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Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees (VASyR) 2024

Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION

The Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees (VASyR) in Lebanon provides a multi-sectoral overview of Syrian refugees at the individual and household level. The 2024 assessment marks the twelfth annual survey evaluating the living conditions of Syrian refugee in the country. The contents of this report are jointly issued by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP).

METHODOLOGY

Data for the 2024 VASyR was collected between 24 May and 22 June 2024 across all regions in Lebanon. A total of 4,922 Syrian refugee households were randomly selected from UNHCR’s database. The sample was designed to be representative at both the district and governorate levels. Face-to-face interviews were conducted using a questionnaire administered to the head of household or another adult household member, which included approximately 750 conditional and unconditional questions. The interview lasted on average 1.5 hours. Data was collected at the household and individual levels, and included details pertaining to general demographics, legal documentation, safety and security, shelter, water, sanitation and hygiene, health, food security, livelihoods, expenditures, food consumption, debt, coping strategies and assistance. Some areas in the suburbs of Beirut required multiple levels of clearances, which would have delayed the data collection. For this reason, households residing in those areas were invited to Makhzoumi’s center where the interview was conducted in a private setting.

Fieldwork was carried out by 4 of UNHCR’s implementing partners, namely Caritas, Shield, Makhzoumi, and MedAir. Quality assurance was conducted by the VASyR core group.

RESULTS

DEMOGRAPHICS

Overall, key population level demographics, namely age and sex distributions, in the Syrian refugee population have remained stable over the past several years.

In general, there was an even distribution of males and females across the population and within different age groups with individuals under the age of 18 having made up just over half of the population (51 per cent).

The average households size remained stable at 4.7 individuals per household. Female-headed households were, on average, smaller than male-headed households (3.8 individuals compared to 4.9). The share of households headed by a female remained stable at 17 per cent, with regional variation. The governorates with the highest proportion of female headed households were Akkar (24 per cent), Baalbek Hermel (23 per cent) and Bekaa (21 per cent). Those with the lowest were Beirut (8 per cent), and Mount Lebanon (10 per cent). Nineteen per cent of household heads reported having no education and this proportion was substantially higher among female headed households (32 per cent) as compared to male headed households (15 per cent).

The average dependency ratio¹ in Syrian refugee households was 0.86 (similar to previous years) indicating an almost even distribution of dependents and non-dependents within a household. The dependency ratio was lower among female-headed household (0.77) than male-headed households (0.87), which reflects higher proportion of dependents among male-headed households.

DISABILITY

Disability was measured using the Washington Group (WG) Extended Set on Functioning. The questions cover six domains of functioning: seeing, hearing, walking, cognition, self-care, and communication. Seventeen per cent of the Syrian refugee population were found to have difficulties which indicate a disability with lowest rates found among individuals aged 2–4 (3 per cent) and highest rates among individuals aged 60 and above (45 per cent). At the household level, 20 per cent of household heads had a disability with higher rates among female heads of households (29 per cent) compared to male heads of households (18 per cent). Among adults, the most common functional domains where difficulty was reported included walking or climbing stairs (7 per cent), anxiety (7 per cent) or depression (6 per cent).

Disability rates excluding anxiety and depression for adults were 13 per cent, and 6 per cent amount children aged 5 to 17.

¹ Dependents were defined as individuals aged 14 or younger, or 60 years or above.

PROTECTION

SAFETY AND SECURITY

Ten per cent of households reported that curfews were being imposed in the areas where they live (compared to 12 per cent in 2023 and 4 per cent in 2022). Similarly to previous years, the proportion of households reporting curfews was substantially higher in El Nabatieh (39 per cent) and South Lebanon (30 per cent) as compared to other areas. The main safety concerns for men, women, boys and girls were reported to be bullying, verbal harassment, and robbery.

Seven per cent of households reported that sexual harassment was a safety concern for women and 6 per cent reported it as a concern for girls (compared to 2 per cent for men and boys). This is substantially higher in Baalbek Hermel where 25 per cent of households reported sexual harassment as a concern for women and 20 per cent for girls. With regards to safety and security for persons with disability, compared to those without disability, 25 per cent of households that have a child with disability reported that bullying was a safety concern for girls and boys with disabilities. Ten per cent of households reported that women and girls avoid certain places due to feeling unsafe (9 per cent in 2023). This was highest in South Lebanon (16 per cent) and Mount Lebanon (14 per cent).

LEGAL RESIDENCY

Legal residency rates remain low with 18 per cent of individuals over the age of 15 holding legal residency permits (20 per cent in 2023). The lowest rates of legal residency are recorded in Akkar (10 per cent) and Bekaa (15 per cent), while the highest rates were recorded in El Nabatieh (30 per cent- although a drop from 41 per cent in 2023), Beirut (28 per cent) and South Lebanon (26 per cent). At the household level, only 7 per cent of households reported that all household members above the age of 15 held legal residency permits (9 per cent in 2023) and 30 per cent had at least one member having legal residency, leaving almost three quarters (70 per cent) of households without any members holding legal residency.

COMMUNITY INTERACTIONS AND TENSIONS

Most households (60 per cent) reported that interactions with host communities were positive or very positive with 7 per cent stating that interactions were negative or very negative (5 per cent in 2023). At the governorate level, Mount

Lebanon had the highest proportion of households that reported interactions to be negative or very negative at 11 per cent.

There was a slight decrease in the proportion of households that reported there were no tensions between refugees and host communities from 66 per cent in 2023 to 59 per cent in 2024. In line with trends in previous years, competition for jobs (both lower skilled and higher skilled jobs) remained the highest reported source of tensions. Political differences and cultural differences were cited to a lower degree although highest in El Nabatiyeh compared to other areas.

BIRTH AND MARRIAGE REGISTRATION

Rates of birth registration at the level of the foreigner's registry continued to increase reaching 50 per cent in 2025, compared to 41 per cent in 2023 and 31 per cent in 2022. Rates were highest in Beirut at 79 per cent, following by Mount Lebanon at 62 per cent. Lowest rates were found in Akkar at 30 per cent. Among female headed households, the proportion of births registered with the foreigner's registry was lower than their male counterparts (42 per cent compared to 51 per cent among male headed households). As in 2023, the major barriers to completing registration beyond the Noufous level were cost (47 per cent) and being unaware of procedures (45 per cent).

Similar to birth registration rates, marriage registration also has continued an upward trend with 41 per cent of marriages that took place in Lebanon reported to be registered at the civil registry (37 per cent in 2023 and 33 per cent in 2022). However, rates in Akkar specifically, remain extremely low compared to other areas at only 15 per cent.

SHELTER

SHELTER TYPE, RENT, AND OCCUPANCY

Most households (73 per cent) continued to live in residential structures, 18 per cent in non-permanent shelters and 9 per cent in non-residential shelters. Average monthly rental costs in 2024 increased by 45 per cent nationally, reaching just over LBP 8M, as compared to around LBP 5.6M in 2023 and an 840 per cent increase in 2022. By shelter type, the largest per cent increase in rent is noted for non-permanent shelters where rent costs increased by 242 per cent. Increases in residential and non-residential shelter were found to be 39 per cent and 31 per cent, respectively. Almost half (45 per cent) of households stated that

they were late paying their rent (50 per cent in 2023), with the majority being in El Nabatieh (67 per cent) and Akkar (61 per cent).

SHELTER CONDITIONS

Similarly to previous years, over half (52 per cent) of Syrian refugee households were living in shelters that were overcrowded, had conditions below humanitarian standards, and/or were in danger of collapse. Nineteen per cent of households were living in overcrowded conditions, defined as less than 4.5 m²/person (compared to 16 per cent in 2023). Households living in non-permanent shelters had the highest proportion of overcrowded conditions (28 per cent), followed by non-residential shelters (25 per cent) and residential shelters (16 per cent). The highest rates of overcrowding were found in Baalbek Hermel (25 per cent), Mount Lebanon (24 per cent) and Bekaa (24 per cent). A total of 19 per cent of households were living in shelters that were in danger of collapse (15 per cent in 2023), with the highest rates in South Lebanon (33 per cent) and El Nabatieh (30 per cent). Most non-permanent shelters were in substandard condition (86 per cent), a much higher rate than those of other shelter types (30 per cent in non-residential and 9 per cent in residential).

HEALTH

DEMAND FOR AND ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Thirteen per cent of individuals had a health problem that required access to health care in the last three months (17 per cent in 2023 and 18 per cent in 2022). Of those, 79 per cent were able to access the care needed (83 per cent in 2023). Ability to access needed care different by region with lowest rates in Beirut where only 44 per cent of individuals in need of healthcare reported being able to access it. This is followed by Mount Lebanon at 65 per cent. Highest rates for access are noted in Akkar (95 per cent) and North Lebanon (91 per cent). These trends are in line with trends noted in previous years. Access rates in Beirut dropped substantially from 70 per cent in 2023.

Among those who needed Primary Health Care (PHC), the most cited needs were access to medications (40 per cent) and a consultation for non-communicable diseases (37 per cent). Other needs included consultations on acute conditions (15 per cent) and ante-natal or post-natal services (6 per cent).

Among those who needed Secondary Health Care (SHC), the most cited need was hospital-based laboratory or diagnostic procedure (49 per cent). Other needs

included elective or non-life saving surgery (23 per cent), emergency life-saving surgery including trauma care (14 per cent), other specialized services (9 per cent) and safe delivery services (7 per cent).

Thirty-Seven per cent of households reported that they faced challenges in accessing primary health care. For those that faced challenges, cost was the main barrier, including cost of the treatment (26 per cent), cost of consultations (26 per cent) and transportation costs (7 per cent). A smaller proportion cited availability of needed services as a barrier. Similarly, for SHC, 32 per cent of households reported facing barriers to accessing needed SHC which mainly included costs of treatment (23 per cent) and cost of consultations (19 per cent)

The share of households that reported knowing where to access emergency medical care or services remained similar to 2023 at 86 per cent. The regions with the highest proportion of households that knew where to access emergency case were South Lebanon (98 per cent), El Nabatieh (96 per cent) and Akkar (95 per cent). Beirut had the lowest proportion of households who knew where to access services (75 per cent). In Bekaa, the share of households who knew where to access emergency services decreased by 81 per cent from 97 per cent in 2023.

MEDICATION BARRIERS AND COPING MECHANISMS

Over half of the households (58 per cent) reported that they needed medication. Of those, 85 per cent were able to access the medications needed with minimal variations by region, ranging from 92 per cent in Akkar to 81 per cent in Beirut. For those unable to access the medication needed, the main barriers cited were the cost of the medication (91 per cent) and inability to afford a doctor's visit cost for a prescription (47 per cent). A small proportion of households reported that the medication needed was not available (11 per cent). To cope with not accessing medication, households were adopting certain coping strategies. In comparison to 2023, a lower proportion of households reporting switching to substitutes (37 per cent compared to 43 per cent in 2023). A higher share of households reported borrowing money in 2024 as compared to 2023 (41 per cent versus 26 per cent in 2023), reducing non-medical expenses (5 per cent compared to 6 per cent in 2023) and acquiring medication outside of Lebanon (12 per cent compared to 6 per cent in 2023).

WOMEN AND CHILDREN'S HEALTH

The rate of women who reported receiving at least four antenatal care visits during their pregnancy remained stable since 2023, at 54 per cent. This was lowest in the Bekaa (46 per cent) and highest in Akkar (67 per cent). For post-natal care, three quarters of women (74 per cent) reported that they received post-natal care during the first 24 hours after birth, 11 per cent between 48 and 72 hours after birth, 1 per cent between 2 weeks after birth and 2 per cent up to six weeks after birth.

The percentage of women aged 15 to 45 that are not single and perceived they needed contraceptives for family planning was 10 per cent (13 per cent in 2023) of which 65 per cent were able to access the needed contraceptives. Women were mainly seeking family planning and contraceptives from PHCC, PSU, dispensaries & SDCs (33 per cent), private clinics (35 per cent) and pharmacies (26 per cent).

The share of refugee children under the age of two who suffered from at least one disease in the two weeks prior to the survey has decreased to 25 per cent from 32 per cent in 2023. Of those who were sick, 53 per cent suffered from diarrhea, 17 per cent from severe diarrhea and 17 per cent from respiratory infections.

ENERGY

ELECTRICITY

Nationally, 96 per cent of households had a connection to an electricity source as compared to 91 per cent in 2023. A total of 86 per cent of households had access to the grid (73 per cent in 2023). Households living in non-permanent shelters reported lower connection rates to the grid (67 per cent) compared to the other shelter types (84 per cent in non-residential and 91 per cent in residential shelters). Similar to 2023, Baalbek Hermel had the lowest access to the national grid, at 49 per cent (although up from 39 per cent in 2023).

Access to diesel generators increased, from 50 per cent in 2023 to 58 per cent in 2024. Connection to diesel generators varied significantly per governorate, ranging from 81 per cent in Beirut and over 70 per cent in El Nabatieh, Mount Lebanon, North and South Lebanon to only 20 per cent in Baalbek Hermel and 28 per cent in Bekaa. The use of solar panels increased to 10 per cent in 2024, compared to 6 per cent in 2023 and less than 2 per cent in previous years. In

Baalbek Hermel, solar panels were reported at an extensively higher rate of 45 per cent.

On average, 8 hours of power outage per day were reported (compared to 10 hours in 2023, 15 hours in 2022 and 6.5 hours in 2021). On average, the grid supplied 6 hours of electricity per day, similar to 2023 and up from 3 hours in 2022. Private generators supplied on average 14 hours of electricity per day (13 hours in 2023 and 9 hours in 2022). Power outages remained longest still in Akkar (12 hours) and Baalbek Hermel (12 hours). Among the 10 per cent of households who reported relying on solar panels, this source was providing around 18 hours of electricity per day.

ENERGY SOURCES FOR COOKING AND HEATING

The main energy source used for cooking remained gas, as reported by 99 per cent of households. A total of 5 per cent of households reported relying on wood to cook. Reliance on wood was highest in Akkar at 26 per cent, although down from 43 per cent in 2023.

When asked about the previous winter, 32 per cent of households stated that they did not have any source of heating (30 per cent in 2023). This was highest in Beirut (70 per cent) and North Lebanon (58 per cent). A higher proportion of families in residential shelters reported not having any heating source (37 per cent) compared to those in non-residential (27 per cent) and non-permanent shelters (13 per cent). Wood was the most cited heating source at 32 per cent while 21 per cent of households relied on gas and 12 per cent on diesel.

FOOD SECURITY

Food security among Syrian refugees in Lebanon has shown a slight improvement in 2024. The proportion of food-insecure households declined to 31 per cent, compared to 42 per cent in 2023. Severe food insecurity, while remaining relatively low, also decreased from 2.6 per cent in 2023 to 1.2 per cent in 2024. Additionally, 39 per cent of households recorded inadequate food consumption scores—indicative of poor or borderline dietary diversity and meal adequacy—marking an improvement from 51 per cent in the previous year.

Despite this overall progress, regional disparities persist. Food insecurity remains most prevalent in Bekaa (47 per cent), Baalbek-El Hermel (40 per cent), and Akkar (37 per cent), where households continue to face significant challenges in meeting their food needs. Conversely, Mount Lebanon (18 per cent) and Beirut

(22 per cent) report comparatively lower levels of food insecurity. In terms of food consumption, Bekaa recorded the highest proportion of refugee households with inadequate food consumption (53 per cent), followed by North Lebanon (48 per cent).

The financial burden of food expenditure remains considerable, with 47 per cent of households allocating more than half of their total income to food, thereby constraining their ability to meet other essential non-food needs. However, this represents a decline from 54 per cent in 2023, indicating a reduction in the proportion of households facing extreme food expenditure pressures. The highest food expenditure shares were recorded in Akkar (58 per cent), Baalbek-El Hermel (58 per cent), and Bekaa (52 per cent). Furthermore, Akkar and Baalbek-El Hermel reported the highest percentage of refugee households spending over 75 percent of their total expenditures on food (14 per cent), in stark contrast to Mount Lebanon and El Nabatieh, where only 3 per cent of households faced similar spending patterns.

COPING STRATEGIES

To cope with food insecurity, 90 percent of Syrian refugee households resorted to food-based coping strategies. The most reported strategies include consuming less preferred and lower-cost food (88 per cent), borrowing food or seeking assistance from friends and relatives (48 per cent), reducing meal portion sizes (53 per cent) and meal frequency (53 per cent), and adults limiting their own consumption to prioritize children's food intake (28 per cent). In 2024, 30 per cent of Syrian refugee households recorded a Reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI) score above 19, indicating a high reliance on food-based coping strategies. However, this represents a five-percentage point decrease from the 35 percent reported in 2023. The highest proportion of refugee households not employing any food-based coping strategies was observed in Mount Lebanon (22 per cent), followed by Beirut (13 per cent). In contrast, reliance on these strategies was most widespread in El Nabatieh, Akkar, North Lebanon, and South Lebanon, where over 95 per cent of households adopted them.

In addition to food-based coping mechanisms, 83 per cent of households reported applying livelihood-based coping strategies in 2024, a slight decrease from the 89 percent in 2023. The highest proportion of refugee households not employing any asset depletion coping strategies was recorded in Beirut (26 per cent) and Mount Lebanon (24 per cent). Conversely, crisis and emergency coping strategies were most prevalent in El Nabatieh (41 per cent) and Bekaa (32

per cent). At the national level, 66 per cent of refugee households reported purchasing food on credit or borrowing money, 40 per cent reduced essential health expenditures, 33 per cent sold household goods, 30 per cent spent their savings, and 26 per cent decreased spending on education.

ECONOMIC VULNERABILITY

Approximately 75 per cent of Syrian refugee households lack the economic capacity to meet their essential needs without external assistance. Even with assistance, 71 per cent of these households remain below the Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB). Additionally, 65 per cent of households were unable to meet the Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB). However, there has been a notable improvement in the economic capacity of refugee households in 2024 compared to the previous year. In 2023, 75 per cent of households were living below the SMEB without assistance, and 63 per cent were below the SMEB even with assistance. Akkar recorded the highest percentage of households living below the SMEB, at 91 per cent, followed by Baalbek El Hermel (83 per cent) and North Lebanon (72 per cent).

The level of household debt has reached concerning levels, with 89 per cent of households in debt (like 2023), carrying an average debt of 35.9 million LBP per household. Among those with debt, the average amount rises to 44.9 million LBP. El Nabatieh, Mount Lebanon, and Beirut reported the highest levels of debt, with average amounts of 56.8 million LBP, 53.8 million LBP, and 45.6 million LBP, respectively. Households primarily incur debt to purchase food (91 per cent), pay rent (56 per cent), buy medicine (33 per cent), cover health expenses (27 per cent), and acquire essential non-food items (44 per cent).

The sources of borrowing also varied, with 87 per cent of households borrowing from friends in Lebanon, 44 per cent from supermarkets, 17 per cent from landlords, and 5 per cent from pharmacies. The growing reliance on informal credit highlights a widening gap in the ability to sustain basic needs, further deepening the financial distress of refugee households.

LIVELIHOODS

The employment situation among Syrian refugees in Lebanon remains challenging, with only 41 per cent of the population employed in 2024, a slight increase from 39 per cent in 2023. Furthermore, 53 per cent of the refugee population is outside the labor force, reflecting a high dependency ratio, with

many individuals either not actively seeking work or unable to participate in the labor market.

There are notable regional disparities in employment patterns. North Lebanon and Baalbek El Hermel report the lowest employment rates, at 37 per cent and 35 per cent, respectively, indicating limited job opportunities and a larger proportion of individuals outside the labor force. In contrast, South Lebanon and Mount Lebanon have higher employment rates, at 49 per cent and 45 per cent, respectively, suggesting somewhat better labor market conditions in these areas.

The average monthly income from employment is approximately 13.5 million LBP per household in 2024, an increase from 7.8 million LBP in 2023. However, income discrepancies persist across governorates. Beirut, Mount Lebanon, and South Lebanon reported the highest household incomes, averaging around 22.4 million LBP, whereas Akkar and Baalbek El Hermel have the lowest household incomes, with averages of 4.5 million LBP and 5 million LBP, respectively.

The main sources of income reported by refugee households include ATM cards used at ATMs from UN or humanitarian organizations (19 per cent), credits or debts (15 per cent), services in the hotel and restaurant sectors (14 per cent), and agriculture (13 per cent), followed by work in construction (10 per cent). In Akkar, 66percent of households rely on ATM cards from UN or humanitarian organizations, compared to 39percent of households in Baalbek El Hermel. Refugees in Beirut and Mount Lebanon report services related to hotels and restaurants as their primary income source, with 32 per cent and 27 per cent, respectively. Finally, refugees in El Nabatieh rely on construction work as their main source of income, at 27 per cent.

In conclusion, while there have been some improvements in food security and economic conditions for Syrian refugees in Lebanon in 2024, prior to the escalation of the conflict in September 2024, significant challenges persist, particularly in terms of regional disparities. The decline in food insecurity, while encouraging, highlights ongoing struggles, especially in regions like Bekaa, Akkar, and Baalbek-El Hermel. The financial burden of food expenditure remains high, and households are heavily reliant on food-based and livelihood-based coping strategies to meet their basic needs. Economic vulnerability remains widespread, with a large proportion of households unable to meet their essential needs without external assistance. Additionally, the employment situation remains a concern, with many refugees facing limited job opportunities and low-income levels. Addressing these issues requires sustained humanitarian support and

targeted interventions to improve livelihoods, reduce economic vulnerability, and enhance access to food and basic services across all regions of Lebanon.

CHILD PROTECTION

Children around the world are routinely engaged in paid and unpaid forms of work that are not harmful to them. However, they are classified as child labourers when they are either too young to work or are involved in hazardous activities that may compromise their physical, mental, social or educational development. Article 32 (1) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) states: "States Parties recognize the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development".

Child labour is defined as a child having performed either economic activities or household chores during the last week for more than the age-specific number of hours or exposure to hazardous conditions during economic activity or household chores.

Economic activities: aged 5–11: 1 hour or more; aged 12–14: 14 hours or more; aged 15–17: 43 hours or more.

Household chores: aged 5–14: 21 hours or more; aged 15–17: 43 hours or more.

Hazardous conditions: any exposure to the following conditions during economic activity or household chores: carrying heavy loads; working with dangerous tools; exposed to dust, fumes or gas; exposed to extreme cold, heat or humidity; exposed to loud noise or vibration; required to work at heights; required to work with chemicals; exposed to other things bad for his/her health

The 2024 VASyR assessment highlights significant concerns in child protection across three critical themes: child labour, child discipline, and early marriage. Child labour remains persistent, affecting 7 per cent of children aged 5 to 17, unchanged from 2023. Economic activities primarily involve children aged 12 to 14 years, reaching 14 per cent, with higher rates among boys (9 per cent) compared to girls (5 per cent). Akkar, Bekaa, North, and South regions exhibit the highest prevalence. Additionally, child labour is more prevalent in female-headed households (10 per cent) than in male-headed ones (6 per cent).

Teaching children self-control and acceptable behavior is an integral part of child discipline in all cultures. Positive parenting practices involve providing guidance

on how to handle emotions or conflicts in manners that encourage judgment and responsibility and preserve children's self-esteem, physical and psychological integrity and dignity.

Regarding child discipline, psychological aggression was at 47 per cent in 2024, while any physical punishment was at 44 per cent. However, severe physical punishment remains unchanged at 6 per cent and only 33 per cent of children experiencing exclusively non-violent discipline. The results show that discipline methods do not vary by the gender of the child, rather they do vary based on the gender of the head of the household. Female heads of households tend to use more violent methods than their male counterpart, at 65 per cent and 54 per cent, respectively. Despite the high prevalence of violent discipline methods, 98 per cent of caregivers reported not believing in violent methods for discipline. Lastly, early marriage among adolescent girls aged 15 to 19 years continues to be a concern, with 17 per cent of girls in this age group married. Rates are particularly high in Akkar (15 per cent) and the North (13 per cent), predominantly occurring in male-headed households.

EDUCATION

Universal access to basic education and the achievement of primary education by the world's children is in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Education is a vital prerequisite for combating poverty, empowering women, protecting children from hazardous and exploitative labour and sexual exploitation, promoting human rights and democracy, protecting the environment, and influencing population growth.

To accommodate hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugee school aged children, the Government of Lebanon, with the support of the international community, runs a two-shift school system that has non-Lebanese children attending in the afternoon. Children enter primary school at age 6 and enter secondary school at age 15. There are nine grades in primary school and three grades in secondary school. In primary school, grades are referred to as year 1 to year 9. For secondary school, grades are referred to as year 10 to year 12. The school year typically runs from September of one year to June of the following year.

Participation in organized learning for children aged 3 to 5 years remains low at 19 per cent, unchanged from 2023, with notable variation based on shelter types—21 per cent participation in residential shelters compared to only 13 per cent in non-permanent shelters. At the primary education level, the net attendance rate for children aged 6 to 11 years is 59 per cent, similar to last

year's figure. However, disparities persist, particularly affecting children with disabilities, whose attendance rate is lower at 47 per cent, compared to 61 per cent among their peers without disabilities.

Secondary education sees even greater challenges, with the net attendance rate for children aged 12 to 17 years at just 19 per cent, unchanged from 2023. Attendance was higher among girls (23 per cent) compared to boys (16 per cent), with significant regional disparities; Baalbeck records the lowest rate at 14 per cent, while Beirut had the highest at 32 per cent. Among youths aged 18 to 24 years, only 10 per cent attended some form of formal education, such as university. The reasons for not attending school remain consistent throughout the years, cost of education (materials and transportation).

The gender parity indices indicate balanced participation at the primary level (index of 1), but the indices rise progressively at higher levels of education, reaching 1.13 for lower secondary and 1.44 for upper secondary. This reflects increasingly pronounced gender disparities in favour of girls at higher education levels, suggesting potential barriers affecting boys continued educational engagement.

INFANT AND YOUNG CHILD FEEDING PRACTICES

Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) practices are vital to promoting child survival, optimal growth, and development—especially in humanitarian settings like Lebanon. In accordance with WHO and UNICEF recommendations, the 2024 VASyR assessed IYCF practices among Syrian refugee households through key indicators, including breastfeeding status, complementary feeding, dietary diversity, and meal frequency. The findings offer insight into the evolving nutritional environment for young children amidst Lebanon's protracted crisis.

BREASTFEEDING PRACTICES

Breastfeeding remains a cornerstone of child nutrition and immunity. In 2024, 78 per cent of children under 24 months had ever been breastfed, which is similar to the 75 per cent reported in 2023. Likewise, 58 per cent were still receiving breastmilk, showing little variation from the 55 per cent recorded the previous year.

Among infants under 6 months, 37 per cent were exclusively breastfed, a figure broadly consistent with the 35 per cent reported in 2023. Breastfeeding practices continued to decline as children aged: 91 per cent of infants under 6 months had

ever been breastfed, while the proportion dropped to 62 per cent among children aged 16–23 months, mirroring last year’s trend.

COMPLEMENTARY FEEDING

Complementary feeding, which should begin at six months of age, remains an area of concern. In 2024, 61 per cent of infants aged 6–8 months had received complementary foods in the day preceding the survey. This marks a notable improvement from 54 per cent in 2023 and 46 per cent in 2022. Rates of complementary feeding increased with age, reaching 88 per cent among children aged 16–23 months, similar to 85 per cent in the previous year. As seen in earlier rounds, boys were more likely than girls to have received complementary feeding across age brackets.

Minimum Dietary Diversity (MDD) is a strong indicator of micronutrient adequacy. According to WHO guidelines, children aged 6–23 months should consume food from at least five out of eight defined food groups. In 2024, 19 per cent of children met this minimum, which is broadly similar to the 17 per cent in 2023.

The vast majority of children—81 per cent—did not meet the dietary diversity standard:

- 55 per cent consumed food from only 1–2 groups,
- 26 per cent from 3–4 groups, and
- 2 per cent consumed none of the food groups.

As in previous years, consumption was highest for grains, roots, and tubers, as well as dairy products, while intake of protein-rich and vitamin-dense foods—such as meats, pulses, and vitamin A-rich fruits and vegetables—remained low.

Minimum Meal Frequency (MMF) reflects whether children receive sufficient meals per day based on their age and breastfeeding status. In 2024, 9 per cent of children aged 6–23 months met the required meal frequency, similar to the 7 per cent reported in 2023. Among breastfed children, 10 per cent met the standard, while 6 per cent of non-breastfed children did, consistent with previous findings.

SANITATION

Access to adequate sanitation and hygiene remains essential to preventing the spread of disease and promoting human dignity, particularly for displaced populations living in overcrowded or informal settlements. In 2024, the VASyR

continues to highlight substantial gains in infrastructure access, while also exposing gaps in quality, privacy, and service sustainability.

Nearly all surveyed Syrian refugee households in Lebanon (97 per cent) reported access to improved sanitation facilities in 2024. This level is similar to 2023 (98 per cent), maintaining the significant improvements seen since 2021. The most used sanitation facility remains the flush or pour toilet connected to a piped sewer system, accessed by 68 per cent of the population. The second most frequently reported system is the flush/pour to septic tank at 7 per cent, followed by flush/pour to pit latrines at 11 per cent. Other types, such as pit latrines with slabs or open drains, each accounted for less than 5 per cent of usage.

The distribution of sanitation types varied slightly by gender, region, and household characteristics. Male- and female-headed households reported similar use of improved sanitation (approximately 68 per cent using sewer-connected flush/pour systems), with negligible differences in other facility types. Regionally, Beirut had the highest access to piped sewer systems (99 per cent), while Akkar had the lowest (54 per cent), where use of alternative systems such as pit latrines and septic tanks was more common. In Baalbek-El Hermel, only 29 per cent reported use of piped sewer systems, while 42 per cent relied on flush to pit latrines and 17 per cent on other basic systems. Bekaa and North governorates also exhibited more mixed facility types, with moderate use of pit latrines and protected wells for flushing.

Sanitation access among people with disabilities remained high, with 99 per cent of respondents with a disability using improved sanitation facilities. There was no substantial disparity between households with and without members with disabilities in terms of access to flush toilets, septic tanks, or pit latrines with slabs.

However, access to improved sanitation does not necessarily mean safe management of human waste. A subset of households still reported unsafe emptying and disposal practices, particularly in Baalbek-El Hermel and informal shelters, where waste is often disposed into open drains or hand-dug holes in the ground. A small share of households (about 4 per cent) in non-permanent settlements reported that their waste is discharged into the open air surrounding their shelter—a practice that poses serious health risks and qualifies as open defecation under international WASH standards.

Shared sanitation remained a challenge for privacy and protection, especially for women and girls. In non-permanent shelters, 24 per cent of toilets were shared

with another household. A higher proportion of female-headed households (22 per cent) reported sharing compared to male-headed ones (13 per cent), consistent with previous years. Shared facilities are typically less hygienic and less secure, raising protection concerns, particularly in crowded informal settlements.

HANDWASHING

With respect to hand hygiene, 86 per cent of households reported having access to a fixed handwashing facility, either inside their dwelling (82 per cent) or in the yard or plot (4 per cent). This is consistent with 2023 levels and indicates a sustained norm around household-level hand hygiene. Another 11 per cent relied on mobile handwashing options, such as a bucket, jug, or kettle. However, 3 per cent of all households lacked any handwashing facility, and this figure increased in non-residential and non-permanent shelter types, where 6 to 7 per cent had no facility in place.

Soap and water availability at handwashing locations remains a critical gap. In 2024, 10 per cent of households were observed without soap or detergent at the designated handwashing point, and 2 per cent lacked water. In non-permanent shelters, the situation was significantly worse: 24 per cent of households had no soap, and 5 per cent had no water at the handwashing station. Non-residential areas followed similar trends, with 16 per cent lacking soap and 8 per cent without water. These findings highlight persistent inequalities in hygiene infrastructure and basic supplies.

Hygiene Products

Beyond facilities, VASyR 2024 also assessed access to essential hygiene products. Among the surveyed households, 85 per cent reported having access to personal hygiene items such as shampoo, toothpaste, and body soap, a level comparable to 84 per cent in 2023. Cleaning items like bleach and detergent were available in 94 per cent of households, while only 46 per cent had access to baby care items. Disparities were again observed by shelter type, with non-permanent shelters reporting the lowest access across all hygiene categories.

Menstrual hygiene access was reported in 78 per cent of households, consistent with 77 per cent the year prior. However, affordability continues to be a barrier: 21 per cent of respondents cited high cost as the reason for not purchasing sanitary pads or other menstrual products. These trends underscore a continued need for targeted hygiene assistance and price-sensitive programming.

