



AN ENDURING NIGHTMARE

Children and Youth in Lebanon reeling from
military hostilities and economic crisis

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YOUNG LIVES AT RISK

Children and youth in Lebanon are facing a devastating reality no child should ever have to endure, as the country grapples with the aftermath of an escalation in hostilities, a prolonged economic downturn and deepening humanitarian needs.

Airstrikes, artillery shelling and demolitions have killed and maimed children and youth, destroyed homes, schools and health centres, exposed girls to increased gender-based violence and inflicted lasting psychological trauma. For many children, the places meant to protect them have become places of fear, violence, loss and destruction.



"Too many children have lost their homes, their schools and the people they love, and, in some cases, their sense of hope for the future. No child should have to grow up amid such fear, violence, loss and suffering."

**Marcoluigi Corsi, UNICEF
Representative in Lebanon**



Seven children a day were killed or injured in the six months since March 2, 2026.



770,000 children have suffered psychological distress over the past six months.



100,000 children risk not having a classroom after 436 schools were damaged.



135 health-care workers were killed and 416 injured while on duty.

An average of seven children a day were killed or injured in the six months since March 2, 2026 renewed hostilities. At least 261 children were among the more than 4,381 people killed, and 1,056 children were among the more than 12,402 people injured¹. An estimated 12 per cent of injured children are now living with a disability² — a stark reflection of the conflict's long-term consequences for children.

Attacks against health workers, ambulances, medical facilities and supply chains further degraded Lebanon's already struggling health care system. At least 135 health-care workers were killed and 416 injured while on duty, while 17 hospitals were damaged and three had to shut down³.

At the height of the conflict, 433 public education institutions – about a third of Lebanon's public-school network – were repurposed as shelters. Some 100,000 children risk not having a classroom after 436 schools were damaged – including 37 that were completely destroyed – and 86 teachers were killed or injured. An absence of schooling limits a child's developmental opportunities and can trap families in a persistent cycle of poverty.

Just weeks after the escalation began, over 1 million people were displaced. Such displacements affect children's access to health care, education and social services, as well as their emotional well-being. Six months later, more than 329,300 people, one third of them children, had yet to return, as continued attacks and widespread damage rendered homes unsafe, further disrupted essential services and eroded people's already limited coping capacity⁴.



Such displacements affect children's access to health care and education, and have profound mental health consequences, particularly at a time when children are exposed to violence and loss. An estimated 770,000 children have suffered psychological distress over the past six months⁵.

Violence has decreased since an April ceasefire, but airstrikes and demolitions of homes and infrastructure continue in southern Lebanon, where Israel still occupies a strip of land.

The conflict has exacerbated the damage and suffering caused by a previous intensification of hostilities in 2023–2024 and a wrenching socio-economic crisis that has persisted since late 2019. Lebanon now faces the daunting task of rebuilding from the devastation. But recovery cannot simply mean reconstructing buildings and infrastructure. It must centre on rebuilding the futures of children, by restoring their access to health, education, protection and other essential services.

A CHILDHOOD OF DEPRIVATION



A new UNICEF Child-focused Rapid Assessment (CfRA)⁶ shows the debilitating toll the violence is exacting on children, who are going hungry, missing out on education, unable to access essential health care and struggling with severe emotional distress.

The assessment highlights how conflict and economic pressures have forced families into desperate choices – such as sacrificing spending on health and education and sending children to work – placing already vulnerable children and youth at ever greater risk.

With 4 of 5 households (82 per cent) finding it more difficult to afford basic necessities than they did three months earlier, more than 1 in 5 (22 per cent) said their children went to bed hungry, in the two weeks prior to data collection, and 14 per cent have at least one child working⁷ – more than twice the proportion reported in the January 2025 CfRA (6 per cent).

1. Ministry of Public Health update 7 September, 2026
2. UNICEF & INARA. (2025). An Intersectional Analysis on Mental Health, Family Dynamics, and Sustainable Systems for War-Affected Children in Lebanon.
3. Ministry of Public Health update 7 September, 2026

4. 4 Lebanon — Mobility Snapshot — Round 115 (03 September 2026)
5. The figure was calculated by UNICEF based on the number of children living in the most conflict-affected areas.
6. The CfRA was conducted in July 2026. A total of 3,016 people across the country were interviewed by telephone.
7. In the 30 days prior to data collection



82% of households struggle to afford basic needs.



17% had to stop their children's education.



22 % of households said their children went to bed hungry

Seven in 10 Households (71 per cent) find it hard to meet their child's health needs compared to three months ago while six in 10 households (61 per cent) reduced their health spending. Almost four in 10 (38 per cent) reported not having access to essential medicine for their children and more than three in 10 (31 per cent) said children did not get the health care they needed⁸ – mainly because they could not afford the cost.

Six per cent of surveyed households reported that a child was wounded or became ill due to the war and a third of these children (34 per cent) did not get the care they needed.

Severe infrastructure damage sustained during the conflict further threatens the health of children and youth. A recent assessment estimated that more than 700,000 people, including 238,000 children, were affected by disruptions to water systems⁹.

Specifically, the CfRA results show 22 per cent of households have insufficient drinking water and 8 per cent have insufficient water for domestic use.

The combined impact of the multiple crises has also dealt a heavy blow to the education system. Three quarters (76 per cent) of households said meeting their children's education needs had become more difficult, than three month ago. Almost one in two (46 per cent) said they had to reduce expenses on education and 17 per cent had to stop their children's education. One in five households (20 per cent) reported that their children did not attend school last year. Of those who did attend, 29 per cent were unable to learn fully, often because of difficulty focusing and emotional distress.



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"I wanted to buy clothes for my children, but I could not. I also wanted to enrol them in school, but I could not afford that either. I am a labourer with four children. God help the labourer."

A father of four

8. In the two weeks prior to data collection

9. South Lebanon Water Establishment Preliminary Assessment, July 2026.

10. Central Administration of Statistics (CAS) & International Labour Organization (ILO). (2022). Lebanon follow-up Labour Force Survey: January 2022. International Labour Organization.



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Making matters worse, a vast majority (83 per cent) of families who remain displaced said they don't know when they'll be able to return home, even though only about four in 10 of them (43 per cent) described their current shelters as safe and suitable.

Even before the latest escalation of March 2, 2026, youth in Lebanon faced significant barriers to education, employment and opportunities to build their futures. In 2022, youth unemployment stood at 47.8 per cent —more than twice the national average—amid the economic crisis, currency devaluation and widespread business closures. The latest hostilities have placed further pressure on already limited opportunities for youth.

A Youth-focused Rapid Assessment (YfRA)¹¹ conducted by UNICEF in March, during the early weeks of the hostilities, found that many were struggling to continue their education, find work and access health care, while mental health concerns were widespread. Only 22 per cent of youth aged 18–25 were in school or university, largely because of financial barriers, with 83 per cent reporting a need for tuition support and 69 per cent for transport expenses. More than half (51 per cent) said they intended to migrate to another country.



“I worry about being able to afford a good university education, especially as tuition fees keep rising.”

Young man, 21

The risks of not going to school go far beyond learning loss. It can undermine mental well-being, increase exposure to violence and limit opportunities to develop essential social skills. Nearly all respondents (95 per cent) reported feeling sometimes sad or depressed. It can also heighten the risk of child labour, early marriage and other forms of exploitation, particularly for children with disabilities, girls, refugees and children from the poorest households. More than one-fifth of CfRA respondents (22 per cent) reported knowing a girl who had married before age 18 during the past year.

11. The YfRA was conducted in March 2026. A total of 1,007 people aged 18–29, including 761 between the ages of 18 and 25, were interviewed by telephone

Displacement, loss, deprivation and repeated exposure to violence have left deep emotional scars. Children, youth and caregivers report symptoms of traumatic stress and grief, including intense fear, nightmares, anxiety and feelings of hopelessness.



"I had given birth only 15 days before the latest war began. My baby is seven months old. We fled the southern suburbs (of Beirut). The sounds affected my son so much that when I brought him a beautiful, colourful toy that makes sounds, he became afraid of it and cried a lot."

A mother of a seven-month-old boy

More than one in two households (54 per cent) interviewed for the CfRA said children's emotional well-being had worsened over the previous three months, 63 per cent reported their children were anxious or nervous and 55 per cent said they were depressed or sad. The findings of the YfRA were particularly alarming, with 95 per cent of youth aged 18-25 saying they sometimes felt depressed or sad, and 66 per cent saying that is often the case.



"I need mental health support and safe spaces where I can talk openly about my concerns and get the support I need."

Young woman, 20

The CfRA also shows that:

55% 

of households are unable to provide their children with three meals a day;

Only 10% 

of households with children under age 5 can provide a sufficiently varied diet;

91% 

of caregivers worry about their children's safety;

44% 

of caregivers reported an urgent need for psychosocial support;

25% 

of households sold household assets;

20% 

of households sold assets used for production or income.

The YfRA also shows that in the early weeks of the war:

64% 

of youth 18-25 who needed health care did not seek it;

67% 

of youth 18-25 had no work in the week prior to the survey;

51% 

of youth 18-25 intended to migrate to another country.

A STEEP ROAD TO RECOVERY

For Lebanon to recover, efforts must simultaneously tackle the interconnected dimensions of the crisis and the structural drivers of children and youth's vulnerabilities, such as multidimensional poverty, a fragile social protection system and deteriorating infrastructure.

The stark findings underscore the urgent need for investment. Lebanon faces the formidable task of rebuilding not only its damaged infrastructure but also restoring opportunities and securing a future for its children and youth. This will require ensuring that they have full access to essential services, including health care, water and sanitation, nutrition, education and protection, while strengthening social protection systems to support families.



"We need to let (children) live their childhood, play and have fun, and ensure that food and water are available to them."

A father of an eight-year-old girl

Children and youth need the opportunity to recover, heal and hope again. Without urgent and sustained support, an entire generation could be left to bear deep emotional scars and long lasting disadvantage into adulthood, with profound consequences for the future of Lebanon.



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UNICEF IN ACTION

During the conflict, UNICEF and partners delivered emergency assistance under difficult conditions, while continuing to support national systems. UNICEF worked to address the humanitarian needs, treating injured children, delivering supplies to shelters and medical facilities, and providing care to displaced families.

UNICEF also played a major role in helping sustain education services. More than 220,000 children returned to in-person learning as schools reopened, remote learning continued for 166,000 students, while 59,000 children accessed in-person non-formal education and retention support.

Between January and July 2026, UNICEF:

- Supported 2.5 million people with access to safe water;
- Supported 1.4 million women and children with access to primary health care;
- Provided antenatal home care to more than 18,100 pregnant women;
- Visited more than 11,400 newborns, facilitating early detection of risks and referrals;
- Provided screening for wasting to more than 99,700 children aged 6-59 months;
- Reached almost 27,700 children under age 2 with emergency food rations and micronutrient supplements;

- Reached almost 39,600 children, adolescents and caregivers with community-based mental health and psychosocial support;
- Reached more than 13,000 women and girls, with gender-based violence prevention, risk mitigation and response service;
- Supported more than 348,600 students enrolled in public schools;
- Supported more than 43,000 out-of-school children and youth in accessing non-formal education or catch-up programmes;
- Reached 65,000 people, including 23,000 children, with emergency cash assistance;
- Supported more than 7,800 adolescents and youth in enrolling in formal and non-formal technical and vocational training;
- Reached more than 3,100 youth through employment support services and income generation interventions;
- Produced and distributed 1.50M hot meals & sandwiches to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in shelter by UNICEF youth volunteers;
- Produced 23,367 assistance items such as sleeping bags, blankets, winter & clothing kits to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) produced by UNICEF youth volunteers;
- Supported engineering assessments of schools that were damaged or used as shelters.

UNICEF is seeking US\$388.5 million in 2026 to reach 2 million people, including 700,000 children. By 31 July 2026, the appeal was 54 per cent funded, **leaving a gap of US\$182.2 million.**



“UNICEF has significantly expanded its emergency response to address this deep humanitarian crisis. At this critical juncture, flexible, multi-year funding is crucial to maintain life-saving support and sustain core services.”

Marcoluigi Corsi, UNICEF Representative in Lebanon





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