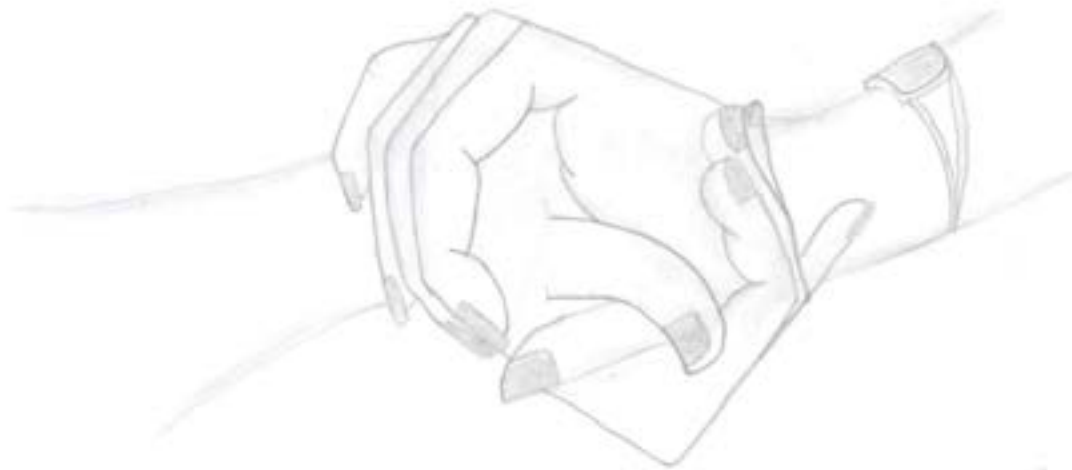




**Save the Children**

# **VIEWS FROM THE LOCKDOWN: CHILDREN AND YOUTH'S EXPERIENCE OF COVID-19 IN LEBANON**

**SUMMARY REPORT  
MAY 2020**



\*Drawing by Fatima, Lebanese 17, inspired by the lockdown

## VIEWS FROM THE LOCKDOWN

Save the Children carried out a survey in Lebanon to understand children and youth's perspectives during the current COVID-19 lockdown and restrictions introduced in response to the outbreak.

The research asked 137 children and youth of different nationalities – including Lebanese, Syrian refugees, Palestinian refugees residing in Lebanon and Palestinian refugees from Syria- and socio-economic backgrounds, including out of school children, children engaged in child labour, and children with disabilities, about the current situation and its impact on their families, education and expectations for the future. This Summary Report provides an overview of the key findings of the research. It was conducted in March and April 2020.

At the time of writing, Lebanon has confirmed more than 1,000 cases with 26 deaths due to COVID-19. The numbers have been slowly but steadily rising as the lockdown measures are eased after two months, but new cases continue to be recorded. The government meanwhile stepped up efforts to conduct more tests around the country.

# FINDINGS

## DAILY LIFE IN THE LOCKDOWN:

Youth and children try to keep themselves busy at home with different activities: **77% spend their time with siblings** while more than half (58%) use social media, and 49% watch TV. Meanwhile, with schools and universities adopting online learning methods, 42% continue studies at home.

Children and youth mostly live in overcrowded households. They **do not enjoy privacy** and are not able to have a quiet space to follow up on their studies. Almost half (**47%**) **live with three to five people in the same household**; 44% live with six to eight people, 9% live with more than eight people and only 4% share the household with less than two people.

Dealing with self-isolation will be a challenge if someone in the same household is infected with the virus. Syrian refugees (15%) and Palestinian refugees from Syria (31%) are the two national groups with the least access to self-isolation.

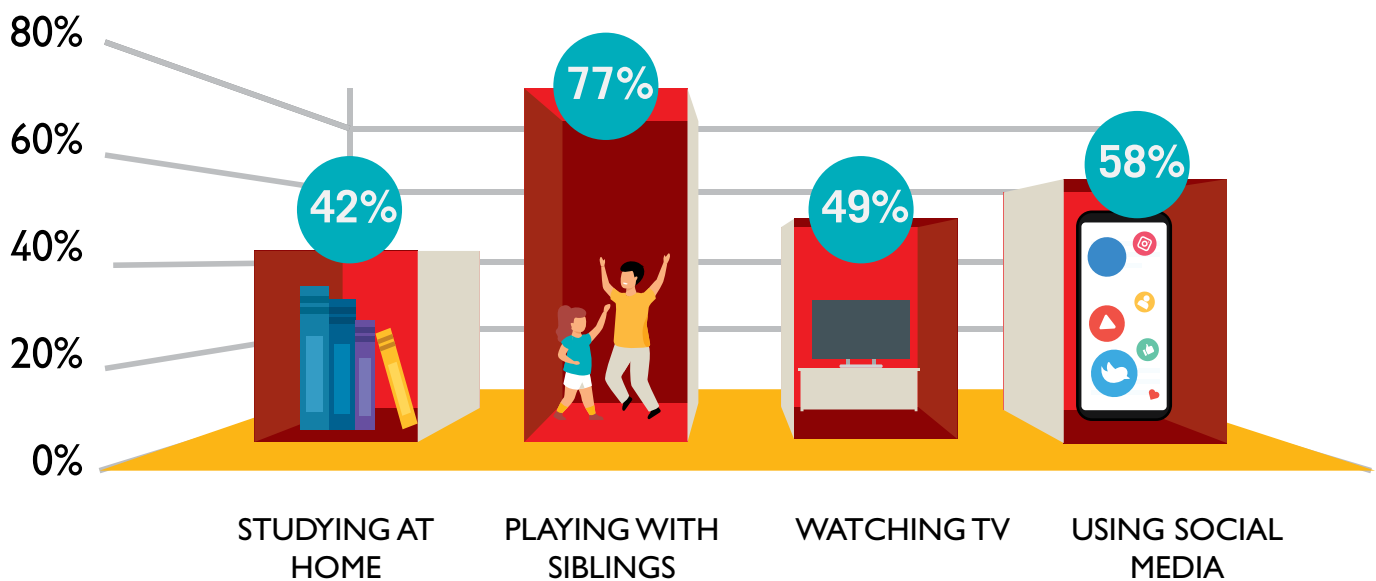
Staying home for longer periods has increased the challenge for households to cover their basic needs. According to children and youth, **among the significant gaps that need to be addressed** through financial support are food (90%) and medicine (50%).



I HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO TAKE MY MEDICATION for sickle-cell anaemia for a while now. I used to receive medical assistance and would travel to Beirut to get the medicine. With travel restrictions in place, I cannot go anywhere, and if I was to buy this medicine from a pharmacy, it is expensive.”

\* Fadi, 14, Palestinian

## DAILY LIFE ROUTINE



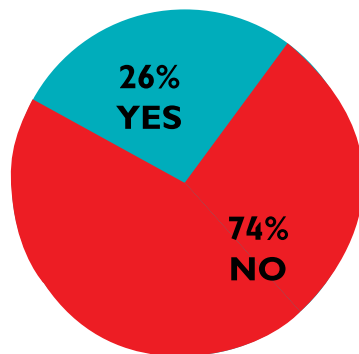


## IMPACT ON FAMILY FINANCES:

The economic situation is the top concern for youth and children during the lockdown, with two thirds (66%) saying that financial support is needed for those affected by job and financial losses caused by the lockdown. The lockdown coincides with economic turmoil in Lebanon, which was already a growing challenge for families pre-COVID-19. Children and youth (46%) are worried that their families are not financially prepared for a longer period of lockdown.

Of the 12 working children and youth surveyed; five stopped their work temporarily, six are still working, and one lost their job altogether. This reveals that children and youth are being exposed to the risk of COVID-19 as they continue to work. Half of those engaged in work are not getting paid, and three said their families were now without income.

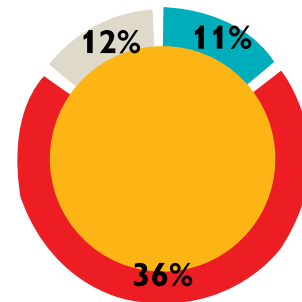
### HAVE A FAMILY INCOME



NGOS NEED TO FOCUS THEIR EFFORTS ON HELPING THE MOST VULNERABLE AND MARGINALISED GROUPS. I was able to [afford] quarantine at home, but there are families who depend on the little they make every day. there also needs to be some focus on two other categories: the youth and refugees.”

\* Khalid, 23, Syrian

## LEARNING CONTINUITY



- WHATSAPP
- STOPPED
- ONLINE



## EDUCATION:

Remote education and home-schooling revealed gaps and challenges for children and youth in accessing online materials. Three quarters (75%) of school children and university students think that studying remotely or online is unsuitable.

With the dependency on WhatsApp as the primary educational platform, **only 19% of female respondents think following studies online or via WhatsApp is suitable**, in comparison to the 33% of male respondents. This gap might be because of domestic duties being assigned to girls on top of homework. Respondents mentioned that, typically, girls are asked to watch their younger siblings while their mothers are occupied with the housework.

**Among the Lebanese, all those surveyed reported difficulties studying online.** For other nationalities, half of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and Palestinian refugees from Syria, and 55% of Syrians are not required by their school or university to continue for now, 22% do not have a reliable internet connection, and 11% said their parents could not help them since they do not have enough education.



**GENDER GAPS:**

Gender concerns surfaced during the research. Asked about adherence to the ‘stay-at-home order’, nearly **two times as many female respondents (58%) had not gone out at all** since the lockdown, compared to 30% among their male counterparts. Households rely on male members to go out and get the needed food and medicine or provide income, while girls stay inside. There are also concerns about the safety of girls while going out, due to increasingly empty streets and a noticeable increase in petty crimes among other issues.

“HAVING TO STAY IN for two or three other months worries me. No one is used to it, and thus it is affecting people in many ways, including their psychological state. Young people of my age are getting bored and wish to go out, but no one dares to because we are in a state of fear. The crisis is taking a toll on our mental health.”

\*Sahar, 17, Lebanese



**PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH:**

Children and youth are uncertain about the future and remain **concerned about their physical and mental health**. Of those surveyed, 2.75% have mental and physical disabilities, while 0.5% have chronic diseases. Thirty-six percent want to see an immediate **provision of medical and health equipment that address the needs of people with disabilities and chronic illnesses**. As many as 40% of children from 15 to 18 years old asked for **psychosocial support services**. Some respondents also mentioned they worry that a family member or a close friend will be infected.

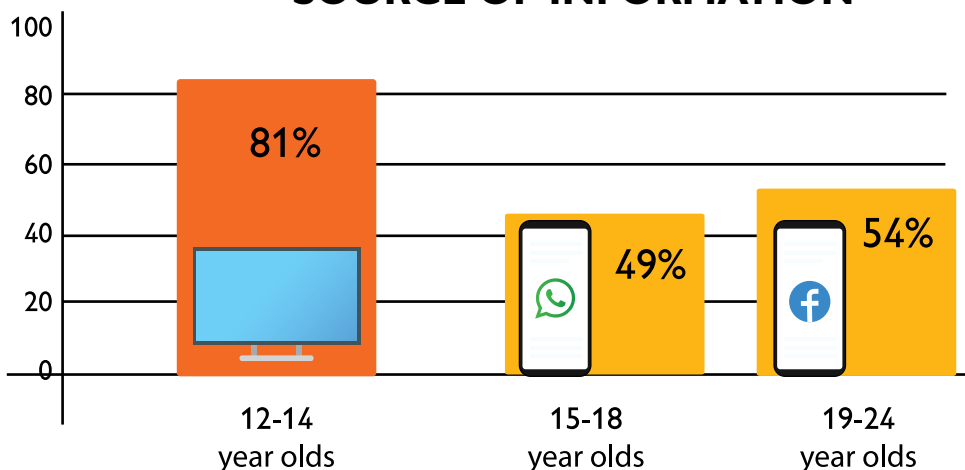


**GETTING INFORMATION:**

Respondents are being kept updated with the latest situation in the country. **More than nine out of ten children and youth (91%) receive updates on COVID-19** either through TV (52%) or via social media (39%).

Children and youth agree that **social media can have a negative side** that can be fraught with risks, including **cyberbullying**. A third (33%) would deal with cyberbullying by telling a parent or a friend, 25% would block the person concerned, and 20% would not add anyone they did not know. Male respondents stated equally (27%) that they would tell a parent or a trusted friend or block the bully, while female respondents scored higher (37%) for telling a parent or a trusted friend.

**SOURCE OF INFORMATION**



# CHILDREN AND YOUTH'S RECOMMENDATIONS

## To the Government of Lebanon:

- Identify places for people to isolate as it is almost impossible for vulnerable people to self-isolate in separate homes or spaces from their families
- Include vulnerable populations, such as refugees and migrant workers, in national strategies and responses to COVID-19.
- Introduce a transparently distributed and adequate child sensitive social assistance package for the most vulnerable Lebanese families to cover minimum basic needs and avoid negative coping strategies.
- Address the needs of persons with disability and take immediate action to avoid an exacerbation of their vulnerabilities and inability to cope with the current situation or access information.
- Ensure equitable access to health and nutrition services, including medication and treatment costs, for all abilities, gender, age groups, nationalities, making services free at the point of use and removing other financial and non-financial access barriers, as at least half of respondents with illnesses and disabilities are not able to get the needed treatment and care they need.

# SAVE THE CHILDREN'S RECOMMENDATIONS

## To UN agencies and NGOs:

- Coordinate with the Ministry of Social Affairs regarding its plan to support vulnerable Lebanese families, especially when it comes to targeting households with persons with disabilities.
- Assume responsibility to support vulnerable refugee populations, additional allocation of funds for cash distributions must be made a priority, in addition to food parcels and hygiene kits.
- Increase support for psychosocial and mental health programming and provide psychosocial support activities in order to help children and their families overcome the stress and the burden of lockdown and address negative repercussions such as domestic violence.
- Address the underpinning gender norms, roles and expectations to maximise the participation of adolescent girls in activities focused on livelihood, education and PSS among others.
- Provide skills and guideline sessions for teachers on how to provide online or remote teaching and develop new approaches by providing the necessary tools and programmes to administer quality education.

- Awareness-raising around cyberbullying should target children, youth and parents equally.
- Focus on children and youth engagement in the current planned response, while taking into consideration the general and child safeguarding risks and the principle of Do No Harm.

“WE SHOULD ALWAYS STAY POSITIVE and look at the glass half full. I read a while ago that humans can no longer live on this planet due to the alarming rates of pollution. Those rates have gone down 48% in the past few months. I’d say that is a positive outcome. Many good changes occurred due to this virus. As a family, we got closer, as a society, we came together and as humans, we regained our sense of humility and humanity.”

**\* Nour, 21, Lebanese**



\*Drawing by Fatima, Lebanese 17, inspired by the lockdown