



REPORT

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Secours Islamique France (SIF)

Secours Islamique France (SIF) is an independent, humanitarian NGO and non-profit. Founded in 1991 in France, SIF is engaged in humanitarian assistance and development aid around the world, as well as in social assistance in France. Through its operations, SIF responds to the basic needs of the world's most vulnerable populations, guided by solidarity, respect for human dignity, and the humanitarian principles of neutrality, independence, and impartiality.



ADVOCACY

Lebanese Children Displaced Again in 2026:

Protection Risks and Required Actions

As a response to the conflict in Lebanon post March 2, 2026, SIF along with partners, provided hot meals in Mount Lebanon, family hygiene kits, shelter cleaning kits, and Ready-to-Eat (RTE) food baskets in Beirut, Mount Lebanon, and Saida. Additionally, SIF delivered the following activities in Beirut, Mount Lebanon (BML) and Saida:

- Recreational sessions and psychosocial support sessions (PSS) for caregivers and children
- Distribution of shelter recreational kits
- Shelter rehabilitation
- Safeguarding and prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) awareness sessions
- Community feedback mechanisms (CFM) awareness sessions
- Distribution of menstrual hygiene management kits (MHM) kits

Executive Summary

Lebanon's children are once again bearing the cost of war. Since hostilities reignited on 2 March 2026, at least 245 children have been killed and 957 injured in Lebanon (until 4 June)¹ More than 390,000 children have been displaced — many for the second, third, or fourth time. This paper presents an evidence-based analysis of the protection risks facing displaced children in Lebanon, grounded in data from humanitarian sources and supported by firsthand testimonies gathered by SIF through interviews with 38 displaced children and 6 caregivers under the Orphan Sponsorship Program. Three interconnected protection risks emerge as priorities:

- **Education disruption:** Out of 1250 public schools in Lebanon, over 435 have been repurposed as displacement shelters², cutting off more than 115,000 students from in-person learning. Children face compounded barriers to school closures, digital inequality, and economic hardship.

[1] ACAPS Briefing Note - Lebanon: Escalation of conflict and forced displacement in southern areas (09 June 2026)

[2] UNICEF, Press Release: "An Average of 19,000 Children Displaced Daily," 27 March 2026.

- Economic pressure and child labor: Lebanon’s pre-existing economic collapse — in which more than 75% of children already lived at risk of poverty³ — has deepened with fresh displacement, heightening the risk that children are pushed into labour to support their families.
- Psychosocial distress: An estimated 770,000 children are experiencing heightened psychological distress⁴, while formal mental health services remain critically under-resourced.

SIF calls on all stakeholders to take urgent action to protect children from the compounding harms of repeated conflict and displacement.

What is the Orphan Sponsorship Programme?

The Orphan Sponsorship Programme is a project implemented by SIF in Lebanon called: ‘Project Sponsorship Support to the Realization of the Rights of Orphaned Boys and Girls in Beirut and Mount-Lebanon’. Generally, it contributes to the realisation of the rights of the most vulnerable orphaned children, in particular their right to education and protection. Specifically, it contributes to improving access to education and protection for orphaned children through the payment of a grant. It supports 250 orphaned children (boys and girls) aged 2 to 18 years old, including vulnerable Lebanese, Syrians, Palestinian refugees from Syria in Lebanon (PRS), and Palestinian refugees in Lebanon (PRL).



Context: Children in Lebanon’s Cycle of Displacement

A Crisis Built on Compounding Crises

Lebanon’s children have been living under the weight of cascading crises for years: a catastrophic economic collapse beginning in 2019, the Beirut port explosion of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic, an escalation of hostilities with Israel in October 2023, a full-scale conflict in September–November 2024 and renewed hostilities since March 2026. Each crisis has progressively eroded the protective environments that children depend upon — stable homes, functioning schools, accessible health services, and secure family livelihoods.

Even before the latest escalation, the situation was already severe. 75% of children in Lebanon were at risk of poverty⁵ and more than 700,000 children were already out of school.⁶ Similarly, for Syrian and Palestinian children in Lebanon, the current crisis deepens pre-existing insecurity and vulnerabilities.

The Scale of the Current Displacement

On 2 March 2026, hostilities reignited following the ceasefire of 27 November 2024. By 13 April 2026, the Lebanese Ministry of Social Affairs estimated that 1.1 million individuals had been internally displaced, including 390,000 children.⁷ Within just three weeks of the escalation, more than 370,000 children had been forced from their homes at an average of 19,000 children displaced every single day.⁸ Displacement is distributed across formal collective shelters, rented accommodations, and informal settings while the displaced child population includes Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian children.

[3, 5, 6] UNICEF USA, “Children in Lebanon Are Paying the Price of 6 Months of Increasing Conflict,” 2024.

[4] UNICEF, Press Release: “At Least 59 Children Reportedly Killed or Injured in Lebanon,” 13 May 2026.

[7, 9] Lebanese Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA), Displacement Situation Report, 13 April 2026.

[8] UNICEF, Press Release: “An Average of 19,000 Children Displaced Daily,” 27 March 2026.

1.1M

individuals displaced by April 2026, including 390,000 children⁹

435+

public schools repurposed as shelters (out of a total of 1250 public schools), disrupting education for over 115,000 students¹⁰

660+

collective shelter sites, many overcrowded and unsafe¹¹

Analytical Scope

Protection Risk: Education Disruption

This paper draws on two complementary bodies of evidence. First, it synthesises findings from humanitarian sources drawing on situation reports, rapid assessments, and flash appeals published between 2024 and 2026. Second, it presents primary data gathered by SIF through a rapid qualitative assessment conducted in April–May 2026 with displaced children enrolled in SIF’s Sponsorship Project. A total of 38 displaced children were reached through Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), alongside 6 caregiver interviews. Out of the 38 children interviewed 23 were Syrian, 10 Lebanese, and 5 Palestinian, ranging in age from 6 to 17. As a rapid qualitative exercise, the assessment surfaces recurring protection concerns and lived experiences rather than statistically representative findings. Testimonies are presented throughout as field evidence grounding the broader data.

As of March 2026, the Lebanese Ministry of Education reported that all 390,000 enrolled public-school children had been provided with access to online learning¹² — yet over 255,000 of these children had been directly affected by school closures or the conversion of their schools into displacement shelters.¹³

Over 435 public schools were functioning as collective shelters by late March 2026, halting in-person education for more than 115,000 students.¹⁴ 16,400 youth were affected by closures of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions.¹⁵ While 55 public TVET schools progressively resumed in safer areas, 103 schools transitioned to online delivery.¹⁶ Prolonged education disruption risks increased dropout rates and exposure to negative coping mechanisms — including child labour and early marriage — particularly among displaced populations.¹⁷ Education crisis predates 2026 starting from October 2023 and the 2024 Israeli war on Lebanon which delayed the start of the school year by several weeks, disrupting learning for more than 1 million students.¹⁸

SIF’s interviews with displaced children confirm and deepen this picture. While many children remained formally enrolled, enrollment did not translate into regular and uninterrupted learning. Children described a layered pattern of disruption spanning full school closure, partial attendance, and a forced shift to online modalities for which many were not equipped.

“I stopped attending. Completely stopped studying, waiting for the war to end to return.”

— Child respondent, SIF assessment

“Not attending because my school hosts displaced people.”

— Child respondent, SIF assessment

[9] Lebanese Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA), Displacement Situation Report, 13 April 2026.

[10, 14] UNICEF, Press Release: “An Average of 19,000 Children Displaced Daily,” 27 March 2026.

[11] IPC, “Lebanon: Deepening Food Crisis Driven by Conflict Escalation,” April 2026.

[12, 13] Lebanese Ministry of Education, as cited in EU Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid – Lebanon, 2026.

[15, 16] UNICEF Lebanon, Humanitarian Flash Update No. 8, 16 April 2026.

[17] UNICEF Lebanon Appeal 2026, available at [unicef.org/appeals/lebanon](https://www.unicef.org/appeals/lebanon).

[18] UNICEF USA, “Children in Lebanon Are Paying the Price of 6 Months of Increasing Conflict,” 2024.

In addition, for those who did access online learning, quality and comprehension were frequently reported as inferior:

“Due to remote learning and displacement, it became difficult to understand subjects.”

— Child respondent, SIF assessment

“Online learning exhausted us. A lot of pressure and no good internet.”

— Child respondent, SIF assessment

Children’s reported needs were concrete and immediate: schoolbooks, stationery, internet connectivity, and a return to physical classrooms. As one child stated plainly: “education now is a service we need but cannot access.”

Protection Risk: Child Labor and Economic Pressure

Collapsing Livelihoods in Displacement Settings

The 2026 escalation has dealt a severe blow to the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of families in Lebanon — many of whom had already exhausted their savings and resources during prior waves of conflict and economic collapse. Displaced families across Lebanon have lost access to income as a direct consequence of fighting and evacuation, while damage to infrastructure and ongoing insecurity continue to obstruct access to food, healthcare, and essential services.¹⁹ Israeli attacks have destroyed farmland and disrupted livelihoods on a wide scale, directly undermining families’ rights to food and work.²⁰



[19] International Rescue Committee (IRC), “Lebanon’s Humanitarian Crisis Demands a Lasting Ceasefire,” Press Release, 3 June 2026.

[20] UN OHCHR, Situation in Lebanon, Press Briefing Note, 17 March 2026.

The economic dimensions of this displacement are acute. In March 2026 alone, the food Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket rose by 6%, while fuel prices surged between 41% and 83%, pushing basic household costs far beyond the reach of displaced families who had already spent their reserves.²¹ By April 2026, the IPC classified 1.24 million people in Lebanon as facing high levels of acute food insecurity, with the deterioration driven primarily by renewed conflict, mass displacement, and the near-total disruption of livelihoods and markets.²² Lebanese households are experiencing a sharp deterioration in food security driven directly by conflict escalation in southern districts, mass displacement, disrupted income sources, and rising living costs in areas hosting the largest numbers of displaced families.²³

Similarly, the food insecurity situation among Syrian refugees is worsening considerably as the widening humanitarian assistance gap, reduced labor opportunities, rising prices, and continued displacement and movement restrictions further erode an already fragile livelihood base.²⁴ Palestinian refugees as well remain among the most severely food-insecure groups in the country reflecting the compounding effect of the conflict on a population already facing deep structural vulnerability and a near-total dependence on humanitarian assistance that is increasingly insufficient.²⁵

Palestinian refugees in southern camps have lost their livelihoods entirely, with many residents and displaced families no longer able to work and lacking any alternative source of income.²⁶ Additionally, families who fled in 2024 returned to find their livelihoods gone, and their savings spent on survival — and those now displaced for a second or third time face an even steeper climb back.²⁷

From Hardship to Child Labor: A Pattern

When household income collapses and basic needs go unmet, children are among those who pay the price. This is not a new dynamic in Lebanon — it is a documented pattern that has recurred with every crisis wave, and the conditions driving it are now more acute than ever. During the 2024 war on Lebanon, a direct link was flagged between economic hardship and child labor with approximately 15% of surveyed families in Lebanon reporting they had already engaged a child in the labor market, spanning Lebanese, Syrian, and Palestinian households.²⁸

The 2026 escalation has deepened all of the conditions that drive this pattern: loss of income, destruction of livelihoods, rising food and fuel prices, and the breakdown of education. The disruption of in-person schooling “leads to an increased risk of child labor and early marriage for the most vulnerable, especially girls and children with disabilities.”²⁹ With over 115,000 students cut off from in-person learning and families across Lebanon stripped of their economic footing, the risk of children being pulled into labour is real, not hypothetical, and needs to be prevented. It is a predictable and documented consequence of precisely these conditions.³⁰

SIF’s assessment found that, among the children interviewed, overt child labour was not widely reported as a current daily reality. Most children described their time as shaped by a combination of education, play, and home-based activities. However, child labour is clearly identified as a possible coping strategy, and was explicitly mentioned by caregivers who noted that children may already be taking on temporary or

[21] IPC, “Lebanon: Deepening Food Crisis Driven by Conflict Escalation,” April 2026.

[22] Security Council Report, Lebanon Monthly Forecast, May 2026, citing IPC April 2026 update.

[23] Lebanese households facing high acute food insecurity (in IPC Phase 3 or above) are projected to nearly double from 484,000 to 725,000 people, IPC “Lebanon: Deepening Food Crisis Driven by Conflict Escalation,” April 2026.

[24] Syrian refugees in high acute food insecurity levels (in IPC Phase 4 or above) are projected to rise from 277,000 to 362,000 people, IPC “Lebanon: Deepening Food Crisis Driven by Conflict Escalation,” April 2026.

[25] Nearly half of the analyzed population in the IPC analysis are projected to be high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above), IPC “Lebanon: Deepening Food Crisis Driven by Conflict Escalation,” April 2026.

[26] UNRWA, Situation Report No. 6 on the Lebanon Emergency Response 2026, 9 April 2026.

[27] UNHCR USA, “Lebanon Refugee Crisis Explained,” 27 March 2026.

[28, 29, 30] Now Lebanon, “Lebanon’s Hidden Crisis: The Alarming Rise of Child Labour,” 26 June 2024, citing UNICEF study (2023): approximately 15% of surveyed families in Lebanon had engaged a child in the labor market.

informal work to reduce the economic burden on their families:

“Tiring but necessary — children work to help their parents in times of income shortage.”

— Caregiver, SIF assessment

Even children themselves articulated awareness of economic pressure as a threat to their stability and education:

“Financial situation is bad and I don't have internet for online learning.”

— Child respondent, SIF assessment

The protective norms expressed by children — “children should not work; they should focus on school” — are essential and must be respected, but they are fragile in the face of prolonged displacement and deepening poverty. The economic hardship captured in SIF's assessment may be an escalating driver of child labour risk that demands preventive action now, before it becomes irreversible.

Protection Risk: Psychosocial Distress and the Mental Health Services Gap

The psychological toll of Lebanon's cycle of conflict and displacement on children is severe. Approximately 770,000 children in Lebanon are currently experiencing heightened distress from repeated exposure to violence, loss, and displacement, with reported symptoms including extreme fear and worry, nightmares, sleeplessness, and feelings of hopelessness.³¹ These are not new wounds. Months after the 2024 war, a SIF survey assessing the mental health and psychosocial needs of children showed that 46% of children surveyed still experienced high levels of fear.³²



Images: ©SIF, Psychosocial activities conducted for children in Lebanon as part of SIF's Emergency Response & ongoing programmes, 2026

[31] UNICEF, Press Release: “At Least 59 Children Reportedly Killed or Injured in Lebanon,” 13 May 2026.

[32] SIF Survey Analysis “Children's Mental Health Assessment and War Impact in Lebanon”, January 2026, at: <https://www.secours-islamique.org/images/ressources/plaidoyer1/Childrens-Mental-Health-Assessment-and-War-Impact-in-Lebanon-January-2006.pdf>

However, with the continued instability children are facing in displacement settings specifically, the psychological toll is exacerbating further. Fear, anxiety, emotional instability, and a pervasive sense of insecurity were the most consistently reported impacts across children and caregivers SIF interviewed. Children described persistent worry about family safety and the psychological weight of interrupted routines and uncertain futures.



Image: ©SIF

“I fear losing my mother”

— Child respondent, SIF assessment

One caregiver described visible behavioral changes since displacement: “hyperactivity due to stress, anger, and increased ADHD symptoms,” reflecting how displacement does not merely generate emotional distress but can worsen pre-existing conditions. Furthermore, structured MHPSS services were largely absent from children’s accounts.

Children primarily relied on informal support networks — or parents especially mothers, relatives, and friends — as their main coping mechanisms:

“I do not know if there are any available and accessible MHPSS services.”

— Caregiver, SIF assessment

“There is service insufficiency and chronic service gaps in regard to MHPSS services.”

— Caregiver, SIF assessment

“Mother provides drawing and beads activities.”

— Child respondent, SIF assessment

“We spend time playing with our friends.”

— Child respondent, SIF assessment

Children living outside collective shelters described exclusion, noting that organised activities were oriented toward shelter populations and did not reach families in private accommodation. The delivery of MHPSS and recreational activities for children outside collective shelters remains severely constrained.³³

Additional Protection Concerns

Safety and Violence Risks

Overcrowded collective shelters create specific protection risks beyond the immediate threats of bombardment. The physical conditions in Lebanon's collective shelters have been extensively documented as unsafe, degrading, and deeply harmful to children. As of March 2026, shelters across multiple governorates were severely overcrowded and frequently lacked adequate sanitation facilities, privacy, and essential supplies. In Beirut Governorate, families were reportedly sheltering in the street, unfinished buildings, and makeshift tents, with hundreds of internally displaced persons spending nights in their vehicles or along roadsides due to the limited availability of suitable shelter space.³⁴ Such conditions heighten protection risks, particularly for women, girls, children, older people, and persons with disabilities.

SIF's interviews with displaced children directly reflect these documented conditions. Children in collective shelters described overcrowded living environments as a source not only of physical discomfort, but of heightened fear, loss of privacy, and interpersonal conflict.

“There are pressure and violence among children of the same age [in the shelter].”

— Child respondent, SIF assessment

Several children reported feeling “unsafe” along mobility routes, while others identified the wider community as a source of insecurity, stating they felt less safe “in the community.” Within shelters themselves, the absence of privacy and the forced mixing of large numbers of people in confined spaces generated significant psychological strain.

Gender Specific Risks

Gender-based violence is a significant protection concern in displacement settings, especially that overcrowded environments leave women and girls with limited privacy and reduced access to safe spaces.³⁵ Out of the 1 million displaced, 51.7% are women living in overcrowded insecure conditions.³⁶



Images: ©SIF, Food distributions in Lebanon as part of SIF's Emergency Response project, 2026

[34] OCHA Lebanon Flash Update No. 3, 7 March 2026

[35] UNICEF USA, “Children in Lebanon Are Paying the Price of 6 Months of Increasing Conflict,” 2024

[36] UN Women, “From homes to shelter halls: Lebanese women bearing the burden of displacement alone”, 5 May 2026.

In this line, children interviewed by SIF reported that protection risks do exist, but they are generally shared across genders given the generalized insecurity of the context and their presence in displacement settings with high protection risks. Among the gender-specific concerns reported by children were bullying, discrimination, and socially imposed restrictions on girls specifically. Caregivers linked these risks to economic hardship and displacement-driven reinforcement of harmful gender norms:

“Economic hardship as a result of the war increases protection risks faced specifically by girls.”

— Caregiver, SIF assessment

The Response Gap: Children Falling Through the Cracks

The evidence in this paper points not only to a protection crisis, but to a systemic gap between documented need and available response. UNICEF’s Lebanon humanitarian situation report from March 2026 noted an 86% funding gap, meaning that for every dollar needed to sustain critical services for children, less than 15 cents were available.³⁷

SIF’s findings consistently showed that access to child-focused services — educational support, psychosocial services, recreational activities, and protection interventions — was limited, inconsistent, and unevenly distributed. Most children reported that organized activities were either unavailable or unknown to them:

“There are no activities available. I don’t know where to go.”

— Child respondent, SIF assessment

A critical structural gap is the invisibility of children displaced outside of collective shelters. Children in private homes or informal settings are largely excluded from humanitarian outreach:

“We are living at home now. These services are not for us.”

— Child respondent, SIF assessment

Caregivers pointed to the role of worsening economic conditions in limiting service access:

Services are insufficient because expenses are really high.”

— Caregiver, SIF assessment

[37] UNICEF Lebanon, Humanitarian Situation Report No. 1, 19 March 2026.

Recommendations

SIF calls all parties in the conflict to cease immediately all attacks on civilians, and civilian infrastructures and commit to a genuine and permanent end to hostilities. The international community must deploy all available diplomatic levers to secure and sustain a full and permanent ceasefire and support independent, impartial investigations into reported violations of International Humanitarian Law, including attacks on civilians, healthcare, and civilian infrastructure, and grave violations against children.

Based on the evidence presented in this paper and the testimonies of displaced children and caregivers collected by SIF, the following actions are urgently required from all relevant stakeholders to ensure the protection of children:

1. Urgently mobilise sustained and flexible funding to enable the humanitarian community to meet immediate needs and to support early recovery and reconstruction.
2. Ensure safe, rapid and unimpeded humanitarian access to all affected communities, particularly in southern Lebanon.
3. Ensure the centrality of CP in humanitarian responses, especially displaced children impacted by insecurity and exposure to conflict-related harm.
4. Ensure safe, continuous, and inclusive access to education for displaced children by reducing barriers such as transportation costs, lack of internet connectivity, limited educational resources, and insufficient information on available support mechanisms, through rehabilitation of learning spaces, support for in-person and remote learning, and provision of books, stationery, internet access, and other educational materials and essential services.
5. Expand accessible child-focused mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services, including counselling, safe spaces, recreational activities, and community-based psychosocial interventions to help children cope with fear, stress, and instability.
6. Ensure displacement shelters and collective settings are child-sensitive and provide safe, private, and protective environments that safeguard children's dignity and wellbeing.
7. Strengthen age and gender sensitive child protection interventions addressing violence, bullying, and insecurity among children and adolescents in shelters.
8. Develop social stability programs to reduce community tensions.
9. Increase equitable and inclusive humanitarian assistance to families experiencing economic hardship through financial support, food assistance, and expanded distributions to reduce negative coping mechanisms and pressures affecting children's wellbeing and education.
10. Improve equitable and inclusive access to child-focused services for displaced families living both inside and outside collective shelters, including outreach in highly affected and underserved areas.