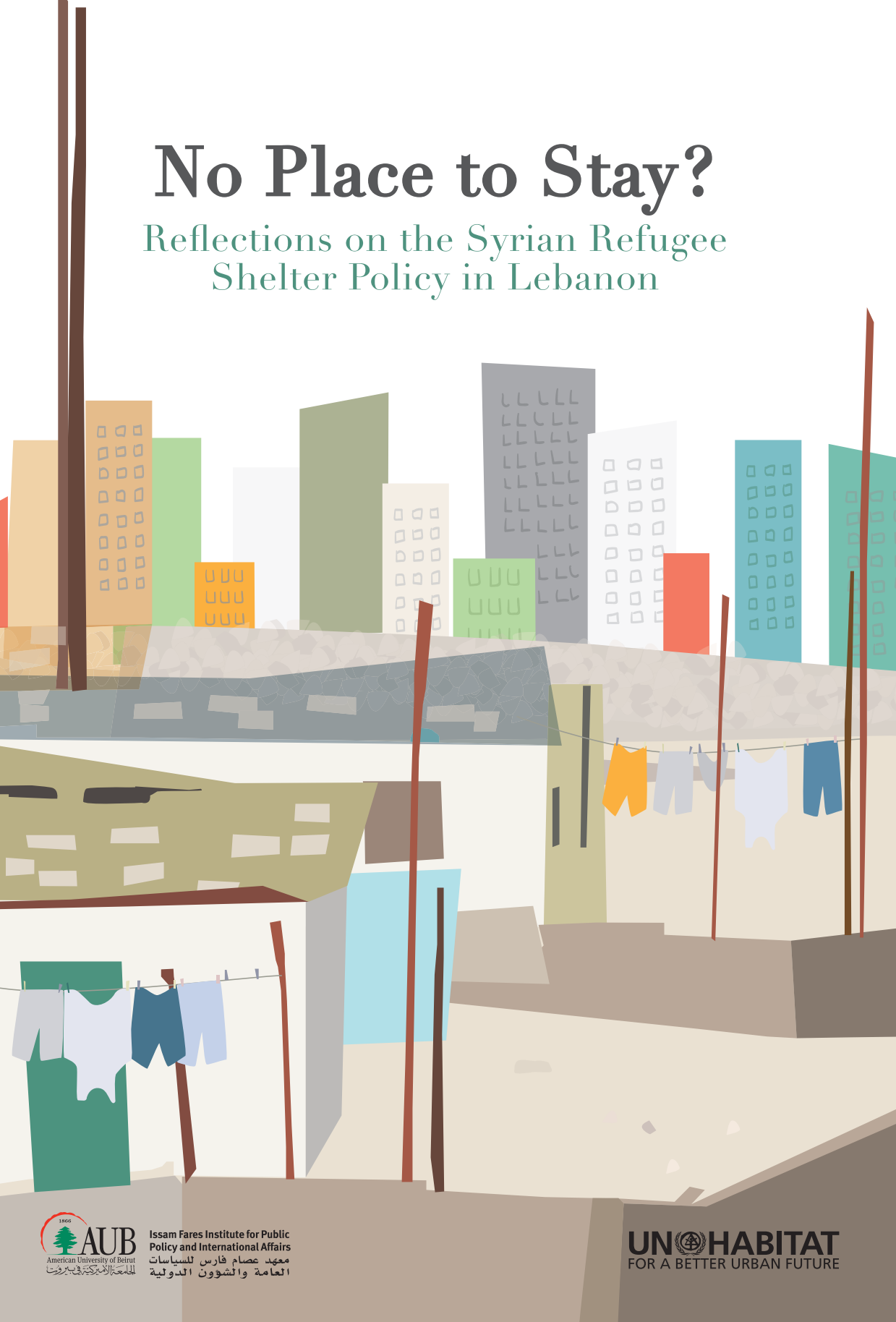
No Place to Stay?

Reflections on the Syrian Refugee Shelter Policy in Lebanon



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Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs
معهد عصام فارس للسياسات العامة والشؤون الدولية

UN HABITAT
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

Printed in Beirut, Lebanon
ISBN 978-9953-586-23-6

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September 2015

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank all actors who contributed to this report through providing their opinions and sharing their expertise, which greatly informed this study. These include, but are not limited to, actors from the Lebanese government, national and international organizations, non-governmental organizations, academics and municipal representatives. Special thanks go to the refugees and host communities, who welcomed us in their localities and shared their perspectives with us.

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ANERA	American Near East Refugee Aid
AUB	American University of Beirut
CCECS	Center for Civic Engagement and Community Service
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
IFI	Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs
IHR	International Humanitarian Relief
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOs	International organizations
IS	Informal Settlements
LCRP	Lebanon Crisis Response Plan
MoIM	Ministry of Interior and Municipalities
MoSA	Ministry of Social Affairs
NGOs	Non-governmental organizations
NPMLT	National Physical Master Plan for the Lebanese Territories
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
PRS	Palestinian refugees from Syria
RHUs	Refugee Housing Units
UN	United Nations
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
UoMs	Unions of Municipalities

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DISCLAIMER

The findings of this report summarize and echo the opinions and views of different practitioners, stakeholders, and affected groups in light of the Syrian refugee shelter debate in Lebanon.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

i. In Lebanon, the question of hosting and ensuring protection for Syrian refugees in light of the government stance against the erection of camps has created many deliberations concerning different proposed and implemented shelter options and solutions. Among these solutions, the proposition of creating refugee camps has been subject to clearly opposing views.

ii. The shelter issue becomes more compounded given the protracted nature of the refugee crisis and the repercussions on Lebanon, which would necessitate long-term, feasible and contextualized solutions.

iii. As such, UN-Habitat, in partnership with the American University of Beirut's (AUB) Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs (IFI), initiated a research study in July 2014 to address solutions for hosting and ensuring protection for refugees specifically on the subject of erecting camps to address the Syrian crisis. The study looked at the issue given the context of complex historic, political, socio-economic and governance conditions that are specific to Lebanon. The results of this research study are published in this report, which comes four years after the crisis, and benefits from the ability to reflect on the emergency response during the "stabilization" phase, which Lebanon has entered in the beginning of 2015.

iv. This report supports and is designed to serve the collective aims of the Lebanese Crisis Response Plan (LCRP), to effectually approach the needs of the Syrian refugee community, one of the most vulnerable populations in Lebanon. The LCRP, formulated by the Lebanese government in partnership with United Nations (UN) agencies and various international organizations (IOs) and international and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), aims to strengthen the implementation of the refugee response, building on lessons learned over the last few years.

v. This report reflects the emerging challenges to shelter options in Lebanon, while highlighting the complex realities on the ground with respect to the shelter response and all of the respective parties involved.

vi. The report aims to provide concerned actors (governmental institutions, IOs, local authorities and NGOs) with some tools to make informed decisions and enact effective policies that apply in Lebanon. Furthermore, this report contributes to the academic literature pertaining to the case of establishing camps for Syrian refugees in Lebanon and response to the need for research and analysis on the subject. More importantly, and based on the evidence collected from extensive fieldwork, interviews and focus group discussions conducted for this study, the report provides recommendations for viable and realistic shelter responses.

TO ELABORATE:

vii. The report primarily highlights the significant role that municipalities in Lebanese host communities are playing in the response. Any response to the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon – with respect to shelter concerns or otherwise – should acknowledge municipalities as players also dealing with this refugee influx, in addition to the central government and international organizations.

viii. The report emphasizes that the Lebanese government and the international community should not view the establishment of Syrian refugee camps as an optimal solution to the protracted refugee crisis. It concludes that it has become far too late to erect camps to house existing refugees in Lebanon.

ix. While establishing camps is part of the contingency plan to absorb large refugee influxes, and as the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities (MoIM) still considers refugee camps as a viable option to relocate refugees (in certain "hot spots", not across the country) and to cope with evictions and for security reasons (in Arsal, for example), the findings of this research show that there are many adverse implications (particularly on the social, political and economic levels) of establishing refugee camps in Lebanon at this stage.

x. Therefore, shelter policies and programs should focus on: 1) upgrading the existing substandard shelter in addition to pursuing additional plans

and adopted alternative shelter options and 2) upgrading the neighborhoods and areas impacted by the crisis and address, in the same manner, the emergence of informal settlements.

xi. This report ultimately advocates a move towards the implementation of a comprehensive security approach which includes policies that are not discriminatory against refugees, do not violate human rights, and are properly enforced. Suggested measures would involve the abolishment of curfews on Syrian refugees while proposing community forms of policing, and supporting municipalities financially and technically to enforce security measures. Ultimately, refugees should be granted a rights-based, transparent legal status.

xii. Learning from the "Palestinian experience", this report recommends that initiatives and projects should be designed and implemented, to allow both Syrian refugees and members of the Lebanese host communities to work side-by-side, thereby leading to decreasing levels of tension and lower perceptions of the "other" as a threat. This will facilitate the successful integration of refugees into host communities.

xiii. Such projects would also benefit the local economy while providing refugees with the chance to sustain their livelihood so as to eliminate the aid-dependent perception of refugees as bodies to be fed. Indeed, engaging refugees in a planned manner in the Lebanese labor market will benefit the refugees themselves as well as the country as a whole. Such projects would also alleviate the marginalization and impoverishment of both Lebanese communities and Syrian refugees.

TO CONCLUDE:

xiv. Lebanon's experience with the Syrian refugee crisis and the debate over the establishment of camps is a unique case, which portrays the prominence of the local context and the need to adapt any response to the realities on the ground. This flags the importance of pausing to understand the complexities of local contexts prior to proposing solutions such as refugee camps that would not only affect refugees, but also host communities, as well as national economic, societal and political realities.

Bekaa Valley, Lebanon, Jan. 2015. ***Photo © UNHCR / A.McConnell***

INTRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Lebanon and the Syrian Refugee Crisis

According to the National Physical Master Plan for the Lebanese Territories (NPMLT), the population in Lebanon was projected to reach around 5,230,000 in 2030.[1] In 2015, in light of the Syrian refugee crisis, the population in Lebanon is estimated to surpass the 2030 projection – to reach 5,900,000, 15 years ahead of time.[2] This rapid population increase not only places immense pressure on the country's infrastructure and services, but also, raises the question concerning shelter options for these refugees scattered around Lebanon.

The Syrian crisis is said to be one of the largest refugee crises since World War II. The advent of the war in Syria in 2011 caused massive displacements of populations fleeing the war mostly to the neighboring countries of Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Iraq. Since then, this crisis has had economic and social impacts on Lebanon. However, the burden fell heaviest on Lebanon, a country with an already fragile governance system and sub-standard infrastructure currently hosting the largest per capita refugee population in the world (some 1.172 million registered with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR] as of March 2015). Furthermore, Lebanon currently has the highest percentage of refugees to local population amounting to 26.20%, while refugees amount to 9.5% of Jordan's population and 3% of Turkey's population with less than 1% in Egypt, Iraq and North Africa.[3]

At the start of the crisis, Lebanese authorities had little to no response to the flood of refugees, as they expected the events in Syria to die down

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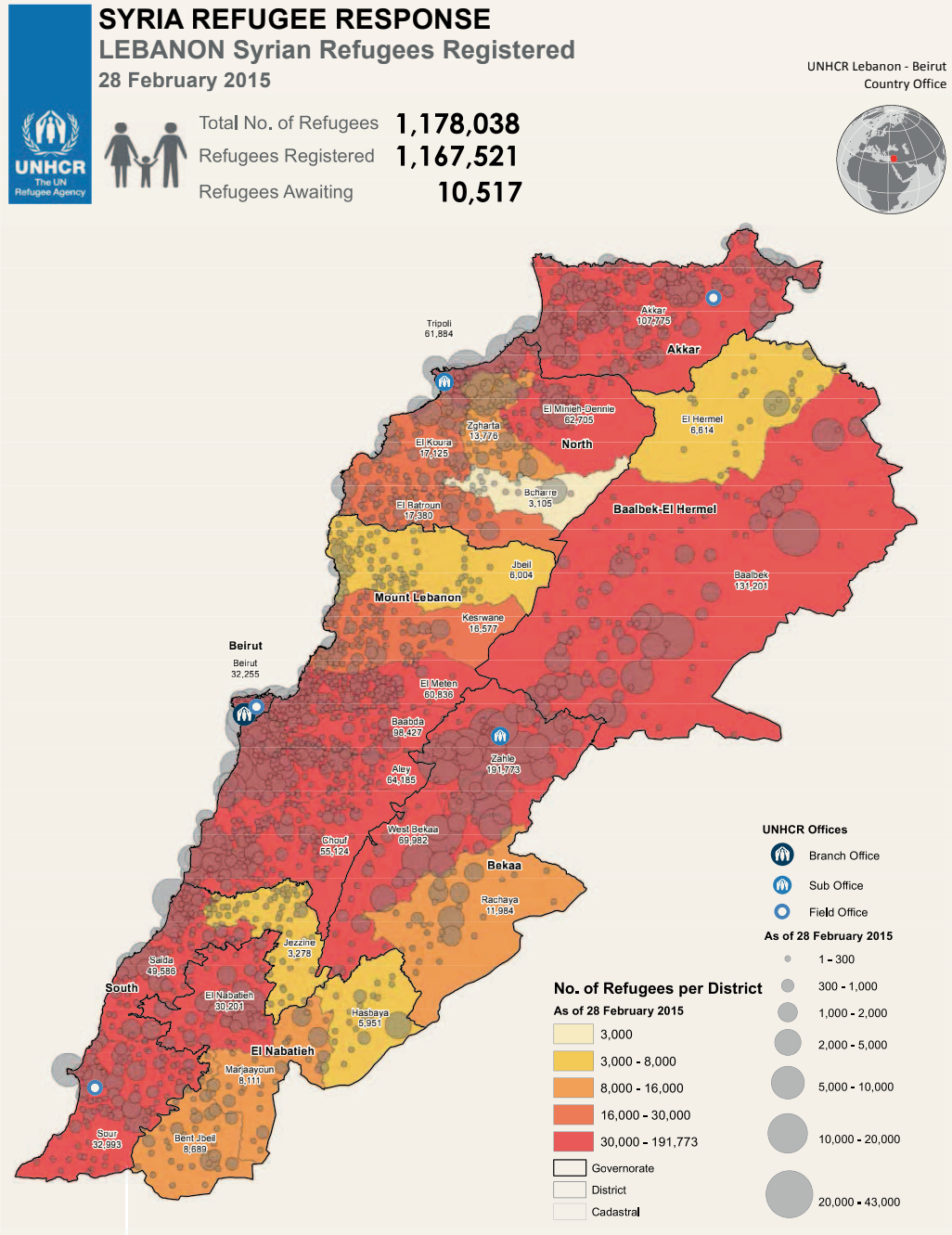
1. *Based on the National Physical Master Plan for the Lebanese Territories (NPMLT), this estimate projects a growth of 0.92% per annum from 1997 to 2030.*
2. *Based on the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) projection for 2015 (p. 6).*
3. *Assafir, Tuesday January 6, 2015. "Lebanon between two extremes the largest displacement... and less aid!"*

rapidly as similar uprisings in the region had. The Lebanese government was praised for keeping borders open, especially by international organizations (IOs). Thus, refugees easily crossed the borders and were welcomed by the Lebanese families who hosted them in their community asking for nothing in return. This hosting process seemed to flow naturally and took a unique turn that was mostly defined by Lebanese-Syrian relationship dynamics predating the war. As such, the factors which largely defined the geography of refugees in Lebanon include: 1) Heads of Syrian households already working in Lebanon prior to the crisis; and 2) Pre-existing familial, economic, and social ties between Lebanese and Syrian families especially those close to the borders. However, as the crisis escalated, and refugee numbers rose significantly, ensuring protection for refugees became a burden not only on the Lebanese hosting families but on the national level as well with impacts on all sectors including security, shelter, education, economic, social, political and others. The government, international organizations, United Nations (UN) agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) rushed to respond to the emergency, proposing various solutions and aiming to address the scale and multi-dimensional characteristics of the crisis, yet the persistent needs of the refugees and challenges marking the Lebanese context blurred the possibility of agreeing on a long-term holistic solution or plan.

The issue of Syrian refugees falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA), which closely coordinates with the UNHCR along with international aid organizations to create responses to this multi-angled crisis. Furthermore, various NGOs took the lead on supporting the Syrian refugees through supplying them with their basic needs and providing an education to as many children as possible in view of the funding available and the schools' capacities. The absence of a state policy to regulate the presence of refugees permitted the emergence of many Lebanese municipalities as authoritative local bodies – particularly with respect to areas of refugee settlement. Moreover, while the Lebanese government was reluctant to set up official refugee camps due to political resistance against this matter, informal settlements started to emerge in an unsystematic manner in the North and in the Bekaa to accommodate the ever-growing number of refugees.

As the crisis in Syria reached new levels of adversity, Lebanon kept witnessing a substantial inflow of Syrians, attaining a number of 805,835 of registered Syrian refugees by the end of December 2013, which is six times larger than the number of refugees at the end of 2012.[4]

4. *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Registration Trends for Syrian Refugees, 2013.*



Map of Registered Syrian Refugees in Lebanon as of February 2015.

By the end of 2014, 1.1 million Syrians were registered as refugees with UNHCR. This relentless increase has left Lebanese citizens concerned that the refugees may remain in Lebanon for many years to come. Lebanon has imposed restrictions on the entry of Syrians at the border effective January 5, 2015, so as to put a halt to the number of Syrian refugees in Lebanon in order to avoid further breaches in Lebanon's security. As time progressed, tensions further increased between Lebanese host communities and Syrian refugees, with the fear of increased hostility in certain areas.[5]

2. Host Countries and the Question of Refugee Camps

Host countries often prefer building refugee camps, which would be managed by international organizations or international communities and thus would become, to a certain extent outside the responsibility of the host state, often "controlled" and governed by international organizations. Establishing camps for refugees is a strategy that host countries often adopt in order to pressure the international community to provide services and assistance to refugees.[6] However, in the case of the response to the Syrian refugee crisis, host countries took a different stance vis-à-vis the question of camps. While the Jordanian and Turkish governments, for example, manage the funding, services and amenities provided to Syrian refugees in addition to the camps themselves, the Lebanese officials – with the exception of MoSA – has been strictly refusing the establishment of camps to host Syrian refugees.[7]

Thus, in Lebanon, the question of hosting and ensuring protection for Syrian refugees in light of the government stance against the erection of camps created many debates concerning different proposed and implemented solutions. Among these solutions, the proposition of creating refugee camps always resulted in a heated discussion with different stakeholders taking extreme stances with or against the establishment of camps. However, to understand the camps controversy in Lebanon, one must not only look at the multiple layers of the crisis, but also the complex historical and present conditions of Lebanon, and the dynamics created by

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5. Harb, Charles and Saab, Reem (2014). Social Cohesion and Intergroup Relations: Syrian Refugees and Lebanese Nationals in the Bekaa and Akkar. http://www.aub.edu.lb/ifi/publications/Documents/policy_memos/2014-2015/20140624_Social_Cohesion.pdf

6. Sommers, Marc (2001). "Young, Male and Pentecostal: Urban Refugees in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania." Journal of Refugee Studies Vol. 14, No. 4.

7. At the end of 2013, MoSA authorized the establishment of a transit site in Arsal for around 65 households.

the displacement between both countries with social, economic, political, and geographic linkages predating the crisis.

3. Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) 2015-2016

With the lack of a clear governmental stance vis-à-vis the Syrian refugee crisis, various governmental institutions issued contrasting statements and showed drastically different levels of involvement in the response. This created a widespread level of confusion on the national level. For instance, some governmental bodies took a "no response" stance, foreseeing a "near end" to the crisis and the return of refugees to Syria. Furthermore, certain ministries were highly involved in the response, while others were simply absent. However, four years into the crisis, the government and international organizations saw the importance of rigorously involving the government and host communities in the response, which is evident in the creation and adoption of the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) 2015-2016.[8]

The LCRP, which was formulated by the Lebanese government, in partnership with the UN and various NGOs, embodies a roadmap to be followed by all supporting organizations and communities involved in the response to the refugee crisis, so as to effectively organize the assistance to Lebanon's most vulnerable populations – including Syrian refugees, in addition to the host communities. Based on this premise, the LCRP framework focuses on three main strategic priorities: (i) ensuring humanitarian protection and assistance primarily to Syrian de facto refugees and the poorest Lebanese; (ii) strengthening the capacity of national and local public delivery systems to accommodate the basic needs of the aforementioned peoples; and (iii) supporting Lebanon's economic, social, institutional and environmental stability. These three strategies cannot exist without the other being fulfilled; they depend on, and furthermore, reinforce one another.

It is important to note that this study supports and is designed to serve the LCRP's aforementioned collective aims, to effectually approach the needs of the refugee community, one of the most vulnerable populations in Lebanon. The LCRP offers an opportunity to strengthen

8. This report was prepared before the Lebanese Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) was published. However, many of the recommendations are in line with the overall objectives of the LCRP.

the implementation of the refugee response, building on lessons learned over the last few years of the crisis.

B. OBJECTIVES

UN-Habitat, in partnership with the American University of Beirut's (AUB) Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs (IFI), initiated a research study in July 2014 to address solutions for hosting and ensuring protection for refugees specifically the proposition of camps to address the Syrian crisis within a web of complex historic, political, socio-economic and governance conditions that are specific to Lebanon. The report comes almost four years into the crisis, and benefits from the ability to reflect on the emergency response during the "stabilization" phase, which Lebanon has entered in the beginning of 2015. The report aims to:

1. Provide concerned actors (governmental institutions, international organizations, UN agencies, and NGOs) with some tools to make informed decisions and enact effective policies that apply in Lebanon.
2. Feed into the gap in the academic literature pertaining to the case of establishing camps for Syrian refugees in Lebanon and respond to the need for research and analysis on the subject.

C. METHODOLOGY

The study is based on a review of the existing academic, official and grey literature on camps and shelter for refugees with a specific focus on the literature on urban refugees. Furthermore, the study bases its findings on a series of semi-structured interviews with key informants as well as focus group discussions that were organized with Syrian refugees in three localities in Lebanon.

The study has thus employed a qualitative research design that is based on:

1. A systematic desk review of publically available documents spanning reports, policies and legislations by government, international and national organizations, UN agencies, research studies, and international and local media coverage.
2. In-depth and semi-structured interviews with key informants conducted by the UN-Habitat/IFI research team throughout August and September 2014. A total of 24 in-depth interviews were conducted with five academics working on refugee shelter issues, five municipal

representatives from areas with a large refugee community, and ten different IOs and NGOs responding to the crisis.

3. A total of 6 focus group discussions in urban and rural localities in 3 areas in Lebanon: Nabaa in Beirut, Sahel El Zahrani in South Lebanon, and Bar Elias in the Bekaa. In each area, two focus groups comprised of 10 to 15 participants were held: one with Lebanese residents and another with Syrian refugees and residents. In light of the security situation in the North of Lebanon during the data collection phase, various attempts to conduct field visits and focus groups in this region were unsuccessful.

The data collected from the desk review, interviews and focus groups was classified into derived themes by the research team. The team then analyzed the data and drafted the findings of the research, which informed the recommendations made in this report.

D. DOCUMENT STRUCTURE

Chapter 1 of the research begins with providing a set of policy recommendations resulting from the findings of the study. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the key concepts pertaining to the camps debate in Lebanon. Chapter 3 is a brief review of the alternative shelter options proposed in Lebanon. Chapter 4 presents the positions and arguments of various stakeholders (academic, governmental, international organizations, UN agencies, NGOs) and their take on addressing shelter for refugees. Finally, the report ends with a synthesis in Chapter 5 and a conclusion in Chapter 6.

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CHAPTER 01

Bekaa Valley, Lebanon, Jan. 2015. ***Photo © UNHCR / A.McConnell***

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The policy recommendations outlined below are addressed to the following central actors in the Syrian refugee response:

1- **The Lebanese Government:** To adopt a clear policy on the national level that would be mirrored and enacted through all sectors and by governmental bodies.

2- **The International Community:** To respect the leading role of the Lebanese government in terms of involvement in planning the response and in the allocation as well as the monitoring of funds.

3- **Local Authorities:** To get support in terms of building capacities, coordination and funding considering that local authorities are at the forefront of the response.

4- **Syrian Refugees and Lebanese Host Communities:** To take into consideration the needs of both groups in any response, emphasizing the need for "balance" in aid and services for Syrian refugees and host communities.

A. Policy, Planning and Coordination

1- It is imperative that the Lebanese government and the international community officially recognize the scale and protracted nature of the refugee crisis and better address the multitude of impacts through a clear vision of how to react as the crisis unfolds with a long-term strategy.

2- The government should take an initiative in assigning the main development and planning authorities in Lebanon to review the implications of this refugee influx and address them accordingly in all relevant sectors [demographic, infrastructure, socio-economic, land use, Master Plan, etc.].

3- The adoption of the LCRP is encouraged – particularly since it addresses the protection of both Syrian refugees and vulnerable Lebanese

populations, in addition to enhancing the capacities of national and local public delivery systems for the provision of basic needs, while highlighting the importance of ensuring stability for Lebanon's economic, social, institutional and environmental stability.

4- Both the government and international organizations (IOs) should acknowledge municipalities as players also dealing with this refugee influx. Thus, they should build on their capacities to address this protracted refugee crisis in the stabilization phase. This can occur through adopting a nationwide policy at the central level, with municipalities/unions of municipalities (UoMs) enacting this national policy.

5- Adopted coordination mechanisms at the central level should involve key governmental entities and actors, in addition to MoSA. At the regional level, coordination should also actively involve representatives of municipalities, UoMs and other local authorities.

6- As the government has been largely excluded from the bilateral funding process over the past four years, it has become important to highly involve the Lebanese government in the allocation and monitoring of funds reaching local authorities and localities within its territories. An international and well-coordinated strategy for fundraising would facilitate bilateral donors to provide aid for this refugee crisis.

B. Shelter and Shelter Alternatives

1- The Lebanese government and the international community should accept that establishing Syrian refugee camps in Lebanon is not the optimal solution to this protracted crisis. Moreover, it has become far too late to create camps to house existing refugees. While establishing camps is part of the contingency plan to absorb large refugee influxes, the findings of this research show that in Lebanon, there are many adverse implications (particularly on the social, political, security and economic levels) of establishing refugee camps at this stage. Thus, shelter policies and programming should focus on: 1) additional substandard shelter options in addition to pursuing additional plans and adopted alternative shelter options and 2) upgrading the neighborhoods and areas impacted by the crisis and the emergence of informal settlements.

2- As the majority of refugees (83%) are paying rent and living in urban, semi-urban, or rural areas in Lebanon, the government, international agencies, and local authorities should adopt a medium-term strategy to formalize shelter arrangements between landlords and Syrian refugee

tenants so to protect the rights of both refugees and landlords.[9]

3- Emphasis on the implementation of community support projects by the government and IOs should continue and increase in affected communities, neighborhoods, and informal settlements; improving access to services through infrastructure upgrading, public space provision, public works, would reduce tensions between Syrian refugees and host communities. However, medium-term projects, which would respond to current needs and would remain beneficial to the Lebanese after the crisis is over, should be promoted.

4- Further cost analysis is recommended and required, so as to review whether the upgrading of informal settlements (where 17% of Syrian refugees are living) or rather, the upgrading of rented shelter (apartments, old houses, unfinished buildings, etc.) is more effective in terms of enhancing living conditions for refugees and the provision of basic needs.

5- A detailed survey on the impact of refugees on the rental markets in Lebanon should be conducted.

C. Safety and Security

1- The Lebanese government has adopted a policy on the entry and exit regulations for Syrian refugees, asserting that any refugee who crosses into Syria will be stripped of their refugee status, thereby restricting their cross-border movement. While the reasons behind such a policy are understood, it is important that such policies are not discriminatory, do not violate human rights, and are properly implemented. The government should provide solutions for Syrian refugees to return to Syria to update their paperwork, or issue the paperwork of newly-born children.

2- The government should articulate a comprehensive security approach that clearly states what security measures are to be enacted to ensure the safety of refugees and host communities alike. The government should inform and mandate local authorities to implement these policies in their localities. Suggested measures would involve abolishing the enforcement of curfews on Syrian refugees, proposing community forms of policing, and supporting municipalities financially and technically to enforce security measures.

3- The Ministry of Interior and Municipalities (MoIM) still considers camps an option to relocate refugees in specific "hot spots" to cope with

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9. UN-Habitat, UNHCR, EU. Housing, Land, and Property Issues in Lebanon. August 2014. Available at: http://unhabitat.org/housing-land-and-property-issues-in-lebanon-implications-of-the-syrian-refugee-crisis-august-2014/

evictions and for security reasons (in Arsal, for example). This warrants further assessment and analysis in terms of feasibility, implications on refugees and host communities, and impact on security.

D. Social Cohesion and Integration

1- Learning from the "Palestinian experience", IOs and NGOs should design and implement initiatives and projects that would allow both Syrian refugees and members of the Lebanese host communities to work side-by-side, thereby leading to decreasing levels of tension and lower perceptions of the "other" as a threat.

2- Refugees should be granted a rights-based, transparent legal status. This legal status should be reinforced by collaborative initiatives, aiding the refugees to settle in the community. Collaborative initiatives, such as permitting refugees to work in public works and other relevant projects, would benefit local public service systems and return the sense of agency to this skilled refugee community. These initiatives have been proven to allow and facilitate urban refugees to successfully integrate within host communities.

E. Economy and Livelihoods

1- International agencies should design projects to address host communities and refugees while benefiting the local economy. Contrary to popular belief, many Syrian refugees are not "competitors" to Lebanese in the job market. Syrian refugees must be given a chance to sustain their livelihoods in order to eliminate the aid-dependent perception of refugees as bodies to be fed and sheltered. Many Syrian refugees are skillful laborers, especially in the fields of construction and agriculture; thus, engaging refugees, to a certain extent, in the Lebanese labor market will benefit the refugees themselves as well as the country as a whole.

2- Many Syrian refugees are residing in areas where the living standards were initially below the poverty line. This has contributed to further marginalization and impoverishment of the Lebanese communities, resulting in a decrease in the living standards for both Syrian refugees and the host communities. Hence, efforts of IOs to "balance" the response to address both local communities and refugees should be echoed by similar efforts on the governmental level – especially following the concerns of municipal representatives on this matter.

CHAPTER

02

Bekaa Valley, Lebanon, Jan. 2015. ***Photo © UNHCR / A.McConnell***

MICKEY
MINNIE
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Mcqueen

THE CAMP CONTROVERSY

A. The Problematique of Establishing Refugee Camps in Lebanon

Lebanon, although not a signatory of the 1951 Refugee Convention, has signed most other human rights treaties that – directly or indirectly – assure the protection of refugees.[10] However, it must be noted that there exists a lack of domestic legislation and administrative practice in Lebanon that particularly caters to the specific needs of refugees and asylum-seekers - particularly with respect to addressing protection of refugees.[11] As a result, Lebanese stakeholders have largely been debating the issue of establishing Syrian refugee camps in Lebanon. Nevertheless, the advantages and disadvantages to creating new camps in Lebanon are not adequately debated or assessed, especially within a developmental framework and from a non-political approach. Special attention is being given to the opinions of UNHCR, the lead agency in the response, in this regard – and the Lebanese government, particularly MoSA and the ministerial committee for Syrian refugees in Lebanon, as its decisions directly alter the current landscape of refugee laws, rules and regulations being created, enforced and implemented. There appears to be a significant schism between the two main actors concerning potential

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10. "The Lebanese Constitution as amended in 1990 states that "Lebanon is [...] a founding and active member of the United Nations Organization and abides by its covenants and by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights." In this respect, it is worth noting that Lebanon acceded to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) on November 12th, 1971, and to both the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) on November 3rd, 1972. Thus, Articles 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) which recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living (adequate housing) are considered part of the Lebanese Constitution." (Saghieh and Nammour, 2014).

11. See: http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e486676.html

locations for proposed camps: while the Lebanese government favors the establishment of camps within Syria or close to the border, UNHCR has carefully and cautiously been calling for the establishment of camps in safe areas well within the Lebanese border.

Definition Who Is a Refugee?

The 1951 Refugee Convention defines a refugee as an individual who "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country." With the advent of globalisation and technological innovation came the facilitation and proliferation of global migration patterns. The rise of complex migration patterns is partly responsible for the prevailing confusion and blurred lines in defining the three existing types of immigrant groups: Economic Migrants, Asylum Seekers, and Refugees.

It is important to keep in mind that conflicts and wars usually engender mass movements of immigrants. These immigrants are often declared "prima facie" refugees (i.e. refugees at first sight), given that their overwhelming numbers would make it impractical to conduct individual asylum interviews (particularly since the reasons as to why they have fled are rather evident). This coupled with other "pre-existing factors" may be the reason that over 1.15 million Syrians have been granted refugee status in Lebanon.

The "formal", the "informal"... A view from the coastline of Beirut. **Photo © UN-HABITAT**

Definition What Is a Refugee Camp?

Conceptually speaking, refugee camps vary greatly with respect to the different types, shapes, systems of organization, locations, number of inhabitants, dependence on external aid, services and amenities offered, and the level of control exerted over inhabitants by national or international authorities. However, there exist certain overarching commonalities that characterize refugee camps: overcrowding, the need to share facilities, marginalization – to varying degrees – whether from the host population or by local authorities and a restricted sphere in which residents enact their daily routines. For the purpose of this study, and keeping in mind the current complexity of the shelter context in Lebanon, Bowles' wider and more inclusive definition of a camp is useful: "Both small, open settlements where the refugee communities have been able to maintain a village atmosphere; and larger, more crowded camps where they are more dependent on assistance."

According to Bowles, there exist four main parameters worth highlighting when discussing the variation in refugee camps and settlements adopted:

- Freedom of movement: There exists a positive correlation between the lack of freedom of movement and the perception of a settlement as a refugee camp.
- Modes of assistance/economics: Camps commonly impose a de facto restriction on work. Camps are typically characterized by limited income-generating programs, while self-settled refugees will tend to be more integrated into the local economy and less dependent on relief/aid.
- Modes of governance: This is related to the mechanisms and varying actors involved in decision-making, which is characteristic of refugee settlements.
- Population size and/or density: Settlement overcrowding generally exists in refugee camps – with some camps attaining, and sometimes even surpassing, maximum capacity figures.

It should also be noted that the characteristics of refugee camps vary depending on whether they are established during the "emergency" or "post-emergency" phase. Camps established during the "emergency" phase are more than often short-term solutions that cater to the refugees' basic needs (i.e. water, shelter, food, and security). These camps are characterized by a top-down approach, where the government and humanitarian agencies exclusively dictate policies targeting the refugee population, given the need to take swift decisions reaching the largest number of people possible. Unlike the "emergency" phase, "post-emergency" phase camps are perceived as longer-term solutions wherein refugees seek to achieve a respectable standard of living, be it economically or socially. Nevertheless, refugees in "post-emergency" phase camps, similarly to those in "emergency" phase camps, are still dependent on humanitarian assistance. It is important to highlight that Lebanon has previously adopted, and still adopts, an "emergency" phase outlook when dealing with the Syrian refugee crisis. This is partly due to a lack of will by the government to perceive this crisis as anything but temporary, even though the conflict is of a protracted nature – spanning around four years to date.

B. UNHCR: Defining Refugee Camps and Policies 2009-2014

As the co-leading agency in the Syrian response in Lebanon, it is important to mention UNHCR's refugee policies and most importantly the 2009 UNHCR Urban Policy and the latest 2014 Policy on Alternatives to Camps. According to UNHCR, almost half of the world's 10.5 million refugee population currently lives outside of camps in rural and urban areas.[12] Such demographic changes increased the need to establish a revised policy to regulate humanitarian services to urban refugees.[13] Thus, UNHCR adopted an Urban Refugee Policy in 2009, which was a welcome change in comparison to the 1997 UNHCR policy as it showed a shift by the agency to convey more attention to refugees residing outside camps. The policy defines an urban area as a "built-up area that accommodates large numbers of people living in close proximity to each other, and where the majority of people sustain themselves by means of formal and informal employment and the provision of goods and services".[14]

However, the 2009 policy had its shortcomings namely in terms of refugee rights. Although the 2009 Urban Policy recognized a refugee's rights to the freedom of movement as well as their rights to services and aid provision irrespective of their dwelling, up until 2014, UNHCR still revealed a preference towards the establishment of refugee camps. For example, Article 146 of the 2009 policy stresses the necessity of refugees to have good and valid reasons to reside outside established camps. That inherently contradicts the notion of "freedom of movement" mentioned in Article 26 of the Refugee Convention, and Article 12(1) of the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights.[15] This policy thus assumes that refugees cannot practice their right to movement, unless they have a valid and justifiable reason to do so. This is highly problematic, as there is no existent international human rights law – or any other international law, for that matter – that indicates the need for preconditions or valid reasons to exercise one's fundamental right of movement.[16]

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12. *UNHCR, 2009.*
13. *"Urban refugees" is a concept used to denote the geographic settlement pattern of refugees located in host-country urbanized areas. (See more at: http://urban-refugees.org/#sthash.hGpWg87O.dpuf)*
14. *See: UNHCR Policy on Refugee Protection and Solutions in Urban Areas.*
15. *Verdirame, G., & Pobjoy, J. (2013). A rejoinder. Urban Refugees. Retrieved from http://urbanrefugees.org/debate/rejoinder/*
16. *Ibid.*

In addition, there resides a vagueness regarding the primacy of state responsibility versus UNHCR's obligations and responsibilities in dealing with a refugee crisis, particularly in countries of the Global South. Indeed, the international refugee regime suffers from the lack of an established, understood role of host countries of the Global South.[17] While states tend to retreat or refuse to accept responsibility for refugee communities, UNHCR and other UN organizations step in and substitute for the weak role of these national governments.

Refugee children in Naba'a, Lebanon 2014.
Photo © UN-HABITAT / M.Fawaz

17. See Kagan, 2011.

In July 2014, four years into the Syrian crisis, UNHCR published the "Policy on Alternatives to Camps" indicating the organization's focus on the importance of ensuring refugees' modes of self-reliance and embracing "alternative" definitions to ensure protection and assistance for refugees outside the camp model. The policy applies to all phases of displacement and focuses on integrating refugees within communities to ensure their "dignity, independence and normality".[18] The policy report is keen on not rejecting the importance of camps in the humanitarian setting or denying their positive attributes. For host governments, camps could be perceived to enhance control, ease tension between refugees and host communities, and lessen competition. As for UNHCR, camps are considered to be an effective tool in the context of large-scale emergencies, to provide assistance and protection, which targets vulnerable refugees in a rapid manner.

Garages used as shelter for refugees in Akkar, Lebanon, 2014.
Photo © UN-HABITAT / M.Fawaz

18. *UNHCR, "The Policy on Alternatives to Camps" (July 2014) p. 3 Retrieved from: http://www.unhcr.org/5422b8f09.html*

However, the policy report views that camps are marked by "some degree of limitation on the rights and freedoms of refugees and their ability to make meaningful choices about their lives" and have proved to have had "negative impacts on the longer term" based on the agency's experience.[19] Thus the policy clearly states that "UNHCR's policy is to avoid the establishment of refugee camps, wherever possible... camps should be the exception and, to the extent possible, a temporary measure."[20]

UNHCR also defines alternatives to camps in a flexible manner that would respond to the local context addressing the diversity of refugees, cultural differences, and the legal, social, political, and economic context in countries of refugee residence. These alternatives would "enable" refugees providing them with the ability to make choices, exercise their rights, and access services and protection.[21] UNHCR's stance with respect to questioning the camp model is rather clear in their 2014 policy – however, whether this change in the organization's view is due to the challenges faced in implementing camps in Lebanon to respond to the Syrian refugee crisis remains questionable.

C. Refugee Safety and Security

1. Refugee Identity and the Problems of "Non-Recognition"

Refugee crises are normally constrained to developing nations since developed nations police their borders. As a result of being ill-equipped to accommodate large influxes of refugees, host communities in the Global South often directly or indirectly marginalize refugees – whether in urban or camp settings – through various means such as:

1- Social discrimination against refugees, which are sometimes akin to xenophobic treatment;

2- Utilization of existing political and legal frameworks to exclude refugees from basic rights awarded to other citizens;

3- Political negligence and lack of policies relevant to refugees and their livelihoods; and

4- Employment of a geographic strategy where refugees are not only segregated from the local population, but also physically secluded from them.[22]

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19. Ibid.
20. Ibid, p. 6.
21. Ibid.
22. See: http://urban-refugees.org/debate/why-do-we-still-have-refugee-camps/.

As a result, contentious debates have emerged concerning the role of refugee camps in devaluing and at times reworking refugees' sense of identity and impacting their sense of security. Refugees – especially those residing in closed refugee camps – are reduced to a "welfare mentality", a term that implicitly lays blame on the refugee for his/her passive dependency on humanitarian aid.[23] Still, dependency is not an essential part of a refugee's identity, but a structural and legal consequence of a paternalistic refugee-aid system.[24] For example, international agencies and host governments not only need to keep count of refugees, but also must manage and represent them as "helpless" and "washed-up" to attract funding. Tagging refugees with labels of victimization and helplessness arguably affects the sustainability of their livelihoods within camps, as they will internalize dependency on other actors to support their lives. As such, many question the camp's modern, top-bottom, and centralized system of organization: "the question is, for whom is this centralization efficient, the residents or the agencies who manage them?" Thus, refugee camps deny refugees' power, possession and agency over their space and livelihoods, ultimately affecting their sense of security in the host country. This, in turn, drives refugees to identify with their reality as useless, insecure, disempowered, dependent and resentful subjects of aid.[25] Ironically, in an attempt to implement a more equal distribution of aid, refugees are rendered "nameless" victims who occupy a "social and political non-existence".

In relation to legal status, refugees placed in camp settings fall into the paradox of their simultaneous over-recognition and non-recognition, which severely harms their security and safety in the host countries. Host states "over-recognize" a refugee crisis by placing refugees in remote, confined, and visible camps to attract international assistance. In doing so, refugees are rendered invisible through their placement in desert-like settlements with no access to urban daily living. Based on Giorgio Agamben's theorization of camps as "bio-political paradigms", this invisibility "is an act of the sovereign power to produce parts of the population as existing outside of the polity."[26]

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23. "Welfare Mentality" is closely related to "Dependency Syndrome". See Clark, Lance. (1985, July) "The Refugee Dependency Syndrome: Physician, Heal Thyself!" Refugee Policy Group. Retrieved from http://repository.forcedmigration.org/show_metadata.jsp?pid=fmo%3A204

24. See also Napier-Moore, Rebecca. (2005). "Entrenched Relations and the Permanence of Long-Term Refugee Camp Situations". Sussex Migration Working Policy Paper 28. Brighton: Sussex Centre for Migration Research. p.14-16. Retrieved from https://www.sussex.ac.uk/webteam/gateway/file.php?name=mwp28.pdf&site=252

25. "Subject" refers to two meanings: "subjects of" and "subjected to".

On the other hand, a camp's visibility can act as a reminder – a form of "spatial responsibility" – to deal with the plight of the displaced population.

It is equally important to speak of the "non-recognition" of urban refugees either by the host state or by the refugees themselves. Urban refugees that are not registered under any legal status exist outside of the law and are thus not protected by the same legal framework as citizens.[27] The host state's exclusionary policies could drive a refugee to warily deny his identity. At other times, "cities can afford a degree of anonymity allowing them [refugees] to escape the apparatus of humanitarian assistance and the stigma of refugee-ness".

For refugees, the relationship between safety, identity and territory is complex. Naturally, it is embedded in the social, economic and political rights, freedoms, and responsibilities that such citizenship can grant. As such, legal policies and space play a key role in shaping refugee identity. Recent scholarship has drawn on different and often contrasting social-identitarian groupings between camp-dwellers and city-dwellers. It has been argued that refugees who are integrated with host communities adopted cosmopolitan forms of identity, while camp dwellers rooted themselves in a politico-historical imagining of a collective identity. Despite scholarly attempts to weave identity-shaping processes in camp and non-camp dwellings, refugees are still marked by a chronic tension between their presence in camps as "bare life" and as political actors, citizens, and subjects of history. As such, refugees in camps find themselves with more complex perceptions in terms of their legal status, and more importantly, in terms of their sense of identity.

D. Social Cohesion and Integration of Refugees in Host Communities

1. Social Discrimination and Legal-Political Exclusion

An unprecedented influx of refugees into a "sea of insecurity" exerts significant pressure on an already weakened local infrastructure, strains

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26. For more on Giorgio Agamben's Biopolitics and refugee as "bare life" see Agamben, Giorgio. (1998). Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life. Stanford Univeristy Press-Stanford, California. http://www.amazon.com/Homo-Sacer-Sovereign-Meridian-Aesthetics/dp/0804732183

27. Here, note the clash and contradiction between the rights of man that every refugee should be entitled to and rights of citizens that only citizens of a territorially-bound nation should enjoy. For more see Hirschler, S. (2013). Beyond the camp: The biopolitics of asylum seeker housing under the UK border agency's COMPASS project. University of York (Department of Politics), York, UK. Retrieved from http://www.rc21.org/conferences/berlin2013/RC21-BerlinPapers/04-Hirschler.pdf

the economy, and aggravates current political instabilities in developing countries. That, in turn, fosters tension with local communities creating further insecurity and resentment.[28] On a daily basis, urban refugees may deal with stigmatization, harassment, and hate speech from hostile host communities.[29] It should be noted, nonetheless, that the creation of parallel systems of education, healthcare, shelter, and other basic needs inside camps also fosters resentment on the part of neighboring urban poor.[30] This resentment is often directed towards the state, the international aid system, and even the refugees themselves.

Legal and political exclusion are intrinsically tied to one another as they have a causal relationship. Political tensions are usually channeled through legal instruments in order to enact laws that limit the refugees' rights and differentiate them from other groups. Interestingly enough, host country political processes have facilitated the propagation of exclusionary policies, as host governments now succumb to the pressure of: appeasing the local population, or risk losing their support during the next election. This is due to the fact that the local population is generally mistrustful of refugees, and perceives them as a threat to its economic and social stability.[31] It must be noted here that both camp and non-camp refugees are impacted by exclusionary politico-legal policies. Urban refugees are often subjected to coercive methods such as detention, repatriation, seizure of identity documents and restricting freedom of movement.[32,33,34] All this to hinder local integration and ensure that refugees would return to their country of origin once the conflict has subsided.[35] In Lebanon, this has taken the following forms: curfews, restrictions on the right to work in certain economic sectors, differentiation between the refugees themselves at the border, the

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28. *Crisp, Jeff, Jane Janz, Jose Riera, and Shahira Samy (July 2009), Surviving in the City – A review of UNHCR's operation for Iraqi refugees in urban areas of Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. UNHCR Policy Development and Evaluation service, p. 8.*
29. *Bailey, Sarah (2004). "Is Legal Status Enough? Legal Status and livelihood obstacles for urban refugees." The Fletcher School, MALD Thesis, p. 33-35.*
30. *Harrell-Bond B E (1986) "Imposing Aid: Emergency Assistance to Refugees", Oxford University Press.*
31. *http://www.unhcr.org/4b0a528c9.pdf : Campbell (2005), Campbell (2006), Bailey (2004).*
32. *http://www.unhcr.org/4b0a528c9.pdf : (Jacobsen 2004, Landau and Jacobsen 2004)*
33. *http://www.unhcr.org/4b0a528c9.pdf : (Alexander 2008, Bailey 2004, Briant and Kennedy 2004, Campbell 2004, Grabska 2006, Horst 2002, Hovil 2007, Jacobsen 2004, Landau 2006, Women's Commission 2002).*
34. *http://www.unhcr.org/4b0a528c9.pdf*
35. *http://www.unhcr.org/4b0a528c9.pdf (Kibreab 1996, Campbell et al. 2006)*

threat of stripping refugees of their status if they return home, and denying certain refugee groups the right to own property.[36,37,38,39,40]

2. Physical Seclusion

Refugees are seen to pose a multifaceted security dilemma: they are considered as a threat to the host state, and under threat themselves. As a result, encampment has often been used as a means to separate refugees from the wider population, as well as exert control over them – i.e. minimizing these security threats by restricting them to specific geographic locations, which are often remote and not easily accessible. Refugee camps are most commonly represented as a "protection space", one that ensures the safety and security of its vulnerable inhabitants; more so than their dispersion in urban settings and shelters.[41] In fact, urban refugees are often perceived as having the potential to not only tear through the social fabric of a host country, but also destabilize it by aggravating what is already a heated political situation.[42] However, it must be noted that refugee camps can actually hold greater risks of instability and violence. Without careful monitoring, a charged socio-political environment in a camp setting can allow armed groups to form and recruit members; thus rendering the camp a hotbed of violence and extremism.[43] Still, host governments push for camps because it is easier to monitor the entry and exit of refugees and any illicit materials. It is also believed that camps minimize the strain on governmental and local institutions, state infrastructure and inter-communal tensions. Furthermore, a confined space limits contact with refugees keeping them paradoxically over-recognized and out-of-sight whilst attracting international donors.[44]

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36. *http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Jun-03/258639-power-to-strip-refugee-status-agreed.ashx#axzz3CoDnHWp9*
37. *http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/06/lebanon-revises-open-door-refugee-policy-201466744881995.html*
38. *http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_193717/lang--en/index.htm*
39. *http://www.aljazeera.com/video/middleeast/2013/06/20136593212232833.html*
40. *2001 Lebanese law (foreigners owning land in Lebanon)*
41. *Hovil, Lucy (2007). "Self-settled Refugees in Uganda: An Alternative Approach to Displacement?" Journal of Refugee Studies Vol.20. No.4 and Jacobsen, Karen (2006). "Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Urban Areas: A Livelihoods Perspective." Journal of Refugee Studies 19(3), p. 604.*
42. *Ibid, p. 13.*
43. *Ibid, p. 605-606. Also see Karen Jacobsen, (1999), A "safety-first" approach to physical protection in refugee camps, 1 and Rebecca Napier-Moore, (2012), Entrenched relations and the permanence of long-term refugee camp situations, 8.*
44. *Bailey, Sarah (2004). "Is Legal Status Enough? Legal Status and livelihood obstacles for urban refugees." The Fletcher School, MALD Thesis.*

Living conditions of refugees, Lebanon 2014.
Photo © UN-HABITAT / M.Fawaz

E. The Economy and Livelihoods of Refugees

It has been argued that urban refugees can successfully integrate within host communities, if granted a rights-based legal status reinforced by collaborative initiatives that benefit local public service systems. However, without access to basic rights, refugees are less likely to secure a decent livelihood. This is especially true for refugees that belong to a low economic stratum and cannot afford private education, adequate housing, or proper health and medical services. For example, refugee children in these situations normally skip or drop out of school to financially support their families. Similarly, under-aged girls are sometimes married off to older men in exchange for money.[45] Therefore, legal status and basic rights are especially important when refugees are left to provide for themselves outside of camps.[46]

In terms of livelihood protection, it is widely argued that camps are more easily and readily provided with aid and services, while urban refugees are unable to access these services due to harsh financial conditions and

45. *Crisp Jeff, Jane Janz, Jose Riera, and Shahira Samy (July 2009), Surviving in the City – A review of UNHCR's operation for Iraqi refugees in urban areas of Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. UNHCR Policy Development and Evaluation service.*
46. *Verdirame, G., & Pobjoy, J. (2013). A rejoinder. Urban Refugees. Retrieved from http://urbanrefugees.org/debate/rejoinder/*

the humanitarian agencies' difficulty in identifying and attending to all their needs. In fact, in many cases, camp services are not up to standards and unable to respond to all the refugees' needs, forcing them to move out to seek a better standard of living.[47] In protracted refugee situations, livelihood protection cannot only concern the physical protection of refugees, but also their state of being as complex individuals and not mere objects of social study.

Electric cables of a building in Naba'a, Lebanon 2014.
Photo © UN-HABITAT / M.Fawaz

47. *Karen Jacobsen, (1999), A "safety-first" approach to physical protection in refugee camps, p. 276.*

1. Refugees and the Local Economy

Refugees are generally considered to be a burden on the state at the socio-economic level, especially that the increase in population drains national resources.[48] This is more thoroughly reflected in the employment aspect; while unemployed refugees are de facto perceived to be a burden on the society, employed refugees are viewed to be competing with host community members.[49] This additional labor force could benefit both the refugee community and the host community, because they would be playing an influential role in the productive economy.[50] Governments could make use of this productive force, which not only fosters economic development but also eases the tension between the local communities. In fact, where governments have ensured that policies adopted to address refugees are in line with international standards, and have accepted international aid, economies have flourished and benefited both communities.[51] In cases where refugee groups have contributed to economic development, more integration with host communities was noted and refugees were recognized as a part of the country.[52] As for the case of refugees residing in camps, the location of the latter is often in poor areas of the country, thus while camp inhabitants receive intensive care and aid, their fellow neighbors are disregarded, creating an intense resentment between the two communities.[53]

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48. *Hovil, Lucy (2007). "Self-settled Refugees in Uganda: An Alternative Approach to Displacement?" Journal of Refugee Studies Vol.20. No.4 and Jacobsen, Karen (2006). "Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Urban Areas: A Livelihoods Perspective." Journal of Refugee Studies 19(3).*
49. *Kritikos, George (2000). "State policy and urban employment of refugees: the Greek case (1923-30)." European Review of History 7 (2).*
50. *Wilson K (1992) "Enhancing refugees" own food acquisition strategies', JRS, Vol 5(3/4) Harrell-Bond B E (1986) "Imposing Aid: Emergency Assistance to Refugees", Oxford University Press; Bulcha M (1988) "Flight and Integration", Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, Uppsala and Kuhlman T (1990) Burden or Boon? A Study of Eritrean Refugees in the Sudan, Anthropological Studies VU no13, VU University Press, Amsterdam.*
51. *Zetter R (1992) "Refugees and forced migrants as development resources: the Greek Cypriot refugees from 1974", Cyprus Review, Vol 4, No 1:7-38 Harrell-Bond B E (1986) Chambers R (1985) "Hidden losers? The impact of rural refugees in refugee programmes on the poorer hosts" International Migration Review, Vol xx, No 2. 243-263.*
52. *Campbell, Elizabeth H. (2005). "Formalizing the Informal Economy: Somali Refugee and Migrant Trade Networks in Nairobi." Global Commission on International Migration 47.8 (2006) "Urban Refugees in Nairobi: Problems of Protection, Mechanisms of Survival, and Possibilities for Integration." Journal of Refugee Studies Vol. 19, No.3.*
    Horst, Cindy (2002). "Vital Links in Social Security: Somali Refugees In the Dadaab Camps, Kenya." Refugee Survey Quarterly Vol. 20, No. 4.
53. *Chambers R (1985)*
    Nieburg P, Person-Karell B, and Toole M 'Malnutrition/mortality relationships among refugees' JRS, Vol 5, No3.

2. Refugee Livelihoods

Urban refugees play an influential role on the government's decision-making concerning refugee rights, refugee status, and refugee policy. In fact, the pressure exercised by urban refugees on cities is incomparable, and the magnitude of the government's sympathy generally depends on this.[54] The influx of Iraqi refugees to Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria has, for instance, inflated the food and fuel prices as well as the housing and public services markets.[55] Exploitation of refugees is common, for instance, landlords and employers in certain cases raise rent costs and decrease salary wages especially since they are aware refugees are receiving international and local aid. This can go on for many years, even when aid has long been discontinued.[56] Furthermore, economic exploitation of refugees also extends to risking lives and the surge of illegal jobs, since employers take advantage of the vulnerability of refugees to impose harsh conditions on them, which is common in Lebanon.[57] For instance, according to the International Labour Organization (ILO), Syrians in Lebanon earn 40% less than their Lebanese counterparts, and 88% of Syrian workers are employed in low-skilled jobs. Economic competitiveness is thus a major source of stress and discord between local communities and refugees.

It is important to note that the background of refugees affects their success in working in either urban contexts or rural/camp contexts. Refugees who have fled urban areas have no experience in rural activities such as farming, and tend to perform poorly in this context. Similarly, refugees escaping rural areas encounter difficulties in working in urban contexts since they do not have the skills required, and tend to live in extreme poverty. This is mainly why some refugees leave camps in order to work in an urban context, and provide wealth and resources to their families.

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54. Bailey, Sarah (2004). "Is Legal Status Enough? Legal Status and livelihood obstacles for urban refugees." The Fletcher School, MALD Thesis.

55. Crisp Jeff, Jane Janz, Jose Riera, and Shahira Samy (July 2009), Surviving in the City – A review of UNHCR's operation for Iraqi refugees in urban areas of Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. UNHCR Policy Development and Evaluation service.

56. Alexander, Amy (22 April 2008). "Without Refuge: Chin refugees in India and Malaysia." Forced Migration Review. Campbell, Elizabeth H. (2005).

57. Crisp Jeff, Jane Janz, Jose Riera, and Shahira Samy (July 2009), Surviving in the City – A review of UNHCR's operation for Iraqi refugees in urban areas of Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. UNHCR Policy Development and Evaluation Service.
Briant Natalie and Kennedy Andrew (2004). "Priorities of African Refugees in an Urban Setting." Journal of Refugee Studies 17 (4)" 437-459.

A view from inside a house in Naba'a, Lebanon, 2014.
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F. Lessons from the "Palestinian Camp Experience"

A recurring statement made by Lebanese governmental, municipal, and local community representatives when refuting the option of hosting Syrian refugees in Lebanon falls under the heading of: "We learned from the Palestinian camp experience". The debate and official decisions concerning camps for refugees in Lebanon, especially by the government, was and remains directly linked by many to the past and present experience of Lebanon vis-à-vis the Palestinian refugee camps, which are perceived by many to be negative, and even traumatic.[58]

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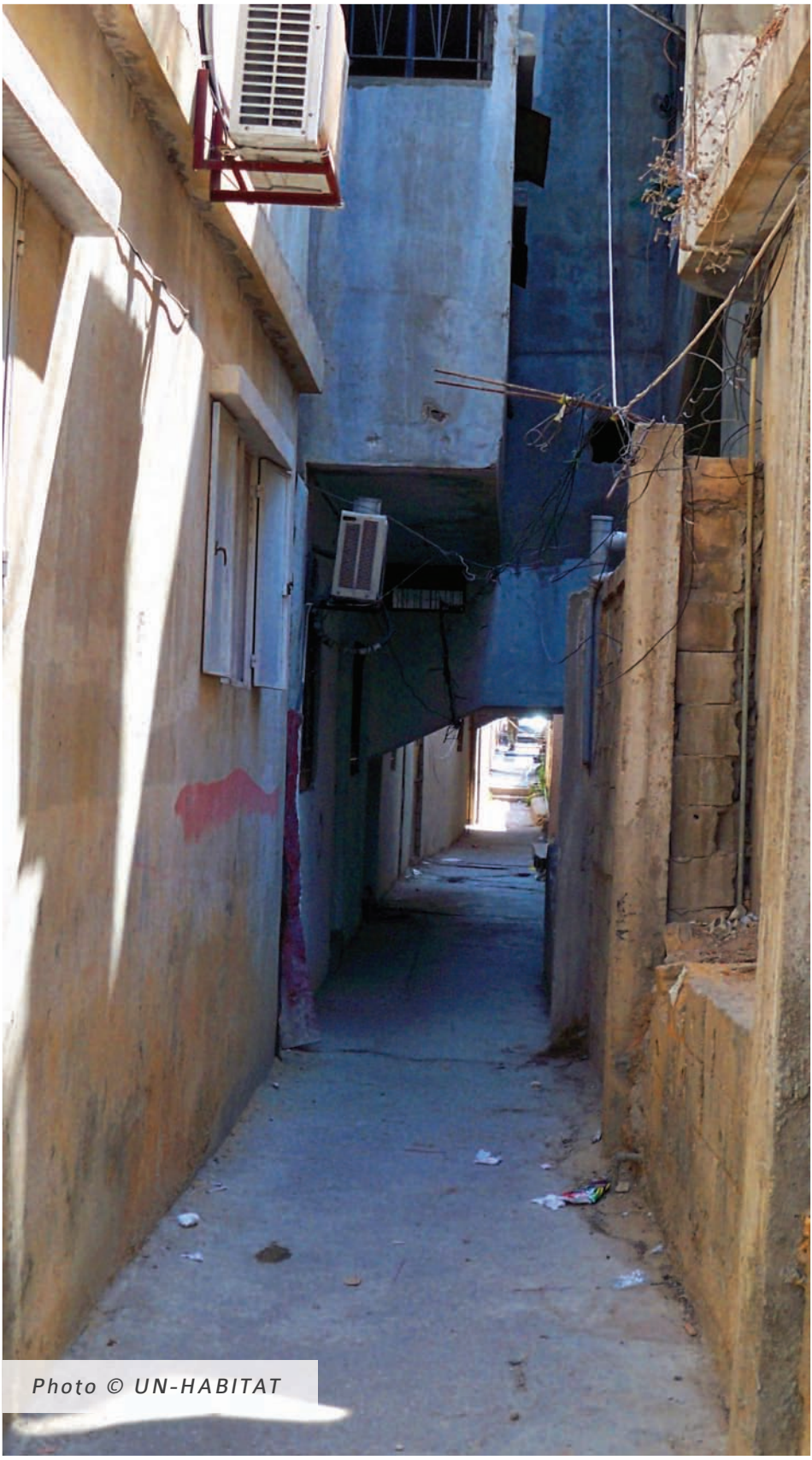
58. See Annex 1 for further details.

As the Lebanese government has for long considered the Palestinian refugee camps as "hotbeds" of radicalization and militarization, there is a clear fear that this phenomenon would be replicated if Syrian camps were to be created. Furthermore, the issue of Lebanon's long-term refugee "burden" and the problem of permanence which has loomed over the Palestinian refugee community have also been mirrored in official responses to the Syrian refugee crisis. Government representatives question the effects that the Syrian influx will have in terms of access to the job market, public social services, public health services, and educational facilities – which have all been widespread concerns vis-à-vis the presence of the Palestinian refugee community in Lebanon. As such, the Palestinian camp experience becomes the "scarecrow" behind the question of establishing refugee camps for Syrian refugees in Lebanon.



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CHAPTER
03

Lebanon 2014. ***Photo © UN-HABITAT / M.Fawaz***

EXISTING SHELTER OPTIONS IN LEBANON

UNHCR and the Lebanese government through MoSA, with the support of other UN agencies and international and national NGOs have developed yearly strategies for the shelter sector, which provide a comprehensive approach outlining the main objectives and plans guiding the inter-agency shelter response. Based on previous shelter sector strategies, UN agencies and NGOs have implemented alternative shelter options across Lebanon, some of which were debated, others rejected or approved. This chapter discusses some of these options in addition to providing a brief overview of the recent 2015 shelter sector strategy.

A. The 2015 Shelter Strategy

Co-led by UNHCR and MoSA, the 2015 shelter strategy addresses shelter as a provider of "security, personal safety, human dignity, protection from the climate and to promote resistance to ill health and disease."[59] Taking into consideration the complexities of the situation, the scale of the crisis, and the government's no-camp policy, the shelter strategy states that, "no single shelter intervention can meet the needs of all families at shelter risk."[60] Based on the UNHCR March 2015 shelter survey, the majority of refugees, around 79% nationwide, are living in apartments and substandard buildings, while 18.4% reside in informal settlements and only 2.6% are in collective centers. The most vulnerable among refugees are those in informal settlements and substandard buildings. The strategy highlighted the decrease in availability of affordable and safe shelter options and noted that 82% of displaced persons pay rent while many lack security of tenure and information about rights.

59. UNHCR (2014, February). Inter-agency Shelter Sector Working Group – Lebanon: Shelter Strategy for 2014. https://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=4582
60. Ibid.

	Apartments	Informal Settlements	Substandard Buildings	Collective centers
Nation Wide	44.4%	18.4%	34.6%	2.6%
LEB- Beirut & Mt Leb	59.4%	1.2%	36.2%	3.2%
LEB- Bekaa	32.4%	37.8%	27.3%	2.5%
LEB- North	43.7%	15.6%	37.3%	3.4%
LEB- South	51.1%	6.3%	40.6%	2%

Table 1: Refugee Shelter Accomodation Types.
Based on the UNHCR Shelter Survey, March 2015

Moreover, the 2015 shelter strategy highlights the Lebanese government's no-camp policy as a challenge to supporting refugees. Also, refugees' residence in the most economically vulnerable areas in Lebanon is increasing the burden on the communities and infrastructure in these localities. Another challenge is the decrease in the areas within which shelter plans/options are feasible. According to the strategy, responding to immediate shelter needs is also hampered by the absence of medium and large scale temporary shelter capacity. Another challenge is that since informal settlements are more visible, they may attract more donor support and funding while there are only 17% of refugees in IS compared to over 80% in existing structures, out of which 44.4% are living in adequate conditions and not in need of humanitarian assistance. Also, adherence to the shelter working group guidelines and recommendations might be difficult taking into consideration the number of agencies and geographic coverage. The lack of security of tenure is also a challenge to be addressed especially that it affects both overall legal security of the displaced and the relationship between host communities and the displaced. Finally, the strategy highlights the restriction of permitted shelter solutions in informal settlements to temporary interventions to be an issue, which would necessitate repeat assistance.

Taking into consideration the findings and challenges outlined above, the 2015 shelter strategy devised its key objective, which is in line with the LCRP. As such, the focus of the strategy is on housing rehabilitation, integrated neighborhood approaches, and enhanced security of tenure to benefit refugees and vulnerable Lebanese. The strategy prioritizes supporting the most vulnerable communities, interventions in the most densely populated areas, and engaging public and private markets.

The strategy outlines the adopted shelter options for 2015 based on the government recommendations presented by MoSA. Based on that, approved shelter activities include:

1- Rehabilitation/weather proofing of substandard buildings.

2- Rehabilitation of private/public collective centers.

3- Weather proofing, shelter enhancement and site improvement of informal settlements.

4- Cash assistance[61] /cash for host families.

5- Increase of host families/collective center capacities.

Apartments rented out by refugees in Akkar, Lebanon 2014.
Photo © UN-HABITAT / M.Fawaz

61. For reference, cash assistance includes cash for rent and vouchers for construction materials.

B. Alternative Shelter Options and the Response to Protection Needs

With the Lebanese government's relatively open stance against the establishment of permanent refugee camps for Syrians, there has been little margin for thinking of and creating alternatives to camps. Suggested alternatives and plans have included renovating buildings or residences to host Syrian refugees and, more recently, the formation of non-permanent Refugee Housing Units (RHU) over a certain range of land.[62] The RHU initiatives are few and relatively new, the majority of which started back in 2013. Given UNHCR's estimation that the average duration of protracted refugee situations is 17 years, RHUs should essentially provide a more sustainable alternative than the temporary tents scattered around Lebanon in informal settlements. However, the Lebanese government adopted a strong stance against any such project. While, according to UNHCR, the idea of small informal settlements remains a valid option, such an option has to be approved by the government on a case-by-case basis.

The Lebanese government rejected several RHU projects and designs, including the IKEA model proposed by UNHCR, because they are regarded as a "threat to the nation"; as these shelters look far too "permanent" and could essentially encourage the Syrians to stay in Lebanon longer. Furthermore, both the Lebanese government and UNHCR rejected the shelter box plan proposed by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), due to the model's expensive cost and perceived "permanency". The official drew an explanation from Lebanon's previous experience with the Palestinian refugee community, stating that: "We had Palestinian refugees who were supposed to stay here for a month in 1948, and now they are a population of 500,000. And we went through a 15-year civil war where the Palestinians were a large player". Besides creating the impression of permanence, the Lebanese government has also explained that these RHUs might have a negative impact on the poor areas where the refugees are concentrated, as it would create feelings of resentment among the poor and destitute Lebanese community who reside in underprivileged areas with terrible housing conditions. Based on this reasoning, the Lebanese government has rejected almost every proposed shelter alternative model.

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62. See Annex 2 for alternative shelter options in Lebanon.

All RHU projects are subject to the government's approval first, but with Lebanon's changing governments and ministerial line-ups and its political deadlock, it is difficult to predict how these, or other projects, would develop in Lebanon. In some cases, the host communities actually rejected RHU projects that were essentially approved by the government and municipalities – a matter that ultimately hindered the establishment of these projects. There also seems to be a gap between the degrees of autonomy of municipalities in allowing RHU projects in their areas, regardless of the ministry's stance. Indeed, a lot of projects are finding precedence through creating "deals" with the municipalities or private landlords based on financial incentives, without knowing where the government stands in regards to such projects.

It is important to note that these small-scale projects will not solve the majority of the refugee shelter problems in Lebanon, but they do serve as a first step towards a long-term shelter solution to the refugee crisis and can serve not only as case studies for further shelter plans and policy recommendations, but also as an example of good practices compared to current conditions of informal settlements and options proposed by NGOs that are implemented without the government's approval. For now, such alternatives seem to ease and alleviate issues of refugee employment, education, and host country-refugee tensions. This is visible through the employment of these refugees in their shelter areas, providing them with education within these regions, as well as benefiting the host community by supplying from its local markets the raw materials needed to build these shelters, in addition to supplying food and non-food items from local vendors. This creates a sense of interdependence between the host and refugee communities.

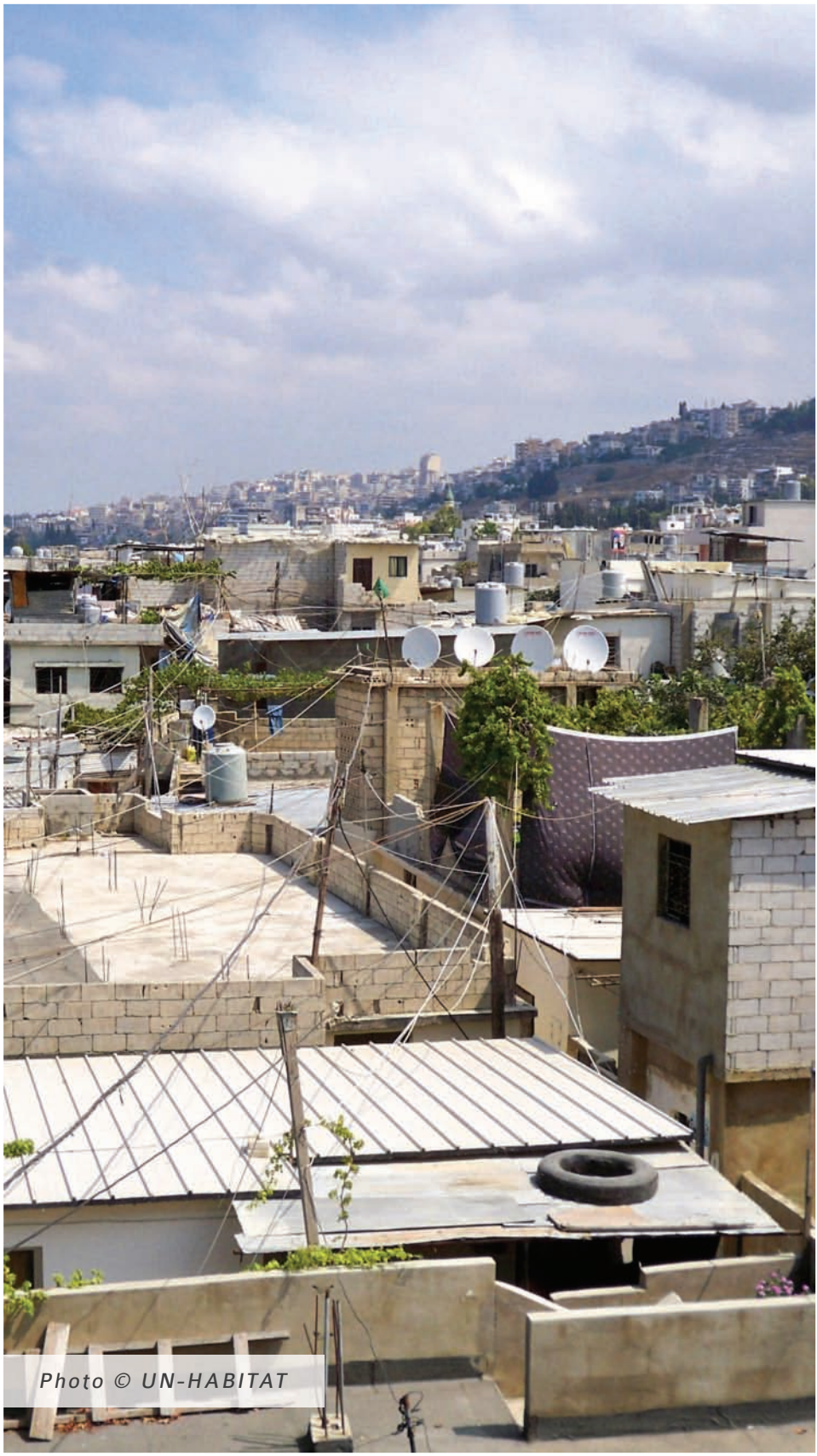

Photo © UN-HABITAT

CHAPTER
04

Akkar, Lebanon 2014. ***Photo © UN-HABITAT / M.Fawaz***

STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTIONS AND VIEWS

This section summarizes the findings of the conducted interviews and the rich discussions of the focus groups. For the purpose of this research, a qualitative research design was employed, whereby in-depth and semi-structured interviews with key informants were conducted by the IFI/UN-Habitat research team. A total of 24 in-depth interviews were conducted with five academics working on refugee shelter issues, five municipal representatives from areas with a large refugee community, and ten different IOs and NGOs responding to the crisis, so as to understand how different individuals and institutions have different views and arguments regarding the debate. Furthermore, focus groups discussions were conducted in urban and rural localities in Lebanon: Naba'a in Beirut, Sahel El Zahrani in South Lebanon, and Bar Elias in the Bekaa. In each area, two focus groups comprised of 10 to 15 participants were held: one with Lebanese residents and another with Syrian refugees and residents. The data collected from the interviews and focus groups was classified into derived themes by the research team. The team then analyzed the data and drafted the findings of the research, which informed the recommendations made in this report.

A. Safety and Security – To Whom, By Whom?

The issue of safety and security – to whom, by whom – is one that sharply resonates when thinking of the influx of refugee populations and the establishment of refugee camps. Should additional security be provided to the refugees as a result of the highly tense relationship between them and the host communities? Are municipalities justified in installing curfews restricting refugee movement, under the guise of securing safety for the Lebanese population? Remarkably, the academics surveyed did not highlight the issue of safety and security to and from refugees throughout their discussion. This comes in stark contrast with the positions of municipal representatives and members of municipality unions, who all

emphasized on the security threat which may emerge from the creation of refugee camps, using the recent incidents in Arsal as an example. The difference in these two standpoints marks the glaring differences between how the refugees are perceived from the standpoint of the Lebanese community, whose worries concerning the security of their citizens take precedence over the humanitarian nature of the crisis at hand – and those of researchers, who are concerned with the unjust treatment of refugees inside the host regions.

Refugee children in an informal settlement in Akkar, Lebanon 2014.
Photo © UN-HABITAT / M.Fawaz

According to a municipal representative, host communities want to put a large distance between themselves and the refugees, due to fear that these refugees might be armed and dangerous. In other words, the refugees are perceived to be an existential threat. One municipal

representative stressed that: "If Syrians are collected into one place i.e. a camp, they might cause a security threat." Moreover, another municipal representative interviewed acknowledged that the locality has placed a curfew to control the movement of Syrians in that area for the very reason of ensuring security for members of their community. Most of the government officials interviewed agreed that hosting camps would actually prove far better for the safety of the host communities – provided that they are established in areas significantly far from the host communities and meticulously controlled by the government.

Many of the government officials and local representatives mentioned the primary need to address the issue of security to host communities and Lebanon through managing the influx at the refugees' entry at the borders. A senior representative from the MoIM asserted that to ensure security, it is necessary to first control influx at the borders in order to decrease the number of Syrian refugees. He claimed that the high number of refugees is associated with the general increase in crime rates around the country. Interestingly enough, security and safety concerns were not essentially brought up in interviews with IO and NGO representatives. UNHCR believed that with respect to security, camps would have an advantage, through decreasing tension and violence between the refugees and the host communities. Nevertheless, many IOs and NGOs expressed their concerns regarding camps as breeding grounds for extremist and fundamentalist groups, particularly such groups that operate under the assumption of aid and service provision inside the camps. One of the NGO representatives gave an explicit example of such a group, stating that, "if ISIS comes and offers men [inside the refugee camps], money and weapons to fight, they will do it."

More significantly, the security and safety issue was critically flagged as an important matter to tackle in all of the focus group discussions that were conducted. The participating Lebanese and Syrian nationals agreed that there are clashes rising between Syrian refugees and the host communities; thus causing tension and violence in some areas. In Naba'a, the Lebanese focus group members stressed that the community feels threatened by the overwhelming Syrian presence, directly associating refugees to involvement in extremist groups such as ISIS and Jabhat Al Nusra. It was confirmed time and time again that the Lebanese community in Naba'a fears for their safety and the safety of their families, and blame the Burj Hammoud Municipality for their lack of involvement in Naba'a. In fact, although the Burj Hammoud municipality has set up a curfew to curb the movements of Syrian refugees, residents of the area claimed

that is not being implemented or monitored by Lebanese authorities. As for Syrian refugees living in Naba'a, they themselves believe that they are being unfairly treated, and that the Lebanese community is being victimized, while they are the "true sufferers" from this current situation. They are not on good terms with the municipality, meaning that no protection is being provided for their families in cases of harassment or violence. In Sahel El Zahrani, Syrians are becoming more fearful of their surroundings. Some of the refugees present during the focus groups claimed that this issue is intensifying every day, to the point where some are afraid to walk on the streets. They live in fear of the host community, claiming that they are being threatened of expulsion from Sahel El Zahrani. However, all the Syrians interviewed agreed that they are under the protection of a local political group. In Bar Elias, the security issue is even more extreme due to the area's proximity to Syrian borders. Cases of beating, assault, and verbal aggression by the Lebanese authorities are very recurrent, especially at checkpoints and on the borders. Syrian refugees feel discriminated, and unjustly treated. An interviewee even stated "we came to Lebanon as victims of the conflict in Syria, and now we are victims of another conflict". Moreover, a controversial issue has arisen following the new policies that are being implemented by the Lebanese government: Syrians fear for their safety and restrict their movement because they have outdated IDs, and they are reluctant to go back to Syria and renew their IDs from fear of losing their refugee status.

B. Social Cohesion and Integration of Refugees in Lebanese Host Communities

The integration of refugees with their host communities is regarded as necessary in an urban setting, based on the responses of the academics interviewed. The matter of whether refugees should be integrated into the host society or not is a topic of debate that brings forth a number of relevant questions, particularly when thinking of the establishment of refugee camps. If refugee camps were created, would that ensure positive levels of social cohesion, from a Lebanese standpoint? In such situations, how can the marginalization of Syrian refugees be avoided? Furthermore, how would urban refugees fit into the equation? A prominent Lebanese urban planning academic remarked that refugee integration in society and in the job market is necessary – however, another international urban planner stressed that this would most likely not be possible, as "refugees want to go back home; they [often] see themselves as outsiders and unwelcome". On the other hand, representatives of municipalities which were hard-hit by the refugee influx all emphasized that it was the

widespread overpopulation in these densely populated areas, which is creating exacerbating tensions. More specifically, the municipal representatives mentioned that these tensions come about since most of the residents of the Lebanese host communities are fully aware that "Syrian refugees are not paying the cost of basic urban services such as electricity and water." Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, Syrian refugees are regarded as replacing local laborers in different domains; thus, creating increased clashes between these two communities. However, one deputy mayor supported the idea of Syrian refugee enrolment in the labor market, claiming that: "Syrian refugees should work so that they don't have time to cause problems". Additionally, the unequal distribution of aid and refugee-targeted aid programs are also exacerbating the elevated levels of tension, as the host communities feel even more marginalized by the government and other aid organizations.

With respect to the government officials interviewed, all of them agreed that it is better to separate refugees from the host community, to be more specific: "keep them [refugees] away". They asserted that most of the host community is no longer accepting that Syrian refugees live in the vicinity of their towns, especially after the incidents witnessed in Arsal over the past few months. Furthermore, in response to Syrian refugee entry to the labor market, a senior government official acknowledged that there should be restrictions on the employment of Syrian refugees in order to curb economies of scale. On the other hand, the opinions of IO and NGO representatives varied distinctively, from those who believed that it is not reasonable to integrate Syrian refugees in the host community due to their "different types of living" and those who believed that it is necessary to integrate refugees in urban settings in order for them to feel a sense of belonging and increased comfort while in Lebanon.

Again, and according to the Lebanese residents of Naba'a, Syrians were described as a threat to the Lebanese community – not only on an existential level, but also, on an economic level. Residents complained that the Syrian presence in the area is causing many problems such as: rise in rent prices, increased competition over jobs, escalated prices of goods and services, and social problems. According to one of the interviewees, landowners are the ones to blame for the rise in rent prices since they prefer to rent their lands/homes to Syrians who pay more rent due to the fact that they live with more than one family in a single household. The same problems were also described in the Sahel El Zahrani focus groups. Syrians were accused of not paying their rent prices; in addition to causing problems with each other and with the Lebanese community.

Thus, the Lebanese host community is not comfortable with their presence. The Lebanese interviewees in Sahel El Zahrani complained about the fact that migrant workers who were initially present in Lebanon before the crisis have brought their extended families to reside with them. According to the residents in this area, such migrant workers should be excluded from the aids and services provided by the municipality or the aid organizations. On the other hand, the Syrian refugees interviewed in Naba'a blamed the Lebanese community for the tensions which might happen due to the perception of Lebanese individuals who "provoke Syrians as soon as they discover their nationality". Nevertheless, Syrians in Sahel El Zahrani complained that they are faced with discrimination from the host community where some interviewees admitted that local men, who "wanted every Syrian to move out of the city", raided their homes. For example, flyers were widely distributed in Sahel El Zahrani which "threatened Syrians with kicking them out". Only one of the Syrian interviewees said: "the Lebanese are very good with us." Different cultural and social levels of Syrians were also viewed as causes of conflict between them and the host community. According to one of the Lebanese men interviewed in Sahel El Zahrani "it is easier to integrate with Syrians who came from cities; but there are Bedouins who came from villages, it is very difficult to integrate with." Whereas Syrians in Bar Elias believed that they are helping the Lebanese economy and they didn't come to Lebanon by choice; they fled a bloody war in Syria and left everything behind. Syrian refugees blame the Lebanese government for not intervening to curb their difficult situation. According to one of the Syrian interviewees in Bar Elias, "the government decided to host us, if it didn't really want to host us, why did it not close the borders from the beginning? If it decided to host us, then it has to provide us with food, shelter, security, and education." Syrian interviewees consistently mentioned that "we came to Lebanon as victims of the conflict in Syria and now we are victims of another conflict".

C. The Economy and Livelihoods of Refugees

Largely speaking, Syrian refugees are considered to be highly skilled laborers, particularly in the domains of construction and agriculture, according to most of the academics interviewed. Thus, they are seen as a productive force with the potential to benefit the Lebanese economy, rather than harm it, as is currently perceived by many. This type of competition between refugees and Lebanese communities generated in the Lebanese labor market is seen by academics to have a positive impact on the Lebanese economy, in the sense of providing more energy and

effort to create additional jobs. However, according to many academics, the Lebanese government is not currently benefiting from the refugee skillsets, as some restrictions are placed with respect to their employment. This act is described by more than one academic as intentional, so as to urge refugees facing difficult conditions and no stable source of income in Lebanon to return to Syria.

As expected, all of the municipal representatives interviewed agreed that Syrian laborers are competing with local residents, and consequently replacing them in jobs that should be "theirs", particularly in the domains of agriculture, construction, and other self-employed domains such as shopkeepers and taxi drivers. Furthermore, Syrian refugees are renting agricultural lands to place their tents; thus, limiting the agricultural produce. While this phenomenon is desirable to many owners of agricultural lands as it generates more income than cultivating the lands agriculturally, it is seen to have negative impacts on the overall agricultural sector in Lebanon. Indeed, competition over jobs is seen as one of the drivers behind the rise of tensions between refugees and the host communities in many cases especially that refugees are considered to be cheaper labor. On the other hand, the opinions of the government officials interviewed ranged from those who viewed the enrolment of refugees in the job market as beneficial to refugees themselves as well as to the Lebanese economy; and those who believed that Syrian laborers are stealing the jobs of Lebanese people and thus making them more economically vulnerable. According to a senior government official interviewed, Syrian workers should not be allowed to work outside the camps, if camps are to be established.

On the other hand, according to the various IOs and NGOs interviewed, the influx of Syrian refugees is affecting the economy of the host communities they operate in, since most of these areas are already poor and have been so for years. However, these IOs and NGOs admit that with respect to the labor market, Syrian workers are lowering the expected wages, since they are accepting jobs for lower salaries to cover their needs. Furthermore, these areas are witnessing a rise in rent prices due to the influx of refugees, a factor which is more than often regarded as a major drawback to the Lebanese economy. A high-raking representative of an IO engaged with Syrian refugees on a day-to-day basis expressed his concern on this matter, stating that: "With the additional 1.2 million [Syrian] refugees, there has been a considerable rent inflation and as you see, the rent market is quite inelastic so it doesn't have the same capacity

to absorb let's say the food and other things that have increased but not as much. So rental market increased causing both Lebanese and Syrians to be displaced to more subtended conditions."

As for the focus groups interviewed, the Syrian refugees prefer to be part of an urban setting in order to engage in the informal labor market. Residing in camps was disapproved by almost all Syrian refugees interviewed in the focus groups since it is often associated with restriction of movement which strips away the right of refugees to be part of a city. In fact, one of the Syrian refugees interviewed in Sahel El Zahrani said: "we want to be in a city, we have the right to be part of a city". Furthermore, Syrian refugees interviewed stated that the Lebanese society should acknowledge the benefit of Syrian refugees since many of those refugees are educated and wealthy members who significantly contribute to economic development of the country. On the other hand, the Lebanese groups interviewed were frequently discussing the negative impacts of the Syrian presence in Lebanon since they are exerting a huge pressure on the infrastructure; and the Lebanese community is paying for this. Nevertheless, the Lebanese focus group in Sahel El Zahrani was outraged by the fact that Syrian workers are replacing Lebanese workers; thus, raising the unemployment and poverty rates of the Lebanese community.

CHAPTER

05

Bekaa Valley, Lebanon, Jan. 2015. ***Photo © UNHCR / A.McConnell***

SYNTHESIS AND DISCUSSION

Municipalities and unions of municipalities are increasingly finding themselves at the forefront of dealing with and responding to the refugee crisis. The crisis has increased the host communities' reported sense of "threat" and decreased sense of safety. At the beginning of the Syrian war, Lebanese residents widely welcomed the incoming refugees into their homes, lands and localities. However, as the conflict in Syria advanced and the refugee crisis became more protracted, Lebanese municipalities, localities and municipal unions began to largely fear what the "permanent" presence of these refugees would essentially mean to the larger community dynamics. Although Lebanese officials stressed on the need to address the issue of security from the first point of entry – the Lebanon/Syria borders – as the time passed, the number of Syrian refugees spiked and Lebanese communities became more aware of the myriad of serious economic and societal implications of the refugee influx.

There was a sharp increase in the perception of Syrian refugees as a widespread security threat, affecting the local security fabric, in addition to greater national security. While there is no strong correlation between the high number of refugees in Lebanon and the general increase in crime rates around the country, nevertheless, Lebanese government officials were quick to make the association based on Lebanon's experience with the Palestinian refugee camps. As the concerns over the security of Lebanese citizens increased, the idea of the Syrian refugee population as an "existential", "economic" and "social" threat has developed and propagated even further along the majority of regions and localities in Lebanon. As such, it is not surprising that there is an expressed mutual desire – on a Lebanese official level and on a local level – to "keep Syrian refugees away". Surprisingly enough, a number of IOs and NGOs echoed this position, claiming that it is highly unreasonable to integrate Syrian refugees with the host community due to their "different types of living" and the negative effects they pose

more generally on societal ties, the security context and the economies of host communities. This is an interesting phenomenon that comes in stark contrast to the long-standing social, economic and cultural relationship the Lebanese and Syrian communities have held over the years.

External conditions of an informal settlement, Lebanon 2014. **Photo © UN-HABITAT / M.Fawaz**

The will to "keep refugees away" is reflected in the current initiatives put in place to "control" these refugee populations, such as the curfews spanning across many regions, which aim to curb the movement of Syrian residents and refugees. Nevertheless, Lebanese host communities do not view the establishment of Syrian refugee camps as a "solution" to their security dilemma – and Syrian refugees themselves outright reject any proposal to house them in camps. Rather, and echoing the positions of IOs and NGOs, municipality and union representatives believe that their citizens would be better off without camps – as they are highly concerned that these camps would only serve as a breeding ground for extremist and fundamentalist groups and radicalization more generally, reflecting the long-term experience Lebanon has had with Palestinian refugee camps. While Lebanese government officials believed that the creation of camps – under the conditions that they are significantly far from the host communities and meticulously controlled by Lebanese authorities – would essentially ensure the safety of Lebanese host communities, the security and safety of refugees themselves is a concern that is largely overlooked

and not factored into the question when thinking of any potential camp plan.[63] Indeed, the security and safety of Syrian refugee communities is second-fold to that of Lebanese host communities, a pattern that can be linked to the increase in the unfair and unjust treatment of this community. The levels of tension between the Lebanese host communities and the refugees have translated into a widespread rise in the reported cases of discrimination, harassment, violence and verbal aggression by Lebanese authorities and, unfortunately enough, between members of both communities. This only reflects the extent to which this refugee crisis has been perceived less and less as a humanitarian one.

In any other context, the establishment of refugee camps, theoretically and conceptually speaking, would have been ideal, as it would ease problems of service provision, decrease problems of social cohesion and, to a certain extent, provide levels of security to both communities. However, the establishment of refugee camps in Lebanon is certainly not ideal, nor is it feasible, in light of the economic, societal and political as well as security implications that would be generated. Furthermore, it has become far too late to even potentially debate the establishment of refugee camps in Lebanon, almost four years into the Syrian crisis. Creating them now or at any point in the near future would essentially become a logistical nightmare for both Lebanese authorities and IOs/NGOs. How would camps be sustained? How would the livelihoods of refugees inside these camps be maintained? Furthermore, as the Syrian refugee influx has decreased significantly over the past few months, there is no pressing need to create refugee camps to place refugees, as they have already settled around Lebanon. More significantly, on an economic level, Lebanon would not be able to handle the burden of additional refugee camps on its territory, since camps are indeed far too costly for a country like Lebanon to create, maintain and sustain. Based on the Jordanian Zaatari refugee camp figures, Lebanon will require an estimated $300,000 to $500,000 per day for camp operations.[64] This would only create a larger economic burden on the local and national level. More importantly, the figures on refugee settlement in Lebanon further corroborate the fact that refugee camps are not a sustainable and durable solution to Lebanon's refugee crisis. Around

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63. However, this merits further analysis with respect to the security implications of refugees living inside semi-formal settlements that are badly built and not meeting shelter sector standards, such as in Arsal where they become a threat to refugee lives.

64. This amount includes operational costs and excludes the costs necessary for refugee assistance. This projection was made based on the operational costs of Zaatari, as highlighted in the Affordable Housing Institute (2014) report: "Zaatari, The Instant City".

17% of Syrian refugees are residing in informal settlements scattered across Lebanon, while the rest have settled in and around urban areas. Finally, and even if these camps were to be established, the Palestinian refugee experience has showed us that refugee camps in Lebanon are not easy to secure, making it highly probable that these potential camps would become hotbeds for fundamentalism and radicalization.

As such, in the context of the relevant literature and the reality of Lebanese particularities, this study does not suggest the establishment of camps as a durable and sustainable solution to the shelter concerns of Syrian refugees in Lebanon. Indeed, the establishment of Syrian refugee camps in Lebanon cannot be considered a "valid solution". Rather, this study recommends a hybrid model, which involves pursuing 1) further substandard options for shelter, in addition to pursuing additional plans and adopted shelter options such as those featured in this report (the Ghata, the IKEA shelter, etc.), and 2) upgrading the neighborhoods impacted by the crisis and current informal settlements. This would be extremely cost-effective, in comparison with costs related to the creation, establishment and daily maintenance of Syrian refugee camps in Lebanon. Tackling the substandard shelter would include rehabilitating buildings, which would be converted to living spaces for refugees and improved to enhance the living conditions of these refugees. This would be a highly appropriate and useful strategy to adopt, as the majority of Syrian refugees are residing in urban areas, specifically in dilapidated buildings and structures that are not completed. Additionally, it is necessary to formalize this complete process – not only to simply structurally fix and mend existing shelter options. The legalization of this process not only protects the owner/landlord, as well as the refugee from any unfair treatment (increase in rent prices, eviction, etc.), but also, would prohibit the rise of any legal issues that may occur in this regard. On the other hand, and with respect to the upgrading of the current informal settlements, which house around 17% of the Syrian refugee population, such a strategy would both abide by the Lebanese context and address the need for sustainable solutions for shelter concerns. Since the Lebanese government does not usually allow for anything that is considered to be "permanent" (and therefore, durable, such as construction materials – metal and concrete) in the upgrading of any refugee settlement, upgrading the informal settlements with small-scale solutions would not infringe on what is considered "permanent". For example, upgrading an existing informal tented settlement through establishing a sewage network would be beneficial for both the refugees and the local community, who would use this system after the refugees have returned to their home country.

CHAPTER 06

External conditions of an informal settlement, Lebanon 2014. ***Photo © UN-HABITAT / M.Fawaz***

CONCLUSION

Lebanon's experience with the Syrian refugee crisis and the debate over the establishment of camps is a unique case which portrays the prominence of the local context over the larger, international development concepts of "aid" and "crisis response". This flags the importance of pausing to understand the complexities of the local contexts prior to proposing solutions that would not only affect refugees, but also host communities, as well as national economic, societal and political realities.

The current situation in Lebanon, where camps were not established – and where, subsequently, refugees settled across the country in varying types of shelter – requires the reflection on and the development of a clear national vision, which would guide the stabilization phase of this refugee crisis. Different future scenarios should be outlined and thoroughly assessed, with possible implications for each and clear responses that would be adopted by local authorities and international communities alike. This report stresses on the importance of thinking through and later adopting solutions that would benefit refugees, but also give prominence to the Lebanese government and communities that are already overwhelmed by the crisis.

Housing conditions in Naba'a, Lebanon 2014. **Photo © UN-HABITAT / M.Fawaz**

ANNEXES

ANNEX I:

The Palestinian Refugee Experience in Lebanon

1. Construction of Palestinian Refugee Camps

Following the creation of the Israeli state and after the Nakba and the influx of Palestinian refugees into Lebanon, the refugees scattered around the country, living in makeshift shelters and tents. In response, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) started building shelters to replace tents in existing camps; these were known as official camps. Official camps are distinguished from non-official ones in that an official camp is operated by the agency, has a particular camp leader, and environmental sanitation services provided by the agency.[65] From UNRWA's point of view, these camps were unwanted, but necessary. The first UNRWA director in 1950 described the better and easier provision of services as a positive advantage to creating the camps, while the crowdedness and uncomfortable living circumstances as a disadvantage. UNRWA's shelter plan was to construct shelters on plots of average 7.5/14m; however, refugees built and changed the camps and shelters through everyday building practices and this was seen as the reason for overcrowding and loss of the agency's control over the camps. In the years to follow, Palestinian camps all around Lebanon were gradually established. There are twelve official Palestinian camps in Lebanon, scattered from the north to the south, where around 500,000 Palestinians reside. Palestinians reside in these camps to this day – even though UNRWA's camps were intended to be short-term and emergency-based, until a (then) hopeful political solution to the problem was reached.

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65. Berg KG (2013), "From Chaos to order and back – the construction of UNRWA shelters and camps, 1950-70", in Hanafi S & Takkenberg L (Ed.), "UNRWA and Palestinian refugees: From relief and works to human development (pp. 129-141). Routledge Studies on the Arab-Israeli Conflict.

2. Governance and Governmentalities within the Camps

Governance within the realm of the camps represents the shaping of the political mentality of the camp's population. Governance within the Palestinian refugee camps of Lebanon is problematic and borderline chaotic, and this is caused by several factors. Indeed, one of the main characteristics of Palestinian camps is their established political realm and its chaotic nature. Each camp has its own governing body, composed of representative committees of each neighborhood in the camp. This committee is composed of educated members who speak on behalf of the residents of the neighborhood. However, because of the deep factionalism existing within the Palestinian camps, governance is quite inefficient, leading to the rise of governmentalities. We can understand governmentalities as the set of norms, laws, and practices that frame each faction of the camps. These governmentalities further deepen the gaps between the already segregated Palestinian refugee society and Lebanese society itself. The "oppressive" Lebanese security situation and the lack of central Palestinian authority encouraged the formation of governmentalities. Furthermore, because the committees or "governmentalities" lack enough resources, the committees were not able to fulfill their functions as acting municipalities.

3. Security Crises and Clashes

The political chaos that persists in the Palestinian camps justifies the security issues that Palestinian refugees face on a daily basis. Palestinian camps have been referred to as "security islands"; a term coined in order to best describe the insecurity and law breach present within the camps.[66] They are also described as the "states of exception" because the Lebanese law enforcement has no apparent effect on life inside the Palestinian camps. Furthermore, the Lebanese security forces dismiss any security issue occurring inside the confines of the camps, and this (among other things) had led to the worsening of the Nahr El Bared conflict in 2007. In fact, the rise of Islamist movements inside the camps in Lebanon, such as what occurred in Nahr El Bared, are merely groups taking advantage of the "security island" situation, and finding it ideal to seek refuge away of the grip of the Lebanese government, resulting in a problematic security dilemma in the Palestinian camps. Other security tensions also arise as

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66. Suleiman, J (1999), "The Current Political Organizational, and security situation in the Palestinian refugee camps of Lebanon" Journal of Palestine Studies, xxix, no.1.

a result of family and inter-village disputes carried over from Palestine, which demonstrates how the Palestinian community is rather enclosed and forms a state of its own. In fact, Palestinian refugees believe that insecurity stems mostly from the displacement of refugees from one camp to the other and also because the camps were thought to be overcrowded.[67]

4. Economic and Social Instability within the Camps

Most Palestinian refugees living inside the camps in Lebanon suffer from wide scale poverty. This phenomenon can be related to the physical structure of the camps; the camps in Lebanon are closed spaces and relatively small compared to the high population residing inside them. These closed camps decrease accessibility to and out of camps for security and other reasons, which lower possibilities of finding job opportunities out of the camps or even establishing small businesses in the camp. For example, Palestinian camps in Jordan and Syria are open spaces, and the poverty rate in these camps is relatively lower.[68] Closed camps are also limited to a certain space thus the increase of the refugee population usually results in overcrowding in those camps. Thus the structure and construction of the camps is a relevant factor, and should always be taken into consideration in relation to the livelihoods of refugees. Also, most of the camps in Lebanon lack green spaces and public spaces, which decrease the level of social cohesion. This could have an impact on the psychological well-being of Palestinian refugees, who are forced to live in constricted and non-hygienic places. Analyzing these results may help in acknowledging the structural drawbacks of camps, or may even hint at better solutions, whether they be camp centric or non-camp centric.

5. Palestinian Refugees from Syria

The recent Syrian crisis has worsened the situation inside the Palestinian camps in Lebanon. In fact, with the growing clashes going on inside Syria, many Palestinian refugees residing in camps in Syria (mainly the Yarmouk camp) have fled to Lebanon and found shelter inside Palestinian camps in Lebanon. The report by American Near East Refugee Aid (ANERA) on Palestinian Refugees from Syria (PRS) has showed that around 85% of

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67. Hanafi,S (2010), "Governing Palestinian Refugee Camps in the Arab East: Governmentalities in Search of Legitimacy" Working Paper Series no. 1, Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs, AUB.

68. Hanafi S & Long T (2010), "Governance, Governmentalities, and the State of Exception in the Palestinian Refugee Camps of Lebanon" Journal of Refugee Studies, 23(2), 134-159.

Palestinian refugees residing in the Yarmouk camp have escaped the war in Damascus.[69] UNRWA – not UNHCR – is in charge of providing services and aid to these refugees. In February 2014, around 51,800 PRS were registered with UNRWA. However, other sources indicate that more than 70,000 PRS have fled to Lebanon, indicating that roughly 20,000 PRS have not yet been registered with UNRWA. UNRWA has spent a great deal of effort trying to integrate the PRS into the already established Palestinian camps in Lebanon. Around 51% of PRS are actually living in Palestinian camps, with the highest numbers residing in Saida's Ain el Helwe camp. The additional influx of refugees into the already overcrowded camps has had several consequences, mainly on the water supply, sewerage and drainage systems.[70] However, even with the assistance of UNRWA, Palestinian refugees from Syria are living in dire circumstances, even more so than the Palestinian refugees already resident in camps in Lebanon. Their legal status in Lebanon is troublesome, as they are denied the right to be employed or to own a house. As ANERA showed in their study, over 90% of PRS are unemployed; thus making it even harder to survive as families cannot provide food and care for their children and themselves. While UNRWA is trying hard to provide the basic needs for the PRS, it is clear that their situation will not become any better, which might have terrible, widespread repercussions on all livelihoods inside the camps, and may result in tensions leading to clashes and unrest.

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69. ANERA (2013), "Palestinian Refugees from Syria in Lebanon", ANERA reports on the ground in the Middle East, Volume 4.

70. UNRWA (2014), "UNRWA's response and services to Palestine refugees from Syria (PRS) in Lebanon", Bi-weekly briefing, Issue 30.

ANNEX II:

The Main Shelter Alternative Projects in Lebanon

1. Main Shelter Alternative Projects in Lebanon

IKEA/UNHCR

In early 2013, the IKEA Foundation created a prototype shelter design in partnership with UNHCR, who adopted it as a possible large-scale future plan to replace refugee tents and tented settlements with these specific housing units. The expected user lifespan of the unit is 18 months without maintenance in moderate climates, and up to 36 months with basic maintenance. This shelter unit could be assembled easily without the requirement of any external tools. Furthermore, the assembly process does not require any relevant construction skills. It was suggested that a group of five refugees with no construction background could erect it in around four to six hours. The shelter unit could later be dismantled and moved by the refugee back to his home country at any time – hence removing any sense of permanence. It also provides electricity through its solar panel and reflects back 70% of the external heat during the day, while warming the unit at night. Although this particular shelter design seemed to fit all the requirements. Yet in June 2013, the Lebanese government rejected the proposed project, claiming that, regardless of all its benefits, it indeed does give the appearance of permanence. Moreover, despite its survivability and its relatively cheap cost of $1,000 per shelter, the project received widespread criticism, as it was perceived as not benefiting the host community, because the building materials are Swedish and not local, and the shelter kits would have to be manufactured abroad and shipped to Lebanon. Furthermore, many expressed that the pre-set design was not open to being personalized or adapted by the refugees in a manner that reflects their preferences or identity, ultimately hindering refugees from feeling that this unit is "their home". Nevertheless, a few months later, in December 2013, the Lebanese government accepted UNHCR's proposition to test a few of IKEA's RHUs in Lebanon to get feedback by the refugees, as it was finally convinced that it would be able to turn into a permanent shelter. However, according to a UNHCR official, the testing of the IKEA shelter has been postponed until an agreement is reached between the government, local authorities, and communities.

Ghata (Sidon)

In 2013, AUB's Center for Civic Engagement and Community Service (CCECS) worked on a project to introduce a different type of RHU,

conveniently called "Ghata" or "cover" in Arabic. In early 2014, the project was approved by MoSA, and was implemented in Sidon. The Ghata is a 5x4 meters squared shelter, easily built in around ten hours and easily dissembled in two hours by only two refugee workers, with minimum skillset requirements. The shelter is provided with solar panels to provide electricity, thus moving away from the dependence of such camps on the Lebanese electricity and reducing the pressure on the Lebanese public services sector. The structure is very malleable in size and shape and can be easily reshaped and expanded depending on its use or needs – for example, the Ghata can accommodate hosting refugee students in a classroom or can be transformed into a kitchen for the refugees. Unlike the IKEA model, the structure can be customized to meet the refugees' taste, and thus carries the residing family's identity. Furthermore, and like the IKEA project, the Ghata can be dismantled and carried by the refugee family back to Syria after the end of the conflict.
More importantly, the Ghata was designed taking into consideration Lebanese regulations that prohibit permanent housing for refugees; therefore the Ghata can be set with no concrete base, thus satisfying the Lebanese regulations and requirements. Caretaker Minister of Social Affairs Wael Abou Faour visited the model in early 2014 and mentioned that, based on its design, the Ghata could be adopted as the official model by the Lebanese government in the future. Note that, up to this date, the Ghata has only been approved to be used as an educational facility for refugees, and not as an alternative shelter option: there is only one Ghata being used as a refugee shelter in the whole of Lebanon at the moment.

IHR (Arsal)

The International Humanitarian Relief (IHR) is a Syrian NGO that is specialized in meeting Syrian refugee needs in the region. Part of their recent aid program involved an innovative design to build ready-made shelters out of metal and fiber in Arsal as an alternative to officially established camps. Like the IKEA and Ghata prototypes, these shelters can also be dismantled easily and transferred to Syria by the refugees upon their return. The shelters are of a relatively good size, 6x3 meters squared and include a bathroom and kitchenette and would hold a capacity of five people per shelter. The project is under construction at the moment in Arsal, and it is using the Arsal local market to get its building requirements. More significantly, this project is employing Syrian refugees to build the shelter units. As such, this project benefits both the refugee and host community, thereby reducing the possibility of any possible tensions. The compound area in which the units are

being built is designed to involve public facilities to the residing refugees such as a school, a clinic, a development center and a mosque. Since it is still a project in progress there is no feedback from settled refugees in the compound area, but the design itself has been based on recommendations from Syrian refugees in other settlements and based on studies on these settlements. The project also intends to employ at least one member of each residing refugee family, whether in its clinics, schools, or any provided services in the compound area, hence creating a sense of community and independence within the area. Finally, the shelter is built on gravel floor with no concrete base, to move away from the sense of permanence and is expected to last for a lifetime. While this project has the approval of the Arsal municipality for its construction, it is unknown where the government stands in relation to the project as its role has been minimal on the ground. This further increases the general confusion of NGOs working on shelter in Lebanon vis-à-vis the government's perception and definition of what is permanent.

2. Other Significant Shelter Alternative Projects in Lebanon

The Danish Refugee Council

Other than rehabilitating buildings to convert them into homes for refugees, the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) had begun building box shelters in Akkar and Bekaa since 2012. However, the project was shut down in June 2013 due to funding concerns as well as the Lebanese government's dissatisfaction at the permanent impression these shelters give away.

The DRC built these 5x5 meter squared shelter boxes on privately-owned lands and properties, under the agreement that the Lebanese land owners get to keep the shelters after the end of the two year contract allowing Syrian refugees in these shelters. The shelter was made out of insulating panels that resist heat and cold. The design did not include a bathroom or kitchen, hence the refugees had to resort to sharing communal facilities with the property owners. The boxes were constructed by the refugees themselves with the assistance of the DRC, so as to give the refugees a sense of engagement and agency. The project seemed to receive positive feedback from the Lebanese host communities as well as the Syrian refugees, who claimed that these units provided their families much needed privacy.

In Summer 2014, the DRC confirmed that in May 2014, MoSA overturned its decision to halt this shelter alternative project and now permits the DRC

to go ahead with its shelter boxes project – but with a few adjustments to the box's size (now 4x4 meters squared), cost (the Ministry asked the DRC to decrease the cost), and number of shelters per settlement area. At the time of this research, the DRC's "new" shelter box was still in the design phase.

The Norwegian Refugee Council

Beside their ongoing project of fixing half-finished buildings owned by Lebanese owners in order to allow Syrian refugees to live in for one year, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) faced some obstacles in having their shelter plan approved by the Lebanese government. One shelter alternative plan the NRC wanted to implement was their softcover shelter design, which is a shelter unit held together by galvanized steel greenhouse frame covered by a layer of insulation material covered by plastic sheeting. The structure could be erected over a concrete foundation or one made of plastic and gravel, to move away from any seemingly permanent-looking shelters. But the rejection of this plan left the NRC confused about the Lebanese government's definition of "permanent". NRC's shelter program manager, said: "We were never quite sure what the sticking point was, whether it was the fact that it had a rigid metal frame or the fact that it was usually to be cemented into the ground. Nevertheless, MoSA officially approved the NRC's shelter design project in December 2013 and project construction is back underway. NRC invested in 600 units (stockpile in Lebanon) and some of this T-shelter will be used as a communal area in informal settlements as well. The designed "T-Shelter" with a 5x4.5 meters squared floor area made of a concrete block layer covered by a mat, could accommodate a family of six (or seven, with an infant).

Concern Worldwide (Akkar)

Concern Worldwide, in an attempt to address the Lebanese government's stance on shelter issues, created a shelter prototype in which it planned to transform large chicken coops into multi-family houses, where they would pay the owners of these coops around $500 a month over three years to host the Syrian refugees. DRC and Concern have been working with professional companies to disinfect the chicken coops prior to rehabilitation, in addition to transforming buildings into small-cell apartments with communal kitchens. Concern's director has considered this idea to be "simply a reflection of where we are with the government". However, UNHCR considers these to be valid options, so as to increase the capacity of collective centers in hosting refugees.

This research seeks to contribute to the policy debates pertaining to the question of establishing camps for Syrian refugees in Lebanon. In response to the critical need for research and analysis on this topic, this report addresses the emerging challenges of providing shelter for Syrian refugees in Lebanon, hosting them and ensuring their protection. The matter of securing adequate shelter for Syrian refugees, the report argues, cannot be understood without unpacking the complex web of historical, political, socioeconomic and governance conditions specific to the Lebanese context. Based on evidence collected from extensive literature review, fieldwork, interviews and focus group discussions conducted in Lebanon for this study, the report provides the myriad of concerned actors involved in refugee shelter issues, such as local authorities, governmental institutions, non-governmental organizations, UN agencies, and other international organizations, with recommendations to make informed decisions and enact effective policies that apply to the Lebanese context.

ISBN 978-9953-586-23-6