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Children's rights in Lebanon

Joint report by:

The Good Shepherd Sisters

Tahaddi

Fondation Apprentis d'Auteuil International

Apprentis d'Auteuil

I. PRESENTATION OF THE AUTHORS

1. The Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, known as **Good Shepherd Sisters (GSS)**, are a worldwide Catholic congregation founded in France in 1835 and have been in Lebanon and Syria since 1893. With more than a century of experience, GSS heads impactful programmes on child protection, education, women's and families' empowerment, healthcare, mental health services, and refugee assistance. The mission of GSS revolves around advocating for dignity, healing, and resilience among the vulnerable populations particularly women, children, especially young girls, and refugees through integrated and community-oriented services.
2. **Tahaddi** is a Lebanese NGO with over 25 years of presence in the informal settlement of Hay El Gharbeh in Beirut's southern suburbs where residents often live in substandard conditions with limited basic services. With community-based approaches, Tahaddi is dedicated to providing holistic support through education, primary health care, social services, and livelihood opportunities. Its programmes serve vulnerable Lebanese families, as well as displaced, stateless, and migrant individuals.
3. Founded in 1866, **Apprentis d'Auteuil** is a Catholic charitable foundation. It supports children and young people in difficulty through programmes of care, education, training and integration in France and internationally. Apprentis d'Auteuil has had special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) since 2014 and supports its local partners in international advocacy work.
4. Based in Geneva, the **Fondation Apprentis d'Auteuil International (FAAI)** is a charitable foundation created in 2013 to support the international projects of Apprentis d'Auteuil. FAAI works with its local partners to protect, educate and integrate young people in difficulty and to support their families. With its local partners, FAAI advocates to international and national institutions in favour of children's rights, particularly those in street situations.

II. INTRODUCTION

5. This report examines the situation of children's rights in Lebanon since its last Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in 2021, with particular focus on education, mental health, healthcare, violence against children, and statelessness.

III. METHODOLOGY

6. Between 28th February 2025 and 21st March 2025, the Good Sheperd Sisters and Tahaddi conducted a total of 18 focus groups and individual interviews to gather information from children, parents, educators, and social workers. Specifically, 9 focus groups were held with children (aged 6 to 18), 5 with parents, and 4 individual interviews were conducted with 4 GSS's educators and social workers.
7. A total of 74 children (49 girls and 25 boys), including Lebanese, refugee, and stateless children, shared their views on the five key topics of this report.¹
8. The focus groups and individual interviews directly informed the findings and recommendations of this report, with direct quotes from children included throughout.

IV. REVIEW OF RECEIVED CHILD RIGHTS RECOMMENDATIONS

9. During Lebanon's previous UPR in 2021, the government received a total of 308 recommendations, 67 of which focused on children's rights. Of these, only 34 were accepted by the Lebanese authorities. Numerous States expressed concerns about violence against children, urging Lebanon to take action on issues such as the involvement of children in armed conflict, child labour, child marriage, gender-based violence, corporal punishment, the age of criminal responsibility, and child trafficking. Emphasis was also placed on the right to identity and nationality, as well as on children's rights to health and education. These recommendations reflect strong international concern over Lebanon's commitment to safeguard the rights and wellbeing of children, especially those affected by displacement, conflict, or systemic exclusion.
10. Most of the noted recommendations addressed sensitive issues requiring the ratification of key international instruments, comprehensive legislative, policy reforms, or challenging gender norms, particularly in the areas of statelessness, child marriage, and violence. This reflects a significant gap in the government's political will to undertake the robust structural changes needed to protect and advance children's rights in these critical areas. Although Lebanon is a party to key international human rights treaties, including the CRC², which impose binding obligations to uphold children's rights, implementation and enforcement

¹ To facilitate children participation, a variety of child-sensitive methods were used in addition to oral discussions. The use of images helped children express their views comfortably, especially when addressing sensitive topics such as violence and child marriage. Where relevant, gender-sensitive arrangements were applied. Girls were interviewed separately when discussing violence, while mixed-gender groups of children were used for other topics. Interviews with parents, educators and social workers provided insights into systemic barriers to children's access to rights and essential services.

² Convention on the Rights of the Child

remain insufficient.

V. NATIONAL CONTEXT: THE SITUATION OF CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IN LEBANON

11. Since 2021, the country has witnessed a series of overlapping crises, including more recently, intensified cross-border hostilities. The economic and political turmoil has led to disrupted access to basic services like food, healthcare, and education, along with widespread human rights violations. UNICEF's 2025 report exposes that children in Lebanon are bearing the profound toll of the conflict that escalated across the country in 2024. The conflict has massively exacerbated the preexisting crisis, with entire communities displaced and civilian infrastructures damaged or destroyed.³ In 2024 alone, conflict and violence triggered nearly 1.1 million displacement movements, leaving 985,000 people internally displaced by the end of the year.⁴ More than 103,000 people remained internally displaced in Lebanon as of January 2025, with 70% of them being children and women.⁵ According to UNICEF, 1.3 million children in Lebanon are in need of humanitarian assistance.⁶ Even before the Beirut port explosion on 4 August 2020 and the recent conflict, many families in Lebanon were already struggling to meet their basic needs due to the economic crisis and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which pushed many into poverty. Despite a ceasefire agreement signed in November 2024, the situation remains tense.

A. CHILDREN'S RIGHT TO EDUCATION

12. In the third cycle of the UPR, Lebanon received 4 recommendations on education urging efforts to ensure access to quality education for children in the most vulnerable situations, such as children of migrant workers, refugee children and children with disabilities.
13. We observe that since 2021 access to education for children has significantly deteriorated due to the deepening social and economic crisis, compounded by ongoing conflict and instability. Some schools were destroyed or severely damaged, and hundreds more

³ UNICEF Lebanon Country Office's report, <https://www.unicef.org/lebanon/media/12731/file/CFRA-UNICEF-Lebanon-2025-Report-EN.pdf.pdf>

⁴ International displacement monitoring centre <https://www.internal-displacement.org/spotlights/lebanon-escalating-conflict-triggers-record-displacement/>

⁵ UNICEF, Lebanon Humanitarian Situation Report No. 1 (2025) <https://www.unicef.org/media/168806/file/Lebanon-Humanitarian-SitRep-15-February-2025.pdf.pdf#:~:text=More%20than%20103%2C000%20people%20remained%20internally%20displaced,new%20arrivals%20from%20Syria%20since%20December%202024.>

⁶ UNICEF, Lebanon Humanitarian Situation Report No. 2 (2025) <https://www.unicef.org/lebanon/media/12861/file/Lebanon%20Humanitarian%20Situation%20Report%20#13%20EN.pdf>

became shelters for some of the 1.3 million people forced to flee their homes during the conflict ⁷. In the south, up to 20,000 children have experienced significant disruptions to their education. Hostilities have exacerbated a pre-existing education crisis. Even prior to the escalation of the conflict, more than 700,000 children were already out of school.⁸

14. GSS focus group discussions revealed that financial constraints often force families to choose between public and private schooling, with families in precarious situations unable to afford school fees. Public schools, while accessible, are described by many children and parents as offering lower-quality education due to overcrowded classrooms, lack of teaching materials and deteriorating infrastructure. In addition, poor working conditions and inadequate salaries lead to widespread teachers' absenteeism, strikes and frequent class interruptions. Many children, particularly from low-income and refugee households, fall behind or drop out from school.
15. The economic hardship is forcing many qualified teachers to seek better opportunities abroad, thus contributing to a brain drain that further exacerbates the shortage of skilled teachers and undermines the quality and stability of the education system. ⁹
16. Furthermore, we note that children with disabilities often lack the specific support they need to access education, and harassment towards them is a frequent issue. Access to specialised services, such as speech and psychomotor therapy or psychological support is too expensive, making them inaccessible to many children in need.

"If my parents could afford it, I would actually prefer to go to a private school and I used to attend a private school, but when the fees went up, my parents had to enrol me in a public school since we have not learned that much this year in the public school; the teachers are not patient with us and told us they are not paid enough to do this work." [16-years-old Lebanese girl]

17. Safety concerns were also frequently raised during focus group discussions, with some children feeling unsafe while walking to school. The conflict has led to repeated school closures, explosions, airstrikes, and accidents within school premises, all of which have severely disrupted the education system. Insecurity has deeply threatened children's right to education, leaving many in a constant state of fear and uncertainty. Exacerbating these challenges are the profound effects on children's mental health and wellbeing. Children emphasise the importance of education for their future and express a desire for a more inclusive, supportive, and safe learning environment.

⁷ UNICEF Lebanon Country Office's report, <https://www.unicef.org/lebanon/media/12731/file/CFRA-UNICEF-Lebanon-2025-Report-EN.pdf.pdf>

⁸ UNICEF Lebanon <https://www.unicef.org/mena/media/24811/file/Caught%20in%20cross%20fire%20EN%20.pdf>

⁹ <https://www.executive-magazine.com/special-report/the-critical-future-of-lebanons-teacher-supply-chain>

"Our school was closed several times, particularly during the recent war. We were at home for over 2 weeks. Sometimes we studied online, and sometimes we did not" [7-years-old, Lebanese boy]

"My children are constantly anxious, and they didn't want to go to school since they were always scared of the airstrikes" [Mother, Lebanon]

18. The most recent official figure for Lebanon's government expenditure on education is 1.7% of GDP in 2020, according to the World Bank, placing it among the lowest globally.¹⁰ The current situation of the country suggests that this allocation has likely decreased in recent years and underscores the pressing need for Lebanon to prioritise education within its national budget to ensure sustainable and equitable access to quality education for all children¹¹.

Access to education for refugee children:

19. As of the end of 2024, Lebanon hosted 758,651 registered refugees, the vast majority from Syria, making it the country with the highest number of refugees per capita globally.¹² Among them are nearly 470,000 registered Syrian refugee children and youth aged 3 to 23 who continue to face significant barriers in accessing both formal and non-formal education.¹³

20. We stress that refugee children in Lebanon face persistent difficulties in securing access to education. Barriers to enrolment include the lack of necessary documentation, a requirement for which many families cannot comply, or expensive fees that most of them cannot afford. This often results in exclusion from public schools and some children being out of school for many years, denied the opportunity to learn and develop essential skills. According to UNICEF, more than 42,000 non-Lebanese children are excluded from formal education due to documentation issues¹⁴.

21. Even when enrolled, refugee children often experience segregation, as some of them

¹⁰ World bank group data <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.XPD.TOTL.GD.ZS>

¹¹ The Education 2030 Framework for Action, developed by UNESCO and a broad coalition of stakeholders, encourages countries to allocate at least 4% to 6% of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to education. This benchmark plays a crucial role in supporting the realisation of SDG 4, particularly in ensuring access to quality education for all. Underinvestment in education has a significant direct impact on the quality of teaching and learning, contributing to overcrowded classrooms, underpaid teachers, inadequate infrastructures and frequent disruptions (UNESCO Institute for Statistics https://tcq.uis.unesco.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2021/09/metadata-ffa-1_a.gdp_.pdf)

¹² <https://www.unhcr.org/where-we-work/countries/lebanon>

¹³ <https://www.unhcr.org/lb/what-we-do/education>

¹⁴ UNICEF, Lebanon Humanitarian Situation Report No. 2 (2025)

<https://www.unicef.org/lebanon/media/12861/file/Lebanon%20Humanitarian%20Situation%20Report%20#13%20EN.pdf>

attend school at different times of the day compared to other children, thus contributing to a sense of marginalisation, inequality and less opportunity of integration into the host community. Furthermore, refugee children report widespread discrimination, both from teachers and peers, including bullying, harassment and stigma based on language difficulties and national identity. The lack of adequate materials and the poor infrastructure conditions in the classrooms further exacerbate the situation. Despite these numerous obstacles, they express a strong desire to learn and to be treated equally, calling for policies that enable all children, regardless of nationality, to receive quality education.

"I have not gone to school in five years because I have some missing papers and I would like to learn new languages so I can visit my brother in Germany." [15-years-old refugee girl]

We recommend to:

- Improve the quality of education by increasing the public investment for the public school system, including for qualified teachers, adequate infrastructures and quality curricula, while eliminating hidden school costs to ensure equitable access for all children.
- Ensure inclusive and equitable access to quality public education for refugee children by removing administrative barriers to enrolment and ending separate school shifts, in order to promote integrated, equitable, and supportive learning environments.

B. VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

22. In the previous UPR cycle, Lebanon received 38 recommendations focusing on violence and the protection of children. These included calls to end all forms of violence against children, eliminate child labour and child trafficking, prevent early and forced marriage, and enhance access to legal support for the victims. Countries also urged Lebanon to ratify the OPAC¹⁵ and to criminalise practices such as domestic violence, marital rape, and sexual harassment. The recommendations highlighted systemic issues such as inadequate child protection laws, and the need to amend Law No. 422 of 2002 on the protection of minors in conflict with the law, in order to raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility in compliance with international standards. While some recommendations were supported, many related to legal reforms, especially on child marriage and gender-based violence, were only noted.
23. Despite the existence of legal provisions and national child protection strategies, such as the 2020-2027 Strategic Plan for the Protection of Women and Children, implementation

¹⁵ Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict

remains fragmented and ineffective.

24. Since the last UPR, children in Lebanon continue to face alarming levels of violence. The conflict in Lebanon has a devastating impact on children and vulnerable communities. Even before the recent intensification of violence, many families were already struggling under the weight of overlapping crises, most notably a severe economic collapse that drove poverty rates to unprecedented levels. The escalation of hostilities since September 2024 have further destabilised children's lives, causing serious physical injuries and lasting psychological trauma. More than 310 children have been killed and over 1,500 injured, with an average of more than three children killed daily during the deadliest periods.¹⁶
25. We note with serious concern the persistence of multiple forms of violence against children in Lebanon, affecting their safety and wellbeing in homes, schools and community settings.

Child marriage

26. Child marriage remains a persistent and deeply rooted issue, disproportionately affecting girls from refugee communities and economically disadvantaged Lebanese households. We deplore a marked increase in its prevalence in recent years, driven by worsening economic hardship, displacement, and gender inequality. Families often view early marriage as a coping strategy to reduce financial pressure. However, this harmful practice severely undermines girls' rights, exposing them to early pregnancy, school dropout, social isolation, and a heightened risk of intimate partner violence.
27. There is a lack of recent official data on child marriage in Lebanon. The most recent available national statistics from 2015–2016 indicate that 6% of women aged 20 to 24 were married before the age of 18. However, this data certainly does not reflect current realities, especially considering the socio-economic deterioration and its disproportionate impact on refugee and other vulnerable communities.¹⁷
28. Lebanon currently lacks a unified national minimum age of marriage. Each religious group applies its own personal status laws, some of which allow marriage as early as 14. This legal fragmentation enables child marriage to persist with impunity and is inconsistent with Lebanon's international obligations under the CRC¹⁸ and CEDAW¹⁹. Although a draft law proposing to set the minimum legal age of marriage at 18 has been under consideration

¹⁶ UNICEF <https://www.unicef.org/lebanon/media/12731/file/CFRA-UNICEF-Lebanon-2025-Report-EN.pdf.pdf>

¹⁷ UNICEF database portal, statistics from 2016

https://data.unicef.org/resources/data_explorer/unicef_f/?ag=UNICEF&df=GLOBAL_DATAFLOW&ver=1.0&dq=LBN.PT_F_20-24_MRD_U18.&startPeriod=1970&endPeriod=2025

¹⁸ Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Lebanon ratified it on May 14, 1991.

¹⁹ [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women](#) (CEDAW). Lebanon ratified it on April 16, 1997.

within the Lebanese Parliament since 2017, it has yet to be passed.²⁰ The prevalent cultural norms, the resistance from religious authorities and the absence of political consensus continue to delay this legislative reform.²¹

Sexual abuse, harassment, domestic violence and bullying

29. Children in Lebanon continue to be exposed to other forms of violence such as sexual abuse, domestic violence, bullying, and harassment with limited access to protection and redress mechanisms. We are deeply alarmed by persistent reports of sexual violence and abuse against children, often perpetrated by individuals within their own families or communities. The victims, particularly girls, frequently face blame, social stigma, and fear of reprisals, which discourage them from reporting and seeking help. The absence of accessible, confidential child-friendly reporting mechanisms, coupled with inadequate survivor-centred services and weak judicial enforcement, contributes to a culture of impunity and causes further trauma.
30. Gender-based insecurity is a recurring concern, particularly for girls, as they feel unsafe in public spaces, especially due to threats of robbery, harassment, and sexual violence. Physical and emotional domestic violence remains also widespread. Children are exposed to physical and psychological violence and some of them are internalising and accepting this abuse as a form of discipline, while expressing deep frustration and helplessness. This normalisation of harmful practices against children constitutes a critical barrier to child protection and we observe an urgent need to strengthen prevention, reporting, and accountability mechanisms within families and communities.

"My father frequently beats me, and once my leg was badly bruised, which made me suffer a lot. I also watched my siblings get beaten up, but I was unable to do anything. I want to punch my father so that he will feel the pain we experience." [12-year-old girl]

31. Moreover, the school environment, which should function as a protective space, is frequently marked by bullying, peer violence, and exclusion. Refugee and marginalised children are particularly vulnerable and no longer view school as a safe space. School-based psychosocial services, child protection mechanisms, and teacher training on violence prevention remain critically insufficient. Despite widespread concerns, schools often lack psychologists or trained staff to address violence and trauma.

²⁰ Girls not bride <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/learning-resources/child-marriage-atlas/regions-and-countries/lebanon/>

²¹ <https://equalitynow.org/news-and-insights/parliament-to-consider-landmark-draft-law-that-aims-to-prevent-child-marriage-in-lebanon/>

"One of my safest places is no longer school since there has been a lot of bullying."

[Lebanese girl]

32. Structural obstacles continue to restrict access to protection and justice such as legal costs, corruption, lack of awareness, coupled with lack of trust in the public system, widely perceived as inaccessible or ineffective. While some services are available through the Ministry of Social Affairs, no dedicated national hotline for child protection currently exists. In this vacuum, civil society organisations are playing a crucial but insufficient role in providing emergency assistance and specialised support.

Child labour

33. The economic crisis and the absence of effective social protection mechanisms have led to a visible increase in child labour. Children, particularly from refugee communities, are increasingly engaged in informal, exploitative, or hazardous work. Common activities include street vending, supermarket assistance, garage apprenticeships, and scavenging recyclables from garbage containers, a phenomenon locally referred to as *"Awlad al-Hawiyat"* ("Container's Children"). By December 2023, 16% of families resorted to sending children to work, with Syrian refugee families particularly affected²².

34. Both Lebanese and refugee children are being pushed into child labour, some even compelled to abandon school to contribute to household income. While boys are typically engaged in paid labour outside home, girls frequently undertake unpaid domestic work or care responsibilities. This worrying trend not only jeopardizes children's education and development but also reinforces gender inequality and exploitation. A 10-year-old Lebanese girl that was consulted, described how her siblings are unable to attend school and are forced to scavenge for recyclables to support the family. Many children expressed a strong desire to continue their education and viewed school as a pathway to a better life.

"My dad told my brother that learning a profession is more important than school because it will help him earn money." [Refugee boy]

We recommend to:

- Adopt a national law prohibiting child marriage with the establishment of the minimum legal age of marriage at 18, in line with international standards, for all religious groups without exceptions.

²² UNICEF <https://www.unicef.org/mena/media/24811/file/Caught%20in%20cross%20fire%20EN%20.pdf>

- Develop and fund an effective government-run national child protection hotline staffed by trained professionals and integrated with referral systems to shelters and child-friendly legal aid services.

C. CHILDREN'S RIGHT TO MENTAL HEALTH

35. In the previous UPR cycle, Lebanon did not receive any recommendations specifically addressing the mental health of children. However, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, in its 2017 concluding observations, expressed serious concern over the limited availability and quality of mental health services for children and called for a strengthened mental health system. The absence of UPR recommendations on this critical issue represents a significant gap, especially given the growing mental health needs of children across the country.
36. Despite some promising initiatives by the Ministry of Public Health, such as the launch of the National Mental Health Strategy for Lebanon (2024–2030) in collaboration with the World Health Organization²³ and the 'Heal through Play' project implemented with UNICEF to provide vulnerable children with safe spaces to play and return to a sense of normalcy²⁴, systemic barriers remain. Stigma, lack of integrated mental health care and ongoing crises, are fuelling trauma faster than current interventions can address, leaving major challenges unresolved.
37. Children in Lebanon face significant psychological distress due to cumulative crises, while access to appropriate mental health care remains limited. The effects of armed conflict, economic collapse, displacement, and the aftermath of the Beirut port explosion have contributed to a rise in anxiety, depression, and trauma among children, underscoring the urgent need for a comprehensive, child-centred approach to mental health services and support. In October 2024, 88,400 children in Lebanon were identified as urgently requiring mental health support.²⁵ In January 2025, a UNICEF survey found that 72% of caregivers reported their children were anxious or nervous during the war, while 62% reported signs of depression or sadness²⁶.

²³ [https://www.moph.gov.lb/userfiles/files/National%20Mental%20Health%20Strategy%20For%20Lebanon%20\(2024%20-%202030\).pdf](https://www.moph.gov.lb/userfiles/files/National%20Mental%20Health%20Strategy%20For%20Lebanon%20(2024%20-%202030).pdf)

²⁴ <https://www.unicef.org/lebanon/press-releases/ministry-public-health-launch-unicef-danish-government-and-lego-foundation-heal>

²⁵ Figures based on assessments conducted by humanitarian organisation World Vision in October 2024 <https://www.wvi.org/newsroom/middle-east-crisis-response/escalating-hostilities-lebanon-having-dire-impact-childrens>

²⁶ UNICEF: Decline in children's mental health, nutrition and education after the war <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/decline-childrens-mental-health-nutrition-and-education-after-war-lebanon-unicef>

38. We observe ongoing fear among children linked to the threat of war, war-related trauma, concern for the safety of their families and uncertainty regarding the future. In recent years, protection concerns have significantly increased, while access to essential services has declined. Children's sense of safety has been severely compromised, especially in conflict-affected areas. Many of the children report not feeling safe, especially those who have been exposed to bombings and airstrikes while at school or in their communities. Children are increasingly exposed to daily stressors such as disrupted education, collapsing infrastructure, the transmission of parental distress, poverty, food insecurity, displacement, and various forms of violence, all of which significantly affect their mental health.
39. We stress that mental health and psychosocial support services in schools remain largely absent, particularly in the public sector. Most schools lack the financial resources to provide adequate services, while recreational and awareness-raising activities are often deprioritised. The high cost of private mental health services poses a significant barrier to access, leaving many children without the support they need, especially those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.
40. Children also report experiencing significant emotional stress due to academic pressure. The education system was consistently cited as a major source of anxiety, compounded by limited access to sports and extracurricular activities, which remain unaffordable for many families. Reports of bullying further contribute to a sense of insecurity within the school environment, with some children noting that such incidents are not effectively addressed by school authorities.
41. In addition, public services have been weakened by budget constraints, and the closure of mental health wards in public hospitals has further reduced access. While some support is offered by NGOs and international agencies, these remain fragmented and do not reach all affected children. Moreover, awareness of available services is low, and many children do not seek help due to stigma associated with mental health and psychological support.

"No one is happy nowadays; there is a lot of pressure on us at school and outside. We are always thinking if we will wake up one day and the war will resurface or if in the future, we will find a job that can help us support our parents financially." [Girl, Lebanon]

42. There is a clear need to ensure safe spaces where all children could speak freely and receive support, in addition to regular access to psychologists, social workers, and other mental health professionals within educational and community settings. Awareness-raising initiatives are also needed to reduce stigma and normalise mental health discussions among youth. Community-based psychosocial services are currently insufficient and unequally distributed. Although some centres offer holistic support, their

limited capacity means many children do not receive adequate assistance. In the absence of equitable school-based services, these community services are essential but underfunded and overstretched, leaving critical gaps in the mental health care system for children.

"There must be a psychologist, social worker, and speech therapist in every school to assist students on a regular basis and not just in cases of crisis. I think that psychologists can stop bullying in schools and make us speak without fear." [Girl, Lebanon]

We recommend to:

- Prioritise the integration and expansion of recreational and extracurricular activities within schools and communities by allocating adequate funding and resources to ensure equitable access for all children, thereby promoting their self-expression, stress relief, and emotional well-being.
- Ensure the systematic presence of accessible mental health and psychosocial support services in all schools, including public institutions, with a proportionate number of professionals to the student population to guarantee equitable access and adequate support for all children.

D. CHILDREN'S RIGHT TO HEALTH

43. During the last UPR cycle, Lebanon received four recommendations concerning the right to health. These mainly called on the government of Lebanon to ensure equitable access to healthcare services for all, including vulnerable groups such as women, children, and persons with disabilities. In recent years, the lack of implementation of existing disability rights legislation, particularly Law 220/2000, alongside the absence of an updated national disability strategy, remain a serious concern. Although Lebanon signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2007 and Parliament approved its ratification in March 2022, followed by a decree in June 2023, the formal ratification process remains incomplete.²⁷
44. The recent conflict has had a severe impact on the delivery of health services, particularly in the south of the country. 10 primary healthcare centres (PHCs) and 17 dispensaries were reported partially or fully closed, disrupting access to essential care. More than 10,000 people, including 4,000 children, have been left without access to basic health services such as immunizations, paediatric and maternal healthcare. Over 16,000 children under five, 17,000 adolescent girls, and 10,000 women living in affected areas face

²⁷The Lebanese centre for policy studies <https://www.lcps-lebanon.org/en/articles/details/4879/reform-monitor-%7C-status-review-of-disability-rights-in-lebanon>

restricted access to early childhood development and nutritional services.²⁸ The disruption of these services puts children at heightened risk of preventable health issues and long-term consequences for their development.²⁹ Access to public healthcare continues to decline across the country, not only due to the conflict but also as a result of financial constraints, energy shortages, and critical gaps in medical supplies and human resources. Damage to health infrastructure has further heightened children's vulnerability.³⁰

45. GSS notes with concern the inability of the healthcare system to respond to children's needs and the persistent barriers children face in accessing adequate healthcare services in Lebanon. In recent years, both public and private healthcare systems face severe challenges. Public hospitals are underfunded, understaffed, and often described as unhygienic and lacking critical infrastructure, forcing families to resort to costly private care. Many parents are unable to afford even emergency services for their children, resorting to delaying needed treatment, using non-prescribed alternatives, taking on significant debts or seeking assistance from NGOs. Those coming from low-income backgrounds, refugee communities, and informal workers who lack social security coverage, are disproportionately affected. At the same time, widespread shortages in medications and delays in care, particularly in dispensaries and primary health centres, have reduced confidence in the health system and access is often limited by complex administrative procedures or prioritisation criteria.

"Public hospitals and dispensaries are not qualified enough and don't have all services. If you enter a public hospital with a problem, you will exit it with 100 problems." [Child, Lebanon]

We recommend:

- Strengthen the public healthcare system by increasing investments in infrastructure, ensuring the free provision of essential medicines and services, and implementing universal health coverage for all children to guarantee equitable access to quality healthcare and reduce the financial burden on families.

²⁸ UNICEF Lebanon <https://www.unicef.org/lebanon/media/12731/file/CFRA-UNICEF-Lebanon-2025-Report-EN.pdf.pdf>

²⁹ UNICEF Lebanon, April 2024
<https://www.unicef.org/mena/media/24811/file/Caught%20in%20cross%20fire%20EN%20.pdf>

³⁰ UNICEF Lebanon <https://www.unicef.org/lebanon/media/12731/file/CFRA-UNICEF-Lebanon-2025-Report-EN.pdf.pdf>

E. STATELESSNESS

46. During the previous UPR cycle, Lebanon received 11 recommendations addressing the issue of statelessness. While one recommendation on ensuring access to education regardless of nationality or immigration status was accepted, all the remaining recommendations were noted. These primarily focused on amending the nationality law to ensure gender equality in the transmission of nationality from mothers to their children and spouses, a key legal gap contributing to the risk of statelessness. Recommending States also urged Lebanon to repeal or reform outdated nationality legislation, reduce and prevent statelessness. It is concerning that Lebanon has not committed to implementing these critical reforms, which are essential to addressing systemic discrimination and safeguarding the rights of all children at risk of statelessness. No tangible progress has been made in guaranteeing every child's right to a nationality, as enshrined in Article 7 of the CRC³¹. Legal and policy developments have either stalled or risk reversing existing protections, placing children at even greater risk of exclusion, marginalisation, and denial of basic rights. This issue remains overlooked and underreported, demanding urgent government attention and structural reform.
47. Statelessness in Lebanon remains a deeply rooted and intergenerational issue, exacerbated by the Lebanese nationality law (Decree No. 15 of 1925) which contains gender discriminatory provisions that prohibit Lebanese women to pass their nationality to their husbands and children on equal grounds with men. Lebanon is one of the 24 countries worldwide that deny women equal rights in passing nationality to their children, with a significant proportion of stateless children born to Lebanese mothers. The absence of effective legal safeguards to prevent childhood statelessness, coupled with gaps in birth registration coverage, further increases children's vulnerability to this issue. Statelessness also affects children born to refugee parents, particularly among Syrian and Palestinian populations. The situation is compounded by Lebanon's non-accession to the 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, and the absence of a statelessness determination and protection framework.
48. We note with serious concern that the civil registration framework in Lebanon presents significant barriers to the realisation of children's right to legal identity. Birth registration is subject to strict and tight deadlines, within 30 days to avoid fines and within one year with limited penalties. The administrative process is widely reported to be costly, complex, and inaccessible, with legal procedures requiring resources beyond the means of most

³¹ Convention on the Rights of the Child

affected families.

49. The country lacks a dedicated mechanism to identify stateless persons, and no official data on stateless populations is collected. As a result, stateless children remain invisible in national systems and policies. We deplore the lifelong impact of statelessness on affected children. They face cumulative and wide-ranging human rights violations, including limited access to healthcare, education, protection, as well as restrictions on freedom of movement, among others. These structural exclusions are further compounded by societal stigma and misconceptions, perpetuating a cycle of marginalisation and systemic discrimination towards stateless people.
50. Stateless children are frequently denied access to education and must rely on non-governmental organisations to access basic learning opportunities. Access to public healthcare is also severely restricted, with reports of stateless children being refused urgent medical treatment due to the absence of a legal identity. The lack of documents also hinders access to protection mechanisms, leaving stateless children more vulnerable to violence, exploitation, and abuse. In addition, stateless people are also prevented from accessing formal employment, leaving many to rely on informal jobs, further increasing their risk of exclusion and economic exploitation.
51. Conflict and insecurity have made restrictions on stateless people's freedom of movement particularly concerning, as their inability to cross checkpoints or access safe areas during emergencies places them at increased risk and further limits their ability to seek protection.
52. All these deprivations reflect broader persistent systemic challenges, including the absence of legal safeguards to prevent statelessness at birth and the presence of significant financial and bureaucratic barriers to civil registration. The inability of parents to secure legal identity for their children causes emotional hardship and perpetuates intergenerational vulnerability and inequality.

“Without nationality, you can never achieve your dreams. All children should be able to go to school even if they don’t have an ID.” [Stateless child, Lebanon]

53. Focus group discussions facilitated by Tahaddi underscore that statelessness has also a profound psychological and emotional impact. Children described statelessness as a burden inherited across generations, leading to anxiety, social isolation, and a loss of hope. Nationality was consistently associated with safety, opportunity, and recognition. Many stateless children expressed fears of being stopped at checkpoints, experiencing bullying at school, or being denied education and healthcare. Parents echoed these concerns, voicing a deep sense of powerlessness and fear that the cycle of exclusion would persist. The emotional and social toll of statelessness is significant and enduring for

affected parents and children.

“Without a nationality, you are nothing.” [Stateless child, Lebanon]

We recommend:

- Simplify and reduce the cost of civil registration procedures, ensuring that all children born in Lebanon are granted nationality and access all their rights and essential services.
- Amend the Lebanese Nationality Law, specifically Decree No. 15 of 1925, to allow Lebanese mothers to confer nationality to their children on an equal basis with fathers.

VI. FULL LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

54. Improve the quality of education by increasing the public investment for the public school system, including for qualified teachers, adequate infrastructures and quality curricula, while eliminating hidden school costs to ensure equitable access for all children.
55. Ensure inclusive and equitable access to quality public education for refugee children by removing administrative barriers to enrolment and ending separate school shifts, in order to promote integrated, equitable, and supportive learning environments.
56. Adopt a national law prohibiting child marriage with the establishment of the minimum legal age of marriage at 18, in line with international standards, for all religious groups without exceptions.
57. Develop and fund an effective government-run national child protection hotline staffed by trained professionals and integrated with referral systems to shelters and child-friendly legal aid services.
58. Prioritise the integration and expansion of recreational and extracurricular activities within schools and communities by allocating adequate funding and resources to ensure equitable access for all children, thereby promoting their self-expression, stress relief, and emotional well-being.
59. Ensure the systematic presence of accessible mental health and psychosocial support services in all schools, including public institutions, with a proportionate number of professionals to the student population to guarantee equitable access and adequate support for all children.
60. Strengthen the public healthcare system by increasing investments in infrastructure, ensuring the free provision of essential medicines and services, and implementing universal health coverage for all children to guarantee equitable access to quality healthcare and reduce the financial burden on families.
61. Simplify and reduce the cost of civil registration procedures, ensuring that all children born

in Lebanon are granted nationality and access all their rights and essential services.

62. Amend the Lebanese Nationality Law, specifically Decree No. 15 of 1925, to allow Lebanese mothers to confer nationality to their children on an equal basis with fathers.