



**NRC**

NORWEGIAN  
REFUGEE COUNCIL



**A FUTURE IN THE BALANCE: LEBANON**



APRIL 2016

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The identity of the individual youth has been protected for reasons of safety and privacy.

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## A FUTURE IN THE BALANCE: LEBANON

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Lebanon is one of the countries in the world hosting the most refugees relative to its population size – one in every four persons in the country is believed to be a refugee. An estimated 16% of over 1.5 million refugees living in Lebanon are believed to be young people aged between 15 and 24.<sup>1</sup> In this formative stage of their lives, between childhood and fully-fledged adulthood, they are particularly sensitive to the adverse circumstances that surround them. Missed opportunities for development and exposure to violence can have a profound impact on their own future and their potential to positively contribute to the future of their societies.

*A Future in the Balance: Lebanon* has been commissioned in support of the Norwegian Refugee Council's (NRC) regional youth report, *A Future in the Balance: How Conflict in Syria is Impacting on the Needs, Concerns and Aspirations of Young People Across the Middle East*, in order to provide a better understanding of how the difficult circumstances for refugee communities in Lebanon translate into life experiences of the refugee youth.

The picture emerging is that of a generation stunted in development, deprived of adolescence and forced into premature adulthood. It is a generation facing a double burden: the same worsening protection environment and limited access to livelihoods as adult refugees and more complex administrative barriers to accessing education than refugee children.

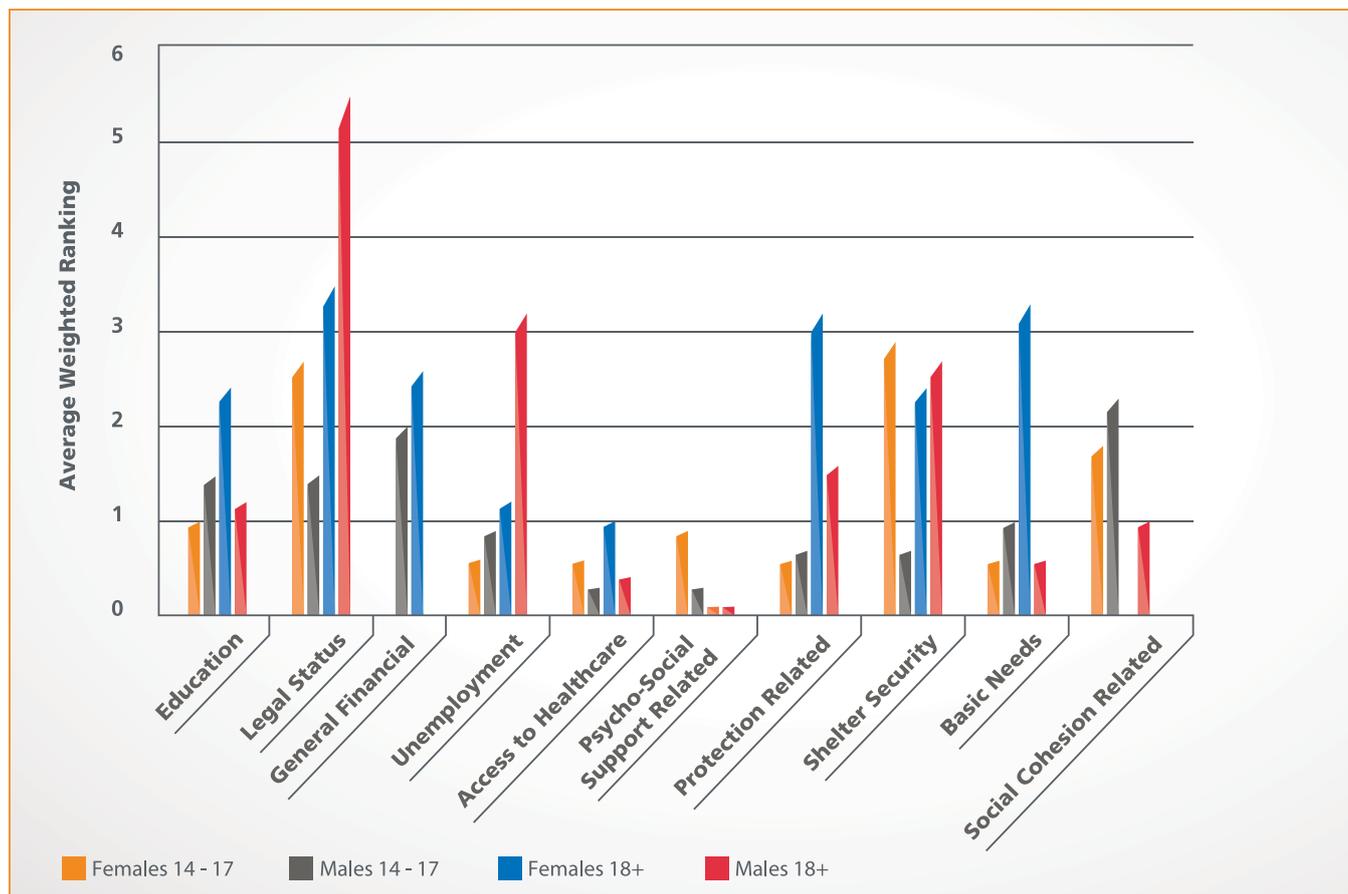
The young people also spoke of the pervading undercurrent of violence that marks their lives in Lebanon. Young men reported instances of violence by young adults from the host communities and by Lebanon's security forces. For young women, the violence seems to feature mainly in private spaces in the shape of increased domestic and gender-based violence. Both groups lack access to any kind of formal redress, fuelling a sense of isolation and despondency.

The research was conducted throughout October and November 2015 and is focused on refugee youth in North Lebanon, providing an in-depth understanding of the dynamics in this limited geographical area. Researchers conducted 31 focus group discussions with 231 young refugees across six major localities in North Lebanon and held conversations with key informants.

In order to provide insight into specific male and female experiences, these discussions were gender-separated: 16 of the groups were female-only, 13 were male-only and only 2 were mixed gender university students. The groups were also equally spread over three key age cohorts: 14-17, 18-21 and 22-25. The research included youth living in urban and peri-urban settings, in informal tented settlements as well as Palestinian refugee youth who were born in Lebanon or arrived as refugees from Syria.

The graph below represents an overview of the key challenges the young people identified, ranked by importance and disaggregated by gender and age group. It is the complex interaction of the problems listed below that makes their existence so precarious. While there are no simple solutions to the problems they identify, the research makes a strong case for a concerted effort by all stakeholders to open paths for development to this generation and ensure that their potential is not lost.

**FIGURE 1.1 - KEY PROBLEMS BY GENDER AND AGE**



## KEY FINDINGS

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**FINDING ONE:** Young refugees are particularly adversely affected by the worsening protection climate in Lebanon, and specifically by restrictive regulations on legal stay.

Conditions for renewal of legal stay in Lebanon became significantly harder in January 2015, when the Government introduced new entry and visa renewal regulations for Syrian citizens that have had a far-reaching impact on their lives.

Syrian refugees registered with the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) can use their registration as a basis for renewing residency visas – under the conditions that they also produce a signed pledge not to work and a notarised housing commitment signed by their landlord. For Syrian refugees not registered with UNHCR, or not wishing to use their UNHCR registration as a basis for renewal,<sup>2</sup> regulations require a notarised housing commitment and a Lebanese citizen (a sponsor) to pledge personal legal responsibility for them.<sup>3</sup>

In both cases, the household head is required to pay a USD 200 annual fee to the national government for every member of the household over the age of 15<sup>4</sup> and an estimated USD 75 in administrative costs. Considering that over 50% of Syrian refugee households live on less than USD 435 a month<sup>5</sup> – out of which they also need to pay an average monthly rent of USD 164<sup>6</sup> - the costs alone are prohibitive for many.

The situation is further aggravated by the difficulties in obtaining the actual required documentation and a lack of consistency in the way in which the regulations are applied across various state security offices.

Similarly restrictive and less transparent rules have already been in place since May 2014 for Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS). As a result, in early 2016, anywhere between 53% and 70% of Syrian refugees<sup>7</sup> and 85% of Palestinian refugees from Syria<sup>8</sup> lack valid legal stay. In February 2016, the Lebanese government said it would review the regulatory framework surrounding these restrictive regulations,<sup>9</sup> but no such measures have yet been taken.

These conditions have had a major impact on the everyday lives of refugee youth. They have limited their freedom of movement and access to work and exposed them to risk of harassment and detention by the national security forces as well as to the risk of being issued self-deportation orders. The young people participating in the focus groups described not being able to leave their places of residence for fear of crossing checkpoints without proper documents - this was especially strongly reported by young males, who are often perceived as a security threat and are at greater risk of being stopped at checkpoints. “When there is a checkpoint we cannot leave the camp, even for the store,” said one male participant. This results in feelings of “being imprisoned” in their neighbourhoods or tented settlements.<sup>10</sup>

*“Our problems with residency lead to many other problems like escaping all the checkpoints and trying to travel unsafely to Germany.”*

*Participant, FGD, males 22-25, Tripoli*

**In 87% of the focus group discussions, regularising legal stay was identified as one of the major needs. In 70% of the groups, valid legal stay was in the top five needs or problems.** The weight of the issues grows with age. As seen in Figure 1.1, males and females aged between 18 and 25 were more likely to highlight legal status as a key problem.

These regulations translate into even more specific barriers for youth:

- Due to higher costs, families often prioritise renewing only one residency permit – that of the head of household, leaving young people vulnerable.
- Obtaining a residency permit is virtually impossible for young people turning 15 in displacement. This is the age at which Syrian nationals have to be in possession of their own residency visa in Lebanon and have to present their own passport or ID. This is an insurmountable obstacle for many, because passports and IDs for Syrians in Lebanon are only issued by the Syrian embassy. Many Syrian refugees feel unsafe approaching the Embassy – for a number of reasons including fear that they will be called up for military service, or that their remaining families in Syria may be subject to persecution.
- The lack of residency permits affects access to civil documentation including marriage, divorce, birth and death certificates. Young women reported this as particularly problematic as it leaves their children vulnerable to statelessness and creates an atmosphere conducive to domestic violence. “How will my children be registered in Syria when my marriage is not registered here?”<sup>11</sup> asked one female focus group participant. Young women also mentioned a sense of vulnerability related to the lack of registered marriages and the inequality it creates. “If we divorce we get nothing. So we stay in the marriages and accept the beating and cursing.”<sup>12i</sup>

Earlier NRC studies confirmed that both marriage and birth certificates are highly difficult to obtain. A 2015 NRC assessment found that 92% of the refugees interviewed were not able to complete the legal and administrative steps required to register births. In late 2015, NRC monitoring of Syrian couples who had married in Lebanon and subsequently sought legal advice, showed that only 13% of them had managed to complete even the first step in the process to obtain marriage certificates.

*Norwegian Refugee Council, Drivers of Despair: Refugee Protection Failures in Jordan and Lebanon, 2016.*

# LOUAY

Louay is only 20 but already feels his future is bleak. He came to Lebanon in 2011, soon after the Syrian crisis erupted, fleeing the violence in his hometown in Syria's Tal Kalakh with his family. For the first three years he stayed in the border town of Wadi Khaled in North Lebanon but eventually moved to Miniyeh to be closer to his father's job.

Louay's education was abruptly halted when the crisis erupted, and he hasn't been back to school since. This has dashed both his dreams of attending university and of finding a stable job. Back in Syria, he had thought about studying interior design. That dream seems far away now because of all the years of school he has missed.

Louay enrolled in a photography class at NRC's community centre in North Lebanon. He enjoyed it so much that he considered taking it up full-time, but the lack of valid residency means he cannot be a professional photographer.

The best he can hope for is finding temporary work in Lebanon to help his family, also difficult to do because he doesn't have residency. He had to leave Miniyeh on several occasions in order to work, finding a job over 90

kilometres away from his home. He had to be sneaked into the town to avoid checkpoints, which would lead to his arrest and detention. Louay says "papers and restriction of movement in Lebanon" are the main reasons behind his inability to find stable work to help support his family.

"I wanted to work in Beirut. I used to be smuggled there. If I were to get caught at a checkpoint, there would be nothing I could do. We used to work above Antelias, in Ain Aar. The municipality there was always making rounds, detaining people who didn't have papers and who were illegal. We went to the supermarket to buy a few things, and the authorities came at us. I quickly fled. Some of my friends were caught," said Louay.

His employer managed to get his friends out quickly, but they still live in constant fear. "We cannot move. We cannot do anything," he said, visibly unhappy, his frustration almost palpable. "Because of legal papers, I cannot move, even with work. I rarely find work, and it is expensive [to study]."

Louay fears prison and says he doesn't know how long he would be detained if he were to be caught.

He says he'd need to pay a fine to be released or find a sponsor.

"If you don't find a sponsor you will remain imprisoned. Only when there is a sponsor, and there's money to pay for the residency, will they release me," he said. Louay spends most of his days at his friends' homes or at a nearby café playing pool. Many of them are Lebanese, and seeing them studying and working is a painful reminder that he is not able to do those things.

"I cannot work. I cannot do anything, unlike my Lebanese friends. They go to work, and I just sit here," he said.



**FINDING TWO:** Overwhelming poverty and restrictions on livelihoods are placing adult burdens on refugee youth, depriving them of adolescence and preventing development.

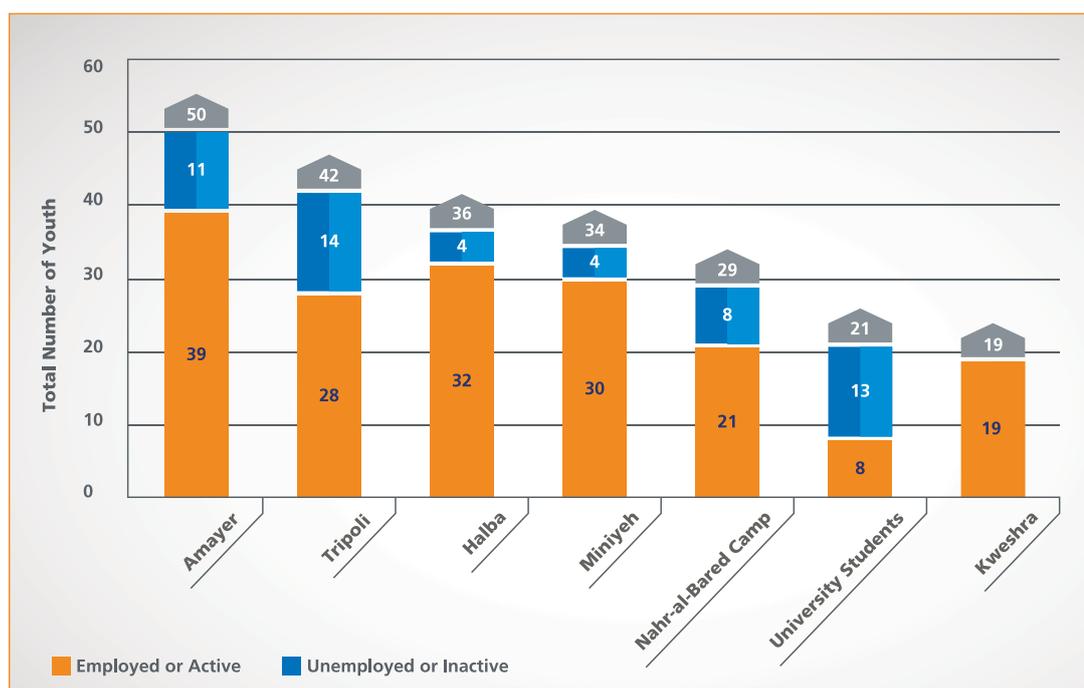
Being able to work and earn a living places youth in every society within structures that enable them to enter pathways to productive adulthood, including better standards of living, security and independence. Poverty, and inability to overcome it through employment, immensely undermines their psychosocial and physical wellbeing and stability.<sup>13</sup>

For refugee youth in Lebanon, employment is both a necessity and a barely achievable goal. As already discussed under the previous findings, having access to legal employment is virtually impossible for refugee youth, since obtaining a residency permit is in many cases conditional on signing a pledge not to work, while not having a residency permit severely limits youth's freedom of movement and access to work opportunities. Other barriers to accessing livelihoods include labour market constraints<sup>14,15,16</sup> an unattractive investor environment,<sup>17</sup> pre-crisis economic deprivation,<sup>18,19</sup> and unmet funding needs.<sup>20</sup>

At the time of this research, poverty levels among refugees in Lebanon had reached unprecedented levels with 70% of Syrian refugees, 66% of Palestinians previously in Lebanon and 89% of Palestinian refugees from Syria living below the national poverty line.<sup>21</sup>

As seen in Figure 1.2, the employment activity reported by youth is low with some localities such as Kweshra completely reliant on humanitarian aid for subsistence. It is important to bear in mind, however, that employment rates of Lebanese young people are also very low, and have dropped further as a result of the economic downturn caused by the Syrian crisis - also in comparison with the overall unemployment rates. While the overall unemployment rate for the country is estimated to be at 6.4%,<sup>22</sup> according to the World Bank, Lebanese youth unemployment is almost 21%.<sup>23</sup>The country's labour ministry put that figure at 33% in 2014.<sup>24</sup>

**FIGURE 1.2 - YOUTH EMPLOYMENT ACROSS GROUPS AND LOCALITIES**



“Youth’s main social and emotional problem is that they are dying of poverty.”

Female participant, FGD, Amayer

The impact of such barriers to livelihoods represents the single largest problem faced by young people. Four out of the 10 thematic categories which youth used to describe their problems (Figure 1.1) are directly linked to poverty: basic needs,<sup>25</sup> unemployment, general financial problems<sup>26</sup> and shelter security.

Because of severely limited employment opportunities and increasing poverty, the young refugees’ exposure to risks such as untreated medical conditions, child labour, early marriage,<sup>27</sup> drug use<sup>28</sup> and other negative coping mechanisms is increased. Furthermore, youth susceptibility to child labour, exploitive forms of labour<sup>29</sup> and non-attendance or drop out from school have been strongly linked to increased poverty.<sup>30,31,32</sup> The young people<sup>33</sup> and six key experts<sup>34</sup> explained early marriage primarily as a financial coping mechanism, one less mouth to feed.<sup>35</sup>

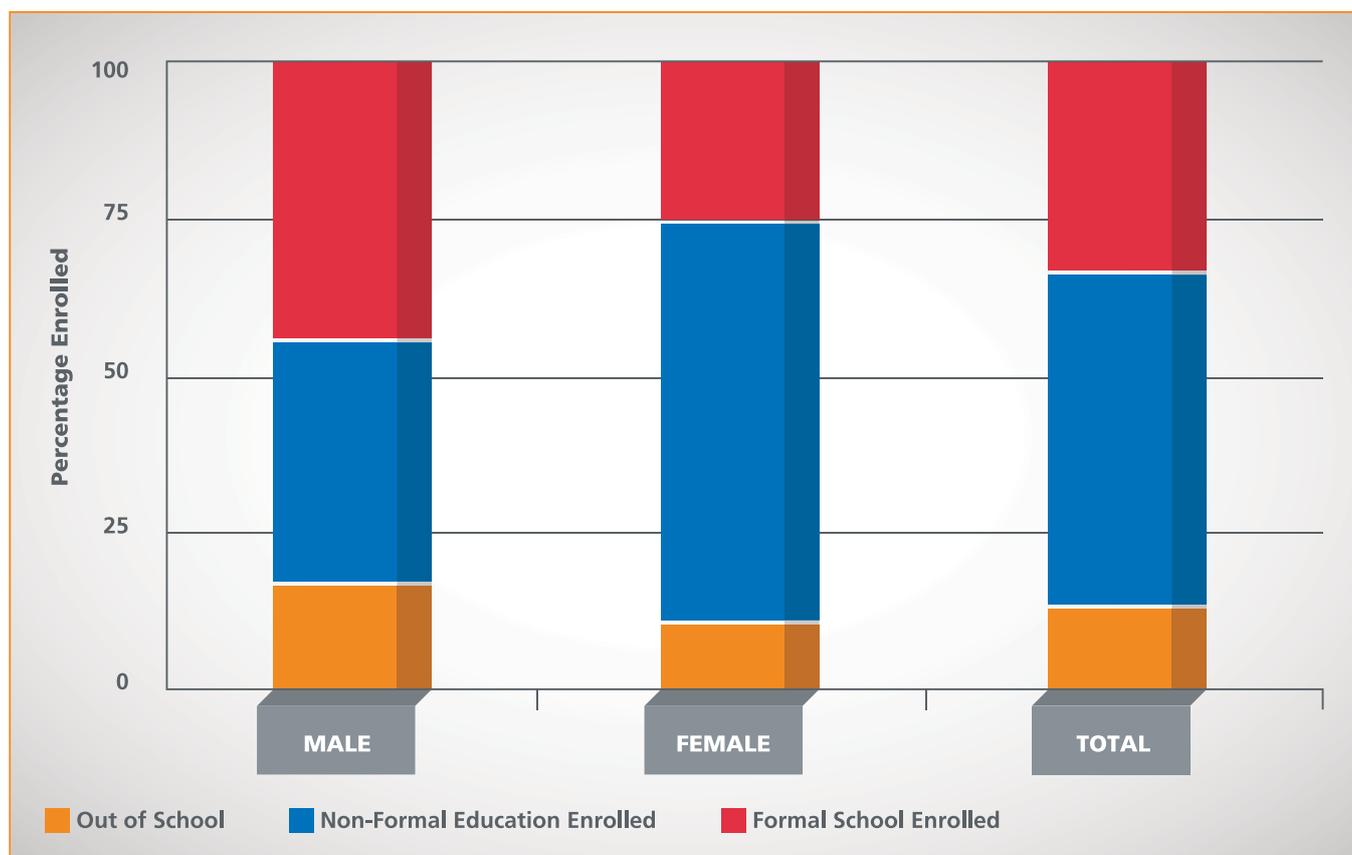
This tally with a recent study by Université Saint Joseph (USJ) that found that 23% of Syrian refugee girls were married before turning 18<sup>36</sup> – a sharp rise in comparison to 13% of Syrian women aged 20 to 25 that were married before their 18th birthday before the war.<sup>37</sup>

Finally, livelihood barriers influence youth at family and psychosocial levels. Because the overwhelming majority of refugees in this study lack valid residency and the movement of men is restricted due to security reasons,<sup>38</sup> some women said they enjoyed a greater role outside the house.<sup>39</sup> This coincided, however, with an increase in rates of gender based violence.<sup>40</sup> Though correlation is not causation, some experts see increasing domestic violence as a component of men’s loss of their sense of masculinity, a traditionally under-emphasised component of changing gender dynamics.<sup>41,42</sup>

**FINDING THREE:** Youth face almost insurmountable barriers to accessing education.

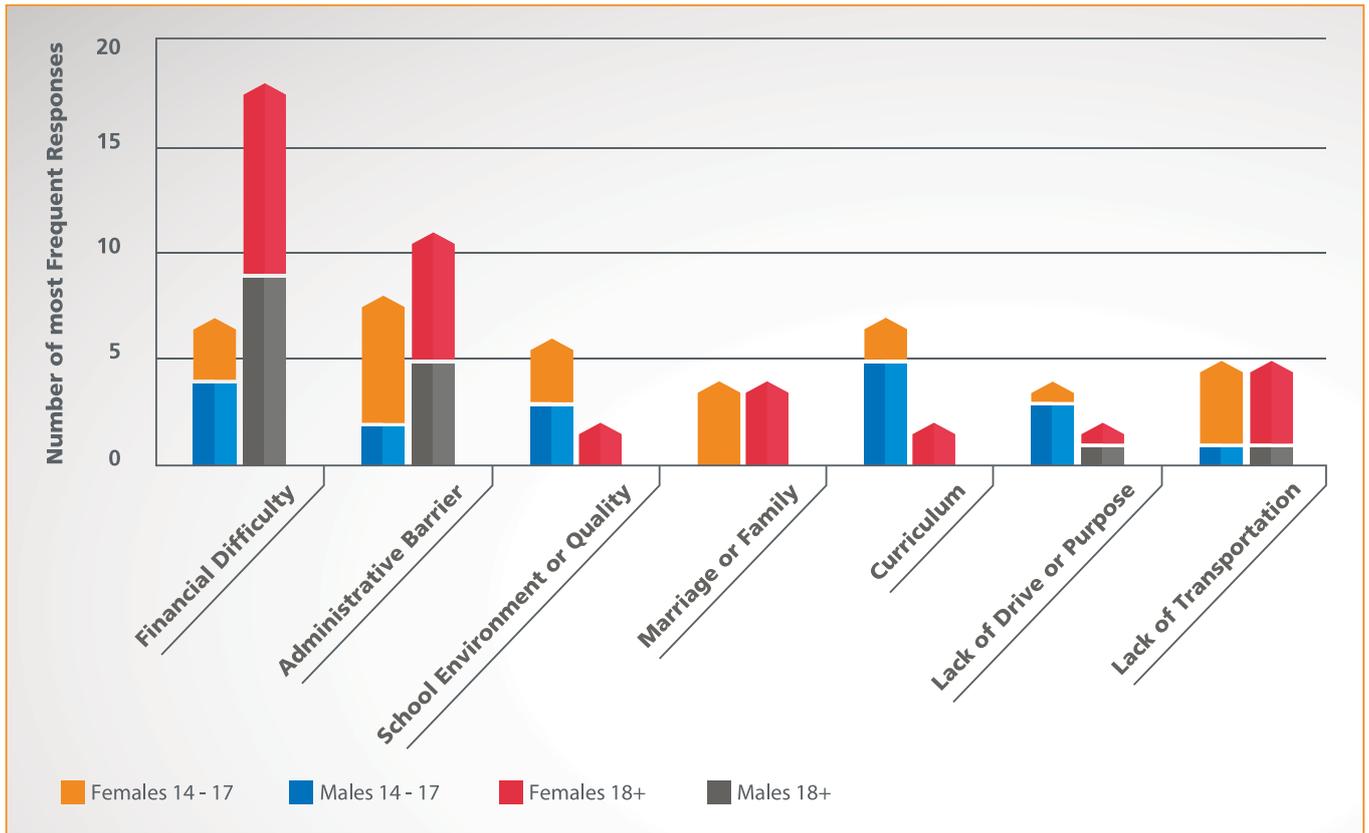
Education rates for Syrian refugee youth in Lebanon are extremely low. The UN Vulnerability Assessment in 2015 reported that only 5% of 15-17 year olds attended secondary school or higher.<sup>43</sup> Recent independent research by Université Saint Joseph suggests the enrolment rates might be higher, though still disconcertingly low. According to their findings less than a quarter of young refugees aged between 15 and 17 are enrolled in schools: 25.5% of children aged 15; 10.5% of children aged 16; and 15% of children aged 17.<sup>44</sup> Within this NRC study, among the 83 young refugees aged between 14 and 17, only 13% (11 people) were enrolled in formal schools (Figure 1.3). The enrolment rate for the Lebanese youth aged 14-17 is 75%.<sup>45</sup>

**FIGURE 1.3 TYPE OF EDUCATION ATTENDED BY 14-17 YEAR OLDS**



The reasons for such low enrolment rates are manifold and are often age-specific. For youth between 14 and 17, education remains a priority, but administrative hurdles seem almost insurmountable. For young people between 18 and 25, education is a more distant ideal, because they have to prioritise work. The overview of these barriers, as reported by youth themselves, is presented in Figure 1.4.

**FIGURE 1.4 BARRIERS TO EDUCATION COMPLETION AND ENROLMENT** <sup>46</sup>



### LIVELIHOOD BARRIERS

Young people and their families are prioritising livelihoods over the completion of secondary education, even when education is accessible in some form without legal obstacles. As reported in four focus groups for non-university youth aged 18 and above, this group is particularly preoccupied with every day concerns such as residency, livelihoods and daily chores.<sup>47</sup>

Women in this category highly prioritised the education of their children over their own. They made clear that their own education is important as it allows them to assist their children's education and has general cultural benefits. Young women said that if an educational support such as transport is removed, they would no longer be able to send their children to school.<sup>48</sup> Young men said they didn't have the time or money for education, and some said they needed to focus on their breadwinner role.<sup>49</sup> Education is the last problem I can think of," said one young man in a group discussion in Tripoli.<sup>50</sup>

This negative impact of the need to work on education consistently shows throughout the focus groups – and it was also corroborated by aforementioned Université Saint Joseph research, which discovered a strong correlation between work and going to school: 69% of those not working go to school while only 12.6% of those working go to school.<sup>51</sup>

## ADMINISTRATIVE BARRIERS

Lack of documentation or transcripts is one of the main barriers to young people enrolling in school. The complex requirements for enrolment in secondary education include documents transcripts proving continuity of study for the two previous scholastic years. Enrolment in grades 10-12 is impossible without proof that the student completed grades 7-9.

In addition to transcripts of previous education, Syrian refugees have in the past been required to provide a valid ID, residency card or UNHCR registration document to enrol. The Government has occasionally issued waivers for these requests, allowing non-Lebanese students to sit their exams without providing the documents for enrolment - but no results or completion certificates would be issued until the documents were provided. The latest Government circular, adopted on March 17, 2016, suggests that these provisions may have been lifted – but there has been no clarification on operational details of the circular’s implementation, nor which particular cohort of students it would affect. The lack of clarity around various circulars, their validity and implementation guidelines, as well as the fact that they were often issued late in the scholastic year has been as much of an obstacle to enrolling as the provisions contained in them.

The official transcripts required are only available at the Syrian Ministry of Education. Many young people fled Syria with very few possessions and returning to obtain the documentation is impossible due to the war. These requirements are components of Lebanese law and are difficult to change despite the advocacy by the international community. To overcome the transcript requirements, young refugees sometimes pay a series of people through person-to-person money transfers to carry out the paper work in Syria and provide the official transcripts.<sup>52</sup> This option is costly and not used by many. A more common strategy is to repeat grade levels so that transcripts can be issued. Grade repetition, however, was also reported as a cause for non-entry into the formal system.<sup>53</sup>

These administrative barriers appear to mostly influence 14 to 17 year olds who expressed a desire to continue their formal schooling. In contrast to the focus groups of 18 years and older, in approximately 70% of focus groups in the age of 14 to 17, education was ranked as a top problem or need, with many striving for a recognised certificate. Some also raised concern over whether or not their education in Lebanon would be useful upon their return to Syria.<sup>54</sup>

An important cumulative barrier that transpired from the research is **DISTANCE FROM SCHOOL** – as the table and the discussion of the previous findings illustrate, for many young men and women reaching schools that are available to them is a problem. For some, paying transportation fees is beyond their families’ financial reach. For others, the main component of the barrier is the already discussed lack of valid legal residency – schools open to refugee youth are few and far between, and reaching them means crossing one or more checkpoints.

Together these factors mean that availability of education in the relative vicinity of the places they reside is an important factor - to be influenced either by increasing the number of secondary schools open to refugees free of charge, or by increasing the reach of non-formal education to the communities where refugees reside.

# NOURSAN



Noursan, from Homs, was once a successful anaesthesiologist in Syria. The 25-year-old had studied hard and was thrilled to find work in her field when she first fled the war and settled in Lebanon. Like many Syrian refugees, however, she has had to leave her job at a hospital and now finds herself out of work, her prospects dim and her career in anaesthesiology uncertain. "I am not happy at all, because I was used to working in Syria. I worked for four years in Syria, and I came here to Lebanon, and I started working as soon as I got here. Now it's very difficult," said Noursan.

Noursan had originally wanted to study either physics or chemistry and had never considered enrolling in medical school. Her university entrance exams, however, meant she was qualified to major in anaesthesiology, and she grew to love it. She worked at a hospital in Homs for four years and says it was the best time of her life. "The group of people, the men and women who were with me, were very good to work with, and I enjoyed myself with them. My best days were at Al-Birr Hospital," said Noursan.

Her eyes light up, and she manages a smile. Noursan was accepted into the anaesthesiology department at a hospital in Tripoli only a month and a half after she and her family moved to Lebanon. Eight months into her job, she had to visit her father in Syria. While she was there, the hospital was told by the health ministry that it could no longer employ Syrians. The hospital's director tried to explain that he had been sponsoring Noursan, but since she was not physically present, he was unable to do so.

The director suggested that Noursan marry a Lebanese, giving her the passport she needs to work at the hospital. Noursan said she would consider this option were she not already engaged to a Syrian. "I feel as though what I've studied has been a waste, and sometimes I feel that I will forget what I've learned. In the end it's something you practice, and that's how you preserve it. I feel like I'm forgetting what I've learned in anaesthesia," she said.

Noursan has been applying to clinics that employ Syrians, but their wages are too low or they withhold salaries due to lack of funding. Her marriage has been put on hold, and her future is unpredictable. Noursan now spends her time tutoring at home.

She is considering leaving Lebanon with her fiancé and settling elsewhere, particularly if the Syrian crisis doesn't end soon. "There is a confusion about going back to Syria or moving abroad. I don't know," she said.

## **FINDING FOUR:** Young refugees in Lebanon are exposed to pervasive violence in public and private spheres with no pathways available for formal redress.

Perhaps the most concerning finding is the pervasive presence of violence that marks the lives of young refugee men and women in Lebanon. The topic was consistently mentioned in all focus group discussions. The main categories of violence mentioned by refugee youth include:

### **HARASSMENT**

Males between the ages of 14 and 17 overwhelmingly list harassment as one of their top three problems. Boys describe being confined to their homes for fear of being beaten,<sup>55</sup> violently attacked by street gangs<sup>56</sup> and verbally harassed on daily errands.<sup>57</sup> The nature of the verbal harassment they endure includes the use of the word Syrian as a derogatory term and swear words directed at them and their families. One group reported the use of dangerous objects in physical attacks and beatings by groups. “The curriculum [in our school] is difficult, because it’s in French. But the problem is not that. It’s the ones that wait for you outside the school,” said one participant in a group discussion of young males aged 14-17 in Halba. “They hit us outside the school. If you hit someone back, 50 people will come to hit you.”<sup>58</sup>, a participant in another discussion said. In some cases, these appear to be attacks by organised youth gangs carrying weapons, identifiable by their names and localities.

### **VIOLENCE BY SECURITY FORCES**

Youth often describe violent security forces raids on informal tented settlements or sites where refugees are known to work. These are mainly army spot checks on residency or targeted searches for wanted persons. Youth, experts and community leaders describe scenes such as misplaced and damaged belongings,<sup>59</sup> children’s’ trauma,<sup>60</sup> men’s arrest,<sup>61</sup> confiscated phones<sup>62</sup> and mistreatment in overcrowded and unhygienic detention spaces.<sup>63</sup> Such measures testify to the fact that refugees are being seen as a security threat, rather than a group in need of protection – and this impacts youth both when directly subjected to such securitisation, or through securitisation of their male caretakers.

Young men reported being impacted by arrests on unknown charges, either because they themselves got arrested or because such arrests increased the vulnerability of the household<sup>64</sup> and propelled them into primary caretaker or job-seeking roles.<sup>65</sup>

For many, trying to avoid harassment or detention at checkpoints is a reason to limit their movement. “Without the papers, you cannot go on the main road. We were jailed, all of us, because of the papers, detained for four days, and then they let us go,” said one participant in a 14-17 year old focus group in Miniyeh.<sup>66</sup>

## EXPLOITATIVE BEHAVIOUR

Informants in the refugee community have noted that younger males are exposed to exploitation at the workplace. In one case, sexual advances were made on a young boy.<sup>67</sup> “We work for very low wages. Sometimes we have to work overtime, and then we get cheated out of our wages,” said a participant in a Tripoli focus group.<sup>68</sup> “My brother has been exploited a lot at work. They make him work for many hours, and sometimes he doesn’t get paid. He has no sense of security,” said a young female university student in a different Tripoli focus group.<sup>69</sup>

Youth are also susceptible to exploitative fraudulent documentation industries<sup>70</sup> and transactional sponsorship, which is granted when refugees pay Lebanese nationals for agreeing to pledge for them. In fact, in the five groups where the issue was mentioned, it was discussed in a matter-of-fact manner. The participants all mentioned large sums of money required to buy a sponsorship without any awareness that this could be an illegal payment. The exploitative aspects they raised were the sponsor’s power over them after sponsorship is granted.<sup>71</sup> A legal status expert also noted that in cases of exploitative fraudulent documentation, refugees might be detained after using the fraudulent document.<sup>72</sup>

## GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Gender-based violence was a common subject raised by women in nine out of the 16 (56%) female-only focus groups. “He curses out of misery, and he curses the situation. There are beatings every day. Beating is a new thing in Lebanon. My husband takes it out on me, and I take it out on my children,” said one woman in Miniyeh. Gender-based violence also emerged from two male focus groups, which raised domestic violence as a stress and anger coping mechanism.

“I cannot hit my [male] friends. If that were to happen, there would be a slaughterhouse here. We encourage men to get married so they have someone to hit and lose their temper on,” said a young male participant in Miniyeh.<sup>73</sup>

Participant, FGD, Miniyeh

## LIMITED ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Without valid residency, the young refugees are unable to report crimes and are susceptible to legal complaints being made against them. Young people reported cases of murder,<sup>74</sup> child rape<sup>75</sup> and sexual assault<sup>76</sup> that were not addressed by the legal system. Such inability to seek legal recourse for criminal activity undermines the safety of citizens and non-citizens alike.

## CONCLUSION

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This report has outlined barriers that refugee youth in Lebanon encounter on structural, community and individual levels. Their ability to develop and contribute to both the refugee and local host communities is stunted. The complex legal, economic and societal obstacles severely impede their transition into secondary and tertiary education and the workforce. The pervasive atmosphere of violence further limits their opportunities, keeping them locked in the cycle of vulnerability.

Despite the mood of hopelessness that pervaded all youth and community discussions, there was much evidence of endurance, resilience and strength despite the many challenges. Examples of resilience abounded – from willingness to assist with research to frequent outburst of laughter during focus groups, despite their often-sombre content. There was also continuous interest in learning and work opportunities. These manifestations may be difficult to quantify and scale, but they are testament to the potential of young people that stakeholders should harness when designing solutions to the protracted crisis in Lebanon.

The commitments made by the Government of Lebanon and the donors at the London Conference held in February 2016 give cause for optimism that more can and will be done to help refugee youth realise their potential. By fulfilling its stated intents to revise the regulatory framework around the refugee residency permits, allow access to labour and have all children up to the age of 18 in school by the academic year 2017/2018, the Government of Lebanon would go a long way in creating a refugee youth-friendly policy environment and capitalising on their energy and capacities.

Equipping young people with the knowledge and skills needed for adult life, and giving them the space to use them, could have an immediate positive effect on their communities. It may also be the best long-term investment donors and Lebanon itself could make in the future of Syria and the stability of the region.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

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## LEGAL STAY

- Key international stakeholders – and specifically the co-hosts of the London Conference – should encourage the Government of Lebanon to swiftly operationalise its Statement of Intent published at the London Conference and review the regulatory framework surrounding the renewal of residency permits.
- As a part of this review, the Government of Lebanon should remove barriers for refugees from Syria to obtaining or renewing residency permits including lifting residency renewal fees, a pledge not to work, sponsorship requirements and/or the need for 'housing pledges'. Administrative procedures should be simplified, standardised and realistic.
- The Government of Lebanon should create alternative ways of ensuring that Syrian refugee youth turning 15 in displacement can obtain temporary identification documents and residency visas.
- The Government of Lebanon should simplify administrative procedures for obtaining civil documentation for Syrian refugees – birth, marriage, divorce and death certificates

## LIVELIHOODS

- Key international stakeholders – and specifically the co-hosts of the London Conference – should encourage the Government of Lebanon to swiftly operationalise its Statement of Intent published at the London Conference and review the regulatory framework surrounding the work authorisation.
- As a part of this review, the Government of Lebanon should lift the pledge not to work from the requirements to extend residency visas.
- The donors should provide funding for programmes that help increase employment rates of both refugee and vulnerable Lebanese youth.
- The donors and the Government of Lebanon should work together on ensuring that employment available to refugee and Lebanese youth alike is in line with dignified labour standards and ensure that programmes put in place to support refugee employment are not conducive to youth exploitation.
- Key stakeholders – including the donors, the Government of Lebanon, implementing agencies and private and public businesses employing youth - have a shared responsibility to ensure that inclusion of refugee youth into the labour market does not crowd out the vulnerable Lebanese youth.

## EDUCATION

- Donors should prioritise the funding of formal secondary education, and specifically the funding of programmes offering pathways to institutes and vocational training for secondary school students.
- The donors should prioritise funding of non-formal education (NFE) programmes for secondary school aged students, including NFE programmes run by international NGOs (INGOs) that offer pathways both to formal education and to labour market.

- The GoL should be encouraged to adopt programmes that would allow youth with missing documents or missing transcripts to enrol, continue their education and receive appropriate certificates.
- The Government of Lebanon should create alternative pathways for secondary school placement and certification of Syrian refugees, such as testing and competency-based certification.
- The Government of Lebanon should operationalise the existing NFE Framework, and draw on expertise of in-country education in emergency partners who have been working on refugee education directly since the start of the crisis.
- The Government of Lebanon should ensure that schools are safe and protective, for all learners, including refugees.

## **ADDRESSING VIOLENCE**

- All stakeholders should use community based programming, such as provision of youth centres, to create bridges between displaced youth and local community youth for increased social cohesion and resilience.
- Donors and all (I)NGOs should improve women-oriented services across the response, and specifically programmes preventing early marriage, and responding to gender-based violence on site.
- Donors and all (I)NGOs should support community-based initiatives to positively influence social norms and attitudes towards gender-based violence affecting boys and girls, including norms related to early marriage.
- Donors and all (I)NGOs should increase psycho-social support for refugee youth across the response through focused programming on psycho-social support.

# ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> UNFPA et al., Situation Analysis of Youth in Lebanon Affected by the Syrian Crises, 2014, p.3. Available at: <http://www.unfpa.org.lb/Documents/Situation-Analysis-of-the-Youth-in-Lebanon-Affecte.aspx>, Last accessed on April 6, 2016.
- <sup>2</sup> One of the key reasons why Syrian refugees may not wish to use UNHCR registration as a basis for their residency renewal is that they have found a Lebanese national to pledge responsibility for them (a “sponsor”), granting them legal status that allows for legal access to employment.
- <sup>3</sup> In May 2015, the Government has also instructed UNHCR to stop registering new refugees on its territory, until a new registration mechanism is put in place jointly by the Government and UNHCR. 2,626 Syrians that arrived after 5 January were deregistered at the Government’s explicit request.
- <sup>4</sup> UNHCR, Refugee Response in Lebanon Briefing Documents, March 2015.
- <sup>5</sup> World Food Programme (WFP), 2015, VASyR 2015: Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon, Available at: <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/preliminaryresultsVASyR2015-3715%282%29.pdf>, Last accessed on April 6, 2016.
- <sup>6</sup> World Food Programme (WFP), 2015, VASyR 2015: Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon, Executive summary, pg. 2
- <sup>7</sup> 53% is the UNHCR figure from February 2016, based on data collected in household visits by cash consortium partners and confirmed in e-mail correspondence with senior UNHCR protection officials in Lebanon. The 70% figure is the estimate from Université Saint Joseph, Survey on Perceptions of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: Full Report, 2015. Available at: <https://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=9399> Last accessed on April 6, 2016.
- <sup>8</sup> UNRWA, Profiling of Vulnerability of Palestinian Refugees from Syria, October 2015, citing Tatwir, Strategic Studies and Human Development Survey, 2015.
- <sup>9</sup> Government of Lebanon, London Conference – Lebanon Statement of Intent, Supporting Syria & the Region, 4 February 2016.
- <sup>10</sup> FGD males, mixed age, Kweshra.
- <sup>11</sup> FGD females, 21-25, Amayer.
- <sup>12</sup> FGD females, 21-25, Amayer.
- <sup>13</sup> Viner and Russel, M., et al. 2012. “Adolescence and the Social Determinants of Health.” The Lancet, no. 379.
- <sup>14</sup> UNDP, north office senior official, 16 November 2015.
- <sup>15</sup> UNRWA, senior education official, 6 November 2015.
- <sup>16</sup> Municipality of Mwenseh (Wadi Khaled) senior official, 31 October 2015.
- <sup>17</sup> Municipality of Halba senior official, 3 November 2015.
- <sup>18</sup> Municipality of Bani Sakhr finance official, 31 October 2015.
- <sup>19</sup> UNDP, north office senior official, 16 November 2015.
- <sup>20</sup> WFP, north office senior official, 19 October 2015.
- <sup>21</sup> Lebanon’s poverty line in 2015 has been set at USD 3.84 per day [http://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/20151223\\_LCRP\\_ENG\\_22Dec2015-full-versionoptimized.pdf](http://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/20151223_LCRP_ENG_22Dec2015-full-versionoptimized.pdf) Last accesses on April 8, 2016
- <sup>22</sup> <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.ZS> Last accesses on April 8, 2016
- <sup>23</sup> World Bank, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.1524.ZS> Last accesses on April 8, 2016
- <sup>24</sup> Women Economic Empowerment Portal. March 2014. “Lebanon’s unemployment rate exceeds 23% amidst poor estimates and limited initiatives.” <http://www.weeportal.lb.org/news/minister-labor-lebanon%E2%80%99s-unemployment-rate-exceeds-23-amidst-poor-estimates-and-limited> Last accessed on April 6, 2016.
- <sup>25</sup> Basic needs summarises youth-stated problems such as decreased or removed food vouchers, food, clean water, blankets, and WASH.
- <sup>26</sup> General financial problems summarises youth-stated problems such as lack of access to cash for daily living, lack of access to cash for other needs and indebtedness.
- <sup>27</sup> Most frequent female-reported family financial coping mechanism.
- <sup>28</sup> Refugee youth, North Lebanon.
- <sup>29</sup> As per ILO standards, a child is defined as anyone under the age of 18, and child labour constitutes labour of those between the ages of five and 17, with a general minimum age set of 15. Lebanese labour law has the minimum working age set at 14. For the purposes of this study, the following 2015 ILO definition of child labour is used: child labour is 1) mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children; 2) interferes with their schooling by depriving them of the opportunity to attend school; obliging them to leave school prematurely; or requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work.
- <sup>30</sup> ILO, SCI, Ministry of Labour, Children Living and Working on the Streets in Lebanon, Profile and Magnitude, February 2015.
- <sup>31</sup> DRC, GBV officer and protection official, group interview, 4 Nov 2015.
- <sup>32</sup> UNHCR, Barriers to Education for Syrian Refugee Children in Lebanon Out of School Children Profiling Report, Loss of Income and Child Labor, November 2014, p.19.
- <sup>33</sup> FGD females, 14-17, Miniye; FGD females, 22-25, Miniye; FGD females 18-25, NBC; FGD females, 22-25, Tripoli.
- <sup>34</sup> Sawa, manager, 5 November 2015; UNHCR, north office senior official and protection specialist, group interview, 3 November 2015; SCI, food security and livelihoods technical advisor, 27 October 2015; DRC, GBV officer and protection official, group interview, 4 November 2015.
- <sup>35</sup> UNICEF, citing MEHE, education specialist and child protection specialist, group interview, 9 Nov 2015.
- <sup>36</sup> Université Sainte-Joseph, 30 June 2015, <http://www.sciences-po.usj.edu.lb/pdf/News%20Brief%20Too%20Young%20To%20Wed.pdf> Last accessed on April 6, 2016.
- <sup>37</sup> UNICEF, State of the World’s Children: Adolescence: An Age of Opportunity, 2011 [http://www.unicef.org/sowc2011/pdfs/SOWC-2011-Main-Report\\_EN\\_02092011.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/sowc2011/pdfs/SOWC-2011-Main-Report_EN_02092011.pdf) Last accessed on April 6, 2016.
- <sup>38</sup> This study did not ask participants to inform the research team of their residency status, but 27 of 31 focus group participants’ statements on an open ended and on general problems they face assumed the absence of valid legal stay for most participants of each discussion.
- <sup>39</sup> FGD females, 14-17, Tripoli; FGD females, 14-17, Nahr-al-Bared Camp; FGD females, 18-25, Nahr-al-Bared Camp; FGD females, 14-17, Miniye.
- <sup>40</sup> Self reported in most focus group and IMC, senior GBV officer, 29 October 2015.
- <sup>41</sup> SCI, child protection official, 12 November 2015.
- <sup>42</sup> Abaad, GBV in emergencies associate, 6 November 2015.
- <sup>43</sup> World Food Programme (WFP), 2015, VASyR 2015: Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon, Executive Summary, pg. 3
- <sup>44</sup> Université Saint Joseph, Preview on Child Education Survey, March 2016. Available at: [http://www.isp.usj.edu.lb/pdf/News%20Brief%20English%20\(00000002\).pdf](http://www.isp.usj.edu.lb/pdf/News%20Brief%20English%20(00000002).pdf) - Last accessed on April 6, 2016.
- <sup>45</sup> UNDP Human Development Index 2015 <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/LBN> Last accessed on April 6, 2016
- <sup>46</sup> Most frequent and next most frequent responses to, “What are the main preventative factors to your education enrolment or completion?”
- <sup>47</sup> FGD males, 18-21, Halba; FGD males, 22-25, Miniye; FGD females, 18-21, Amayer; FGD, 18-21 (B), Miniye.
- <sup>48</sup> FGD females, 18-25, Halba; FGD females, 18-21 (A), Miniye; FGD females, 22-25, Amayer.
- <sup>49</sup> FGD males, 18-21, Halba; FGD males, 18-21, Tripoli; FGD males, 22-25, Miniye.
- <sup>50</sup> FGD males, 18-21, Tripoli.
- <sup>51</sup> Université Saint Joseph, Preview on Child Education Survey, March 2016. Available at: [http://www.isp.usj.edu.lb/pdf/News%20Brief%20English%20\(00000002\).pdf](http://www.isp.usj.edu.lb/pdf/News%20Brief%20English%20(00000002).pdf) Last accessed on April 6, 2016.
- <sup>52</sup> FGD Males 14-17, Amayer; FGD Males 22-25, Tripoli, FGD Females 14-17, Amayer
- <sup>53</sup> FGD males, 14-17, Amayer; FGD females, 14-17, Amayer.
- <sup>54</sup> FGD Males 14-17, Amayer

- <sup>55</sup> FGD males, 14-17, Halba.
- <sup>56</sup> FGD males, 14-17, Abu Samra.
- <sup>57</sup> FGD males, 14-17, Halba.
- <sup>58</sup> FGD males, 14-17, Tripoli.
- <sup>59</sup> FGD 14-17 Males, Tripoli.
- <sup>60</sup> FGD 18-21 Males, Miniye.
- <sup>61</sup> FGD 18-21 Females, Tripoli.
- <sup>62</sup> FGD 22-25 Males, Miniye; FGD Males, mixed age, Kwshra, FGD Female Community, Amayer; FGD Male Community Tripoli, FGD Female Community, Tripoli.
- <sup>63</sup> FGD 14-17 Males Miniye; FGD Males 21-25, Tripoli; FGD Male Community, Tripoli.
- <sup>64</sup> FGD males, 14-17, Miniye.
- <sup>65</sup> FGD males, 14-17, Tripoli.
- <sup>66</sup> FGD males, 14-17, Miniye.
- <sup>67</sup> FGD females, 18-21, Tripoli.
- <sup>68</sup> FGD males, 14-17, Miniye.
- <sup>69</sup> FGD females, 18-21, Tripoli.
- <sup>70</sup> Al Jinan University, human rights professor, 2 November 2015.
- <sup>71</sup> FGD females, 14-17, Tripoli; FGD males, 22-25, Miniye; FGD males, 14-17, Miniye; FGD males, mixed age, Kwshra; FGD community, mixed gender, Miniye.
- <sup>72</sup> NRC, north ICLA coordinator, 6 October 2015.
- <sup>73</sup> FGD males, 22-25, Miniye.
- <sup>74</sup> FGD males, 14-17, Tripoli; FGD females, 18-21, Amayer.
- <sup>75</sup> Refugee community leader 1, 25 October 2015.
- <sup>76</sup> FGD females, 18-21, Miniye.





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