



Promoting education to prevent child labour among adolescent girls in Lebanon

Photo: Plan International

This case study describes how tailored education and psychosocial support for at-risk Syrian and Lebanese adolescent girls has helped to prevent child labour.

Background

In Lebanon, school dropout is common among Syrian and at-risk Lebanese adolescents, particularly older adolescent girls, and it forms a major risk factor for child labour and child marriage. In 2017, fewer than 3 per cent of Syrian adolescent girls aged between 15 and 17 years were enrolled in secondary education. Out-of-school Syrian and Lebanese adolescent girls are found to be engaged in “hidden” forms of child labour such as domestic work or sexual exploitation. Child marriage is also often associated with forced domestic labour, exploitation and abuse by the child’s family in-law. Plan International’s project in partnership with the Rene Moawad Foundation in North Lebanon (located in Tripoli, Mennieh-Dennieh and Zgharta), was designed to enhance access to quality and inclusive education activities for Syrian refugee and vulnerable Lebanese adolescent girls aged 12 to 17 years and to address related protection risks to child labour and child marriage.

Education and psychosocial support to prevent child labour among adolescent girls

The project targeted both adolescent girls who were out of school and homebound, and girls who were in school but at risk of dropping out due to low school performance, irregular attendance or other risk factors such as child marriage and child labour. The project also targeted married girls and young mothers. The goal of the project was to provide relevant, tailored and flexible learning programmes and psychosocial activities to support girls to continue their education. Both centre-based and mobile modalities were used to reach out to girls and deliver psychosocial support activities to promote their wellbeing and learning. Targeted activities were organised for community members and gatekeepers to mobilise support for girls’ continued access to quality learning opportunities.

Core components of the programme included the following:

- Adolescent girls who were in school but attended irregularly or had poor school performance were provided with weekly remedial and homework classes to enhance their school performance and attendance; the objective was to support girls to stay in school.
- Adolescent girls who were out of school were provided with non-formal education programmes that included basic literacy (Arabic and English) and numeracy classes; some were tailored to a vocational training or other non-formal education programme of choice.
- All adolescent girls who were interested and eligible were offered a vocational training programme of their choice, funded by a separate project.
- In addition to educational support, the girls enrolled in life skills sessions to promote peer support, self-confidence and psychosocial competencies.
- Girls were offered participation in weekly recreational activities and girls' clubs where they could meet, interact and develop leadership skills. The girls' clubs were also a mechanism for girls to design and carry out their own initiatives, including actions to promote girls' education and wellbeing.
- For parents and caregivers of the girls, weekly parenting sessions were organised to foster parental support and facilitate discussion on the importance of education and to address any barriers to girls' education.
- At the community level, family and community dialogues were promoted on the importance of girls' education and girls' participation in society, including girl-led initiatives.

Lessons learned

- When working with adolescents, especially adolescent girls, it is important to engage with parents/caregivers and community members in order to gain their trust, avoid doing harm, and build a supportive environment for adolescents.
- Partnerships with existing community-based organisations are key to building trust with parents, caregivers and the community.
- Remote and flexible programming is essential for reaching homebound, married and working adolescent girls.
- Education-focused interventions should be accompanied with psychosocial support activities that help adolescent girls to gain confidence, build friendships and strengthen their resilience.
- Older adolescent girls (aged 14 to 17) prefer basic literacy and numeracy classes that can be linked to topics that are relevant to them, such as vocational training.
- When projects addressing child labour do not include a livelihoods component, it is important to link them to other existing projects that address that barrier. In the case of this intervention, it was linked to another programme being implemented by the same partner in the same areas.

More information and resources are available at:

<https://alliancecpha.org>

<https://alliancecpha.org/en/child-protection-hub/child-labour-task-force>