

Terre des hommes COVID-19 Rapid Needs Assessment in the Palestinian Camps of Lebanon

June 2020



Terre des hommes

Helping children worldwide.



Introductory summary

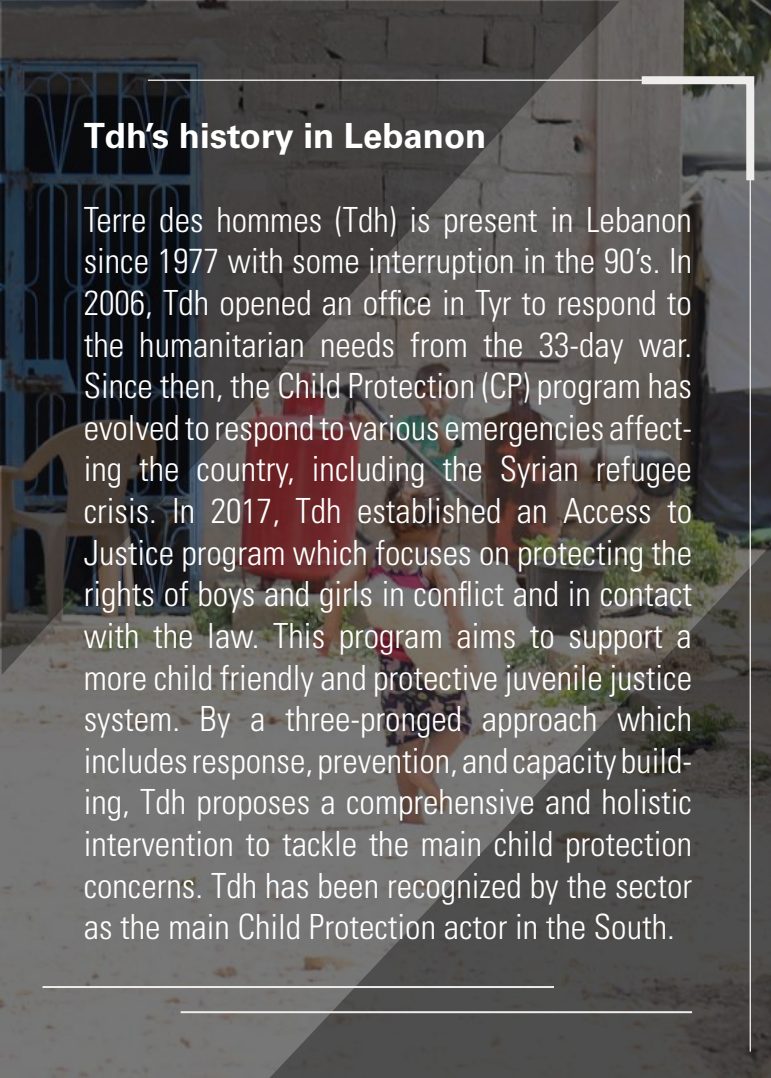
Amid COVID-19 crisis, Terre des hommes (Tdh) conducted a Rapid Needs Assessment which purpose was to address Child Protection trends and gaps in 7 Palestinian camps as well as the outbreak's impact and camps inhabitants' behaviour during the pandemic. This report confirms that populations' needs have increased in a context where several crises are having a devastating impact on the most vulnerable. Tdh identified child abuse, sexual and gender-based violence, children with specific needs, child labour and neglect, denial of services and resources as well as early marriage as the main protection concerns.



Background and Objectives

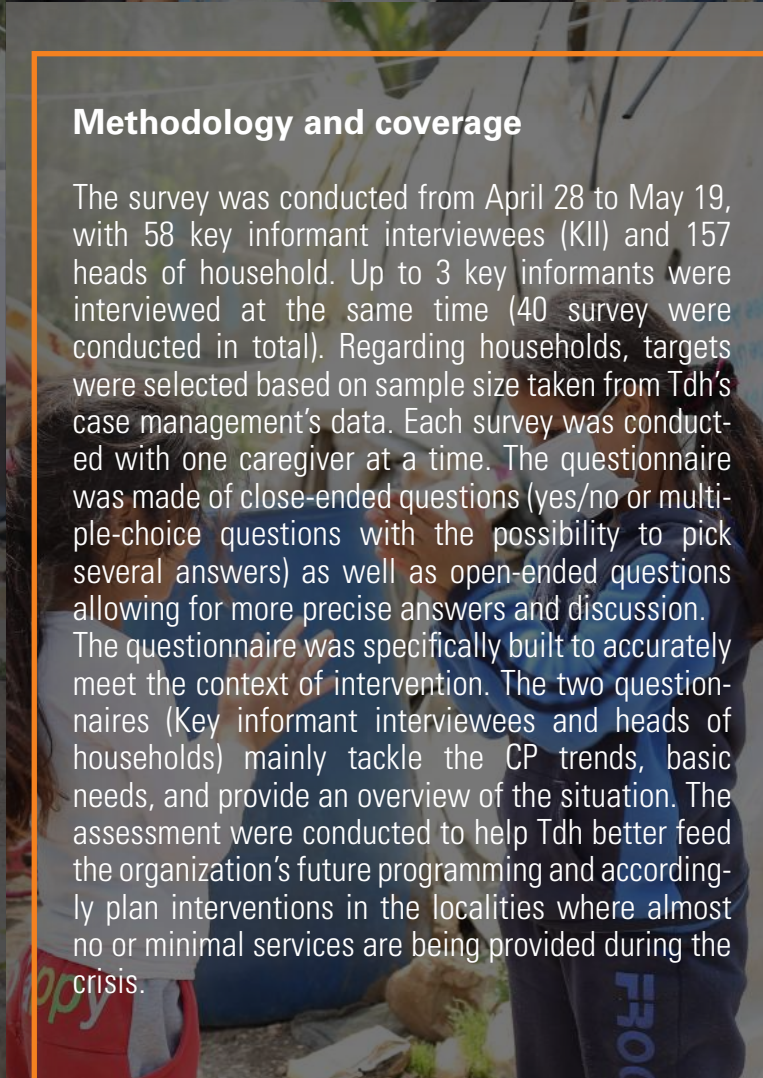
While achieving at the end of February a one year and half intervention in Palestinians camps over Lebanon, Tdh took the initiative to start a Rapid Needs Assessment right after the government declared the general mobilization related to COVID-19 pandemic. The outbreak came in an already very critical context of severe economic crisis impacting the whole population of Lebanon and obviously reinforcing the poverty of Palestine refugees living in the camps. The confinement and restriction measures have significantly complicated the protection process of the most vulnerable: increased cases of child marriage, child abused and/or harassment and violence against girls and women have been observed in the three-month period (March 2020 to May 2020).

The assessment came in a crucial moment when some vulnerable population are excluded from humanitarian interventions due to specific criteria (unregistered/undocumented refugees, vulnerable Lebanese that are not registered under Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA), etc). The ever-growing needs also prevent the provision of a tailored and sufficient response. In order to respond to the increased demand, Tdh's Rapid Needs Assessment's objective was to sharply understand Palestinian populations' needs.



Tdh's history in Lebanon

Terre des hommes (Tdh) is present in Lebanon since 1977 with some interruption in the 90's. In 2006, Tdh opened an office in Tyr to respond to the humanitarian needs from the 33-day war. Since then, the Child Protection (CP) program has evolved to respond to various emergencies affecting the country, including the Syrian refugee crisis. In 2017, Tdh established an Access to Justice program which focuses on protecting the rights of boys and girls in conflict and in contact with the law. This program aims to support a more child friendly and protective juvenile justice system. By a three-pronged approach which includes response, prevention, and capacity building, Tdh proposes a comprehensive and holistic intervention to tackle the main child protection concerns. Tdh has been recognized by the sector as the main Child Protection actor in the South.

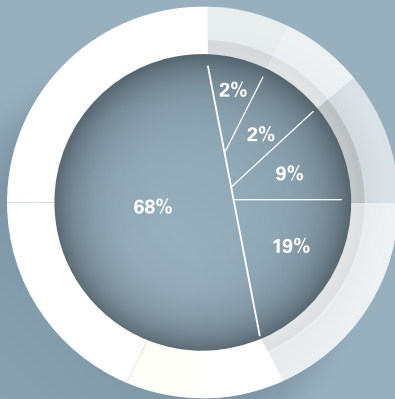
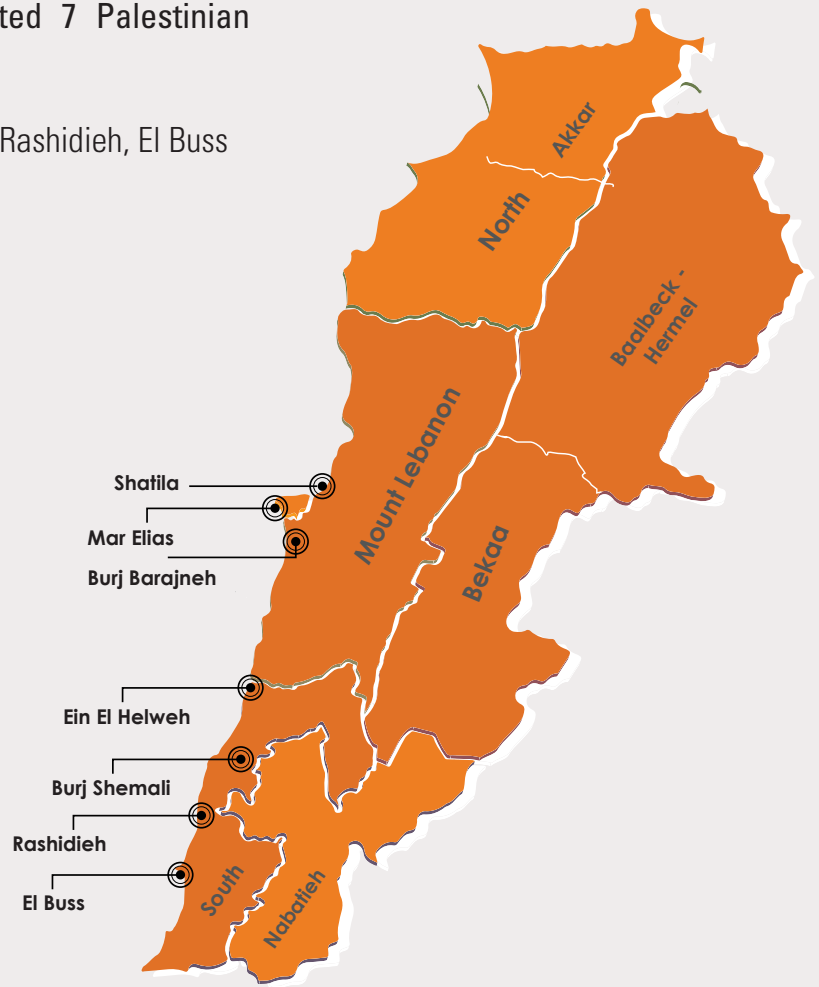


Methodology and coverage

The survey was conducted from April 28 to May 19, with 58 key informant interviewees (KII) and 157 heads of household. Up to 3 key informants were interviewed at the same time (40 survey were conducted in total). Regarding households, targets were selected based on sample size taken from Tdh's case management's data. Each survey was conducted with one caregiver at a time. The questionnaire was made of close-ended questions (yes/no or multiple-choice questions with the possibility to pick several answers) as well as open-ended questions allowing for more precise answers and discussion. The questionnaire was specifically built to accurately meet the context of intervention. The two questionnaires (Key informant interviewees and heads of households) mainly tackle the CP trends, basic needs, and provide an overview of the situation. The assessment were conducted to help Tdh better feed the organization's future programming and accordingly plan interventions in the localities where almost no or minimal services are being provided during the crisis.

The Rapid Needs Assessment targeted 7 Palestinian camps where Tdh is operating:

- In the South: Ein El Hilweh, Burj Shemali, Rashidieh, El Buss
- In Mount Lebanon: Shatila, Burj Barajneh
- In Beirut: Mar Elias



"Gender and Citizenship"

68% Palestinian Males
19% Palestinian Females
9% Lebanese Males
2% Lebanese Females
2% Other Females

Key Informants Interviewees' profile

58 Key informant interviewees from different nationality, gender and age group participated to Tdh's RNA. Most of them are Palestinian male (69%).

Figure 1: Most of the RNA's KII are popular committee members (24%), CBO staff (16%), CPN members (10%) or Faith-based actors (10%).

Heads of household's profile

157 family's caregivers were interviewed within the 7 camps. Most of them are Palestinian females (46%) and males (27%).

"Gender and Citizenship"

27% Palestinian Males
46% Palestinian Females
8% Syrian Males
16% Syrian Females
1% Lebanese Males
2% Lebanese Females

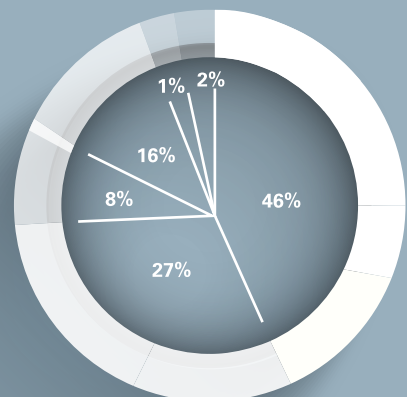


Figure 2: Most of the head of household interviewed are popular community members (45%) or house wives (38%).

KEY FINDINGS

Tdh's RNA findings explore the impact of the COVID-19 crisis and its associated increasing needs. Economical aspects such as the source of income, households' main contributor, populations' coping mechanisms, and most urgent needs during the pandemic are presented. RNA's main results also provide a precious insight into the protection concerns with a specific focus on psychosocial needs. As its core field of expertise, Tdh emphasizes on child protection and gender-based violence issues.

Impact of COVID-19

Whatever the effects, COVID-19 has impacted people around the world and put the most vulnerable at increasing risk. Palestinian camps' households' respondents stated that work interruption (58% in South ; 42% in BML), panic and stress (51% ; 42%) as well as confinement (40% ; 50%) were the most important effects on lives.

IMPACT OF COVID-19

Work interruption

58% in South and 42% in BML



Panic and Stress

51% in South and 42% in BML



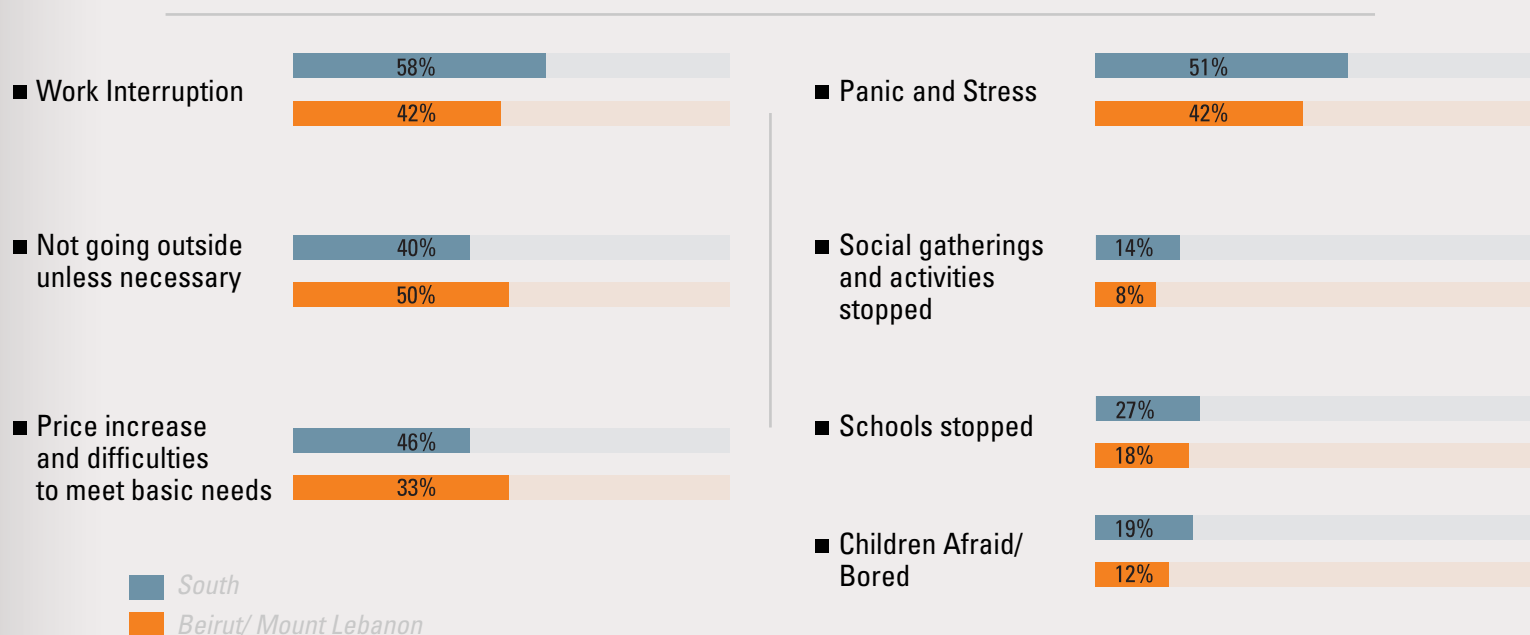
Impossibility to go outside

40% in South and 50% in BML



Figure 3: Impact of COVID-19

Percentage of Households mentioning the following COVID-19 impacts

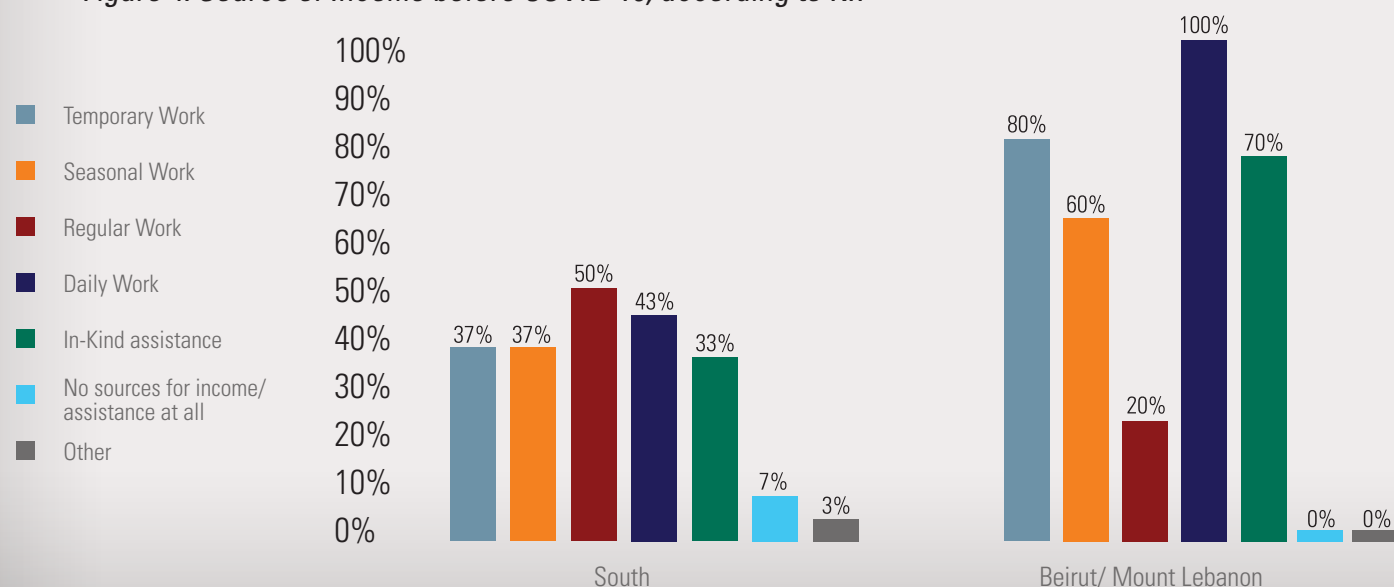


INCOME

Source of income

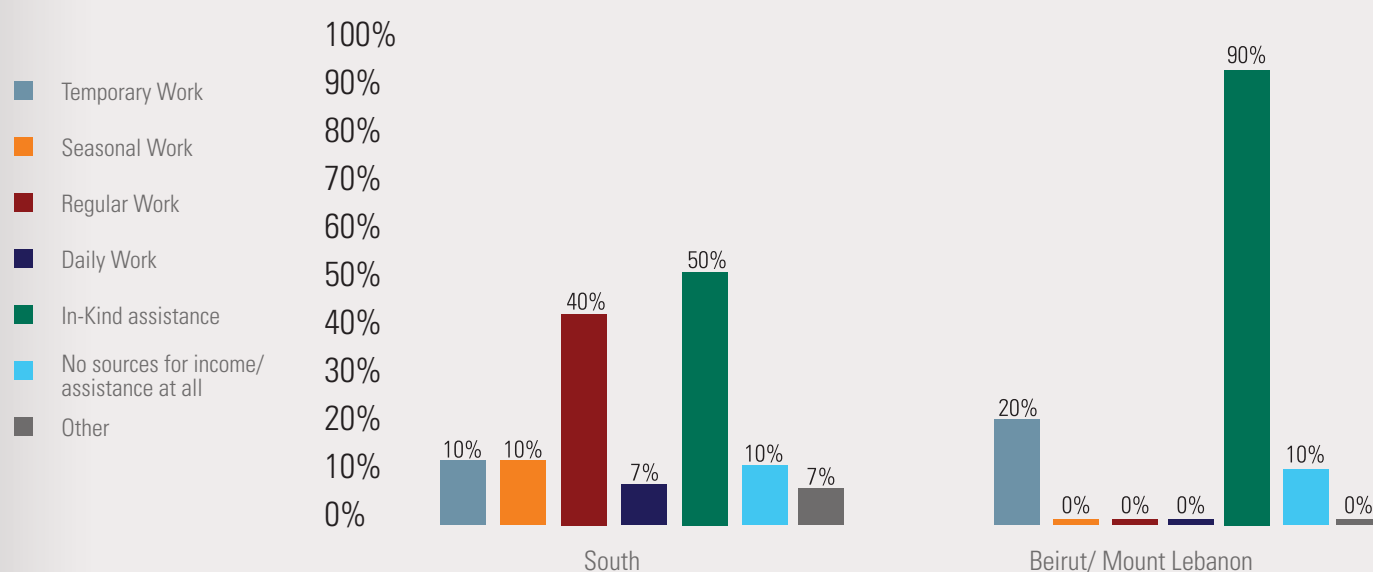
The COVID-19 pandemic is significantly impacting the source of income of camps' population. In addition to the financial difficulties related to the already deteriorated situation, the source of income has evolved since the pandemic outbreak. According to the World Food Program¹ 39% of Palestinians living in Lebanon have lost their jobs since COVID-19 outbreak and 21% have seen their wages decrease. Tdh's RNA confirms the analysis and highlights the fact that income has reduced for 62% of Palestinians over the past year while 11% have resorted to alternative income sources to maintain previous level.

Figure 4: Source of Income before COVID-19, according to KII



¹ WFP Lebanon, Assessing the Impact of the Economic and COVID-19 Crises in Lebanon, June 2020.

Figure 5: Source of Income during COVID-19, according to KII

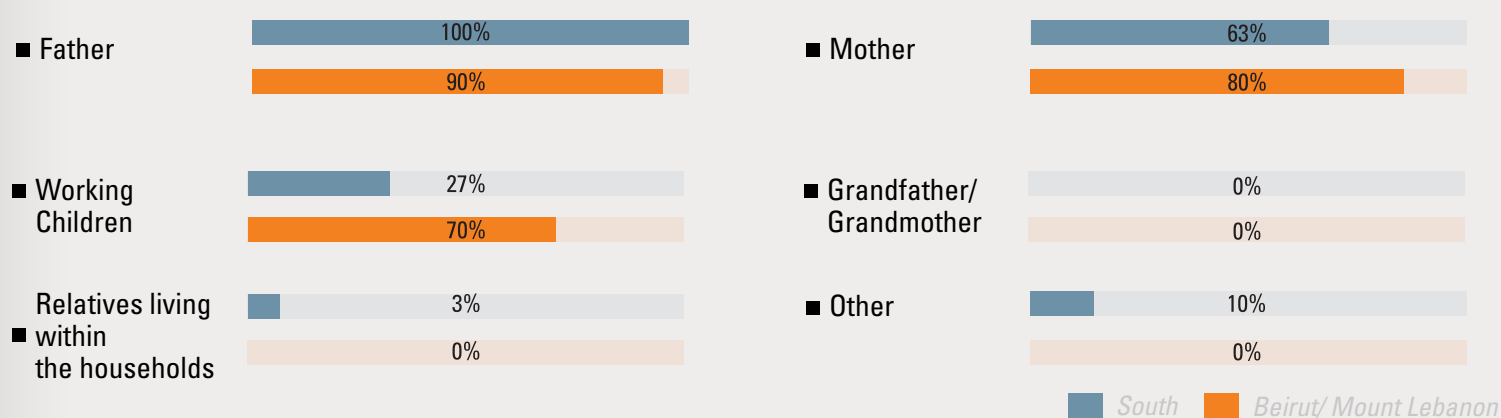


As illustrated, in-kind assistance has increased in the same proportions in the South and in Beirut/Mount Lebanon during Covid-19, becoming in both geographical areas the main source of income. This is correlated with huge decrease of temporary work, seasonal work and daily work. Regular work is still mentioned by 40% of the KII in the South while it's not present at all in BML. This shows a huge dependency to in-kind assistance providers during this crisis period.

FAMILIES' MAIN CONTRIBUTOR

Youth are often considered as households' bread winners. Harsh times such as the COVID-19 pandemic and its terrible economic consequences put children under greater pressure to carry the burden of the whole family. Tdh's teams noted that more children are forced to work. This is confirmed by 70% of the KII in BML saying that working children are one of the main contributors to the family income.

Fig 6: Percentage of KII mentioning the following persons as families economic contributor



MOST URGENT NEEDS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Access to health services, food security and livelihood were also part of Tdh's assessment as they were considered as key topics to be explored in a context of heightened crisis. Their deterioration is intimately related to the lack of resources exacerbated by the health crisis.

ACCESS TO HEALTH SERVICES

Figure 7: Percentage of head of households who stated the following as main barriers to access health services

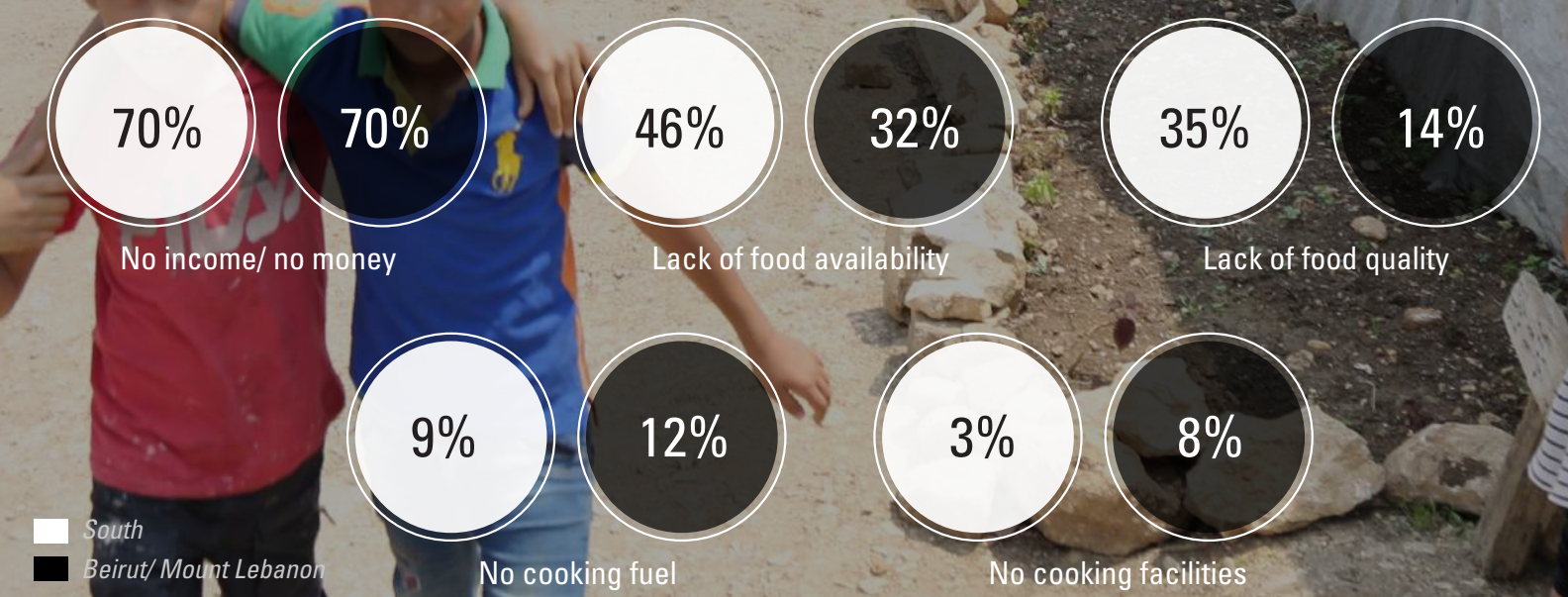


Following households' interviewees, financial reason is the most stated one when it comes to barriers to access health services in the South (93%) and in Beirut/Mount Lebanon (86%). The series of concurrent and mounting crises faced by camps' inhabitants directly involves putting them at higher risks, specifically when it comes to health matter.

FOOD SECURITY

Figure 8: Percentage of head of households who stated the following as main concerns related to food

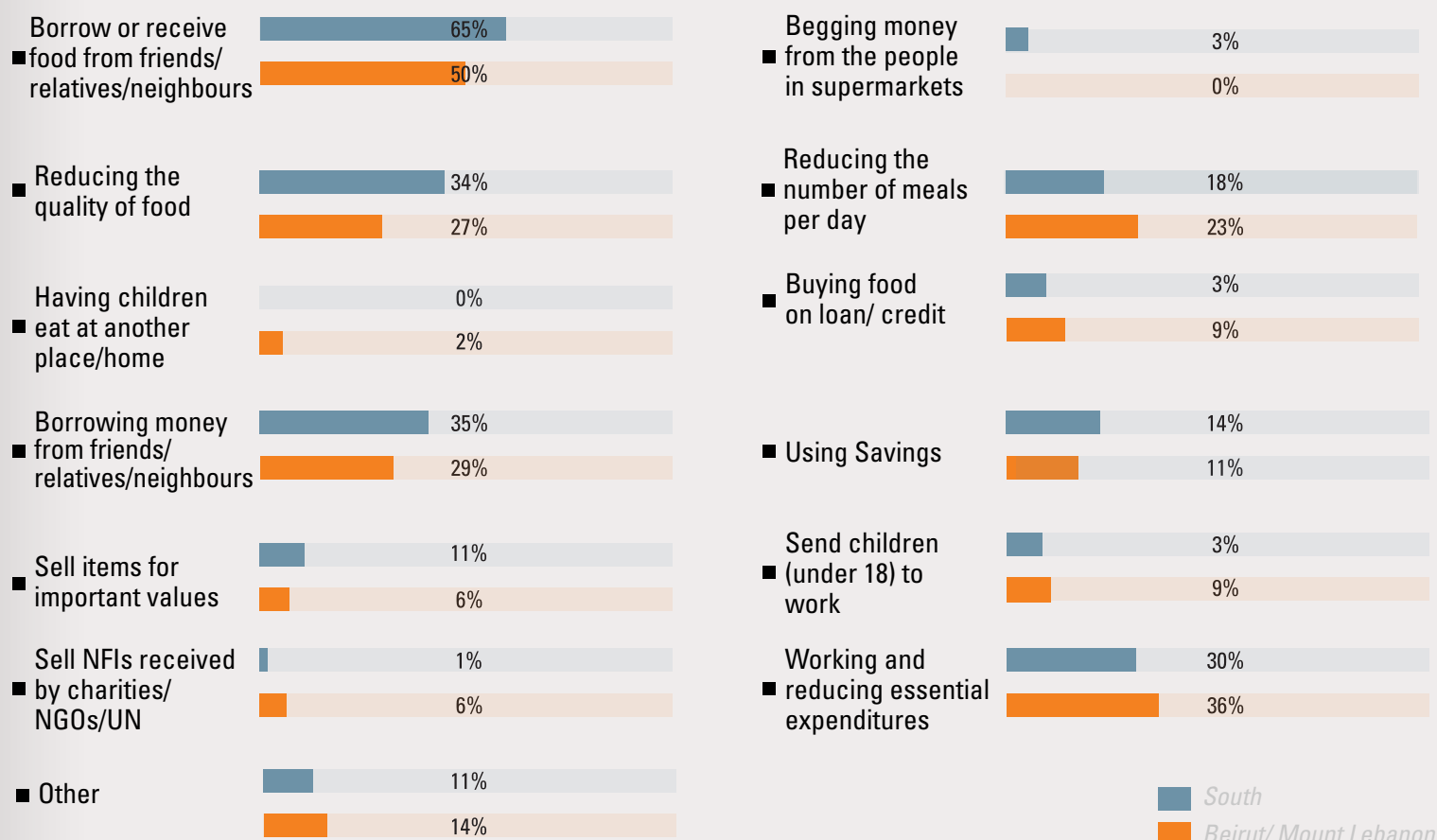
According to the household respondents, the main concerns related to food are the lack of income (70%) as well as lack of food's availability and quality food. Concerns about lack of food contribute to increased stress levels and fear of not having enough food: following WFP, 63% of the Palestinians felt worried about not having enough food to eat in the last month.



LIVELIHOODS AND BASIC NEEDS

Refugees from Palestine living in camps resort to different means to cover their basic needs. Among the covered regions, the most mentioned ways include borrowing or receiving food from relatives (65% in the South ; 50% in BML), working and reducing essential expenditures (30% ; 36%), borrowing money (35% ; 29%) and reducing the numbers of meals (18% ; 23%).

Figure 9: Percentage of households starting the following as means to cover basic needs

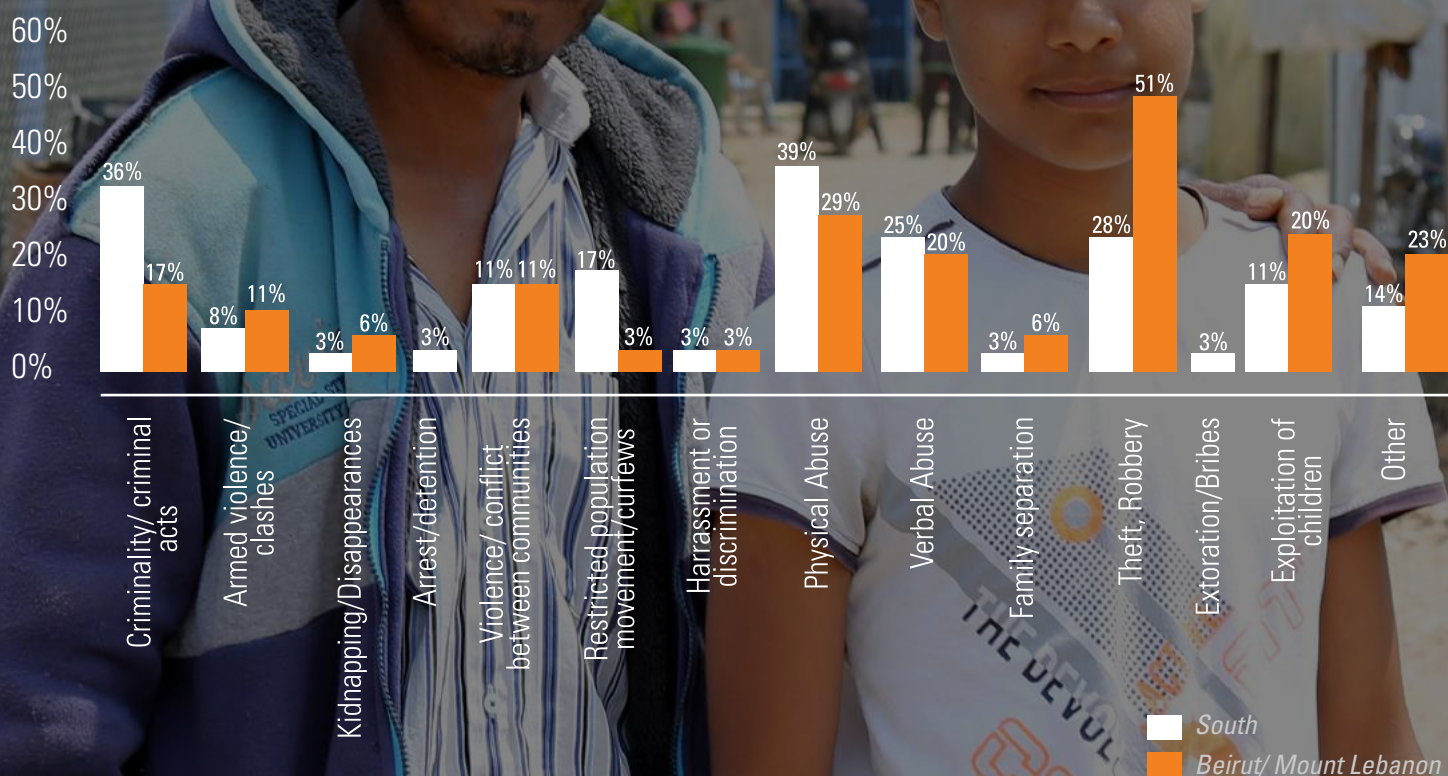


PROTECTION CONCERNS AND PSYCHOSOCIAL NEEDS

PROTECTION CONCERNS

Protection incidents have increased during the COVID-19 period. 57% of the KII reported an increase in protection incidents in the South and 70% of KII in Beirut/Mount Lebanon. The households' caregivers stated physical abuse, criminal acts and theft as the most common incidents & protection concerns.

Figure 10: Percentage of KII mentioning the following as main ongoing incidents and protection concerns



PSYCHOSOCIAL NEEDS

As observed by Tdh's RNA, pandemic's situation has led to reactions of fear, despair and insecurity, thus increasing stress and aggressivity levels. The lock down effect, worsened by the absence of income, reinforced by the fear of contamination led to the modification of the daily routine and generated a high level of stress among the community members.

Figure 11: KII's perceptions of the situation

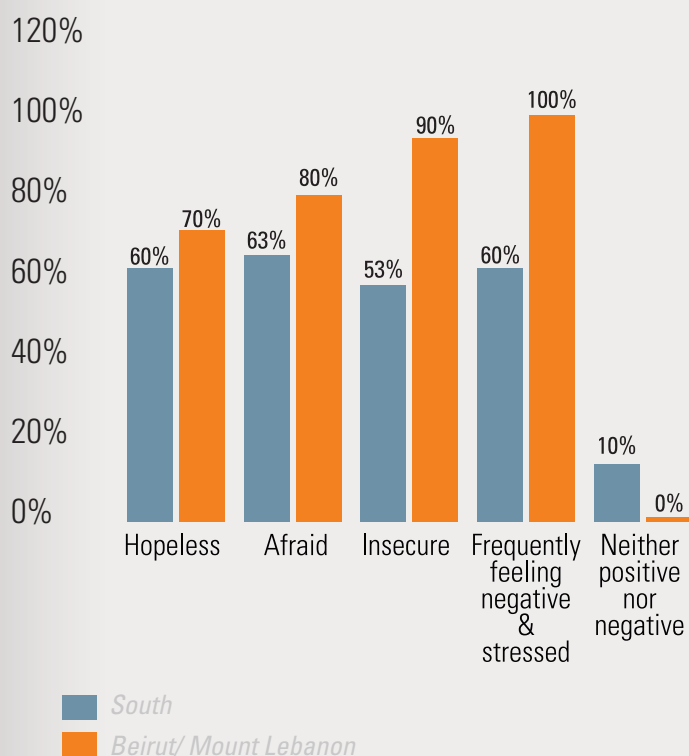
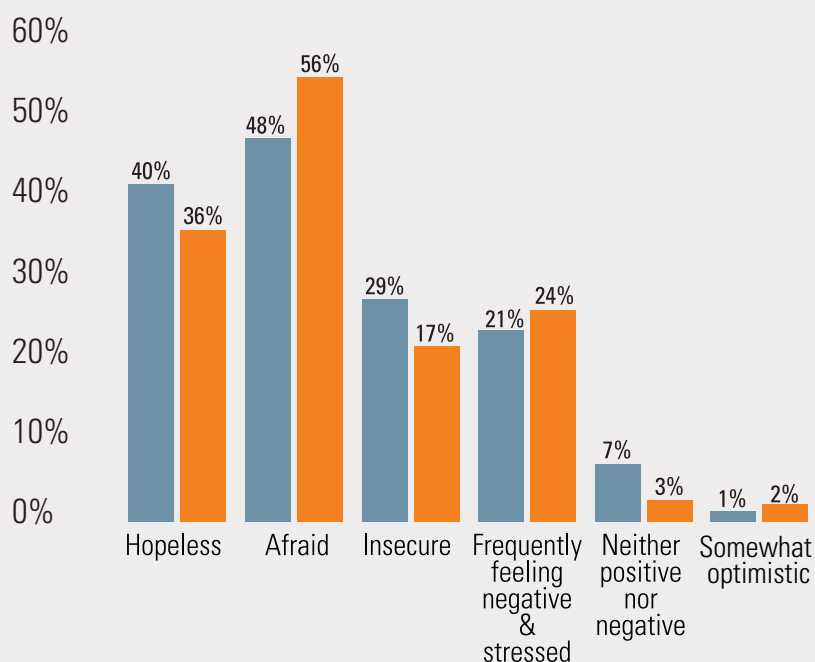


Figure 12: Heads of household's perceptions of the situation



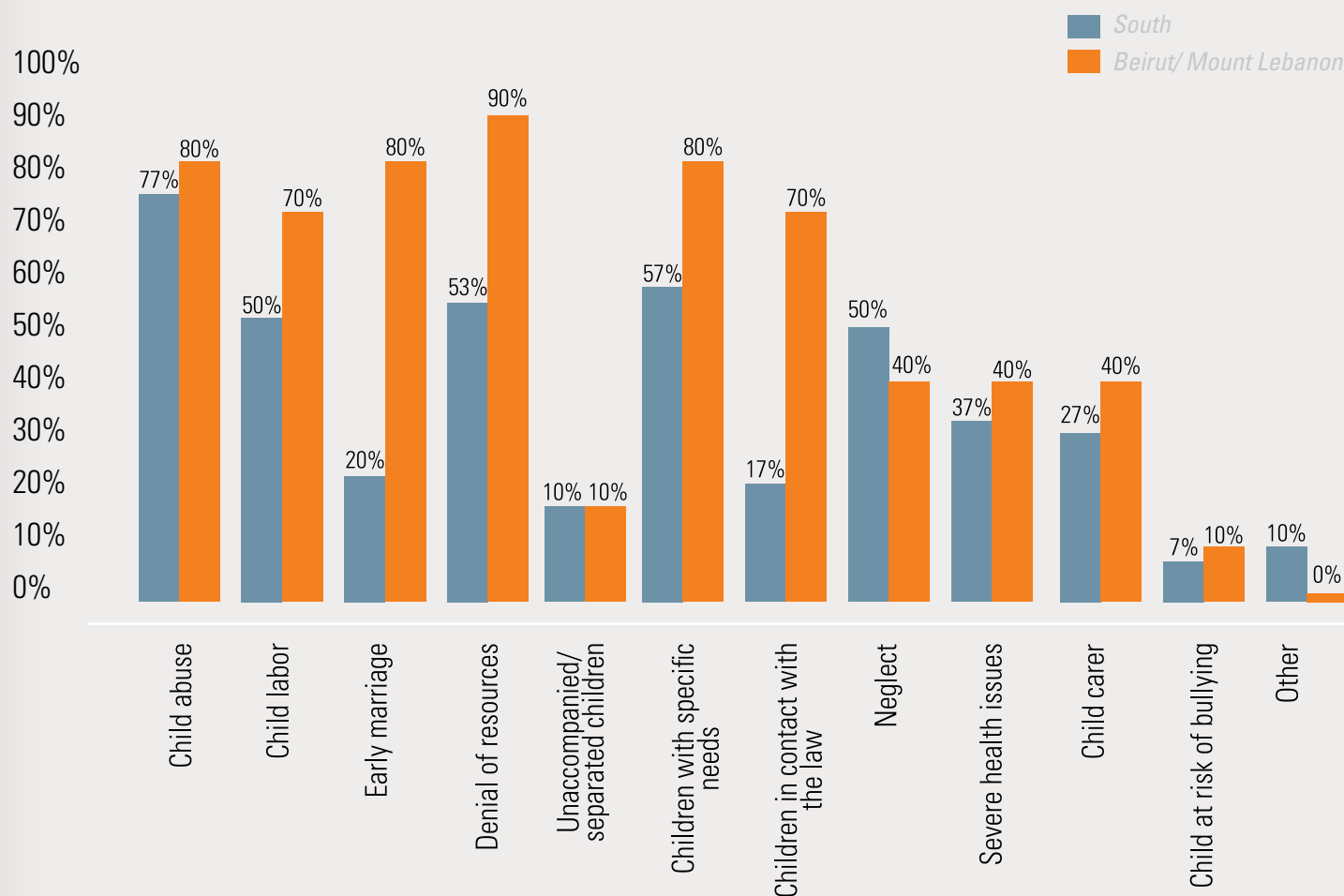
CHILD PROTECTION

Children directly suffered from the crisis. First, they face the economical impact as their access to food or health services is severely reduced. Then, they are also subject to negative coping mechanisms such as child labour forcing them to bring an income home. Schools were also closed and consequently interrupting, putting an end to accessing a learning or educational space for children. When asked, the head of household clearly mentioned the following gaps and needs: basic assistance (food, hygiene, etc.), psychosocial programs to support children's mental health and support on stress relief as well as studying materials.

CHILD PROTECTION TOP PRIORITIES

According to the KII, the main protection concerns are denial of services and resources, child abuse, child labor and neglect, children with specific needs and early marriage.

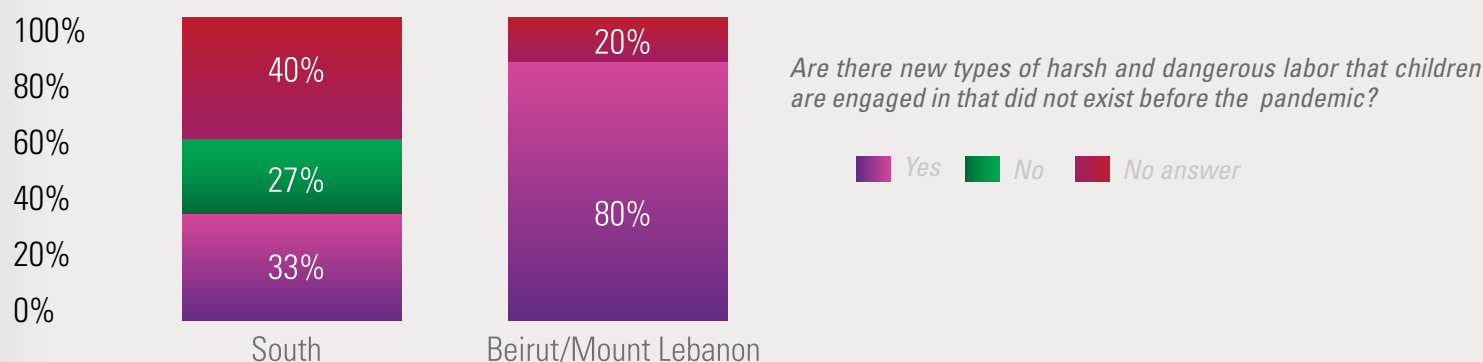
Figure13: Percentage of the KII mentioning the following Child Protection concerns



CHILD LABOR

According to the KII, new harsh and dangerous labor for children has been witnessed in the South, Beirut and Mount Lebanon. This is particularly strong in BML where 80% of KII answered that there is an increase of harsh child labor during pandemic. These are composed of children working voluntarily to support themselves and/or their families, children sent to engage in such work by their parents/caregivers, children sent to engage in such work by people other than their caregivers. Tdh teams have noticed that children working in the street have moved more than usual from one place to another to find income opportunities. This was particularly observed in Saida and Beirut area.

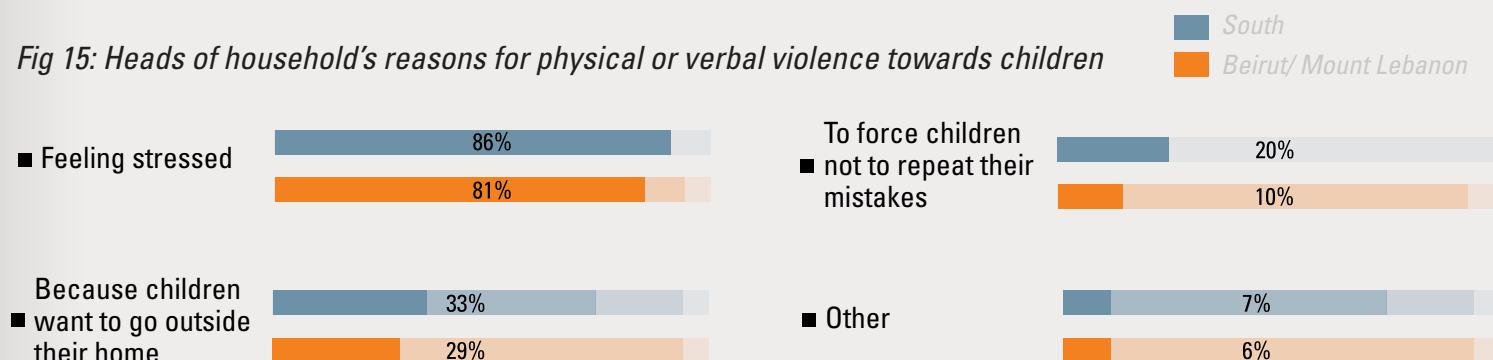
Fig 14: Increase of harsh child labor during pandemic, following KII.



PHYSICAL OR VERBAL VIOLENCE

During COVID-19, Tdh field teams have been continuously providing assistance to the most vulnerable. They have witnessed an increase of physical and verbal violence against children that is confirmed by the RNA. The most-mentioned reasons are closely related to the health crisis and its day-to-day consequences. The complexity of the COVID-19 socio-economic consequences on individuals, families and communities' abilities to access services and to sustain livelihood means, can further weaken community and family safety nets and consequently the protective elements in children's lives.

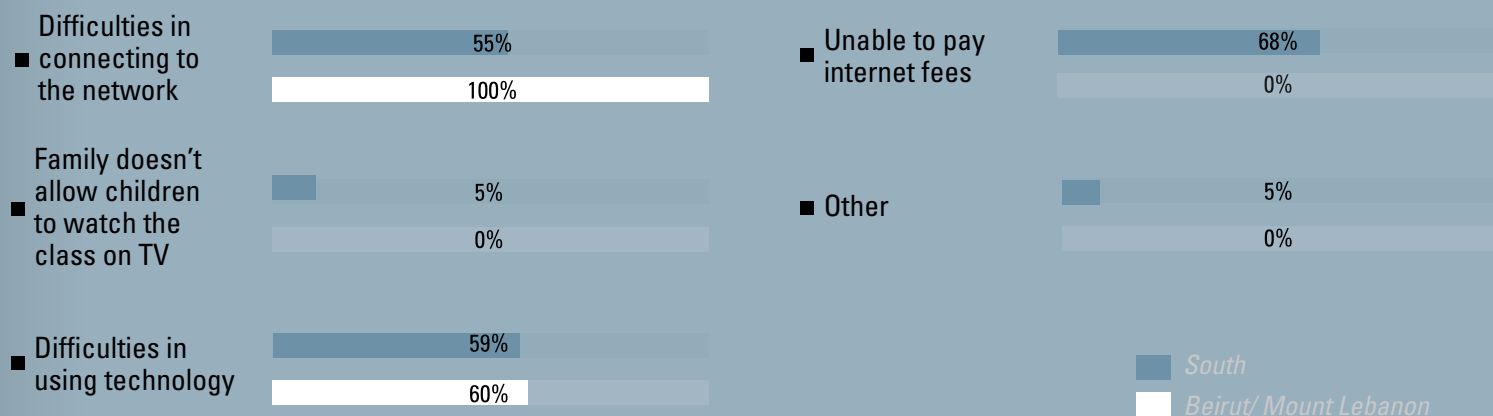
Fig 15: Heads of household's reasons for physical or verbal violence towards children



EDUCATION

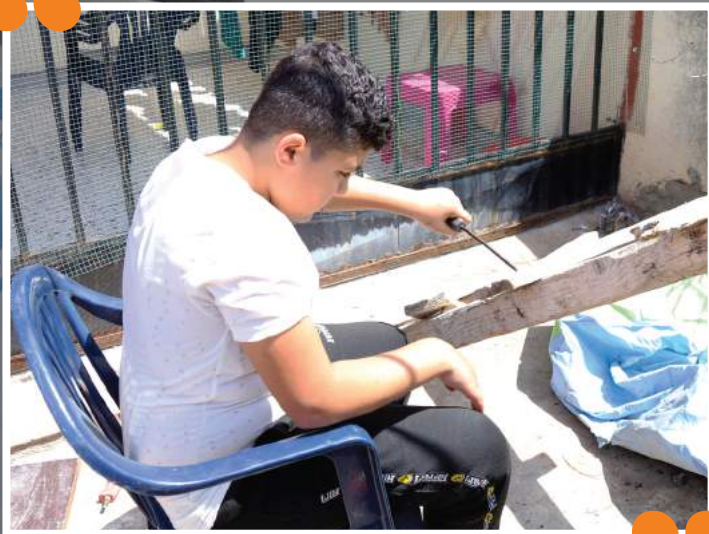
Despite the encouraging fact that more than 50% of children could follow distance learning program while at home, many challenges remained. In Palestinians camps, the availability of electricity and internet are not always granted and most of the household are living in crowded places, small houses that are not allowing a relevant learning space. The unequal access to education services can trigger long lasting inequalities putting the most vulnerable children at risk of drop out and consequently at heightened child protection risks.

Fig 16: Difficulties encountered to use distance learning



CHILDREN PSYCHOSOCIAL WELLBEING

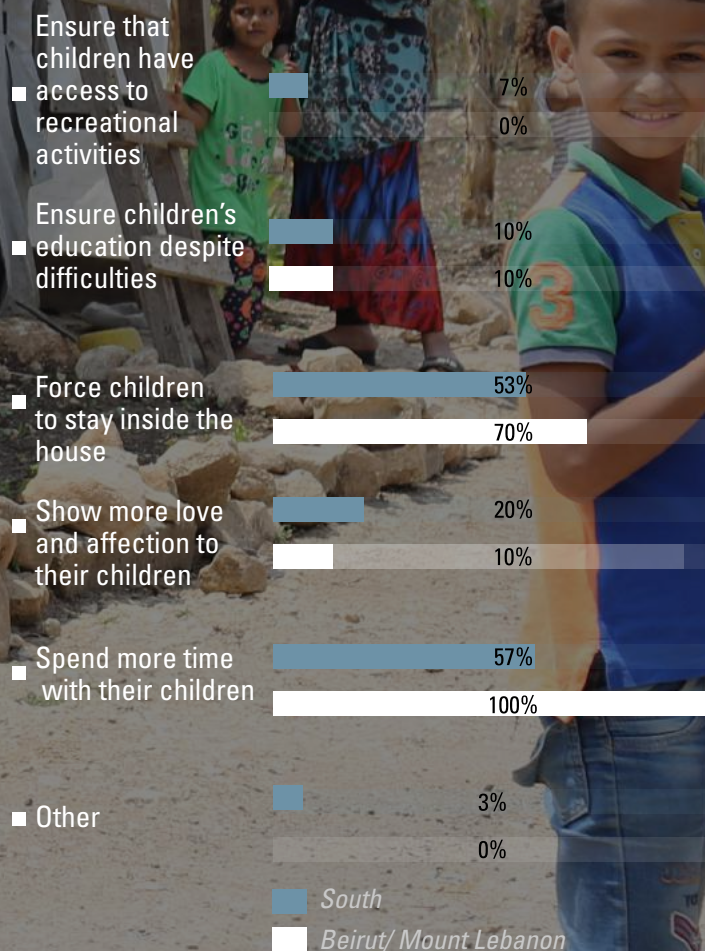
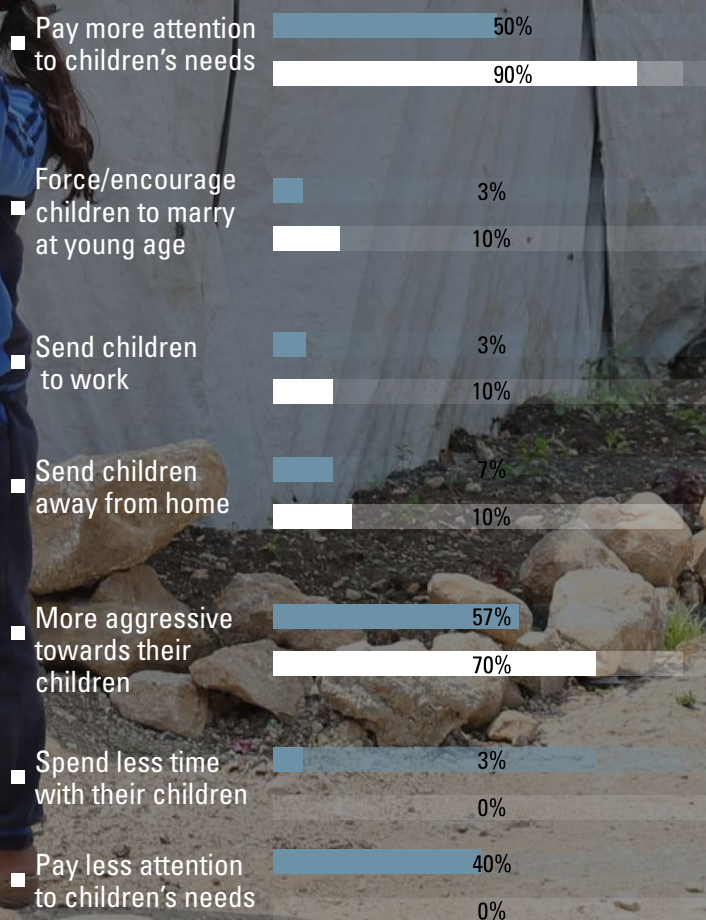
Following Tdh's RNA and field's observations, children had mixed feelings about the COVID-19 and its consequences. Some of them had the chance to enjoy the company of their family and relatives but were frustrated not being able to go out. Some others have had to undergo the increasing aggressivity within their homes.



Omar is a 12 year old Palestinian boy, he lives in a Palestinian gathering in Southern Lebanon. He used to work in the streets to help his parents with earning money. Within the Coronavirus outbreak, Omar is exposed to a big danger that may affect his life. Tdh's caseworker learned about his case, worked with his parents and convinced them to stop Omar from working and to quarantine in order to protect his health and family. Now Omar is at home, taking into consideration all the prevention guidelines and practicing one of his favorite hobbies: fixing and constructing some stuff.

"I felt insecure, watching everyone taking precautions and I didn't know what I have to do... but now I feel safe!"

Fig 17: Percentage of KII stating the following changes in caregiver's attitude towards their children



Undoubtedly, the situation affected children psychosocial wellbeing. Incomprehension, fear and possible violence are all factors that weigh on children and can leave important scars. The protracted lack of access to education and socialization opportunities, overcrowded spaces in houses and caravans,

increasing overlapping stressors to the family environment, among others, exacerbate the risk to children's psychosocial wellbeing, the ability to resort to positive social and emotional skills, to protect themselves from negative and risky behaviours. Among the coping mechanisms identified by the RNA, children relied on family's or friends' support, resorted to social media or enjoyed activities with their families, cooking, online games and music.

Conclusion

Gaps

Tdh's RNA shows that an intervention in the Palestinian camps is more important than ever. Needs in terms of food, livelihood, protection, education as well as access to health services and psychosocial support are drastically increasing. The worsening situation is to be analysed in a context of decreasing humanitarian support.

The assessment, conducted during the COVID-19 crisis, shows the pandemic's harsh impacts as well as the high level of needs. The erosion of livelihood means and the protracted limitation of the access to labour market is eroding the capacity of the families to continue resorting to positive coping strategies. Negative coping strategies such as incurring debt, child labour and child marriage, domestic violence against girls, boys and women are therefore on the rise. Meanwhile, vulnerable households' ability to access essential services is narrowed because of the series of concurrent and mounting crises. People with specific needs are at heightened risk of paying the utter consequences of the socio-economic impact of the pandemic. All of these factors exacerbate the risk to children's and their caregivers' psychosocial wellbeing, the ability to resort to positive social and emotional skills and to protect themselves from negative and risky behaviours.

Recommendations

The RNA's key findings and their correlated gaps must not remain unaddressed. Tdh's recommendations emphasize the following elements:

- It is essential to mitigate the disruptions to livelihoods through all appropriate means including CASH distributions.
- More than ever, life-saving interventions must be available as high-risk protection cases are harshly increasing. Specific focus should be given to cases related to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).
- Marginalized individuals, including vulnerable children, must be supported to access health services, food and basic needs.
- To secure families' income, alternative means must be found and implemented to reduce the number of working children.
- In view of the worsening situation and its psychosocial consequences, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) must be made available to the most vulnerable populations. Particular attention should be paid to children who are being severely affected in their development.

Tdh's intervention in the Palestinian camps

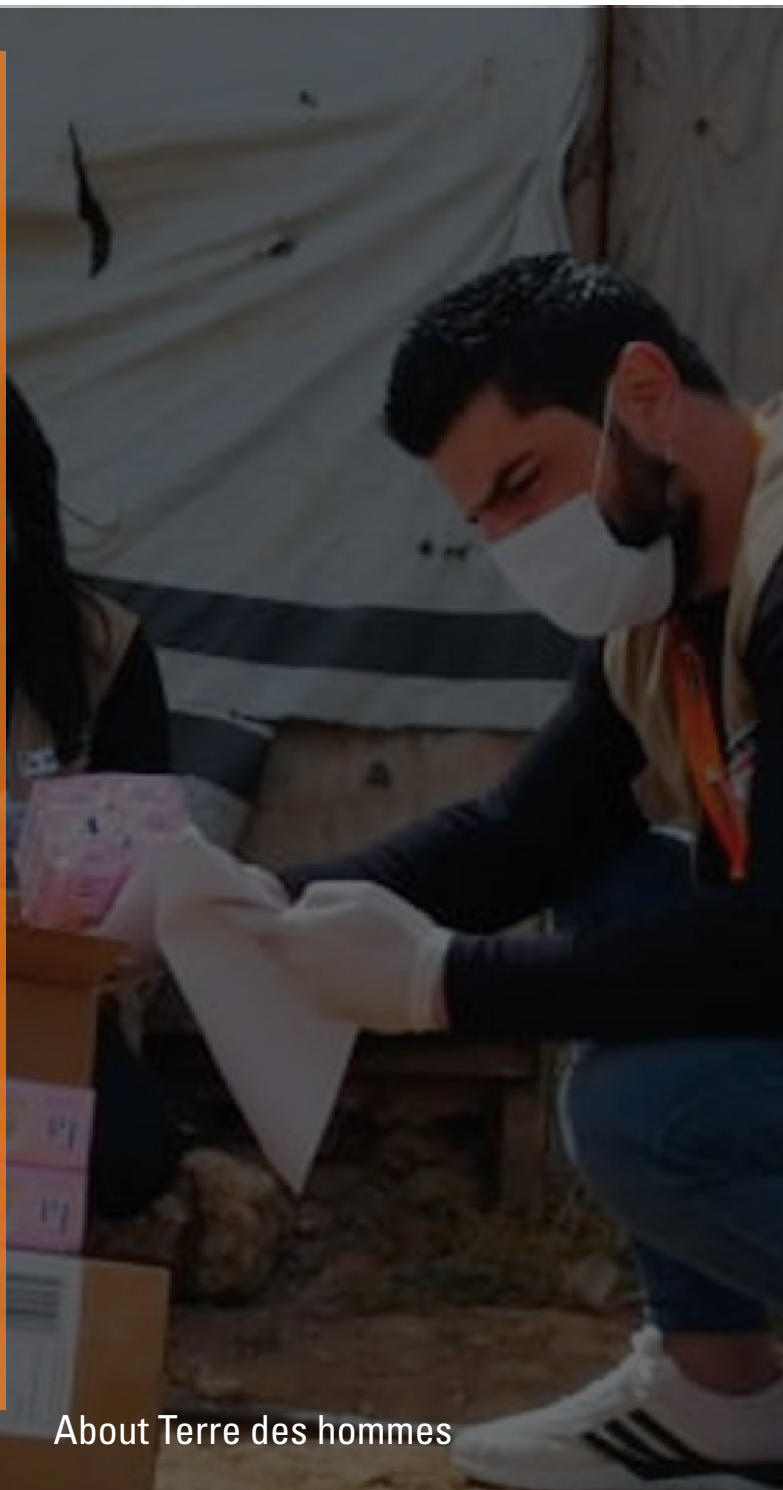
Following UNRWA, over 470,000 Palestinians are registered as refugees in Lebanon, out of which 45% live in the country's 12 refugee camps. Lebanon hosts Palestinian refugees from Lebanon (PRL) as well as Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS). The camps are characterized by overcrowding, poor housing conditions, high unemployment, poverty and lack of access to justice making the camps a rough place to live, especially for the youngest children.


Tdh has an unhindered access to Palestinian camps, particularly in the South of Lebanon. Thanks to its long experience in the Palestinian camps, Tdh has been able to make a lasting contribution as a major humanitarian operator. COVID-19 crisis demonstrated the useful and rapid intervention of Tdh teams all along the curfew period. Tdh intervenes 24/7 to respond to cases and provide beneficiaries with the necessary support.

A relation of trust and a spirit of collaboration have gradually developed between Tdh and Palestinian communities. Recently, Tdh operated in Ein El Hilweh camp - considered as challenging - by winning the confidence of the population and implementing an essential action. Tdh can also count on its various local partners as well as on local authorities, MoSA, Palestinian Security Forces and UNRWA to link with beneficiaries and ensure accessibility.

About Terre des hommes

Terre des hommes (Tdh) is the leading Swiss child relief agency. The Foundation has been helping children in need for over 50 years, defending their rights regardless of their race, creed or political affiliation. Active in more than 40 countries, Tdh develops and implements field projects to allow a better daily life for over three million children and their relatives, particularly in the domains of health care, protection against exploitation, abuse, trafficking and violence.





**Every child in the world
has the right to a childhood.
It's that simple.**