



Inter-Agency
Coordination
Lebanon



UNHCR
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (VASyR) analyses a representative sample of Syrian refugee households in Lebanon to provide a multisectoral update of the situation of this population. Conducted annually, 2022 marks the tenth year of this assessment. The contents of this report, jointly issued by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), shows a continuous deterioration in the living situation of Syrians in Lebanon amid the deepening economic and financial crisis. With the exponential rise in prices of essential goods and services, 90 per cent of families need support to meet their basic needs. Reliance on negative coping mechanisms remained high, with further deterioration in the food security situation of families, and the majority of families continuing to live in substandard shelter conditions.

METHODOLOGY

In June and July 2022, survey teams visited over 5,000 randomly selected Syrian refugee households, covering all districts across Lebanon. The household questionnaire was based on that of the previous year to ensure comparability, and face-to-face interviews took 45–60 minutes to complete. The analysis plan was developed with inputs from the sector working groups and with reference to global indicators.

KEY FINDINGS

Protection

Legal residency rates were at an all-time low, with 17 per cent of Syrian refugees holding legal residency. Rates among women were lower than among men. Positively, birth registration rates increased, reaching 36 per cent. For those who have not completed the registration process, the main barriers included unaffordability (fees and transport) and lack of awareness of the procedures. Concerns about kidnapping were reported significantly higher in 2022 compared to 2021 and 2020 across all age and gender groups. The proportion of households where someone had personally witnessed a physical confrontation involving at least one Syrian refugee increased by 3 percentage points. That said, there was a positive increase in reported intra-community relations, with 61 per cent of Syrian households rating interactions with the Lebanese host communities as positive or very positive. Of those who reported tensions, the primary driver was competition for jobs.

Child Protection: Child labour, early marriage, and violent discipline

The percentage of children between 5 and 17 years old who were engaged in child labour in 2022 is 4 per cent. There was a significant difference in the gender parity of child labour, with boys (7%) and girls (2%). Among adolescent boys and girls aged 15–17, 17 per cent had worked for at least one hour in return for pay, with boys at a triple rate compared to girls, at 28 per cent and 9 per cent respectively.

Twenty two percent of girls aged 15 to 19 were married at the time of the survey. Among married girls, 68 per cent did not attend school on any day during the scholastic year 2021/2022 and the previous year 2020/2021. The highest rate of child early marriage was found in Beirut at 36 per cent, with the lowest being in Akkar at 16 per cent.

More than half children between 1 to 14 (58%) experienced forms of violent discipline, namely physical punishment and/or psychological aggression an increase of 6 percentage points from last year. The highest was in more remote areas such as El Nabatieh (77 per cent) and Baalbek-El Hermel (76 per cent) governorates, with the lowest in Mount Lebanon (47 per cent) and Beirut (51 per cent) and South Lebanon (51 per cent).

Economic vulnerability

Given the inflation of prices and the depreciation of the Lebanese lira, Syrian refugees in Lebanon have become economically highly vulnerable. Over two thirds of Syrian refugees did not have the economic capacity to afford the minimum essential items needed to survive. If the value of assistance and credit had to be deducted from the household budget, then nearly 90 percent of the Syrian refugee households would not have the economic capacity to meet survival needs. Total expenditure has almost quadrupled in 2022 compared to 2021 (LBP 1,575,613 in 2022 versus LBP 316,129 in 2021), and the prices of food items have increased by 332 per cent since June 2021. Almost all refugee households (94 per cent) were taking on debt to cover their essential food and non-food needs, with an average accumulated debt of LBP 11,610,661 per household and LBP 2,764,159 per capita. Food needs continue to be the main reason for borrowing, as reported by 93 per cent of households, followed by rent (46 per cent) and medication costs (35 per cent). This indicates that refugees' purchasing power has decreased and they are unable to meet their essential needs without taking on debt, which further exacerbates their vulnerability.

Food security

In 2022, based on the consolidated approach for reporting indicators (CARI), the rate of food insecurity among Syrian refugees witnessed a sharp increase to reach 67 per cent (61 per cent were moderately food insecure and 6 per cent were severely food insecure), compared to 49 per cent in 2021. The highest increases in rates of food insecurity were reported in the governorates of Akkar and Baalbek-El Hermel (31 percentage-point increases each). a higher proportion of female headed households were food insecure, compared to male headed households and seven out of ten households living below the SMEB were food insecure. The percentage of households with inadequate food consumption also increased in 2022 (57 per cent in 2022 versus 46 per cent in 2021). The governorates with the highest rates of inadequate food intake were North Lebanon (72 per cent), Baalbek-El Hermel (62 per cent), Bekaa (62 per cent) and Akkar (59 per cent). Daily dietary diversity decreased in 2022, as 14 per cent of refugees had rich diversity and consumed over 6.5 food groups per day, compared to 21 per cent of refugees in 2021. Daily consumption of vitamin A-rich foods (24 per cent in 2022 versus 36 per cent in 2021) and protein rich foods (34 per cent versus 44 per cent) also significantly decreased.

Livelihoods

The percentage of working refugees remained stable in 2022 compared to 2021 (both 33 per cent); however, this is an increase since 2020 (26 per cent). Seven out of ten households had at least one working member, and the monthly income from employment for all households in dollars has almost doubled this year, \$34 (LBP 517,564) in 2022 versus \$60 in 2021 (LBP 1,708,258). Even with this increase, their income only covered 21 per cent of the cost of the SMEB, similar to 2021. This further proves that refugees were unable to cover the costs of their food and non-food essential needs from their employment. Female labour-force participation remained much lower than male labour-force participation (18 per cent and 73 per cent respectively). Most refugees reported humanitarian aid as their main source of income, which indicates the importance of this aid given that refugees were highly dependent on it to survive.

Coping strategies

The overwhelming majority of refugees, 97 per cent, had resorted to coping strategies to meet their food needs. They were consuming less preferred/less expensive foods, reducing meal portion sizes and reducing the number of meals eaten per day. In 2022, 44 per cent of refugees had reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI) values of 19+ points, indicating that they faced high difficulties in accessing food. The highest increases in rCSI value were reported in South Lebanon (25 points in 2022 versus 15 points in 2021) and El Nabatieh (23 points in 2022 versus 19 points in 2021). A total of 69 per cent of the Syrian refugee population were adapting crisis and emergency livelihood coping strategies that affected their medium- and long-term ability to cope with future shocks. Some of the most implemented strategies among refugees were reducing expenditure on food (89 per cent), buying food on credit (81 per cent), and reducing expenditure on health (60 per cent) and education (30 per cent). Additionally, one out of ten refugee households reported withdrawing their children from school to reduce expenditures.

Nutrition

A Significant per cent of children in Lebanon are not getting the diets they need to reach their potential growth and development. Children are not fed enough of the right foods at the right time. Currently, 54 per cent of children aged 6–8 months are not fed solid foods. Among children aged 6–23 months, 89 per cent are not fed with the minimum meal frequency, and 81 per cent do not have minimally diverse diets. The low consumption of nutritious foods is especially worrying among over 70 and 90 per cent of children who are missing the lifelong benefits of the most nutrient-rich foods, such as fruits and vegetables and protein group such as eggs, fish and meat respectively. Children's diets have seen little or no improvement since last two years due to prolongation of the socio-economic crisis, the above deprivations are already showing impact on the nutritional outcomes among the most vulnerable children and lastly, children's diets are constrained by gender barriers, girl bearing higher risks to poor diets.

Health

About 18 per cent of individuals had a health problem that required access to health care in the last three months, and 73 per cent of these individuals were able to access the needed health care. Among individuals in need of health care, 90 per cent needed primary health care (PHC) and 10 per cent needed secondary health care (SHC). The percentage of households in need who were able to access PHC (75 per cent) was higher than the percentage of households who were able to access SHC services (59 per cent). Cost was, by far, the main barrier to accessing the needed care. This included direct costs, such as treatment or consultation fees, and indirect costs, such as transportation.

Regarding children, the percentage of refugee children under the age of 2 who suffered from at least one disease in the two weeks prior to the survey was 24 per cent, which was similar to 2021 and 2020.

Regarding women's delivery, 23 per cent of women aged 15–49 had delivered a baby in the past two years, of which 54 per cent received at least four antenatal care visits and 92 per cent delivered in health-care facilities.

Shelter

Monthly rental costs have almost tripled compared to 2021, reaching an average of over LBP 800,000 nationally, with the highest rates in Beirut. More than half of households are behind on their rent payments, and almost a third of those are three months behind or more. The distribution of Syrian refugee households across the main shelter types remained stable, with 69 per cent living in residential structures, 21 per cent in non-permanent shelters and 10 per cent in non-residential structures. Like last year, over half (58 per cent) of households were living in shelters that were either overcrowded, had conditions below humanitarian standards, and/or were in danger of collapse. A total of 7 per cent of households were currently living under an eviction notice.

Energy

In 2022 access to electricity declined significantly, with 12 per cent of households not having any connection to an electricity source (3 per cent in 2021). Almost all households were experiencing power outages, at an average of 15 hours per day, more than double the figure for 2021. The national grid was only supplying an average of three hours of electricity per day, and households were increasingly relying on private generators. Reliance on wood for cooking and heating increased significantly since 2021, and almost a third of

households reported not having an energy source for heating during the previous winter season.

WASH

In 2022, a significant portion of Syrian households reported not having enough water to meet various needs. Drinking water sources were not available when needed for 28 per cent of households, while 56 per cent reported insufficient or barely sufficient water for washing and domestic purposes, a devastating increase of 23 percentage points from 2021. Water insufficiency was higher in residential shelters, which indicates a worse level of accessing services than in non-permanent locations heavily supported with humanitarian assistance.

The proportion of households that share their toilet with other households has doubled since 2021 and reached 36 per cent. This may have potential negative protection and GBV-related implications and is particularly concerning in non-permanent locations where half of the households reported sharing the toilet with other households. This significant increase of 23 percentage points from 2021 for non-permanent locations may be associated with economic hardship and selling toilet materials to cover other household needs.

Education

The numbers of children who are accessing education remains low, and with the situation being worse than pre-COVID rates. Out of all school-aged children, between the ages of 3 and 17 years of age, just half (53%) reported attending school for the year 2021-2022. The results show significant fluctuations between ages, with 14 percent among pre-primary children (ages 3 to 5), 59% of children ages 6 to 14, and 27% among adolescents ages 15 to 17. Gender disparity is a major issue at the secondary levels, with twice as many girls accessing education by the time they reach upper secondary levels; boys lack of access is reported as due to work as the main reason. Economic barriers remain the greatest issue facing children who were not attending school, with transportation (32%), cost of education materials (27%), and work (22%), cited as the most common reasons. The youth ages 15-24 remain vulnerable, with 59% without any education, employment or training. Thirty-five percent of all youth ages 15-24 have never attended school.

Recommendations

- Legal residency:** The VASyR findings demonstrate the need for targeted outreach for legal residency. Targeting should be guided by several factors. In addition to focusing on locations with low legal residency rates, partners should consider locations where impact of not having legal residency is more severe on individuals. For example, in South Lebanon, legal residency rates have historically been high(er) compared to other governorates. This is understood to be an indication of the increased need to prioritize legal residency for easier movement and safety due to the specific security situation. Similarly, in 2022, restrictive measures have been more prominent in informal tented settlements (ITSs), particularly in Bekaa, and ITSs have significantly lower legal residency rates compared to other shelter types, making this important for the prioritization of outreach. Furthermore, there should be tailored outreach for women and youth given their low rates of legal residency, without diverting resources from outreach to young men and adolescent boys who, according to the community, face greater risk of arrest and detention as a result of lack of legal residency.

• **Challenges with obtaining legal residency:** Challenges should be addressed through an expansion of the fee waiver in line with the recommendations of the Brussels Conference partnership papers. Expanding the fee waiver for legal residency to all categories of refugees, not just those with UNHCR registration, while ensuring consistent implementation of the 2017 fee waiver across the country, is critical for refugee protection. Furthermore, permitting all Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR – even if they previously renewed their residency based on a sponsorship – to renew their residency based on their UNHCR certificate, and allowing Syrian youth who have turned 15 years old while in Lebanon to obtain residency using their Syrian Individual Civil Extract even after they become adults and without a specific validity, would significantly facilitate access to legal residency. Furthermore, specific considerations should also be taken of concerns raised by refugees about approaching General Security Offices (GSOs), pointing to the need to expand accompaniment practices of refugees to GSOs given the promising results from this practice. These measures are especially important in light of yearly increases to legal residency barriers reported by refugees. They will allow for the increase of refugees' freedom of movement and access to documentation, as well as to critical services, justice and safety. They would also provide the national authorities with comprehensive updated information on the refugee population.

• **Birth registration:** Long-term efforts to promote birth and marriage registration demonstrate a gradual impact, but to maintain results, efforts must be mainstreamed through other sectors. To effect large-scale improvement in birth registration rates, continued significant policy changes will need to be made at the level of ministries. This emphasizes the need to extend the waiver to Syrian children born after 8 February 2022, also including children of other nationalities, including Lebanese.

• **Protection and conflict-sensitivity mainstreaming:** Results from the VASyR show there are growing challenges to accessing services in the community, aid perception bias, and barriers people face when accessing and participating in humanitarian interventions. Protection mainstreaming and conflict sensitivity must be key priorities in the response in 2023. A critical step to achieving this is to improve the availability of analysis on protection risks in relation to humanitarian assistance.

• **Safety and security:** Perceptions collected in relation to safety and security incidents demonstrate the need for perspectives to be directly sought from the different age, gender, disability and diversity groups in order to provide more accurate results and tailor responses. Feedback from the community in terms of how their physical safety can be improved is important. Increases in reported safety and security concerns demonstrates a need to scale up case management services and ensure case workers are equipped to adequately respond especially to legal and physical protection cases. Furthermore, a better understanding of the drivers leading to households with at least one member with a disability reporting high(er) safety and security concerns is required, as well as the mainstreaming of these households into other sector services and social assistance programmes.

• **Gender-based violence (GBV):** Results on women and girls' safety and security concerns were limited due to the survey methodology. However, results on sexual harassment do point to the need to increase targeted programming for sexual harassment, especially in southern Lebanon, as well as a need to reach out to households with persons with a disability. Strengthening the protection of girls who are forced into child labour is extremely important in order to prevent sexual exploitation. Moreover, interventions should enhance intersectoral collaboration among education, child protection and GBV partners to improve safety in schools. This could include GBV training for teachers and students, and safe referrals to specialized services. Lastly, noting the limitations of quantitative household surveys to safely collect data on GBV vulnerability, assessments should be complemented with qualitative studies to identify main GBV risks for refugees and host communities.

• **Protection of children from violence:** The VASyR results show how children are deprived of their right to protection from different forms of violence, namely child labour, violent discipline and child marriage, in line with results from various other sources. With the current situation of mass poverty, unemployment at a tipping point, cumulative debts on families, and schools still at risk of closure, children are the ones who will be impacted the most. This calls for optimizing and expanding integration between sectors and programmes, while ensuring a gender- and age-sensitive approach. Each vulnerable child should benefit from protection services such as mental health and psychosocial sessions, parenting, or case management, linked with other complementary services such as social assistance, education (formal and non-formal) and skills learning. This integrated approach, including social and behaviour change initiatives, can prevent violence against children by addressing the different determinants of protection violation in a holistic manner. The violation of children's rights warrants prioritization, given that the phenomena might escalate quickly in light of the absence of any national policy (e.g. a minimum age for marriage), increase in unemployment and poverty rates, school closures, and deterioration of the socioeconomic situation.

• **Food security and basic needs:** Continue to expand the provision of cash-based assistance, and to adjust the value of transfers to ensure they adequately meet increasing food and other essential needs (e.g. education, health, shelter) in a context of currency depreciation, price spikes, subsidy removals and reduced livelihood opportunities.

There should be regular and timely monitoring of prices and the value of the SMEB/MEB, and the adjustment of transfer values accordingly to ensure that refugees can meet their essential food and non-food needs without resorting to negative coping strategies.

There is a need for the expansion of cash-based assistance and ensuring that transfer values are informed by the gap analysis to make certain that severely vulnerable Syrian refugees, those unable to cover the cost of the SMEB, receive required assistance.

Likewise, food security and vulnerability indicators need to be continuously monitored throughout the year, at both national and governorate levels. Given the results of this monitoring process, the indicators need to be updated to capture the dynamic socioeconomic situation in Lebanon.

There is a need for tailored programmes that reflect gender-, disability- and protection-related vulnerabilities. For example, the proportion of women within the labour force remains low (18 per cent), hence it is recommended to plan programmes that encourage women to enter the labour force. It is also recommended to tailor assessments and programmes to specifically capture the food security and livelihood needs of vulnerable refugees. Future programmes should be designed accordingly.

The monthly income of most Syrian refugees was enough to cover only 21 per cent of the SMEB. This indicates that they were being poorly paid, even though they were taking on high-risk jobs (6 per cent of Syrian refugees were found to be engaged in high-risks jobs). Given that Syrian refugees are only able to work in two sectors, agriculture and construction, there is a need to diversify agricultural and livelihoods projects for which refugees will be adequately paid for their work, decreasing the rate of refugees taking on high-risk jobs. Collaboration among humanitarian agencies, NGOs and the Government is needed in order to develop income opportunities for Syrian refugees.

Given the worsening socioeconomic crisis, the depreciation of the Lebanese lira and the impact of these on all residents in Lebanon, it is recommended to focus on conflict sensitivity in all programmes pertaining to food and basic needs assistance among refugees. There is a need for greater advocacy with donors to increase funding for food assistance to ensure adequate transfer values, updated on a regular basis based on needs and gap

analysis, to avoid prioritizing reach over assistance value. Funding for agricultural livelihoods interventions is also key, to enhance people's access to food and reduce their reliance on imports.

• **Nutrition:** The VASyR has shown that Syrian children in Lebanon face an increased risk to meeting dietary requirements. Poor-quality diets impose major risks to survival, growth, early childhood development. These risks are highest in the first two years of life, when insufficient dietary intake of nutrients can permanently harm a child's rapid growth and development. In such context, there must be an explicit focus on addressing all forms of malnutrition and the associated growth and developmental deprivations. Deprived growth and early childhood development are a violation of children's right and has lifelong impacts on wellbeing of the population throughout the life course. Specific focus during maternal and child nutrition during the first 1,000 days coupled with a nurturing care framework and Early Childhood Development investment– must be a core to the response to ensure all children reach their potential growth and development. In such context, the government must take the lead in fulfilling every child's right to nutrition. Together with humanitarian and development partners as well as the private sector, governments must mobilize all delivery systems; including nutrition, food, health and social protection systems to deliver nutritious, adequate and affordable diets, essential nutrition and child development services and promote healthy nutrition and child development practices to every child, their caregivers and women.

• **Access to health care:**

Considering the increasingly difficult socioeconomic situation in the country and its impact on the health system, it is crucial to maintain and expand all current support provided by health sector partners to increase equitable access to quality health-care services. In general, the public health system needs to be supported and strengthened to ensure provision of universal access to health care. It is becoming crucial to address the financial barriers to accessing PHC and SHC. This includes direct costs, such as treatment and consultation fees, and indirect costs, such as transportation. The poor access to medications highlights the need to increase support to the mechanism for central acquisition and distribution of essential drugs to PHC facilities, as well as to strengthen supply chain management at the health facilities level. The overall situation requires efforts to further increase integrated health education, awareness and care-seeking behaviours, especially for preventive services such as vaccination and antenatal care.

• **Shelter and eviction:**

Preparedness and response to emergencies, mainly addressing refugees living in non-permanent shelters, should be ensured to enhance lifesaving interventions. The current yearly mobility rate of 11 per cent, and increase in eviction and eviction threats from 5 to 7 per cent, are results of increased socioeconomic vulnerability and civil unrest. This should be addressed through short-term emergency response (e.g. cash for rent). An integrated and multisectoral response for the longer term, focusing on shelter, water, sanitation and hygiene, protection, and social stability, is also required to meet the increasing needs of the Syrian refugee population in Lebanon.

• **WaSH:** The only viable, at-scale solution to mitigate elevated public health risks in Lebanon, including the prevention of recurring cholera outbreaks, is through the immediate systemic-level support to the operational and managerial capacity of public water and sanitation service providers. This will not only prevent the total collapse of utilities, which are the most cost-efficient way of water and sanitation service provision to the population but in the longer-term contribute to the implementation of the national water sector strategy and reforms, and increase the subscription rate.

Given that the main bottleneck for the WaSH sector remains energy, a key priority is to continue supporting humanitarian and development actors' efforts to reduce water supply and sanitation systems' reliance on fossil fuel and electricity from the public grid.

The most viable alternative in Lebanon is the solarization of feasible systems and/or the increase the gravity-fed water supply solutions. The humanitarian support for a basic WaSH services provision to 300,000 displaced Syrians residing in non-permanent locations needs to continue. Resources to cover the capital cost of investments for the water and sanitation action plans and high-level advocacy for durable solutions are urgently required to enable the transition to more sustainable and cost-efficient ways of securing access to WaSH services, that should benefit both hosting and displaced communities.

• **Education**

To reduce present and future vulnerabilities, education must continue to be a priority for the crisis response. There is a clear need to increase outreach to out-of-school children and youth, expanding opportunities for supporting their enrollment in primary school, as well as providing recognized alternatives for older children and youth to acquire foundational skills and training. With economic barriers remaining the greatest challenge to education access, education costs, including transportation and education materials, should be considered in all interventions that respond to economic vulnerabilities, and cash for education should be expanded. Greater cross-sectoral collaboration child protection will be needed to respond to the gender disparities in education related to child work, particularly for children ages 12-18. Similarly, cross-sectoral collaboration with livelihoods could support rates of education access for youth. With very low rates of pre-primary education access and given its importance in achieving higher education completion rates and improved learning outcomes, investment in awareness and expansions of services for children ages 3-5 is needed. Finally, it would be useful to research more about the factors within the education settings that influence drop-out overall and transition between lower secondary and upper-secondary levels.