

Universal Periodic Review 9th session, 2010

Stakeholder report on Lebanon Submitted by World Vision Lebanon Children's Council

Introduction:

The World Vision Children's Council project in Lebanon was created in 2008, with the goal of building children's capacities on child rights, development, tolerance, peace and provide them with the space to participate and meet children from different backgrounds across social, religions and ethnic boundaries, taking into consideration gender balance and inclusion of children with disabilities. The Children's Council is comprised of 360 children who are members of 12 local councils, each one consisting of 30 children.

This report was prepared by the World Vision Children's Council and involved approximately 30 children whose ages ranged from 9 to 17, representing three very different contexts and experiences within the country (in urban Beirut, in the Bekaa Valley and Maryajoun, Southern Lebanon) The children received training to understand the UPR process, and they were guided by World Vision as to how to compile an appropriate submission, but the content and concerns expressed in this report are entirely those of the children.

Children's Rights

The World Vision Children's Council is submitting this report in the name of the children of Lebanon to raise awareness about the problems that children face in the country. Child rights are essential and the most beautiful thing is to achieve the needs and rights of children, because it is the right of every child to enjoy the right to play, have good health, to be protected from war, protected from labor and exploitation, protected from sexual, emotional and physical abuse. Lebanon ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child¹ which guarantees rights to children whatever their color, gender or religion, yet many children are still not enjoying the rights that have been promised.

Child Labor

An ILO report estimated that about 100,000 children work in the country², 25,000 of them work in tobacco plantations³. Many children suffer every day because of the

¹ Lebanon ratified the Convention on 30th October, 1990

² IRINnews, Lebanon: Street children – victims of organized Crime, 2006

³ ILO-IPEC, Lebanon: Child Labor on Tobacco Plantations: A Rapid Assessment, 2002.

greed of their parents, their need for money or any other reason, where they are forced to work and this leads to a lot of problems which deprive them of enjoying their full rights.

Children are deprived of enjoying their childhood by spending their time doing hard work so are deprived of attending school and receiving knowledge and education which are fundamental in life for guaranteeing a successful future⁴. They are exposed to dangers and risks that always surround them since they work daily in rough climate conditions without the proper tools and safety standards, and this exposes them to physical injuries when they use tools and equipment that are not suitable for children⁵.

Some children are forced to work for free and they work as unpaid domestic work, seasonal labor and also working as personal assistants, craftsmen apprentices and other informal jobs⁶. Many of these children suffer from neglect where the child is left unattended, his health needs ignored and his personal hygiene, clothing and shelter are uncared for. Sometimes children meet, while working, bad people who encourage him to do bad things in life⁷.

Interviews conducted with children aged between 13 and 17 showed evidence that working children suffer from not attending school because their parents pressured them into dropping out or because they personally did not want to continue their education, but they regretted dropping out of school⁸. Three of the interviewed children have dangerous jobs such as selling and iron forging and they acquired certain habits such as smoking.

Street Children

Street children is a problem that is increasing every day particularly among children whose ages range between 10-17 years. According to a report street children are composed by Syrian 70 per cent; Lebanese 7.5 per cent, Iraqi 6 per cent, Palestinian 1.5 per cent and Egyptian 1 per cent⁹.

Street children are considered vagrant by the Lebanese legislation and they can be arrested and jailed and they might suffer all forms of violence. Street children do not attend school, do not have access to health and they suffer abuse and intimidation in the streets¹⁰.

According to anecdotal evidence provided by the members of the Children's Council, street children work in crowded areas of Beirut and they sell tissue papers, and chewing gum. Children also wash car windows and beg some money from

⁴ Committee on the Rights of the Child. Concluding observations: Lebanon. 2006

⁵ UNICEF. Child Labor in Lebanon. 1997

⁶ UNICEF. Child Labor in Lebanon. 1997

⁷ Interviews were conducted by members of the Children's Council in the city of Zahle. March, 2010

⁸ Interviews were conducted by members of the Children's Council in the city of Zahle. March, 2010

⁹ Street Children (2004) Lebanon Report. Civil Society Forum.

¹⁰ UNICEF. Excluded and invisible. The state of the World's Children. 2006

people in vehicles. Children's Council expressed that many of these children are forced by their parents and by certain rings into begging on the streets¹¹.

Non-ID Children

Children in Lebanon also face problems based on the lack identity paper and nationality due to the existence of non-ID or stateless children although they were born in Lebanon¹². According to Lebanese legislation a Lebanese mother cannot transmit the nationality to their children - only a Lebanese father can do it. The Lebanese constitution guarantees equality only to Lebanese children but does not provide the same protection to foreign children and refugee children¹³.

The first problem faced by non-ID children is not being officially registered with the competent authorities and this violates the child's right mentioned in Article 7 of the Convention of the Rights of the Child¹⁴. The second problem faced by such persons is their inability to access public and private institutions such as hospitals, universities and schools. A non-ID child cannot sit for official Lebanese exams (intermediate level and secondary level certificates) because he lacks official documents¹⁵. The third problem is being deprived of their full rights including: the right to work, depriving the person of access to her full rights which are violated by the employers¹⁶.

The last and very important problem is the number of foreign workers in Lebanon, most of whom are women from the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Ethiopia, who are forced to leave their country in search of a livelihood. When a migrant worker has a child and the father is not Lebanese that child has not nationality. Also when a Lebanese woman marries a foreigner, the mother cannot transfer her nationality to her children and this makes children born on Lebanese soil stateless children or they are treated as foreigners their whole life¹⁷.

Children affected by armed conflict

Children in Lebanon have been affected by different wars and armed conflicts causing serious problems such as physical disability, death, orphaned children and lack of freedom of movement because the surroundings areas where children live are not always safe and children cannot play wherever they want for fear of landmines and cluster bombs.

Internal and international wars lead to diseases, epidemics, physical disability and psychological disorders, including impairment due to cluster bombs and landmines. This is the result of not protecting children by the concerned countries. An UN report indicated that after the July war 2006 there were 516 cluster bomb strike

¹¹ Focus Group Discussion with members of the Children's Council, Ain El Remaneh, Beirut. March 2010

¹² Committee on the Rights of the Child. Concluding observations: Lebanon. 2006

¹³ Committee on the Rights of the Child. Concluding observations: Lebanon. 2006

¹⁴ Committee on the Rights of the Child. Concluding observations: Lebanon. 2006

¹⁵ Danish Refugee Council. Non-ID Palestinian Refugees. Lebanon. 2007

¹⁶ Danish Refugee Council. Non-ID Palestinian Refugees. Lebanon. 2007

¹⁷ Migrant Workers Organization. Migrant workers' children face marginalisation, racism. Lebanon. 2008

locations in Southern Lebanon and estimated that there were more than 350,000 unexploded cluster bombs in the area while other reports suggest that there are more than a million unexploded munitions in South Lebanon¹⁸.

Following the July 2006 war and since the ceasefire on August 2006 and up until May 2008, landmines, cluster bombs and unexploded munitions resulted in the death and injury of 313 persons. 83 children under the age of 18 were injured and 7 were killed¹⁹. Reports show that children are drawn to cluster bombs because these munitions have appealing shapes and colors like candy, electronic games and even toys²⁰. After the July war, local papers covered a number of incidents where children handled cluster bombs²¹.

According to anecdotal evidence provided by the members of the Children's Council, children in Southern Lebanon frequently are exposed to cluster bombs. Some children reported that some of their young brothers while playing outside the house they found unexploded bullets so they collected them and took them to their houses. Fortunately, parents were aware of the risks and took the devices outside the house and handed them over to the authorities. Other children have experienced similar situation when parents found cluster bombs hanging from the trees while they were working in the plantations²².

During focus group discussion, children expressed that explosions caused physiological problems and anxiety: fear of thunder and lightning, fear of Israeli aircrafts when they enter the Lebanese airspace because this reminds them of the previous war in 2006, fear of all loud noises that are similar to the sound of bombing²³.

In May 2007, children living in Lebanon faced a new armed conflict in Nahr el-Bared Palestinian refugee camp in Northern Lebanon. As a result, around 27,000 Palestinian refugees from the Nahr el-Bared camp were displaced; approximately 13,500 of them children and youths. The war resulted in the death of many people including children and youths²⁴.

According to a report, children displaced from Nahr el-Bared camp showed symptoms of post-traumatic stress such as bedwetting, crying, fear of the dark, recurrent nightmares and thoughts about deceased persons, bombing, tanks, snipers and cluster bombs. Girls interviewed expressed concern about fights breaking within families because of insufficient food rations and the lack of mattresses and blankets²⁵.

¹⁸ OCHA. The deadly impact of cluster bombs in Southern Lebanon. 2006

¹⁹ UNDP Mine Action. Information in Mine and UXO Victims. 2008

²⁰ US Department of the Interior. Military munitions and explosives of concern. 2007

²¹ www.daylysatr.com.lb January 6, 2007

²² Focus group discussion with member of Children's Council. Marjayoun. Southern Lebanon. February 2010

²³ Focus group discussion with member of Children's Council. Marjayoun. Southern Lebanon. February 2010

²⁴ www.unrwra-lebanon.org. 2007

²⁵ Naba'a (Developmental Action without Borders). Monitoring the violation of child among children-displaced from Nahr El Bared Camp. 2007

Children with disabilities

UNICEF estimates that 4.3% of Lebanese children are disabled and Save the Children stated that there is a lack of information about disabled children in Lebanon as some are neglected and marginalized²⁶.

A Save the Children report indicated that there is a lack of studies about specialized institutions for people with disabilities, particularly children, and there is absence of measures to facilitate the enrolment of children with disabilities in schools. Children with disabilities face numerous problems namely discrimination, mockery and all the forms of emotional and physical abuse²⁷.

During focus group discussion, children expressed concern about children with disabilities and one child told the story of a neighbor who gave birth to a disabled baby girl but she neglected her in the first days after she was born neither feeding her nor caring for her and the baby girl died after three days. Children also affirmed that their schools do not provide disabled children with the necessary facilities to allow them to join the schools. They also claimed that many families withdraw their children with disabilities from society and isolate them because it is hard for them to face the mainstream society²⁸.

Children also highlighted cases of children with disabilities who are able to join the school but face the lack of disabled-friendly facilities. Peers and teachers need to take extra care of children in wheelchairs and lift them through the stairs due to that Lebanese schools normally have 3 or 4 floors²⁹.

Violence against Children

A study conducted by Saint Joseph University indicates that 45.6% of children have experienced violence in schools, 40.7% have been slapped by hand on the arm or hands and 32.6% have been hit by thrown objects³⁰. The same study points out that 51.7% of children have been deliberately insulted in schools and 48.6% have been shouted at with the aim to embarrass or humiliate them. A World Vision assessment conducted in a refugee camp found that 60.2% of the interviewees had the perception that children in the camp experience physical or emotional violence³¹.

Children experience violence in many ways including physical abuse where the child is beaten, burned or kicked until he/she suffers from bruises or injuries, sexual abuse where the child is touched in inappropriate places and times and as a result has sleeping problems, fear and nightmares, and also emotional abuse where the child's self-esteem is crushed, he/she is ignored, or teased and hurt from the way he/she is spoken to or from being controlled so he suffers from an inability to concentrate,

²⁶ Save the Children. Child Rights Situational Analysis. Lebanon. 2008

²⁷ Save the Children. Child Rights Situational Analysis. Lebanon. 2008

²⁸ Focus group discussion with member of Children's Council. Marjayoun. Southern Lebanon. February 2010

²⁹ Focus group discussion with member of Children's Council. Marjayoun. Southern Lebanon.

³⁰ Saint Joseph University. School children abuse in Lebanon report. 2009

³¹ World Vision. Basic assessment of Dbayeh Palestinian Refugee Camp in Lebanon. 2006

from emotional, social and behavior problems, speaking difficulties and seeking attention through hyperactivity³².

In addition, abused children develop anger, sadness and other emotional complexities because they feel humiliated when they are beaten in front of their friends and classmates and this puts them in a very embarrassing situation³³. About 90% of respondents of a child consultation expressed that the main feelings they have after experienced violence are sadness, humiliation, embarrassment and anger³⁴.

Recommendations

1. The World Vision Lebanon Children's Council recommends that children need to be actively involved in promoting and defending their rights. Children have many things to say and when more children participate, the rights of children are applied more truly.
2. From the perspective of children, we ask you to take into consideration the problems faced by children with disabilities in our country, namely the mockery, discrimination and lack of facilities for them. We recommend to conduct awareness raising activities to promote acceptance of the children with disabilities and to ensure that there are policies in place and budget for children with disabilities
3. Violence against children should be banned by law in schools and homes. We recommend that corporal punishment and emotional abuse need to be replaced by dialogue and positive discipline methods.
4. We recommend that more awareness raising sessions need to be conducted to educate children about the danger of cluster bombs and landmines. More land need to be cleared so children can play freely and safe.
5. We recommend to create psychological assistance for those children that need support to overcome the trauma caused by wars and monitor that the aid reach everyone in a fair way.
6. We recommend that the government give more rights to women so they can transfer nationality to their children.
7. Finally, we deeply thank you for listening to us and ask your help to overcome these problems. We take this opportunity to tell you that all Lebanese children thank you from the bottom of their heart and that they wish you all the best and pray you will solve these issues.

³² World Vision. Twenty year on. 2009

³³ World Vision. Children make their voices heard. 2009

³⁴ World Vision. Children make their voices heard. 2009