fee.[\[118\]](#) This option is no longer possible.[\[119\]](#)

Although Syrian children under 15 can renew their residency status in Lebanon for free, their application is tied to the head of households legal status. If their parent does not have the right documentation or cannot pay the \$200, the child cannot renew either.[\[120\]](#)

A study based on 75,000 visits to refugee households found that in January 2015, when the new residency requirements came into effect, just 9 percent of households reported no valid residency. That percentage had increased dramatically to 61 percent by July 2015.[\[121\]](#)

Fawaz, 44, said that his family could not afford to pay the \$200 fee required for each of the four people in his family aged 15 or older to renew their residency. His father said that the additional residency requirement of finding a Lebanese sponsor made it virtually impossible to update the familys residency.[\[122\]](#)

Without residency, refugees face restrictions on movement and are vulnerable to arrest. One survey carried out by international humanitarian NGOs between September and December 2014 found that only 33 percent of those without valid residency felt able to go outside the area where they were living, compared to 92 percent of those with residency.[\[123\]](#) Another survey conducted by a Lebanese university in 2015 and 2016 found that more than 50 percent of Syrians without valid residency reported problems with checkpoints.[\[124\]](#)

A local humanitarian organization said that due to checkpoints in Akkar, Syrian families without papers cannot leave their camps to get their children enrolled.^[125] Staff at another organization noted that while soldiers may not stop young children at checkpoints, parents are worried about sending their children through checkpoints where they themselves cannot follow.^[126] Since older children are more likely to be stopped at checkpoints, residency expiration particularly affects access to secondary education.^[127]

Lack of valid residency in Lebanon has also hindered refugees ability to register newborns. Without birth certificates or identification documents (IDs), refugee children may not be able to enroll in public schools. Under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Lebanon ratified in 1991, newborn children have the right to be registered immediately after birth.^[128]

The Lebanon Crisis Response Plan, published in December 2015, estimates that nearly 70 percent of the 60,000 children born to Syrians registered with UNHCR in Lebanon do not have a birth certificate from the Lebanese authorities.^[129] Unregistered refugees born in Lebanon may be unable to prove their nationality and are therefore at risk of statelessness.^[130]

The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) found that 92 percent of 797 people interviewed in 2014 were not able to complete the possible legal and administrative steps to register the births of their children.^[131] Of the five steps required to register children in Lebanon, Syrians must complete the first three within one year of birth, or will need to go to court in order to register their child.^[132] Although legal residency is not required for any of the initial three steps, NRC found that refugees without status feared traveling, were apprehensive of contact with officials, and in some cases were denied documents.^[133] Refugees need valid residency in order to complete the final steps of birth registration.^[134] However, due to widespread lack of legal status, humanitarian actors only recommend that refugees complete the first three steps.^[135]

Syrians have worked in Lebanon for many years, but their access to the job market has diminished since the beginning of the conflict in Syria, limiting their ability to keep children in school.^[136] Although no official updated unemployment figures are available, estimates of rising unemployment among Lebanese citizens have coincided with increased restrictions on Syrians access to work.^[137]

On December 16, 2014, the Minister of Labor reduced the number of professions that are open to Syrians.^[138] And because few Syrians are able to maintain legal status, they are increasingly unable to travel within Lebanon to look for informal work for fear of being arrested and fined.^[139] Even refugees who secure a Lebanese sponsor to renew their residency, and who therefore do not have to sign a pledge not to work, do not necessarily have the right to work in Lebanon. General Security issued a statement in April 2015 claiming that the employer must be actively seeking to secure a work permit for the worker and that they are still legally bound to secure a work visa from the Ministry of Labor.^[140]

In its statement of intent at a major donor conference on February 4, 2016, Lebanon acknowledged the necessity of reviewing its regulatory frameworks relating to residency and work authorization with a view to easing Syrians access to certain sectors of the job market. However, the Lebanese government has yet to implement any such changes.^[141]

Residency requirements also restrict Syrians' ability to work. Refugees who have signed a pledge not to work face potential criminal sanctions for doing so.^[142] Those without residency face movement restrictions because they are vulnerable to arrest at checkpoints. Refugees in north Lebanon described regular arrests of Syrians who lacked residency. We dont dare look for work. We dont even dare to go out on the main street, one man said.^[143]

Fawaz, 44, wept while describing the difficulties that the lack of residency caused: there was no work available in the winter months in the area where the family is living, but without residency they were afraid to try to look for work elsewhere, he said.^[144] Mohammad, from Homs, described the relationship between access to work and education as a cycle. If you can just fix the work problem it would all be solved.^[145]

Parents unable to look for even informal work due to lack of valid residency are often unable to pay school transport fees, and in some cases depend on child labor for survival.

Rana, 32, worked at a pastry shop in a nearby city, but said she had to stop because she could not afford to renew her residency and feared arrest on the way to work. She tried three times to enroll her children in school, but each time could not afford the transportation fees of more than \$30 per month per child. Her 10-year-old son Hamza now sells chewing gum on the street. She worries about him, but says there is no one else to support the family. They are two months behind on rent, and the UN has cut off food assistance. Sometimes the kids go to bed without food. We didnt have bread today, she said, adding: My children should learn to write their names. Its over for us, should it be over for our children as well?^[146]

In order to survive, some families are pulling children out of school to work.^[147] Child labor undermines childrens ability to attend or stay in school. Families dependent on child labor are less likely to have resources for incidental expenses such as transportation or school supplies.

A 2016 survey by a Lebanese university found that only 12.6 percent of working children were in school.^[148] Conversely, a Save the Children study found that children in households receiving cash help were less likely to engage in child labor and more likely to enroll in school and attend consistently.^[149]

Forty families told Human Rights Watch that they had at least one child working to support the familysome who started work at age seven. One humanitarian organization said that a quarter of the households it works with relied on the income of at least one working child to secure basic needs.^[150] A multi-agency study of children living and working on the street in Lebanon found that, of 748 Syrian and Lebanese children interviewed, 61 percent had come to Lebanon during the crisis in Syria. Only 3 percent of the children were enrolled in school and 40 percent had never been in school at all.^[151]

It is often easier for Syrian children in Lebanon to find work than adults because they receive exploitatively low wages.^[152] According to one humanitarian organization, employers only pay Syrian children 25 to 30 percent of what they pay adults.^[153] In addition, several refugees told us that employers routinely delayed or withheld payment to children.^[154]

Asma, 28, said her 17-year-old brother, Loay, was in 11th grade in Syria but was unable to continue his education in Lebanon. Hes working here in tiles. His employer owes him [\$900], but had not paid him for four months, she said.^[155] Families also believe, based on experience, that children are less likely than adults to be stopped at checkpoints, and so can work even when adults without valid residency face restrictions on movement.^[156]

Staff at seven humanitarian NGOs said they had documented children leaving school in order to work, and one staff member said the problem was getting worse: The number of children working is increasing as the income of parents decreases. Parents cant find jobs.^[157] One non-formal school administrator described several cases of young children who had left school to work:

An 11-year-old is working as a butcher, an 8-year-old is roasting and selling nuts, and 30 percent of kids drop out during the potato season in May and October, and every week during market day.^[158]

In 2013, Lebanon adopted a National Action Plan to eliminate the worst forms of child labor by 2016.^[159] But rates of child labor among Syrians in Lebanon appear to have increased since the beginning of the crisis.^[160] Syrian children in Lebanon start work as young as 6 or 7 and are engaged in agricultural work, selling goods, cleaning, and dangerous forms of work including construction, manual labor, and metal work.^[161] Children, Lebanese and Syrian, often work long hours for low pay, without necessary safety equipment or precautions.^[162]

Fadi and Muna said that none of their four children has gone to school since the family came to Lebanon in 2011. Fadi, who has epilepsy, says he is not able to work due to seizures. So although they live across the street from a school, for the past three years, Yousef, 11, and Nizar 10, have gone to work instead of school, leaving the house every day at 9:00 a.m. to sell gum on the street. The two boys, who were out working when Human Rights Watch first visited the family, have been robbed, violently attacked, and detained by police. Muna said:

Their other son Omar, 16, reached grade 6 in Syria. After arriving in Lebanon, he worked washing dishes in a restaurant until 3:00 a.m., but was only paid a third of what he was promised and quit to find a salary that would allow him to support his family. He is looking for work in the nearby city of Saïda, but Fadi and Muna worry about his safety. Muna said:

Child refugees working in Lebanon not only miss out on an education, they are also at risk of injury, exploitation, or arrest.^[165] Several refugees told us that their children had suffered injuries while working, and staff at one humanitarian organization said they had documented a sharp increase in the worst forms of child labor in 2015.^[166] Fareha, 47, who came to Lebanon from Daraa in 2013, said her 10-year-old son Ahmad, who dropped out of school after being bullied, broke his hand doing car repair, and the hospital put the cast on the wrong way.^[167]

Ali, 14, showed us the scar where he cut his hand open harvesting tobacco. He needed 10 stitches. The operation cost 175,000 [LBP, \$116.50] and we got no aid for it, said his father, Fawaz. Ali, who does not use protective gloves when working, told us that he has experienced headaches, rashes, itches, and breathing problems after working.^[168] Human Rights Watch has extensively documented the health risks of work in tobacco farming for children, which include acute nicotine poisoning and exposure to toxic

pesticides.[169]

Older children, particularly those age 15 and above who can no longer renew their residency for free, also face legal risks for working without residency. Mahmoud, 65, said that because he is unable to do physical labor, his son Mustafa, 15, stopped going to school after 6th grade and found work at a restaurant in order to support the family. Mustafa does not have residency, and had to jump out of a car on his way back from work to avoid being stopped and potentially arrested at a checkpoint. It took him hours to find a way to get home, and his family worried that he had been arrested.[170]

Transportation is just one of the education-related financial burdens that can affect the ability of Syrian children to attend school. Lebanon's enrollment policy, supported by international donors, has waived public school fees for all primary school children. However, refugees in Lebanon often struggle to pay for transportation to send their children to school.

According to one humanitarian agency, the average distance from an informal tented settlement to the nearest public school is 6.1 kilometers.[171] Although humanitarian aid programs provided transportation to vulnerable families in the 2014-2015 school year, these programs were reduced in 2015-2016.[172]

For impoverished Syrians, the monthly costs of transportation often mean the difference between children getting an education or staying home. Of those families Human Rights Watch interviewed, an inability to pay for transportation often due to restrictions on work was the most common reason why Syrian children were not in school. Several refugee families told Human Rights Watch that they would send their children to school if transportation were provided, but that they did not have the resources to pay for transportation themselves.[173]

The 2015 Vulnerability Assessment for Syrians in Lebanon depicts a severe financial crisis with 70 percent of refugees living below Lebanon's poverty line and 89 percent of refugees in debt.[174] Syrian households' expenditures in Lebanon average \$493 per month, yet the mean household income was only \$165 in 2015. Nineteen percent of families facing food insecurity coped by pulling their children out of school nearly twice as many as in 2014.

A 2016 survey by a Lebanese university of 914 Syrians found higher rates of enrollment for children who travelled shorter distances to school: of children who traveled less than 10 minutes, only 15 percent had dropped out, while 35 percent of those who traveled more than an hour dropped out.[175]

Among those with whom we spoke, transportation costs ranged from \$10-50 per child per month. In several cases, parents said that a monthly payment of \$13 was the only barrier keeping children from getting an education.[176]

Racha, 30, who has been in Lebanon for two years, said she could not afford the monthly fees to send her children to school:

Kheirieh, 30, who fled to Lebanon in 2014 from Aleppo, said she had enrolled three of her children in a nearby non-formal school during the 2014-2015 school year, but could only send one of her 6-year-old twins because they share one pair of shoes. Her husband fell from the fifth floor of a building during the conflict in Syria, breaking both his legs, and is unable to work. In order to support the family, their 8 and 10-year-old children work picking tomatoes and collecting plastic and metal garbage to sell, but Kheirieh said she would send them to school if transportation were affordable:

Some Syrians must travel greater distances to schools than similarly situated Lebanese children because not all schools have a second shift.[179] Lack of transportation therefore becomes a larger obstacle for children who live far from the nearest available school.[180]

Although some Syrians walk to school, parents often told us they were unwilling to send children without transportation because schools were too far away or they had safety concerns about their children walking alone. Syrian children enrolled in second shift classes do not return home until 6:30 or 7:00 p.m. well after dark in the winter. Forty-three families told Human Rights Watch that they had safety concerns about their children walking to school. Some parents walk with their children to school, but because many Syrians interviewed for this report lacked residency, they felt too vulnerable to leave camps or cross checkpoints.[181]

Some children have suffered abuses while walking to or from school or when they were alone in public. Sana, 32, said that she usually walked with her daughter to kindergarten, but that one day when her daughter went to school with her 13-year-old sister, the two girls described an apparent kidnapping attempt: Someone tried to steal her, they offered her chocolates and said I want to take you with me. Now I don't let them outside.[182]

Joumana, 36, began walking with her 10-year-old daughter to a non-formal school after a man shouted profanities and slapped her when she walked home. She wouldn't repeat what he said, but she cried for two days and no longer wanted to go to school, Joumana said. Meanwhile, her school-aged son was attacked and robbed while on an errand to buy water. People beat him up and stole the water container, and now he begs me not to send him out. I don't dare do anything. If I speak up, who knows what will happen?[183]

Halima, 30, said her children come home crying because they are being harassed on the way to school. [184] Her daughter, Iman, 12, said that her experience of having sewage water poured on her while walking to school makes me want to stay home. Amal, 12, said her father is considering pulling her siblings out of school because her 10-year-old brother keeps getting hit on the way home and comes home crying.[185]

Syrian parents also worry about their children walking to school along busy roads. Amal, 12, said that she stopped attending public school in 2012, when she was in fourth grade, because a motorcycle ran over my foot so I can't go to school anymore.[186] In the same camp, Nawar, 29, said that he knew several children who had been hit by vehicles, including his 2-year-old son.[187]

Some children, unable to reach public schools without transportation, enroll in non-formal schools that are closer to camps or provide free transportation. However, these often only accept younger children. After children reach the age when they need to transfer to public schools, they may drop out of any education unless they are able to access safe transportation.

Tala, 36, has three children in a nearby non-formal school.[188] She told us, After they are too old, my kids will be out of school. If transportation were free I would send them [to the public school]. Tala's oldest child is 11 years old, and the non-formal school he is attending only accepts children up until age 12.[189]

Even Syrians who could afford transportation described overcrowded buses, collisions, and drivers beating students.[190] One international humanitarian organization staff member said that some drivers harassed children.[191] Another NGO worker noted bus drivers were overcrowding their vehicles with Syrian school children: There are supposed to be 24 people [per bus], but they are squeezing in 50. Kids are coming home sick.[192]

Ghousoon, 31, said that a school bus driver hits and yells at her children, but that when she complained, he claimed that he has an order to hit them.[193] Ghada, a refugee in the same camp in the Bekaa Valley, had a similar experience. She told us, The van driver took my son, threw his books out of the window, and hit him on his head with a stick. The driver said he had an order to hit the kids.[194]

Syrian children face bullying and harassment on the way to school and in the classroom from bystanders, other children, bus drivers, teachers, and school administrators. Thirty families told Human Rights Watch that their children faced bullying and harassment, including on the basis of national origin, and nine families said their children were physically attacked by other children.[195]

Refugees and humanitarian workers described several cases in which Lebanese children waited after their morning shift at school in order to harass Syrian children arriving for the afternoon second shift.[196] One 2016 survey by a Lebanese university found that 33 percent of Syrian respondents had problems at school all or some of the time.[197] Even Syrian parents face discrimination in Lebanese schools. Ibtisam, 31, told us that during the enrollment period, school officials told Syrian parents they were acting like animals.[198]

Bullying can lead Syrian children to drop out of school. Mariam, 45, said her husband pulled their 14 and 15-year-old children out of school after two years because of bullying. Her four children in public school are also being harassed. She told us, They walk half an hour to school. Lebanese kids follow them, beat them, and take their money. Her son Saji, 11, said [It] makes me feel sad and angry. Kids from the morning shift wait for us in front of the school. The director doesn't do anything.[199]

Discrimination in school can also affect children's ability to learn or motivation to attend. Halima, 30, is concerned about how her 12-year-old daughter, Iman, was being treated. She said:

Cases of bullying, harassment, and discrimination also deter other students from enrolling. Ziad, 17, told us, I didn't register for public school. My friend said they ask Syrians to clean the classroom floors and hit them. Kids come back marked from hitting, it happened to my friend. Both teachers and Lebanese kids hit them.[201]

Human Rights Watch interviews with Syrian refugees indicate that efforts by public school staff to remedy bullying, harassment, and discrimination are not consistent. Some parents said school officials claimed there was nothing they could do about bullying outside school gates, and some said that teachers and administrators refused to act on their

complaints of discrimination and bullying.^[202] However, in other cases where school directors have addressed these issues, parents described the efforts as important for their childrens continuing education.^[203] Sana, 27, told us:

Ongoing problems indicate a need for the Education Ministry to instruct school staff to ensure that Syrian parents and students can report complaints of such abuses, and to offer clear, specific guidance on what steps school officials should take in response.

Of the 67 families we interviewed with at least one child in public school, 23 families told us that teachers, school administrators, or bus drivers hit their childrens as young as six. Although a 2001 memorandum from the Ministry of Education and Higher Education banned corporal punishment in Lebanese public schools, the practice remains widespread.^[205] One survey conducted by UNICEF and Save the Children in 2012 found evidence of corporal punishment in 70 percent of 27 schools visited.^[206]

Refugees told Human Rights Watch that their children were being hit with sticks, hoses, books, and in one case, an umbrella. Amira, 29, said,

Human Rights Watch interviewed several families whose children dropped out or who withdrew their children from public school because of corporal punishment. Khalifeh, 8, said he went to public school for one month before dropping out because of being hit.

Ghousoon, 27, said she is arguing with her husband about pulling their children out of school after staff repeatedly hit them:

Although corporal punishment affects both Lebanese and Syrian children, in most cases in which Syrian families interviewed for this report described corporal punishment by teachers, the children were enrolled in all-Syrian second shifts. Zakin, 33, who enrolled her children in a public school second shift, said her children were beaten by teachers.^[210] By contrast, Wafaa, 32, said her children, enrolled in the morning shift at the same school as Zakins were not being hit.^[211]

Corporal punishment can detrimentally affect childrens ability to learn in the classroom. Malak, 33, said that her son used to be very good at school, but now hates it, because a teacher was beating him with an umbrella.^[212] Madeleine, 26, said that her sons experience of school was one of fear, not learning: When the teacher comes near my son, he shields himself with his hands because he expects to be hit.^[213]

One international humanitarian organization documented a decline in classroom violence after conducting programs to address corporal punishment, but a staff member said that they could no longer conduct the trainings because the Education Ministry no longer allows their NGO to operate inside its schools.^[214]

Lack of quality education can also impact children staying in school.^[215] Human Rights Watch has not conducted a quality assessment of Lebanese public schools. However, 34 Syrian families told Human Rights Watch they were concerned about the quality of teaching in Lebanese public schools, particularly in second shift classes. Nineteen families said that their children had still not received all of their textbooks as of November and December 2015, several months into the school year.^[216]

This is consistent with a survey conducted by a Lebanese university between December 2015 and February 2016 that found 20 percent of Syrian children did not have textbooks or school supplies.^[217] Two families interviewed complained that teachers spent their time sending messages on their phones and were not paying attention to their students.^[218]

In 2010, the Education Ministry found that 54.5 percent of public school teachers did not hold a university degree.^[219] Under the ministrys operating procedures, second shift teachers are drawn from the first shift, and new teachers are only hired if there are an insufficient number of teachers or qualified staff available from the first shift.^[220] According to the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan, teachers were not always sufficiently prepared or experienced to meet the emergency education needs of students and teachers newly hired for the second shift did not always meet optimal qualifications for managing classrooms, dealing with traumatized children, or working well for an extended number of teaching hours.^[221] A staff member at one humanitarian organization said, consistent with concerns raised by staff at six other humanitarian groups:

Syrian parents in Lebanon consistently expressed a desire for a dignified, quality education. Ilham, 30, said that all her school-age children had attended school in Idlib. In Lebanon, Ilham was able to register four of her children in the fall of 2014, but pulled them out because of how poorly they were treated. The first day, they taught them how to count to 10 in English, and the next day they were ordered outside to clean garbage. I sent them with their best clothes, they came back dirty. I stopped sending them. Ilham said her 14-year-old son was currently working picking olives rather than going to school, in part to earn an income, and in part because no quality education is available.

Mohammad, 40, said he worries about the quality of education his children, including daughter Abir, 13, are receiving in public schools after coming to Lebanon in 2012.

Parents whom Human Rights Watch spoke to in November and December 2015 were particularly worried about the lack of textbooks. Mamoun told us that her three children still had not received all their books in late November.^[225] My kids are very smart, but there is nothing to encourage them here, she said. Majida, 34, had similar concerns. When are they going to get them, when the school year is over? she asked.^[226]

Some parents hired private tutors to make sure that their children are learning, but few can afford to do so. Hanan, 24, said that a tutor was necessary for her six-year-old daughter to learn in public school, because she had not received any school books as of late November, and because her teachers punished her for asking questions in class.

Lebanon does not allow Syrian refugees to work as public school teachersone possible way to relieve the overwhelmed public education system.^[228] Mariam, 34, was an English teacher in Syria. I went to the public school and wanted to work here, but the ministry only allows Lebanese teachers, she said. All of my hard work in Syria was for nothing.^[229]

Other refugee-hosting countries have, to various degrees, allowed Syrians to work in classrooms. Turkey has mobilized Syrian teachers in order to reach a greater numbers of students: more than 4,000 Syrians serve as volunteer teachers and earn a stipend of \$150 to \$220 per month, funded by international donations.^[230] Similarly, in Egypt, 2,000 Syrians are employed as teachers in refugee-run education centers.^[231] In Jordan, some 200 Syrian volunteers work under Jordanian teachers in public schools in refugee camps that are accredited by the Education Ministry.^[232]

Ten families told Human Rights Watch that their children faced difficulties accessing toilets and sanitation facilities in public schools. Families reported that some teachers would not allow students to use the bathroom, or that facilities were too dirty to use. In one case, they described a school where staff locked bathrooms in the afternoon, all-Syrian shift.

Hedaya, 31, whose three children are enrolled in a public school in Akkar, said, They lock them for the second shift because they dont want Syrians making them dirty. I spoke to the school teacher, but it solved nothing.^[233]

Human Rights Watch has documented the link between access to toilet facilities and school attendance, particularly with regard to girls and children with disabilities. For example, private and clean sanitation facilities are essential to ensuring girls can manage their hygiene during menstruation without disruption to their education.^[234]

The Lebanon Crisis Response Plan identified lack of water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities as a particular barrier to the retention of girls in public schools, noting that 50 percent or more of public schools that welcome displaced Syrians do not have sanitary facilities that meet minimum requirements.^[235]

Halima, 30, said When they go to the bathroom, the monitor hits them with a stick. They come home and rush straight to the bathroom. I tried to talk to the director, but the director denies that anything is happening.^[236]

Restricting bathroom access can have serious consequences for students experiences in school. Ibtisam, 31, said that teachers at a public school in south Beirut wont let kids go to the bathroom. My daughter got a urinary tract infection last year.^[237] Waiting to urinate can be a cause of such infections, because regular urination is necessary to flush bacteria out of the urinary tract. Madeleine, 26, said, My son soiled his pants because the teacher didnt believe he had to use the bathroom.^[238]

Lack of affordable or accessible healthcare for Syrian refugees in Lebanon negatively affects their ability to keep their children in school. Fourteen families told Human Rights Watch that they had kept children home from school because of health issues. Ahmad has a 12-year-old son, Mousa, with shrapnel embedded in his eyes and face from the war in Syria. He says he stopped sending Mousa to a non-formal school after he found him walking in the street blinded, with something in his eye.^[239]

The UN refugee agency, in most cases, only covers 75 percent of medical fees for obstetric and life-threatening conditions.^[240] As a result, preventive healthcare is beyond the financial means of most refugee families, and childhood illness is prevalent.^[241] Refugees told Human Rights Watch that they were often unable to cover the cost of necessary medication or treatment. As a result, refugee families routinely kept sick children home from school. Roda, 38, said that her daughters asthma was so severe she misses three days of school every time she gets an attack; it happens whenever the weather changes.^[242]

Many Syrian children in Lebanon have witnessed or experienced violence, and parents report symptoms of deep distress and fear including sleep disturbances, crying, bed-wetting, clinginess, and withdrawal.^[243]

Traumatic experiences affect Syrian childrens ability to learn in school, but there are not enough counseling and support programs to meet the need. Humanitarian actors provided psychosocial support services for more than 135,000 children in 2015, but this was far short of the target of 302,000 children.^[244] One non-formal schoolteacher told Human Rights Watch: Trauma from the Syria war is apparent. There are children drawing airstrikes and blood, students who cant speak, children who hide under the table from loud noises.^[245]

Rana said that her four daughters found it difficult to participate in school after they had been detained at a checkpoint as they fled Syria and held for 20 days, an experience that led to nightmares and bed-wetting. Imad, their father, said that an aid organization provided the girls with counseling, but that they had to stop after four sessions, even though they said we needed more.^[246]

Those living in informal tented settlements face particular adversities that can affect childrens ability to study. Camps are regularly raided by the Lebanese Armed Forces, who routinely arrest those without residency.^[247] Ramad, 35, told Human Rights Watch that soldiers had raided her camp four times in one year.

A non-formal school director in the Bekaa Valley described two instances in early 2015 in which the Lebanese army raided a non-formal school with young children inside. They came in with their weapons, and didnt allow me to let the kids out. They searched with the kids in the room, with weapons out, she said.^[249] Military raids have a deterrent effect on school enrollment, a humanitarian worker noted: If the army comes and raids your camp and displaces you at night, are you likely to go enroll your kids or want to interact with any government institution?^[250]

Rates of enrollment for Syrian children in secondary education are extremely low. There were 82,744 registered Syrian refugees aged 15-18 as of August 2015, but only 2,280 non-Lebanese students enrolled in public secondary schools in 2015-2016.^[251] According to one humanitarian worker, just 1,287 of these students were Syrianless than 2 percent of the total number in this age group.^[252]

In comparison, net secondary school enrollment stood at 70 percent in both Lebanon and Syria in 2011, before the war in Syria.^[253] Of the Syrian families with children aged 15 to 18 whom Human Rights Watch interviewed, only three children in that age group were in school while 56 were not enrolled.

Syrian refugees trying to enroll in secondary school face barriers beyond those found at the primary level, including documentation requirements, restrictions on freedom of movement, increased distances to schools, lack of Arabic-language second shifts or non-formal options, and pressure to work (see section II). Lack of job prospects and limited opportunities for higher education can also deter students from completing secondary education.^[254]

Public secondary schools in Lebanon impose enrollment requirements that can be difficult for Syrian refugee families to meet. Schools require that Syrians complete the official state *Brevet* exam and families told Human Rights Watch that school officials have also required transcripts in prior yearswhich some families may not have brought from Syria.^[255] In a positive move, in March 2016, the Education Ministry announced that it would allow Syrian students to take the state *Brevet* and *Baccalaureate* exams without providing past school transcripts.^[256] Secondary schools also charge annual fees totaling approximately \$180 per student, however the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has launched a pilot project to cover these fees for non-Lebanese students in public schools.^[257]

Aya, 16, should have enrolled in grade 10 in fall 2015. Living outside of Damascus, she reached the 7th grade but stopped going to class because of shelling and airstrikes close to her school. In Lebanon, Aya said she needed grade transcripts from Syria in order to join a first shift class. Although she might be able to request certificates through the Syrian Embassy, she told us, Im scared of going there. I couldnt leave the camp to go to the embassy without residency. Aya said there werent enough students for the local school to open a second shift for her grade level. So she enrolled in grade 5, the highest available second shift class.

When Human Rights Watch returned to Ayas informal camp in February 2016, two neighbors told us that her family had left, that she had never managed to register in school, and that she was now engaged to be married.^[259]

There are fewer secondary schools than primary schools, and not all have space for Syrians.^[260] As a result, older children must often travel greater distances to school and are more likely to encounter checkpoints in some areas. Although young children can usually cross checkpoints without incident, they are more likely to be stopped after turning 15, when residency renewal is no longer free for them.^[261]

In other words, older Syrian children face increasing restrictions on their freedom of movement precisely when they may need to travel longer distances and cross checkpoints in order to attend secondary school.

A 2016 survey found that refugee children aged 15 to 17 without residency were more likely to be out of school than children in that age group with valid residency, and that 60 percent of refugees facing security issues do not go to school.^[262]

Syrian children without residency permits face particular barriers enrolling in secondary school. But according to the Norwegian Refugee Council, it is virtually impossible for children turning 15 to renew their residency, because at this age they must present their own ID or passport, issued only at the Syrian Embassy where many are afraid to enter due to fear of persecution or military conscription.^[263]

Amin, 18, stopped going to school after fleeing Homs in 2011.^[264] Since coming to Lebanon, he and his younger brother Anas, 16, said they have had to work to support their family, because their father is unable to work. They do not have residency, and Lebanese authorities caught them and entered deportation orders on their papers. Although Lebanon is not currently implementing deportation orders, lack of legal status makes it difficult for the brothers to work or return to school.^[265] Amin said:

Amins brother, Anas, 16, tried to stay in school after coming to Lebanon, but faced setbacks almost every year. In one case, a non-formal school director took \$50 in enrollment fees from each student, and then shut down the school and left the area. When he realized that non-formal schools are not accredited and do not give out certificates, Anas tried to enroll in a Lebanese public school in each of the past two years. He told us,

I tried to go to [the public school] for 9th grade, but left after two days when the teacher started picking on me. This year, they said they changed teachers at [the school], but when I tried to register, they needed 15 students to open a 9th grade. There were only seven, so I stopped going.^[267]

Language of instruction is a heightened barrier at the secondary school level. There are no Arabic-language afternoon shifts in secondary schools and little or no language support programs, so students must contend with an advanced, unfamiliar curriculum in English or French.^[268]

The low enrollment rate for secondary-aged children is also a symptom of the broader realities of the refugee crisis. Secondary-aged children, many of whom missed years of school in Syria and Lebanon, may not be ready to enroll in secondary school. Some refugees have missed out on a secondary education altogether and are no longer school-aged. Jawaher, 24, told us, Ive never heard of anyone from this camp whos completed high school since we arrived here in 2011.^[269]

There are few options for secondary-aged children who cannot enroll in public schools. Non-formal education is often unavailable to older children. Human Rights Watch visited seven non-formal schools, none of which accepted students older than 14.^[270] Fawaz, 45, told us that his 15 and 17-year-old children had attended a non-formal school up until 7th grade, but the school didnt offer higher grades so now they are at home.^[271]

Some vocational opportunities are open to older Syrian children in Lebanon. Children aged 13-18 who have completed grade 5 can opt to enroll in state-run vocational schools.^[272]

However, few refugees are enrolling in vocational programs.^[273] One humanitarian organization told Human Rights Watch that a vocational certificate requires three years of education, but that even if a Syrian student receives a certificate he or she will face limited job prospects in their field due to the virtual impossibility of obtaining work permits, and that most refugee children opted to start working in the informal sector instead of taking vocational courses.^[274]

Syrian children with disabilities face particular barriers in accessing education. All children have the right to education without discrimination on the basis of disability^[275] There is no precise data available on the number of Syrian children with disabilities in Lebanon, but a 2014 study by Handicap International found that approximately 20 percent of Syrian refugees in Lebanon had a disability, in line with the World Health Organizations global estimates.^[276]

However, educational interventions for Syrian refugees in Lebanon have not done enough to include Syrian children with disabilities, who are often overlooked in government and humanitarian efforts to include Syrian children in education, leaving them among the most invisible and vulnerable children in Lebanon.

Although children with disabilities in Lebanon faced challenges accessing education before the refugee crisis, barriers for Syrian children with disabilities are particularly severe. Public schools often reject Syrian children on the basis of their disabilities claiming lack of resources or skills to educate them.^[277]

Even where Syrians are able to enroll children with disabilities in Lebanese public schools, schools do not adequately accommodate the needs of all children to ensure they receive quality education on an equal basis with others. One local disabilities rights expert told Human Rights Watch, For Syrians, the main option is that there is no option.... In most cases, public schools are not letting in Syrians with disabilities. Where they enroll, there are no services.[278] Thirteen humanitarian and disabilities organizations told Human Rights Watch that little or nothing had been done to ensure that children with disabilities can access education.[279]

Human Rights Watch also spoke with the families of seven children with disabilities, many of whom have been turned away from enrolling their children in Lebanese public schools.

Maysa, 30, has a 10-year-old daughter, Layla, with an intellectual disability. She tried to enroll Layla in several public schools and a non-formal school, but all of them rejected her. They told me we don't accept these types of cases, she said.[280] Abir, a mother of two children, aged 6 and 10, with intellectual disabilities, had a similar experience. She first tried to enroll her younger child in a private school, but staff refused to enroll him, claiming the school was not equipped to teach him. [They] told me I was wasting my money because he had special needs, she recalled. In 2014, Abir enrolled the children in a special school at a total cost of \$1,650, but can no longer afford to do so, and has been unable to enroll them in public or private schools in Lebanon. She told us, I tried to enroll my 10-year-old in a public school but they turned him down, even from kindergarten. They told me that other students would make fun of him. So now hes at home.[281]

Kawthar, 33, is the mother of a 13-year-old boy, Wael, who has Hunter Syndrome, a rare genetic condition that can lead to physical and intellectual disabilities. She said she was able to enroll him in public school in the fall of 2015 because his case is not severe. But she said that as of November, 2015, the school had not provided any children with textbooks, and that staff refused to take even basic steps to accommodate Wael and help him learn, such as allowing him to sit in the front row so that he could concentrate better. Its a small request, Kawthar said.

Several months later, in a follow-up interview, Kawthar told us that she had withdrawn her children from school. Because they weren't learning, she could not justify paying US \$80 per month in transportation fees to keep them in school.[283]

Khalid, 29, told us that his brothers Moayad, 13, and Majd, 18, who cannot speak or hear, received top marks in their school in Syria. Since fleeing Syria, Khalid said his brothers have been out of school for three years in Lebanon. One school told him it did not accept foreigners, another said it would charge \$4,000, and a third said it did not have the capacity to teach his brothers. I would travel anywhere as long as my siblings could go to school and get health care. Ive lost hope in registering them in any school, he said.[284]

The humanitarian response has taken some steps to improve accessibility, but mostly limited to ad hoc initiatives and small improvements focused on physical accessibility. For example, as of December 2015, just seven out of 72 newly rehabilitated schools met physical accessibility standards for children with disabilities.[285]

The 2015-2016 Lebanon Crisis Response Plan includes a clear commitment to mainstream the rights and needs of refugees with disabilities, including the right to education for children with disabilities. The plan identifies a lack of data on children with disabilities and their ability to access education, calling for data collection on the needs of children with disabilities, the barriers they face to access education, and the pathways to identify and refer them to schools. It also recognizes the current failure of the humanitarian response to adequately include children with disabilities in education programming, and calls for more concerted efforts to ensure children with disabilities have access to formal and non-formal education.[286]

Lebanon has lacked inclusive and quality education for children with disabilities since before the crisis in Syria. In 2000, Lebanon adopted a law guaranteeing access to inclusive education for persons with disabilities, but has done little to implement the law.[287] Few Lebanese public and private schools offer any form of inclusive education.[288]

One 2006 study found that most children with disabilities were in special care institutions and that private schools systematically rejected children with disabilities.[289] A 2013 UNESCO study found that a great number of [public] schools still refuse to accept students with disability in their classrooms.[290] In April 2016, the education minister announced a plan to open 60 new schools over two years that cater to children with learning disabilities.[291]

Syrian children with disabilities, unable to benefit from education in mainstream public schools, do not have access to the same educational resources as Lebanese children with disabilities.

The Ministry of Social Affairs subsidizes a number of residential institutions where Lebanese children with disabilities live, but this funding does not extend to Syrians.[292] Children in these institutions receive some form of education, however local experts have questioned its quality. One disability rights expert told us, These are really institutions, not schools. They aren't focused on education.[293] Refugees we spoke with cannot afford either the unsubsidized institutions or private segregated schools that are exclusively for children with disabilities, and so must try to enroll children with disabilities in inaccessible public schools that often reject them, or keep them home.[294]

Although enrollment and dropout rates are similar for boys and girls, several barriers disproportionately affect girls ability to enroll and stay in school.[295]

Lack of access to private, clean sanitation facilities at school can reduce girls ability to manage their hygiene during menstruation and thus impact attendance (see section II). Parents are more likely to keep older girls home due to safety concerns, including fears of harassment.

There has also been an increase in child marriage among Syrian girls in Lebanon.[296] Child marriage is often a coping response to poverty for parents, since married girls move to live with their husbands and in-laws, but in some cases the practice is also driven by parents safety concerns for their daughters.[297]

Syrian girls face harassment, including sexual harassment, on the way to school, deterring enrollment and leading to dropouts in some cases. Wafaa, 32, told us My daughters are being offered money for sex, its happening on the way to school. Im scared to send them even to the market. Im worried about my daughters.[298]

Human Rights Watch documented several cases of families keeping older girls at home instead of allowing them to go to school because of safety concerns including fears of sexual harassment. This is particularly the case when girls must walk home from school late at night because of parents inability to pay transportation costs. Khadija told us that after her 15-year-old daughter Mariam finished 6th grade in Lebanon, she pulled her out of school. I don't feel safe sending her. If there is transportation from our home to the school then I might feel comfortable sending her, she said.[299]

Child marriage is a serious barrier to girls education because most married girls stop going to school.[300] Human Rights Watch documented seven cases of child marriage among refugee girls in Lebanon, some as young as 15. None of the girls were in school. Six humanitarian organizations told Human Rights Watch that child marriage has become a barrier to Syrian girls education in Lebanon.[301] Conversely, education can also help deter child marriage. One 2016 survey found that among Syrian girls in Lebanon aged 13-18, those enrolled in school were 25 percent more likely to oppose child marriage.[302]

Child marriage was already prevalent in Syria before the crisis, with 13 percent of women aged 20-24 years old having married before 18 between 2000 and 2009.[303] Although reliable data is not available, local and international organizations have noted an increase in the number of child marriages among Syrians in Lebanon, with one agency documenting a threefold increase since the beginning of the crisis.[304] A 2015 study found a high rate of child marriage among refugees, with 23 percent of married Syrian women registered with UNHCR married before the age of 18.[305] Humanitarian organizations attribute increased child marriage to depleted financial resources and concerns about the safety of adolescent girls. A 2015 Save the Children report found:

Mariam, 45, has been in Lebanon for four years. She has an 18-year-old daughter who left school after 7th grade and got married at the age of 15. Mariam said, Her father wouldn't let her leave the house, we were worried about her safety. Her uncle put pressure on her to marry.[307]

Although the Education Ministry took a direct role in non-formal education in 2015, humanitarian organizations have expressed concern that it withdrew support for non-formal education run by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that year. Nine humanitarian organizations told Human Rights Watch that the space for them to implement non-formal education diminished in 2015, despite the fact that more than 250,000 children were still not able to access formal education.[308] One humanitarian worker said,

One organization told Human Rights Watch that it has shut down some of its non-formal schools at the request of the government and is suspending basic literacy and numeracy programs in the coming 2016-2017 school year. It said that none of its education programs have been approved in the 2015-2016 school year.[310] Some organizations described operating in an atmosphere of uncertainty, unsure of what programs they were allowed to provide.[311] Human Rights Watch obtained a Ministry of Education directive sent to school directors, dated June 23, 2015, calling on them to report nearby centers or private schools providing educational or pedagogical services to displaced [Syrian] students so that the ministry can take actions when necessary.[312]

Human Rights Watch spoke with the families of 85 children attending non-formal education and visited seven non-formal schools. Parents gave a number of reasons for sending their children to non-formal schools. Some said they chose non-formal education because public schools were full, required documents they did not have, or were too far away.

Roda, 38, said she tried to register her daughters in public school when she first came to Lebanon in late 2013, but the school required \$200 in fees. When she tried to enroll her

children again in the fall of 2015, the public school required school certificates from prior years in Syria, which she did not have. Rodas 13-year-old daughter, Doha, then found a nearby non-formal school. Roda told us: Even though [the non-formal schools] are wooden structures, the education that they are getting is great. There are lots of activities that they do there.^[313]

Parents also chose non-formal options because they wanted to avoid corporal punishment, difficult curricula, or a lack of attention in public schools. One non-formal school administrator told Human Rights Watch that 12 former students who transferred to public school dropped out because they were being hit there.^[314] One of the parents, Rahma, 30, said:

Some non-formal schools were located inside camps or covered the cost of transportation, allowing parents, primarily in the north, to send their children safely when they cannot otherwise afford buses to formal schools.

Nawafa, 29, said that her children were first able to attend school in 2015 because a non-formal school opened in their informal camp in Akkar. Even if the [non-formal] school closed and transportation were provided, I would be worried about sending them to public school, she said.^[316]

Some parents said that their children had been traumatized by war and did not want to be sent to school outside the camp. Fatima, 40, who sends her children to a non-formal school, said:

Others said that non-formal programs are important because they ensure children continue learning and remain engaged even when they are not able to enroll in formal schools. Non-formal education may also be more appropriate or necessary for some children who have missed several years of school as a first step before enrolling in public schools.

The demand is high for non-formal education. Seventeen families said that their children had been unable to enroll in nearby non-formal programs because they were full. One such school in Beirut told Human Rights Watch that they had 800 children on their waiting list.^[318] We spoke with five parents on the schools waiting list, all of whom were still trying to enroll their children. Another organization that operates three schools in Lebanon told us it has a total waiting list of about 30 students in each school.^[319]

Khalid, 45, was unable to enroll his children, aged 9 and 13, in Lebanese public schools because of distance and his daughters lack of school certificates from Syria. He said the quality of education in the non-formal program was not ideal, but that it was still valuable:

He added:

Despite the clear demand for non-formal education, refugees have also expressed concerns about the quality of some of the non-formal programs and the fact that, aside from the government-run accelerated learning program, they do not offer recognized certificates. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education, in its non-formal education framework, has taken responsibility for ensuring that all non-formal programs are of good quality and aligned with international standards.^[321]

Non-formal programs in Lebanon appear to be of widely varying quality: many refugees praised the quality of some non-formal schools, but others complained about the quality of education. Some NGOs run robust programs and hire teachers to follow a set curriculum, but others do not. Khadija, 29, took her children to a non-formal school after she was unable to enroll in the public school. She told us, I'm worried that my children are not learning in the [non-formal] school, except for how to write letters. Its not like public school.^[323] Aisha, 46, who lives in an informal camp with a small school, said she would prefer to enroll her children in public school because there are no books here.^[324]

All children, irrespective of legal status, have a right to access education without discrimination. Lebanon is party to a number of international treaties that outline this right, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).^[325] Lebanon has not made any reservations to these treaties with respect to the right to education.

Lebanon has incorporated its human rights obligations into its constitution, the preamble to which states, Lebanon is also a founding and active member of the United Nations Organization and abides by its covenants and by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Government shall embody these principles in all fields and areas without exception.^[326] The Universal Declaration of Human Rights guarantees both the right to seek and enjoy asylum and the right to education.^[327]

Under both the CRC and ICESCR, primary education shall be compulsory and available free to all and secondary education, including technical and vocational training, shall be made generally available and accessible to all by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education.^[328] For children who have not received or completed their primary education, [f]undamental education shall be encouraged or intensified.^[329] Governments also have an obligation to [t]ake measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rates.^[330]

International law prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability, gender, sex, religion, ethnicity, social origin, or other status. According to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the international expert body that monitors implementation of the ICESCR, education shall be available, physically and economically accessible, acceptable, and adaptable.^[331] The prohibition against discrimination is subject to neither progressive realization nor the availability of resources; it applies fully and immediately to all aspects of education.^[332]

Furthermore, it extends to all persons of school age residing in the territory of a State party, including non-nationals, and irrespective of their legal status.^[333] With regard to persons with disabilities, the Committee has held that states should recognize the principle of equal primary, secondary and tertiary educational opportunities for children, youth and adults with disabilities, in integrated settings.^[334] According to the Committee, a government that fails to provide a significant number of individuals the most basic forms of education is, prima facie, failing to discharge its obligations under the right to education.^[335]

Regarding the education of refugees specifically, the Convention on the Rights of the Child provides that States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure that a child who is seeking refugee status or who is considered a refugee in accordance with applicable international or domestic law and procedures shall, whether unaccompanied or accompanied by his or her parents or by any other person, receive appropriate protection and humanitarian assistance in the enjoyment of applicable rights set forth in the present Convention and in other international human rights or humanitarian instruments to which the said States are Parties.^[336]

As a party to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Convention Against Discrimination in Education, Lebanon is under an obligation to give foreign nationals resident within its territory the same access to education as is given to its own nationals, and to abrogate any statutory provisions or administrative instructions and discontinue administrative practices that involve discrimination in education.^[337]

Lebanon is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol. Consequently, it does not assign refugee status to individuals who would otherwise qualify for it under international law, and all entry and stay procedures are usually implemented in accordance with local law and additional regulations imposed by General Security. It is still bound by customary international law on the treatment of refugees.^[338]

Under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Lebanon ratified in 1991, all newborn children in the country have the right to registration at birth. Article 7 of the convention states that the child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have the right from birth to a name, the right to acquire a nationality and, as far as possible, the right to know and be cared for by his or her parents.^[339]

Lebanon has ratified the key international conventions concerning child labor, including the International Labour Organizations (ILO) Minimum Age Convention (ILO C.138), the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (ILO C.182), the CRC, and the ICESCR.^[340] These conventions acknowledge that a child engaged in labor is less likely to access a proper education.^[341] Furthermore, they require governments to protect children and young persons from economic and social exploitation and any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education.^[342] In ratifying the ILO Minimum Age Convention, Lebanon specified a minimum age of 14 years.^[343]

In 2012, Lebanon adopted Decree No. 8987, which prohibits the employment of children under the age of 16 and prohibits all types of work that may harm the health and safety of children.^[344] In 2013, Lebanon adopted a National Action Plan to eliminate the worst forms of child labor by 2016.^[345]

Lebanon does not have a civil code regulating personal status matters such as marriage. Instead, there are 15 separate personal status laws for the country's different recognized religious communities including twelve Christian, four Muslim, the Druze, and Jewish confessions, which are administered by separate religious courts all of which discriminate against women.^[346] Some of the personal status laws set the minimum age of marriage between 14 and 18, although girls can be married as young as age nine with dispensation from some religious courts.^[347]

Lebanon is a state party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).^[348] In November 2015, the CEDAW committee called on Lebanon to adopt an optional civil personal status law based on the principles of equality and non-discrimination and the right to choose one's religious affiliation in order to protect women and alleviate their legal, economic and social marginalization.^[349] The committee also expressed concerns about child marriage in Lebanon and called

on the authorities to set the legal minimum age for marriage at 18 years for girls and boys, in line with international standards.^[350]

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