

Report on the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Lebanon

Wednesday - 02/09/2026

a. Introduction

Lebanon ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) on **14 May 1991** without reservations and committed itself to ensuring the realization, protection, and fulfilment of the rights recognized under the Convention. Lebanon has also ratified the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, while it signed the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict but has not yet ratified it. Lebanon has neither signed nor ratified the Optional Protocol on a Communications Procedure. Despite these commitments, significant gaps remain between Lebanon's international obligations and their effective implementation at national level, particularly due to political instability, economic collapse, institutional weaknesses, limited resources, and insufficient accountability mechanisms.

Since Lebanon's ratification of the CRC, the Committee on the Rights of the Child has issued recommendations addressing key areas affecting children's rights, including general measures of implementation, non-discrimination, birth registration and nationality, child participation, protection from all forms of violence, child labour, education, health, disability inclusion, juvenile justice, and protection of children in vulnerable situations. While Lebanon has adopted some legislative and policy measures to advance children's rights, many concerns raised by the Committee remain unresolved, and substantial challenges continue to prevent the full realization of children's rights.

The situation of children in Lebanon has significantly deteriorated due to the accumulation of multiple crises, including prolonged political instability, economic and financial collapse, poverty, social exclusion, displacement, and armed conflict. These challenges have disproportionately affected children in vulnerable situations, including Palestinian refugee children, Syrian refugee children, children with disabilities, children living in poverty, and children exposed to violence, exploitation, and protection risks. The deterioration of essential public services, including education, healthcare, and social protection systems, has further increased inequalities and limited children's access to their fundamental rights.

This report is developed by Developmental Action without Borders – Naba'a and the Arab Network for Child Rights – Manara. The report aims to provide an independent civil society perspective on the implementation of the CRC in Lebanon, highlighting progress achieved, persistent gaps, and key challenges affecting children's rights.

The report focuses on the most pressing child rights concerns in Lebanon, including barriers to legal identity and birth registration, discrimination affecting children and their families, violence against children, child labour, child marriage, trafficking and exploitation, access to education and healthcare, protection of refugee children, children affected by armed conflict, and the inclusion of children with disabilities. It particularly examines the situation of children facing multiple forms

of vulnerability and exclusion, whose rights remain insufficiently protected despite existing legal and policy frameworks.

The preparation of this report is based on the direct experience and expertise of Developmental Action without Borders – Naba’a and the Arab Network for Child Rights – Manara in monitoring, promoting, and advocating for children’s rights in Lebanon. It draws upon field observations, documentation, consultations, and evidence collected through programmes and interventions implemented with children, families, and communities.

The preparation of this report incorporated children’s views and perspectives through consultations and discussions on key child rights concerns and recommendations, in line with Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which recognizes the right of children to express their views freely and to have those views given due consideration in all matters affecting them. The consultations provided children with opportunities to share their experiences and perspectives on issues affecting their rights, protection, education, health, and well-being. The views expressed by children were taken into consideration in identifying and prioritizing the findings and in shaping the recommendations presented in this report.

Through this report, Developmental Action without Borders – Naba’a and the Arab Network for Child Rights – Manara seek to support the assessment of Lebanon’s implementation of the Convention and contribute to the development of concrete, practical, and child-centred recommendations aimed at strengthening the protection and fulfilment of the rights of all children in Lebanon without discrimination.

The Situation of Palestinian Children in Lebanon – The UNRWA Crisis - Rights of Palestinian Refugee Children in Lebanon (Articles 2, 22, 24 and 28 CRC)

Lebanon witnesses the highest refugee density per capita globally, where individuals and community resilience is stretched to breaking point amid chronic poverty, social and economic exclusion, and escalating social tensions. Palestinian refugees, among the most vulnerable groups in this context, are facing entrenched structural marginalization across generations. Palestinian refugees in Lebanon live below the national poverty line, a figure that will exceed **90%** without emergency cash assistance from UNRWA.

Since **2018**, UNRWA has been facing a crippling funding crisis that began after the United States decision to halt its financial support, which constituted approximately one-third of the agency's budget. This crisis has continued to worsen until **2025**, directly impacting the quality and continuity of the basic services it provides, particularly in Lebanon, where more than **210,000** Palestinian refugees are registered with the agency, including about **36,000** children of school age.

This crisis has led to the reduction, integration, or suspension of a number of vital programs, including education, healthcare, psychosocial support, and food and cash assistance. UNRWA has warned in its recent reports that the funding deficit could lead to a complete halt of its programs in Lebanon by mid-**2025** if the estimated **\$27.3** million funding gap is not filled.

The consequences of this decline are catastrophic for Palestinian children, as more than **65** UNRWA schools are threatened with closure, putting **36,000** children at risk of dropping out of school. The percentage of children engaged in the labour market has increased. The number of families sending their children (under the age of eighteen) to work in order to survive has risen to a shocking **16%**, compared to **11%** last April. Routine childhood vaccination rates have also decreased by **31%** due to the pressure on limited health centres, while the Lebanese state provides no health or educational alternatives for Palestinian refugees. Furthermore, the reduction of psychological and social support programmes has increased children's exposure to domestic violence and exploitation. Almost half of Palestinian refugee children suffer from anxiety and **30%** from depression due to poor living conditions and clashes between factions in refugee camps, and the state of uncertainty about the future. All of these factors endanger the mental health of Palestinian children, in addition to the constant scenes and news that children are following on a daily basis about the battles in Gaza and the West Bank, and about loved ones who have been displaced, injured, or killed, which are greatly affecting them.

Syrian Children in Lebanon – Between Uncertain Return and Renewed Displacement amid Lack of Protection - Rights of Syrian Refugee Children in Lebanon (Articles 2, 22, 24 and 28 CRC)

In **2025**, Syrian children in Lebanon are facing escalating humanitarian challenges due to the complexity of the Syrian displacement issue in Lebanon, which is witnessing rapid developments against the backdrop of security escalation on the Lebanese-Syrian borders and political and military changes within Syria. On one hand, the pace of forced and voluntary returns of Syrians from Lebanon to Syria has increased in the last few years, especially after the social and political pressures that peaked in late **2024**. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) schedule revealed that between December 8th, **2024**, and January 16th, **2025**, almost **195,200** Syrian refugees returned to their country, comprising **60%** of children and adolescents. However, this return, whether voluntary or forced, often took place in the absence of legal and humanitarian guarantees, where returnees, in particular children, are facing tragic situations including a lack of basic services, deprivation of education, and security threats such as detention or forced conscription, amid a devastated infrastructure and an ineffective protection system. **44%** of Syrian children in Lebanon do not attend school, which increases the risk of early engagement in the labour market. It is estimated that **80%** of these children lack legal documentation, depriving them of access to education and healthcare and exposing them to the risk of marginalization and exclusion.

Syrian families are also facing difficulties in obtaining legal residencies due to the complexity and cost of the procedures, which exposes children to the risk of detention or deportation. Poverty and deprivation of education are forcing a large number of children to work in agriculture, construction, and street vending, under difficult circumstances and low wages, exposing them to exploitation and abuse. These children are also facing risks of physical and psychological violence, bullying, and discrimination, in the absence of adequate legal protection. When it comes to health, children are facing difficulties in accessing healthcare due to a lack of documentation and pressure on the health sector, especially when UNHCR has reduced its support for secondary healthcare.

On the other hand, after the escalation of military operations in the Syrian coastal regions during the first quarter of **2025**, Lebanon witnessed a new wave of displacement. UNHCR revealed that

more than **21,000** people, including thousands of children, had been displaced from Syria to Lebanon, according to statistics submitted by Lebanese authorities and the Lebanese Red Cross, as a result of the violence witnessed in the coastal region of western Syria during March. These children found themselves once again facing a troubled reality, lacking the minimum requirements for a decent life, including food, healthcare, and education. The sudden displacement has deprived most of them of continuing their education and led to a lack of psychological support and increased risks of violence and exploitation.

Children at the Heart of the Conflict – Escalating Violations amid War and Recurrent Hostilities - Children Affected by Armed Conflict and Emergencies in Lebanon (Articles 6, 19 and 38 CRC):

The situation of children in Lebanon has significantly deteriorated due to successive waves of armed violence, including the escalation of hostilities from October **2023**, which intensified in September **2024**, followed by renewed escalation in **2026**. These hostilities have resulted in grave violations of children's rights, including killing and injury, displacement, disruption of education, psychological distress, and increased exposure to protection risks.

During the **2023–2024** escalation, airstrikes and hostilities caused widespread civilian casualties and displacement across Lebanon, particularly in southern Lebanon and border areas. More than **200,000** people were displaced, including a significant number of children, while thousands of children lost access to education due to the closure of schools or their transformation into shelters. The conflict resulted in thousands of deaths and injuries, including hundreds of children, with many sustaining life-changing injuries and experiencing severe psychological consequences due to exposure to bombardment, displacement, and loss of family members.

Renewed hostilities in **2026** further exacerbated the situation of children. According to UNICEF, since the escalation beginning on 2 March **2026**, at least **247** children had been killed and **992** injured by 17 June **2026**, representing an average of **12** children killed or injured every day. Earlier UNICEF reporting indicated that by May **2026**, at least **200** children had been killed and **806** injured since 2 March **2026**, while more than **770,000** children were facing heightened risks of trauma and mental health consequences due to ongoing violence and displacement.

The impact of the renewed hostilities extends beyond casualties. Large-scale displacement has disrupted children's access to education, healthcare, protection and other essential services. UNICEF reported that many children have been forced to flee their homes multiple times, while widespread destruction has affected homes, schools and essential services, including water, sanitation and hygiene systems. Repeated displacement and prolonged exposure to insecurity can further undermine children's sense of safety and increase their vulnerability to protection risks, including violence, exploitation, family separation and child labour.

Education has also been severely disrupted. School closures, damage to educational infrastructure and the use of schools as collective shelters have interrupted children's access to formal education and increased the risk of prolonged learning loss, particularly among children who were already experiencing barriers to education before the escalation. The scale of the damage to educational infrastructure further compounds these risks: a nationwide assessment conducted in June **2026** identified **340** damaged schools, including **17** that had been completely destroyed, and UNICEF

warned that at least **100,000** children could be left without a classroom at the start of the following school year without urgent rehabilitation and restoration measures.

The psychological impact is equally significant. UNICEF reported that more than **770,000** children were experiencing heightened distress as a result of repeated exposure to violence, loss and displacement. UNICEF also reported symptoms among children and caregivers associated with traumatic stress and grief, including extreme fear and worry, nightmares, sleeplessness and feelings of hopelessness. The repeated cycles of conflict and displacement may have longer-term consequences for children's mental health and psychosocial well-being and underline the need to integrate mental health and psychosocial support into emergency education, health and child protection responses.

The cumulative impact of these hostilities has severely affected children's enjoyment of their rights under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, particularly the rights to survival and development (Article 6), protection from violence (Article 19), education (Article 28), health (Article 24), and an adequate standard of living (Article 27). Beyond immediate casualties, children continue to face long-term consequences, including interrupted education, displacement, psychological trauma, disability resulting from injuries, increased risks of child labour, family separation, and weakened access to protection and essential services. The prolonged nature of these crises also risks compounding pre-existing vulnerabilities and widening inequalities among children, particularly those already affected by poverty, disability, displacement or limited access to essential services.

b. General Measures of Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Articles 4, 41 and 42 CRC)

1. The Lebanese state has taken a number of legislative and policy steps in the field of children's rights, despite economic and political challenges. On the legislative front, in January **2025**, the Ministry of Labor launched a Child Labor Unit, aimed at reducing child labor in hazardous sectors through monitoring and coordination with the relevant bodies. During **2023**, the draft amendment to the Juvenile Protection Law No. **422/2002** was referred to the head of the Women and Child Committee in the Parliament to be reviewed and commented on, before referring it to the Administration and Justice Committee to be presented to a general session for voting. The draft includes proposals submitted by local associations and organizations, in addition to the Ministries of Social Affairs and Justice, that were supposed to be approved during **2024**. The proposed amendments included raising the age of criminal responsibility to **14** years, establishing a specialized judiciary and a specialized police force for juveniles, allocating appropriate investigation rooms, and removing the statute of limitations for sexual assault crimes against children, aimed at strengthening legal guarantees for their protection. On the policy level, in **2024**, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education launched the "National Policy on Inclusive Education," which ensures the inclusion of children with special needs in the formal education system and provides a comprehensive learning environment. At the strategic level, the state, in partnership with international organizations, has prepared the "National Strategic Plan for Children's Rights **2022–2025**," which focuses on four main pillars: education, protection, participation, and health. Despite these initiatives, the gap between the legal framework and adopted policies and the level of actual implementation persists, weakening their impact on

ensuring comprehensive and effective protection for children, especially the most vulnerable groups. Furthermore, Lebanon has not yet ratified the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, despite signing it 18 years ago.

Recommendations

1.1 Ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and the Optional Protocol on a Communications Procedure.

1.2 Effectively implement international treaties, agreements, conventions, and their protocols that Lebanon has ratified through the adoption of domestic laws and reforms, and undertake the necessary amendments to align laws, policies, and practices accordingly.

1.3 Establish a mechanism for reporting and handling complaints of violations against children.

c. Right to Legal Identity, Birth Registration and Nationality (Articles 7 and 8 CRC)

2. The legal framework in Lebanon still contains significant gaps that hinder the full recognition of children's legal personality, particularly concerning the granting of nationality and birth registration. Lebanese women are still deprived of the right to grant nationality to their children, resulting in thousands of children being deprived of their fundamental rights, including healthcare, education, and legal residency. This discrimination also extends to Palestinian refugee women in Lebanon, who cannot register their children under their names, although they are registered with UNRWA. Similarly, a Palestinian refugee woman registered with the Directorate of Political Affairs and Refugees, who is married to a foreigner, is deprived of granting a "courtesy residency" to her children, unlike Lebanese citizens, which exacerbates her children's legal and living conditions. Furthermore, Syrian refugee children are facing increasing difficulties in registering their births due to complex administrative procedures linked to the expiry of the parents' or one parent's residency, leading to newborns being deprived of basic legal documents and recognition of their legal personality, despite the fact that their status as displaced persons require facilitation rather than complications.

Recommendations

2.1 Register and complete the issuance of identity documents for newborns of Palestinian refugees from Syria, in compliance with the ratified international agreements.

2.2 Amend the Lebanese nationality law to allow Lebanese women married to foreigners to grant Lebanese nationality to their children.

2.3 The Lebanese state should assess the situation of Palestinian refugees married to Lebanese citizens and cease the obstructing procedures regarding nationality acquisition.

d. Protection from All Forms of Violence, Abuse, Exploitation and Neglect (Articles 19, 34, 35 and 36 CRC)

3. Protection from All Forms of Violence and Abuse: Children in Lebanon are increasingly exposed to various forms of violence, amid the absence of an effective and comprehensive protection system, and the presence of legal and structural gaps that have prevented adequate response to these violations. UNICEF reports in **2022** showed that more than **1.8** million children live in conditions that make them highly vulnerable to violence, and one in two children in Lebanon is at serious risk of physical, emotional, or sexual violence.

3.1 According to the UNICEF National Survey of **2021**, **57%** of Lebanese children between the ages of **1** and **14** have been subjected to some form of violent discipline by a family member, while the percentage rises to **82%** among Palestinian refugees and **77%** among Syrian refugees, reflecting differences in living conditions. In **2022**, surveys also showed that **36%** of parents have become harsher in their behavior with children as a result of economic pressures.

3.2 Despite the amendment of the Domestic Violence Law No. **293/2014** under Law **204/2020**, all forms of physical, sexual, moral, and economic violence have been criminalized against individuals covered by this law, with a clear exception for the crime of marital rape from the scope of criminalization. Nevertheless, practices of physical punishment persist within homes and institutions. The safe centre of the Developmental Action without Borders – Naba’a Association has received more than **45** women and girls who were victims of domestic violence during the years **2023** and **2024**. KAFA organization has also recorded **1,012** cases of women victims of violence and their children at the end of **2024**. In addition to direct violence, neglect remains one of the most common forms of violation, although it is difficult to document.

3.3 Violence in schools remains widespread, despite the amendment of Article **186** of the Penal Code in **2014**, particularly in public schools that suffer from overcrowding and a shortage of qualified staff. According to a **2022** report issued by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with Save the Children, **38%** of students acknowledged being subjected to verbal or physical violence within schools, including beating, insults, class expulsion, and psychological abuse. Cases of physical assault by teachers requiring official intervention have been documented. However, disciplinary mechanisms remain ambiguous, and most schools lack child protection units or qualified social counsellors.

3.4 Sexual violence is considered one of the most dangerous violations that children are facing in Lebanon, and its risk has increased due to poverty, family disintegration, and digital negligence. According to statistics from Himaya association, Lebanon has recorded an increase in cases of sexual violence against children between **2022** and **2023**, from **10%** to **12%**, with registered cases of violence distributed between **46%** for females and **54%** for males. The UNHCR has also documented an increase in cases of sexual exploitation, particularly in informal camps where protection and monitoring mechanisms are absent. Lebanon has witnessed a series of shocking incidents involving the luring and sexual assault of children by organized networks, in addition to harassment cases in educational institutions and residential care facilities. These incidents reflect weak protection systems, lack of monitoring, and the urgent need to implement laws and activate prevention mechanisms and legal support for children. Furthermore, there is an escalation in online

grooming through gaming and chat applications, amid a lack of parental control, despite digital awareness campaigns. These cases are complicated by the failure of victims and their families to report them, fearing social stigma.

3.5 Most victims decide to speak about the violence against them when the statute of limitations expires. Law No. **293/2014**, as amended by Law No. **204/2020**, grants minor the right to resort to the judge of urgent matters to obtain a protection order, without the consent or the presence of the guardian. This amendment allows the minor, especially the married minor who is subjected to domestic violence, to request protection independently and without requiring the consent of her guardian. Article **12** of Law No. **293/2014** was amended by Law No. **204/2020**, so that protection now includes children up to the age of thirteen, regardless of the custody age specified in personal status laws.

3.6 Protection orders remain temporary until a final criminal judgment is issued, which limits their effectiveness. Law **422/2002** pertaining to the protection of minors at risk constitutes the basic legal framework for child protection, focusing on reform, rehabilitation, and protection. However, it still suffers from gaps related to the low age of criminal responsibility (**7** years), legal procedures during detention, and criminal records. Regarding alternative care, placing children in residential care institutions remains common, despite constituting a violation of the principle of the child's best interest. These institutions have shifted from being a temporary solution in emergency situations to a permanent alternative due to the absence of effective support programs for nuclear or extended families. These institutions suffer from acute financial crises, as they rely on partial funding from the Ministry of Social Affairs, which does not cover the full operational costs, forcing them to depend on donations or reduce services. This crisis has worsened during the economic collapse, leading to a deteriorating quality of care and to children leaving or being removed from care centres or being neglected within the institutions themselves, in addition to the absence of family or community reintegration programs. Since **2018**, limited steps have been taken to implement the family care project by local and international associations, which is based on keeping the child in their nuclear or extended family or with a reliable foster family when absolutely necessary, when the child is exposed to severe danger as stipulated in Law **422/2002**. However, these initiatives have been weak in terms of funding and implementation.

Child Marriage

Protecting children from early marriage, especially the marriage of underage girls, remains a concerning phenomenon in Lebanon, and constitutes a systematic form of sexual and legal violence. According to a **2023** report issued by the United Nations Population Fund, **27%** of Syrian refugee girls in Lebanon were married before reaching the age of **18**, with higher rates reaching **32%** recorded in areas such as Bekaa and Akkar. In the absence of a unified personal status law, the age of marriage in Lebanon remains subject to the personal status law of each sect and denomination. Despite amendments made by some sects regarding the age of marriage, most sects still recognize child marriage and conduct marriages without official documentation.

Therefore, child marriage is considered legal, despite Lebanon's ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and despite having no reservations on paragraph two of Article **16**, which does not recognize child marriage and stipulates that child

betrothal or marriage shall have no legal effect, and that all necessary action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify a minimum age for marriage and to make the registration of marriages in an official registry compulsory.

Numerous civil society organizations have launched campaigns demanding the establishment of a minimum marriage age, and a draft law has been submitted to set eighteen as the minimum age for marriage. However, the efforts made by the Lebanese state remain insufficient in order to move forward with studying this proposal in preparation for its adoption without including any exceptions. Although Article **522** of the Penal Code, which exempts perpetrators of sexual offenses from punishment if they are married to the victim, was abolished on February **15th, 2017**, its effects persist in Article **505**, which states the following: "If a valid marriage is concluded between the perpetrator and the victim, who is between **15** and **18** years old, the prosecution shall be suspended." Furthermore, Article **518** of the Penal Code exempts from punishment anyone who seduces a girl with a promise of marriage and deflowers her if he marries her.

Children and Armed Conflict

Protecting children from participation in armed conflicts remains a significant concern in Lebanon. In Lebanon, the practice of recruiting and using children by some Lebanese and Palestinian factions and parties has persisted, exploiting children's need for protection and their economic and social circumstances, specifically extreme poverty. This is exacerbated by the absence of human security and legal protection concepts in Lebanon.

To date, no law has been issued criminalizing the involvement of children in armed conflicts, leaving a large number of children in Lebanon victims of exploitation in wars and armed conflicts.

Protection of Child Victims of Human Trafficking

In July **2023**, Judicial Police investigations, dating back to **2021**, revealed the expansion of human trafficking gang activities in Lebanon, exploiting the deteriorating economic and social conditions. Minor girls, particularly Syrian refugees, were lured into prostitution for sexual exploitation. In the same context, the Lebanese judiciary closed an association after proving its involvement in human trafficking crimes and sexual exploitation of minors. Fake pages on social media were also discovered, offering "children for sale" for amounts ranging between **500** and **1700** US dollars, sparking widespread debate about this dangerous phenomenon.

The Lebanese legal framework does not distinguish between human trafficking victims of Palestinian nationality or those of other nationalities. Furthermore, non-Lebanese residents are not required to have residency permits to benefit from protection. The enactment of Law No. **164** on August **26th, 2011**, constituted an advanced step towards combating human trafficking and strengthening victim protection. However, this law still contains significant gaps that prevent comprehensive and effective protection.

Instead of presuming victim status, the law obliges individuals to provide evidence to prove they have been trafficked, which burdens victims and undermines the principle of protection. Furthermore, their participation in judicial procedures may require obtaining a residency permit,

and they are not granted an unconditional right to compensation, which remains contingent on the confiscation of perpetrators' assets. The law also lacks clear mechanisms to protect victims' identities and does not provide specialized therapeutic guarantees for children under the age of eighteen, in addition to the absence of mandatory preventive measures for the state.

The law holds all victims criminally liable unless they prove they were subjected to coercion, which contradicts international standards that presume victim status when there are serious indicators of trafficking, as stipulated in Article **586 (8)** of the amended Penal Code.

The increase in trafficking patterns, especially against women and children, is attributed to the lack of legal protection granted to Palestinian refugees, in addition to the "non-refoulement" policy pursued by the Lebanese state towards Palestinian refugees fleeing Syria. This has manifested in new forms of exploitation such as employing children and women for long hours without pay in exchange for providing shelter for the family, or providing financial amounts or benefits to those who have authority over refugees in exchange for allowing their exploitation in begging, prostitution, forced labor, or even practices similar to slavery.

4. Recommendations

4.1 Abolish Article **186** of the Penal Code concerning the types of discipline inflicted by parents and define escalating measures and procedures against parents who repeatedly violate the law.

4.2 Protect children from sexual exploitation and support psychological and social rehabilitation programs dedicated to children who are victims of abuse and sexual assault, and ensure strict prosecution and punishment of perpetrators.

4.3 Amend the Penal Code regarding the statute of limitations for sexual violence crimes against children, thereby eliminating legal deadlines.

4.4 Amend Article **33** of the Juvenile Law No. **422/2002**, particularly paragraphs two and three thereof, to ensure unified methods of appealing judicial decisions issued by ordinary courts and the juvenile court when determining the punishment. It is proposed that the judgment issued by the ordinary court be referred immediately upon its issuance, and before acquiring final status, to the juvenile court, so that the latter exclusively determines the appropriate punishment and measure for the minor. Appeals should be limited to the final decision issued by the juvenile court in accordance with the principle of individualized punishment and consideration of the juvenile's best interests.

4.5 Raise the age of criminal responsibility from **7** to a minimum of **13** years.

4.6 Take into consideration the juvenile's age, and their psychological, mental, and physical condition when adopting any measure beneficial for them and for their protection.

4.7 Provide specialized staff trained to deal with juveniles who come into contact with the law, whether they are children in conflict with the law, child witnesses, or child victims.

4.8 Maintain contact between the juvenile in conflict with the law and their family.

4.9 Ensure the necessary health services for the juvenile in conflict with the law.

4.10 Protect children in schools, and employ an adequate number of health and social counsellors, psychologists, nurses, and specialists in dealing with people with disabilities in public schools in basic education, in accordance with approved international standards.

4.11 Enact a unified personal status law that specifies the minimum age for marriage and prohibits child marriage, applicable to all Lebanese and residents on Lebanese territory without any exception.

4.12 Enact a law criminalizing early marriage outside religious and competent courts, punishing those responsible with deterrent penalties, and taking measures and procedures to protect minors, including refugee girls, from early marriage.

4.13 Amend Articles **505** and **518** of the Lebanese Penal Code as follows:

"Whoever has sexual intercourse with a minor under the age of fifteen shall be punished with imprisonment for a period of not less than five years.

The penalty shall not be less than seven years if the minor is under the age of twelve.

Whoever has sexual intercourse with a minor who has completed fifteen years of age but has not completed eighteen years of age shall be punished with imprisonment for a period of not less than three years."

4.14 Take legal measures to prohibit and criminalize the use and recruitment of children and prevent their involvement in military tasks inside and outside Lebanon.

4.15 Provide care and rehabilitation for former child soldiers and reintegrate them into society, and protect them particularly from prosecution in military courts.

4.16 The Lebanese state shall amend Law **164/2011** to protect victims of human trafficking without discrimination, in particular children and women, and drop criminal liability from them, in accordance with international standards in this regard.

4.17 Issue special laws and decrees to guarantee appropriate protection and support for human trafficking victims, especially children.

4.18 Strengthen oversight of childcare centres to ensure that children are not exploited under the cover of charitable work.

4.19 Establish effective and confidential mechanisms for reporting trafficking cases, and provide legal, psychological, and social protection for victims.

e. Protection from Economic Exploitation and Child Labour (Article 32 CRC)

5. Over the past five years, the phenomenon of child labour in Lebanon has deteriorated amid successive economic, social and humanitarian crises. Poverty, school dropout, displacement, and reduced access to social protection and essential health, social and educational services have increased children's exposure to economic exploitation. This includes hazardous work, street-based activities, begging, and informal employment. New forms of work, including online work, have also emerged, creating additional risks of exploitation in digital spaces.

Child labour remains one of the major challenges threatening childhood in Lebanon. While older estimates cited around **100,000** working children based on official statistics from **2016**, these figures should be treated with caution given changes in the context and differences in definitions, methodologies, and population coverage across sources. Earlier estimates that reported very high percentages of working children are not directly comparable without a clearly defined denominator and consistent methodology. The most recent comprehensive source, the Lebanon Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS6) **2023**, provides more recent and methodologically comparable data on child labour among children aged **5–17**. It found substantial differences across geographic areas and population groups: the proportion of children classified as being in child labour ranged from **7%** in Beirut to **23%** in Mount Lebanon and **23%** among children living in settlements of displaced Syrians.

Importantly, the MICS **2023** survey did not cover Nabatieh, South Lebanon, or Baalbek-Hermel because of security constraints. These geographical limitations should be taken into account when interpreting the findings, particularly when assessing the national prevalence of child labour. The MICS **2023** results should therefore be used as the primary recent evidence base, replacing older estimates that do not have a clearly defined denominator or comparable methodology. The findings also highlight the need for strengthened monitoring, evidence-based planning, social protection, access to education, and child protection measures to prevent and respond to child labour, particularly among children affected by poverty, displacement, school exclusion, and other forms of vulnerability.

The persistence and changing nature of child labour underscore gaps in prevention, protection, monitoring, and enforcement mechanisms. Strengthening official data collection and coordination among relevant institutions remains essential to ensure that policies and programmes are based on reliable, disaggregated and regularly updated evidence.

5.1 UNICEF reported that the proportion of families resorting to sending their children to work as a coping mechanism increased from **11%** in April **2023** to **16%** in December **2023**. This indicator refers to households reporting this coping strategy and should not be interpreted as the percentage of children engaged in child labour.

5.2 Despite Lebanon's signing of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which stipulates in Article **32** the protection of children from economic exploitation and hazardous work that impedes their physical, psychological, mental, or social development, the implementation of these obligations remains weak. The Ministry of Labor's Inspectorate suffers from a severe shortage of

human and material resources and conducts only a limited number of inspection tours, especially in remote areas.

5.3 Moreover, the National Action Plan adopted by the government for the period **2013–2016**, aimed at eliminating the worst forms of child labour, has not been implemented as required and has not been renewed or updated. There is also no comprehensive national registry identifying the numbers of working children and their distribution by regions and sectors. The head of the Child Labor Combat Unit at the Ministry of Labor has stated that the plan did not receive the necessary funding, which led to the closure of some centres specialized in combating child labour.

5.4 Recommendations

5.4.1 Update and activate the National Action Plan to Combat Child Labor and provide adequate financial and human resources for its effective implementation.

5.4.2 Impose effective penalties on employers and other actors who employ children below the legal working age, while strengthening social protection and support for vulnerable families to prevent children from being pushed into work. Parents or caregivers should be held accountable only where they intentionally exploit or coercively expose children to labour, rather than where families face extreme poverty or lack viable alternatives.

5.4.3 Provide social and economic support programs for the poorest families, linking this support to the condition of keeping children in school.

5.4.4 Amend Article **22** of the Lebanese Labor Law to criminalize the employment of children under the age of **15**, considering it a form of violence, and take legal measures against violators, whether they are employers or parents.

6. Right to Education and Inclusive Education (Articles 28 and 29 CRC)

The education sector in Lebanon is experiencing a rapid deterioration, making it one of the most affected children's rights over the past five years, due to accumulated economic, social, and political crises that have led to a gradual collapse of the educational system. UNICEF estimates for **2023** indicate that approximately **700,000** children, representing about **35%** of school-age children, are outside the formal education system or lack genuine learning opportunities. A survey conducted in January **2025** showed that **30%** of families reduced their spending on education to secure basic needs. Amid this deterioration, enrollment rates in public schools have decreased to **28%**, while reliance on private education has increased, according to the statistical bulletin of the Educational Center for Research and Development for the year **2022–2023**, reflecting the loss of confidence in public education and many families turning to irregular alternatives or abandoning education entirely. This decline is attributed to the poor quality of public education resulting from poor infrastructure, a shortage of qualified staff, especially in rural areas, low success rates, and the absence of long-term educational planning.

7. Public spending on education has not exceeded **2%** of GDP since **2020**, and this decline continues. According to The Policy Initiative, the Ministry of Education's budget for **2024**

represents only **14%** of its budget size in **2019**, indicating a significant decrease in sector funding. This lack of funding has led to a shortage of educational resources, increased classroom overcrowding, and deteriorating education quality, while the state continues to support private religious and non-religious schools, semi-free and half-free schools, contributing to deepening the educational gap between students in public and private schools.

8. The education crisis was exacerbated by the intensification of the war on Lebanon in September **2024**, where hundreds of schools were closed and more than **500** were converted into shelters for displaced persons, affecting **500,000** children's regular education. In the absence of adequate infrastructure, distance learning has become unavailable to the majority of students due to power outages, weak internet access, and the absence of flexible curricula that adapt to emergency situations. Even after the ceasefire was announced in November **2024**, many schools remained closed due to damage.

9. Despite Lebanon's ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the existence of Law **220/2000**, which is supposed to guarantee inclusive education, this law is limited to physical disabilities and exempts intellectual and psychological disabilities, creating an additional legal obstacle. Estimates show that less than **1%** of children with disabilities are enrolled in public schools, whereas their number should not be less than **45,000** children, while the official figures do not exceed **8,558**. In **2022/2023**, only about **3,000** children with special needs were given access to inclusive education in some public schools, reflecting the weak comprehensiveness of government efforts. These children are facing additional difficulties in private schools, which often refuse to enroll them or charge them exorbitant fees.

10. Refugee children are also facing numerous challenges, most notably discrimination, racism, and bullying, pushing them to drop out or refrain from enrolling. Some public schools impose difficult administrative requirements, such as submitting valid residency documents or paying fees, which contradicts the principle of free education. Estimates indicate that more than half of Syrian refugee children are out of school, while approximately **36,000** Palestinian children are facing the risk of dropping out if UNRWA services cease.

11. Although Law **150/2011** amending Article **49** of Legislative Order **134/1959** stipulates mandatory and free education for all children up to the age of **15**, the absence of implementing decrees and inter-ministerial coordination has impeded its effective implementation, thereby weakening the state's ability to combat dropout rates and ensure inclusive and equitable education.

12. Recommendations

12.1 Increase the share of the general budget allocated to public education to meet the growing demand and ensure quality education.

12.2 Issue implementing decrees to enforce the mandatory education law (**150/2011**) and establish mechanisms to monitor school dropout cases.

12.3 Adopt an emergency plan to save the academic year, including providing incentives for teachers, transportation, stationery, and school meals for students.

12.4 Develop a comprehensive national strategy to educate children with disabilities, including amending Law **220/2000** to comprise all types of disabilities, providing inclusive schools, comprehensive curricula, and trained teachers.

12.5 Remove all administrative and financial barriers that impede the enrollment of refugee children and children with disabilities in public schools.

f. The Right to Health

13. Right to Health and Access to Healthcare Services (Article 24 CRC)

The right to health is a fundamental right that has been severely affected in Lebanon amid an unprecedented economic and social crisis that has directly impacted children and families' ability to access healthcare. Medical professionals and government officials have warned that Lebanese hospitals are nearing total incapacity to provide basic health services, including life-saving surgeries and emergency medical care, due to acute financial collapse. Public and private hospitals have suffered from a continuous shortage of medicines and medical supplies. Emergency and intensive care departments were closed or downsized due to medical staff migration and declining healthcare workers' wages. Treatment costs have become an unbearable burden for families, leading to increased deaths and disabilities among children due to delay or lack of treatment in emergency cases. A UNICEF survey conducted in **2023** revealed that **8** out of **10** families (**81%**) reduced their healthcare spending compared to six months earlier, when **75%** of families were already cutting back on these expenses.

14. Reports from the Ministry of Public Health and United Nations organizations indicate that a large percentage of children have been deprived of essential preventive and curative health services due to the collapse of the primary healthcare system and the absence of comprehensive health coverage. Deaths among children have been recorded because their families could not afford hospitalization costs or lacked health insurance, particularly in peripheral areas and camps. Among the most prominent of these cases were children's deaths in public and private hospitals due to the unavailability of beds or urgent treatment, as occurred in the Tripoli Governmental Hospital.

15. Basic children's vaccination rates have also witnessed a dangerous decline during this period. In **2022**, a UNICEF report showed that approximately **66%** of children in Lebanon dropped out of the mandatory vaccination program.

16. It is noted that most dropout children are over the age of five, despite the need for important booster doses at ages **10**, **14**, and **18**. This has led to the resurgence of diseases such as measles, cholera, and polio in some areas.

17. Children with disabilities have suffered from an almost complete absence of specialized healthcare, including physical, psychological, and rehabilitative treatments. A large number of them have also been deprived of assistive devices and surgical procedures, especially in rural areas and camps, due to lack of funding and a scarcity of specialized doctors.

18. Palestinian refugees remain deprived of government health coverage and are not included in social security services despite their contributions. Ten percent of Palestinian refugees suffer from

stunting, while anemia spreads among **28%** of children aged **0–5** years. The cessation of U.S. funding and the decline in donor support for UNRWA have resulted in a sharp reduction in its services in Lebanon, which threatens a humanitarian catastrophe in case of its complete cessation, as more than **30,000** children will be deprived of basic healthcare and threatened with serious health complications due to the lack of vaccinations and medicines. Syrian refugees rely on partial and limited support from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and its partners. In **2023**, UNHCR announced its inability to cover the treatment costs of **97** Syrian refugees who required life-saving surgeries, and confirmed that patients suffering from chronic diseases such as kidney failure and cancer have become unable to receive regular treatment.

19. Recommendations

19.1 Ensure comprehensive health coverage for all children without discrimination, including refugee children, whether Palestinian or Syrian.

19.2 Activate the comprehensive healthcare card approved by the Lebanese Parliament and ensure its effective implementation for marginalized groups.

19.3 Improve and generalize school health programs in all schools, public and private, through cooperation between the Ministries of Health and Education, aimed at ensuring periodic medical examinations, promoting vaccination campaigns, and providing health, nutritional, and psychological awareness, especially in remote and deprived areas.

19.4 Ensure the provision of basic vaccines for children in all health centres, and monitor compliance through periodic campaigns in cooperation with municipalities and schools.

19.5 Rehabilitate and equip government hospitals with the necessary medicines and technologies, especially pediatric and emergency departments.

19.6 Provide specialized psychological and social support programs for children affected by conflicts, violence, or natural disasters, with special attention to children with disabilities.

References

- UNICEF. (17 June 2026). *Statement by UNICEF Country Representative in Lebanon, Marco Luigi Corsi, on the ongoing suffering of children in Lebanon.*
- UNICEF. (2 July 2026). *At least 100,000 children risk missing the next school year without urgent action to restore education.*
- United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). (23 April 2026). *Lebanon Flash Update No. 20.*
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). (13–19 April 2026). *Lebanon Flash Update No. 7.*
- UNRWA. (2025). *Emergency Appeal for Syria, Lebanon and Jordan.*
- UNICEF Lebanon. *Children in Lebanon are suffering more than ever amid multiple severe crises.*
- Asharq Al-Awsat. (2022). *Declining vaccination rates in Lebanon expose children to deadly diseases.*
- Al Jazeera. (18 January 2025). *United Nations: 200,000 Syrian refugees returned to Syria.*
- UNHCR Lebanon. *Education.*
- Human Rights Watch. (28 August 2024). *Stop Politicizing Education: Lebanon's Refugee Children.*
- UNHCR Lebanon. *Access to healthcare and assistance for refugees.*
- The Cradle Arabic. (2025). *More than 21,000 people displaced from Syria to Lebanon due to violence in the coastal region.*
- UNICEF Lebanon. *At least one million children in danger as violence and crisis intensify in Lebanon.*
- GrandLB. *Report on sexual violence and protection concerns affecting children in Lebanon.*
- Human Rights Watch. *Report on sexual exploitation and protection concerns affecting children.*
- Alhurra. (29 November 2021). *Child trafficking and exploitation in Lebanon.*
- Alghad. *Documents reveal fake pages offering children for sale in Lebanon.*
- An-Nahar. (18 June 2023). *Figures reveal the alarming reality of child labour in Lebanon.*
- Elnashra. *Child labour in Lebanon: commitments that have not yet been fulfilled.*
- UNICEF Lebanon. *Future on Hold: The Impact of Crises on Children in Lebanon.*
- UNICEF Lebanon. *Children in Lebanon after the war: A psychological, nutritional and educational crisis.*
- UNICEF Lebanon. *Lebanon Humanitarian Situation Report – End of Year 2022.*
- Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP). *How Palestinian children are bearing the brunt of Lebanon's economic crisis.*
- Human Rights Watch. *Report concerning children's protection and exploitation in Lebanon.*