



**Child Labour
Ends Childhood
Save a Generation**

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Media Statement

June 13, 2022: Child Labour is Ending Childhoods in Lebanon

A drastic increase in child labour in Lebanon is causing harm to an entire generation of children and preventing them from reaching their full potential. This is a result of cascading interlocked social, economic and humanitarian crises in Lebanon, most recently exacerbated by the conflict in Ukraine. Many children in Lebanon are now resorting to often exploitative and hazardous work to ensure their survival and that of their families.

"I have to work in a grocery store in order to support my family, and this has come at a cost to my education. It was hard trying to balance work and school, and I was surely falling short on both. If I have to choose between work and education, I cannot be selfish, I need to think of my family, especially my younger brothers as they need me. I must put them first." Said Zein a 14-year-old boy living in Bekaa.*

Aside from denying children their right to education, child labour exposes children to the risk of physical and emotional exploitation and abuse, and has devastating impacts for their physical and mental health. Most significantly, child labour ends childhood. It deprives children of the precious moments of their childhood, and to play, develop and thrive with friends and family – moments, which once lost, cannot be regained.

Despite the lack of comprehensive national data on the extent of child labour, multiple sources project a worrying increase in the numbers of children engaged in work and the impact it has on their wellbeing. In 2021, up to seven percent of Lebanese students had their school attendance disrupted by engagement in labour¹ while the percentage of Syrian children engaged in child labour doubled since 2019 to 5.5%.² Worryingly, child labour is widely accepted with 44% of parents and caregivers believing that engaging children in paid employment enhances their life skills.³

"We can no longer tolerate children across Lebanon taking up the burden of earning income for their families. They should not miss any more days of school while they work or face unwarranted harm while doing jobs not suitable for their young ages. We must protect their childhood," said Jennifer Moorehead, Save the Children Country Director in Lebanon.

Save the Children is urging the Government of Lebanon to adopt the revised draft of the Lebanese Labour Law, which raises the minimum legal age of work to 15 years and to enforce its inter-ministerial child labour action plan. We further call for more comprehensive social protection that addresses the needs of the most vulnerable children and their families and increased measures to get children back to school.

We are supporting children like Zein by helping them to resume their education and stay in school as well as providing mental health services. We also support families with cash and livelihoods assistance for them to have means to adequately provide for their families and reduce negative coping strategies including child labour.

¹ OCHA (April 2022) Increasing Humanitarian Needs in Lebanon.

² UNHCR (Jan 2022) VASyR 2021 – Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon.

³ World Vision (June 2021) Caregiver Perceptions and their Influence on Child Education and Labour across Lebanon