



## National Protection Sector Key Advocacy Messages

Updated July 2023

*This document provides an overview of common priority advocacy messages across protection, gender-based violence and child protection working groups, which partners can use as a basis to further inform their advocacy actions with key stakeholders in Lebanon. Further, underpinning these messages is a collective acknowledgement of the exceptional generosity and hospitality demonstrated by the people of Lebanon in hosting persons displaced from Syria.*

To the Government of Lebanon and respective line ministries

- **Uphold the Government of Lebanon’s commitment to respect the principle of non-refoulement.** No individual or group deportations or denial of admissions at the border **should be conducted without due process** which includes a transparent and individual assessment of potential risks and opportunity for individuals to express protection concerns, in alignment with Lebanese and International Laws.
- Emphasize the need for the Government of Lebanon **to uphold the voluntary, safe and dignified nature of returns**, noting that, conditions in Syria are not yet conducive to large-scale facilitated return, despite some small-scale return movements linked to individual situations. The government should continue to uphold the principles of international law and maintain the protection space in Lebanon to ensure refugees live in safety and dignity.
- **Allow UNHCR to resume the registration of Syrian refugees.** This is the most efficient and cost-effective way to ascertain the scale of refugees present in Lebanon, to ensure security, to bolster evidence to support additional humanitarian funding to Lebanon, and to provide information for eventual return planning. Additionally, it will increase the number of refugee households eligible for legal residency under the current requirements.<sup>1</sup>
- **Broaden the eligibility criteria for obtaining and renewing legal residency to ensure that more displaced persons from Syria are eligible to renew based on their UNHCR certificate.** This means allowing all Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR to renew their legal residency based on their UNHCR certificate - even if they previously renewed their legal residency based on sponsorship.
- **Waive all fees required to apply and renew legal residency for displaced persons from Syria**, including: (i) the annual fee for those aged 15 years’ old and above, (ii) the accumulated back fees for overstayed years for displaced persons from Syria applying for status regularization, (iii) the related fines and fees,<sup>2</sup> and (iv) the costs of compiling the numerous documents required by the GSO for this purpose, to all categories of refugees, not just those registered with UNHCR.
- **The Government of Lebanon should take positive steps to de-escalate harmful anti-refugee**

<sup>1</sup> For more specific legal residency messaging, see the Protection Sector Legal Residency Advocacy Messages, 2023

<sup>2</sup> It includes the additional required fees for the following procedures: retrieving confiscated documents from the GSO, changing sponsor based on the current GSO decision and regularizing the legal residency for those who entered Lebanon illegally before April 2019.



**rhetoric** to promote social stability and the safety of all communities. This should include taking active steps to transparently communicate response programs for Lebanese under response frameworks which partner with government institutions and to **constructively** approach discussions on Syrian refugee personal data sharing recognizing the critical need to **adhere to international data protection principles and privacy safeguards**.

- Restrictive and discriminative measures, such as curfews and movement restrictions, continue to be reported across all regions in Lebanon negatively impacting the protection environment including the free movement and wellbeing of refugees. **The Government of Lebanon should ensure that any measures adopted at local, regional or national level are not arbitrary or discriminatory and respect the rule of law**, in line with Lebanon's international commitments and national legislation.
- **The Government of Lebanon should ensure that the registration of important life events (birth, marriage, divorce, death) is accessible to all on a non-discriminatory basis, regardless of nationality and legal status, including late registration and that procedures are predictable and consistently applied. Progress should be made to endorse and implement the National Action Plan on birth registration.**
- The Government of Lebanon should scale up efforts to address the root causes of onward movements, ensure the **protection and rescue of people in distress at sea** and that their assistance and protection needs are met upon return to Lebanon.
- **The Government of Lebanon should develop, adopt, and implement a national strategy for persons with disabilities** through a participatory process ensuring inter-ministerial engagement and the full participation of disability led civil society organizations, and organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs). This should contain steps to **develop universal social protection measures for persons with disabilities and older persons** using a human rights approach. This should include a comprehensive pension system, housing, education subsidies, and targeted health coverage as well as maintaining the existing national allowance program.<sup>3</sup>
- **Education** should be guaranteed as a **right** for all children regardless of **legal status and documentation** and should not hinder their ability to obtain certification. To achieve the protective benefits of education, the Government of Lebanon should **ensure full roll-out and implementation of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education's Child Protection Policy**.<sup>4</sup>
- The Government of Lebanon should take measures to address overcrowding and deteriorating conditions in all prisons and detention facilities. Such measures could include addressing backlogs in judicial delays by introducing alternative sentencing and fast-tracking critical cases for judicial procedures particularly for children in contact with the law and gender-based violence cases.
- Recent femicides present an alarming trend that perpetrators of GBV are not held accountable. **The Government of Lebanon should address barriers preventing survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) including those exposed to domestic violence and human trafficking from safely reporting incidents of violence** to law enforcement actors and ensure their fast-tracked

<sup>3</sup> The Lebanon national strategy on persons with disabilities is currently under development.

<sup>4</sup> The 2015 Incheon Declaration recommends national governments allocate 15-20% of their total public expenditure to education ([Global Partnership for Education, 2019](#)).



access to judicial proceedings regardless of their legal status and nationality.

- **The Government of Lebanon should ensure the enforcement of laws that protect women and girls from all forms of violence, abuse and exploitation** such as Law 293 on family violence, Law 164 on human trafficking and Law 205 on sexual harassment. At the same time, the Government of Lebanon should adopt laws that foster gender equality, reduce power imbalance and discrimination against women and children.

To diplomatic missions and donor agencies:

- In communications with the Government of Lebanon, diplomatic missions and donor agencies should reinforce the need to uphold Lebanon's commitment to international law, **respecting the principle of non-refoulement and to stop individual and summary group deportations without due process and which lack the relevant legal safeguards.**
- Diplomatic missions and donor agencies should leverage their position **to push the Government of Lebanon to preserve previous commitments to facilitating refugees' access to legal residency.** Importantly this means, ensuring the resumption of UNHCR registration, advocating for the suspension and non-extension of the recent GSO decision on 15<sup>th</sup> May to facilitate refugees to regularize their entry status in the country and to abstain from their arrest and deportation without due process.
- Diplomatic missions and donor agencies should **continue their engagement with partners on identifying durable solutions for refugees through established forums,** and importantly advocate with their member states **to expand opportunities for third-country resettlement and complementary pathways,** not only limited to Syrian refugees but also refugees of other nationalities. This is a critical step to demonstrate responsibility-sharing with Lebanon.
- **Donor agencies should maintain support for cross-population, human rights based (including gender-responsive) and conflict-sensitive approaches to responding to the crises,** including supporting service provision through national systems, reinforcing Lebanon's economic, social, and environmental stability and dedicating resources to developing and implementing a strategic communication campaign to demonstrate support to Lebanese.
- **Donor agencies should provide multiyear unearmarked funding,** with an aim to foster the predictability and sustainability of aid including through specific support to **prevention and early interventions, community-based approaches** as well as **gender transformative actions** to address the root causes of GBV.
- Donor agencies should maintain adequate levels of funding to **public institutions, protection partners** including directly to local organizations **and other sector interventions which are critical to protection outcomes.** This includes support to institutions and courts to continue processing legal cases and procedures and all interventions which address high rates of out of school children, risk of child labor, child marriage, gender-based violence, trafficking in persons, arrest and deportation, eviction, statelessness and aggravated mental health concerns including substance abuse.
- Persons at risk, particularly those without legal residency or documentation, face challenges reaching and accessing humanitarian services and assistance. **Donor agencies should guarantee that all humanitarian partners fulfil their responsibility to mainstream protection**



**and gender including by actively identifying and mitigating obstacles impeding meaningful and safe access and supporting inclusive budgeting practices.**

- Households and individuals with disabilities, older persons, persons with chronic illness, female headed households and single women face additional difficulties to meet their minimal survival needs, leading to subsequent protection risks. **There is a critical need to expand longer-term sustainable solutions through targeted, inclusive, and holistic social protection schemes and through expanding effective livelihood options.** Targeted social protection schemes can address inequities and are easy to communicate and explain to communities.
- **Donor agencies should maintain funding levels to local persons with disabilities and women-led organizations, community-based organizations and national NGOs** supporting older age, gender and disability inclusion and providing disability and older age targeted services such as community-based rehabilitation and outreach assistance services, assistive and adaptive products, as well as helping to combat stigma and negative attitudes toward persons with disabilities.
- **Donor agencies should continue to support coordination mechanisms which play a critical role in maximizing resources and delivering an effective, efficient, timely and predictable Protection, Child Protection and GBV response.** Donor agencies should continue their engagement with the protection sector coordination team to ensure appropriate synergies.



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