

BUILDING A BETTER TOMORROW

The Building a Better Tomorrow appeal sought to tackle the barriers to education faced by Syrian refugee children in Lebanon. Your support matched by the Saïd and Asfari Foundations has enabled the IRC to reach 4,288 people helping children, young people and their families to learn, grow and thrive.

In 2018, we set out together to help create a safe and supportive environment for Syrian children and their families in Lebanon. We are committed as ever to transforming the lives of Syrian children living across Lebanon through education, child protection and community empowerment.

Over the past year, a deteriorating economic situation and related civil unrest, along with increasing controls on Syrian refugees by Lebanese authorities have contributed to a sharp increase in the number of children working on the streets, as families grow desperate to make ends meet.

Local hostility against Syrian refugees has also risen drastically – women and girls especially are scared to move around and instead feel safer remaining in their homes. Only 22% of Syrian refugees (above 15 years old)

report having legal residency,¹ which puts them in fear of arrest and deportation and makes it even harder for them to work.

As a result of their environment, refugee children and young women face substantial barriers to accessing an education. Lack of job prospects means caregivers are forced to send their children to work; lack of space due to funding restrictions in Lebanon's formal education system; and the fact that refugee girls are increasingly at risk of forced early marriage and physical abuse are among just a few of these barriers.

The support your donations have brought to Syrian refugees through the Building a Better Tomorrow programme has never been more critical in bringing hope and the chance of a better future. Thank you.

Maha's story

Maha, 9, was only four years old when her family fled Syria, arriving in Aarsal in Bekaa, Lebanon. The year her family arrived in Aarsal, she was diagnosed with rheumatism and she became paralysed from the waist down. With rare access to the outside world, Maha found herself isolated in her tent away from nature, friends and school.

Thanks to support from the Building a Better Tomorrow programme, Maha now has a wheelchair and is able to go to school for the first time in her life. *"I like school a lot, we learn Arabic, English, and Mathematics and I can give you an example: three plus three equals six,"* said Maha. *"We also learn about colours, animals, and shapes."*



Photo: Elias El Beam/IRC

¹ <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/73118>

The impact of your donation

We are pleased to share the impact of your support over the past year with you. In this report, you will read about what has been achieved so far to transform the lives of the most vulnerable Syrian children and young people in Lebanon.

- 4,288* children, young people and their families reached directly with education and support services
- A further 21,440 people reached through cash assistance and community actions

** this number is based on the number of unique individuals receiving support, however one individual may receive multiple interventions.*

Taking a holistic approach, the Building a Better Tomorrow programme is focused on not only improving children's access to a high-quality education, but also supporting their mental wellbeing and physical safety.



A psycho-social support session with case worker, Aya in Tripoli. Photo: Elias El Beam/IRC

163 CHILDREN



took part in basic literacy lessons.

99 street and working children took part in basic Arabic literacy sessions and 64 adolescent girls took part in English and Arabic literacy classes achieving an 88% improvement in literacy skills.

Many of these children have never been to school, and so these sessions provide the children with a range of basic skills needed to progress in life.

152 ADOLESCENT GIRLS



and 411 street and working children received psychosocial support and took part in life skills activities.

The life skills sessions for adolescent girls, based on an IRC curriculum called 'My Safety, My Wellbeing', are designed to equip them with the skills to identify, prevent and mitigate gender-based violence (GBV). Working children experience high levels of harassment and abuse, and so the psychosocial activities they attended were designed to help them deal with their difficult experiences and resolve conflicts without violence. They also learned how to build new friendships and how to choose good friends, in addition to how to avoid bullying by other children.

54 CAREGIVERS



of street and working children attended parenting skills sessions.

Caregivers were encouraged to think about ways to better support their child and reduce the effects of toxic stress. They were held in a space where they could speak openly about the shame of having to send their children to work and gave them the opportunity to form strong supportive peer networks.

3,624 PEOPLE



took part in community outreach activities.

Parents, teachers and members of the community engaged in sessions to raise awareness and help mitigate the risks of violence against adolescent girls and street and working children.

78 HOUSEHOLDS



supported with cash for protection assistance for a total of 107 children.

The stressful conditions in Lebanon has led to many caregivers employing negative coping mechanisms that can result in children being removed from school, sent to work or married early. By offering short-term cash support, caregivers can give their children access to an education, as well as equipment required for their learning needs.

Alaa's story

It wasn't easy for 8-year-old Alaa and her family to leave their home in Syria and flee to Lebanon. She was only two years old when her family took this step and started their journey in Lebanon as refugees. Her parents noticed when she was six that she was not hearing properly. They took her to the nearest primary healthcare centre where a specialist diagnosed her case and recommended that she takes a hearing test as a first step. In addition to Alaa's hearing problems, she had already been diagnosed with a hole in her heart since birth.

The family came across the IRC protection monitoring team, who referred the family for cash assistance. The IRC was able to cover the cost of the hearing test along with the hearing aid device, and also referring Alaa to a service provider to follow up on her heart condition. *"She can now understand what we say to her, she can play again with her friends at school, and her studies will improve,"* expressed Alaa's father Khaled with happiness.

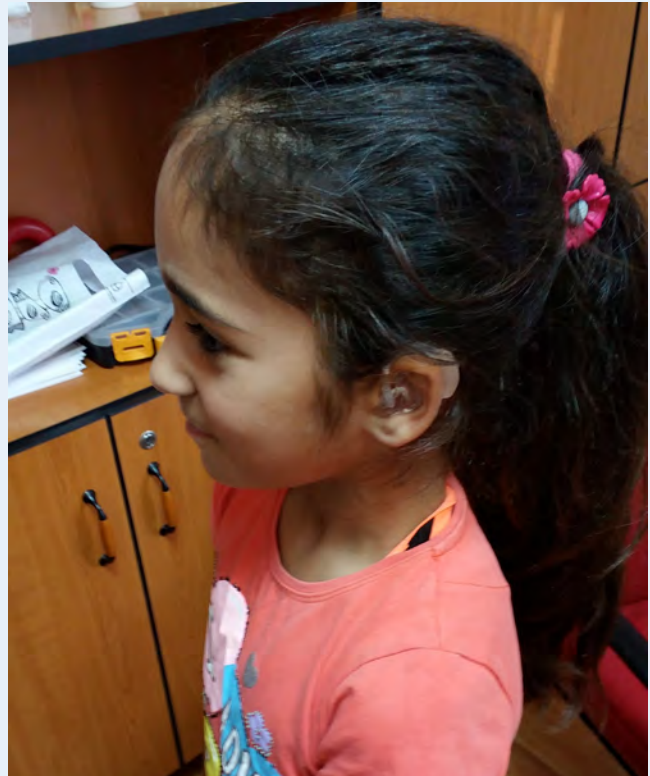


Photo: Elias El Beam/IRC

Looking Ahead

This year on the 11th March, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic. As of June 2020, there are over 1,600 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Lebanon.² The pandemic and the nationwide lockdown caused further disruption of businesses and loss of income, with heightened food insecurity for refugees and Lebanese people.

The IRC responded swiftly in Lebanon by distributing hygiene and food kits for the most vulnerable families. Remote literacy and numeracy sessions have been introduced, as well as remote mental health support, with priority given to high risk cases. We are also coordinating with banks and money transfer agencies to ensure clients continue to receive payments, and when necessary we can still deliver cash in hand.

With these hardships will come a greater demand for child protection, as well as an increased need to intervene as early as possible to facilitate children's reintegration into education. We also know that women and girls, often marginalised in times of crisis, will be finding it even more difficult to access health facilities. Our outreach volunteers and women's committees are active in identifying GBV risks and providing information on safe referrals. These groups are also promoting awareness-raising of COVID-19 in their communities.

In Year Two of the programme, the IRC will start working with two local partners – LebRelief in Tripoli, and another partner to be confirmed – to broaden the reach of activities, whilst also strengthening local capacity to deliver support to Syrian refugees. We will also be training local outreach volunteers in Bekaa and Akkar, to establish contact with vulnerable communities and improving access to services for children and adolescent girls.



The Saïd and Asfari Foundations visiting Tripoli in October 2019. Photo: Elias El Beam/IRC

² <https://covid19.who.int/>

A heartfelt thank you to you all

We are so very grateful for the generosity and support of the Saïd and Asfari Foundations and all the Building a Better Tomorrow Appeal donors. It is with your support that Maha, Alaa and many other Syrian children in Lebanon can have access to an education.

Please do contact Alaina Patterson (Alaina.patterson@rescue-uk.org) at the International Rescue Committee if you would like any further information on the Building a Better Tomorrow programme.



Photo: Elias El Beam/IRC