

# BRUSSELS VII – NO LOST GENERATION ADVOCACY BRIEF

Key figures and advocacy messages from No Lost Generation and the Syrian Youth Advisory Group (YAG) ahead of the Brussels VII conference on supporting the future of Syria and the region

June 2023



**#NOLOST  
GENERATION**  
#لا\_لضياع\_جيل

## **ABOUT NO LOST GENERATION:**

The **No Lost Generation (NLG)** initiative is an advocacy platform currently co-chaired by UNICEF and World Vision. It brings together 40 UN agencies, INGOs and NGOs championing the cause of children and young people affected by the Syria crisis. It was initiated in 2013 in support of the humanitarian responses in Syria and the top 5 refugee hosting countries in the region: Lebanon, Jordan, Türkiye, Iraq and Egypt.

NLG's current advocacy objectives are: **(1)** uplifting the voices of Syrian children and youth; **(2)** fostering technical knowledge and enhance the response to meet the protection, education and mental health needs of children and youth; and **(3)** nurturing sustainable approaches to address the long-term impact of the Syria crisis on children and youth.

With the aim of ensuring that young Syrians' key concerns are heard and represented at all relevant international platforms, NLG also established the **Youth Advisory Group (YAG)** in early 2023, bringing together more than 25 Syrian youths residing in Syria and neighboring countries. They will be regularly consulted ahead of key events such as the Brussels conference for Syria to ensure that young people's voices are heard and taken into account by the international community.



# NO LOST GENERATION & YOUTH ADVISORY GROUP KEY ASKS AHEAD OF BRUSSELS VII:



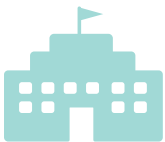
Only **8%** of the Syria Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for 2023 has been funded thus far.



The Türkiye Earthquake Flash Appeal has been only **35%** funded.



There is an estimated **4 million** out of school children in Syria and host countries.



More **investment needs to be made** in repairing and rebuilding the severely damaged education system in Syria

## (1) On the urgent need to address chronic funding gaps in the Syria crisis response:

- The chronic underfunding of Syria's Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) and the Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan (3RP) must urgently be addressed to ensure Syrian children can continue accessing education, child protection, mental health care, and livelihood opportunities.
- While the Syria Earthquake Flash Appeal managed to secure over 99% of the required funding at the March 2023 Brussels conference,<sup>1</sup> this will only cover a three-month period.<sup>2</sup> More support is needed for the overarching humanitarian response as only 8% of the Syria Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for 2023 has been funded thus far.<sup>3</sup> And the Türkiye Earthquake Flash Appeal has been only 35% funded as of 18<sup>th</sup> May.
- International support must be sustained in the face of growing vulnerabilities and the need for more durable solutions. The majority of Syrian refugees living in 3RP countries still want to return home one day, but few intend to return in the immediate future – conditions are not yet in place for large scale and safe voluntary returns. 3RP countries, host communities and refugees are bearing the brunt of this stalemate and deserve committed large scale international support until political progress can be made and return becomes a viable solution.

## (2) On answering to the specific education, child protection and mental health needs of Syrian children and young people:

### EDUCATION:

- Despite the generosity of host countries, which opened their public schools to refugees, there is an estimated 4 million out of school children in Syria and host countries, who are losing out on education. After 12 years of conflict, many of those children we collectively managed to keep in school and protected from different threats, are now young people who have other needs, such as access to university studies, scholarships, vocational training, as well as sustainable economic opportunities.
- Moreover, more investment needs to be made in repairing and rebuilding the severely damaged education system in Syria, providing adequate resources and infrastructure to ensure safe and inclusive learning environments for all children, including those with disabilities. Recognizing the potential link between psychological distress and the use of physical and emotional violence in schools, investment is needed to create violence-free educational environments by promoting awareness, training educators, and implementing effective policies that protect children from harm.

<sup>1</sup> <https://fts.unocha.org/appeals/1149/summary>

<sup>2</sup> <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/syria/card/7lPpCLTnr7/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://fts.unocha.org/appeals/1114/summary>



**Mitigating risks** of child labor, child marriage, gender-based violence, family separation, as well as other forms of violence, abuse, and neglect.



**Increasing economic instability and food insecurity** must be addressed by promoting access to livelihood opportunities for families.



**Addressing the high prevalence of depression and psychological** distress among both adults and children.

## CHILD PROTECTION:

- The protection needs of vulnerable displaced and refugee children and young people must urgently be addressed, including mitigating risks of child labor, child marriage, gender-based violence, family separation, as well as other forms of violence, abuse, and neglect. Enhance support for families and communities, as well as improve access to an integrated package of quality child friendly services, including specialized child protection services. Prioritize family tracing and reunification services for unaccompanied children.
- Strengthen the protective environment for Syrian refugee children by improving the capacity of children, parents, and communities on prevention of and protection from all forms of violence against children through community engagement, parenting programmes and social and behavioral change programmes.
- Young Syrian girls, women, and female-headed households in Syria and host countries in the region are increasingly vulnerable to various forms of gender-based violence (GBV) including intimate partner violence (IPV) and child marriage. Protection programs needs to be tailored to their needs and must include strong GBV referral pathways as well as safe spaces tailored to their needs which could also protect them from stigma within their communities.
- The increasing economic instability and food insecurity must be addressed by promoting access to livelihood opportunities for families, particularly in areas with high rates of child labor and child marriage to mitigate the spread of harmful coping mechanisms among vulnerable Syrian families. Promoting decent work and livelihood programs for parents, caregivers, and the wider community is key to reduce debt, food insecurity, and depression, as well as discourage harmful coping mechanisms like child marriage or child labor.

## MENTAL HEALTH:

- Increasing donor support and funding is needed to improve mental health support among refugee and internally displaced communities. Ensuring sustained and flexible financial commitments from donors to address the chronic underfunding of humanitarian response plans, investing in both immediate lifesaving support and longer-term resilience-building initiatives aimed at improving the lives of Syrian children, young people, and their families. Addressing the high prevalence of depression and psychological distress among both adults and children by increasing access to mental health services, with targeted interventions for those in Northwest Syria and refugee camps in Jordan, such as Azraq and Zaatari, where higher rates of depression have been reported.

### (3) On investing in durable solutions that would allow Syrian girls and boys to thrive in the mid to long term:

- Inclusive longer-term development solutions should be center stage. A greater emphasis needs to be placed on policies that enable inclusive solutions and capacities by national and international partners to ensure dignified lives through self-reliance and resilience of host communities, internally displaced persons



**Localization is also needed** by investing in local actors, NGOs, CSOs, but also youth groups.

- and refugees, while reducing their dependence on aid. A good example is the recent MoU between UNHCR and the Al Yarmouk University in Jordan to lower fees for all refugee students.<sup>4</sup>
- Donors should commit to providing earmarked development resources to the inclusion agenda in tandem with host governments and local actors committing to expanding refugees' access to national systems, legal residency and work.
- A greater focus on localization is also needed by investing in local actors, NGOs, CSOs, but also youth groups made up of young people from the IDP, refugee and host communities who can provide adapted and contextually relevant humanitarian approaches that are key to long term development.

***“I hope to spread happiness to the largest number of Syrian refugee children and youth, raise awareness and urge them not to give in to despair. Together we can still work towards a brighter and more hopeful future!”*** -- Thonai, Youth Advisory Group in Jordan



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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/jo/23809-first-jordanian-university-to-lower-fees-for-all-refugee-students.html>



# I. 12 YEARS OF WAR & DISPLACEMENT IMPACTING MILLIONS OF SYRIAN CHILDREN



Syria continues to be the world's largest displacement crisis.

Syria continues to be the world's largest displacement crisis, with more than 13 million people having either fled the country or being displaced within its borders.<sup>5</sup> These include 6.8 million Syrian refugees in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Türkiye,<sup>6</sup> among which approximately 47% are children and 48% female. In addition, 3 million children are currently displaced inside Syria.<sup>7</sup> More than twelve years into the crisis, humanitarian needs are at their highest, while access and funding shrink year after year.<sup>8</sup> The ongoing conflict in Ukraine has had a devastating impact on food prices in Syria and the wider region, only adding to the daily concerns of internally displaced, refugee and host families.<sup>9</sup> The earthquakes of February 2023 have only exacerbated the already dire humanitarian situation, particularly in Northwest Syria where significant human and structural damage occurred,<sup>10</sup> while humanitarian aid was slow to reach those most in need.<sup>11</sup>



**13 million people** having either fled the country or being displaced within its borders.



**6.8 million Syrian refugees** in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Türkiye. **47%** are children and **48%** female.



**3 million children** are currently displaced inside Syria



The **earthquakes** of February 2023 have only **exacerbated the already dire humanitarian situation**

The humanitarian situation in neighboring host countries also remains critical, with Türkiye hosting the largest refugee population in the world of over 3.9 million Syrians.<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile, Lebanon and Jordan are among the countries with the highest number of refugees per capita globally.<sup>13</sup> Millions of vulnerable Syrian women, men and children reside in refugee camps, informal settlements and

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing-notes/eleven-years-mounting-challenges-push-many-displaced-syrians-brink>

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Regional\\_Strategic\\_Overview\\_2023\\_full.pdf](https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Regional_Strategic_Overview_2023_full.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> [https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/humanitarian-action-children-2023-syrian-arab-republic#:~:text=Children%20throughout%20the%20Syrian%20Arab,million%20children\)%20are%20internally-%20displaced.](https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/humanitarian-action-children-2023-syrian-arab-republic#:~:text=Children%20throughout%20the%20Syrian%20Arab,million%20children)%20are%20internally-%20displaced.)

<sup>8</sup> <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/06/1121652>

<sup>9</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/war-ukraine-pushes-middle-east-and-north-africa-deeper-hunger-food-prices-reach>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.un.org/en/Türkiye-syria-earthquake-response>

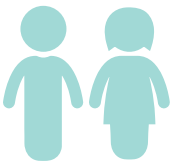
<sup>11</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/earthquake-one-month-funding-falls-short-huge-needs-syria>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/>

<sup>13</sup> [Ibid.](#)



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**43%** of children under age 5 in low and middle-income countries are at risk of not reaching their developmental potential.

host communities in the region with limited access to any long-term solutions. The top 5 host countries are currently hosting more than 1.9 million school-aged Syrian refugee children, 41% of whom were neither enrolled in formal nor non-formal education in 2022, up from 36% in 2019.<sup>14</sup> This also means that Syrian children impacted by this crisis continue to be at risk of missing out on their education, and having limited access to essential child protection, mental health and psychosocial support services with effects that can last a lifetime and impact children's ability to grow into healthy, productive adults. These risks are particularly significant for the youngest children – it is estimated that 43% of children under age 5 in low and middle-income countries are at risk of not reaching their developmental potential. The continued exposure to poverty, adversity, and malnutrition that refugee and displaced children in these countries often face can yield detrimental effects to a child's healthy development..

**Since its inception, NLG has been listening to the key asks of Syrian children and young people. The Syrian children who have been born into the crisis are now turning into young adults and are eager to lead productive lives. Despite the protracted conflict, they still dream big for their futures. The young people NLG spoke to are determined to continue their education through high school and university. <sup>15</sup> They are also asking for career and livelihood opportunities tailored to their needs that would allow them to support themselves and their families. This would also help break the cycle of violence and reduce the prevalence of negative coping mechanisms such as child labor, abuse and exploitation. In parallel, the Syrian girls and young women NLG consulted have shed light on the rise in child marriage among increasingly vulnerable internally displaced and refugee communities impacted by the crisis, highlighting the need to further protect and empower young girls, and ensure they have a chance at a brighter future free of all forms of gender-based violence (GBV).**

<sup>14</sup> [https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Regional\\_Strategic\\_Overview\\_2023\\_full.pdf](https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Regional_Strategic_Overview_2023_full.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.nolostgeneration.org/reports/11-years-syrian-youth-still-dream-big-their-future>

## II. SYRIAN CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE CONTINUE TO BE AFFECTED BY THE CRISIS



### SYRIA

Humanitarian needs continue to rise across all sectors in Syria and it is estimated that 15.3 million people – including 7 million children – will require assistance in 2023 in the country.<sup>16</sup> The cost of the Syrian conflict has been devastating, with an estimated loss of US\$1.2 trillion in GDP between 2011 and 2020, a figure believed to be much higher today.<sup>17</sup> This has severely impacted Syrian children and young people, as resources for essential services such as education and healthcare have largely dwindled over the years.<sup>18</sup> The ongoing conflict in several parts of the country, coupled with attacks on health infrastructure, schools, and IDP camps – as well as the lasting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and cholera outbreaks – have all contributed to a dire situation for child survival and development.<sup>19</sup>

The dire situation has only been exacerbated by the earthquakes that struck Syria and Türkiye on February 6th, 2023, resulting in 4,500 reported deaths and 10,400 injuries in affected areas of northern Syria, with 20% of injuries impacting children aged 5 to 14.<sup>20</sup> The destruction of tens of thousands of homes and buildings has left Syrian children particularly vulnerable to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as they absorb yet another shock.<sup>21</sup> Despite the immense needs following the earthquakes, aid has been slow to reach Syria<sup>22</sup> while long term support for lasting solutions remains uncertain.<sup>23</sup>

#### **Education**

The education system in Syria is severely fragmented, with only two-thirds of schools being fully functional.<sup>24</sup> There are 2.4 million children who are currently out of school, in addition to 1.6 million children at risk of dropping out.<sup>25</sup> Schools that continue to operate suffer from chronic teacher shortages, overcrowding, dilapidated buildings and classrooms, poor furniture and supplies, insufficient lighting and heating, and inadequate water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities.<sup>26</sup> Additional challenges include limited public transport and lack of warm winter clothes. Children with disabilities face even greater challenges in accessing appropriate learning environments that are tailored to their needs.<sup>27</sup> In addition to the difficult learning conditions, many schools are severely damaged or contaminated by unexploded ordnances (UXOs) and other remnants of war, posing a critical challenge for education partners, teachers and children.<sup>28</sup> In addition, teachers have also been impacted by the recent earthquakes and are in need of psychosocial support.

#### **Child protection**

Syria continues to be one of the most dangerous places to be a child. Rights violations – including child recruitment, detention, exploitation, sexual violence, abduction, abuse, neglect, attacks on schools and hospitals, as well as denial of humanitarian access – are still prevalent.<sup>29</sup> Over 2,400 grave violations against children were recorded throughout 2022, including recruitment by armed groups, conflict-related deaths and injuries affecting children.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>16</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/syrian-arab-republic-2023-humanitarian-needs-overview-december-2022>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.wvi.org/publications/hunger-crisis/dire-consequences-12-years-suffering-syria>

<sup>18</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.wvi.org/publications/hunger-crisis/dire-consequences-12-years-suffering-syria>

<sup>20</sup> <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/syria/card/upKzcEKeJz/>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.wvi.org/newsroom/syria-crisis-response/deepening-mental-health-crisis-syria-following-last-months>

<sup>22</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/earthquake-one-month-funding-falls-short-huge-needs-syria>

<sup>23</sup> <https://fts.unocha.org/appeals/1114/summary>

<sup>24</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/humanitarian-action-children-2023-syrian-arab-republic>

<sup>25</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>26</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/syrian-arab-republic-2023-humanitarian-needs-overview-december-2022>

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/mena/documents/unicef-whole-syria-humanitarian-situation-report-january-june-2022>

<sup>28</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/every-day-counts-outlook-education-most-vulnerable-children-syria>

<sup>29</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/syrian-arab-republic-2023-humanitarian-needs-overview-december-2022>

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/media/134311/file/Whole-of-Syria-Humanitarian-SitRep-Jan-Dec-2022.pdf>



The majority (91%) of the 4.5 million people living in the Northwest are in need of humanitarian assistance, including 2.8 million internally displaced people, with 80% of the population in this particular area consisting of women and children.<sup>31</sup> Increasing economic instability and food insecurity have forced many children to drop out of school and engage in child labor. Last year, 84% of surveyed communities said their children were working to support their families, with boys being most affected.<sup>32</sup> Child marriage is also on the rise and impacting 71% of communities, with girls being most affected.<sup>33</sup>

The child protection situation in the Northeast remains particularly worrying. The camps of Al-Hol and Roj still hold more than 56,000 individuals with 50% of the population consisting of girls and boys, of which 80% are under the age of 12.<sup>34</sup> In addition, some 850 boys are still being held in rehabilitation or detention centers across the Northeast with limited access to basic rights.<sup>35</sup> Child marriage limits girls' opportunities, education and employment prospects.<sup>36</sup> It also has long-term physical and mental health effects on young girls and the children they end up raising, perpetuating the cycle of violence, abuse and neglect.<sup>37</sup>

### ***Mental health and psychosocial support***

Children and young people's mental health across much of Syria has been significantly impacted by the daily hardships and compounded trauma experienced during more than a decade of conflict. A 2022 study conducted by NLG and World Vision in Northwest Syria, for example, revealed that 76% of the respondents identified poverty and lack of basic needs as primary factors contributing to suicidal ideation among young people.<sup>38</sup> Alarmingly, 66% of respondents believed that children were "very likely" to act on suicidal thoughts due to the stressful environment and uncertain future.<sup>39</sup> In 2022, more than one-fourth of children showed signs of psychological distress, highlighting the crisis' cumulative impact on their mental health and wellbeing, which is likely to have lifelong consequences on younger generations.<sup>40</sup> The earthquakes of February 2023 only added to this psychological stress, leaving many children suffering from symptoms of PTSD.<sup>41</sup>



<sup>31</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/humanitarian-action-children-2023-syrian-arab-republic>

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/media/134311/file/Whole-of-Syria-Humanitarian-SitRep-Jan-Dec-2022.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2023/03/children-northeast-syria-must-be-urgently-repatriated-un-experts>

<sup>35</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>36</sup> <https://syria.unfpa.org/en/news/stolen-childhood-and-shattered-dreams-reality-child-marriage-0>

<sup>37</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.wvi.org/publications/report/syria-crisis-response/reaching-final-straw>

<sup>39</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>40</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/syrian-arab-republic-2023-humanitarian-needs-overview-december-2022>

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.wvi.org/newsroom/syria-crisis-response/deepening-mental-health-crisis-syria-following-last-months>



## JORDAN

Jordan currently hosts 1.3 million refugees,<sup>42</sup> the majority of whom reside in the host community.<sup>43</sup> The 2021-2022 COVID-19 pandemic added to the already precarious living conditions for refugees, leading to increased food insecurity and limited access to clean drinking water, education, healthcare, and other basic necessities.<sup>44</sup> This also had a considerable impact on children's development, mental health and overall well-being, both in the host community and camp settings,<sup>45</sup> which is still being witnessed in 2023.

### **Education**

Even though Jordan has taken positive steps to enable Syrian refugee children access to education, 40% of school-aged children are growing up in families that are considered highly vulnerable in the education domain.<sup>46</sup> The country's Vulnerability Assessment Framework (VAF) found that 17% of school-aged refugee children in the host community had never been enrolled in school.<sup>47</sup> This was also closely linked to their shelter situation, particularly if they resided in informal settlements.<sup>48</sup> In parallel, high costs of transportation have become a significant barrier especially for older children who are rarely able to walk to secondary school and require public or private transportation to reach the classroom.<sup>49</sup> A lack of digital tools for remote schooling was also a primary challenge for Syrian refugee children during the 2020–2021 school year when remote learning was adopted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, many Syrian refugee students missed out on their education requiring additional learning to catch up in subsequent years.<sup>50</sup>

In the camp settings, 87% of school-aged children were found to be enrolled in school in Azraq compared to 83% in Zaatari.<sup>51</sup> However, similarly to the host community, enrolment rates declined significantly with age in both camps as adolescents were more at risk of dropping out.<sup>52</sup> School-aged children in Azraq reported challenges with physical distance from their home to school and poor quality of teaching and learning materials.<sup>53</sup> Vulnerable Jordanian children and Syrian refugee children living with disabilities in the host community and camp settings continue to face financial, physical and social stigma barriers when trying to access inclusive education that is adapted to their learning needs.<sup>54,55</sup>

### **Child protection**

Child protection-related risks are on the rise in Jordan with more than 8% of refugee children still being vulnerable to child abuse, violence, neglect, child marriage, and child labor.<sup>56</sup> Although Jordan has made progress in issuing work permits to Syrian refugees over the past years, these are limited to services, sales, agriculture and other basic industries.<sup>57</sup> Many Syrians' economic condition has worsened, with many Syrian families reporting being in debt.<sup>58</sup> Those whose socio-economic situation worsened during the pandemic resorted to negative coping mechanisms such as domestic violence in the home, child labor and child marriage.<sup>59</sup> Incidents of gender-based violence also significantly increased during the pandemic while referrals to response services and access to safe houses were affected by COVID-19 restrictions.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>42</sup> [https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Regional\\_Strategic\\_Overview\\_2023\\_full.pdf](https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Regional_Strategic_Overview_2023_full.pdf)

<sup>43</sup> <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria/location/36>

<sup>44</sup> [https://www.acaps.org/sites/acaps/files/key-documents/files/3rp\\_regional\\_needs\\_overview\\_2022\\_compressed\\_1.pdf](https://www.acaps.org/sites/acaps/files/key-documents/files/3rp_regional_needs_overview_2022_compressed_1.pdf)

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/media/136001/file/Jordan-2022-COAR.pdf>

<sup>46</sup> <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/93754>

<sup>47</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>48</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>49</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/04/26/jordan-submission-un-committee-rights-child>

<sup>50</sup> <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/93754>

<sup>51</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>52</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>53</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>54</sup> <https://www.nolostgeneration.org/reports/yearning-learn-behavioral-barriers-and-enablers-inclusive-education-jordan>

<sup>55</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/04/26/jordan-submission-un-committee-rights-child>

<sup>56</sup> [https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Regional\\_Strategic\\_Overview\\_2023\\_full.pdf](https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Regional_Strategic_Overview_2023_full.pdf)

<sup>57</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2022/1/61effaa54/jordan-issues-record-number-work-permits-syrian-refugees.html>

<sup>58</sup> <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/93754>

<sup>59</sup> <https://www.nolostgeneration.org/media/3561/file/Child%20marriage%20in%20the%20context%20of%20COVID-19%20-%20MENA%20regional%20analysis.pdf>

<sup>60</sup> [https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Regional\\_Strategic\\_Overview\\_2023\\_full.pdf](https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Regional_Strategic_Overview_2023_full.pdf)



In the camp setting, exposure to harassment remains high for young women and girls, particularly when they are using latrines, shopping, or walking to school.<sup>61</sup> Child labor was also found to be prevalent in Azraq camp, with boys being most at risk, while girls in Zaatari camp were found to be more vulnerable to child marriage.<sup>62</sup>

### ***Mental health and psychosocial support***

Chronic illnesses and depression were found to be the most prevalent mental health issues in Azraq and Zaatari camps.<sup>63</sup> Azraq camp residents are particularly impacted by depression due to high debt, worsened food security, more difficulties within school, and lower rates of employment.<sup>64</sup> This has also impacted boys' and girls' wellbeing in the camp, particularly when parents are struggling from symptoms of stress, anxiety and depression that can impact dynamics within the household.

In the host community, Syrian refugee children were particularly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic which affected their access to learning and mental health. It is estimated that 70% of Syrian children did not continue their education at home with stress and anxiety being reported as the primary behavioral changes among children and their parents.<sup>65</sup> Gender-based violence (GBV) and child marriage also rose among Syrian refugee families in the host community following the pandemic period,<sup>66</sup> as socio-economic struggles persisted due to high unemployment rates coupled with a gradual decrease of humanitarian assistance.<sup>67 68</sup> Child marriage particularly affects all areas of adolescent girls' lives including their physical and mental health, as well as their education, access to reproductive health, family planning and GBV services putting them at greater risk of abuse.<sup>69</sup>

***“The spread of racism and discrimination has negatively affected the mental health of Syrian refugee youth, especially children. It also affects their way of life and outlook on the future...”*** -- Amjad, Youth Advisory Group member from Jordan

<sup>61</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>62</sup> <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/93926>

<sup>63</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>64</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>65</sup> <https://www.jogh.org/documents/2021/jogh-11-05003.pdf>

<sup>66</sup> <https://www.nolostgeneration.org/media/3561/file/Child%20marriage%20in%20the%20context%20of%20COVID-19%20-%20MENA%20regional%20analysis.pdf>

<sup>67</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-arabstates/-ro-beirut/documents/briefingnote/wcms\\_749356.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-arabstates/-ro-beirut/documents/briefingnote/wcms_749356.pdf)

<sup>68</sup> <https://www.jogh.org/documents/2021/jogh-11-05003.pdf>

<sup>69</sup> <https://www.nolostgeneration.org/media/3561/file/Child%20marriage%20in%20the%20context%20of%20COVID-19%20-%20MENA%20regional%20analysis.pdf>





## LEBANON

Lebanon has been facing a multifaceted political and economic crisis since 2019.<sup>70</sup> As a result, the Lebanese pound has lost more than 95% of its value, greatly reducing peoples' purchasing power.<sup>71</sup> Combined with diminishing income levels and high inflation, this has devastated livelihoods and led to high levels of poverty and food insecurity amongst all population groups residing in Lebanon, including vulnerable Lebanese, refugees and migrants.<sup>72</sup> Lebanon continues to host the highest number of displaced people per capita in the world.<sup>73</sup> The government estimates that the country hosts 1.5 million Syrian refugees, along with 210,000 Palestinian refugees and 31,400 Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS).<sup>74</sup> The deteriorating economic situation has further strained inter-communal relations while anti-refugee rhetoric continues to be on the rise.<sup>75</sup>

Over 80% of surveyed Syrian refugee households in Lebanon said that humanitarian assistance was no longer meeting their basic needs.<sup>76</sup> Unable to meet their basic survival needs, many vulnerable host community and refugee families are resorting to harmful coping mechanisms such as reduced food consumption, child labor, debt accrual and child marriage.<sup>77</sup> Onward movements were also on the rise in 2022, with UNHCR recording a threefold increase in known attempts to undertake dangerous sea-crossings compared to 2021, sometimes with tragic results.<sup>78</sup>

### Education

Since October 2019 and till March 2023, public schools have repeatedly closed for substantive periods of time due to strikes linked to the economic crisis, affecting over 1 million children's learning.<sup>79</sup> Even if schools are functioning currently, or reopen within this school year, children impacted by school closures have experienced significant interruptions over the last four school years, directly impacting their learning achievement, development, psychosocial wellbeing, and leaving them exposed to greater protection risks such as child marriage and child labour. TVET institutions and schools' capacity and infrastructure continue to be a national challenge. Barriers to learning faced by refugee children include the family's inability to afford transport, limited spaces in public schools, lack of civil documentation and limited pathways to transition to formal education.<sup>80</sup> This is evidenced by the fact that 30% of school aged Syrian refugee children in Lebanon have never been to school.<sup>81</sup>

According to preliminary findings by the 2022 Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (VASyR), only 60% of children 6 to 14 years old were attending school in the year 2021-2022.<sup>82</sup> For the age group 15 to 17, attendance was only 27%.<sup>83</sup> The main reasons for not attending school for children aged 3 to 17 are the cost of transportation (31%), the cost of educational materials (27%), due to work (22%), school or curriculum difficulties (7%) and marriage (6%).<sup>84</sup> These learning delays and difficulties will inevitably have lasting repercussions on vulnerable Lebanese and Syrian refugee children's education and overall development.

<sup>70</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/05/01/lebanon-sinking-into-one-of-the-most-severe-global-crises-episodes>

<sup>71</sup> <https://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/295389>

<sup>72</sup> <http://www.unescwa.org/news/escwa-warns-three-quarters-lebanon%E2%80%99s-residents-plunge-poverty#:~:text=According%20to%20today's%20updates%2C%20the,alleviate%20the%20country's%20humanitarian%20crisis.>

<sup>73</sup> [https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Regional\\_Strategic\\_Overview\\_2023\\_full.pdf](https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Regional_Strategic_Overview_2023_full.pdf)

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> <https://ialebanon.unhcr.org/vasyr/#/>

<sup>77</sup> <https://lebanon.un.org/en/230731-lebanon-emergency-response-plan-2023#:~:text=As%20a%20result%20of%20the,vulnerable%20and%20marginalized%20population%20groups.>

<sup>78</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/mena/press-releases/unicef-deeply-saddened-death-toll-boat-sank-coast-syria-coming-lebanon>

<sup>79</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/one-million-children-left-without-education-lebanon-after-public-schools-shut-their-doors>

<sup>80</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/lb/education#:~:text=Refugee%20children%20face%20additional%20barriers,to%20transition%20to%20formal%20education.>

<sup>81</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/lb/education#:~:text=30%25%20of%20school%20aged%20refugee,and%20not%20attending%20any%20training.>

<sup>82</sup> <https://ialebanon.unhcr.org/vasyr/#/>

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

## **Child Protection**

Syrian refugee children continue to face significant protection threats growing up in Lebanon. Only 17% of individuals over 15 years hold valid legal residency, hampering their access to basic services, civil documentation and increasing the risk of deportation.<sup>85</sup> This also impacts refugees' access to work opportunities and induces harmful coping mechanisms within the household.

In 2022, 18% of surveyed households believed it was unsafe for women, girls and boys to walk alone at night, with the main concerns being listed as bullying, harassment, robbery, and even kidnapping.<sup>86</sup> Moreover, due to limited job opportunities and rising food insecurity, 7% of boys and 2% of girls were found to be engaging in various forms of child labor.<sup>87</sup> Children between the ages of 12 and 17 were most likely to be working.<sup>88</sup> Worryingly, 22% of Syrian refugee girls between the ages of 15 and 19 were found to be married, a 2% increase from 2021.<sup>89</sup> Previous studies on child marriage in Lebanon had shown that the financial instability that is experienced by Syrian refugee families is a key driver behind the increasing rates of child marriage.<sup>90</sup>

## **Mental health and psychosocial support**

The compounded economic, political and health crises currently facing Lebanon are weighing heavily on the mental health of adults, children and young people across the country. With increasing stress, trauma and isolation, the psychosocial wellbeing of refugees and Lebanese people is at critical risk. A rise in negative coping mechanisms linked to violent discipline is particularly apparent within Syrian refugee households as they continue to experience rising socio-economic pressures. The 2022 VASyR showed that more than half (58%) of Syrian refugee children between the ages of 1 and 14 had experienced forms of violent discipline such as physical punishment or psychological aggression, representing a 6% increase compared to 2021.<sup>91</sup> This was particularly the case for children being brought up in male headed households, with more than half of these households (59%) resorting to violent disciplinary measures.<sup>92</sup> Early childhood exposure to various forms of disciplinary violence can impair brain development and result in a wide range of physical and mental health problems that will negatively impact children well into adulthood.<sup>93</sup>

***“Many refugee students are exposed to violence and bullying in Lebanese schools. I hope that this will change in the future and that counselors will be available in schools to support students and listen to their problems.”***

-- Saniha, Youth Advisory Group member from Lebanon



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<sup>85</sup> [https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Regional\\_Needs\\_Overview\\_100dpi.pdf](https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Regional_Needs_Overview_100dpi.pdf)

<sup>86</sup> <https://lalebanon.unhcr.org/vasyr/#/>

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/mena/media/1806/file/MENA-CMReport-LebanonBrief.pdf%20.pdf>

<sup>91</sup> <https://lalebanon.unhcr.org/vasyr/#/>

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/lebanon/unicef-lebanon-working-end-violence-against-children>



## TÜRKİYE

As of May 2023, Türkiye was hosting 3.4 million Syrian refugees, almost half of whom are children and 46% of whom are women and girls.<sup>94</sup> Increased commodity prices – especially food and energy – coupled with inflation and the depreciation of the Turkish lira have pushed the poverty rate in Türkiye above pre-2019 levels.<sup>95</sup> There are also concerns about an increase in tensions between refugees and host communities which were only exacerbated following the earthquake that hit southern Türkiye and northern Syria in February 2023.<sup>96</sup> The economic impacts of COVID-19 and cost of living challenges have affected communities across Türkiye, increasing the social distance between populations and contributing towards the growing anti-refugee sentiment being expressed on social media and elsewhere. The loss of livelihoods and growing competition over jobs, misinformation and language barriers – with 70% of the female Syrian population in Türkiye saying they have little to no knowledge of the Turkish language<sup>97</sup> – at a time when many households are struggling with rising prices has further strained community relations.<sup>98</sup> The devastating earthquakes, resulting in more than 50,000 deaths,<sup>99</sup> have dramatically increased the needs and vulnerabilities of both host and refugee populations.

Prior to the earthquakes, 1.7 million Syrians under Temporary Protection (SuTP) were living in the earthquake affected provinces<sup>100</sup>. Although SuTP need to be registered in the province they are residing and have restrictions of movement, after the earthquake the Government of Türkiye allowed these individuals to temporarily move to other provinces to seek refuge for a period of 60 days, which was later extended for another 60 days until end of April 2023. According to the Ministry of Interior, only 20% of those who migrated to other cities have returned, possibly due to financial constraints and the high cost of living in hosting provinces. This indicates that the increase in living costs may lead to further child protection issues as well as school dropouts amongst refugee children<sup>101</sup>.

### Education

In Türkiye, 43% of households indicated that some or none of their children attended schools, , citing financial barriers (42%), child labor (17%) and peer bullying (11%) as top reasons.<sup>102</sup> As of January 2022, 855,136 Syrian children were enrolled in Turkish schools, while more than 400,000 remained out of school.<sup>103</sup> Out-of-school children are one of the most vulnerable groups in Türkiye, and face multiple child protection risks, including psychosocial distress, child labor, child marriage and other forms of neglect, exploitation and abuse.<sup>104</sup>

Amongst children enrolled in school, only 33% reported having access to online education systems.<sup>105</sup> The negative impact of COVID-19 on face-to-face teaching and interaction with peers resulted in a loss of learning for vulnerable children, including host community members and refugees, which ultimately harms educational gains made over the past years.<sup>106</sup> Nevertheless, the higher education enrolments of Syrians improved in the 2021- 2022 academic year, rising to 10% of the overall university enrolment in the country.<sup>107</sup> Among the 53,097 Syrian students attending Turkish universities, 60% are male and 40% are female.<sup>108</sup>

<sup>94</sup> [https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Regional\\_Strategic\\_Overview\\_2023\\_full.pdf](https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Regional_Strategic_Overview_2023_full.pdf)

<sup>95</sup> <https://www.mei.edu/publications/already-vulnerable-turkeys-economy-now-faces-massive-earthquake-recovery-costs>

<sup>96</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/earthquake-fans-anti-syrian-sentiment-turkey-amid-desperate-conditions-2023-02-13/>

<sup>97</sup> [https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Regional\\_Needs\\_Overview\\_100dpi.pdf](https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Regional_Needs_Overview_100dpi.pdf)

<sup>98</sup> [https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Regional\\_Strategic\\_Overview\\_2023\\_full.pdf](https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Regional_Strategic_Overview_2023_full.pdf)

<sup>99</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/turkiye/unicef-turkiye-humanitarian-situation-report-no-8-earthquake-11-april-2023>

<sup>100</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/neu/97487-the-earthquakes-in-turkiye-and-syria-a-crisis-within-the-crisis.html>

<sup>101</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/turkiye/turkiye-2023-earthquakes-situation-report-no-16-27-april-2023-entr>

<sup>102</sup> <https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Inter-Agency-Protection-Needs-Assessment-Round-6-Report-September-2022.pdf>

<sup>103</sup> [https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Regional\\_Strategic\\_Overview\\_2023\\_full.pdf](https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Regional_Strategic_Overview_2023_full.pdf)

<sup>104</sup> [https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Regional\\_Needs\\_Overview\\_100dpi.pdf](https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Regional_Needs_Overview_100dpi.pdf)

<sup>105</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>106</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>107</sup> [https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/3RP-2023-2025-Turkiye-Country-Chapter\\_EN.pdf](https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/3RP-2023-2025-Turkiye-Country-Chapter_EN.pdf)

<sup>108</sup> [Ibid.](#)





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### **Child Protection**

A growing number of Syrian refugee families residing in Türkiye have been forced to adopt harmful coping mechanisms to deal with their difficult situation<sup>109</sup>, such as child labor, mainly for boys, and the exposure of young girls to child marriages and other forms of exploitation.<sup>110</sup> Ongoing efforts to combat child marriage and child labor amongst Syrian refugees require sustained support as well as an expansion of programming.<sup>111</sup> Domestic violence has emerged as a “shadow pandemic” and profoundly affected Syrian women and girls. Although Syrian women and girls risk ill-treatment and discrimination in their daily lives, research shows that 73% do not know where to find assistance related to violence or harassment and 74% do not know where to seek support for their children, highlighting the need for awareness-raising and strengthening referral pathways to prevent, mitigate risks of and respond to GBV.<sup>112</sup>

### **Mental health and psychosocial support**

Rising psychosocial needs across groups – and particularly for Syrian refugee adolescents and youth – have been identified as severe in Türkiye.<sup>113</sup> The reduction in service capacity and outreach has made it harder to identify and protect vulnerable individuals, especially women, children and young people, despite efforts to increase support through helplines, psychosocial counselling, and remote/blended service delivery modalities. There is a need to focus on investment in robust referral mechanisms and in services to respond to the specific needs of women and children at risk.

A survey conducted by World Vision in Southeast Türkiye in March 2023 showed that 55% of children felt regularly upset when remembering the earthquake, and 56.5% regularly experienced upsetting thoughts and unwanted images in their minds reminding them of the earthquakes.<sup>114</sup> Meanwhile, 49.5% of caregivers said they had regular nightmares and 33% said they felt anger, guilt and shame when remembering the life-altering events of 6 February 2023, when the earthquake struck southeast Türkiye.<sup>115</sup>

<sup>109</sup> [https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Regional\\_Strategic\\_Overview\\_2023\\_full.pdf](https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Regional_Strategic_Overview_2023_full.pdf)

<sup>110</sup> [https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Regional\\_Needs\\_Overview\\_100dpi.pdf](https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Regional_Needs_Overview_100dpi.pdf)

<sup>111</sup> [https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Regional\\_Strategic\\_Overview\\_2023\\_full.pdf](https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Regional_Strategic_Overview_2023_full.pdf)

<sup>112</sup> [https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Regional\\_Needs\\_Overview\\_100dpi.pdf](https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Regional_Needs_Overview_100dpi.pdf)

<sup>113</sup> [https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Regional\\_Strategic\\_Overview\\_2023\\_full.pdf](https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Regional_Strategic_Overview_2023_full.pdf)

<sup>114</sup> <https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrjoiMWFjN2E4MzYtMzRiMi00YmQ2LTk5MmYyYzIzYjYk3ZjdljliwidCl6ml5NTEFMDMwLWFmMzgtNDBkNy1iZD-BilWVZiZWQzYzYzNjUzYSIsImMiOjZ9>

<sup>115</sup> [Ibid.](#)



## IRAQ

As per April 2023, 289,353 Syrian refugees reside in Iraq, with 91% (262,218) living in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I).<sup>116</sup> Recent assessments indicate that 84% of refugees living in camps are food insecure or vulnerable to food insecurity as economic instability, high unemployment and the impact of climate change continue to negatively affect food prices and access to basic needs.<sup>117</sup> UNICEF estimates that there are 1.1 million children in need in Iraq, including refugees, IDPs and returnees.<sup>118</sup>

Iraq is transitioning from a state of emergency towards recovery and development. Displaced persons in Iraq face significant protection concerns and are likely to engage in harmful coping mechanisms such as child labour and child marriage, largely driven by socio-economic factors, human rights deficits, and the absence of the rule of law. There is a need to provide conflict and gender sensitive care and psychosocial support, combined with livelihood recovery and economic opportunities and social cohesion services for smooth reintegration, peaceful co-existence and stability. Iraq has an IDP population of 1.2 million, many of whom face significant barriers to return or to effectively locally integrate as a result of ethnic and religious differences, lack of civil documentations, and financial difficulties.

### **Education**

According to the upcoming 3RP Iraq Country Chapter, in the academic year 2021/2022, 41,000 school age children were enrolled out of 71,000 school-aged Syrian refugee children in KR-I. This means 42% were not attending school. Among them, 65% never attended school, while 26% dropped out due to costs linked to education and transportation to school, lack of documentation and absence of relevant academic certificates among other reasons.<sup>119</sup> Soon after, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) implemented a landmark decision for the academic year of 2022-2023 through the Refugee Education Integration Policy (REIP) which integrates refugee children and teachers from grade 1 to 4 into the national education system.<sup>120</sup>

Although the REIP was a positive move towards Sustainable Development Goal 4, which recognizes that education is critical to the resilience of refugee and host community children and youth, it also came with challenges for Syrian refugee students, parents and teachers who would need to learn the Kurdish language to fully integrate into the national education program.<sup>121</sup> Limited school infrastructure and WASH facilities also made it challenging for public schools to integrate all Syrian refugee students.<sup>122</sup> In addition, returnees continue to be largely marginalized with UNICEF estimating that 680,000 IDP and returnee children still face obstacles accessing education due to absence of civil documentation and lack of access to internet or connectivity devices.<sup>123</sup>

***“A lot of Syrian students are forced to leave school in Kurdistan region of Iraq (KRI). We must provide them with the support they need to continue their education.” -- Jinda, Youth Advisory Group member from Iraq***

<sup>116</sup> <https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/iraq>

<sup>117</sup> <https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/>

<sup>118</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/iraq/unicef-iraq-humanitarian-situation-report-no-4-1-january-31-december-2022>

<sup>119</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>120</sup> [https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Regional\\_Strategic\\_Overview\\_2023\\_full.pdf](https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Regional_Strategic_Overview_2023_full.pdf)

<sup>121</sup> <https://globalcompactrefugees.org/good-practices/refugee-education-integration-policy-reip>

<sup>122</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>123</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/iraq/unicef-iraq-humanitarian-situation-report-no-4-1-january-31-december-2022>

## Child protection

Syrian refugee children and adolescents in Iraq continue to encounter significant challenges related to protection and psychological well-being, as the consequences of the previous conflicts persist. The governorates of north and central Iraq face the highest vulnerability rates, with chronic humanitarian needs due to substantial barriers to return, local integration, and resettlement. The effectiveness of child protection efforts is hindered by the absence of appropriate legal instruments and a lack of coherence between existing legal and policy mechanisms designed to address the protection needs of children.

The prevailing legislation concerning disabilities primarily adopts a medical, caregiving, and charity-oriented approach rather than a rights-based approach. According to a needs assessment conducted by Save the Children in Iraq in 2023, children with disabilities have reported limited access to secure, inclusive, and high-quality protection and psychosocial support services, which restricts their ability to feel safe, dignified, and connected to the broader community. Additionally, other underserved and difficult-to-reach groups include children engaged in child labor, out-of-school adolescent girls and boys, adolescent mothers, married adolescent girls, and working boys who have limited or no access to necessary services or support.



Lack of access to livelihood opportunities and growing food insecurity remain at the core of protection issues such as child labor and child marriage among Syrian refugees in Iraq.<sup>124</sup> It also led to refugee families seeking relocation to camps – where protection risks such as exposure to GBV are more prevalent – as they were unable to cover the costs of their basic needs in the host community.<sup>125</sup> Although there has been progress linked to the integration of refugees in the education system, they are still not allowed to work in the public sector and therefore have to find job opportunities in the informal sector, mostly with unregistered businesses.<sup>126</sup> Due to the unstable nature and lower wages attributed to this type of income, refugees have become more reliant on debt to make ends, resulting in higher food insecurity particularly among refugee families in camp settings.<sup>127</sup>

Increased economic vulnerabilities have also exacerbated the prevalence of GBV and child marriage, with girls being particularly at risk of dropping out of school.<sup>128</sup> A 2022 study found that female youth in KRI were exposed to child marriage due to family pressure as parents believed it would improve their economic opportunities and protect them against sexual harassment.<sup>129</sup> The study also found that education could be a protective factor against child marriage in this particular region.<sup>130</sup> Child labor and domestic work were also listed by some refugee families as reasons for their boys and girls not attending school.<sup>131</sup> Refugee children have been particularly involved in street-based work, restaurants, hotels, agriculture, industries, plastic recycling, and steel factories, where they are often exposed to physical and verbal abuse in public.<sup>132</sup> Moreover, many IDP children in Iraq still suffer from lack of documentation which hampers their access to education, child protection and mental health services, putting them at greater risk of exploitation and abuse.<sup>133</sup>

<sup>124</sup> <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/05/1118472>

<sup>125</sup> [https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/2022\\_3RP\\_Iraq\\_Country\\_Chapter\\_4apr22.pdf](https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/2022_3RP_Iraq_Country_Chapter_4apr22.pdf)

<sup>126</sup> [https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Regional\\_Strategic\\_Overview\\_2023\\_full.pdf](https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Regional_Strategic_Overview_2023_full.pdf)

<sup>127</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>128</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>129</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/iraq/perspectives-early-marriage-voices-female-youth-iraqi-kurdistan-and-south-sudan-who-married-under-age-18>

<sup>130</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>131</sup> [https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/2022\\_3RP\\_Iraq\\_Country\\_Chapter\\_4apr22.pdf](https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/2022_3RP_Iraq_Country_Chapter_4apr22.pdf)

<sup>132</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/jordan/child-labour-within-syrian-refugee-response-2020-stocktaking-report>

<sup>133</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/iraq/access-civil-documentation-idps-and-idp-returnees-iraq-2022-2023>



***“We must create more opportunities for Syrian refugees with special needs to be able to work in a safe environment and grant them scholarships that would allow them to complete their studies.”-- Angela, Youth Advisory Group member from Iraq***

### ***Mental health and psychosocial support***

Lockdown and social distancing measures during the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the worsening of pre-existing mental health conditions among displaced populations in Iraq, with a particular impact on children’s mental health during school closures.<sup>134</sup> In a 2022 mental health assessment by IOM, 48% of respondents expressed concerns for their children’s safety.<sup>135</sup> The lack of job opportunities, the prevalence of domestic violence within families, child marriage and the absence of safe recreational spaces for children were highlighted by parents as key concerns that are closely linked to their children’s mental health wellbeing.<sup>136</sup> That same year, a mental health study found that Syrian refugee families and children impacted by displacement in Iraq were found to suffer from chronic trauma-related disorders such as depression and Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) which needed long-term treatment and care.<sup>137</sup>

According to data analyzed by Save the Children for case management in 2022, 17% of children followed by case management workers have been emotionally abused by their caregivers. In 2021, there was a reported increase in GBV incidents, primarily domestic violence, and an estimated 920,000 people in Iraq required GBV interventions, 87% of them being women or adolescent girls.

***“We must focus on the importance of educating the parents and families of Syrian refugee children and youth on mental health, because they are the closest to their children and can support them in times of need...” – Qadriya, Youth Advisory Group member from Iraq***



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<sup>134</sup> [https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/2022\\_3RP\\_Iraq\\_Country\\_Chapter\\_4apr22.pdf](https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/2022_3RP_Iraq_Country_Chapter_4apr22.pdf)

<sup>135</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/iraq/mental-health-and-psycho-social-needs-assessment-republic-iraq-basra-governorate>

<sup>136</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>137</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9690495/>



## EGYPT

Egypt hosts 145,000 Syrian refugees.<sup>138</sup> Currently, 46% of Syrian refugees in the country are estimated to be living under the national poverty line.<sup>139</sup> Despite the rise in poverty and unemployment in the country, Egypt continues to be one of the least funded countries at international donor conferences linked to the Syria crisis.<sup>140</sup>

### **Education**

Since 2011, the Ministry of Education and Technical Education (MoETE) of Egypt has granted Syrian refugee and migrant boys, girls and youth full access to public education with access extended to all stages of the education cycle, including vocational and technical schools, as well as higher education academies and institutes.<sup>141</sup> Nevertheless, due to the challenging economic circumstances, the MoE's resources continue to be strained and sustaining this level of assistance to refugee children and youth through the public education system would require further investment from donors.<sup>142</sup> Although enrollment rates had reached 90% as per the last UNHCR survey in 2019, some barriers to access and quality of education remain such as overcrowded classrooms, dialect barriers, peer violence, discrimination and transportation challenges, with young women and girls being particularly impacted.<sup>143</sup>

UNHCR had previously estimated that 10% of all Syrian refugee children were not enrolled or attending school regularly due to disability, general poverty, child labor, distance to available schools, and overcrowding in public school classrooms.<sup>144</sup> Higher education opportunities are also limited with more than 2,400 higher education students needing such support while only a few hundred scholarship slots are made available each year.<sup>145</sup>

### **Child Protection**

Although education is accessible to many Syrian children and young people in Egypt, persisting legal and administrative barriers still make it very difficult for them to find formal job opportunities as adults and they often resort to less stable employment in the informal economy.<sup>146</sup> This is also the case for children and young adults who will drop out from school and engage in informal child labor to support their struggling parents, while the undocumented nature of their work makes it very difficult to protect them from exploitation and abuse.<sup>147</sup> Due to increasing socio-economic vulnerabilities among Syrian refugees in Egypt, Syrian girls are also at risk of child marriage. A 2021 study conducted among Syrian refugee families found that for some families, displacement-specific challenges such as protection concerns and livelihood insecurities further exposed Syrian refugee girls to child marriage.<sup>148</sup> This also resulted in negative health and social consequences for young girls who married early, including disruption of their education, early pregnancy and motherhood, the curtailment of their mobility.<sup>149</sup> Challenges with obtaining or renewing marriage and birth registration due to legal documentation barriers, further exacerbated refugees' vulnerabilities in Egypt, noting also possible risks of statelessness.<sup>150</sup>

<sup>138</sup> [https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Regional\\_Strategic\\_Overview\\_2023\\_full.pdf](https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Regional_Strategic_Overview_2023_full.pdf)

<sup>139</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>140</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>141</sup> <https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/3RP2021EN.pdf>

<sup>142</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>143</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>144</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>145</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>146</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/jordan/child-labour-within-syrian-refugee-response-2020-stocktaking-report>

<sup>147</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/jordan/child-labour-within-syrian-refugee-response-2020-stocktaking-report>

<sup>148</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8028254/>

<sup>149</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>150</sup> [Ibid.](#)

## ***Mental Health and Psychosocial Support***

According to WHO, the refugee community in Egypt has significant health needs, including serious mental health concerns resulting from exposure to displacement and trauma.<sup>151</sup> Recent assessments have also shown that the psycho-social issues impacting Syrian refugee children currently in Egypt have continued to deteriorate over the years, requiring long-term mental health and psychosocial support.<sup>152</sup> The majority of refugees and asylum seekers in Egypt live in urban areas as there are no refugee camps in the country.<sup>153</sup> Previous studies have shown that many Syrian families face social isolation and exclusion as they reside in isolated family units in urban areas while their usual communal or family networks are not available for them to lean on.<sup>154</sup> Young girls were also shown to be particularly at risk of violence and harassment occurring in public spaces or while they are on their way to school.<sup>155</sup> Syrian refugee children who have undergone trauma and displacement, residing in overcrowded neighborhoods in poor cities with limited contact with peers and access to recreational spaces, may experience a negative impact on their mental health wellbeing and overall development.



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<sup>151</sup> <https://www.emro.who.int/egy/programmes/syrian-refugee-response.html>

<sup>152</sup> <https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/3RP2021EN.pdf>

<sup>153</sup> <https://www.acaps.org/country/egypt/crisis/syrian-refugee-crisis>

<sup>154</sup> [https://plan-international.org/uploads/sites/35/2022/01/pyschosocial\\_support\\_for\\_syrian\\_and\\_egyptian\\_children\\_in\\_urban\\_areas.pdf](https://plan-international.org/uploads/sites/35/2022/01/pyschosocial_support_for_syrian_and_egyptian_children_in_urban_areas.pdf)

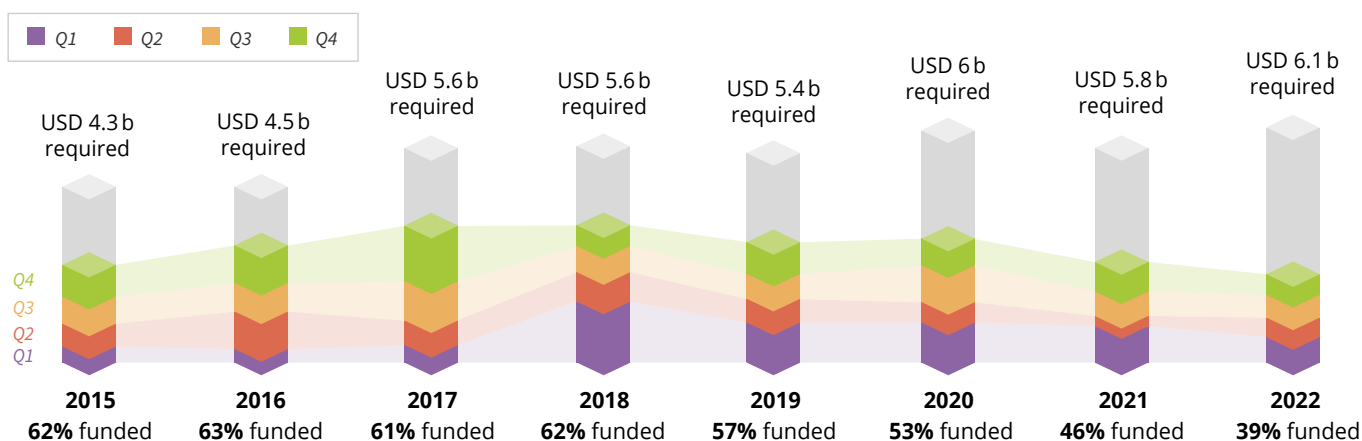
<sup>155</sup> [Ibid.](#)



### III. WORRYING FUNDING DYNAMICS AROUND THE SYRIA CRISIS

In 2022, the 3RP asked for US\$ 6.1 billion and approximately 39 % was funded.<sup>156</sup> This was the lowest percentage in funding since the 3RP was launched in 2015. Over the past few years, despite increasing humanitarian needs<sup>157</sup> there has been a steady decline in funding, particularly for the resilience component of the 3RP, which is intended to make families and children less dependent on aid while investing in durable solutions for their future. Funding to support dignified lives for all and the strengthening of local and national systems is also at its lowest. In 2022 the resilience funding amounted to 37% of the appeal.<sup>158</sup> This is particularly concerning given the priority need to support economic opportunities, access to quality services and inclusive policies for all, as well as the resilience and capacities of state systems and national actors for advancing solutions and development in the mid to long term.

#### 3RP Funding Trend over the Years



Despite the competing emergency response in Ukraine, the Brussels VI Conference in May 2022 saw international donors pledging 6.7 billion US\$ (4.3 billion for 2022 and an additional 2.4 billion for 2023 and beyond), which represented an unanticipated increase from 2021, when a major reduction in funding took place.<sup>159</sup> The recent pledging conference held in Brussels in March 2023 in support of Türkiye and Syria following the earthquake also mobilized 7 billion euros (6 billion for humanitarian aid, recovery and reconstruction in Türkiye, and 1 billion for humanitarian aid in Syria), but it is critical that those are in addition to funding for the 3RP and Syria HRP in order for the day-to-day humanitarian response to continue while keeping in mind durable solutions to this protracted crisis.

<sup>156</sup> [https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Regional\\_Strategic\\_Overview\\_2023\\_full.pdf](https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Regional_Strategic_Overview_2023_full.pdf)

<sup>157</sup> <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/06/1121652>

<sup>158</sup> [3RP\\_2022Annual\\_Report.pdf \(3rpsyriacrisis.org\)](https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/3RP_2022Annual_Report.pdf)

<sup>159</sup> <https://coar-global.org/2022/05/16/donors-defy-expectations-with-6-7bn-pledges-at-brussels-vi-conference/>

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## IV. CONCLUSION

Brussels VII is a critical opportunity for the international community and local stakeholders to come together, design and implement medium to long-term solutions to the current challenges faced by Syrian children and young people. Child protection, education and mental health needs in Syria and neighboring host countries will keep intensifying in the socio-economic climate of today as long as very little investment is made into the resilience of the displaced and refugee population impacted by this 12-year crisis, including millions of boys and girls. More importantly, as Syrian families' livelihoods continue to dwindle in the face of compounded crisis and the absence of any long-term strategy, harmful coping mechanisms such as child labor and child marriage will continue to grow, and millions of boys' and girls' educational development, physical and mental health will suffer.

The Syrian boys and girls we speak to on a regular basis are determined to weather the storm and keep fighting for their right to access education, child protection and mental health services that will allow them to thrive and bounce back from this crisis as they grow into strong and self-sufficient young adults. The only question that remains is whether or not the international community is willing to continue empowering them so that they have the opportunity to transform their journey through conflict, displacement and loss into one of resilience and hope.

***“I am one of the students who has been impacted by the Syrian crisis, and now that I am older, the opportunity to apply for a university scholarship is gone. I do not want the same to happen to Syrian students and children who are younger than me...”*** -- Safa, Youth Advisory Group member from Iraq





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