

ADVOCACY REPORT

UNDER PRESSURE

the impact of the Syrian
refugee crisis on host
communities in Lebanon



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All names in this report have been changed to protect the privacy of those interviewed

Cover photo: Syrian refugee boy living in a makeshift tent. © 2013 Marwan Tahtah/World Vision

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"Don't ask me how we are coping, ask me how we feel suffocated."
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Executive Summary

It is not easy to be a child in Lebanon today.

The country and the region are grappling with a large and growing crisis. There is a palpable fear that the place you were born in may look very different when you grow up. The Syrian conflict is increasingly affecting everyday life in Lebanon and other neighbouring countries. Lebanon now has more than half a million Syrian refugees, with more arriving every day. By Christmas, it is predicted that one in three people in Lebanon could be a refugee.

Some Lebanese towns now have twice the population they had last year. The resulting pressure on healthcare, education and electricity is now felt by ordinary Lebanese parents. For example, the mother who has to wait days to take her six-year-old daughter to the doctor; or the teenage son who cannot play football as there are now refugee tents on his pitch. Lebanese children are seeking answers to why their lives are changing.

Meanwhile, Syrian families who have fled conflict at home are now trying to create a sense of normality for their children, as they seek to pick up the pieces of their lives.

As these stories increasingly collide, tensions grow between host communities and refugees, and violence is increasing in the country. There is rising fear that this small country is near breaking point.

Yet Lebanese families who opened their doors to offer food and shelter to refugees, and who now face their own crisis, are too often forgotten. And inevitably it's the children in these families who bear the brunt of this crisis. In Lebanon host communities were initially welcoming Syrian refugees, understanding of their situation and perhaps recalling their own past times of need. Syrians received 'welcome packs' of food, and schools and hospitals were opened to them.

The international community has responded to this crisis largely by helping the refugees. Food vouchers have been provided and the UN is paying for some of their hospital costs. Host communities have been largely left without aid. Recent improvements to ensure Lebanese communities also receive assistance are most welcome and should be encouraged. Aid will be most effective and help create good relations between communities when given to those most in need, regardless of where they are from.

The problems in Lebanon require not only aid but also a peaceful solution to the crisis in Syria. Without peace in Syria, the future in Lebanon will remain uncertain, and it is therefore critical that the international community finds a way to end the conflict. It is the responsibility of all to ensure that the children who are fearful today will be hopeful tomorrow.

As the crisis grows, all actors should:

- Immediately increase aid to meet the needs of refugees and host communities
- Ensure aid helps create good relations between Lebanese and Syrians
- Promote a peaceful resolution to the crisis in Syria

Introduction

In the last two years, more than half a million people have fled into Lebanon from the conflict currently raging in Syria¹. The vast majority are living amongst Lebanese communities, staying with relatives or friends, renting accommodation, residing in empty shops and buildings or pitching tents on privately owned land. Host communities have often demonstrated enormous generosity for new arrivals, welcoming them into their homes, sharing key resources (water, electricity etc) and accepting their rights to access health and education services within the community.

However, as the crisis has dragged on the strain on local communities in Lebanon is becoming unbearable. The initial welcoming attitude of many is turning to anger. Many people now feel that their communities are becoming dangerously overcrowded; basic services, such as schools and health clinics, are struggling to cope with the additional demand; security is deteriorating and many people see no end in sight to the current crisis. The presence of so many refugees threatens to destabilise an already fragile and volatile situation. Many communities have reported feeling close to breaking point.

This report aims to shed light on the impact that the enormous influx of refugees from Syria is having on hosting communities in Lebanon². It seeks to capture the perceptions of host community members about how their lives, including the lives of children in Lebanon, have been impacted by the arrival of the refugee population. It will investigate the role that the national and international response has played in alleviating or exacerbating these impacts, and make specific recommendations for humanitarian, development and advocacy agencies involved in this response. Case studies are included throughout to highlight the human impact of the current crisis for communities in Lebanon.

The conditions of Syrian refugees in Lebanon

This report focuses on the impact of the current crisis on host community members in Lebanon. As such, a detailed assessment of the current needs of refugees living in these communities is not included. Nonetheless, it is important for the reader to consider the plight of the Syrian refugees as they proceed through this report.

The majority of Syrian refugees arriving in Lebanon are living in extreme conditions. They are often fleeing out of desperation. Many have lost a family member, witnessed extreme acts of violence or been the victims of such acts. Many have come from relatively comfortable lives, having enjoyed good services in Syria and relative stability over the last 20 years. Yet they have arrived in Lebanon with only the possessions they can carry. Many are living in tents, with only the most basic of water and sanitation facilities. They have been freezing over the winter, and are now sweltering in the summer. Those living in rented accommodation are often paying extremely high rents, forcing several families to co-habit, sometimes as many as 20 people sleeping in a room together. Many of these refugees have lost any sense of stability and community, and are striving to establish a new life in an unfamiliar location. They do not know when, or if they will be able to go home.

Methodology

Data was collected from four contexts across the country; Akkar – a rural district in the north, Zahle and surrounding areas – a mix of urban and rural communities in the Bekaa Valley, Bourj Hammoud and Nabaa – urban communities in Beirut, and Burj el Brajneh – a Palestinian camp in Beirut. All four areas have higher than average poverty rates, and very high numbers of Syrian refugees. Interviewees were drawn from a diverse mix of social and religious groups present in Lebanon, and a gender balance ensured.

In total, information was directly gathered from approximately 180 people in Lebanon. Focus Group Discussions were held with 70 people; separate discussions were held with children, youth and adults in roughly equal number. 50 interviews were conducted with a broad range of stakeholders (including refugees, local service providers, government officials, local businesses, community leaders, local and international civil society, UN agencies and donors). Further discussions were held with roughly 20 people on Syrian refugee site visits, and another 40 people (refugees and host communities) were interviewed for a series of case studies that accompany this report. All names of interviewees and case studies have been changed.

¹ By the end of May 2013, UNHCR had registered over 430,000 refugees, with at least 77,000 more awaiting registration in Lebanon since the crisis started in early 2011. However, almost all observers, including UN staff acknowledge that that true figure is likely to be significantly higher than this (UNHCR 2013, May 31).

² This report defines a host community as 'any community including individuals, civil-society organisations and governance structures that for a temporary period of time hosts displaced individuals by allowing them to remain there and contribute towards their needs'

Limitations

This qualitative data collection methodology is aimed at identifying the most prominent issues faced by the host communities affected by the crisis. Findings from this report present a snapshot of the communities' perceptions towards the impact of this crisis on their lives, including the economic, physical, and social aspects of it. The results reflect views and opinions as articulated by different participants in this study and all are shaped by the diverse experiences families have witnessed as a result of the conflict.

The findings in this report are by no means representative of all hosting communities' perceptions. We acknowledge the salient diversity characterising communities in Lebanon and hence the complex and various forms this conflict can take amongst different vulnerable communities. There is a need for more rigorous quantitative data that assesses the impact of the crisis on people's lives and provides numerical evidence of the breadth and depth of the current situation. However, while the focus of the national and international response has understandably been on the condition of Syrian refugees inside Lebanon, we believe this report addresses a gap in knowledge on a topic that has not been sufficiently explored yet.

CASE STUDY: SAMER, A PHARMACIST FROM SAADNEYIL

Samer is a well-dressed, English speaking Lebanese pharmacist from Saadneyil. The 29-year-old has set up a medical aid organisation in the village to help Syrian refugees, dealing with more than 400 patients per week.

"I listened to their problems," says Samer. "Some needed money, some needed food and shelter, some are really in need and some are getting aid. Some are in need, but they are not used to asking for help. So I decided to set up a youth organisation, to help the refugees."

If the patients need medication, they are given a voucher that entitles them to a 20 per cent discount on prescriptions at his pharmacy. Meanwhile, other pharmacies have not lowered their prices.

Samer has a nuanced position on the refugees, recognising that it is impossible to generalise about their situation. While some may have more advantages than others, they are mostly in dire need and deserving of a humanitarian response, he insists.

"Syrians sometimes help the Lebanese. Before the war, some Lebanese who had two apartments, couldn't find anyone to rent them. Now they are renting for US\$500 a week," he says. "From a religious and humanitarian point of view, this is not good. Above my pharmacy, I have 12 apartments, four of which I have given free to Syrian families, and eight of which are rented at a below market rate of \$300 per month. "

He also believes that the Lebanese community is profiting in other ways. Those Syrians who do have money for example, are feeding into the local economy. Meanwhile Lebanese businesses can also employ cheaper Syrian labour. There are therefore many ways in which the situation is beneficial to at least some sectors of Lebanese society.

He knows of Lebanese who fled to Syria during the 2006 war with Israel. *"I didn't go, but always heard from the Lebanese who went, that the Syrians were welcoming. Some Syrians gave their own homes to the Lebanese. So now, we have to reciprocate. Because who knows, next time, we could be the visitors again."*

Samer employs a Syrian refugee, Zein, in his pharmacy, and says he is contributing to the local economy through spending money he earns at the pharmacy. *"Zein works here, he bought a car and that money went to a Lebanese, when he refuels, that goes into the economy, and so on."*

Samer agrees that there is a shortage of jobs and property. *"I have a Lebanese friend who wants to get married this summer, but can't find an apartment. "*

"For a while, Syrians would come here and I used to give them medicines for free. But I couldn't continue that way. So now I have a weekly budget of how much discount I can give and still survive. I still give some medicines for free, but I choose people that are really in need. Yes, some Syrians have jobs and still try to get discounts on prescriptions and pretend they don't have money or jobs, but this happens everywhere. Lebanese might do it too if they were in the same situation. "

However, Samer is adamantly opposed to refugee camps: *"That's not a humanitarian way to treat them," he says. "They have no freedom, they can't work, their children will see their parents not working and will feel this is the norm. It will be bad for the future."*



Jad, 3, one of many children queuing for aid as the crisis in Lebanon grows.
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Overview of the Context

“These are the children of Lebanon; they are the lamps that cannot be snuffed by the wind and the salt which remains unspoiled through the ages”.

Khalil Gibran, You Have your Lebanon, I have my Lebanon

Lebanon has always been an important crossroad for traders, investors, invaders and immigrants from across the world. This has resulted in the country's uniquely complex communal make-up. Shia Muslims, Sunni Muslims, Christians,³ Alawites and Druze are the main population groups in a country that has been a refuge for the region's minorities for centuries.

Prior to 1975, Lebanon enjoyed strong economic growth and a reputation as a cultural and economic hub. Beirut's reputation as the 'Paris of the East' was well earned. However, this reputation was destroyed with the outbreak of the civil war. The war lasted over 15 years, and devastated the physical, economic and social infrastructure of the country. The Taif agreement, signed following the end of the war in 1990, put in place an amended form of political representation that better reflected the sectarian make up of the country. However, this has not addressed the underlying tensions, which remain to this day.

Since the early 1990s the country has made steady economic progress, but has been continually affected by chronic bouts of political instability and sectarian strife, many of which have spilled into open conflict. In 2005, the assassination of the former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri sparked huge protests, culminating in the 'Cedar Revolution', and the eventual withdrawal of the Syrian troops present in the country since 1976. In 2006, Lebanon was subjected to massive bombardment by Israel during Hezbollah-Israel war. In 2007, a major conflict erupted between the Lebanese army and militia armed groups in Nahr el Bared Palestinian camp in Tripoli. Political assassinations, street fighting and skirmishes between sectarian groups are all too common occurrences across the country.

Lebanon has also seen several large influxes of Palestinian refugees. The UN estimates that there are now more than 400,000 Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon⁴. Almost all live in densely populated 'camps', although in reality these more closely resemble slums or shanty towns. Palestinian refugees enjoy few legal rights. Their presence, status and actions have been perceived as being a catalyst for tension in Lebanon, with some people blaming their presence in Lebanon as a trigger for the civil war, and much on-going instability.

Conflict in Syria

On 15 March 2011, protesters gathered in the Syrian city of Deraa following the claimed detention of several youth who had been writing anti-government graffiti. Three days later, with the protests gathering momentum, fighting broke out, resulting in the death of several people. These events sparked a significant escalation in the unrest already bubbling across the country. The following months saw a gradual increase in violence between government forces and protesters. By the end of 2011, the violence had spread across the whole country, with roughly 10,000 people reportedly killed.

The year 2012 saw a significant escalation in the scale and brutality of the conflict. The conflict has increasingly been portrayed as having taken on a sectarian divide, with both sides appearing to be receiving significant support from groups both within and from outside of the country. This has allowed both sides to become entrenched. Few people predict an end to the conflict any time soon.

Current UN estimates are that 93,000 (and possibly many more) have been killed⁵ with more than 6.8 million people in need of humanitarian assistance inside Syria alone⁶. Children and other vulnerable groups have been disproportionately impacted by the violence⁷. The situation inside Syria can only be described as dire.

³ There are many Christian denominations in Lebanon, the largest groups being Maronite, Greek and Roman Catholic, Greek, Syrian and Armenian Orthodox, Assyrian and Protestants.

⁴ UNRWA (2013)

⁵ Human Rights Data Analysis Group (2013).

⁶ UN OCHA (June 17, 2013)

⁷ Save the Children (2012)

Political Impact on Lebanon

Syria and Lebanon share roughly 365 km of border⁸, much of which is porous and un-demarcated. There are widespread reports of Lebanese fighting alongside Syrian government forces inside Syria⁹. It is equally rumoured that some rebels have used Lebanese territory to smuggle weapons into Syria¹⁰. Recent reports of shelling into Lebanon, as well as overt statements by leaders of the Syrian opposition, point to the very real risk that the conflict could spread across the border¹¹.

Lebanon's fragile political situation has already been placed under significant strain by the escalating violence in Syria. Since 2005, Lebanese politics has been dominated by the rivalry between two major alliances; the 8 March coalition, closely allied with the Assad regime in Syria, and the 14 March coalition, widely seen as being ideologically aligned with the West. The crisis in Syria has therefore exacerbated the already deep political polarisation in the country. This political fragility has been compounded by the resignation of the Prime Minister on 22 March 2013, ahead of Lebanon's scheduled national elections, leaving the country without a formal government.

Deep divisions already exist between sectarian groups in Lebanon, most notably (but by no means exclusively) between the Shia and Sunni communities. These divisions are becoming more acute as the conflict in Syria continues, and as ever more stories of alleged atrocities committed by both sides filter through to communities in Lebanon. Increasing engagement in the conflict inside Syria by a range of groups from Lebanon is further adding to these tensions, and contributing to a potentially explosive situation. The presence of large numbers of refugees is likely to only add further pressure to already strained community relations¹².



The refugee influx

It is difficult to put an exact figure on the number of refugees that have already arrived from Syria. However, even the most conservative estimate puts the figure at over 525,000¹³. There could also be as many as 325,000 unregistered refugees already in the country¹⁴, whilst there were already an estimated 300,000 Syrian migrants working in Lebanon before the crisis started. The true number of Syrians in Lebanon today therefore is likely to be close to 1 million, the vast majority of whom have arrived in the last year¹⁵.

Most of the Syrian refugees are located in the North and in the Bekaa valley, with very significant numbers in Beirut. The number of refugees arriving in the South of Lebanon is increasing also. Map 1 outlines major concentrations of refugees.

The scale of the refugee influx into Lebanon is difficult to comprehend. The population of Lebanon is estimated to be a little over 4.3 million people¹⁶. Even by the most conservative figures, the number of refugees currently in the country has swelled by more than 12% in little over a year. When we factor in 400,000 Palestinian refugees, the true scale of the crisis facing Lebanon becomes apparent. By these (conservative) estimates, almost 25% of the people in Lebanon today are

⁸ Lebanon-Syria Borders report (2009)

⁹ E.g. BBC, Syrian Conflict's Sectarian Shadow Over Lebanon, 20 June 2013

¹⁰ International Crisis Group (2013)

¹¹ see reported statements by leading general in Free Syrian Army, BBC 'Syrian rebels 'can fight Hezbollah in Lebanon' – Idriss', 5 June 2013, (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-22778035>)

¹² See International Crisis Group (2013)

¹³ The UN's most recent Rapid Response Plan (RRP5) puts the figure of registered refugees, and those awaiting registration at 509,152 (UN, 2013)

¹⁴ Figures based on research by ACAPS (March 28, 2013).

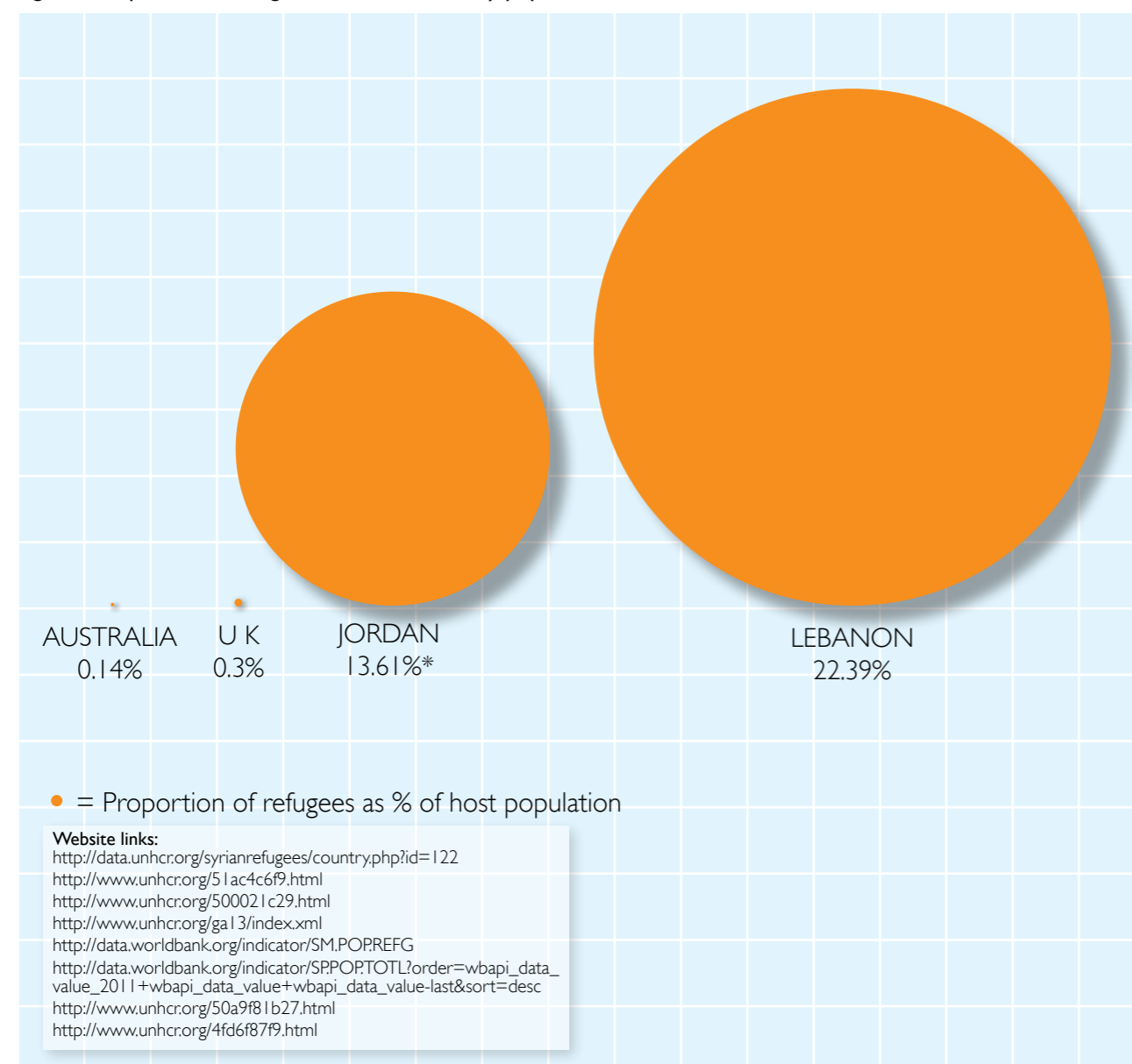
¹⁵ In July 2012, less than 30,000 Syrian refugees were registered in Lebanon. UNHCR (2013).

¹⁶ World Bank Lebanon (2013)

refugees. If UNHCR estimates become reality, by December 2013, 1 in 3 people in Lebanon could be refugees¹⁷. The true figure is likely to be significantly greater.

By means of a global comparison, the country with the next highest proportion of refugees (Jordan) has little over 13%.¹⁸ No other country has a proportion of more than 2.5%. In the UK, the figure is 0.3%.

Figure 1: Proportion of refugees to host community population



* numbers of refugees in Jordan does not include roughly 2 million Palestinians currently residing in Jordan. This is because these refugees enjoy full citizenship rights in Jordan. 140,000 refugees from Gaza, who do not have full citizenship rights, are included in this figure.

There are no formal refugee camps for Syrians in Lebanon. When refugees began to arrive, the government at the time took the decision not to establish camps¹⁹. As a result, the vast majority of refugees are living with host communities; renting accommodation, living in empty shops, community halls or other spaces, or pitching tents on privately owned land on the periphery of towns and villages. They are using the same services and facilities as local people, putting significant strain on these resources, and the resilience of the host communities.

The rest of this report will investigate the perceived implications for host communities of this situation.

¹⁷ UNHCR estimate that there will be 1 million newly arrived refugees from Syria in Lebanon by December 2013. UN (2013).

¹⁸ This proportion does not account for Palestinian refugees in Jordan with full Jordanian citizenship rights.

¹⁹ This topic is discussed again in chapter 4 of this report. However the reasons for this decision are beyond the scope of this report. See International Crisis Group (2013) for a full discussion of the political arguments both in favour and against the establishment of camps.

WORLD VISION IN LEBANON AND THE REGIONAL RESPONSE TO THE SYRIAN CRISIS

World Vision in Lebanon has been operational since 1975 when it worked with Lebanese and displaced populations. World Vision's work in Lebanon is based in three main areas of work: advocacy, emergency relief and development. Long-term interventions support both vulnerable Lebanese and Lebanon's large Palestinian refugee population through 14 field programmes located in all five regions of Lebanon including three Palestinian refugee camps. Since early 2011, World Vision has also been responding to the needs of Syrian refugees in Lebanon. World Vision's longer term history in local communities has allowed the organisation to step up support for host communities and to support refugees directly as they have arrived with interventions such as food vouchers, child protection spaces and WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene).

World Vision is also responding to the crisis in Jordan, supporting refugees and host communities. Our work there is being scaled up and plans are focusing on child protection, cash assistance and WASH.

CASE STUDY: TAHA AND ABIR, FROM KABB ELIAS IN BEKAA VALLEY

Soaring rents have priced Taha's family out of their old apartment. Now Taha, his wife Abir and their four children, are squeezed into a two-room basement in the village of Kabb Elias, in the Bekaa Valley.

The Lebanese family manages to survive by paying their rent 'in kind', by maintaining the garden of the apartment block. Their kitchen is a makeshift tent.

Abir, who's five months pregnant, works as a cleaner. But her meagre wage means they can't even afford heating fuel. They survived the harsh winter by burning plastic crates and shoes to keep warm.

Their 13-year-old daughter Layal has a hole in her lung; and their 10-year-old son Iyad suffers severe migraines.

Iyad says he feels overwhelmed by the refugees: "We are living in a Syrian country. There are many Syrian children in the school, and they ask us to leave early at 1pm instead of 2.30pm, to make way for Syrian children. I am not friends with the Syrian children."

Taha, who can no longer work because of a car accident, harbours increasing resentment. He says: "I blame the Lebanese government for letting them in. We don't even have a proper government. They say they are refugees. But refugees should have a status like us, not be better off than us."

"Maybe my words don't impact you, but for people like us, if we don't work, we don't eat, and when we do eat, we are just eating tomatoes and onions."

"They get all the assistance, get given their food, mattresses, they are even able to sell items such as stoves to make money. We should also be getting assistance".

Taha's family were forced to leave their home where they were paying \$400 per month in rent, because Syrians were able to pay \$600/month. She says several Syrians families are prepared to live together in cramped conditions in one apartment in order to be able to afford the higher rents.

"At first, we were sympathetic, but now it has changed. We used to get assistance, food parcels, assistance with school fees, food parcels, diesel fuel, and other aid, but we get nothing at all now". Abir says ruefully: "Two months ago, we had to eat bread covered in ants. Can you imagine what I felt when my children had to eat that bread? This is all due to poverty. We just want to live properly, eat properly."

Abir has been so desperate at times that she has attempted suicide. She is the only person working to support her family but now her son Hamza has left school to work as a car mechanic to bring in much needed cash, earning LL 200,000 per month (roughly \$133/month).

"The Syrians are now even selling us their spare blankets, and their food vouchers, but I owe LL 1 million to the local pharmacist for medications for Taha's leg injury," says Abir.



Taha and his family have felt the impact of the crisis and been forced to move to a cheaper house.
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Impact on host communities: Key findings

This chapter outlines the most significant impact of the influx of refugees from Syria on host communities, as identified by the communities themselves. Where secondary evidence is available, this is used to corroborate or contradict these perceptions. A detailed assessment of the current needs of refugees living in these communities is beyond the scope of this chapter. The themes are categorised based on common patterns identified during the primary data collection.

Economic impact

Host communities in Lebanon are very worried about the economic impact of the refugee crisis now engulfing the country²⁰. Almost without exception, people interviewed for this research highlighted competition over jobs as either the biggest, or one of the biggest challenges that they face. It was widely reported that response funds aimed at refugees were allowing Syrian workers to undercut local competition. As one person noted *"Syrians are employed informally, they do not have to pay taxes, they are receiving food vouchers and accommodation support. Of course they can afford to work for much lower wages."*

Many people reported significant food price increases over the last 12 months. This was attributed to an increase in demand without any additional supply entering the market²¹. Interviewees also noted increased competition from cheap Syrian businesses and smuggled goods coming across the border from Syria as further damaging the local economy. One shop keeper reported that *"There used to be 10 shops around, now there is like 100. Syrians are renting very small areas and selling food and other items. Shop owners are in debt, the first is myself."*

Some members of host communities are clearly benefiting economically from the refugee influx. Interviewees noted that the arrival of aid agencies was injecting new money into the local economy and creating job opportunities. Local businesses are benefitting from the availability of cheap labour²², whilst landlords and landowners are making significant profits on renting out land or living space. However, the availability of cheap labour is also making it harder for poor Lebanese workers to find work²³, whilst the increased demand for rental accommodation pushes up prices. As a result, whilst a section of middle class and wealthy Lebanese people are benefiting from the refugee influx, it is the poorest and most vulnerable members of host communities who are feeling the greatest strain. Among the most vulnerable, children stand out as a particularly vulnerable group, at risk of child labour and inadequate housing and education. Protecting children must be a key priority to prevent the crisis from having lifelong impact on their wellbeing and safety.

Decreased levels of family income have significant implications for children, and especially on the capacity of care givers to protect children. Increases in family poverty can increase the risk of child exploitation, and particularly incidents of child labour. A recent study pointed to family poverty as a factor contributing to child-trafficking in Lebanon, especially for the poorer and most marginalised families²⁴. This report also indicated that family income can contribute to an increase in frustration within the family, increasing the likelihood of violence at home.

Whilst access to jobs is causing a significant strain on relations between host communities and Syrian refugees²⁵, it is difficult to see alternative options for newly arrived refugees other than to compete for paid work with local people. Many arrive with very few savings and need to find a means of supporting themselves and their families. They are often unable to fully access support from international relief organisations for between 1 and 3 months, due to delays in the refugee registration process. They may be unused to undertaking casual labour and are often open to exploitation and abuse by unscrupulous employers from within host communities. Without more support being provided to new arrivals, these tensions could escalate.

²⁰ A recent review of economic conditions in areas of Lebanon hosting large numbers of refugees concluded that average wages for agricultural and service sector workers in the North and Bekaa areas had decreased since 2004. It concluded that "When taking into account the increased expenditures host households must incur to support refugees and others impacted by the conflict in Syria, particularly in border areas where hosting burdens are high and market prices have increased, agricultural and service-sector workers are facing strained economic situation" (IRC et al, 2013, page 5). For comprehensive review of economic impacts for workers in key sectors, see the Lebanon Emergency Market Mapping

²¹ Perceptions of food price inflation are corroborated by recent analysis by UNDP which calculated an average 18% increase in food prices in Bekaa, and 12% in the north. This is probably not however purely due to increased demand, but equally impacted by closure of the border, meaning that Lebanese people can no longer benefit from cheaper goods in Syria, as well as regional inflation and transport costs. UNDP (2012).

²² A recent review of labour market conditions for example found that wages for agricultural labourers (both Syrian and Lebanese) have decreased by up to 50% in some areas (IRC et al, 2013)

²³ Several people reported having family members or friends who had either lost work, or been fired from their jobs, only to be replaced by Syrian refugees willing to work for significantly lower wages (IRC et al, 2013).

²⁴ See Lewis, C. (2011)

²⁵ There have already been isolated cases of these tensions spilling into the streets. For example, in Akkar local people recently protested against Syrian access to the labour market, shutting down the town centre for several hours

Overcrowding

"People can really suffocate you." Hicham, male in his early 20's in Beirut

Overcrowding is becoming a very significant problem in many host communities. Some towns in the Bekaa Valley and North have reported up to 100% increases in population in the last 2 years. When refugees first began to arrive, many were put up in homes with members of the community (often friends or family). However, this proved to be unsustainable and most are now renting accommodation, living in empty shops or renting space on privately owned land on the periphery of towns²⁶. As a result, rents have soared often by as much as 200% over a six month period.

In Beirut, the situation appears to be even more severe. In one district it was reported that rents had increased by up to 400%. Several people spoke of people being forced to leave the area so as to make space for refugees able to pay higher rents²⁷. As one Palestinian resident of Burj el Brajneh²⁸ put it, "We were already residing in a crisis, with massive overcrowding. Now 20,000 more people have arrived. Can you imagine the impact that has? Already there were more than 30,000 living here".

Research indicates that the physical environment in which children are raised (noise level, overcrowding, and housing and neighborhood quality etc) can have as significant an impact on their well-being as psychosocial characteristics such as relationships with parents and peers. For example, the physical environment can profoundly influence developmental outcomes including academic achievement, cognitive, social and emotional development as well as parenting behaviour²⁹. Should current levels of overcrowding continue or increase, there could be significant long term impact on child well-being for both Syrian and Lebanese children. This means that the issue of shelter is likely to become increasingly important as the refugee influx continues, and that responding agencies and authorities should look into alternatives of how to manage this.

Significant strain is also being placed on basic services, such as waste disposal, water and electricity. Municipality officials claim to have received no additional support from Central Government to manage the increased load. Rubbish collection fees for example in one municipality in Aakar have increased by 100%, yet no additional budget has been allocated to manage this³⁰. Electricity theft is another common concern³¹.

Health

"Summer is approaching, and we are afraid of epidemics, such as increases of scabbies cases.... There is a lack of hygiene, no water, and we fear diseases." Ayman, community leader in Akkar.

The influx of refugees is having a very significant impact on host communities' access to and quality of healthcare services. In all areas visited, health care professionals, local government officials and host community members reported that current services were struggling to cope with the additional demand. All health clinics visited reported increased caseloads of at least 50% over the last 12 months³². Whilst additional medical and financial support is often provided³³, no one considered this to be adequate to deal with the additional pressure³⁴.

A representative from the Ministry of Health in one province reported a significant increase in cases of some diseases since the beginning of the refugee influx, including Leishmaniasis³⁵ and measles. He expressed particular concern that the spread of these diseases could increase during summer time, and that children would be particularly affected, primarily through transmission at schools. These concerns were voiced several times by parents and teachers interviewed across the country.

There is a widespread perception that Syrian refugees get preferential access to, and treatment in, Lebanese healthcare centres and hospitals. Meanwhile there is some evidence that resources traditionally used to serve the health needs

²⁶ DRC (2012)

²⁷ Refugees are often able to afford higher rents by squeezing several families into a single apartment.

²⁸ The camp is situated on an area of land ¼ km by ¼ km. It is already massively over crowded. UNRWA (2013)

²⁹ E.g. Evans (2006), Kipko, K (2007)

³⁰ The president of this municipality reported that "we used to pay for garbage collectors 20,000,000 LL per year and now they are requesting 40,000,000. They say that I now have 2 villages, double the population. We cannot cover this, they don't pay municipality fee and our budget is not increasing".

³¹ Children in several communities voiced fears about electrical explosions caused by faulty wires and electricity theft in their communities

³² UNDP (2012)

³³ primarily by Government of Lebanon and UNHCR

³⁴ Administrative and operational support is not normally provided, leading to significant strain on the ability of clinics to effectively manage the increased numbers of patients.

³⁵ A skin disease spread primarily by sand-flies.

of poor Lebanese communities have been diverted towards supporting refugees³⁶. This appears to be contributing to tensions between these communities. One municipal head reported that "Syrians receive more support than local people. UNHCR is helping Syrians get to hospital, e.g. by providing an ambulance. But local people can't get to hospitals, and they are full of Syrians anyway when they do get there. NGO ambulances do not go to villages without large numbers of Syrians."

It is important to note that many refugees in these same communities reported having very limited access to healthcare facilities. Although healthcare costs are effectively subsidised by international agencies, many refugees are still unable to cover the costs. Others are unaware of the available support, whilst such support is not available to unregistered refugees (see next chapter for further discussion). Many refugees have only very limited access to effective water and sanitation facilities. It is little wonder therefore that refugees live in high risk environments for spreading of diseases. This will inevitably have an impact on members of host communities³⁷.

Education

Many schools have seen huge increases in numbers of students over the last 12 months³⁸, placing enormous strain on teachers' abilities to provide adequate support to all students. Syrian children face a major language barrier, since some subjects in Lebanese schools are taught in French or English, rather than Arabic. The additional support required for these students invariably affects the quality of education for all children.

Boys and girls had already been experiencing high levels of physical violence at schools. Corporal punishment is accepted and justified in Lebanon as means of discipline and education³⁹. Rarely is this type of violence reported to the authorities. A qualitative consultation study conducted by World Vision indicated that four out of five children interviewed experienced some form of corporal punishment at schools⁴⁰. With the increased pressure on teachers and schools, increased use of violence at schools is a very real possibility.

There are more concerns for both Lebanese and Syrian children. For example, teachers, pupils and parents interviewed highlighted tensions between Syrian and Lebanese children. Syrian children for example have spoken about feeling discriminated and excluded at school by their peers and teachers⁴¹. There have not been reports of major clashes between children, but underlying tensions are apparent.

Teachers and NGO workers interviewed predicted that drop-out rates for poor Lebanese students would increase in the next academic year. One community centre reported that they had significantly increased financial support for school fees for poor Lebanese families over the last year, largely in response to higher unemployment and increases in living costs. In addition, some parents have stopped their children from going to schools with large numbers of refugees, due to concerns that medical conditions, including scabies may be spread between students. This may be further deepening the divide between the communities, preventing children from receiving an education, increasing school drop-out, and ultimately contributing to child protection concerns.

Several people noted that Syrian children appear to receive more support for education than equally poor Lebanese families. For example, one noted that "Syrian children gets everything for free, their bags, books transportation, registration is paid, but Lebanese have to pay for everything". Such perceptions are not necessarily backed up by evidence. A recent assessment by World Vision for example found that many refugee families are unable to afford even the most basic items for school⁴². Nonetheless, many parents in the communities visited maintained this view.

³⁶ UNDP (2012)

³⁷ Reports on health conditions in refugee populations

³⁸ UNDP (2012) have reported that "There is an increased pressure on public and private schools because of the lack of space and need for adaptation for Syrian students to the Lebanese curricula" in August 2012. Since then, the numbers of refugees entering these communities has increased drastically.

³⁹ Salim, A. (2009)

⁴⁰ Cuevas, -Parra, P. (2009)

⁴¹ World Vision (2012) and World Vision (2013, January 19)

⁴² World Vision (2013)

Perceptions of Security

"There is fear now, I used to go the shop at night now my parents don't allow me"

Abir, 14 years old from Zahle

Host communities generally reported feeling less safe as a result of the influx of refugees. Whilst they felt that security was a problem before, especially in Beirut, many reported that insecurity had increased dramatically in the last 6-12 months⁴³. Communities reported increased levels of petty crime (especially thefts of mobile phones and handbag snatching) and house burglaries. There were also reports of street fighting, often between Syrian refugees, but also between Syrian and Lebanese youth. Several youth in Beirut reported routinely carrying knives, and regularly clashing with Syrian youth.

Women and children feel less confident in going out after dark and expressed fears of "Syrians in back alleys". People are increasingly wary of taking public transport due to security concerns. One university student in Akkar reported that *"When I have a class after 4, I do not go. I don't feel safe I take the notes from my friend"*.

In addition to feeling less secure within their communities, children in the North and Bekaa also reported significant concerns that the Syrian conflict directly was spreading into their communities. At least half of the children interviewed said that they were scared of the war coming to Lebanon, and many reporting hearing gunfire from across the border. Several said that they knew of people who had been injured by cross-border shelling⁴⁴.

Relations between Refugees and Host communities

"Tensions between Lebanese and Syrians is increasing, not because we are bothered by the Syrians, but because there is a competition for everything and it started to be a burden" Zaher, Service Provider from Akkar.

When refugees began to arrive in Lebanon in 2011, almost all were warmly welcomed by host communities. The common perception was that it was the duty of communities to help them. However as the burden on host communities have increased, so tensions have increased. These tensions are now high in all areas in which research was conducted, and appear close to boiling point in some places, especially Akkar and Bekaa.

There is a widespread perception amongst interviewees that Syrians are benefitting disproportionately from the national and international response, whilst poor Lebanese families are bearing the brunt of the impact. Sentiments such as *"now there are more Lebanese who are poorer than the Syrians and no one is helping them"* and *"Lebanese are asked to pay for everything, Syrians are given everything for free"* were widely expressed in focus groups. These concerns are compounded by the perception held by the large majority of interviewees (especially in Akkar and Bekaa) that many of those receiving support have in fact been living and working in Lebanon for many years already. Many people term these Syrians and 'workers' and therefore not 'real refugees'⁴⁵.

There are reports that the rate of prostitution in Lebanon has increased, and that Syrian women are being exploited (often by men from host communities) and sold for sex. A recent report from IRC for example found that survival sex was reported as a common practice among Syrian women and girls to cover the increased cost of living in Lebanon⁴⁶. The issue of men from host communities marrying Syrian women or girls was also raised in several communities. For Syrians, marriage (often early marriage) might be accepted only as an opportunity to access affordable accommodation and support for themselves and their families. There was a reported perception that it is often 'cheaper' (and easier) for a Lebanese man to marry a Syrian woman than a Lebanese woman, essentially because so many Syrian refugees are in such a desperate situation, whereas Lebanese women had more material demands.

There was widespread sympathy for Syrian women and girls exposed to such abuse. This was however accompanied by a general anxiety, especially amongst women and community leaders in Lebanon, that the presence of large numbers of vulnerable Syrian refugees was somehow contributing to a moral decline within the host communities. These perceptions and experiences are making it increasingly challenging for the two groups to maintain good relations.

⁴³ "According to (Lebanese government official), the crime rate in Lebanon has increased by about 50%, an increase he says is related to the influx of Syrians". BBC report, 9 April 2013

⁴⁴ Not independently verified.

⁴⁵ See chapter 4 for more complete discussion about perceived impact of international response for host communities.

⁴⁶ International Rescue Committee, (2012)

Perceptions of the future

"We are headed towards an explosion" Samar, local government official, Akkar.

Host communities were asked what they thought would happen in the next 6-12 months. The responses were largely pessimistic. Everyone expected the flow of refugees to continue or intensify. Many expect Syrians already in Lebanon to bring their families over; whilst if the battle for Damascus intensifies, this would prompt a huge influx of new refugees. No one predicted an end to the conflict in Syria in the coming year.

Almost all interviewees predicted a significant deterioration of conditions, both for host communities and refugees. Schools and healthcare centres will become overwhelmed, leading to increased dropout rates, and health epidemics in the summer. Crime and security were expected to deteriorate, as people resort to more desperate measures to feed their families. Child protection issues will become more severe, as overall conditions worsen.

Most people predicted that as a result of these additional pressures, compounded by the fragile political situation within Lebanon, tensions between host communities and refugees would intensify and in all likelihood spill into open conflict. Almost all interviewees felt that drastic and immediate action is required in order to prevent this eventuality. There is a clear need for peacebuilding initiatives in order help address some of these emerging tensions.

Analysis and conclusions

The arrival of over half a million Syrian refugees into Lebanon is placing a very severe strain on host communities. The cost of living is going up, whilst it is getting harder for people to find work. Schools and healthcare centres are struggling to keep up with the massive demand for services, parents are worried about their children's education, families are scared of being exposed to new diseases and people are worried about crime and violence. Children are scared about the future.

It is the poorest members of society who are most affected. Self employed labourers and those without formal employment are hardest hit; they feel that they cannot compete with Syrians willing to work for lower wages⁴⁷. These groups are also most likely to be reliant on the public services most affected by the refugee influx, such as health clinics and public schools.

Perhaps most worrying is the growing frustration amongst host communities that local and international aid efforts are being channelled exclusively to Syrians. There is a widespread perception that Syrians are now living in better conditions than many local people. There is a growing sense of discontent in many communities⁴⁸.

Many of the views and perceptions expressed by host communities however, are starkly out of line with the reality for most refugees. The majority of refugees are living in very basic conditions, with very limited access to health and sanitation facilities. Many have struggled to register with UNHCR and are living in tented communities for which they are paying significant rent. Some have reported being unable to find work, or start businesses due to discrimination from host communities. Others who were able to find work reported exploitation by their employers. Taken together, these factors contribute to heightened levels of frustration and anger within the refugee community.

These findings point to a growing sense of discontent within host communities visited. They feel that their living conditions are deteriorating, and (rightly or wrongly) attribute much of this to the presence of large numbers of refugees within their communities. This is a dangerous situation; in an already very tense context, there is a real danger that a small spark could ignite significant levels of violence. Serious action is needed in order to address these issues before it is too late.

⁴⁷ IRC et al, 2013

⁴⁸ World Vision staff who have been working with these communities for many years noted that the degree of resentment and anger expressed during this research was significantly higher than they had noted even 1-2 months earlier. It is clear that these feelings are getting stronger.



The tent that Miriam shares with nine other refugees who have fled the violence in Syria. © 2013 World Vision Lebanon

CASE STUDY: ALAA FROM THE NABAA DISTRICT OF BEIRUT

"Don't ask me how we are coping, ask me how we feel suffocated," says Alaa – a 33-year-old Lebanese woman who lives with her family in Nabaa, one of the slum areas of Beirut.

Her rent used to be US\$100 each month. Now it is US\$230. *"Rent has gone up, school fees have gone up, all food prices have gone up, and there are no jobs for me. If men can't work, we can't do anything."*

Her husband has had to rent a car to drive as a taxi, but it broke down and the cost of maintenance and repair has put them into debt, by \$150, which may seem trivial but still can't be paid off.

"There is not one room for rent in Naba – everyone here is Syrian," says Alaa. *"There are six buildings here which used to be full of Lebanese people. Today, they are all Syrian and only five Lebanese families are left. And in each apartment, there are four Syrian families squeezed in together into two rooms. We (Lebanese) have only one family per apartment. Next to my parents, there is an apartment with four families in it. How do they live?"*

However in the same breath, Alaa maintains that Lebanese are still worse off than the refugees: *"Syrians are not living in difficult conditions. All their men are working and they can pay rent of \$800 per month, and will also work for less money. We don't welcome them here and we don't go to their homes."*

Many of those who have been forced out have gone to their hometowns in rural areas.

"From what I can see, they prefer it here," she says. *"The Syrians are getting so much aid and assistance that they are able to sell their food vouchers. We get no help. Today, \$33 gets you nothing. I am asking people for help to find a job for my husband, and we are behind on our rent."*

While she hopes that Syrians will ultimately return to Syria, she thinks that those who find work in Lebanon may never return.

She is adamant that the government should set up camps for the Syrians.

Analysis of the Crisis Response in Lebanon

This chapter identifies a number of key issues relating to the national and international response to the current crisis, drawn primarily from the perspectives of host communities, service providers, donors and refugees interviewed. Analysis and conclusion are presented at the end.

There are essentially two stories of this crisis, one is the refugee crisis and the other one is the host community crisis. For the former it is a question of finding a way to live in a foreign country, for the latter it is about managing and adapting to the changes occurring as a result of the arrival of the refugee population. Sometimes these two stories collide. Given the different focus of the two stories, this chapter will also take a slightly different angle than the previous one by looking at the response angle.

Scope and Scale of the response

There was a widespread perception amongst interviewees that the response so far has been too limited in both scope and funding. When refugees first began to arrive in early 2011, UNHCR took a leading role in coordinating and managing the response. The pre-existing humanitarian structures in Lebanon, set up primarily to manage Iraqi refugees as well as existing Palestinian camps, were not however prepared for the scale of the influx of refugees. What is more, early planning seems to have been primarily focused on addressing the needs of new arrivals, and failed to account for the wider impact on host communities.

The international community is only now reassessing both the true scale and scope of the crisis. The most recent UN appeal for the Syrian crisis has for example more than quadrupled its assessment of the financial needs for Lebanon; \$1.66 billion for the second half 2013⁴⁹ compared to \$274 million for the first half of the year. The scope of this appeal now includes support for host communities as well as refugees for the first time. These shifts are welcome, but also highlight the limited scope and vision of earlier appeals.

Aid coordination

Many interviewees also felt that there was weak coordination within and between agencies involved in the response to the current crisis. Host community members, refugees and service providers pointed to multiple examples of refugees being provided with the same goods several times, whilst other basic needs went unmet. One UN official for example, noted a refugee family he had recently visited, who had a pile of mattresses and no food.

Occurrences such as these are fuelling resentment within host communities. As might be expected, refugees often sell donated goods, such as blankets, mattresses and gas stoves in order to buy other essentials. Many Lebanese people expressed the opinion that refugees are taking advantage of the generosity of the international community by taking more than they need, and selling on the excess for profit. Moreover, such practises are perceived to be undermining the local economy, by under-cutting local businesses.

"Our shops are no longer selling, we are buying from the Syrian refugees" Zeina, in her early 20s from Akkar

Refugees also pointed to a lack of coordination within the humanitarian aid system as a key source of frustration. Several noted that UNHCR had promised to pay for 85% of medical bills incurred at certain Lebanese hospitals. However when they arrived for treatment, the refugees had to cover a far greater proportion of the full costs themselves. Other refugees noted that they often only received US\$20 worth of goods from shops in exchange for UN and NGO issued food vouchers with a value of \$27.

NGOs and service providers also reported that they had received inappropriate or unsuitable materials as part of the aid packages from some UN agencies. One health centre reported that they had received medications from UN agencies that had not been used in Lebanon for at least 5 years. The same centre reported having to discard significant parts of hygiene kits that were not culturally appropriate, and having piles of unusable winter blankets, delivered at the end of spring.

⁴⁹ \$1.66bn figure includes \$1.2bn for UN and NGO requirement, and a further \$460m for the Lebanese government's response. UN (2013)



A barefoot Syrian refugee girl plays in the dirt outside her tent.
© 2013 Patricia Mouamar/World Vision

Donor representatives interviewed pointed to challenges in effective coordination and decision-making. They noted the absence of a functioning cluster mechanism⁵⁰ in-country, with coordination managed by existing sectoral working groups instead. Some donors noted that these working groups were primarily used for information-sharing rather than operating as effective decision-making fora. It was also noted that UNHCR currently leads on coordination of sectoral working groups, whilst also being an implementing agency. This is leading to a perceived conflict of interest⁵¹. There is an on-going debate between response agencies about whether the time has come to establish a cluster system, or whether attention would be better focused on improving the effectiveness of the current working group model.

The presence of non-traditional donors, such as those from the Gulf States, has provided both welcome resources and new challenges for coordination. These donors often fund programmes outside of the UN system, meaning that it is very difficult to get an accurate overall picture of the resources contributed and to coordinate effective implementation on the ground.

Targeting of aid

Over the last 2 years, humanitarian aid in Lebanon has been almost exclusively targeted at Syrian refugees, and specifically those registered with the UNHCR. Whilst registration is clearly necessary, there have been significant implications for other vulnerable groups as a result of this focus.

There are at least 80,000 known unregistered refugees for example, who are unable to access certain types of support through the UNHCR system⁵². In addition to these there is likely a much higher number of unknown unregistered refugees. Likewise, the most vulnerable members of host communities in Lebanon have also been excluded from accessing humanitarian support under the current system. Chapter 3 of this report highlights some of the many ways in which host communities are being impacted by the refugee influx, and the tensions that these are causing.

A major source of tension within host communities appears to be the widely held perception that only a small proportion of Syrians receiving support are 'real refugees'. Many people reported that Syrians who have been working in Lebanon for many years were now registering as refugees, allowing them to access support whilst continuing to work in Lebanon. For example, one youth in Akkar reported "I work in an organisation that supports refugees and we have files of 840 refugees; the true refugees are maximum 100. The others have been here for more than 10 years."

In reality, it is very difficult to distinguish between 'real' refugees and workers in a context such as Lebanon. Many thousands of Syrians have been working in Lebanon for many years, often as transient or seasonable labour. These workers may have brought their families to Lebanon, or are unable to return to their homes in Syria as a result of the fighting. Often these workers are in the greatest competition for low paid labouring roles with newly arrived refugees. Such workers and their families may be in just as much need of assistance as newly arrived refugees. The situation is therefore more complex than the refugee/ worker dichotomy would suggest.

Registration delays

UN agencies have reported that there is typically a one to three month delay in registering new arrivals as refugees. As a result, refugees have often lacked support at precisely the time when they are most vulnerable. Whilst the registration rate has now improved, refugees remain reliant on the generosity of host communities for much of this time. This has put significant strain on host communities; the longer the delay, and the more unregistered refugees there are, the greater the strain on host communities. Delays in the registration of new arrivals may have contributed to the regular under-estimation of the numbers of refugees in Lebanon.

⁵⁰ The cluster system was devised following the tsunami and articulated in the Humanitarian Response Review 2005 for major disasters to facilitate coordination and decision-making.

⁵¹ by giving UNHCR a stronger voice in resource allocation decisions than other implementing agencies

⁵² UNHCR report an estimated 80,000 refugees still awaiting registration. This figure does not include those refugees who may have decided not to register for a number of reasons. The real figure therefore is likely to be very much higher. One donor estimated the true number to be closer to 200,000 unregistered refugees in Lebanon today. The main reasons why so many refugees have not registered appear to be due to lack of awareness of the importance and benefits of registration, slow and confusing registration processes, and fear of being associated with one side in the conflict in Syria if they register with the authorities. See Lebanon Inter-Agency Response: Syrian Refugees, (May 2013)

Needs for the future

All interviewees were asked what the Government of Lebanon and the international community need to do differently in the future in order to address the challenges identified. Two clear themes came through; more needs to be done to achieve peace in Syria and specific sites for housing refugees need to be established.

Peace in Syria

Almost all interviewees highlighted the need for peace in Syria as the most pressing need. Whilst this may seem obvious, it does remind us of three key points. First, the solution to the problems in Lebanon cannot be found exclusively inside Lebanon. Humanitarian assistance for example can only provide a sticking-plaster; it cannot address the underlying drivers of fragility. Second, achieving peace and avoiding further militarisation in Syria must remain key priorities for all with influence in that country. Third, the international community must be ready for a prolonged crisis; ensuring aid is available as needed to refugees and hosting communities for as long as necessary.

The issue of camps

There was a very strong view from host communities that specific sites for housing refugees need to be established. As many as 75% of interviewees from host communities felt that this was an urgent priority for the Government of Lebanon and international community. Roughly two thirds of donor and INGO representatives interviewed agreed with this view.

Given the context in Lebanon, this is a highly contentious suggestion. Lebanon is already home to 12 official Palestinian refugee camps of more than 400,000 inhabitants⁵³. There is a history of mistrust and conflict between Lebanese and Palestinian communities since the civil war in 1975. Furthermore, this issue is deeply politically charged. Broadly speaking, members of the March 14 alliance are strongly supportive of the establishment of camps, whilst the March 8 alliance is vocally opposed⁵⁴. Any position on camps therefore runs the risk of being interpreted as a political statement rather than a humanitarian imperative.

Nonetheless, interviewees put forward compelling arguments both for and against camps. Most people living in host communities felt that camps would lessen the strain on public services, and allow for better targeted and more cost effective assistance. They also felt that camps would improve security in their communities, whilst providing a safer environment for the refugees. It was also argued that there is simply no more space for new refugees; new arrivals are gathering in make shift camps on the periphery of towns anyway. In effect informal camps are being established, with all of the problems camps bring, and none of the benefits.

"Doing camps is not a solution. It would be creating a big problem and would be an aim for the political parties to take advantage. It would be a big security issue" Kamil, 20's from Burj el Brajneh

On the flip side, many people pointed out that camps can very easily become militarised zones providing safe havens for fighters engaging in the conflict in Syria, and potentially in Lebanon as well. It can be very difficult to ensure the protection of women and children in camps, whilst they can also foster increased dependency on UN and NGOs for service provision. Segregating Syrians and host communities may also lead to increased polarisation of views and experiences, leading to more tension and distrust. Furthermore, camps play into fears that the refugees will become a permanent fixture, a particular concern in Lebanon given the presence of Palestinian camps for almost 65 years.

Whether camps are a sustainable solution or not will be largely dependent on the abilities of the Government of Lebanon and international community to mitigate against the negative impact highlighted above. What is clear is that host community members interviewed feel that they are reaching breaking point, and that camps are one part of a solution.

Analysis and conclusions

Since early 2011, the national and international humanitarian response in Lebanon to the crisis has been seen primarily through a 'refugee lens'. In practise this has meant that the vast majority of humanitarian aid has been directed towards Syrian refugees, whilst the needs of other vulnerable groups affected by the crisis have largely been neglected. Essentially,

⁵³ UNRWA (2013)

⁵⁴ See ICG (2013) report for detailed analysis and background to the political positions behind these stances.

there have been two crises unfolding in Lebanon as a result of the refugees influx, the Syrian refugee crisis and the host community crisis. Until recently the bulk of response activities were focused only on the former.

However, as more and more refugees have arrived in host communities in Lebanon, so the impact on host communities has become more acute. The lack of pre-existing sites to house refugees has only exacerbated this impact, contributing to Lebanese becoming poorer.

The failure of the national and international response to recognise the deteriorating condition of many Lebanese communities, and respond appropriately, has contributed to increased tensions between host communities and refugees. These tensions have been exacerbated by perceptions (real or perceived) of poor coordination between agencies and initiatives, aid being misdirected or manipulated towards Syrians who don't really need it (workers rather than refugees) and delays/ inefficiencies in refugee registration processes. Local municipalities have in many places exhausted their resources in trying to support both their communities and the new arrivals, but require more support than they have to do so fully.

With hindsight, it is surprising that there appears to have been relatively little analysis into the broader impact of the refugee crisis on host communities in Lebanon much earlier in the response. Given the extreme fragility within Lebanon, and historical links between sectarian groups on both sides of the border, it could have been predicted that even a relatively small influx of refugees could have had a very significant impact on the resilience of host communities.

Whilst the scale of the conflict in Syria may have been hard to predict, better context analysis and scenario planning on the part of response agencies might have allowed for better contingency planning. Such analysis would, presumably have identified the possibility of such a large refugee influx, and considered the likely impact on host communities.

A number of the issues identified by this chapter are now beginning to be addressed. The current UN appeal for example explicitly recognises the needs of host communities. UNDP and others are scaling up peacebuilding efforts, whilst the Lebanon Host Community Support Programme and the joint Ministry of Social Affairs-UNDP working group is another welcome step. However, the question remains whether the agencies and organisations involved in the response inside Lebanon are capable of addressing the escalating crisis in such a way as to prevent a deepening crisis and widening conflict.

CASE STUDY: NAWAL AND ZIAD, SYRIAN REFUGEES LIVING IN BEKAA

"His face is always covered in cuts because he falls every day clambering over the rubble outside," says Nawal of her 18-month-old son, Ziad.

Nawal is a 27 year old Syrian refugee living in a breeze block room with her six children. Inside, the room is very sparse, a carpet covering the floor, a TV, but with bare breeze blocks for walls. And the rubble outside this makeshift home is all her children have as a playground.

"Hunger made us leave Syria in February, to come to Lebanon," says Nawal "The clashes were getting closer and I was afraid of snipers. One of the snipers narrowly missed my eldest child, Heba, by just a few centimetres.

"I dream of having a better life than the one in Syria. My mood is low," says Nawal. "I was very scared by all the bombing. My children have missed school for two years. Safety is the most important thing. Now I am concerned the fighting will spread to Lebanon. Everyone is talking about this. We don't have a passport to go anywhere else. And we can't afford to go back to Syria.

"My house in Syria was burned. I lost it. I can't go back, to the bombing, kidnapping. There is no security, no life. The only solution is defeating Bashir. I don't care about politics, I only need safety for my children. I've run for a long time. I left my house, all furnished, with a ceramic kitchen and three bedrooms."

Her second son Hasan, aged ten, says: *"I remember the wall, the kitchen, I miss my computer"*.

11-year-old Heba adds: *"Even if we don't have a house in Syria, we would build a tent and stay there"*.

Nawal says *"My son Ali was only 20 days old when we left home. I don't mingle with Lebanese, I like being alone by nature. And we have also been harassed. Some Lebanese in passing cars have shouted 'We want you out', but I don't talk to them. What have we done wrong? We hosted them in July 2006, so why do they hate us?"*

Youssef – the Lebanese man who is allowing the family to stay in the garage – came into the room, the first time he has allowed himself to enter the family's space. *"Youssef is really kind, because he cares about us," says Nawal. "Before he hosted us, we used to stay in a leaking house. We have never paid rent. We were 30 people living in the same building, but many fled due to insect infestations, but I didn't leave because there were no more rooms available anywhere."*

Her brother is a student who used to be with her. But one day he accidentally bumped into a Lebanese person, and as a result got badly beaten up by a group of Lebanese who took offence. And so he decided to go back to Syria.

"I really don't understand why this happened," says Nawal. "There is no way to go back, because the Sunnis are hated in Syria. On one day, 70 Sunnis were killed. I'd rather die here. The Shabiha (mercenaries) are slaughtering people. Just because I am from Bayyada, I might be killed. It's a genocidal war, where women and children are killed as well as men. We've had enough".

In contrast to the widespread perception amongst some Lebanese that Syrian refugees live relatively well, or better than the Lebanese, she says *"If it were not for the food vouchers, we would die of hunger. We came here with just the clothes we were wearing. Everything else was left in the house."*



"His face is always covered in cuts because he falls every day clambering over the rubble outside," says Nawal of her 18-month-old son, Ziad.
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PROGRAMMING WITH HOST COMMUNITIES AND REFUGEES: LESSONS LEARNED BY WORLD VISION

This box highlights some lessons learned based on World Vision experience as both a relief and development organisation, working with the most vulnerable children in refugee and host communities throughout Lebanon. Some key lessons included:

- **Long term presence in communities can help improve effectiveness of response activities:** World Vision's ability to maintain its development programming, even in the midst of significant upsurges in conflict, has helped establish strong levels of trust with communities. This in turn has helped programmes negotiate complex, politically and socially charged environments. For example in the North and the Bekaa, despite the rapid change in context in the communities as a result of the Syrian crisis, World Vision's established presence in these communities, and strong community relations allowed for a quick relief response.

These strong community relations have also helped staff to identify how changes in the context are impacting on vulnerable groups within host communities (e.g. through the support of community groups in identifying the most vulnerable groups). Staff are based in the community, and trained in responding to emergencies, allowing them to respond immediately to rapidly changing events.

- **Conduct and regularly update national level context analysis and scenario planning:** World Vision has conducted regular national level context analyses, using World Vision's Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts (MSTC) Methodology⁵⁵. These have informed the national strategy, by identifying potential causes of conflict and how programmes can help to address them. Since early 2012, the analysis has been updated every 6 months, with strategies and programmes reviewed accordingly. Regular scenario and contingency planning has helped identify emerging trends, allowing for pre-positioning and planning within development programmes.
- Ensure a conflict sensitive approach to development and response activities⁵⁶: Analysis of the factors that can impact on or contribute to conflict has been used to inform how World Vision has responded to the current crisis⁵⁷. For example, the decision to continue to run long-term development programmes with host communities alongside the humanitarian response was informed by an assessment of the potential impact on stability within these communities if World Vision were to stop working with them and focus only on refugees.
- Adapt the way in which we do development programming to account for changed context: World Vision's development programmes have sought to integrate relief activities. Programmes have been adapted in order to allow them to integrate Syrian refugees into ongoing programmes (see Mother Action Groups case study below). Some are preparing to increase activities with immediate and visible impact (such as small scale infrastructure improvements for schools or establishments of child-friendly spaces for both Syrian and Lebanese children) to ensure that immediate needs are met as part of a longer term approach. World Vision is actively seeking further grants to allow it step up its work with both host communities and refugees.
- Ensure host communities are included in response activities: World Vision intends to ring-fence at least 20% of funding allocated for humanitarian response activities to working with host communities⁵⁸.

⁵⁵ MSTC is a participatory conflict analysis methodology. It seeks to identify underlying drivers of conflict, and key strategic needs for a country in order to support it to address these issues. (WV 2011)

⁵⁶ Conflict Sensitivity refers to the ability of an organisation to 1) understand the context in which it operates 2) understand the interaction between its intervention and the context and 3) act upon this understanding in order to minimise negative impacts and maximise positive impacts on conflict (CSC, 2012)

⁵⁷ WV (2007)

⁵⁸ This will be dependent on donor funding requirements and need in communities.

CASE STUDY: MOTHER ACTION GROUPS



A Syrian woman cares for sick children. World Vision supports projects that enable Lebanese women to train Syrian refugee mothers on how to care for their children. © 2013 Patricia Mouamar/World Vision

World Vision's Mothers in Action group was initially formed to work within poor Lebanese communities in the town of Kabalias in the Bekka Valley. Local women were trained in mother and child health and how to offer advice to other mothers. Access to healthcare was already poor in Kabalias before the Syrian crisis, which has seen the population of Bekka almost double, putting intense pressure on this already deprived community.

Many Syrian refugee families in Kabalias have been unable to access health care and are living in unsanitary conditions. World Vision decided to encourage the Mothers in Action group to target refugee mothers. The aim was to provide practical self-help advice but also to build bridges between the two communities.

Dima mixes a solution of salt, sugar and water then pours into a bowl holding it aloft for the group to see. She's demonstrating how to make a simple rehydration solution to prevent diarrhoea in babies and young children.

50 Syrian women sitting around her look on in concentration. For them this simple solution could be the difference between life and death for their children. Most of these women live in whatever rented accommodation they could find, half constructed buildings, shacks, garages.

Dima looks entirely comfortable, but in reality this is the first time that she has ever spoken to the Syrian families who have taken refuge in her town.

"I did think badly of them. Their coming here has been a crisis for my community. Only yesterday I was in the doctor's surgery and some women were complaining that soon there will be no medicine left for us Lebanese because the Syrians are taking it all. I agreed with that because also many Lebanese men have been unable to find work since the Syrians came, they will always work for less. But today I have seen these women differently. I can see they don't want to be here. They are trying to take care of their children and families when they have nothing. I think it is good we came today. They really needed this advice. And now I can tell my friends that we should be helping them if we can."

Her friend Ghada, another member of Mothers in Action, agrees: *"I came here today expecting them to ask for money from us, but they didn't. They only wanted information and help for their kids. My husband was happy I came here today. He thinks I am helping our community too because there has been so much tension between us and the Syrians because the Syrians are everywhere. I had a very bad impression but I can see now I had the wrong idea about them. They are mothers just like me."*

Key Recommendations

This chapter outlines recommendations for key actors with influence over the current context in Lebanon. They are intended to support more effective response activities, working for the benefit of all those affected by the crisis, both Syrian refugees and host communities.

All relevant actors engaged in Lebanon should:

- Ensure that adequate aid is directed to those people most in need, regardless of whether they are refugees or members of host communities in Lebanon
- Ensure that all activities are informed by an understanding of the local context, and particularly how activities can either help or hinder good relations between host communities and refugees
- Invest in an appropriate mix of humanitarian, peacebuilding and development interventions. Particular attention should be paid to interventions aimed at addressing the economic impact of the refugee crisis, as well the education and healthcare needs of children from both host community and refugee populations
- Work with parties involved with the conflict in Syria to reach a peaceful resolution to the crisis, and prevent further destabilisation of Lebanon. All parties should refrain from any further militarisation of the conflict in Syria.

The Government of Lebanon should:

- Commit to continued action to support incoming refugees from Syria, whilst stepping up action to support all groups affected by the refugee influx. Specifically by:
 - Reiterating its commitment to Lebanon's policy of welcoming all refugees, and maintaining open borders to facilitate their arrival.
- Ensure all efforts are made to facilitate humanitarian scale-up in the country, by:
 - Taking a leadership role in the coordination of the overall response, alongside other humanitarian actors (especially UN leads and co-leads)
 - Proactively engage with humanitarian actors operating in-country to develop appropriate contingency plans and implementation strategies.
- Ensure sufficient support is provided to local government institutions to allow for effective support for host communities and refugees. Specifically by:
 - Proactively investing in the understanding of, and addressing, the pressures that municipalities face in coping with the increased demand on basic services
 - Developing a strategy for accessing additional support from the international community
 - Put in place shelter solutions able to facilitate WASH, healthcare, education and protection programmes for refugees and to assist host communities under pressure
- Identify specific initiatives intended to promote peace, and facilitate improved relations within and between communities across the country. Specifically by:
 - Ensuring that aid is specifically targeted to geographic and sectoral areas where it can contribute to conflict prevention
 - Ensuring investment in peacebuilding and social cohesion programmes, specifically targeting children and youth in host communities with large refugee populations and with refugees.
- Develop a detailed strategy in collaboration with host communities, civil society, UN and donors on where and how to host the significant number of predicted new refugees, projected to arrive in the next 6-12 months. This should include a plan on how to manage the pressure on the local population resulting from higher rents, lower wages, crowded schools and hospitals

International Donors should:

- Ensure that the Syria Regional Response Plan 5 (RRP 5) is fully funded. Specifically:
 - Ensure that funding is quickly directed towards programmes working with the most vulnerable groups including host communities, as well as both registered and unregistered refugees
 - Particular emphasis should also be given to economic development initiatives that aim to support both host community and refugee populations
 - Ensure that NGOs and UN agencies engaged in child protection programming and child protection capacity building are fully funded, as children are a particularly vulnerable group.
- Step up support to humanitarian initiatives in Lebanon, whilst maintaining long term development programming. Specifically:
 - Integrate short term solutions to address the needs of the most vulnerable Lebanese hosting communities alongside the development programmes, for example within the education sector; rehabilitation of WASH infrastructures in schools where Lebanese and Syrian children are enrolled
 - Ensure that all communities (refugees and host communities) are meaningfully involved in decision-making about needs and responses
 - Ensure adequate support is provided to Ministry of Social Affairs -UNDP Host Community Support Project.
- Ensure that a conflict sensitive approach is applied to the delivery of both humanitarian and development aid. Specifically by:
 - Conducting conflict analysis at the national level to inform country strategic plans. This should account for and assess the potential impact of new and existing funding on social cohesion, including relations between host communities and refugees
 - Making funding and capacity building support available to implementing partners to ensure that all programmes are informed by an analysis of the likely impact of programmes on social cohesion.
- Significantly increase the number of donor agencies with humanitarian advisers based in Lebanon.
- Ensure funding for humanitarian and development interventions goes to those organisations best placed to identify and help the most vulnerable. Specifically:
 - Prioritise funding to organisations able to demonstrate strong understanding of the needs of local communities, and who have conducted do no harm assessments to inform programme implementation strategies.

United Nations Agencies in Lebanon should:

- Ensure the most efficient mechanisms are in place for coordination, decision-making and data collection and sharing amongst responding organisations. Specifically:
 - Strengthen the already existing coordination mechanisms
 - Ensure informative and strategic decisions guide the current response
 - Develop a clear response plan that addresses the most urgent priorities for the short and medium term in consultation with the NGO community
 - Ensure adequate resources are allocated to continuously collect data and develop the appropriate information management system to disseminate this data to relevant actors.
- Ensure that the implementation of the vulnerability criteria for targeted assistance is done employing a conflict sensitive approach, considering vulnerable members of the refugee and host population.

Civil Society and NGOs should:

- Scale up and demonstrate capacity to implement programmes according to the current and growing needs in country
- Ensure efficient coordination and data-sharing through national forums and local mechanisms
- Ensure that a conflict sensitive approach is applied to all development and response activities. Specifically:
 - Ensure that programmes are based on consultation with all groups within local communities, including refugees and host communities, so as to identify the most urgent needs and the best way to meet those needs
 - Ensure that programmes are based on risk analysis, including an assessment of the potential impact of such programmes on community relationships, including between host communities and refugees.
- Adapt the way in which they design and implement development programmes to account for changed context. For example,
 - Be prepared to implement quick impact projects as part of long term development approach
 - Scale up work with both host communities and refugees
 - Adapt programme designs to address urgent needs for both host community and refugees
 - Review sector and national level needs and vulnerability assessments to identify specific needs of both host communities and refugees, and target assistance accordingly.



Syrian girls from a tented settlement of 120 tents in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley.
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