



# LOCAL GOVERNANCE UNDER PRESSURE

**RESEARCH ON SOCIAL STABILITY  
IN T5 AREA, NORTH LEBANON**



**OXFAM**

Nizar Ghanem, *Local governance under pressure. Research on social stability in T5 area, North Lebanon*, Menapolis and Oxfam Italia, 2016

Report of Findings

Menapolis and Oxfam Italia

Author: Nizar Ghanem

Nizar Ghanem is qualitative research consultant with more than 10 years experience in policy research and training. Nizar has served as a consultant with various international organizations, including the World Bank, UNICEF and Save the Children. Nizar has authored reports and published scholarly articles on a variety of topics related to governance and development in the Middle East region, and lectured on conflict resolution at the Lebanese American University in Lebanon. He holds a Masters in International Relations and Economics from Johns Hopkins University, The School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS).

Edited by Silvia Ciacci, Programme Development Advisor with Oxfam Italia

Photos: Georgie Pauwels

Design: invasionecreativa.it

This research would not have been possible without the inestimable contributions of all key informants and focus groups participants. Oxfam Italia also would like to acknowledge Nizar Ghanem for his professionalism and enthusiasm in conducting the research. Finally, Oxfam Italia would acknowledge Sally Abi Khalil, Policy Advisor with Oxfam in Lebanon, for the crucial support given to this research.

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OXFAM ITALIA · Via C. Concini, 19 · 52100 Arezzo · Italy  
t. +39 0575 182481 · f. +39 0575 1824872 · [oxfamitalia.org](http://oxfamitalia.org)



The impact of Syria crisis on Lebanon is subject of many researches and assessments, intended to understand how a historically fragile country has reacted and is reacting to one of the most dramatic refugee crises in the last decades. In fact, even before the outbreak of Syrian crisis, Lebanon was a State facing challenges: a dividing political confessional system, high youth unemployment, poor infrastructure, weak public services and alarming social, economic and spatial inequalities. International non-governmental organizations intervening in this complex context should not only pay attention to such macro-dynamics at national level, but they should be aware about what is going on at local level, in terms of impact of Syria crisis on local communities, on their power structures and on their needs. Understanding local dynamics is a key tool for influencing changes at national level. Notably in Lebanon, due to the peculiar power structures and dynamics of the country, local authorities have always played a crucial role in governing their communities, despite administrative, financial, technical and legal constraints - emerging from an insufficient and still ongoing decentralization process – that they have to face. This is the main aim of this research: understanding the impact of Syria crisis on local governance.

In Oxfam vision, local governance is the dialogue between local authorities and the community they represent for fostering local development. Also in time of crises, this dialogue should remain stable and strong. In order to understand the health state of this dialogue in selected communities from North Lebanon, Oxfam decided to “catch” all voices, the voices of Lebanese citizens, Syrian refugees and local authorities as human being and institutions forming one community and sharing common spatial territory and common needs. Indeed, we found that all stakeholders want the same: security, decent jobs, acceptable living conditions and a future for them and their children.

Such main findings from the field represent the basis for designing and fostering Oxfam action in the country. Thus, the research provides Oxfam in Lebanon with concrete inputs for contributing to enhance social stability and livelihood conditions in vulnerable communities. A pilot training package has been also set up and delivered to selected local authorities in Dannieh and Bcharreh Districts with the aim to provide local actors with concrete tools and practical solutions for fostering local development.

Finally, this research form part of the Oxfam discussion paper *Lebanon: looking ahead in times of crisis. Taking stock of the present to urgently build sustainable options for the future*, released in December 2015. This paper aims to contribute to an urgent discussion of both interim and longer-term solutions to address protection issues, living conditions, access to services and reduced aid dependency for refugees, along with stronger social protection, access to services and greater employment opportunities for poor and vulnerable Lebanese.

Abstract

Since the onset of the crisis in Syria in 2011, Lebanon has faced numerous spill over effects. The historically fragile Lebanese structure and economy are struggling to accommodate approximately over 1.1 million registered Syrian refugees and 43,377 Palestinian refugees from Syria. In a country of just over 4 million people and 321,362 Palestinian refugees from Lebanon, population has grown by 30 percent and 1 out of 5 are refugees. The magnitude of the crisis has had a dilapidating effect on the local economy and infrastructure. Lebanese local authorities have to deal with the presence of persons displaced from Syria, providing basic services and maintaining social well-being to an increased number of inhabitants, despite their weak financial and technical resources. Under this scenario, strengthening local resilience in face of this crisis is an imperative to any humanitarian response but also for reactivating local development processes. This research focuses on local governance and social stability in North Lebanon (El-Koura, Bcharreh, Zgharta and Minieh-Dannieh districts), where Oxfam has been working with both municipalities, Syrian refugees and host communities since 2013. Main aim of the research is to understand the informal and formal power dynamics and governance structures at the local level. It also looks at the impact of the Syria crisis in this area, to understand the basic needs, priorities and concerns of Syrian refugees and host communities. Furthermore, the research identifies initiatives that assist local authorities in absorbing and adapting to the current shock and strengthening social stability.

ATM	Automated Teller Machine
ESIA	Economic and Social Impact Assessment\
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
ITS	Informal Tented Settlement
KII	Key Informant Interview
LCRP	Lebanon Crisis Response Plan
MC	Municipal Council
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PDM	Post Distribution Monitoring
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
T5	The area of North Governorate of Lebanon including Bcharreh, Zgharta, Minieh-Dannieh and El Koura districts

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since the onset of the crisis in Syria in 2011, Lebanon has faced numerous spillover effects. The historically fragile economy is struggling to accommodate approximately over 1.1 million registered Syrian refugees, and 43,377 Palestinian refugees from Syria. In a country of just over 4 million, and 321,362 Palestinian refugees from Lebanon (PRL), population has grown by 30 percent and 1 out of 5 are refugees.<sup>1</sup> Lebanon's population of. Lebanon's northern districts have been particularly affected, partly because of hosting an estimated of 280 thousand refugees constituting approximately 50 per cent of the total population in T5.<sup>2</sup> The majority of Syrian refugees are concentrated in Tripoli's suburbs, such as Bab Al-Tibbaneh, Abou Samra and Mina. The highest concentration of refugees outside Tripoli is in Minnieh-Dannieh with approximately 17,808 refugees.<sup>3</sup> The magnitude of the crisis has had a dilapidating effect on the local economy and infrastructure.

Strengthening local resilience in the so-called T5 area (including Bcharreh, Zgharta, Minieh-Dannieh and El Koura districts) in face of this crisis is an imperative to any humanitarian response. As such, Oxfam has commissioned the current research, which identifies key entry points at the local level to align humanitarian responses to local needs and support society's resilience. Furthermore, the current paper identifies initiatives that assist local authorities in absorbing and adapting to the current shock and strengthening social stability. Focus groups and interviews for this research were conducted in North Lebanon between May 1 and June 15, 2015 with Lebanese host

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1. Oxfam, *Lebanon: looking ahead in times of crisis. Taking stock of the present to urgently build sustainable options for the future*, 2015.

2. *Syria Regional Refugee Response*, Interagency Information Sharing Portal. Available at: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/settlement.php?id=203&country=122&region=87>

3. *Ibid.*



communities, Syrian refugees, and municipal leaders on local and district levels. The research also includes interviews with local NGOs, UN agencies and community leaders. The main findings of this study are outlined below and include a particular focus on the needs of local authorities and the community at large.

## SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

**Employment.** The crisis has intensified competition in labour segments that were traditionally dominated by Lebanese. The T5 area has witnessed a reversal of its traditional labour profile. Cheaper Syrian labour is replacing Lebanese labour in the unskilled job market, as well as in other sectors, such as construction, service, produce sales, and skilled crafts like hairdressing. Employment in T5 is also found to be largely in the informal sector. Syrian refugees do not have legal contracts or any social security benefits.

**Political polarization.** The Syrian war has increased sectarian and social polarization in the North of Lebanon. The deepening social and economic crisis in the North has formed an atmosphere suitable for the emergence of militant Islamist movements. Christians, Alawites and average Muslims are afraid of the repercussions of the fall of Homs at the hands of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), which could directly destabilise the North and Tripoli along sectarian fault lines.

**Inequality.** The Syrian crisis has exacerbated inequalities in T5 host communities to the benefit of land and business owners, while negatively affecting workers. Business and capital owners have taken advantage of Syrian refugees who provide them with cheap labour and rent their properties. Lebanese workers have lost their jobs to Syrians and suffer from rising commodity prices and rents.

**Security.** The absence of effective law enforcement has pushed municipalities to implement curfews. These curfews are used as a psychological tool to mitigate Lebanese host-communities' fears and anxieties. Towns that have seen their population double during the last refugee influx are more likely to implement

The crisis has intensified competition in labour segments that were traditionally dominated by Lebanese.

such procedures. Municipalities consider law enforcement as a fundamental means to sustain social cohesion. Prostitution rackets and other petty theft crimes are reported to be on the rise.

**Pressure on municipalities.** Garbage collection, infrastructure repair, and security needs have doubled, while municipalities' revenues have declined. The inability to tax Syrian refugees is an obstacle to the sustainable collection of revenues. Faced with limited budgets and low administrative capacity, municipalities are struggling to maintain service delivery. The central government has transferred the responsibility of dealing with the Syrian influx to local authorities without providing the appropriate financial and administrative means with which to do so.

**Fragmentation of aid.** Poor coordination among humanitarian actors operating in the T5 area have overwhelmed municipal leaders with bureaucratic demands and processes. Aid delivery is splintered across several donors with their own procedures and priorities. Municipal leaders have a hard time understanding the overlapping relationships. What is more, the fragmentation of assistance is ineffective on a systemic level, and municipalities want more durable and long-term projects.

## IDENTIFIED NEEDS

**Water, Sanitation and Hygiene.** Due to the Syrian crisis, the amount of refuse has doubled in T5 area. In addition, pressure on the sewage systems has depleted existing networks and spurred the formation of informal sewage systems. This is the root cause of water contamination and other public health hazards. Diarrhoea, skin rashes and several stomach infections have been cited as a direct result of unregulated sewage problems. Pressure on local water sources has also increased. Syrian refugees and Lebanese residents have indicated that purchasing water from private providers has become a heavy financial burden.

**Infrastructure.** The influx of Syrian refugees has depleted already precarious basic infrastructure assets, such as power grids, roads

Faced with limited budgets and low administrative capacity, municipalities are struggling to maintain service delivery.

and buildings. Pressure has been particularly heavy in areas that form a traffic hub and connect rural areas to the main city of Tripoli, such as Zgharta and Miryata. Minnieh-Dannieh has the largest need for infrastructure projects due to the level of concentration of refugees and a history of deprivation. There is also immense pressure on electricity grids. To this end, solar energy projects are ideal, as they assist in local autonomy and compensate supply shortages. Local community members have requested larger investments in public parks, playgrounds and youth facilities. Such projects are seen as long-term prevention mechanisms against street crime and rising social tensions.

**Syrian refugee emergency needs.** Syrian refugees have a different set of priorities. The majority are concerned about their legal status in Lebanon and new entry requirements. They consider the new set of legal requirements to be impossible to comply with and unaffordable. Shelter is the greatest challenge facing the Syrian community. The increased demand for housing and increases in rent have pushed many to request a continuation of cash-for-rent policies for fear that such policies may be discontinued. Refugees are also worried about the reduction in the amount of WFP cash-assistance from 27 USD (January 2015) to 13.5 USD per person.

**Job creation and livelihoods.** Lebanese are sceptical about job creation activities targeting Syrian refugees, which they see as offering Syrians incentives to stay, something the Lebanese categorically reject. Results indicate that Lebanese host communities prefer immediate job creation programmes targeting Syrians, such as rapid employment initiatives, which could contribute to social stabilization without furnishing sustainable work opportunities. Vocational training for Syrian refugees is also seen as assisting Syrians in acquiring skilled jobs, putting them in a position to compete with their Lebanese counterparts. The provision of technical support for local economic development, such as assisting agro-businesses to find niche markets and customers, is seen to be helpful in the medium run. Small grants and micro-finance loans for emerging Lebanese businesses and entrepreneurs are seen as increasing employment and job

Syrian refugees have a different set of priorities. The majority are concerned about their legal status in Lebanon and new entry requirements.

creation. What is more, direct work to support job creation in Tripoli through business hubs, collectives and heavy investment in technology are considered the only way forward if the T5 area is to retain skilled workers.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT

**Technical assistance programmes.** Long-term project cycles targeting municipal unions and medium to large municipal councils can be effective. In-house consultants, who can support municipalities by increasing the capacity of specific departments such as fundraising and planning, could prove effective. Furthermore, results indicate that the majority of municipalities lack the administrative capacity to transfer their ideas into written proposals and long-term plans. In addition, it is recommended to provide municipal unions with long-term, process-oriented technical assistance in order to enhance their roles in local development. Short-term trainings should concentrate on tangible results and/or outputs, which municipal leaders could utilise in their daily work.

**Support agriculture and tourism.** Projects designed to increase overall competitiveness of specific sectors, such as tourism and agriculture could provide an essential contribution to economic resilience. The T5 area is dependent on these two sectors for sustaining livelihoods. Nonetheless, both sectors are plagued by inefficiency, lack of supporting infrastructure, and an overall development plan. Project design should support municipal projects in one of those sectors by building competitiveness, expanding markets and enhancing overall quality.

**Rapid Employment Initiatives.** In addition to long-term support programmes, short-term temporary jobs that can generate quick cash incomes are helpful for stimulating local economies. The implementation of large rapid employment initiatives, which involve rehabilitating irrigation systems, rebuilding damaged infrastructure and sewage networks, is recommended.

Long-term project cycles targeting municipal unions and medium to large municipal councils can be effective.



**Income generation and start-up grants.** Programmes that support start-up grants and small livelihood projects that encourage production of traditional artefacts can be helpful. Places such as Ehden and Bcharreh are known to be tourist destinations with a market for small handmade crafts. What is more, small grant projects targeting sectors like family run hostels, camping sites, and other eco-tourism projects can be suitable for T5 area economic profile.

**Foster local participation and activism through community centres.** This report also recommends programmes involving the construction or enhancement of community centres in the most crowded towns. The lack of recreational activities and venues that target vulnerable children has been identified as one of the contributing factors of social tension and future social ailments. Projects that support local community centres with a small library, cinema and other facilities, can be extremely helpful for conflict mitigation and building social cohesion.

Supporting local community centres can be extremely helpful for conflict mitigation and building social stability.





A photograph of a man with a mustache and a dark cap, looking through vertical metal bars. He is holding a document or a piece of paper in front of him, which is slightly out of focus. The background is blurred, suggesting an outdoor setting with some greenery.

# RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Through this research, Oxfam seeks to tailor its interventions to the current realities and specific local contexts of North Lebanon. The research findings will be utilized to tailor programmes for local authorities, community leaders and CBO's members in order to provide them with adequate and concrete tools to adopt for fostering socio-economic development in their communities and active citizenship, taking into account all the challenges posed by the Syrian crisis.

The purpose of this report is to meet three key objectives:

1. Understand informal and formal power dynamics and main governance structures at the local level, including the impact of the Syrian crisis on T5 areas (El-Koura, Bcharreh, Zgharta and Minieh-Dannieh).
2. Understand basic needs, priorities and concerns of Syrian refugees and host communities and how local actors can manage tensions and foster local development.
3. Recommend strategies to enhance the design of Oxfam programmatic implementation in order to foster effective partnerships with local stakeholders around issues related to poverty, inequality and management of tensions.

To achieve these ends, the research team conducted a thorough research of available literature around social cohesion and stabilization efforts implemented by local Lebanese authorities as well as by national and international actors. The research team conducted focus groups and interviews targeting community members, local leaders and representatives of international organizations. Data were collated, coded and analysed to produce actionable, evidence-based analysis and recommendations to meet objectives outlined above.



## APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

This qualitative assessment used a participatory mixed-methods approach in the four Northern districts of Lebanon (Zgharta, El-Koura, Minieh-Dannieh and Bcharreh) over the period spanning from May 1, 2015 to June 25, 2015. The methodology comprised of an initial desk review of all relevant documentation. Data collection activities focused on 10 interviews and 12 focus group discussions (FGDs) with relevant local stakeholders such as municipalities and local community leaders as well as Syrian refugees.

Qualitative data acquired through interviews and focus groups were analysed according to grounded theory method, also known as the Glaser-Strauss method. This method is a systematic methodology used in the social sciences but operates in reverse fashion from traditional qualitative research methods. The collected data were extracted, coded and marked. Theory building is based on the ordering of these data into various categories and concepts, which then inform the research findings and consequent assertions. These assertions, combined with existing data, form the basis of this final report's recommendations.

Accordingly, the three main aspects of this report's methodology are:

1. A desk review of internal documents and primary qualitative and quantitative data provided by Oxfam as well as relevant data from developmental, academic and journalistic sources in either Arabic or English
2. Key Informant Interviews with internal Oxfam staff, international and local aid agencies, community leaders and local authorities
3. Qualitative Focus Group Discussions with local authorities and Lebanese and Syrian adults (see table 1).

Qualitative data acquired through interviews and focus groups were analysed according to grounded theory method, also known as the Glaser-Strauss method.

## SAMPLING STRATEGY

The research used a snowball sampling method to recruit focus group participants. The sampling strategy was implemented via professional recruiters who are trained in focus group selection mechanisms. A two-fold screening process was utilised, one at the recruitment phase and another before focus group commencement. The screening questions validated the parameters of the sample's profile by checking for age, socio-economic background, gender, geographic location, and verifying that participants had not participated in similar studies before. Participants who did not fit the intended profile were not allowed to attend focus groups sessions. Due compensation and transportation were provided to participants.

### 1.2.1 KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

The research team conducted 10 semi-structured key informant interviews (KII) with key internal and external stakeholders. Stakeholders were identified in consultation with Oxfam and comprised of community leaders, community representative bodies, local authorities, existing partners or CBOs of each area to triangulate qualitative information obtained from FGDs.

### 1.2.2 FOCUS-GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Focus group participants were selected in a stratified non-random fashion (snowball). Focus group participants

The research team conducted 10 semi-structured key informant interviews (KII) with key internal and external stakeholders.

consisted of municipal leaders from the four-targeted regions. Furthermore, FGD participants were sourced from sub-locations in each district through professional recruiters. The FGD research activities disaggregated responses from participants according to gender, age of majority, and location (see Table 1).

GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION	AGE GROUP	GENDER	PROFILE	NATIONALITY
Zgharta	NA	NA	Municipality leaders	Lebanese
Minieh-Dannieh	NA	NA	Municipality leaders	Lebanese
El Koura	NA	NA	Municipality leaders	Lebanese
Bcharreh	NA	NA	Municipality leaders	Lebanese
Zgharta	18-30	Male	Community	Lebanese
Zgharta	31-49	Female	Community	Syrian
El Koura	18-30	Male	Community	Syrian
El Koura	31-49	Female	Community	Lebanese
Minieh-Dannieh	18-30	Female	Community	Syrian
Minieh-Dannieh	31-49	Male	Community	Syrian
Bcharreh	31-49	Male	Community	Lebanese
Bcharreh	18-30	Female	Community	Lebanese

# BACKGROUND

## POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

The Syrian crisis, erupted in 2011 when thousands of Syrians went to the streets in defiance of their government, has had a substantial impact on Lebanese political dynamics. The Lebanese government has adopted an official policy of “disassociation” towards the Syrian conflict.<sup>1</sup> Eager to keep the political balance between various sectarian forces, the government has argued for some form of neutrality. This policy of disassociation was not heeded by various Lebanese factions and became a euphemism for relocating the political conflict between Lebanese blocs into Syria. Hezbollah has partaken in the civil war by sending paramilitary groups to defend the Syrian regime since 2013. At the same time, militant groups from Tripoli, Aarsal and northern Lebanon have collaborated with various Syrian Jihadist groups fighting Syrian government forces and Hezbollah. The dangerous social and political polarization in the country has led to the de-facto paralysis of major Lebanese public institutions, such as the parliament and the presidency. The Lebanese parliament has been unable to elect a President since May 2014. Furthermore, the parliamentary elections, which were to be held in 2013, have been postponed twice thus far.<sup>2</sup>

1. *The Limits of Lebanon's Disassociation Policy*. Aspen Institute. September 27, 2012. Available at: <http://www.aspeninstitute.org/policy-work/middle-east-programs/us-lebanon-dialogue/the-lebanon-bulletin/limits-lebanons>

2. *Lebanon's Presidential Election postponed to June 24*, The Daily Star, June 3, 2015. Available at: <http://www.aspeninstitute.org/policy-work/middle-east-programs/us-lebanon-dialogue/the-lebanon-bulletin/limits-lebanons>

The lack of agreement among Lebanese political parties has meant a lack of policy concerning the influx of Syrian refugees.<sup>3</sup> Haunted by the Palestinian experience in Lebanon, where thousands of refugees settled in camps that became a security nightmare for decades, the Lebanese authorities discarded the idea of organizing official relief camps for Syrian refugees. The unintended consequence of that decision was that refugees flooded Lebanese towns in the North, and in poverty belts around cities forming informal tented settlements (ITS).

Thousands of Syrian refugees have transformed the demographic nature of numerous rural Lebanese communities. As a response to public outcry, several Lebanese municipalities have imposed curfews on Syrians and foreigners. As of last year, Human Rights Watch has estimated that some 45 villages have imposed curfews on Syrians.<sup>4</sup>

The flourishing of informal tented settlements without an organization or planning has led to several other complications. International aid organizations have experienced difficulties delivering aid to Syrian refugees, who are dispersed all over Lebanon with no tracking mechanisms in place. Furthermore, by entering into Lebanese communities, a host of other economic, social and security problems has emerged. The lack of a unified policy has meant transferring a significant weight of the refugee crisis from the national government to local municipalities who have had to deal with one of the most catastrophic humanitarian disasters of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Lebanon currently has the highest per-capita concentration of refugees in the world at 232 per 1,000 inhabitants and the second highest number of total refugees at an estimated 1.15 million.<sup>5</sup>

In response to the above, the Government of Lebanon elaborated the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) with the support of and

Thousands of Syrian refugees have transformed the demographic nature of numerous rural Lebanese communities.

in consultation with International Organizations and International NGOs. The LCRP was released in October 2014 and was designed to mitigate the consequences of the Syrian crisis on Lebanese communities through the following:

1. Ensuring that humanitarian assistance and protection covers the most vulnerable (Lebanese and Syrians).
2. Strengthening the capacity of national and local service delivery systems.
3. Reinforcing Lebanon's economic, social, environmental and institutional stability.<sup>6</sup>

Since the outbreak of the Syrian crisis in early 2011, Lebanon has had to deal with an increased flow of refugees, reaching staggering heights. The number of refugees in Lebanon is approximately 1.15 million<sup>7</sup>. In a country of 4.2 million inhabitants, Syrian refugees constitute approximately 25 per cent of the resident population.<sup>8</sup> Given its prolonged nature, the Syrian refugee crisis has had a wide range of spillover effects into Lebanon that have resulted in multifaceted shockwaves that have increased pressure on social cohesion and exerted tremendous burdens on local communities. The refugee crisis has had a negative impact on the job market, further depleted Lebanese infrastructure and added significant burdens on local municipalities and communities alike. As refugees have moved into host communities, social tensions and pressures on communal resources have intensified. This has led to a politically charged atmosphere resulting in further instability.

In a country of 4.2 million inhabitants, Syrian refugees constitute approximately 25 per cent of the resident population.

At the request of the Government of Lebanon, the World Bank conducted a rapid Economic and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) of the Syrian conflict on Lebanon for the 2012-2014 period. The crisis was projected to cost the Lebanese economy up to 2.9 per cent

3. *Official response to the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon, the disastrous policy of no policy*, Civil Society Knowledge Center, January 10, 2014. Available at: <http://cskc.daleel-madani.org/paper/official-response-syrian-refugee-crisis-lebanon-disastrous-policy-no-policy>

4. *Lebanon: at least 45 Local Curfews Imposed on Syrian Refugees*, October 3, 2014. Available at: <http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/10/03/lebanon-least-45-local-curfews-imposed-syrian-refugees>

5. *World at War: Global Trends, Forced Displacement in 2014*. UNHCR, June 18, 2015. Available at: <http://unhcr.org/556725e69.html>

6. *Lebanon Response Crisis Plan*, Lebanese Ministry of Social Affairs, 14 December 2014. Available at: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>. An updated version of LCRP is planned for 2016 (Ed.)

7. *Ibid.* As per the last update of UNHCR, the total number of Syrian refugees in Lebanon is 1,113,941 (last visited on 28 of September 2015) (Ed.)

8. *Ibid.*



in GDP growth for each year, which entails large losses in wages, profits and taxes.<sup>9</sup> The crisis was also projected to diminish government revenue collection by USD 1.5 billion while simultaneously increasing government expenditures by USD 1.1 billion due to increased demand for services.<sup>10</sup>

*«This idea of decentralization is one big lie. There is no decentralization in Lebanon. I can't build a budget as a municipal leader, because I have to wait to see if the independent municipal council will send money. You can't run a municipality this way»*  
FGD-Municipal Leaders-El-Koura

The decrease in government revenue collection is expected to affect local authorities. Municipalities in Lebanon receive their finances from the central government, which collects revenues on their behalf and sends them back annually. Changes in revenue collection and expenditure are being felt first-hand at the municipal level.

The Syrian refugee crisis is estimated to cost the Lebanese economy up to USD 7.5 billion annually (including the required spending on stabilization).<sup>11</sup> The surge in demand for public service delivery in terms of garbage collection, road maintenance, and sewage has led to a decline in access and quality of public services. The electricity sector, which continues to be plagued with corruption, inefficiency and lack of reliability, is also suffering. The fiscal cost of providing electricity to refugees is estimated to be around USD 393 million annually.<sup>12</sup>

The Lebanese economy has also suffered a significant blow to its tourism sector. It is estimated that Lebanon lost 894,000 tourists (around 50 per cent) between 2011 and 2013.<sup>13</sup> The closure of the Syrian borders have also affected Lebanese agro-businesses in North

The decrease  
in government  
revenue collection  
strongly affects local  
authorities.

Lebanon and the Beka'a, cutting off local producers from their markets in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries. The suffocation of the Lebanese economy has occurred with a simultaneous increase of 50% in the labour force and a doubling of the unemployment rate.<sup>14</sup>

The majority of Syrian refugees coming to Lebanon have settled in the poorest Lebanese communities. Some 86 per cent of Syrian refugees live in 242 communities where 66 per cent of Lebanese are living under USD 4 per day.<sup>15</sup> This has led to higher social polarization and regional disparities. Poverty in Lebanon is concentrated in suburbs and poverty belts of large cities, in addition to rural areas such as Akkar and Northern Beka'a. Before the crisis, 37 per cent of the Lebanese population (1.5 millions) was estimated to be living on USD 4 per day.<sup>16</sup> It is estimated that the Syrian crisis will have exacerbated the situation by pushing approximately 170,000 Lebanese into poverty. The unemployment rate has been estimated to have doubled to above 20 per cent, affecting largely unskilled youth.<sup>17</sup>

On the other hand, while the Lebanese economy has taken multiple hits, recent signs of recovery show that Lebanon could recover if security and political situation in the region improves. Lebanon reported stronger economic performance in 2014 due to lower oil prices. GDP rose from 0.9 % growth in 2013 to 2.0 per cent growth in 2014 and is projected to increase to 2.5 per cent in 2015.<sup>18</sup> Tourism and real estate markets are also reported to show signs of improvement. The social consequences of a prolonged Syrian crisis are hard to predict and require further stabilization efforts that could mitigate its impact on local communities.

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9. *Economic and social impact assessment of the Syrian Conflict*, the World Bank, page 1, September 24, 2013. Available at: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/2013/09/18292074/lebanon-economic-social-impact-assessment-syrian-conflict> page 1.

10. *Ibid.*

11. *Lebanon Response Crisis Plan*, Lebanese Ministry of Social Affairs, 15 December 2014. Available at: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>

12. *Economic and Social Impact Assessment of the Syrian Conflict*, September 20, 2013. Page 55.

13. *The Syrian Crisis and its Implications on Lebanon*. L'Université Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth, March 9, 2015. Available at: <http://www.sciences-po.usj.edu.lb/pdf/The%20Syrian%20Crisis%20%20its%20Implications%20on%20Lebanon%20-%20Khalil%20Gebara.pdf>

14. *Executive summary: Lebanon's Economic and Social Impact Assessment of the Syrian Crisis*. September 1, 2013, page 1. Available at: <http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/MNA/LBN-ESIA%20of%20Syrian%20Conflict-%20EX%20SUMMARY%20ENGLISH.pdf>

15. *Ibid.*

16. *Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2015-16*. Also, findings of Oxfam research on social protection in Lebanon (2015, to be released) show that typical annual household income ranges between \$4000-8400 per annum, which is lower than the poverty lines, defined in 2008 by UNDP (Ed.)

17. *Lebanon Economic Monitor*, World Bank, Spring 2015. Available at: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/21761/958590WP00PUBL0431BOLEMOspring02015.pdf>

## MUNICIPALITIES IN FOCUS

Municipal governments in Lebanon are elected for a period of 6 years on a regular basis and are comprised of two administrative bodies: The decision-making body, represented by the Municipal Council (MC), and an executive authority, represented by the President of the Municipal Council. The Municipal Council is elected directly by people, which in turn designates or elects a president.<sup>1</sup> After 1964, municipal elections were suspended due to political instability and were not reinstated until 1998, eight years after the end of the civil war. The first post-war elections came in 1998, after several civil society campaigns and have been held periodically since then.<sup>2</sup>

The 1977 Decree-Law provides municipalities with broad authorities and tasks. It stipulates that any work having a public character or benefit within the area of the municipality falls under the jurisdiction of the MC. These tasks include preparing annual budgets, determining the tax rate to be collected, planning and expanding streets, founding public schools, hospitals, and even local means of transportation.<sup>3</sup>

Major obstacles hinder municipal public works in Lebanon. Governmental planning at local and regional levels is obstructed by the lack of reliable data on the actual Lebanese resident population in towns or cities. Lebanese citizens are required by

After 1964,  
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reinstated until 1998

law to be registered in the civil status registries of their ancestral villages, which are often not the same as their place of residence or even their place of birth.<sup>4</sup> In practice, this means that Lebanese citizens residing in Beirut must vote in municipal and parliamentary elections in the village or town their family was originally registered in. While it is legally possible to transfer one's civil status registry, very few ever do. At the same time, since municipal planning and budgeting happens in direct relation to the size of the registered population, and not the resident one, a distorted situation is created. It is not uncommon to have people living in communities where they do not vote in the municipal councils and municipal councils that are not held accountable by their residents.<sup>5</sup> This also creates imbalances in financing, where municipalities with a higher density of actual residents might receive a smaller budget. It is important to note that the population distribution in Lebanon is highly unequal, with 16 per cent of the population registered in half of the municipalities, while 42 per cent of the population lives in the largest 10 per cent of municipalities.<sup>6</sup>

Municipal unions were established based on articles 118 and 119 of Decree-Law 118/1977 in order to consolidate the capacities of small municipal councils. Some 70 per cent of a total of 1,100 municipalities in Lebanon are considered small and possess insufficient administrative and financial capacities to provide necessary services.<sup>7</sup> Due to the irregular payments of the Independent Municipal Fund, many municipalities see the Municipal Union as a productive tool to pool resources and implement bigger municipal projects. There are 51 municipal unions in all of Lebanon.<sup>8</sup>

1. *Municipal Finance Studies Program Final Strategic Framework* - page 17 available at: [www.interior.gov.lb/Download.aspx?id=81](http://www.interior.gov.lb/Download.aspx?id=81)

2. *Ibid*, page 16.

3. *Ibid*, page 17.

4. *Ibid*, page 18.

5. *Ibid*, page 17.

6. *Ibid*, page 19.

7. *Enhancing Municipal Capacities Emergency Response Planning*, Civil Society Knowledge Center, July 3, 2014. Available at: <http://cskc.daleel-madani.org/paper/enhancing-municipal-capacities-emergency-response-planning>

8. *Ibid*.

## T5 AREA OVERVIEW

T5 area is composed of the districts of Tripoli, Minnieh-Dannieh, Zgharta, Bcharreh and El-Koura, and has an estimated population of 550,000 Lebanese and is currently hosting approximately 283,728 refugees.<sup>1</sup> The majority of refugees have settled in Bab Al-Tibbaneh, Abou Samra and Mina in the district of Tripoli.<sup>2</sup> When the Syrian refugee crisis began in 2011, North Lebanon, ranging from Wadi Khaled on the Syrian border down to Tripoli, was the first area to host refugees. The largest host areas are the city of Tripoli, Akkar and Wadi Khaled in particular. The highest concentration of Syrian refugees in the T5 area and outside Tripoli continues to be in Minnieh-Dannieh, with approximately 17,808 refugees, and Sir Ed-Dannieh with 6,573 refugees and then to lesser extents Bakaaoun, and Souq Dahannin at the coast.<sup>3</sup> In Zgharta, refugees concentrate in Miziara, Ehden, Zgharta and Majdaliyya Zgharta. El-Koura has also received a considerable number of refugees, albeit far fewer than Dannieh. The highest concentration in El-Koura is in Ras Masqa, Qalamoun, and Chikka. Bcharreh has the least amount of Syrian refugees among the rest of T5, mainly concentrated in the town of Bcharreh.<sup>4</sup>

T5 area is composed of the districts of Tripoli, Minnieh-Dannieh, Zgharta, Bcharreh and El-Koura.

1. Syria Regional Refugee Response, UNHCR, Last accessed on June 22, 2015. Available at: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=122> *ibid*.

2. *Informing Targeted Host Community Programming in Lebanon*. OCHA, September 2014, page 23. Available at: [data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=7172](http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=7172)

3. Syria Regional Refugee Response, Inter Agency Information Sharing Portal. UNHCR. Last accessed June 22, 2015. Available at: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/settlement.php?id=203&country=122&region=87>

4. Syria Regional Refugee Response, Inter Agency Information Sharing Portal. UNHCR. Last accessed June 22, 2015. Available at: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/settlement.php?id=203&country=122&region=87>

MINNIEH DANNIEH	
Population Size	103,000
Local Economy	Agriculture, tourism (mainly local), remittances, and construction
Sectarian Make-up	Predominantly Sunnis, minority Christians
Settlements	52 villages
Main town	Bakhoun

BCHARREH	
Population Size	76,831
Local Economy	Agriculture, tourism, public jobs, remittances
Sectarian Make-up	Majority Maronites, minority of Sunnis
Settlements	26 villages
Main town	Bcharreh

ZGHARTA	
Population Size	90,000
Local Economy	Agriculture, services, tourism
Sectarian Make-up	Majority Maronites, minority Sunnis, Armenians and Greek Orthodox
Settlements	26 villages
Main town	Zgharta

EL-KOURA	
Population Size	54,500
Local Economy	Agriculture, tourism, remittances, construction, petro-chemicals, university and public jobs
Sectarian Make-up	Predominately Orthodox (60%), minority of Shiites, Sunnis and Maronites
Settlements	52 villages
Main town	Koura



The Syrian crisis has had a significant impact on the economic and social conditions of host communities in North Lebanon. The deteriorating economic conditions are not only related to increased expenditures on humanitarian aid for refugees but also involve a crushing blow to local agriculture. The closure of the borders with Syria has eliminated exports to markets in the Gulf. In Minnieh Dannieh, like much of Bcharreh and El-Koura, farmers grow apples, vegetables and seasonal fruits like plums, figs and grapes to be exported through Syria to Iraq and the Gulf markets. The economic downturn coincided with a heavy influx of Syrian refugees that has caused an increase in family expenditures due to inflation and increased competition with Syrian workers.<sup>5</sup>

Minnieh-Dannieh has been severely affected by the Syrian crisis, even more so than the other T5 districts. Apart from having the highest concentration of Syrian refugees, Minnieh-Dannieh is known to have the highest level of under-development in Lebanon.<sup>6</sup> Urbanization has resulted in overpopulation of cities such as Tripoli, Halba and Minnieh, and reduced agricultural productivity without providing suitable job opportunities.<sup>7</sup> Bcharreh and El-Koura are in a relatively better developmental situation. These areas are traditionally known for their highly educated populace and their dependence on tourism and remittances.

Far from being politically homogenous, the T5 area has a history of inter- and intra-sectarian polarization. The Sunni Muslims tend to concentrate on the coastal region of Tripoli and then extend in an arch from Tripoli towards Dannieh, Akkar and Homs in Syria. In an effort to increase the Christian presence in Lebanon, French mandate sought to cut Tripoli from its historical countryside, now in Syria, leading many Tripolitans to refuse Lebanese citizenship

Urbanization has resulted in overpopulation of cities such as Tripoli, Halba and Minnieh, and reduced agricultural productivity.

during the early years of the republic. The emerging Lebanese state in 1943 shifted power from the city towards the mountainous areas (Bcharreh, Zgharta and El-Koura).

During the Lebanese civil war, the Syrian regime, whose ruling elite was predominantly Alawite, sought to trap Tripolitan Sunnis by forming a minority coalition favouring Zgharta and local Lebanese Alawites in Jabal Mohsen. The rise of the Tawheed Salafist movement transformed Tripoli into a brief Islamic emirate in 1983, which led to a Syrian army intervention.<sup>8</sup> The radical Salafist movements, although fairly unpopular as election results demonstrate, feed off of a history of political marginalization in the North and a perception that Sunnis, although being the majority in the area, are secluded from development projects and other forms of political participation.

The current Syrian crisis has managed to heighten a sense of communal tension by resurrecting possibilities of the 1983 scenario being repeated. The fear that poverty belts surrounding Tripoli, combined with a strong anti-Assad sentiment, could become a fertile ground for Salafist militants, sends shockwaves through the T5 area. Local Christians, who are not for the most part pro-Assad, are rightfully afraid of a Salafist militant take-over, especially if the city of Homs in Syria falls at the hands of ISIS, which would expose North Lebanon to real risk of prolonged armed conflict. The recent Syrian crisis has threatened local economic resilience and put in motion a dangerous social and political dynamic. The effects of the Syrian crisis, coupled with extreme poverty, make social conditions ideal for militant Islamism, which in turn feeds into rising sectarian tensions.

The effects of the Syrian crisis, coupled with extreme poverty, make social conditions ideal for militant Islamism.

5. Regional differences in the Conditions of Syrian Refugees. April 23, 2014. Available at: [http://cskc.daleel-madani.org/paper/regional-differences-conditions-syrian-refugees-lebanon#footnote23\\_oc4jnf0](http://cskc.daleel-madani.org/paper/regional-differences-conditions-syrian-refugees-lebanon#footnote23_oc4jnf0)

6. Minieh-Dannieh district hosts 36% of Syrian refugees living in T5 area (source: UNHCR, Registration Trends for Syrians in Lebanon, March 2015). Socio-economic background about Lebanon. Available at: <http://www.rmfi.org.lb/aboutus/lebcontext/lebcontext.html>

7. *Ibid.*

8. Tripoli the Salafi Gateway. Sharek Awsat, 2007. Available at: <http://www.aawsat.net/2007/05/article55262590/tripoli-the-salafi-gateway>



T5 area has an estimated population of **550,000 Lebanese** and is currently hosting approximately **283,728 refugees**.

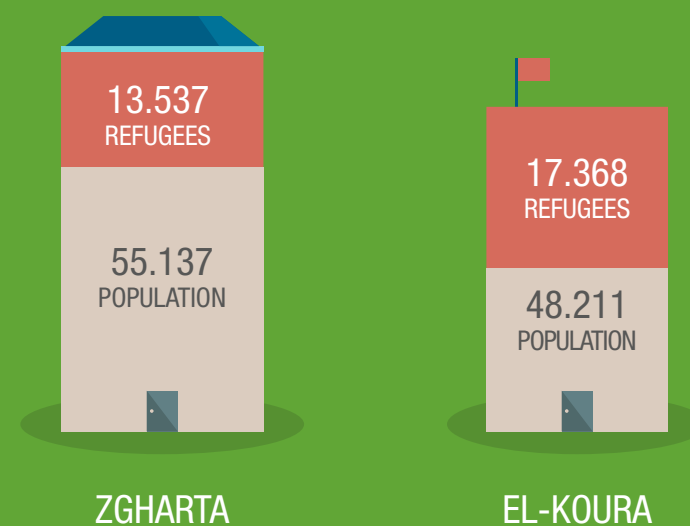
## SOCIAL STABILITY IN NORTH LEBANON

# T5 AREA OVERVIEW

WHEN THE SYRIAN REFUGEE CRISIS BEGAN IN 2011, NORTH LEBANON WAS THE FIRST AREA TO HOST REFUGEES.



T5 area is composed of the districts of Tripoli, Minnieh-Dannieh, Zgharta, Bcharreh and El-Koura.



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# FINDINGS

## SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

### IMPACT OF CRISIS ON ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SECURITY

The impact of the Syrian crisis on Lebanon has been devastating, as it reshaped the political economy of vast regions and set forth multifarious social, economic and political shockwaves. The demographic “avalanche” as one municipality leader describes it, has transformed the city and the countryside, “reducing the Lebanese to a minority in their own homeland.”<sup>1</sup> Syrian refugees were never put in formal refugee camps and left to dwell in villages and cities without any form of centralised or regional plan. The shock’s intensity and the lack of a resilient local governance structure has exacerbated the socio-economic implications.

*«The borders were closed. Our apples are falling under the trees, and then we had thousands of refugees, many of them as poor as the people of Dannieh. What do you think is going to happen?»*

Focus group with Municipal leaders. Dannieh

The closure of the Syrian-Lebanese borders has had several effects on Lebanese northern regions. The border closures cut off apple and olive farmers from their markets in the Gulf. Bcharreh, Zgharta, El-Koura and Dannieh’s agro-businesses were suffocated.

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1. *Ibid.*



The agricultural sector suffered further deterioration when the Syrian authorities halted the import of Lebanese produce in 2014.<sup>2</sup> The inability to import and export produce has contributed to unprecedented economic decline in these areas. The influx of Syrian refugees has increased the labour supply and reduced the wages of Syrian labourers, but was insufficient to offset market losses.

Tourism has declined sharply in the T5 area due to deterioration of security and the ensuing political crisis in Lebanon. Tourism was traditionally considered to be the second most important contributor to local income after agriculture. In places like Dannieh, which already had a reputation of being a hot-bed for Islamist groups, the Syrian crisis destroyed what remained of Gulf visitors during the summer.

The crisis has intensified competition in labour markets that were traditionally dominated by Lebanese. Lebanon has historically received hundreds of Syrian unskilled labourers as seasonal migrant workers in the agricultural sector. The current refugee crisis has contributed to a reversal of the traditional labour profile in T5 area. Cheaper Syrian workers have replaced Lebanese in the construction sector, small crafts such as hairdressing, vegetable selling, and the service industry. In all the studied areas, Lebanese citizens and municipal leaders are worried that Syrians are dominating the workforce. In Bcharreh, for example, FGD participants are conscious of the need for Syrian labourers in apple picking and considered them essential to the prosperity of their farmlands but are also alarmed by an increasing rate of Syrians working as waiters, hotel personnel and in other service related positions. Dannieh in particular suffers from skilled and unskilled labour competition. In Dannieh, where poverty rates are higher than more privileged regions in T5, Lebanese unskilled workers are seen as excluded from the labour market by the lower wages for Syrian labourers. This has led to higher unemployment rates

Tourism has declined sharply in the T5 area due to deterioration of security and the ensuing political crisis in Lebanon.

and a worsening social crisis. Syrian refugees are conscious of the social burden resulting from the refugee crisis and reiterated the need for more job creation. They have also acknowledged that Lebanese workers are frustrated because Syrian workers “accept lower wages, undercutting Lebanese, because we have no other option.”<sup>3</sup> The refugees who took part in this assessment all stress that Lebanese host communities’ attitudes towards them have changed from tolerant to hostile as the number of refugees has increased.

Employment in T5 was also found to be largely in the informal sector. Syrian refugees do not have contracts or any social security benefits. The majority of refugees work in the informal sector, such as daily labourers. The average day’s wage was found to be around 20,000 L.L. (USD 13.33) for male labourers and around 10,000 LL (USD 6.67) for female workers<sup>4</sup>. Syrians typically work in low paid jobs with no social security and no employment contract. Children also work in informal jobs, such as in restaurants, as manual labourers like apple pickers or other informal jobs.

Results also indicate that the refugee crisis has exacerbated inequalities in T5 host communities, benefiting land and business owners, while negatively affecting workers. The Lebanese host communities are conscious of the fact that Syrian refugees have had a non-uniform impact on their local economy. Participants in focus groups also stated that Syrian refugees benefited business and capital owners and exacerbated socio-economic disparities. Lebanese participants are frustrated about rising rents and commodity prices and blame it on Syrian refugees. The coastal areas of Minnieh, and the central towns of Amioun and Zgharta have been particularly affected. Lebanese real-estate owners have benefited from renting their assets to Syrian refugees, many times at high prices, through partial subsidies from humanitarian aid through cash-for-rent programmes. Municipal leaders consider the benefits to local economy in-terms of rent insufficient to offset

The Lebanese host communities are conscious of the fact that Syrian refugees have had a non-uniform impact on their local economy.

2. *Syrian ban on produce disastrous for Lebanon*. DailyStar, December 2, 2014. Available at: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/Business/Local/2014/Dec-02/279560-syria-ban-on-produce-disastrous-for-lebanon.ashx>

3. FG-Syrian male workers- El-Koura.

4. The following numbers were reiterated during focus groups and Key Informant Interviews in T5 area.

the huge losses to the local economy in terms of infrastructure depletion and losses in economic growth in agriculture and tourism. The non-uniform impact on the local community is expressed in varying political positions. Those who benefit from the Syrian crisis, such as real-estate owners, second-shift school teachers, bus drivers, and local NGO workers, are reluctant to endorse political positions that call for expelling Syrian refugees into border refugee camps.

*«Few people actually benefit from the Syrian crisis in Amioun. For example, a warehouse owner who got bankrupt, he split the warehouse into different sections and he rents it out.»*

Municipality leader in El-Koura

*«We are stuck with poorer Syrians who are under the poverty line and are depleting our resources. The more educated middle-class Syrians and other capital owners did not come to our areas. They went to Turkey or Beirut.»*

Focus group with Municipal leaders. El Koura

The Lebanese who took part in this assessment are frustrated at the expensive social costs levied upon the local community. The majority of Syrian refugees in the T5 area are seen to come from lower income strata that tend to spend little money at local stores. Most of the educated and rich Syrian refugees are thought to go to the capital city and outside Lebanon, leaving the most vulnerable communities in the T5 area.

The intensity of the refugee crisis also led to multiple social ailments affecting Syrians and Lebanese at once. A perceived increase in child labour and prostitution has been reported across the T5 area regardless of gender, sectarian affiliation or geographic location. Municipalities have reported an increase in informal prostitution rackets as suspicious apartments spring up in various parts of T5. An overall increase in harassment is also reported. Syrian women accuse Lebanese men of taking advantage of the dire economic situations of Syrian families and reiterate multiple incidents where they have been harassed, shouted at or called names with sexual connotations. At the same time, Lebanese

The non-uniform impact on the local community is expressed in varying political positions.

accuse Syrian men of harassing Lebanese women in the streets. However, these perceptions of an increase in harassment cannot be confirmed statistically due to the absence of reliable data. That said, focus groups indicate that harassment and prostitution are becoming serious issues and signal the need for further study and documentation.

Crisis impact on local authorities: Political deadlock at the central government level has transferred the burden of crisis management to the municipal level. The inability of the various political parties to make a unanimous decision on how to deal with the Syrian crisis is considered to be the primary reason behind the massive influx of Syrians and its effects on local societies. The central state is considered to be absent when it comes to dealing with the ramifications of the refugee crisis. Municipalities and the local communities are seen as the real players dealing with complex issues pertaining to the refugee crisis, such as housing, sewage, health and security. Refugees were until recently registered by the UNHCR and have rarely had to deal with government or municipal structures. The void created by the central state is filled neither by weak local governance structures nor by humanitarian agencies.

The fact that local authorities have limited resources and administrative capacities to deal with a protracted refugee crisis has exacerbated the problem. Municipalities generally lack a functioning administrative team. Recent studies show municipalities have limited financial capacities, which they receive from the Independent Municipal Fund. Their resources are often drained by responding to basic needs of local population and basic infra-structure provision.<sup>5</sup> It is important to note that out of 1000 municipalities in Lebanon, 70% are small because they have less than 4000 registered inhabitants. Recent studies show that 800 municipalities are administratively and fiscally

Municipalities and the local communities are seen as the real players dealing with complex issues pertaining to the refugee crisis

5. *Enhancing Municipal Capacities: From Emergency Response to Planning*, Civil Society Knowledge Center, July 2013. Available at: <http://cskc.daleel-madani.org/paper/enhancing-municipal-capacities-emergency-response-planning>



weak and do not have the capacities to provide the services they are mandated to<sup>6</sup>. For example, the local municipal council of Deddeh, a town in El-Koura that hosts around 2,500 refugees, is composed of four full time employees: the president of the municipality, an assistant and two security personnel. The lack of administrative capacity restricts local authorities' ability to grapple with the deep socio-economic and political ramifications of the crisis, such as rising unemployment, intensifying social conflict and humanitarian needs. The functioning municipal councils were seen to be the Union of Municipalities who have the ability to undertake infra-structure projects and possess sufficient administrative capacity to plan and design long-term interventions. Furthermore, spending on garbage collection and public hygiene has doubled since the onset of the crisis, while municipal revenues have declined. Confronted with limited budgets and low administrative capacity, municipalities are barely able to finance the bare minimum of municipal activities like garbage collection. Municipalities receive their budgets from the Independent Municipal Fund on an annual basis, a process plagued with continuous delays. To compensate for the rising costs, municipalities have demanded an increase in their annual budget lines or to have the ability to tax Syrian refugees directly.

*«The garbage has increased with the Syrian refugees. To be fair to them, the sewage systems were always bad. It's just that there are too many Syrians, and the sewage systems cannot handle it. The municipalities should do more.»*

Focus group discussion with Lebanese women, above 30. El-Koura

*«Our spending has doubled in every direction. At the same time, we have a limited ability to tax Syrians who are already suffering. At the same time we don't have any compensation from the central government. So, what do you want us to do?»*

Focus group with Municipal leaders. Dannieh

Confronted with limited budgets and low administrative capacity, municipalities are barely able to finance the bare minimum of municipal activities like garbage collection.

6. *Engaging Municipalities in the Response to the Syria Refugee Crisis in Lebanon*. Mercy Corps, March 2014, Available at: <http://d2zyf8ayvg1369.cloudfront.net/sites/default/files/Mercy%20Corps%20Lebanon%20Policy%20Brief%20Engaging%20Municipalities%20%28English%29.pdf>





Humanitarian agencies are seen as a stabilizing force, as they provide a crucial safety net for various Syrian communities. Cash for rent, WASH and other service provision, has relieved part of the problem, but could never substitute for the overarching need for large development projects that could stabilise the heavy social burden in the North.

Municipal leaders are frustrated by what they perceive as fragmentation and duplication of humanitarian assistance. Humanitarian institutions are seen as overwhelming municipal leaders with bureaucratic demands and processes, something considered time consuming and arduous. The current pattern of delivering aid is seen as splintered across too many donors, each with its own procedures and priorities. Municipal leaders have a hard time understanding the overlapping relationships and connections and would like to see a more transparent and coordinated effort. Municipalities already face a set of innate bureaucratic challenges that impede them from implementing large infrastructure and public work projects. Given the scale of these interlinked problems, humanitarian agencies are seen as working in a piecemeal fashion. Municipal leaders give the example of projects targeting water pollution that do not take into consideration that problems are interwoven into other priority issues across the district and require large public investment projects targeting multiple actors and sectors. The concentration of aid in areas with the largest Syrian communities is mentioned as an example of non-uniform aid distribution. Municipal leaders want more investment according to the percentage of Syrian refugees relative to the total population.

Focus groups with Syrian refugees validate the above findings. Syrian refugees' lack of trust in government and municipal institutions is expressed in their reliance on their Lebanese neighbours for protection and on humanitarian organizations for assistance. Results indicate that Syrian refugees prefer to resolve their conflicts through local networks. These informal networks are not systematic or institutionalised in any shape or form. Landowners and neighbours are identified as refugees'

Municipal leaders are frustrated by what they perceive as fragmentation and duplication of humanitarian assistance.

main source of protection. When faced with legal problems, Syrian refugees ask for assistance from their immediate neighbours, who generally assist them either by providing the state with legal papers for sponsorship or by vouching for them with local business owners in order to find jobs<sup>7</sup>.

## SOCIAL AND POLITICAL DYNAMICS

Despite varying political positions regarding the Syrian crisis, results indicate that T5 area residents are afraid that political tensions might lead to an inter-Lebanese spill-over. Lebanese host-communities have varying perceptions and political positions towards the Syrian crisis. Dannieh for example, has seen a surge in young Lebanese males entering Syria through Akkar to fight against the regime. Local communities in Dannieh initially received Syrian refugees as co-religionists; however, as time has passed, local residents have become disenchanted with what they consider a protracted Syrian conflict that could destabilise North Lebanon. Fears of a Sunni-Salafist infiltration from beyond the borders remain real in Sunni- and Christian-majority areas alike. Focus group participants believe that the Lebanese security apparatus is managing to contain the security situation, but are afraid of future repercussions of the Syrian war. Northern Lebanon is socially and geographically inter-connected with the Syrian interior, and political or military gains across the border are directly felt in the northern provinces.

Lebanese host-communities have varying perceptions and political positions towards the Syrian crisis.

Tensions along sectarian lines are expected to affect the T5 area through the Tripoli-Homs axis. The fear that the city of Homs in Syria might fall to ISIS or other Jihadist groups resurrects sectarian fears among Christians in Northern

7. In addition, focus groups with Lebanese have been asked about the trust they have in local authorities. The main finding is that it depends on municipalities. For example, people in Bcharreh and Zgharta expressed their satisfaction about their municipalities. People in El-Koura expressed their satisfaction expect in some small Municipalities (Ras-masqa and others). Hence, in general, Lebanese citizens trust in their local authorities. Main concerns are about effectiveness of central government (Ed.)

Lebanon. The Syrian city of Homs has a crucial geographic and strategic importance for Northern Lebanon, as it forms the only natural gateway from the Syrian interior to the Mediterranean coast. If Homs were to fall into the hands of Jihadist groups, a political atmosphere suitable for the rise of Sunni radicals in Tripoli, Dannieh and Akkar would be formed. Such a scenario is expected to lead to Sunni-Christian sectarian strife that would destroy the fragile political and security situation in North Lebanon. The tense political situation at the other side of the border has led to various informal security patrols along major geographic nodes, such as Mejdeleyyah, which connects Dannieh to Zgharta, and other geographic nodes. Christian residents tend to see the Syrian refugees as a demographic time bomb that could explode if the city of Homs is taken by anti-regime opposition forces. Christians in Akkar feel they are in an even more dangerous situation due to their proximity to the Syrian borders and the possibility infiltration by Islamist militants.

The absence of effective law enforcement has led to the rise of curfews as psychological tools of mitigating Lebanese anxieties and asserting a perceived loss of control over territory. The demographic change in the T5 area, where several towns have seen a 100 per cent increase in population, has led to the implementation of curfews as a tool of managing social tensions. Many municipalities are unaware of the illegality of enforcing curfews without the endorsement of Lebanon's council of ministers.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, such curfews are a violation of international and bilateral agreements between Lebanon and Syria concerning citizens' rights to freedom of movement in each other's territories.<sup>9</sup> Focus groups indicate that municipal leaders have enforced curfews following several complaints from local Lebanese residents.

The tense political situation at the other side of the border has led to various informal security patrols along major geographic nodes.

8. *Examining curfews against Syrians*. Civil Society Knowledge Center. November 25, 2014. Available at: <http://cskc.daleel-madani.org/content/examining-curfews-against-syrians-lebanon-0>

9. *Ibid.*



Lebanese villages are closed cultural enclaves where families know each other intimately and have a sense of their own identity. The demographic transformation, where some villages' populations doubled overnight, has led to serious anxieties among the Lebanese. Lebanese women participating in this study expressed a fear of walking at night for the fear of being attacked by Syrian men. Rumours of "security threats" about supposed Islamist cells operating locally circulate among Lebanese residents. In addition, a perceived increase in crime rates has caused a social uproar.

Municipalities have had to act, and in the absence of an effective system of regional law enforcement, they have opted for curfews as a tool to appease and calm frightened Lebanese citizens. The effects on Syrian refugees have been mixed. Some consider the act an insulting measure that illustrates Lebanese disdain and racism. Others point out that municipalities rarely enforce such curfews. Focus group results show that Syrians are still out and about during the supposed curfews, and many think of it as a measure that is not implemented uniformly and is only devised to resolve the initial panic over new arrivals.

Effective law enforcement is seen as a crucial requirement to sustain local social-cohesion. The majority of municipal leaders have asked for support to introduce local police forces to fight off a perceived increase in security incidents, such as break-ins and thefts. Furthermore, in all of the four districts under investigation, Syrians and Lebanese alike confirm a rise in prostitution rackets and "suspicious apartments." It is also believed that the Lebanese central government has legally facilitated the ability of municipalities to form local police forces but has not supplied them with any funds. Municipalities have confirmed sending regular reports of the number of registered Syrian inhabitants in their respective communities to the district governor (Qaim Maqam). Due to the absence of effective law enforcement, many areas have opted for informal security networks, where young Lebanese males conduct daily patrols to identify "suspicious" security threats. These

Lebanese central government has legally facilitated the ability of municipalities to form local police forces.

informal networks should be seen as a communal response to a perceived lack of security. Focus group results indicate that such patrols in rural areas are done with knowledge of the municipality and local political party strongmen. The consistent failures of the central state to secure the Lebanese borders, execute a monopoly over the use of violence as several paramilitary groups continue to dominate specific territories feeds into a culture of patronage.

Results also indicate, that economic pressure and perceptions of insecurity exacerbated by the refugee crisis express themselves as religious tensions between various communities. The economic pressure felt by local communities stretches social safety nets and sets a tone of political dissatisfaction. Coupled with a political deadlock in Lebanon and widespread insecurity at the border region, communal relations between various ethnic and religious groups are strained. Social tensions between Syrian refugees and Lebanese residents are expressed in religious undertones in Christian majority areas. Lebanese residents of Bcharreh, El-Koura and Zgharta, who are majority Christian, see Syrian refugees as coming from a different cultural background (primarily Sunni Islam). Participants express their dissatisfaction with demographic change that would uproot what they considered their "Christian way of life." A majority of Lebanese residents in predominantly Christian areas have more fears regarding the political radicalization of Syrian refugees. Many speak of " sleeper cells " among Syrian men plotting to attack Christians. A majority of residents and municipalities stress the need for local law enforcement to protect Lebanese from ISIS or other radical Islamist groups.

Furthermore, Lebanese residents from Christian backgrounds consider Syrian refugees to be un-hygienic, lacking in Lebanese norms when it comes to gender dynamics and overtly religious. The old Lebanese religious tension between Christians and Muslims is replayed again, but this time between Lebanese and Syrian refugees. It is important to note that municipalities in Dannieh face similar security challenges

The old Lebanese religious tension between Christians and Muslims is replayed again, but this time between Lebanese and Syrian refugees.



OVER  
**1.1 MILLION**

REGISTERED  
SYRIAN REFUGEES

**43,377**

PALESTINIAN  
REFUGEES FROM SYRIA

JUST OVER  
**4 MILLION**

LEBANESE  
POPULATION

**321,362**

PALESTINIAN REFUGEES  
FROM LEBANON

POPULATION  
HAS GROWN BY

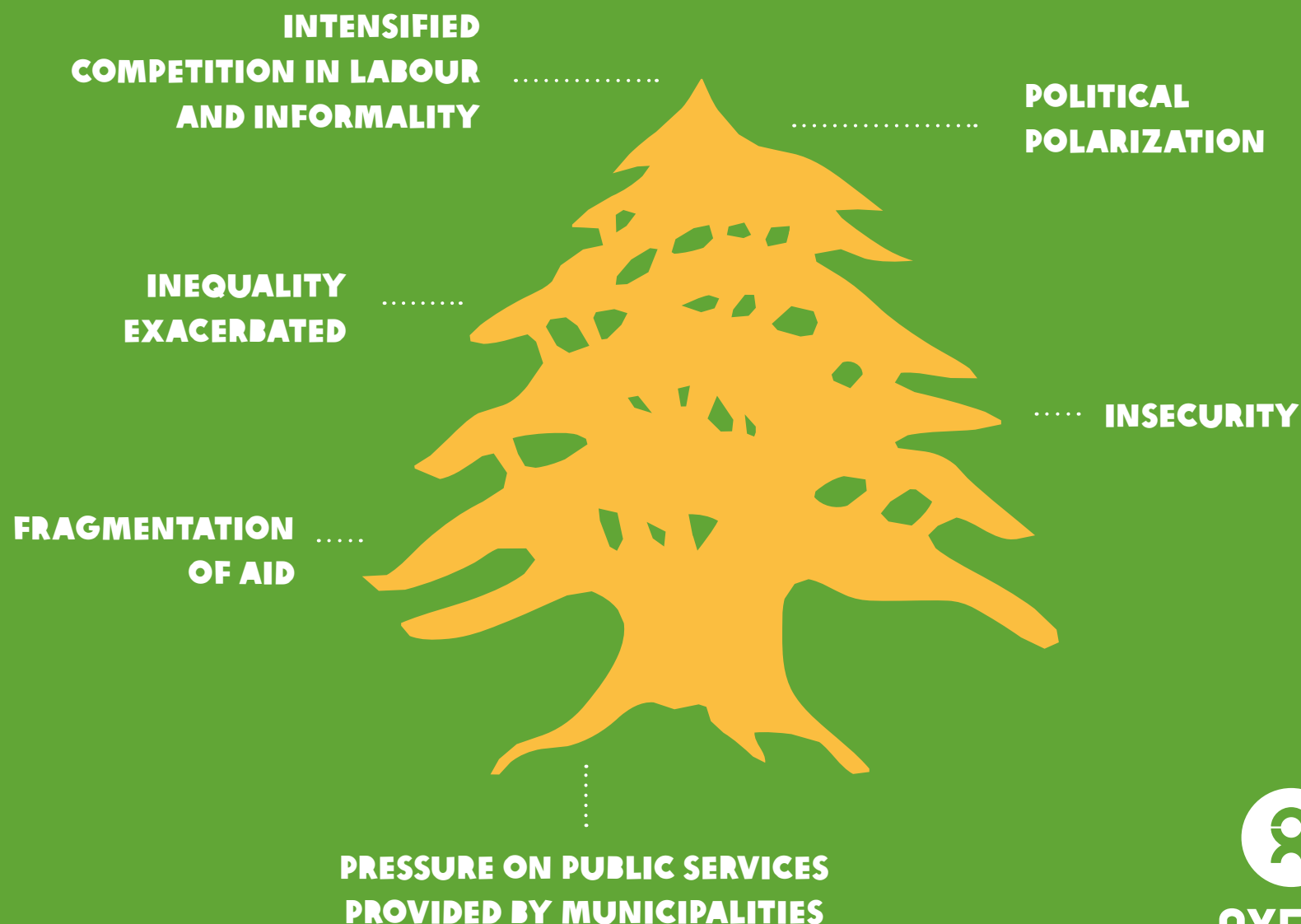
**30%**



1 OUT OF 5 ARE REFUGEES

# SOCIAL STABILITY IN NORTH LEBANON

## SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS



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and have similar demands but do not opt to implement curfews against Syrians. The common religious background is cited as one of the reasons for the lack of such measures.<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless, Dannieh municipalities have confirmed an increase in break-in rates and prostitution.

Syrian refugees see anti-Syrian sentiment as cross-confessional and an expression of a wider Lebanese “classist” attitude that treats Syrians with xenophobia and perceives them only as manual labourers. Syrian refugees acknowledge that Sunni areas like Tripoli, Dannieh and Akkar are relatively friendlier to a Syrian presence due to a similar confessional background. This, however, does not change what they consider a general Lebanese attitude that looks down on Syrians as culturally inferior and economically destitute. Syrian refugees in Dannieh, which is majority Sunni, speak of mistreatment at the hands of Lebanese urbanites who exploit them financially and mistreat them individually, regardless of religious background. At the same time, several Syrian refugees reiterate their preference for their Christian business owners who have sponsored them and effectively provided for their livelihood

Syrian refugees see anti-Syrian sentiment as cross-confessional and an expression of a wider Lebanese “classist” attitude that treats Syrians with xenophobia

10. The majority of Dannieh’s residents are Sunnis, and focus groups with local residents and municipalities have confirmed that Syrians were welcomed at the beginning of the crisis as “Sunni relatives and brethren.” The majority consider implementing curfews impossible because of local sympathy with Syrian refugees.

## BASIC NEEDS

The significant increase in population has had a significant impact on local infrastructure in T5 area. The increase in Syrian refugees is seen as depleting major public sectors including but not limited to 1) electricity, 2) water sources, 3) sewage, 4) roads and 5) garbage collection. Residents perceive the inflow of refugees as having affected Lebanese host communities by depleting important public sectors that were already in deprived conditions. The electricity sector, which has been struggling for decades, has been direly affected by the increase in demand. Several interviewees point out that major electricity transformers have crashed due to increased demand. Lebanese and Syrian confirmed that Syrian refugees informally connect to the electricity grid, which causes major shutdowns and cuts.

### WASH

Although municipalities mention WASH projects financed by several humanitarian agencies, systemic problems such as garbage collection, drinking water shortages and informal sewage systems persist. The inflow of refugees has depleted the sewage systems well below pre-crisis capacity. The lack of adequate sewage systems, especially in Dannieh, is mentioned as a root cause of water contamination and other public health hazards. The unorganised flow of refugees into the T5 area has resulted in many Lebanese leasing substandard shelters and rooms with limited access to a functional sewage system. Focus groups respondents claim that sewage problems are causing several diseases affecting Lebanese and Syrian children and adults. . Diarrhea, skin rashes and several stomach infections are cited as a direct result of unregulated sewage, especially in Dannieh.

The electricity sector, which has been struggling for decades, has been direly affected by the increase in demand.



Results indicate that major sanitation activities, including major public works such as pipe installation/rehabilitation, renovation of pipe systems, and reconstructing the sewage network, are in high demand. Residents consider other WASH activities, such as household water treatment-filters, water tank distribution/repair and solid waste management bins, problematic because they are temporary in nature and do not resolve the larger problems facing their communities. Hygiene kit distribution, water trucking and other small WASH activities are valued projects carried out by humanitarian agencies, but also the least effective and the most divisive. Municipal leaders cite such projects as sowing conflict, since many Lebanese feel left out.

Water shortages have been identified as a major driver for tensions between Lebanese and Syrian refugees. Lebanese blame the Syrian influx for heavy pressure on water resources and increased pollution, but they also consider municipal schemes to be insufficient and unorganised. Lebanese residents and Syrian refugees note that purchasing water from water trucks has become a heavy financial burden. Municipal leaders, on the other hand, are worried about the proliferation of well construction by private households or via NGOs, which could endanger groundwater resources. Municipalities affirm the need for collaboration on a district level to resolve water shortages by constructing water treatment facilities, major irrigation networks, and water pipeline renovation. Treatment of the root causes of water pollution, such as depleted sewage networks, informal garbage dumping and other systemic issues affecting the whole district, is cited as the only viable option to minimise tensions and resolve the problem. For that purpose, municipalities argue for the need of in-depth coordination with the WASH UN working group on a district level

Water shortages have been identified as a major driver for tensions between Lebanese and Syrian refugees.

## INFRASTRUCTURE

### A. Roads, zoning, and regulation.

The influx of Syrian refugees has depleted basic physical and organizational structures, such as power grids, roads and buildings. The pressure has been strongest in geographical



locations that form hubs of traffic. Zgharta and Miryata, for example, have been especially affected by increased traffic jams and the degradation of roads and buildings. Miryata and Zgharta form the gateway to Dannieh and Zgharta districts, where all the residents pass through while heading to Tripoli or the coastal parts of Minnieh for work or shopping. Bcharreh remains well connected to Tripoli via the Bassel Al-Asad highway and suffers to a lesser extent than Zgharta and Dannieh. Major infrastructure projects have been implemented in recent years. As a matter of fact, Bcharreh is something of an anomaly compared to other T5 area. The political leadership seems to be intent on imposing heavy regulations on construction, zoning and infrastructure repair. Citizens in Bcharreh complain about draconian municipal rules regarding housing, sewage and zoning laws. Their major demands from municipal leaders are centered on job creation and developmental plans.

*«In Bcharreh, they are working very well. Too well if you ask me! The municipality is supported by the Lebanese Forces here, and they are implementing very strong laws in zoning and construction.»*

Focus group with Lebanese men, above 30. Bcharreh

*«It's all hills in Lebanon and roads that go sideways. We have, or we used to have, better roads in Syria. We don't even have a park to send our children to.»*

Focus group with Syrian women under 30. Zgharta

## B. Electricity.

Electricité du Liban (EDL), a state-owned enterprise, dominates Lebanon's electricity supply system. Its installed powerplants, before the crisis, could only meet 85 per cent of Lebanon's electricity needs. Lebanon imported about 10 per cent of demand from Syria, while the remaining electricity deficit was and is being supplied by private individual enterprises.<sup>1</sup> The World Bank has estimated the cost of providing Syrian refugees

The influx of Syrian refugees has depleted basic physical and organizational structures, such as power grids, roads and buildings.

with electricity at USD 314 to 393 million for 2014.<sup>2</sup> Lebanese residents express their frustration at the need to purchase more private electricity due to the increase in electricity cuts as a result of the influx of refugees. Municipalities, on the other hand, are requesting solar energy projects and solar powered street lamps to mitigate the current surge in demand and shortage in supply. Solar energy projects are very popular among municipalities and community members due to the marginal independence it creates from EDL and compensates electric shortage while replacing diesel generators.

## C. Parks, youth facilities and playgrounds.

Several Syrian refugees have claimed that Syria had better and bigger parks and playgrounds and request larger investments in public facilities. Municipal leaders confirm the need for such investment in recreational facilities like soccer fields, swimming pools and parks for children and youth. Such investments are viewed as part of a long-term mitigation strategy against street crime and traffic accidents, especially since many Syrian children “can be seen on the streets, many times in groups and have no place to go.”<sup>3</sup> These projects are also seen as possible rapid employment initiatives, which could create extra jobs for Syrian workers who would be employed as labourers and good will among Lebanese whose community would benefit from public works and new facilities<sup>4</sup>.

Municipal leaders confirm the need for such investment in recreational facilities like soccer fields, swimming pools and parks for children and youth.

## D. Green belts and reforestation.

Municipalities and citizens are conscious of the environmental capital in their respective areas. Investments in reforestation, nature reserves and green belts are seen as possibly yielding

1. *Electricity Sector Public Expenditure Review*, World Bank, January 31, 2008. Available at: <http://www.databank.com.lb/docs/Electricity%20Sector%20Expenditure%20Review%202008.pdf>

2. <http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/MNA/LBN-ESIA%20of%20Syrian%20Conflict-%20EX%20SUMMARY%20ENGLISH.pdf> page 5

3. FG-Lebanese Females above 30- El-Koura.

4. Most municipalities take for granted that Lebanese will not work in construction. Instead, Syrians are needed in that work and they did it traditionally. This finding has been validated by Oxfam's experience in rapid employment initiatives in Bekaa, where poor Lebanese preferred not to take part to the activities (Ed.)

high returns in terms of eco-tourism and improvement in quality of life. Municipalities claim they can extract revenue through renting cottages near forests or huts in public parks. Furthermore, towns like Ras Masqa, Deddeh and Chekkah ask for green belts that could shield their towns from dust coming from urban and factory pollution.

## SYRIAN SPECIFIC NEEDS

Focus groups with Syrian refugees revealed a different set of priorities. While, Lebanese were concerned about infrastructure, water supply, hygiene and employment, Syrians appealed to humanitarian agencies to assist them in the provision of 1) legal documentation, 2) rent assistance and 3) Cash assistance.

### 1. Legal documentation.

New entry requirements for Syrian refugees were issued on 31 December 2014, and provide a list of six types of visa categories for Syrians wishing to enter the country. The categories include transit, visa application at a foreign embassy, medical treatment, education, business and tourism. Refugees who are already in Lebanon were requested to renew their residency permits every six months for a fee of USD 200. All those wishing to work in Lebanon were required to have a Lebanese sponsor.<sup>5</sup> The detailed list of criteria for permissible entry specifically states that no Syrian will be allowed to enter Lebanon as a “displaced person” (i.e. a refugee) except for exceptional cases, and that these procedures will be later determined in coordination with the Ministry of Social Affairs. This is clearly aimed at maintaining selectivity and nebulosity in terms of determining its applicability to new entries. Syrians fulfilling the new criteria are granted short-term, temporary residency. Before this decision, Syrians automatically obtained residency for six months, with the

Syrians appealed to humanitarian agencies to assist them in the provision of legal documentation, rent assistance and Cash assistance.

5. *Lebanon: New entry requirements for Syrians likely to block would-be refugees*. 6 January 2015. Available at: <http://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/lebanon-new-entry-requirements-syrians-likely-block-would-be-refugees>



possibility of renewal.<sup>6</sup> The majority of Syrian refugees consider the new legal requirements restrictive and a curtailment of their freedom of movement. Syrian workers are afraid to pass through checkpoints, and many share stories of their relatives being arrested and detained for several days for lack of the necessary documents. None have heard of Syrians actually being deported. Results also indicate that Syrian refugees are thinking of departing Lebanon to neighbouring countries such as the Gulf, Turkey and Europe. The majority believed that North Lebanon cannot take additional refugees and has reached its absorption capacity. The majority of refugees demanded that Gulf and European countries to provide legal ways for Syrian immigration.

*«Legal documentation is really a problem. Half of the Syrians I know don't have a sponsor. I am afraid to walk in the streets. I understand that Lebanon has too many refugees, but what should we do. Why don't you send us abroad?»*

Focus group with Syrian men under 30. El-Koura

## 2. Rent.

Shelter continues to be the greatest challenge facing Syrian refugees. Increased demand and limited housing options have left many Syrian families renting collective apartments and other unfinished structures. Syrian refugees consider cash-for-rent and cash assistance necessary for them to sustain themselves and their families. If such assistance package were to be rescinded, many are certain that it would lead to a social crisis.

## 3. Cash assistance.

Syrian refugees are concerned about the decrease in cash assistance allocated to them by UNHCR. In light of continued funding shortfalls, the WFP cash assistance voucher has been reduced from USD 27 to USD 13.5 per person.<sup>7</sup> Syrian

The majority believed that North Lebanon cannot take additional refugees and has reached its absorption capacity.

families are feeling the economic pressure and demand more assistance or better employment opportunities. Syrian workers in the Minnieh area express their dissatisfaction with working conditions, as Syrian workers are given up to 10,000 LL (USD 6.67 dollars) per day. Degrading working conditions coupled with price inflation and a decrease in WFP cash assistance has had a severe impact on Syrian families' livelihoods and resilience. Syrian refugees reiterated these demands across gender and age brackets, indicating the depth of the problem.

## JOB CREATION AND LIVELIHOODS

Results indicate that host communities are sceptical about job creation projects as it would encourage Syrian refugees to stay in Lebanon. At the same time, they acknowledge that the local economy urgently needs job creation programmes to enhance Syrian and Lebanese access to employment opportunities. Results indicate that host communities prefer immediate job creation programmes, such as rapid employment initiatives, as a way to contribute to social stabilization without furnishing sustainable job opportunities for Syrian refugees. Lebanese residents cite as examples rapid employment initiatives where humanitarian agencies support major employment intensive infrastructure projects and public works in sectors already affected by the Syrian crisis such as sewage, roads, water pipelines and construction.

*«I heard from an NGO, [laughing], they want to do vocational training! This means there are a couple of jobs Syrians haven't taken and now they want them to have it.»*

Focus group with Municipal leaders. El-Koura

Lebanese are sceptical of vocational training programmes for Syrians.

Lebanese are sceptical of vocational training programmes for Syrians. Focus group participants are convinced that vocational training would assist Syrians in acquiring skilled jobs, which would in turn help them compete with Lebanese in a market with scarce job opportunities. What is more, refusal to provide vocational training and other forms of livelihood and

6. *Lebanon Places Discriminatory Entry Restrictions on Syrians*, The Legal Agenda, 22 Jan. 2015. Available at: <http://english.legal-agenda.com/article.php?id=679&lang=en>

7. *Syrian Refugees in Lebanon Snapshot*. February 2015. Available at: <https://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=8586>



income generation projects stems from a fear that if economic opportunities were readily available, Syrians would be induced to stay in Lebanon.

Resistance to small livelihood projects for Lebanese and Syrian females was less pronounced. Several focus groups with Lebanese and Syrian females show that women are eager to participate in the work force. Several Lebanese women have also indicated their willingness to work from home in small projects, such as knitting, traditional crafts and foodstuffs. Lebanese generally had fewer objections on small livelihood projects. Provision of technical support for local economic development initiatives such as assisting agro-businesses to find niche markets and clientele can be helpful in the medium-term. Small grants and micro-finance loans for emerging businesses and entrepreneurs could increase employment opportunities in the T5 area. Limited access to financial facilities hinders refugees and locals' ability to create jobs.

Skilled Lebanese youth consider the possibilities of finding a job in their districts miniscule and recommend that the government implement large job creation efforts in Tripoli and the coastal areas. The majority of those studying electronic and computer engineering and other technical concentrations in the information or business industries consider Tripoli to be the natural destination for skilled Lebanese workers. The security situation and a lack of suitable infrastructure are considered to be the real reason for high unemployment. Lebanese men and women from the T5 area consider emigration the only alternative, given the state of high unemployment and the lack of public policies designed to create jobs in the surrounding areas. Direct work to support job creation in Tripoli through business hubs, collectives and heavy investment in technology are considered the only way forward if the T5 area is to retain skilled workers.

Skilled Lebanese youth consider the possibilities of finding a job in their districts miniscule.

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

## CONTINUE CASH FOR RENT AND OTHER CASH TRANSFERS TO SYRIAN REFUGEES IN THE NORTH

This research indicates that decreasing cash transfers could have serious repercussions on T5 social stability. Syrian families' labour income remains insufficient to cover rent, foodstuffs and other basic needs. What is more, the Lebanese who largely compensate the shortfall in their incomes by renting out to Syrian families would also be affected<sup>1</sup>. A decline in cash assistance would exacerbate existing social problems, especially in areas such as Akkar and Minnieh Dannieh.

## ENCOURAGE JOINT PLANNING SESSIONS BETWEEN HUMANITARIAN AGENCIES AND MUNICIPAL UNIONS

Although municipalities are often consulted as part of regional needs assessment initiatives and data collection, they have not been consistently included within the humanitarian response planning. Organizations should commit more effort to involving municipalities in long-term response planning, programme design and proposal development. Municipalities in Lebanon retain specific bureaucratic and organizational challenges and low administrative capacity. Since the majority of municipal councils are small in size, organizations should focus on encouraging regular meetings with Municipal Unions. Municipal Unions could assist humanitarian agencies in building comprehensive

1. The landowners are exploiting the Syrian refugees, after losing their business in exporting foodstuffs (apples and fruits and so on). Therefore, this is exacerbating inequalities, but stopping cash would actually lead to more turmoil because people cash assistance in fact helps both Syrians and Lebanese because they in one economy now.

approaches that fit the district's long-term needs. It also sets development and humanitarian assistance strategies directly within the Lebanese local governance system, yielding better cooperation and long-term results. At the same time, international organizations should strive to include the district governor (Qaem Maqam) in regular planning and debriefing sessions.

*«International organizations rarely come to talk to us. They only want information, but rarely want our input in the design. This session is a good example of what should happen.»*

Focus Group Discussion with Municipal leaders - Zgharta

### IMPLEMENT TRAINING INITIATIVES THAT BUILDS INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY OF MUNICIPALITIES AND ENCOURAGE LOCAL PARTICIPATION

Municipalities require long-term capacity building programmes. In-house consultants can work regularly with municipal staff and leaders to assist municipalities in building domestic programmes, planning, archives and project proposals (Ed. please refer to Annex 3 containing the methodology and results of two trainings on joint development proposal design organized for Bcharreh and Dannieh Municipalities at the end of the research phase). Long-term capacity building programmes should target municipal unions and medium-to-large municipal councils, such as Zgharta, Meryata, Amyoun, and Minnieh. Results indicate that municipalities face staff shortages and a dilapidating lack of administrative capacity. Training programmes spanning a few days frustrates municipal staff, as they lack momentum and follow-up mechanisms that could have a lasting impact. Long-term monitoring and assistance is harder to fund but generates better, more lasting results. Donors should allow for longer funding cycles to resolve what are clearly long-term difficulties related to reforming Lebanese local governance and relieving the impact of a long-term refugee crisis. It is also recommended that training initiatives include advocacy, conflict mitigation strategies, and strategic planning. It is also recommended to assist municipalities in designing mechanisms to enhance local participation around local budget and investment

Long-term capacity building programmes is harder to fund but generates better, more lasting results.

plants. Such package programs that builds the capacity of local municipalities while at the same time, making it more accountable to its constituency can be powerful.

### DESIGN PROJECTS THAT CAN HAVE A LASTING IMPACT ON AGRICULTURAL AND TOURISM SECTORS

Results indicate that tourism and agriculture are the backbone of local economies in the North. It is necessary to generate schemes that enhance the competitiveness of these two sectors. The report recommends assisting unions of municipalities in each district of the T5 area in constructing municipal tourist help desks. The help-desks can be responsible for enhancing overall quality of services, improving infrastructure (such as transportation), conducting regular meetings with hotel owners, and enhancing quality of service. The tourism sector suffers from a dearth of infrastructure and from high, uncompetitive prices. The tourism desk could work with specialists on developing alternative tourism packages with local businesses for Lebanese middle-income families and foreign groups. Projects intended to raise agricultural competitiveness is more complicated given the mountainous areas and the higher costs of production. Nonetheless, serious work needs to be done in order to preserve agriculture in the North. Programmes that assist local communities to market their produce and realign their production to international standards are indispensable.

Programmes that assist local communities to market their produce and realign their production to international standards are indispensable.

### EMPLOY A RAPID EMPLOYMENT APPROACH AS PART OF AN OVERALL JOB CREATION DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Emergency temporary jobs that provide quick cash incomes will be helpful for stimulating local economies. They can also be considered a peace dividend that reduces social tensions between host community and refugees. Rapid employment projects could involve rehabilitating sewage networks, water drainage, installing new irrigation systems and rebuilding damaged infrastructure. If done on a large scale and in coordination with local municipalities in the T5 area, rapid employment projects could provide an important

base for medium- to long-term economic recovery. Rehabilitation of irrigation systems in parts of El-Koura and Dannieh could be helpful in boosting agricultural yields. Building public parks that can be used for summer farmers' markets could enhance local development, provide future employment opportunities and provide refugees with immediate income benefits.

Projects such as replacing the old irrigation systems (ditches and canals) with modern pipes and drip-irrigation have been successful in minimizing local conflicts and preserving water sources. Such projects could be useful since they provide quick cash to Syrian workers and assist local societies in managing their resources.

### **SUPPORT INCOME GENERATION PROJECTS TARGETED LIVELIHOOD AND SELF-EMPLOYMENT START-UP GRANTS**

Private sector development in the T5 area can generate numerous employment opportunities. Results indicate that income generation projects that target crafts could prove successful, especially in areas of Bcharreh and Ehden that are known as tourist destinations. Livelihood projects targeting Syrian and Lebanese families through the production of local artefacts and foodstuffs could also prove effective. What is more, in parallel to building institutional capacity and tourism infrastructure, start-up grants in areas related to tourism, such as renovating old houses, family cottages and other small businesses targeting middle-income families, could be beneficial. Cheap and clean lodging in places like Ehden, Dannieh and Bcharreh remain a rarity. Small grants targeting sectors such as family run hostels, camping, horseback riding, apple picking excursions and other eco-tourist projects could be suitable for the T5 area and have been mentioned during focus group sessions.

### **SUPPORT YOUTH ACTIVISM BY BUILDING SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY CENTRES**

Results indicate that community centres could mitigate rising tensions between Lebanese and Syrians. The lack of recreational

activities and the dire situation of many Syrian families have been identified by several focus groups as a recipe for future social problems. Lebanese were also worried at rising drug and alcohol consumption among their children and pointed out that social and recreational centres are needed to redirect young people's energies into more productive pursuits, such as music, theatre and sport. Furthermore, several municipal leaders have expressed their worry that Syrian children growing up in Lebanon were at risk of being pushed into criminal activity, prostitution and other social ailments. Social centres are identified as crucial for maintaining social stability and increasing local resilience. Community centres would also assist in fostering youth activism and improving local participation in local governance structures.

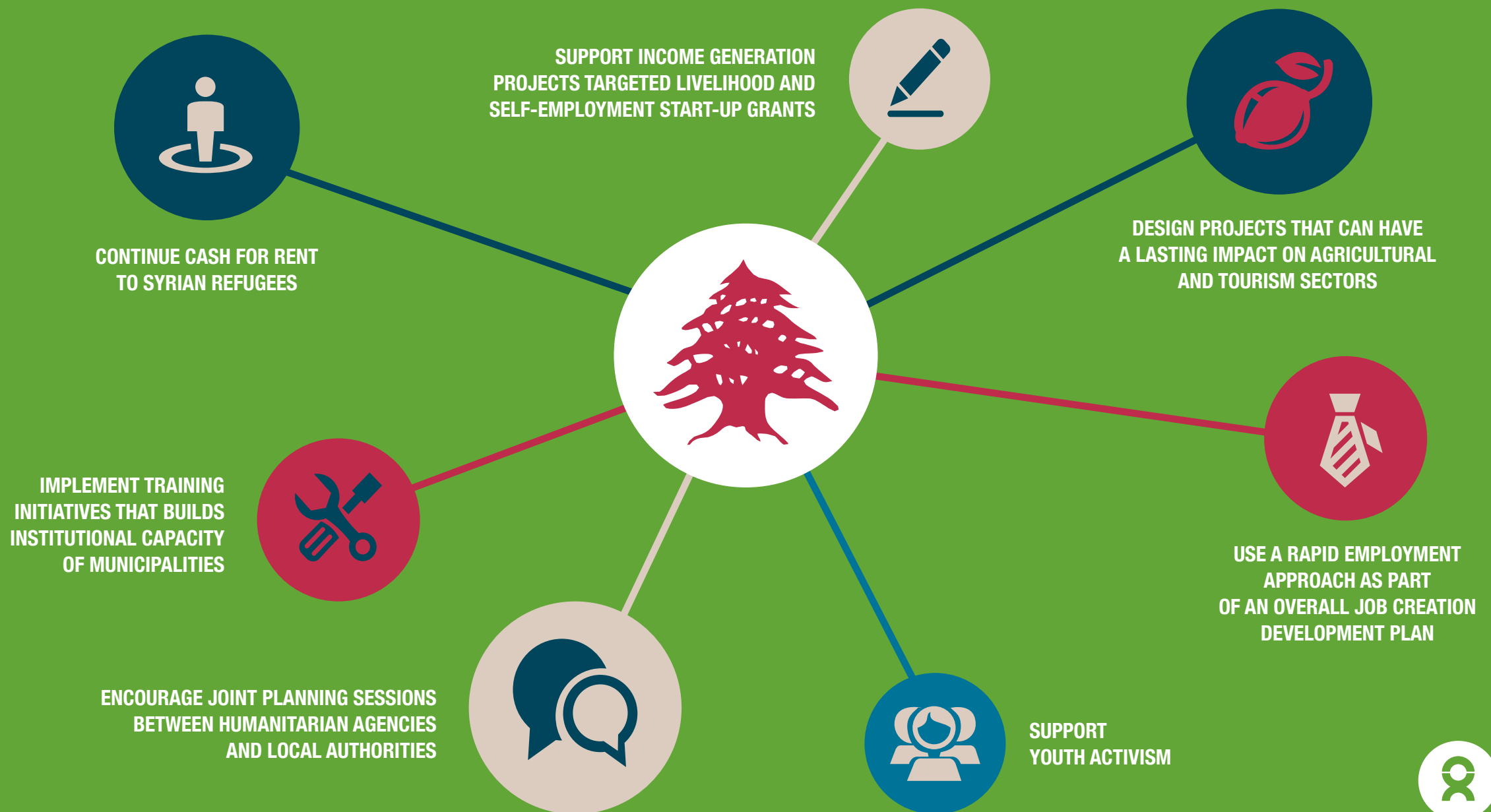
Private sector development in the T5 area can generate numerous employment opportunities.

Results indicate that community centres could mitigate rising tensions between Lebanese and Syrians.



# SOCIAL STABILITY IN NORTH LEBANON

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT



**OXFAM**

# ANNEX 1

## DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR MUNICIPAL LEADERS

Oxfam, April 2015

### INTRODUCTION:

- i. Inform participants of the purpose and scope of research.
- ii. Inform that session is recorded and their participation is anonymous and voluntary
- iii. Information collected is used solely for research purposes.
- iv. Structure of the conversation:
  - a. Power dynamics
  - b. Needs
  - c. Priorities.

### QUESTIONS:

#### 1. Power Dynamics:

- How would you describe the political situation in Dannieh?
- What are the main problems facing you as a community in Dannieh?
- What are the main problems facing you with Syrian refugees? How? Why?
- How did the Syrian crisis affect the political situation in Lebanon? In your area?
- How would you describe your relationship with the central government? How can it be improved?
- What is your main role when it comes to dealing with Syrian refugees? What is the balance between central/local authorities in the provision and financing of services for refugees? How can these roles be improved?
- If you face problems in your community whom do you speak to? Who is responsible for the “Syrian file” in your area? If you face problems with Syrian refugees how do you deal with it?
- What are the dominant religions and values that shape political views and debates in the Dannieh?
- How strong is the relationship with the Lebanese Diaspora in your area?
- If you are to advise an international organization, what are the main issues they should keep in mind before working in [specify region] why?

#### 2. Basic Needs:

- [Put up a flip chart]- I Brainstorm core needs on paper, the things that ? What are they?
- What are the main priorities when it comes to dealing with the Syrian influx (facilitator will organize priorities by mapping them to core needs).
- What do you think are the main vulnerable groups in your area? (from Lebanese and Syrians).
- Are there differences between children and adults’ needs? How?
- What are the main common problems that face both Syrians and Lebanese?  
How can it be resolved?

#### 3. Program Design:

- What are the main programs implemented by NGOs and aid agencies in your region? What do you think of it?
- What are the main training needs, you think, you or your staff members require in order to better serve your communities?
- What are the main subjects you think are required to maximize the efficiency of your work and that of local governance structures?
- If you were given the chance to give an advice for Organizations on how to give assistance for your municipality? Please state 3 recommendations. [Probe each participant]

# ANNEX 2

## DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR ADULTS

Oxfam, April 2015

### INTRODUCTION:

- i. Inform participants of the purpose and scope of research.
- ii. Inform that session is recorded and their participation is anonymous and voluntary
- iii. Information collected is used solely for research purposes.
- iv. Structure of the conversation:
  - a. Power dynamics
  - b. Needs
  - c. Program design.
- v. [Probe change in Lebanese treatment]

### QUESTIONS:

#### 1. Power Dynamics:

- How would you describe the political situation in your area?
- How did the Syrian crisis affect the political situation in Lebanon? In your area?
- How would you describe your relationship with the central government? How can it be improved?
- How do you describe your relationship to Syrians living in your area? Why?
- How do you provide and finance services for refugees? What is the balance between central/local authorities in the provision and financing of services for refugees? How can these roles be improved?
- If you face problems in your community whom do you speak to? Who is responsible for the “Syrian file” in your area? If you face problems with Syrian refugees how do you deal with it?
- What are the dominant religions and values that shape political views and debates in the selected area?
- If you are to advise an international organization, what are the main issues they should keep in mind before working in [specify region] why?

#### 2. Basic Needs:

- [Put up a flip chart]- Brainstorm core needs on paper, the things that ? What are they?
- What are the main priorities when it comes to dealing with the Syrian influx (facilitator will organize priorities by mapping them to core needs).
- Are there differences between children and adults’ needs? How?
- What are the main common problems that face both Syrians and Lebanese? How can it be resolved?

#### 3. Program Design:

- What are the main programs implemented by NGOs and aid agencies in your region? What do you think of it?
- What are the main training needs, you think, you or your staff members require in order to better serve your communities?
- What are the main subjects you think are required to maximize the efficiency of your work and that of local governance structures?
- If you were given the chance to give an advice for Organizations on how to give assistance for your municipality? Please state 3 recommendations. [Probe each participant]



## ANNEX 3

### DEVELOPING AND DESIGNING DEVELOPMENTAL PROJECTS PRACTICAL TRAINING

Following the successful implementation of Report on Social Stability in T5 area, North Lebanon, Menapolis conducted two training courses in Dannieh and Bcharreh. The goal of the training was to build local municipal leaders' capacities to enable them to develop and design joint development projects through the means of practical training and technical assistance. The training courses were conducted on 4th and 5th of August in Dannieh and 8th and 9th in Bcharreh.

#### METHODOLOGY:

The research conducted by Menapolis and following rigorous research involving tens of focus groups and interviews with local stakeholders, municipalities and citizens a set of recommendations were presented to Oxfam. The research found that short-term trainings should concentrate on tangible results, which municipal leaders could utilize in their daily work. Because the majority of municipalities lack administrative capacity, many municipal leaders are skeptical of the impact of management and leadership training. Nonetheless, programs that could assist them in producing a tangible result, such as a project proposal with a narrative and a budget, are seen to be useful.

The follow up workshops were intended to implement the above recommendation and to pilot test training for municipalities. The pilot training was constructed by conducting a brief desk review regarding the major problems and issues facing the municipalities. A phone call was arranged with the municipal leader and brainstorming session resulted with an outline approved by the municipal leader. The two consultants from Menapolis then prepared the agenda and material. The workshops were 2 days in total.

#### Methodology of training:

The training was based on interactive experiential learning. Participants were asked to brainstorm the various problems and issues facing their region. Following that, the trainer developing a working plan where participants were actively involved in the design

and flow of the discussion. Participants agreed in the first day on the subject they would like to deconstruct, resolve and then write a proposal.

#### Target groups:

- Group 1: members of Bcharreh Municipality Union (10 – 15 participants)
- Group 2: Members of Dannieh Municipality Union (10 – 15 participants)

#### Outputs:

Two proposals regarding solid waste management in Bcharreh and Dannieh.

#### Working Team:

1. A consultant in development and municipal work, to train and facilitate the practical sessions
2. Note taker, to take notes of the sessions outputs and develop, in cooperation with the consultant, the final proposal of two fundable projects.

## DAY ONE

Time	Session	Key topics	Notes
10.00	Introductions and ice breaking	Introductions - agreeing on the agenda and workshop ground rules	
10.30	Introduction: project development	- Project definition - Project development	A comprehensive theoretical introduction to projects and requirements to develop one
11.45		Break	
12.00	Understanding realities and identifying needs	- Exercise: where we are now, where do we want to be - Identify the priorities of the developmental work in the region - Stakeholder analysis: CSOs and citizens	Group work
13.30		Lunch	
14.30	Analyze the main common problem	Exercise: problem tree	Group work
16.00	Day review and wrap up		

## DAY TWO

Time	Session	Key topics	Notes
10.00	Visualize realistic solutions	Exercise: solutions tree	Group work
11.45		Break	
12.00	Identify the project idea and importance	- Project summary - Explain how to solve the problem - Identify expected results	(project background)
13.30		Lunch	
14.30	Formulating objectives and activities	- Formulating SMART objectives - Identify the evaluation indicators - Describe the activity - Identify tasks and duration	(develop the evaluation plan)
16.00	Working with donors	- Finding a donor - Approaching the donor and presenting the case - Building relations and responsibilities	Group work
18.00	Day review and wrap up		



Oxfam Italia is an association that is part of an international confederation of 17 organizations that work together in more than 90 countries in order to build a future free from injustice of poverty. We work to improve the living conditions of thousands of people, giving the power and the resources to exercise their human rights and build a better future for themselves.

**THE POWER OF PEOPLE AGAINST POVERTY**

OXFAM ITALIA · Via C. Concini, 19 · 52100 Arezzo · Italy  
t. +39 0575 182481 · f. +39 0575 1824872 · [oxfamitalia.org](http://oxfamitalia.org)