

# **Child Labour in the Context of the Syrian Crisis**

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# Fertile Environment

- Child labour is a manifestation of deep-rooted socio-economic problems, cutting across range of inter-related sectors
- In emergency contexts, this environment becomes the norm and significantly magnified
- Unfortunately, inevitable that child labour will flourish in emergencies
- In “contained” emergency context, i.e. within specific area and national borders (IDPs), targeted interventions more readily developed within national framework
- In refugee situation, e.g. Syrian crisis, situation considerably more complex and complicated and targeted interventions challenged and not prioritised

# Child labour among refugees

- Unfortunately, data on scale and scope of child labour among refugee populations globally is lacking – almost non-existent – although forthcoming Za’atari assessment will provide some data
- Anecdotal evidence of its prevalence is captured by assessments in various countries, including those affected by Syrian crisis
- Often a coping mechanism to address economic problems facing families forced to flee emergency, left without income sources
- Particularly notable in female- or child-headed households, but not only
- Environment of child and family changes fundamentally and normal life, rules, practices no longer apply – issue of return to sense of normalcy is key element in looking at potential interventions

# Particularities of child labour among Syrian refugees in Jordan

- Phenomenon noted in earliest assessments
- Found in camp and non-camp settings, but most refugees in host communities (as in other countries)
- Usual interventions, particularly education, not as effective as should be
- Highly vulnerable families with many diverse needs – high cost of living
- Major challenges of incompatibility and capacity of education system and disinterest
- Limited to non-existent social protection programmes
- High unemployment rates, especially among youth – large population of disaffected youth

- High migrant labour population and regulated migrant labour market – competition – particularly in construction, agricultural, industrial, commercial and informal sectors
- Already difficult labour market further destabilised, overwhelming government's capacity of control and management
- Creating serious social tensions
- Youth unable to access formal vocational education system
- Policy and legislative environment well developed in some host countries, e.g. Jordan and Turkey – more than Syrian context – but limitations in application
- Differences in traditional and cultural practices, tolerances, etc. – although this is less in reality

# Challenges in response

- Greatest challenge is ensuring systematic and structural linkages between national mechanisms to address child labour (which exist) and that of humanitarian child protection mechanism
- Allocation of roles and responsibilities
- Prioritisation of the issue itself within child protection approach and its mainstreaming
- Tolerance levels of child labour among different actors – at least children working and contributing to family income
- Consistency of enforcement of legislative and policy frameworks
- Lack of driving institution
- What are alternatives in reality for refugees?

# Interventions

- Preparedness and strategic planning are key
- Application of Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, Standard 12 on Child Labour
- Child Labour Task Force of Child Protection Working Group finalising Inter-Agency Toolkit to Support Humanitarian Programmes to Meet the Protection Needs of Child Labourers in Emergencies (show draft)
- Task Force is looking for pilot countries for testing – already used by Save the Children Canada for a session during post-graduate course on child protection in emergency – positive feedback
- Development of emergency response plan template to tackle child labour in humanitarian situations – flexible, with rapid resource and technical responses to meet minimum standards while strategic project development initiated for longer term interventions

- If child labour not addressed in early phase of emergency, becomes entrenched and more difficult and costly to address in medium- to long-term
- Need more detailed knowledge – research is key – Za’atari assessment, KRG assessment (sshhh) and possible National Child Labour Survey in Jordan which would capture data on refugees
- Need to institutionalise issue within humanitarian agencies, supported by globally available technical expertise – will happen with toolkit
- Policy dialogue with host countries – share information and experiences
- Address issues of youth, 15-18 age group – extremely vulnerable
- Reinforce coherence, coordination, collaboration, communications between national and international (development and humanitarian) – leadership is crucial

- Education, TVET and employment-related programmes for children and youth – meaningful
- Map future needs of Syria and plan skills development programme
- Involve all relevant partners: private sector, donors – outcome of Sharjah conference in 2014
- Labour market opportunities for refugees – human dignity – ILO Labour Migration in Crisis – planned joint meeting between Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey to discuss labour market impact
- Awareness-raising and advocacy
- Need innovation and creativity – new area of child labour for institutions and usual interventions not always applicable
- Opportunities to address needs of host communities, link development and humanitarian – equal partners
- Learn from experiences of Syrian crisis