

INTRODUCTION



Background

Ten years into the Syria conflict, Lebanon remains at the forefront of one of the worst humanitarian crises. The Government of Lebanon (GoL) estimates that the country hosts 1.5 million¹ of the 6.6 million² Syrians who have fled the conflict since 2011 (including 855,172 registered with UNHCR as of end of March 2021³). The Syrian refugee population in Lebanon remains one of the largest concentrations of refugees per capita in the world.

Adding to the humanitarian context, Lebanon is undergoing a series of overlapping crises on the political, economic, and social front, compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to this, the capital Beirut and the country are still recovering from the effects of the devastating blast in the port of Beirut on August 4, 2020.

On the macroeconomic front, from 2018 to 2020, the GDP (Gross Domestic Product) per capita has decreased by 37%, while real GDP is projected to contract by 11% in 2021, following a contraction of 21% in 2020. This constitutes one of the deepest crises globally.⁴ The Lebanese lira has continued to lose value in 2021, averaging 15,274 per USD (United States Dollars) in the informal market during the month of data collection (compared to 5,600 in 2020), equivalent to a loss of value of around 90% compared to the official rate of LBP (Lebanese Pounds) 1,500 per USD. The country depends heavily on imports, paid for in USD, and is going through a removal of subsidies, particularly of fuel, which are creating inflationary pressures. Lebanon's hyperinflation is among the highest globally, averaging 134% for all goods and services and 300% for food and non-alcoholic beverages (January–September 2021). The high inflation is negatively affecting the purchasing power and welfare of families.

Lebanon was also strongly affected by COVID-19, with around 560,000 (10% of the population) confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 7,906 deaths by end-July 2021.⁵

Taking all the aspects jointly, the political situation, economic downturn, steep inflation, Beirut blast, and COVID-19 have pushed vulnerable communities in Lebanon - including Syrian refugees - to an even more precarious standard of living.

The 2021 Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (VASyR) was the ninth annual representative survey assessing the situation of Syrian refugees in Lebanon to identify changes and trends in their vulnerabilities. Similar to 2020, given the COVID-19 pandemic in Lebanon, most assessments and other activities requiring in-person visits were either cancelled or postponed. Considering the prolonged socio-economic status in Lebanon and COVID-19, it was crucial to provide needs-based estimates on Syrian refugees in the country. Thus, the VASyR 2021 was one of the few assessments that were conducted face-to-face; the implementation was accompanied by a comprehensive COVID measures protocol to ensure the safety of families and field workers (see Methodology for more details). The criticality of conducting the VASyR 2021 was to provide insights about Syrian refugees impacted by the overlapping crises affecting Lebanon.

Purpose

The VASyR is an essential tool for planning, decision-making, and needs-based program design. Results of the VASyR are used by the ten sectors under the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) to understand the evolving situation in Lebanon and to advocate for funding from donors. The VASyR has also been used to build targeting models, for instance to predict the socio-economic vulnerability and allocate assistance accordingly. Results of the VASyR are used to show the geographical differences in vulnerabilities at governorate and district levels, which feed into the situation analysis.

The key objectives of the VASyR are:

1. To provide a multisectoral overview/update of the vulnerability situation of Syrian refugees in Lebanon through an annual household survey. This assessment offers an understanding of the economic situation, food security, coping strategies, shelter living conditions, access to services, the situation of women and children, and more. The information feeds into the situational analysis of the LCRP and informs the planning processes of local government agencies, donor countries, and NGOs.

2. To enhance targeting for the provision of assistance. The VASyR is used to build or revise targeting models, like the targeting formula to predict socio-economic vulnerability, which in turn are used for targeting for cash and food assistance. The results of the VASyR also inform other targeting approaches, for instance on protection risks or shelter vulnerability, and identify the most vulnerable areas.

3. To contribute to the LCRP Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework. The VASyR results are used to measure whether sector objectives (outcomes) have been achieved. The VASyR is also used in the formulas to calculate LCRP impact indicators (e.g. protection risks).

4. Provide an overview of the additional needs of Syrian refugees impacted by the ongoing crisis. VASyR 2021 aims to provide insights on how Syrian refugees have been impacted by the overlapping crises affecting Lebanon.

¹ LCRP 2017-2020 (2020 update)

² <https://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2019/>

³ UNHCR registration data as of March 31, 2021

⁴ World Bank (2021). Lebanon's Economic Update — October 2021.

⁵ WHO (2021). Lebanon: WHO Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Dashboard. Consulted on November 12, 2021.

Assessment organization and scope

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the World Food Programme (WFP) are the VASyR technical leading agencies and form the VASyR steering committee together with the Inter-Agency Coordination unit. The VASyR Core Group agencies members were responsible for implementing the assessment, providing technical insights, and ensuring quality control. The Inter-Agency unit coordinates the VASyR process among the core group members, ensuring linkages between the VASyR and the LCRP, as well as communication and feedback from the different sectors.

The development of the analysis plan and questionnaire began in February 2021 through rounds of feedback with the Core Group and sector experts. Data collection took place from June 7 to July 7, 2021. Preliminary data analysis occurred from August through November 2021, and full analysis and report writing took place from September through November 2021.

The figure below reflects the scope and contents of the VASyR.

The analysis for this report was conducted by the three above-mentioned UN agencies with the support and coordination of the Inter-Agency unit. UNHCR is the lead for demographics, protection, shelter, health, energy, and assistance, while UNICEF is the lead for WASH, youth, education, child protection, child health, child nutrition, and children with disabilities. WFP is the lead agency for economic vulnerability, livelihoods, food consumption, coping strategies, and food security. WFP also supported with the analysis of child nutrition data. All agencies conducted the data analysis and wrote up the chapters internally based on the breakdown of responsibilities. UN Women conducted gender specific analysis and result write-up based on data analysis by the lead agencies. Humanity and Inclusion conducted the disabilities analysis. Coordinators from the three agencies provided the requested analysis and oversaw the relevant chapters in the VASyR.

For additional details on the implementation of the survey, see the Methodology chapter.

