

HARD LESSONS

An inquiry into Syrian children with disabilities' exposure to protection risks in Lebanon and Northwest Syria, in light of deteriorating socio-economic contexts, and growing barriers to inclusive education

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Note: This study was conducted prior to the earthquakes of February 2023 that hit Türkiye and Syria. Our deepest condolences go out to all those affected, we remain committed to easing the suffering of those most impacted by this tragedy.

Report designed by: Diana De León

Cover photo credits: A girl studying in an education tent in a displacement camp. ©Action for Humanity, World Vision Syria Response Partner

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CHILD AND ADULT SAFEGUARDING CONSIDERATIONS

We ensured safe and ethical participation of children, parents and caregivers or other adults when they shared their stories and surveys were conducted in compliance with COVID-19 preventive measures and in line with World Vision's safeguarding protocols. Names of children and adults have been anonymized and changed to ensure confidentiality. All photos were taken and used with informed consent.

DISCLAIMER


This report has been prepared based on data collected by the local partner organisations mentioned above in their capacity as service providers. World Vision are unable to verify with a hundred percent certainty the identity of, and information provided by, survey respondents.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|-----------|---|
| 4 | Acronyms |
| 5 | Executive Summary |
| 7 | Key Findings and Recommendations |
| 10 | Introduction |
| 12 | Research objectives & questions |
| 13 | Methodology |
| 15 | Findings from Lebanon |
| 26 | Recommendations for Lebanon |
| 29 | Findings from Northwest Syria |
| 39 | Recommendations for Northwest Syria |
| 42 | Conclusion |
| 43 | Annex I: breakdown of focus group discussion participants in Lebanon and Northwest Syria |

ACRONYMS

| | |
|---------------|---|
| AFH | Action For Humanity |
| CEFM | Child, Early and Forced Marriage |
| CWD | Child With Disabilities |
| EiE | Education in Emergencies |
| FGD | Focus Group Discussion |
| IDP | Internally Displaced Person |
| ITS | Informal Tented Settlement |
| NWS | Northwest Syria |
| UNHCR | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |
| URDA | Union of Relief and Development Associations |
| WVI | World Vision International |



Syrian girl with hearing impairment
uses sign language to communicate.
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

After 12 years of conflict, the Syrian crisis remains one of the world's largest refugee and displacement events of recent times.¹ Girls and boys who are now IDPs in Syria, or refugees in host countries, are experiencing a worsening humanitarian situation that is making them highly susceptible to various protection risks. Child, Early and Forced Marriage (CEFM), child labour, lack of access to education and different forms of physical and psychological abuse or exploitation, are some of the challenges Syrian refugee and displaced children face on a daily basis due to compounded socio-economic crises, conflict, and displacement. Children with Disabilities (CWD) - whether physical, intellectual, hearing, visual, or speech - are at risk of being further marginalised and face additional challenges, particularly in Northwest Syria and Lebanon where significant barriers to inclusive education remain.

Through mixed research methods that include surveys with 144 caregivers and parents of CWD in Lebanon and Northwest Syria – as well as Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with children with and without disabilities, caregivers and teachers – this study has found that, despite ongoing challenges and hardship, the importance of inclusive education is still recognised by Syrian communities in Northwest Syria and Lebanon. Caregivers and children from both contexts overwhelmingly placed a big emphasis on access to inclusive education for boys and girls, with or without disabilities, which would in turn decrease their exposure to CEFM and child labour.

The demand for education is clear, but children and youth in both Northwest Syria and Lebanon face multiple barriers to accessing inclusive education, including a lack of resources, security risks, bullying and lasting disability stigma. These barriers are further exacerbated among CWD as they face additional obstacles such as inadequate school facilities and a lack of specialised teaching skills to accommodate their learning needs.

In Lebanon, CWD among Syrian refugees are facing rejection and social stigma, which can render them less likely to be subjected to child marriage and child labour compared to children without disabilities. Nevertheless, this does not mean that their protection is safeguarded as they face a greater risk of being exposed to disability stigma and exploitation, which in turn hinders their access to basic rights such as education or livelihoods.

In Northwest Syria, the prevalence of early marriage is significantly influenced by gender roles, and is greatly impacting girls with and without disabilities. When it comes to child labour, the type of labour in which Syrian CWD are involved is also influenced by their disability. Due to the unstable context, CWD face different kinds of risks hampering their access to, and participation in school, both of which are exacerbated by ongoing conflict in Syria.

The respective education systems in Lebanon and Northwest Syria need to address the needs of Syrian children with disabilities to ensure that they are not left behind. To improve access to education for children with disabilities, it is crucial to build or renovate schools with accessibility features. This may include wheelchair ramps, accessible bathrooms,

¹ <https://www.worldvision.org/refugees-news-stories/syrian-refugee-crisis-facts>

and other features that can help students with disabilities move around the school independently. Accessibility also includes creating a safe environment free of any bullying and disability stigma through awareness-raising campaigns and community engagement activities. In addition, it is important to provide specialised training for teachers to help them understand and support the unique needs of children with disabilities. This can include training in inclusive teaching practices and the use of assistive technologies. Providing mental health and psychosocial support for children with disabilities and their families can also help address the emotional and psychological challenges associated with disability. By implementing these recommendations, the education systems in Northwest Syria and Lebanon can become more inclusive and equitable for all students, including those with disabilities.

Lastly, the 7.7 magnitude earthquake that hit southeast Türkiye and Northwest Syria in the early hours of February 6th is having a further significant impact on the already weakened education system there. The disaster damaged more than half of the functioning schools in Northwest Syria, leaving thousands of children without access to education. Moreover, many of the schools that remain undamaged are now being used to provide temporary emergency shelter to displaced families in the area. These challenges will put further pressure on the education system, making it increasingly difficult for many children to access education. CWD in particular will face even more access constraints coupled with limited resources within the schooling system in Northwest Syria.

To address all of the above-mentioned challenges, it is important to take a comprehensive approach to inclusive education in Syria, Lebanon and the wider region, with a focus on building resilience while addressing the unique needs of Syrian children with and without disabilities in conflict-affected areas and host communities. These efforts will ensure that all Syrian girls and boys will still have the opportunity to thrive and lead fulfilled lives after 12 long years of war and uncertainty.



Children during recess in a newly rehabilitated school in Syria © Hand in Hand for Aid, World Vision Syria Response Partner

KEY FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

IN LEBANON:



Key finding number 1: Children with disabilities among Syrian refugees in Lebanon are less likely to be subjected to child marriage compared to children without disabilities, primarily due to the social stigma and rejection they face.

- Only 25% of the respondents believed that children with disabilities (CWD) are more likely to experience child marriage than children without disabilities.
- Survey results showed that 61% of participants responded negatively when questioned whether CWD are at a higher risk of facing early marriage compared to children without disabilities.
- 60% of the respondents firmly disagreed with the idea that families with girls with disabilities would prefer to arrange an early marriage for their child, and at a younger age than children without disabilities, if given the choice



Key finding number 2: Children with disabilities among Syrian refugees in Lebanon are less likely to engage in child labour compared to children without disabilities.

- 75% of caregivers believed that it is less common for boys with disabilities to engage in child labour compared to boys without disabilities.
- 83% believed that girls with disabilities are less likely to engage in child labour compared to girls without disabilities.



Key finding number 3: Children with disabilities among Syrian refugees in Lebanon face a greater risk of stigma and exploitation, which hinders their access to basic rights such as education.

- Respondents agreed that greater access to education for children with disabilities would offer more protection from harm, 77% believe it would decrease the likelihood of child labour, 85% believe it would delay its onset, 82% say it would decrease the likelihood of child marriage, and 80% believe it would delay its onset.
- 70% of respondents believed that increased access to schools could delay early marriage by at least 5 years for girls, while 66% believed it could do the same for boys.
- Nevertheless, the above finding does not mean that CWD have more access to school and enhanced protection. It was confirmed during FGDs that Syrian CWD in Lebanon, face risks of bullying, stigma and exploitation that also prevent them from accessing education and other basic rights.

IN NORTHWEST SYRIA:



Key finding number 1: Early marriage affects girls in Northwest Syria, regardless of whether or not they have a disability.

- 61% of respondents strongly agreed that families of girls with disabilities are more likely to choose early marriage, and at a younger age than children without disabilities, if given the option.
- Some respondents stated that girls with disabilities are at a higher risk of experiencing early marriage due to being more marginalised and being subjected to different types of abuse.
- Caregivers of girls with disabilities may be more willing to accept unfavourable marriage conditions due to the societal perception of CWD as a burden and their lower value in terms of marriage.



Key finding number 2: The type of child labour in which Syrian children with disabilities are involved is influenced by their disability.

- FGDs with caregivers of boys with disabilities revealed that their child's disability was not a contributing factor in the decision-making for determining the age their child would begin to engage in income generating activity.
- When asked about the prevalence of sending girls with disabilities to engage in economic activity compared to boys with disabilities, the majority of respondents (79%) said that it is less common, while 18% said that it is the same.
- FGDs with caregivers of CWD suggested that unskilled labour is more prevalent among boys with disabilities, which often poses significant risks.



Key finding number 3: Exclusion from school and participation in school entail different kinds of risk for CWD, both of which are exacerbated by ongoing conflict in Syria.

- Caregivers have identified several barriers that prevent children with disabilities from accessing school, including economic constraints, limited inclusive education, a lack of accessibility to and within schools, a lack of trained teachers or inclusive curricula, and peer bullying.
- 71 out of 72 respondents said that they “strongly agree” when asked if better access to inclusive education for children with disabilities would provide greater protection from harm.
- Caregivers said that they would send their children to school if they had the chance, but it seems like education is an agreed upon hypothetical solution that cannot be applied in their context given the dire living conditions.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS:

FOR LEBANON:

- 1 Develop and implement programmes that promote equal access to education and employment opportunities for children with disabilities.
- 2 Support programs and projects that help promote integrated inclusive education, child protection and livelihood for CWD and their families in Lebanon.
- 3 Create a safe, inclusive and quality education system that makes public schools accessible for all children regardless of their abilities.
- 4 Dedicate funds to build the knowledge and skills of teachers and other education personnel on inclusive education and on creating a safe and bullying-free environment.
- 5 Provide economic support to families of CWD to help reduce financial barriers to education.

FOR NORTHWEST SYRIA (POST-EARTHQUAKE):

- 1 Consult with disability rights organisations and experts to develop guidelines and standards for accessible schools and educational facilities.
- 2 Provide training to teachers and school administrators on inclusive education and disability rights.
- 3 Ensure that all new school construction or renovation projects are designed with accessibility in mind.
- 4 Implement evidence-based anti-bullying programs in schools to address the issue of bullying towards children and youth with disabilities in Syria.
- 5 Provide transportation services or increase the number of schools available in areas where children with disabilities live in Syria to address the issue of geographical distance from schools and transportation challenges.
- 6 Increase access to education and skills development opportunities for children with disabilities, particularly girls.
- 7 Establish temporary learning spaces in safe and accessible locations for children who are unable to attend their regular schools due to damage or destruction.
- 8 Provide psychosocial support to children who may be experiencing trauma or anxiety related to the earthquake.
- 9 Ensure that schools have adequate resources and support to provide additional support to students who have fallen behind in their studies due to the disruption caused by the earthquake.

INTRODUCTION

Twelve years into the Syrian conflict, displaced and refugee Syrians are experiencing deteriorating living conditions and increased protection risks amid harsh national and international crises.

Despite Lebanon's long history of being affected by complex national and regional conflicts, in the early 2020s, Lebanon experienced a rapidly escalating and unprecedented humanitarian crisis.² In addition to its constant struggle with political, social and economic challenges, Lebanon was hit by intersecting simultaneous crises. This included the COVID-19 pandemic, amongst the severe economic collapse whereby the Lebanese pound lost over 80% of its value and the massive Beirut port explosion that resulted in hundreds of thousands of injuries, thousands of destroyed properties and hundreds of deaths.³ Together, these factors had compounding effects on the country, especially on vulnerable individuals.

Most significantly, unemployment rates soared from 18.5% in 2019 to over 40% in early 2022, the minimum wage plummeted from 450 USD/month to less than 22 USD/month, with inflation as high as 215% from 2021 until 2022.⁴ This crisis has resulted in the adoption of negative coping mechanisms to ensure survival and attainment of basic needs. With over 80% of the general population in Lebanon reportedly living in multidimensional poverty,⁵ children are disproportionately impacted.⁶ All Syrian refugees are experiencing a severe decrease in their quality of life, with most facing difficulties accessing basic services; around 90% of Syrian refugee households require some form of humanitarian assistance.⁷

Syria is also at the intersection of an economic crisis, conflict and the COVID-19 pandemic, and the contextual conditions are expected to worsen in 2023. Syrians are currently enduring the worst economic crisis since the beginning of the war in 2011, weakened by 11 years of conflict, the pandemic, and spill-over effects from the economic crisis in Lebanon. As of the end of 2021,⁸ more than 90% of Syrians live below the poverty line, compared with 10% prior to the start of the conflict. People in Syria are also experiencing a cholera outbreak and alarming suicide rates and ongoing hostilities in the de-escalated area are forcing people to leave their homes.⁹ In Northwest Syria, between 2020 and 2022, food prices increased by 532%¹⁰ coupled with severe strains on livelihoods, lack of civil status documentation, unemployment, and family separation, which puts further pressure on households.¹¹

² <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpubh.2021.704678/full>

³ [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/eclinm/article/PIIS2589-5370\(21\)00028-6/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/eclinm/article/PIIS2589-5370(21)00028-6/fulltext)

⁴ <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/acaps-briefing-note-lebanon-humanitarian-impact-crisis-children#:~:text=More%20than%2050%25%20of%20school,%2C%20price%20increases%2C%20and%20inflation.>

⁵ <https://www.unescwa.org/news/escwa-warns-three-quarters-lebanon%E2%80%99s-residents-plunge-poverty>

⁶ <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/lebanon-children-s-future-line-enar>

⁷ <https://www.unhcr.org/lb/16363-un-worsening-conditions-for-vulnerable-families-in-lebanon-amid-deepening-economic-crisis.html>

⁸ https://www.care-international.org/sites/default/files/2022-08/RGA_NW%20Syria_202208.pdf

⁹ [https://actionforhumanity.org/media/16730023023411377/Joint%20Statement%20on%20the%20Continuation%20of%20UN-led%20Cross-border%20humanitarian%20assistance%20in%20Northwest%20Syria%20\(Jan,%202020-2023\).pdf](https://actionforhumanity.org/media/16730023023411377/Joint%20Statement%20on%20the%20Continuation%20of%20UN-led%20Cross-border%20humanitarian%20assistance%20in%20Northwest%20Syria%20(Jan,%202020-2023).pdf)

¹⁰ https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/news-stories/stories/syria-life-time-food-insecurity_en

¹¹ https://www.unicef.org/mena/media/15726/file/hno_2022_final_version_210222.pdf.pdf



This has resulted in more than 4 million people relying on humanitarian assistance to meet their basic needs.¹² Those living with disabilities also encounter significant barriers in accessing livelihood opportunities and basic services, resulting in increased dependence on family networks and humanitarian assistance.¹³ Food insecurity, poverty and unemployment due to economic deterioration exacerbate the likelihood of households resorting to negative coping mechanisms, like taking children out of school, selling household assets, consuming less food, reducing food quality, going into debt, child labour, CEFM and willingness to take on high-risk income-generating activities.¹⁴

The purpose of this study was to investigate the conditions under which children and youth with disabilities in emergency settings are affected by child protection issues such as child marriage and child labour. The study explored whether lack of access to inclusive education is a driver and consequence of child marriage and child labour and whether this differs from the practice among children without disabilities. By comparing two emergency settings, Syria (IDPs) and Lebanon (predominantly refugees), the study aims to identify the policies and plans that need to be put in place to promote inclusion and well-being as well as prevent stigma, discrimination, and exclusion. Using an intersectional framework and a gender lens, the study also sought to understand the factors contributing to child protection issues amongst children with disabilities.

The findings of this report were presented at a side event dedicated to disability-inclusive education at the Education Cannot Wait High Level Financing Conference in February 2023. Ultimately, the findings of this study will contribute to the development of effective policies and interventions to promote the inclusion and well-being of children and youth with disabilities in emergency settings.

¹² https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/news-stories/stories/last-lifeline-how-bab-al-hawa-keeps-northwest-syria-alive_en

¹³ https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/hws_and_raata_sitrep_34_december_2022.pdf

¹⁴ https://www.care-international.org/sites/default/files/2022-08/RGA_NW%20Syria_202208.pdf

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES & QUESTIONS

Primary objective: The study will explore the association between protection risks such as child marriage or child labour and disability in children.

Secondary objective: The study will explore the relationship between access to inclusive education and child marriage.

Third objective: The research will look at policies and programs that should be put in place to promote inclusion in both contexts.

Through this study, we aimed to answer 3 key questions:

- 1** Is there evidence that suggests children with disabilities are more/less susceptible to child labour and early child marriage compared to children without disabilities?
- 2** What are the factors contributing to child protection issues amongst children with disabilities who face barriers when it comes to accessing inclusive education?
- 3** What policies or plans might be put in place to promote inclusion and well-being while also preventing stigma, discrimination, and exclusion, in order to preserve schools as safe spaces for children with disabilities?

Following data collection and analysis, an additional research question became pertinent guided by the data: **Is a lack of access to inclusive education a driver of child marriage for children with disabilities compared to children without disabilities?**

METHODOLOGY

World Vision and Action For Humanity undertook this mixed methods study between October 2022 and January 2023. It primarily consisted of quantitative surveys, including qualitative open-ended questions, conducted with a total of 144 caregivers and parents of Syrian CWD, half of whom live in Northwest Syria and the other half in a refugee setting in Lebanon. In parallel, focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with 28 children (with and without disabilities), 13 caregivers, and 16 teachers in Lebanon and Northwest Syria (See Annex I for more information).

In Northwest Syria (NWS), with support from AFH teams, 42 fathers and 30 mothers of internally displaced Syrian children with disabilities were surveyed. 10% of the respondents have more than one child with a disability. The age of CWD ranged between 6 and 18 years, with 21% of them (15) aged 16 years and 15.3% (11) aged 13 years. In total, the 72 interviewed respondents reported that they have a total of 75 disabled children, of which 38 are females and 37 are males.

In Lebanon, with support from partners at URDA, 56 mothers, 14 fathers and 2 other caregivers of Syrian refugee children with disabilities were surveyed. The sample is equally distributed between 4 regions in Lebanon - Akkar, Baalbek, Beqaa and Tripoli - and 18% of the respondents have more than one child with a disability.

Respondents' children in both countries have different types of disabilities, mainly physical, intellectual, hearing, visual, and speech impairments. Through this research, we focused solely on the protection risks of child labour and early child marriage as they were the most concerning risks linked to our ongoing child protection interventions in both contexts.

SAMPLING TECHNIQUE AND SIZE:

The sample of surveyed caregivers was selected by convenience based on the decision of operations and monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning (MEAL) teams from World Vision Syria Response and Lebanon. The sample was selected from a group of programme/ project participants from the communities in which World Vision, Action For Humanity and URDA operate.

Following the framework of convenience sampling, the sample of 144 caregivers was estimated by the research team and MEAL team guided by their knowledge and experience in order to maximise the statistical power and to identify the relationships between disability and protection risks.

DEFINITION OF CHILD LABOUR FOR THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY:

For the purpose of this study and within our questionnaire, child labour included the involvement of children in: (1) small family businesses – including domestic work within the family sphere, carpentry, construction, manufacturing, industrial sites, welding, agriculture,

meat treatment and fisheries. (2) Services sector - cleaners, wait staff, delivery and porters. (3) Street labour - peddling trinkets, collecting waste material, shining shoes and begging. We did not assess the time spent on unpaid work within the home and were therefore unable to know if children with disabilities are responsible for more unpaid work around the home.

LIMITATIONS:

The study's findings should be interpreted while keeping in mind some methodological limitations. Firstly, the sample size was chosen through a convenient sampling method, which does not follow probability rules. Therefore, the results from this research cannot be generalised to the entire population of caregivers of children with disabilities in Syria and Lebanon. The desk review for Lebanon also faced limitations as there are very few recent publications on inclusive education and ensuring protection risks for this particular context.

Another potential methodological limitation is the potential of biased responses by parents and caregivers of CWD given that the topic is highly sensitive and can generate feelings of guilt and shame among respondents. Additionally, a further bias can arise from the fact that many of the research participants are also beneficiaries that receive support from organisations known to be associated with this research as it is this connection that enabled access to them.

SAFEGUARDING:

Consent forms were collected from all respondents who participated in research activities, except for children and minors, wherein parents provided consent on their behalf. Informed consent was recorded for all respondents through the signature of consent forms by survey respondents. In order to ensure proper safeguarding, all data collectors underwent basic psychological first aid training, which included instructions on how to ask open-ended questions to better understand the context of operations, how to pay close attention and actively listen to respondents in order to better understand their feelings and contain crisis situations and finally how to inquire about their needs and concerns in order to better refer them to needed services. During survey data collection, parents were encouraged not to have their children present with them to avoid unnecessary harm. All parents of CWD were provided with referral pathways should the need arise for protection, education or health services. All data was anonymised, and unique codes were used instead of names.

FINDINGS FROM LEBANON

A significant number of children in Lebanon who live in conditions of poverty often resort to negative coping mechanisms, which in turn pose significant risk factors that are likely to have long-lasting effects on their futures.¹⁵ While there has been a recent shift towards enrolling children in public schools rather than private schools, school enrolment in the 2021 academic year dropped to 43%, with limited financial capacity being the primary barrier, especially regarding transportation costs.¹⁶ Many schools in Lebanon, like other institutions in the country, suffer from intermittent access to electricity, face shortages of the materials and equipment needed to deliver school curricula and have generally limited resources to operate at minimal capacity.¹⁷

An increase in the number of students, coupled with a shortage of teachers, whose salaries plummeted to close to 1 USD per hour, has left schools in Lebanon - especially public schools - struggling to maintain functional operations to ensure the delivery of education to their students.¹⁸ These challenges were exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic, where prevention policies prompted the adoption of online or hybrid models of schooling. Both schools and households have limited access to basic electricity, internet connection, electronic devices, and to some extent digital literacy, making it difficult to adopt such models.¹⁹ The restricted capacity to access education may have resulted in detrimental coping mechanisms among the most marginalised groups and have the potential to exacerbate child protection risks such as abuse and exploitation. For instance, children may be more likely to be coerced into dropping out of school in order to support their household's livelihoods by engaging in multiple forms of child labour.²⁰



Fatima with her youngest daughter – communicating through sign language. ©Action for Humanity, World Vision Syria Response Partner

¹⁵ <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/acaps-briefing-note-lebanon-humanitarian-impact-crisis-children#:~:text=More%20than%2050%25%20of%20school,%2C%20price%20increases%2C%20and%20inflation>

¹⁶ <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/lebanon-education-tipping-point-education-sector-advocacy-brief-october-2021>

¹⁷ <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/lebanon-s-education-crisis-open-letter-24-january-2022-enar>

¹⁸ <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/lebanon-s-education-crisis-open-letter-24-january-2022-enar>

¹⁹ <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/lebanon-s-education-crisis-open-letter-24-january-2022-enar>

²⁰ <https://www.unicef.org/lebanon/stories/hadis-story-swapping-work-education>

While these challenges affect all children in Lebanon, Syrian refugee children face additional barriers regarding education. Due to the economic crisis, many Syrian parents have been unable to enrol their children in school because of financial difficulties. Parents have cited issues such as the high cost of fuel, textbooks, and school supplies.²¹ Between 2019 and 2021, the number of Syrian refugee children involved in income-generating activity doubled to roughly 28,000 and disproportionately impacted boys. This further increased their exposure to risks like abuse, exploitation, and bad working conditions.²² Children and youth, particularly girls, also face a heightened risk of early and enforced child marriage (EECM) as a consequence of dropping out of school, which in turn prevents them from re-enrolling in school.²³

Barriers faced by Syrian CWD are much less understood in Lebanon. Before the refugee crisis, it was difficult for children with disabilities in Lebanon to access education, but the situation has worsened for Syrian CWD. Public schools frequently turn away Syrian – as well as vulnerable Lebanese – children because of their disability, stating they lack the necessary tools or skills to educate them.²⁴ Syrian CWD do not have access to the same educational resources as their Lebanese counterparts since they cannot benefit from the same educational resources.²⁵ This report seeks to shed light on the relationship between access to education and child protection risks among Syrian CWD living in refugee settings given that this minority group is relatively understudied.



Key finding number 1: Children with disabilities among Syrian refugees in Lebanon are less likely to be subjected to child marriage compared to children without disabilities, primarily due to the social stigma and rejection they face.

The research cohort widely links disability with the inability to enter into marriage, resulting in a decreased probability of early marriage among children with disabilities. This implies a potential negative correlation between disability and early marriage in the broader population.

Only 25% of the respondents believed that children with disabilities are more likely to experience child marriage than children without disabilities. This perception was attributed to caregivers reporting that they see CWD as more vulnerable to exploitation (56%) and as a burden to their families (44%).

In the reported cases of child marriage involving CWD, the reasons behind it seem to be linked to the child's disability status and the perceived lack of capacity that comes with it, rather than fulfilling any gender roles. Moreover, in the case of Syrian refugees in Lebanon with intellectual impairments, the fear of exploitation may lead families to hide their relative with a disability, further isolating them.²⁶

²¹ https://almashareq.com/en_GB/articles/cnmi_am/features/2021/11/16/feature-01

²² <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/vasyr-2021-vulnerability-assessment-syrian-refugees-lebanon>

²³ <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/learning-resources/child-marriage-and-education/>

²⁴ <https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/07/19/growing-without-education/barriers-education-syrian-refugee-children-lebanon>

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/disability-inclusion-syrian-refugee-response-lebanon>

| Reasons provided as to why children and youth with disabilities may experience child marriage | | | |
|--|------------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| | Responses | | Percent of Cases |
| | N | Percent | |
| More vulnerable to exploitation | 9 | 42.9% | 56.3% |
| Seen as a burden to their family | 7 | 33.3% | 43.8% |
| Have limited or no job opportunities | 1 | 4.8% | 6.3% |
| To preserve the family's honor | 3 | 14.3% | 18.8% |
| Prefer not to answer | 1 | 4.8% | 6.3% |
| Total | 21 | 100.0% | 131.3% |

From the total surveyed sample, there were no reports of boys or girls with disabilities engaging in child marriage. In contrast, there were a few cases of early child marriage reported in children without any disabilities. 14% of respondents reported having a girl without disabilities from their households and only 1 respondent (1.4%) reported having a boy without disabilities from their household that was married when they were less than 18 years old.

Viewed from a gendered perspective, cultural norms and societal standards often associate the role of breadwinner and providing for the family with boys and associate the role of taking care of the household with. However, survey responses from Lebanon show that the disability status of children prevail over their presumed gender roles as CWD, whether male or female, have a lower likelihood of being subjected to early marriage compared to their non-disabled peers.

Survey results showed that 61% of participants responded negatively when questioned whether CWD are at a higher risk of facing early marriage compared to children without disabilities. Additionally, 60% of the respondents firmly disagreed with the idea that families with girls with disabilities would prefer to arrange an early marriage for their child and at a younger age than children without disabilities, if given the choice.

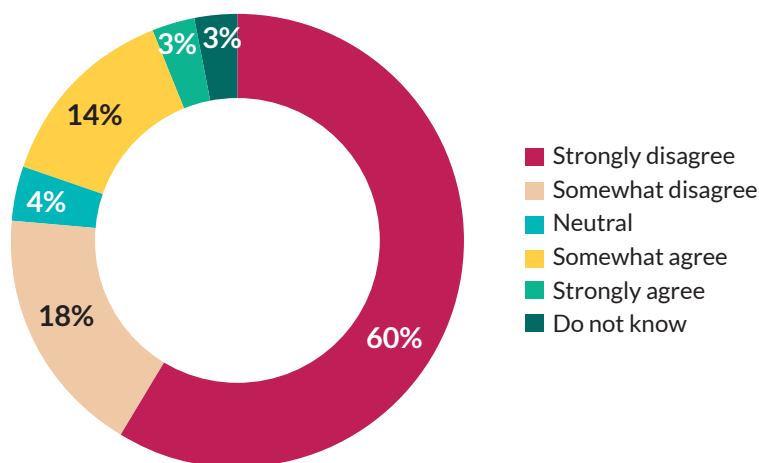
For instance, one of the interviewed parents of CWD reported: "Due to their disability, my daughters (14, 17, and 19) are not fit to get married. They can't take care of a household or understand their husbands. If they weren't disabled, I would certainly let them get married".

The quotation demonstrates a narrative that presents a contradiction between the likelihood of a child with a disability getting married and having a disability, implying that the two cannot coexist. This perspective can be interpreted as a manifestation of the high levels of stigma and exclusion that CWD face in their communities. As mentioned earlier, 33.3% of respondents believe that CWD are more likely to experience child marriage because they are seen as a burden to their families. However, since these children experience marginalisation and are often not viewed as potential marriage partners, parents might resort to other means to lessen their perceived burden. When family members in Syrian refugee communities face increasing stress and pressure without having financial and social support, CWD are more susceptible to abandonment and/or institutionalisation.²⁷

²⁷ <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/disability-inclusion-syrian-refugee-response-lebanon>

Girls with disabilities in Lebanon are less likely to experience early marriage due to social stigma, rather than a lack of intention from caregivers. However, social stigma may vary depending on the type of disability, with girls with minor disabilities being more vulnerable to pressure for early marriage. For example, a needs assessment for persons with disabilities in Lebanon carried out in 2017 found that girls with minor disabilities are more likely to be pressured into an early marriage before they are viewed as “less desirable” due to both their age and disability.²⁸ If girls with disabilities do marry early, they face a higher risk of intimate partner violence. Women with disabilities may be more prone to encounter intimate partner violence because they are perceived to have less power in relationships.²⁹

Families of girls with disabilities are more likely to opt to marry their disabled child early, and at a younger age than children without disabilities, if they had the option



When asked if families of boys with disabilities are more likely to arrange an early marriage for their child - and at a younger age - compared to boys without disabilities, 50% of respondents strongly disagreed and 22% somewhat disagreed.

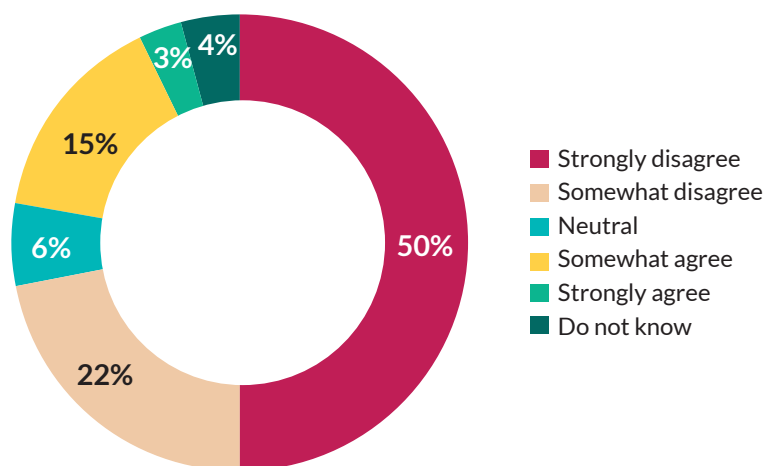
In Lebanon, as with global trends, girls are more likely than boys to experience early marriage. According to a needs assessment conducted in Lebanon in 2021, approximately 20% of Syrian girls aged 15-19 were married in 2021, while this was true for less than 1% of boys in the same age category.³⁰ However, for children with disabilities, their chances of getting married are similarly low for both boys and girls, as they are often excluded from social practices such as marriage regardless of their gender.

²⁸ <https://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/research-resources/disability-inclusion-in-child-protection-and-gender-based-violence-programs/>

²⁹ <https://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/research-resources/disability-inclusion-in-child-protection-and-gender-based-violence-programs/>

³⁰ <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/vasyr-2021-vulnerability-assessment-syrian-refugees-lebanon>

Families of boys with disabilities are more likely to opt to marry their disabled child early, and at a younger age than children without disabilities, if they had the option



The exclusion of CWD from social life results in parents and families concealing their CWD and restricting their interactions with the larger community due to the stigma and prejudice that are still prevalent toward children with disabilities.³¹ This is a deeply concerning issue as it not only affects their social and emotional development but also exacerbates their vulnerability to abuse and neglect.

In Lebanon, this issue is compounded by prevalent stigma and discrimination towards children with disabilities. Previous data in Lebanon shows that 44% of Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR and 62% of those in informal settlements believe that children with physical disabilities should not be integrated into society.³² This leads to the children feeling isolated and excluded, which can have long-lasting effects on their mental health and well-being. These attitudes can result in the exclusion of children with disabilities from social activities, education, and healthcare services. Furthermore, this can also affect their ability to access employment opportunities, participate in decision-making processes and engage in civic life.



Key finding number 2: Children with disabilities among Syrian refugees in Lebanon are less likely to engage in child labour compared to children without disabilities.

Regarding child labour, among the respondents, only 5 reported having girls from their households engaging in skilled labour, while 26% reported having at least one boy engaged in economic activity (e.g. skilled labour, family businesses, sales, etc.). However, none of the boys with economic activities lived with a disability. In contrast, only one respondent reported that a boy with a disability was engaged in economic activity.

From 2019 to 2021, there was an increase in the percentage of Syrian children between the ages of 5 and 17 in Lebanon who are involved in child labour from 3% to 5.5%.³³ This rise can be attributed to a number of factors, including high unemployment rates, an increase

³¹ <https://www.unicef.org/media/128976/file/UNICEF%20Fact%20Sheet%20-%20Children%20with%20Disabilities.pdf>

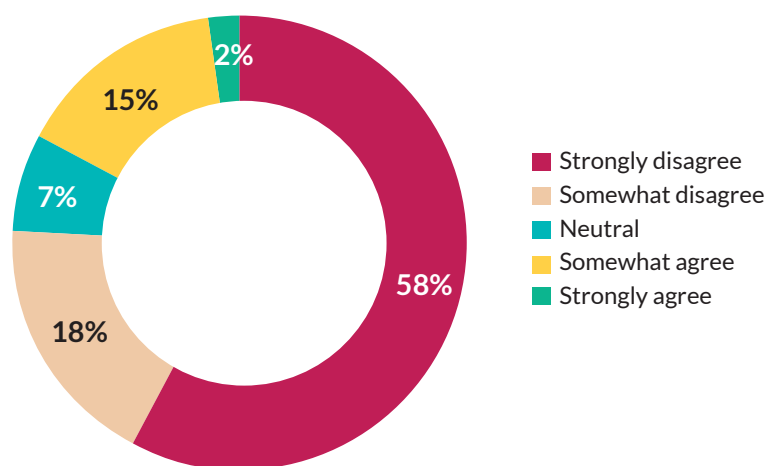
³² <https://www.unicef.org/lebanon/media/8341/file/Lebanon%20Situational%20Analysis%20report%20EN%20.pdf>

³³ <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/vasyr-2021-vulnerability-assessment-syrian-refugees-lebanon>

in children living on the streets, poverty and poor housing.³⁴ Additionally, the difficulty in accessing school or online education has also contributed to the rise of child labour.³⁵ Despite this reported rise, caregivers who participated in the surveys seemed hesitant to engage their CWD in child labour.

Both girls and boys with disabilities are found to have limited access to child labour, despite evidence suggesting that CWD are more likely to engage in child labour than children without disabilities.³⁶ When caregivers in Lebanon were asked about the possibility of families of girls with disabilities involving their girls in income-generating activities, the majority disagreed with this statement with 58% strongly disagreeing and 18% somewhat disagreeing

Families of girls with disabilities are more likely to involve them in income generating activities



The survey results also showed that a similar percentage of respondents disagreed with the statement regarding the involvement of boys and girls with disabilities in income-generating activities at a younger age. For girls with disabilities, 59% strongly disagreed and for boys with disabilities, 58% strongly disagreed, while 18% and 15% somewhat disagreed, respectively. This suggests that not only are children with disabilities less likely to engage in child labour, but they are also less likely to do so at a young age.

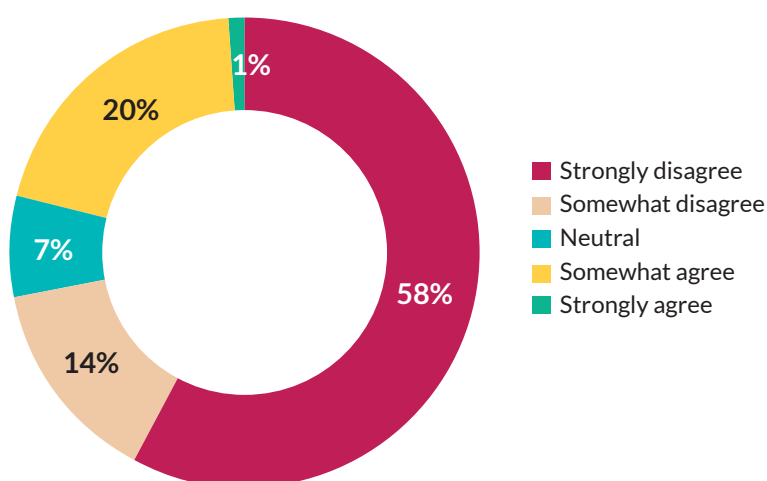
The majority of caregivers and parents of CWD (75%) believed that it is less common for boys with disabilities to engage in child labour compared to boys without disabilities. Similarly, 83% believed that girls with disabilities are less likely to engage in child labour compared to girls without disabilities.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ <https://www.unicef.org/media/128976/file/UNICEF%20Fact%20Sheet%20-%20Children%20with%20Disabilities.pdf>

Families of boys with disabilities are more likely to involve them in income generating activities at a younger age



Disability can override gender in Lebanon when it comes to child labour

Respondents in Lebanon demonstrated similar attitudes towards child labour for both boys and girls with disabilities, indicating that both genders are likely to have more limited access to child labour than children without disabilities.

The perception of disability seems to override the gender gap that is found amongst Syrians in Lebanon engaging in child labour. A vulnerability assessment conducted in 2021 shows that child labour is higher among boys (8%) than girls (2%).³⁷ As children get older, child labour rates increase and the gap between boys and girls also widens. Child labour rates were reported at 16% among children aged 17 years, with boys engaged in child labour (21%) twice as much as girls (11%).³⁸ For young persons aged 16, only 4% of girls were engaged in child labour compared to 21% of boys.³⁹

The stigma attached to disability appears to have a significant impact on the involvement of CWD in child labour, as it is often perceived as a lack of ability. Due to these assumptions, parents and caregivers may perceive child labour to be a dangerous undertaking for CWD and may therefore seek to prevent them from happening, this outlook implies that CWD need to be “fixed” and have less ability to engage and contribute and, in general, are less valuable than children without disabilities.⁴⁰

³⁷ <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/vasyr-2021-vulnerability-assessment-syrian-refugees-lebanon>

³⁸ <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/vasyr-2021-vulnerability-assessment-syrian-refugees-lebanon>

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ <https://www.unicef.org/media/128976/file/UNICEF%20Fact%20Sheet%20-%20Children%20with%20Disabilities.pdf>

One parent of CWD mentioned:

“I have some of my children working - collecting scrap or working in agriculture when possible. However, I wouldn’t let [my son with a disability] work because it is not safe for him. How would he communicate with his employer? If he weren’t disabled, I wouldn’t mind him working and supporting the family.”

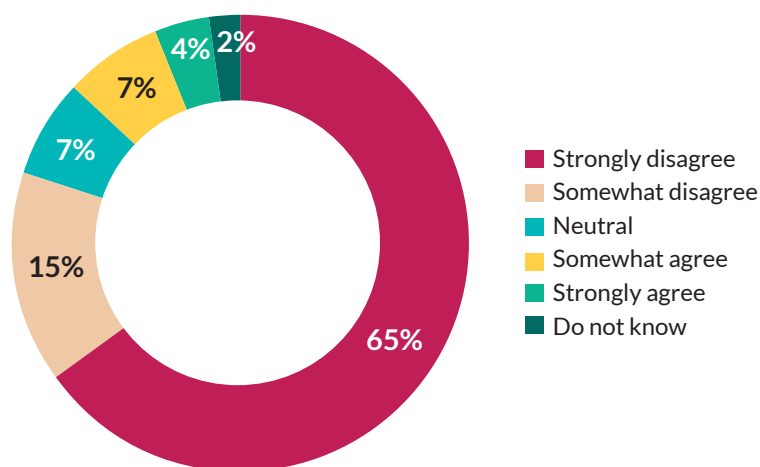
Despite the majority of respondents expressing the perception that CWD are less likely to engage in child labour, the incidence of CWD being involved in child labour in Lebanon poses significant risks. Reports have shown that some adolescent girls with disabilities are forced into begging on the street which exposes them to added risks of sexual abuse and exploitation.⁴¹ Moreover, CWD in Lebanon face the risk of engagement in the more dangerous forms of child labour.⁴² This could include trafficking, debt bondage, slavery, sex work and pornography, in addition to participating in illegal activities and work that is likely to harm the child’s physical, mental or emotional well-being.⁴³ The ILO considers the worst forms of child labour to be a serious violation of human rights and a threat to children’s development and future opportunities.



Key finding number 3: Children with disabilities among Syrian refugees in Lebanon are comparatively less affected by early marriage and child labour. However, they face a greater risk of facing stigma and exploitation, which hinders their access to basic rights such as education.

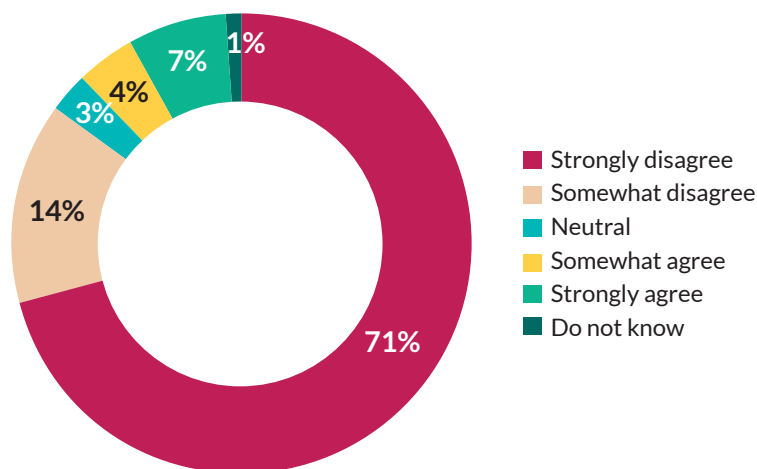
According to the majority of respondents, education is a hypothetical solution that is able to prevent the delay or the offset of child labour and early marriage. Respondents agreed that greater access to education for children with disabilities would offer more protection from harm: 77% believe it would decrease the likelihood of child labour, 85% feel it would delay its onset, 82% are of the opinion it decreases the likelihood of child marriage and 80% say it will delay its onset.

CWD would be less likely to experience child marriage if they could go to school



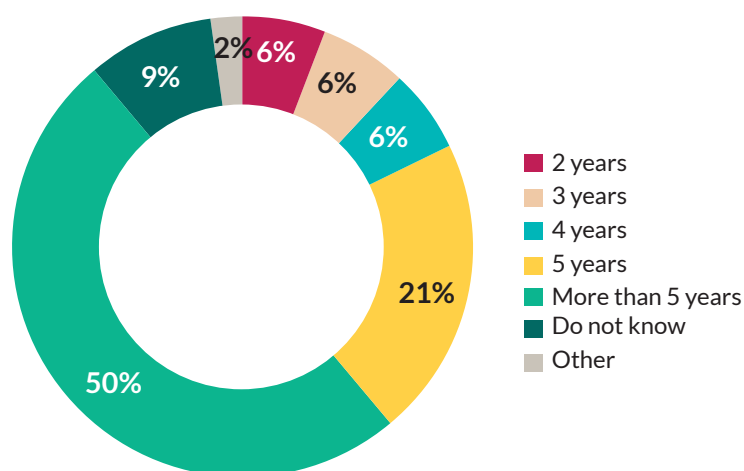
⁴¹ <https://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/research-resources/disability-inclusion-pss-programs-lebanon-guidance/>
⁴² <https://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/research-resources/disability-inclusion-pss-programs-lebanon-guidance/>
⁴³ <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/child-labour/lang-en/index.htm>

CWD would be less likely to experience child labour if they could go to school



The majority of respondents believed that increased access to education could potentially delay or prevent early marriage and child labour. Specifically, 70% of respondents believed that increased access to schools could delay early marriage by at least 5 years for girls, while 66% believed it could do the same for boys. In terms of child labour, most respondents believed that increased access to education could delay children’s exposure to it by at least five years and reduce its likelihood.

Availability of inclusive education for girls with disabilities would delay the child’s exposure to child marriage by has many years



Although the respondents’ perceptions suggest that disability may provide some protection against early marriage and child labour and that education could enhance child protection, these views may not accurately reflect the reality for CWD in refugee settings in Lebanon. Despite respondents suggesting trends of disability rendering less access to early marriage and child labour and despite their hypothetical views on education as enhancing child protection, it does not mean that CWD have more access to school and enhanced protection. Syrian CWD in Lebanon, due to their disability, face risks of stigma and exploitation that also prevent them from accessing education and other rights.

When questioned about the factors that limit the access of CWD to education, respondents identified various obstacles. When asked about the top 3 barriers CWD are more likely to face, 72% included the option of “negative attitude/bullying/stigma”, 33% included “exclusion from the community/isolation” and around 17% included “sexual and gender-based violence”.

| Top 3 of the barriers that children and young people with disabilities are more likely to experience | | | |
|---|-----------|---------|------------------|
| | Responses | | Percent of Cases |
| | N | Percent | |
| Negative attitudes/ bullying (stigma) | 52 | 24.50% | 72.20% |
| Lack of access to healthcare and rehabilitation services | 46 | 21.70% | 63.90% |
| Violence and abuse | 31 | 14.60% | 43.10% |
| Lack of access to education | 25 | 11.80% | 34.70% |
| Exclusion from the community/isolation | 24 | 11.30% | 33.30% |
| Lack of access to assistive devices | 13 | 6.10% | 18.10% |
| Sexual gender-based violence | 12 | 5.70% | 16.70% |
| Imposed restricted physical mobility | 7 | 3.30% | 9.70% |
| Poor mental health | 2 | 0.90% | 2.80% |
| Total | 212 | 100.00% | 294.40% |

When asked about the common barriers preventing children and young people with physical disabilities from accessing education services, the most cited factors included bullying at school (59%).

One mother of multiple CWD says:

“My daughters are afraid to go out because they are continuously bullied. They are called names and mocked most of the time in the settlement. I am very scared about their mental health. They are deprived of their basic rights. They don’t go to school because they are not accepted due to their disability. We are told that they will not adapt or keep pace with other children”.

| Common barriers preventing children and young people with physical disabilities from accessing education services | | | |
|--|-----------|---------|------------------|
| | Responses | | Percent of Cases |
| | N | Percent | |
| Schools are not accessible | 31 | 17.7% | 43.7% |
| Classrooms are not inclusive/teachers do not have the knowledge | 34 | 19.4% | 47.9% |
| Geographical distance from the school/ challenges with transport | 14 | 8.0% | 19.7% |
| School tuition and supplies | 46 | 26.3% | 64.8% |
| Bullying at school | 42 | 24.0% | 59.2% |
| Sexual harassment at school | 8 | 4.6% | 11.3% |
| Total | 175 | 100.0% | 246.5% |

Similar descriptions were echoed by another mother of multiple CWD:



“[My son] is rejected and bullied by his friends. They don’t allow him to play along, and some would even hit him. He is smart and wants to learn, but most public schools in Lebanon don’t accept disabled children... I hope one day there will be specific schools for disabled children so they can continue their education. I also hope that there would be more awareness in the community that disabled people are just like regular people and they must be accepted.”

Thus, the societal stigma and exclusion faced by CWD does not only exclude them from social practices such as early marriage and child labour, but also to education. According to a study from 2018, Syrian refugees with disabilities (aged 13 and above) in Lebanon are more likely to have never enrolled in school and to be illiterate than people without disabilities.⁴⁴ In fact, 25.5% of Syrian refugees with disabilities never enrolled in school and are illiterate as opposed to 13% among their counterparts without disabilities.⁴⁵ The study also found that Syrian children with disabilities aged 6 to 12 are more prone to never enrol in or to drop out of school (24.5%) than children without disabilities (14.4%).⁴⁶ Syrian boys with disabilities in Lebanon’s informal tented settlements are at greater exposure to bullying which could partly contribute to their limited opportunities for education.⁴⁷

As previously noted, families of children with intellectual impairments are afraid of exploitation for their child. This fear, stemming from the stigma and potential exploitation, contributes to families hiding the person living with a disability which adds to the isolation of the individual.⁴⁸ This, in turn, hinders CWD’s access to education and other rights, which exacerbates threats of exploitation and risks them becoming further marginalised.

⁴⁴ <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/removing-barriers-the-path-towards-inclusive-access-lebanon-report.pdf>

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/disability-inclusion-syrian-refugee-response-lebanon>

Additionally, Syrian refugees with disabilities in Lebanon face challenges accessing humanitarian assistance programs which consequently increases their protection risks such as violence, abuse, and exploitation.⁴⁹



Noura trying to communicate with Ali -communicating through sign language. ©Action for Humanity, World Vision Syria Response Partner

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LEBANON:

We call on the international community to:

Invest in inclusive education for children with disabilities in Lebanon:

- 1** Develop and implement programs that promote equal access to education and employment opportunities for children with disabilities, in order to reduce their exposure to risks like early marriage and child labour.
- 2** Support programs and projects that help promote integrated inclusive education, child protection and livelihood for CWD and their families in Lebanon, including those that provide financial assistance to families.
- 3** Invest in the participation of CWD in public schools through creating a safe, inclusive and quality education system that makes public schools accessible for all children regardless of their abilities.
- 4** Dedicate funds to build the knowledge and skills of teachers and other education personnel on inclusive education and on creating safe and bullying-free environment, as well as supporting the recruitment of specialised staff in schools to support CWD, in order to increase the number of schools in the Inclusive Education Programme in Lebanon that currently covers 30 schools only.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

- 5 Provide economic support to families of CWD to help reduce financial barriers to education, such as school tuition and supplies. Plan and implement programmes that aim to increase access of children to education including cash for education programmes for CWD to eliminate the financial access barrier and catch up/retention support programs that eliminate the academic barrier.
- 6 Train teachers, school staff and education personnel on the inclusion of CWD in the classroom, including strategies for accommodating different learning styles and accommodations.



Prioritise wider child protection issues:

- 1 Address the root causes of social stigma and exclusion faced by children with disabilities in Lebanon. This can be done through awareness-raising campaigns and community engagement activities to promote inclusivity and acceptance of CWD. Develop and implement social behaviour change programs that aim to increase the knowledge about inclusive education.
- 2 Strengthen child protection systems in Lebanon by investing in the capacity of child protection actors, including social workers, child protection experts and other relevant professionals. This should involve providing them with the necessary resources and tools to effectively respond to cases of child abuse and exploitation.
- 3 Develop and implement awareness-raising campaigns that promote the rights of CWD and challenge cultural and gender norms that perpetuate child labour and child marriage especially the hidden forms of child exploitation and abuse.
- 4 Increase investment in research and data collection on child protection issues, with a particular focus on children with disabilities. Strengthen coordination and collaboration among child protection actors, including government agencies, civil society organisations and international organisations. Conduct further research to explore other protection concerns among CWD in Lebanon, in order to better understand the specific needs and challenges facing this population.
- 5 Increase the awareness of parents and caregivers around the rights of CWD as well as their access to the available inclusive services in their communities.

We call on the Government of Lebanon and the Lebanese

Ministry of Education and Higher Education to:

- 1 Increase funding and support for targeted interventions for children with disabilities in Lebanon, as outlined in the UN Lebanon Response Plan. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - Providing appropriate health care services and increasing access to mental health and psychosocial support services for refugee children affected by the Syrian crisis, including children with disabilities.

- Strengthening child protection systems to prevent and respond to exploitation, neglect, and violence against refugee children, including those with disabilities, by providing comprehensive support services, including health care, social protection and legal aid.
- Ensuring that refugee children have access to education, including children with disabilities, by removing barriers such as financial and legal obstacles and providing support for transportation, school supplies and language learning. Develop and implement anti-bullying policies and programmes in schools to create a safe and inclusive environment for CWD.
- Address the societal stigma and exclusion faced by refugee children, including children with disabilities, by promoting inclusivity and acceptance of refugees in the wider community. This can be done through awareness-raising campaigns and community engagement activities.

2 Review and adjust existing policies and laws to ensure that they protect and promote the rights of children with disabilities, including their right to education, health, and social services. This may include working with disability rights organisations and other relevant stakeholders to develop and implement a national disability strategy.

3 Ensure that all government programs and services are accessible to children with disabilities and that all infrastructure and public spaces are designed to be accessible and inclusive. This includes providing assistive devices and technologies to support children with disabilities in their daily lives and ensuring that all public transportation is accessible.

4 Provide training and capacity building opportunities to government officials, educators, health care workers and other relevant stakeholders to improve their knowledge and skills in working with children with disabilities. This may include training on disability rights, inclusive education and the use of assistive devices and technologies.

5 Share the needs of the education system in Lebanon and engage with donors and the education sector to seek support for the development of an inclusive system that adopts inclusive principles as well as increase the number of schools that support CWD, making education accessible for all children.

FINDINGS FROM NORTHWEST SYRIA

In Northwest Syria (NWS), thousands of children, including those with disabilities, are being forced to leave school and enter the labour market. Children with disabilities are at a higher risk of exploitation, abuse, and neglect. Access to education for children with disabilities remains limited, with only 44% of children with disabilities between the ages of 12 and 17 in all of Syria attending school.⁵⁰ Children with disabilities face increased obstacles in access to education due to the inaccessibility of public schools and a lack of adequate training for teachers to teach children with disabilities and inclusive curricula and stigma.⁵¹ Parents and caregivers in NWS report that lack of capacity or facilities within schools to integrate children and youth with disabilities, overcrowding of schools and lack of specialist training for teachers and staff to effectively work with children and youth with disabilities as key barriers when trying to keep their children with disabilities in school.

When conflict occurs, children with disabilities face the risk of being neglected, excluded, and stigmatised which is further driven by the lack of access to services, schools, and assistive products like wheelchairs. The most marginalised children, such as those facing multiple challenges like poverty, malnutrition, rural living, displacement, minority status, etc., are at a higher risk of having their education disrupted. Emergencies only serve to worsen existing inequalities and affect marginalised groups the most. These children and young people are most likely to miss out on education before, during and after an emergency situation.⁵²



⁵⁰ https://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/old/wp-content/uploads/Disability_Prevalence-and-Impact_FINAL-2.pdf

⁵¹ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/09/08/syria-children-disabilities-left-unprotected>

⁵² <https://uis.unesco.org/en/topic/out-school-children-and-youth>



Key finding number 1: Early marriage affects girls in Northwest Syria, regardless of whether or not they have a disability.

Disability does not seem to be a differentiating factor when it comes to early marriage among girls. While 10 respondents (14%) reported that their daughters were married before reaching the age of 18 between 2015 and the time of the interview - out of the total of 38 disabled girls in the sample- 2 of those girls had at least one type of disability, accounting for 20% of all girls who were married before the age of 18 in this sample. Most respondents agreed that families of girls, whether they have disabilities or not, are more likely to marry their daughters if they have the option, compared to families of boys with or without disabilities.

In response to questions about whether families of girls with disabilities are more likely to opt to marry their disabled child early if they had the option, 60% of respondents strongly agreed. Similarly, 61% of respondents strongly agreed that families of girls with disabilities are more likely to choose early marriage and at a younger age than children without disabilities, if given the option.

Additionally, 40% of respondents believed that children and youth with disabilities are more likely to experience EFM due to being seen as a burden to their families (79%), more susceptible to exploitation (52%) and have limited or no education opportunities (48%). Ten respondents provided more detailed explanations, stating that girls with disabilities are at a higher risk of experiencing early marriage due to being more marginalised and being subjected to different types of abuse. They also noted that families are more likely to accept any marriage proposal for their disabled daughter as they may not receive many offers in comparison to girls without disabilities.

While the data indicates that girls with disabilities may have a high rate of early child marriage, additional information reveals that girls without disabilities are also at risk. Reports indicate a dramatic increase in CEFM of adolescent girls in Northwest Syria specifically ever since the conflict erupted in 2011.⁵³ When asked whether they believe families of girls without disabilities would choose to marry their daughters early if given the opportunity, 60% of respondents strongly agreed. Similarly, 7% and 21% of respondents strongly and somewhat agree, respectively, that families of boys with disabilities would be more likely to arrange early marriages for their daughters without disabilities early if given the chance.



Children learning how to read the clock in a learning tent in a displacement camp.
©Action for Humanity, World Vision Syria Response Partner

⁵³ https://www.plan-international.fr/app/uploads/2022/06/rapport_in_harms_way.pdf

Regardless of their disability status, girls in NWS appear to be highly vulnerable to early marriage. When the same questions were posed to respondents about boys (both with and without disabilities), only 18% strongly agreed that families of boys with disabilities would be more likely to opt to arrange earlier marriages for their male child without disabilities early if given the opportunity. In comparison to their female counterparts and girls with disabilities, boys with disabilities don't seem to be at risk of early marriage. This is not surprising, given that globally child marriage rates among boys are only one-sixth of the rates among girls.⁵⁴ When asked if they believed that families of boys with disabilities would choose to marry their child with disabilities early if they had the option 60% strongly agreed.

Early marriage, particularly for girls, is sometimes seen as a means of easing the financial burden on families and providing security for them:

This study shows that the primary reason for early marriage in girls with disabilities is to reduce the burden on families, with 79% of respondents citing this as the main reason for girls with disabilities to experience CEFM.

Parents may also view marriage as a way to ensure their child's future security, which is a concern for both disabled and non-disabled children. Parents often see marriage as a form of protection for their children from poverty and sexual harassment.⁵⁵ In instances where the marriage of a person with disabilities is an option, it is seen as a way to achieve a more secure environment, as well as protection from exploitation, with 52% of respondents saying that girls with disabilities are more likely to experience exploitation. 48% also cited the lack of access to education for girls with disabilities as a key driver of early child marriage. In the absence of support mechanisms, early marriage is considered a solution to ongoing issues faced by families and is seen as an opportunity for girls with disabilities to improve their living conditions.⁵⁶

Caregivers of girls with disabilities may be more willing to accept unfavourable marriage conditions due to the societal perception of CWD as a burden and their lower value in terms of marriage:

CWD not only face multiple forms of discrimination but are seen by their caregivers, and society at large, as a 'burden' because of their disabilities, leading to discriminatory attitudes that diminish their value in terms of marriage. As a result, families may accept unfavourable marriage opportunities for their daughters with disabilities, as they are less likely to receive frequent marriage offers.

As one parent mentioned during FGD:



"Families usually accept any marriage opportunity for their disabled girl as she is less likely to get frequent marriage offers."

⁵⁴ <https://www.unicef.org/protection/child-marriage#:~:text=Child%20marriage%20is%20often%20the,one%20sixth%20that%20among%20girls.>

⁵⁵ ECPAT International (2015) *Thematic Report: Unrecognized Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children in Child, Early and Forced Marriage*

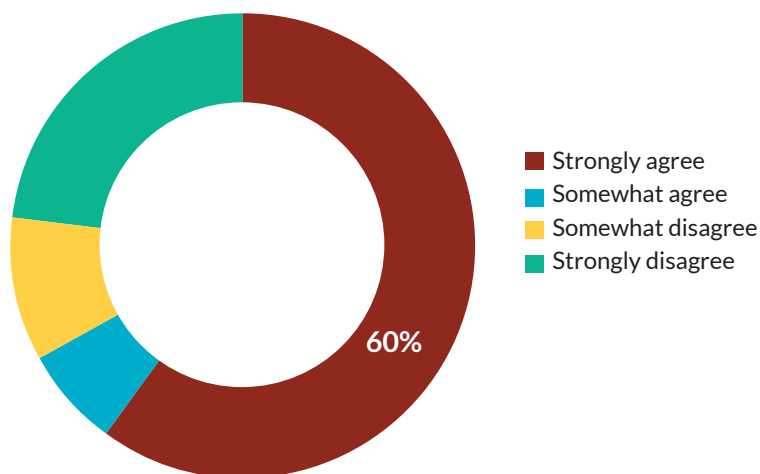
⁵⁶ Uncovered realities: Exploring experiences of child marriage among children with disabilities

This intersection of gender and disability creates an additional structural disadvantage, where families make marriage decisions opportunistically and may feel compelled to accept compromised conditions because of the presence of a disability. This can potentially further marginalise girls with disabilities and put them at greater risk of exploitation and abuse. For example, according to UN Women, women with disabilities are at a higher risk of experiencing domestic violence when compared to women without disabilities. They are also likely to experience abuse over a longer period of time.⁵⁷

The prevalence of early marriage in Northwest Syria is significantly influenced by gender roles, which also affect girls with disabilities.

Survey data shows that caregivers are more likely to intend early marriage for girls with disabilities compared to girls without disabilities. This trend is further compounded by the fact that girls with disabilities are likely to be married off at a younger age. A significant majority of caregivers (60%) said that they “strongly agree” that they would consider early marriage as an option for their daughters with disabilities.

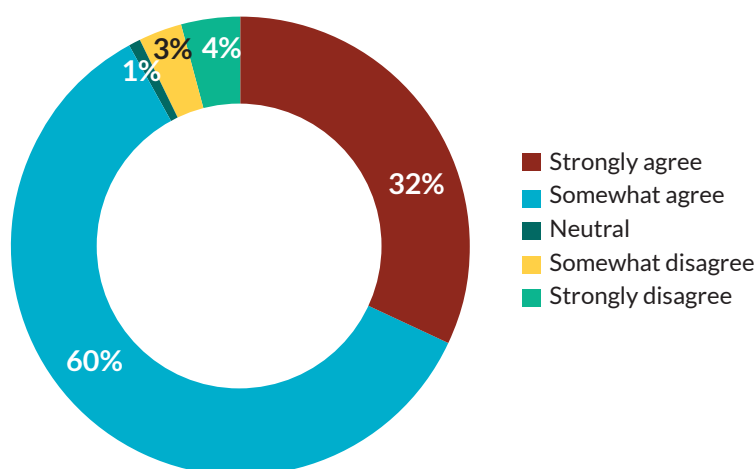
Families of girls with disabilities are more likely to opt to marry their disabled child early, and at a younger age than children without disabilities, if they had the option



In comparison, according to the caregivers’ responses, the likelihood of boys with disabilities experiencing early child marriage is comparatively lower than girls. When asked if families of boys with disabilities are more likely to choose to marry their disabled child early if they had the option, responses were more uniform, with 60% strongly disagreeing. This suggests that caregivers are less inclined to consider early marriage for their boys with disabilities, in contrast to their approach towards girls with disabilities.

⁵⁷ <https://untf.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2017/08/ending-violence-against-women-and-girls-with-disabilities>

Families of boys with disabilities are more likely to opt to marry their disabled child early if they had the option



One possible reason is that traditional gender roles and expectations often place a greater emphasis on protecting and controlling girls' sexuality and reproduction, which may lead to early marriage as a way to prevent premarital sex or pregnancy outside of marriage.⁵⁸ In contrast, boys may not be subject to the same level of scrutiny or pressure to conform to gender norms related to sexuality and reproduction.

Another possible reason is that, as previously mentioned, boys with disabilities may be perceived as having greater potential for economic independence and contributing to the household income compared to girls with disabilities, who may be seen as a financial burden. This may lead caregivers to prioritise investing in boys' education and skills development to prepare them for future employment, rather than marrying them early.



Key finding number 2: The type of child labour in which Syrian children with disabilities are involved is influenced by their disability.

Disability does not appear to affect a caregiver's decisions to involve boys in child labour, but it does seem to have an impact on the specific types of labour that both boys and girls with disabilities perform. Regardless of disability status, boys begin income-generating activities at the same age.

Most evidence shows that more boys than girls participate in income-generating activities overall, including labour outside of the home and family work.⁵⁹ Respondents indicated that boys with disabilities are significantly more likely to engage in economic activity than girls with disabilities, with the majority (79%) saying that it is less common and 18% saying that it is the same. FGDs with caregivers of boys with disabilities revealed that their child's disability was not a contributing factor in the decision-making for determining the age their child would begin to engage in an income-generating activity. Economic pressures were the primary consideration, and their child would have started working at the same age regardless of disability status.

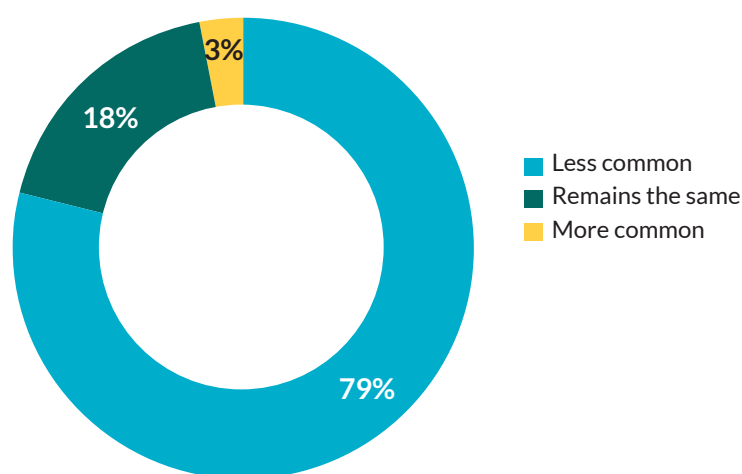
⁵⁸ <https://www.unfpa.org/child-marriage>

⁵⁹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5860687/>

Of the survey respondents, 28 respondents (39%) live inside a displacement camp or informal tented settlement (ITS), while 44 respondents (61%) live outside camps and in the host community. The majority of participants in this study described their economic status as “very bad” (60%) or “bad” (36%). Only 4% said that they are managing with difficulty. Additionally, 57% of respondents also said that they are unemployed and only 1 respondent has full-time employment or a job. This may place a burden on children and youth to carry out income-generating activities in order to provide for their families.

The data shows that boys without disabilities were the most commonly reported group engaged in economic activities, with 20 respondents (28%) reporting that at least 1 boy engaged in economic activities. Past reports indicate that in cases where the parent cannot find work, has a disability, or is absent, adolescent males within the family may become the sole breadwinner, prioritising their responsibility of generating income over their education.⁶⁰ This practice represents an often-ignored form of structural gender-based violence.⁶¹ This trend is problematic, as it not only perpetuates gender inequality but also compromises the boys’ educational opportunities and overall well-being. It is crucial to address the root causes of this issue, including economic inequality and social norms surrounding gender roles, to ensure that all children have access to education and opportunities to reach their full potential.

How common is the practice of sending girls with disabilities to engage in economic activity when compared with boys with disabilities?



In comparison, when asked about the prevalence of sending girls with disabilities to engage in economic activity compared to boys with disabilities, the majority of respondents (79%) said that it is less common, while 18% said that it is the same.

The decisions by caregivers for their children to engage in income generation, and the type of work assigned to them, highlight the significant and intersecting role gender norms play in determining expectations, behaviours and practices for girls, boys, women, and men. However, these norms seem to be less prominent in CWD, who are reported by participants to mainly work in street-related activities, regardless of their gender.

⁶⁰ <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13031-017-0128-7>

⁶¹ <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/978-3-030-22176-8.pdf?pdf=button>



Children learning about the different emotions and imitating them in an education tent.
©Action for Humanity, World Vision Syria Response Partner

Broader research shows that Syrian children who are engaged in income-generating activities are often exposed to physically demanding work conditions that may have a harmful effect on their health, with males expected to do tasks like shopping for the house, maintenance, carrying heavy things and escorting household members.⁶² Again, these gendered expectations are perpetuated by traditional and patriarchal gender roles that are still prevalent in Syrian society.⁶³ As a result, Syrian women are still generally employed for jobs that align with these gendered expectations, which in turn influences the type of work they ask their children to engage in. This underscores the critical role that gender norms play in shaping the decisions of caregivers regarding the economic engagement of their children and highlights the need for interventions that promote more equitable opportunities for all children.

While boys without disabilities are most likely to carry out a more diverse range of tasks, from skilled labour (8 respondents), working in family businesses (6 respondents) and street-related activity, which involves collecting waste, like plastic or scrap metal, which they sell (6 respondents), all of the boys with disabilities engaged in street-related labour. FGDs with caregivers of CWD suggested that unskilled labour is more prevalent among boys with disabilities, which often poses significant risks. Street-related work can be particularly exploitative and dangerous, with safety risks and increased exposure to crimes often associated with such activities. There is a need for greater attention to the safety and well-being of children, particularly those with disabilities, who may be particularly exposed to such risks.

According to caregivers' responses, girls without disabilities were primarily tasked with working in family businesses and in paid domestic labour outside their own homes. This

⁶² <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0003687019301966#bib7>

⁶³ <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/women-syria-s-economy-feminist-review-women-s-economic-empowerment>

gendered division of labour is not limited to income-generating activities alone but also extends to domestic chores, creating an unequal burden on girls who must manage both paid and unpaid work. Globally, girls between the ages of 5-14 are estimated to spend 160 million more hours each day on unpaid domestic work and care activities than boys of the same age, highlighting the unequal distribution of work and responsibilities between genders from a young age.⁶⁴

The study showed that there is little difference between the types of paid tasks boys and girls with disabilities are asked to carry out, regardless of gender. The FGDs revealed that both boys and girls with disabilities are involved in similar work such as collecting waste. Caregivers also flagged that girls with disabilities are more likely to do domestic work in the home. This was likely not raised in conversations about paid work because it may not be considered by the community as actual labour.

Caregivers of children with disabilities perceived that boys with disabilities were more capable of carrying heavier waste material than girls with disabilities with boys being perceived as being more able to lift heavier things (e.g. firewood). The findings of the study suggest that caregivers of children with disabilities are more focused on finding work that is physically feasible for their children, rather than on tasks that could potentially develop skills that might be useful for future job prospects. This is in slight contrast to caregivers of children without disabilities who may be more likely to encourage their children to engage in activities that could lead to the development of skills. The lack of emphasis on skill development for children with disabilities may be due to a number of factors, including limited access to education and training programs, a lack of awareness of the potential benefits of skill development and the belief that their children may be limited in their ability to perform certain types of work due to their disabilities. This lack of focus on skill development may have long-term consequences for children with disabilities, as it may limit their ability to access higher-paying and more rewarding jobs in the future.

This study highlights a concerning cycle in which children with disabilities are at risk of being harmed due to engaging in dangerous work as a result of their disability

Caregivers of CWD, expressed major concerns about their children's safety when sending them to work, with the harm from unexploded ordnance being a significant worry. This risk is particularly pronounced for children who engage in waste collection, which is often a prevalent type of work for children with disabilities who live and/or work on the streets. A 2022 report from UNHCR shows that "street children" are among the most at-risk groups, along with children with disabilities and children working in invisible or irregular work that is likely to be controlled by criminal groups and accompanied by physical, emotional and sexual abuse.⁶⁵ If caregivers perceive waste collection to be the most accessible type of labour for CWD and unexploded ordnance poses a significant occupational hazard for children working in street-related activity, then CWD face the threat of further harm and marginalisation by carrying out more dangerous work. This dangerous cycle is further perpetuated by the child's disability, which is shown to limit their ability to engage in other forms of work that could provide them with more opportunities for skill development and a safer future.

⁶⁴ <https://data.unicef.org/topic/gender/gender-norms-and-unpaid-work/>

⁶⁵ <https://reliefweb.int/report/jordan/child-labour-within-syrian-refugee-response-2020-stocktaking-report>



Key finding number 3: Exclusion from school and participation in school entail different kinds of risk for CWD, both of which are exacerbated by ongoing conflict in Syria.

Access to services can be challenging for individuals with disabilities. Caregivers of children and youth with disabilities highlighted various issues, with 75% reporting a lack of access to education is the most prominent issue. Other significant barriers reported include the lack of access to healthcare and rehabilitation services (52%) isolation and the exclusion from the community (43%) and violence and abuse (40%). The main barriers that children and young people with disabilities are more likely to experience, identified by caregivers are:

| | Responses | | Percent of Cases |
|---|-----------|---------|------------------|
| | N | Percent | |
| Exclusion from the community/isolation | 31 | 14.7% | 43.1% |
| Imposed restricted physical mobility | 3 | 1.4% | 4.2% |
| Lack of access to assistive devices | 26 | 12.3% | 36.1% |
| Sexual gender-based violence | 1 | 0.5% | 1.4% |
| Lack of access to education | 54 | 25.6% | 75.0% |
| Lack of access to healthcare and rehabilitation services | 38 | 18.0% | 52.8% |
| Poor mental health | 6 | 2.8% | 8.3% |
| Violence and abuse | 29 | 13.7% | 40.3% |
| Negative attitudes/ bullying (stigma) | 23 | 10.9% | 31.9% |
| Total | 211 | 100.0% | 293.1% |

Caregivers identified lack of accessible and inclusive education as key barrier to education, while children and youth with disabilities identified peer bullying as the most important factor preventing them from attending school:

According to evidence from the 2022 UN Humanitarian Needs Overview on Syria, 50% of children with health conditions, injury or disability attended school, compared to 84% of children without disabilities.⁶⁶

Caregivers have identified several barriers that prevent children with disabilities from accessing school, including economic constraints, limited education facilities that can provide inclusive education, a lack of accessibility to and within schools, a lack of trained teachers or inclusive curricula and peer bullying. All of the below obstacles are either exacerbated by ongoing conflict, or indeed created by conflict.

⁶⁶ https://www.unicef.org/mena/media/15726/file/hno_2022_final_version_210222.pdf

| common barriers preventing children and young people with physical disabilities from accessing education services | | | |
|--|-----------|---------|------------------|
| | Responses | | Percent of Cases |
| | N | Percent | |
| Schools are not accessible | 15 | 7.5% | 21.1% |
| Classrooms are not inclusive/teachers do not have the knowledge | 61 | 30.3% | 85.9% |
| Geographical distance from the school/challenges with transport | 22 | 10.9% | 31.0% |
| School tuition and supplies | 62 | 30.8% | 87.3% |
| Bullying at school | 41 | 20.4% | 57.7% |
| Total | 201 | 100.0% | 283.1% |

While conflict itself may not cause bullying, it can contribute to the perpetuation of bullying and discrimination towards children with disabilities. For example, displacement and social upheaval caused by conflict can lead to increased stress and tension, which can lead to heightened aggression and bullying.⁶⁷ Additionally, the breakdown of social structures and the disruption of education can lead to a lack of awareness and understanding about disability, which can contribute to stigmatisation and discrimination towards children with disabilities.⁶⁸ Finally, the absence of protection and enforcement mechanisms during times of conflict can lead to a culture of impunity for bullies, exacerbating the problem.⁶⁹

Greater access to education for children with disabilities would provide greater protection from and delay protection risks to children with disabilities:

Caregivers overwhelmingly reported that better access to inclusive education for children with disabilities would provide greater protection from harm (71 out of 72 respondents said that they “strongly agree”). 70 respondents out of 72 said that they “strongly agree” that CWD would be less likely to experience child labour if they could go to school and 67 respondents out of 72 said that they “strongly agree” that CWD would be less likely to experience child marriage if they could go to school.

The statistics regarding the delay of early marriage for boys with disabilities were slightly lower compared to girls with disabilities, presumably due to the lower risks; Around 29% of respondents believe that education can delay early marriage for more than 5 years, where almost 24% said that it can delay it for 5 years and 21% said that it will be delayed for 4 years

Deteriorating living conditions have rendered education a mere hypothetical solution for respondents, as their pressing financial needs take precedence over the hypothetical benefits of education:

While the vast majority of survey participants agreed that education would delay child protection risks such as child labour, and all participants in an FGD with caregivers said that they would send their children to school if they had the chance, instead of sending

⁶⁷ https://www.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Unicef_ChildreninDanger_ViolencereportW.pdf

⁶⁸ <https://www.unicef.org/media/128976/file/UNICEF%20Fact%20Sheet%20:%20Children%20with%20Disabilities.pdf>

⁶⁹ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/44617/brussels-iv-conference-report-civil-society-in-the-syria-crisis.pdf>

them to work, it seems like education is an agreed upon hypothetical solution that cannot be applied in their context given the dire living conditions faced. Poverty, displacement, and difficult living conditions were listed by all caregivers in the FGD as the main reason why they send their child with a disability to work. The living needs are great to the extent that participants said that they would have sent their child to work at the same age regardless of whether the child has a disability or not. CWD do not have the option to refuse to work as most caregivers in the FGD said that when they asked their disabled children if they wanted to work, they refused and yet they were forced to work anyway.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NORTHWEST SYRIA:

We call on the international community to:



Invest in inclusive education for children with disabilities in Northwest Syria:

Building back education systems more inclusively after the earthquake:

- 1 Conduct a thorough assessment of the accessibility of schools and other educational facilities to identify areas that need improvement in terms of accessibility for children with disabilities.
- 2 Consult with disability rights organisations and experts to develop guidelines and standards for accessible schools and educational facilities.
- 3 Provide training to teachers and school administrators on inclusive education and disability rights, including how to accommodate children with disabilities in the classroom.

- 4 Ensure that all new school construction or renovation projects are designed with accessibility in mind, including features such as wheelchair ramps, accessible restrooms, and assistive technology.
- 5 Promote inclusive teaching methods and curricula that take into account the diverse needs of students, including those with disabilities.
- 6 Implement evidence-based anti-bullying programs in schools to address the issue of bullying towards children and youth with disabilities in Syria. This should include providing support and protection mechanisms for victims of bullying and training for school staff to effectively identify and address instances of bullying.
- 7 Provide transportation services or increase the number of schools available in areas where children with disabilities live in Syria to address the issue of geographical distance from schools and transportation challenges. This should involve conducting transportation assessments and implementing recommendations to promote inclusivity.
- 8 Increase access to education and skills development opportunities for children with disabilities, particularly girls, in Syria to improve their economic prospects and reduce their vulnerability to exploitation and abuse. This should involve developing specialised vocational training programs and promoting access to financial services.

Getting children back into school post-earthquake:

- 1 Develop a comprehensive communication strategy to inform parents and caregivers about the importance of sending their children back to school, including the long-term benefits of education for their children's future.
- 2 Provide financial assistance to families who are struggling to afford school fees, uniforms, and supplies in the aftermath of the earthquake.
- 3 Establish temporary learning spaces in safe and accessible locations for children who are unable to attend their regular schools due to damage or destruction.
- 4 Provide psychosocial support to children who may be experiencing trauma or anxiety related to the earthquake, both in school and through community outreach programs.
- 5 Ensure that schools have adequate resources and support to provide catch-up classes and additional support to students who have fallen behind in their studies due to the disruption caused by the earthquake.

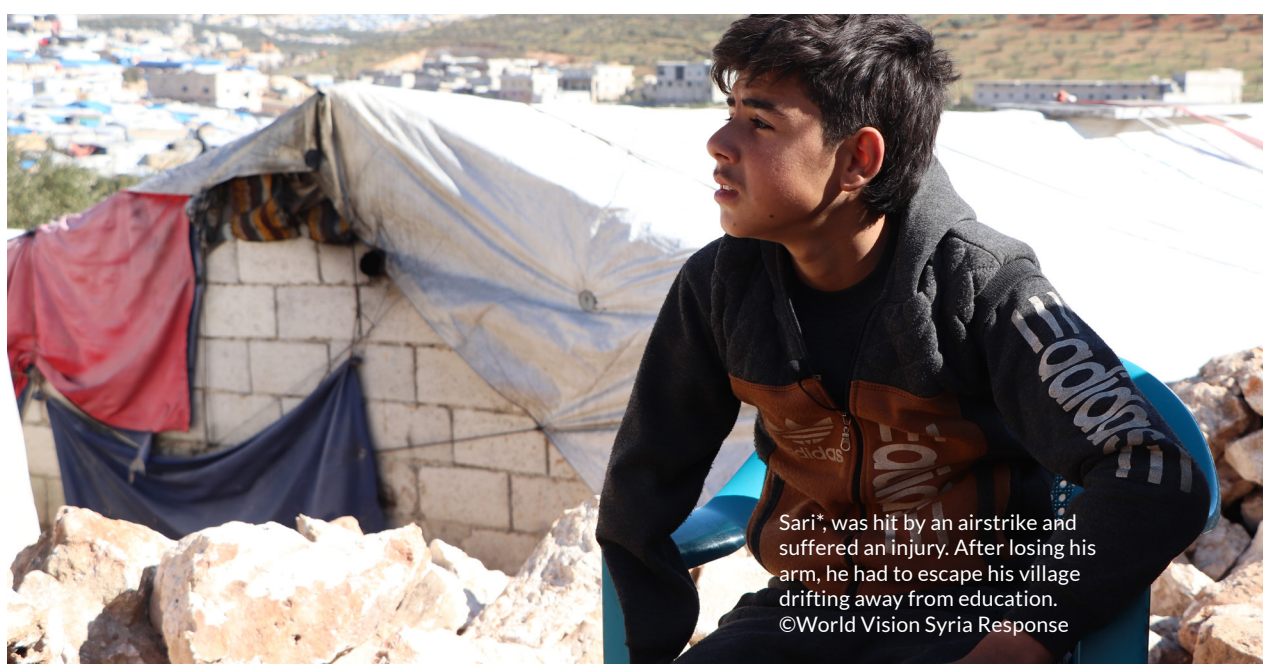


Prioritise wider child protection issues:

- 1 Develop and implement awareness-raising and education initiatives to address negative attitudes and stigma towards individuals with disabilities in Syria. This should involve engaging key stakeholders, including families, communities, and decision-makers, to change attitudes at the community level.
- 2 Implement child protection programs to address the issue of violence and abuse towards children and youth with disabilities in Syria. This should include developing

and enforcing laws that protect children from violence and abuse, establishing support and protection mechanisms for victims and ensuring accountability for perpetrators.

- 3 Provide support services for families of children and youth with disabilities in Syria, including access to counselling services, financial support, and respite care. This should be done in coordination with other social protection programs to ensure maximum impact.
- 4 Develop and implement evidence-based programs that address the root causes of child labour and early marriage in Syria, including poverty, discrimination, and exclusionary social norms. This should involve conducting research and data analysis to inform policy and programmatic interventions.
- 5 Provide support and resources to families and caregivers of children with disabilities in Syria to reduce their reliance on child labour and early marriage as coping mechanisms. This should involve developing alternative income-generating activities and providing access to education and training programs.
- 6 Conduct awareness-raising campaigns to educate caregivers, communities, and policymakers about the negative impacts of child labour and early marriage on children with disabilities in Syria and advocate for their rights and inclusion. This should involve using a range of communication channels, including social media, television, and radio, to reach a wide audience.
- 7 Collaborate with local and national partners, including disability-led organisations, to ensure that interventions are culturally appropriate and responsive to the specific needs.
- 8 Implement measures to protect schools and education facilities in Syria during times of conflict to provide greater protection for children with disabilities. This should include enforcing protection mechanisms and ensuring accountability for perpetrators of violence and abuse.



Sari*, was hit by an airstrike and suffered an injury. After losing his arm, he had to escape his village drifting away from education.
©World Vision Syria Response

CONCLUSION

This study found that despite the recognition of the importance of education by the communities in both countries, CWD face multiple barriers to accessing education, including a lack of resources, security risks, bullying and stigma from the host community. Moreover, CWD in both contexts remain vulnerable as they are embedded in patterns of protection risks that are either directly or indirectly linked to early marriage and child labour. However, it is also clear that the protection risks faced by CWD in Syria, where a protracted conflict persists, are different from those faced by Syrian refugee CWD in Lebanon, where socio-economic vulnerabilities are on the rise.

The results from Lebanon show the high degree of social stigma and exclusion that Syrian CWD face in their wider communities as they tend to be ostracised from socio-economic practices such as early marriage and child labour. The disability status of the children is perceived as a lack of capacity and puts them at risk of neglect, isolation, abandonment, or even institutionalization; these factors contribute to the lower risks of early marriage among CWD in Syrian refugee populations. When it comes to child labour, the perception of disability seems to override the gender gap that is found among Syrians in Lebanon engaging in child labour. Both male and female CWD are less likely to be engaged in child labour, as opposed to the dominant trends among children without disabilities where boys are more likely to be engaged in child labour. The lower risks of early marriage and child labour does not mean that Syrian CWD in Lebanon have greater access to education; they face a greater risk of experiencing stigma and exploitation in schools and society, which hinders their access to basic rights such as education.

The report also shows that in Northwest Syria, early marriage affects girls regardless of whether or not they have a disability. The prevalence of early marriage in NWS is significantly influenced by gender roles and marriage for girls is seen as a way of easing the financial burden on families and providing security for them. Caregivers of female CWD may be more willing to accept unfavourable marriage conditions as these children are seen as a burden and as having lower value in terms of marriage. Findings on child labour showed that due to economic pressures primarily, caregivers would engage their child in labour at the same age regardless of disability status. Gender norms seem to be less prominent in CWD, who are reported by participants to mainly work in street-related activities, regardless of their gender. Moreover, unskilled labour and street-related activities that CWD are engaged in puts them at risk of emotional, physical, and even sexual abuse.

It is clear that parents see schooling as a protective measure from exploitation and abuse but are prevented from supporting their learning by an education system, welfare system and services provided by local authorities all which exclude children with disabilities or fail to meet their needs. When CWD are able to attend, they are often driven away by bullying from their peers based on stigma around disability or by security risks that they face on the way to school. More work is needed to understand the impact of societal stigma and weak protection mechanisms on the well-being of children with disabilities, not least in the kinds of decision-making that impinge upon early marriage from both 'sending' and 'receiving' families, in the concerning absence of the individual CWD's exercise of agency particularly in highly volatile or socio-economically deprived contexts.

ANNEX I:

BREAKDOWN OF FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION (FGD) PARTICIPANTS IN LEBANON AND NORTHWEST SYRIA

| FGDs Participants – NWS | | | |
|-------------------------|-----|-----|--------------------------|
| Area* | Sex | Age | Profile |
| NWS | M. | 9 | CWD |
| NWS | M. | 10 | CWD |
| NWS | M. | 7 | CWD |
| NWS | M. | 8 | CWD |
| NWS | F. | 7 | CWD |
| NWS | F. | 13 | CWD |
| NWS | F. | 12 | CWD |
| NWS | F. | 10 | CWD |
| NWS | M. | 15 | Child without disability |
| NWS | M. | 12 | Child without disability |
| NWS | M. | 14 | Child without disability |
| NWS | M. | 12 | Child without disability |
| NWS | F. | 11 | Child without disability |
| NWS | F. | 11 | Child without disability |
| NWS | F. | 12 | Child without disability |
| NWS | F. | 9 | Child without disability |
| NWS | M. | 10 | Child without disability |
| NWS | M. | 33 | Caregiver |
| NWS | M. | 22 | Caregiver |
| NWS | M. | 34 | Caregiver |
| NWS | F. | 25 | Caregiver |
| NWS | F. | 29 | Caregiver |
| NWS | F. | 30 | Caregiver |
| NWS | F. | 41 | Caregiver |
| NWS | M. | 23 | Teacher |
| NWS | M. | 31 | Teacher |
| NWS | M. | 27 | Teacher |
| NWS | M. | 36 | Teacher |
| NWS | M. | 34 | Teacher |
| NWS | F. | 39 | Teacher |
| NWS | F. | 28 | Teacher |
| NWS | M. | 35 | Teacher |

*Specific location cannot be disclosed due to safeguarding purposes.

| FGDs Participants – Lebanon | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----|-----|--------------------------|
| Area | Sex | Age | Profile |
| Beqaa | M. | 9 | CWD |
| Beqaa | M. | 9 | CWD |
| Beqaa | M. | 17 | CWD |
| Beqaa | F. | 12 | CWD |
| Beqaa | F. | 12 | CWD |
| Beqaa | F. | 9 | CWD |
| Beqaa | F. | 43 | Caregiver |
| Beqaa | F. | 34 | Caregiver |
| Beqaa | F. | 27 | Caregiver |
| Beqaa | F. | 38 | Caregiver |
| Beqaa | F. | 36 | Caregiver |
| Beqaa | F. | 40 | Caregiver |
| Akkar | F. | 13 | Child without disability |
| Akkar | F. | 12 | Child without disability |
| Akkar | F. | 13 | Child without disability |
| Akkar | F. | 12 | Child without disability |
| Akkar | M. | 13 | Child without disability |
| Akkar | F. | 30 | Teacher |
| Akkar | F. | 35 | Teacher |
| Akkar | F. | 31 | Teacher |
| Akkar | F. | 37 | Teacher |
| Akkar | F. | 27 | Teacher |
| Akkar | F. | 30 | Teacher |
| Akkar | F. | 34 | Teacher |
| Akkar | F. | 33 | Teacher |

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