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How the Syrian Conflict Affected Syrian Children

Looking in Depth at the effect on their Education and the Increase of Child Labour in Lebanon

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Objective:

For my research, I wished to investigate the more uncommonly known effect of war, the increase of child labour. The Syrian war has created societal and economical circumstances that has forced many children to leave education and enter the work force. I focused on the current situation in Lebanon, as this country appears to have the highest rate of Syrian refugee children working and there is a lack of access to education for Syrian refugee children.

Background:

The Syrian conflict is an on going civil that began 15 March 2011. There has been 306,887 civil deaths and millions have been forced to flee their homes. Currently there are 5.7 million Syrian refugees registered in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt and many of these are children. This researched wanted to focus on the experiences of Syrian children as they have faced many risks throughout this war and their futures have been detrimentally affected. They have lost their families, childhood and years of education and the suffering these children experience carries on even after they have fled Syria. These children now face being subjected to child labour.

Child labour is work that deprives a child of their childhood, potential and their dignity. This work is harmful for their emotion development and physical well-being. Child labour differs from 'child employment' as this form of working implied that the work prevents that child from going to school.

Once again, many thanks to Lord Laidlaw, the Durham University team and my supervisor Dr Harris Dousemetizis for his guidance throughout this research



The situation in Lebanon:

This research focused on Lebanon as there are reports of 180,000 Syrian refugee minors working in Lebanon, which is an unacceptable number of children to be found in employment. These children are forced to work from early ages, even some being as young as three, which seriously effects their futures and development. 85% of children have been found to be employed in dangerous environment, which include; agriculture, welding, aluminum factories, slaughterhouses, sewage cleaning services, and street work - such as begging or washing cars. These children are expected to work ridiculously long hours, with one in four children working 11-15 hours a day and over a third work six days a week. These long hours hinders their development and creates a greater risk of injury.

Children who are working in these environments face extreme risks and health problems. It has been found that 79% of children reported knowing another child who had died following a work accident. These children have escaped a war zone; however they are still risking their lives everyday working in Lebanon. Highlighting why this research is important as these children are not receiving the protection they deserve.

This research also wanted to highlight how Lebanon are failing Syrian refugee children as they have made it extremely hard for children to access education. There are 660,00 school aged Syrian refugee in Lebanon but a UN assessment revealed that 200,000 children have never been to school. Children are prevented from going to school because the Labonese government has put policies in place that make it harder for children to access education, such as making it a requirement that children must have legal residency or documentation, which was likely left in Syria, in order to enroll in schools.



Solutions Proposed in My Findings:

This research found that Lebanon has many discriminatory policies against Syrian refugees which can be linked to the rise in child labour. Firstly, adults are prevented from working outside low-income sectors, which means that families must rely on their children working in order to survive. The government needs to amend these policies to allow Syrian refugees access to higher income jobs, which will then decrease the need for families to rely on their children.

Throughout the research it is clear there is a demand for Syrian children as they are cheap labour, Lebanon needs to put more regulations and check in place to ensure that companies are not using children in their businesses.

Another solution proposed was that the international community need to provide more aid – especially considering third parties involvement in the war - this aid will be used for social assistance, as grants could be given to Syrian families to again decrease the need for children to work for their family's survival.