Recommendations on Individual Eviction Tracking System

Rational

The purpose of this document is to guide the Protection sector and its partners in deciding whether the sector should put in place a tracking system of individual evictions; by determining i) what would be the defined purpose of systematically collecting data on individual eviction cases and ii) what would be the protection outcomes that the data collection system would bring to the protection response to affected population. This document should enable the Protection sector to draw recommendations based on a thorough data analysis.

Background

In 2018, the Protection sector through the Temporary Eviction Task Force (TETF) reviewed the actual eviction tracking system, how the eviction situations were tracked and how the information collected led to protection outcomes for the affected population. On the one hand, collective evictions are tracked on ActivityInfo and the response and provision of the assistance is coordinated at the field level following the national eviction guidance note; while on the other hand individual eviction cases are not tracked per se.; indeed, the individual eviction cases are compiled at the level of protection programmes at agencies level based on the assistance provided. This case-based information is therefore not comprehensive nor is it statistically representative of the situation at country level.

Methodology

Given that systematic tracking of individual eviction cases would require substantial resources the Protection sector has initiated a secondary data review to compile and analyze the information already available on individual eviction cases which included VASyR and Protection partner's thematic reports (Oxfam, HRW, etc). An analysis plan was developed in order to identify information gaps that would be necessary to take an informed-based decision on the added value of having an individual tracking system. As some analytical questions could not be answered by the current set of data, the TETF decided to conduct a follow-up phone survey[1] with 2018 VASyR households who had reported to have moved within the last six months.

Analysis of available information

Combining the findings of the 2018 VASyR, partners' reports, and the results of the follow-up survey on eviction allowed us to analyse the correlations between vulnerability to evictions, demographics, geography, shelter type and economic vulnerability. VASyR data can be extrapolated to the national, governorate or district levels to provide estimated absolute numbers of households/individuals affected by various types of eviction[2].

The analysis part is divided into different thematics such as demographic, geographical area, the reasons of changing of accommodation, type of shelter and economic vulnerability (expenditure, coping mechanism).

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[1] Methodology of the follow-up phone interview: 289 sample cases were extracted from VASyR 2018 who had indicated that they: a) had been evicted (171 cases), b) received eviction notice (118 cases). Out of which, only 120 cases were surveyed. The remainder cases were deemed ineligible for reasons including: unreachable, the applicants were not at risk of eviction, telephone number not in service, and wrong phone number. The results were taken from 92 cases evicted from their residence. Although the sample population is not representative of the whole population, it strongly indicates that economic vulnerability is the primary cause for evictions.

[2] To frame the discussion VASyR data does not rely on households approaching UNHCR or NGOs to report their evictions; rather, VASyR reaches out to a sample of 5,000 households (registered and recorded with UNHCR) and the data is therefore more representative of the reality.

Estimated total households receiving eviction notices in last 6 months[3]: **2.7% - 8,235 HHs (2017: 3.6% - 10,980HH).**

Estimated total households evicted in the last 6 months: **3.7% - 11,285 HHs (2017:4.8% - 14,611 HHs**).

Locations of evictions

- **Rates of eviction threats** were highest in Baalbek-El Hermel (5%) and Beirut (4.2%) governorates. Rates were lowest in Akkar (1.4%) and Bekaa (1.1%) governorates.

- **Rates of evictions** were highest in Bekaa (4.5%) North (4.4%), and El Nabatieh (4.3%) governorates. Rates were lowest in Mount Lebanon (2.8%) and Beirut (2.7%) governorates (see Figure 1).

Demographics

- **Average household size** at threat of eviction and/or evicted in the last 6 months are almost similar, and are similar to the average household size across the population (5 members).

- **Legal Residency:**
  o HHs evicted or at threat of eviction are less likely to have members with legal residency.
  o **Only 21% of those aged 15 and above and evicted/at threat of eviction had legal residency compared to 27% nationally.**

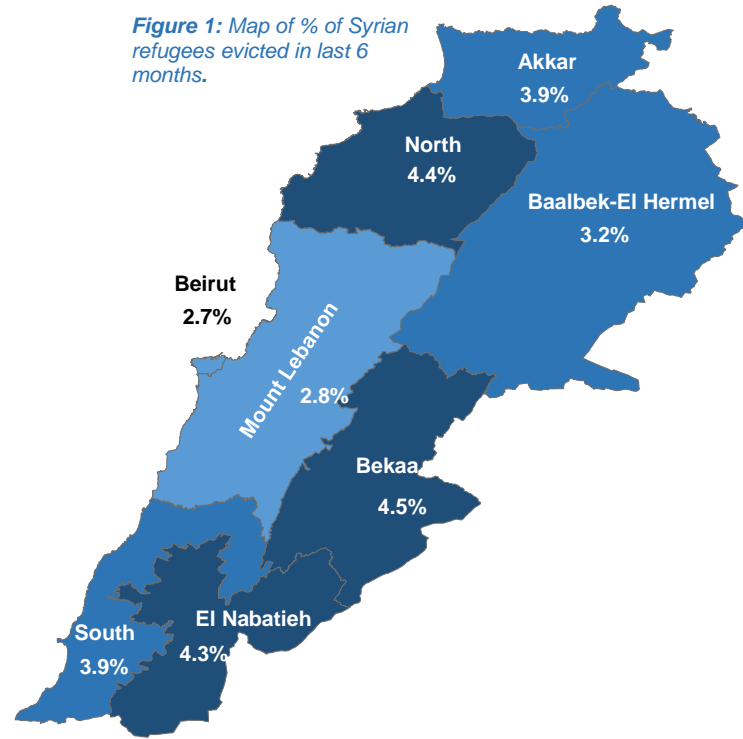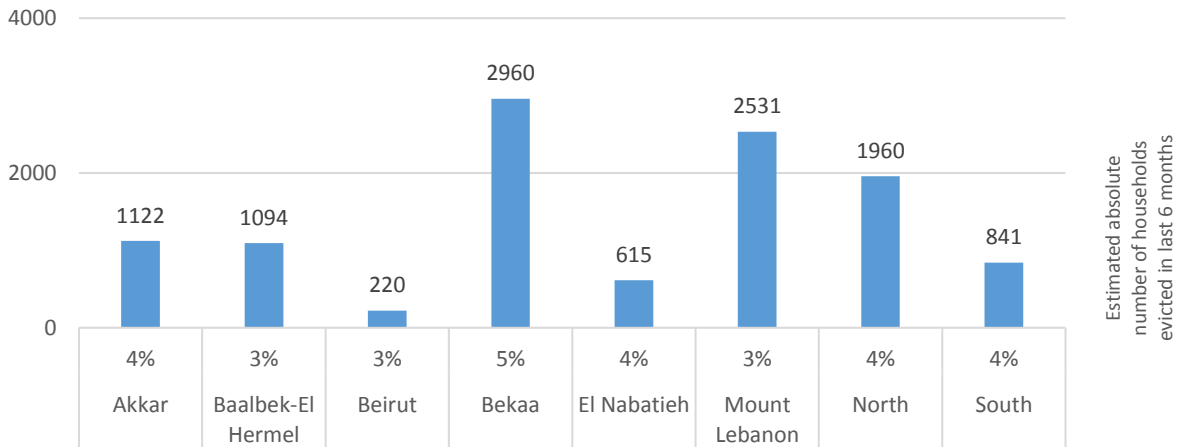*Figure 1:* Map of % of Syrian refugees evicted in last 6 months**.**

Figure 2: Percentage and estimated absolute number of households evicted in the previous 6 months.

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Reasons for changing accommodation

- Of those who changed accommodation in the last 6 months, the most common reasons were: eviction by landlord (35.6%), expensive rent (25.2%), other reasons (12.3%) and Shelter and WASH Conditions not acceptable (10.9%).

- **Three out of four individuals** stated **inability to pay rent** as the main reason for their eviction[4]

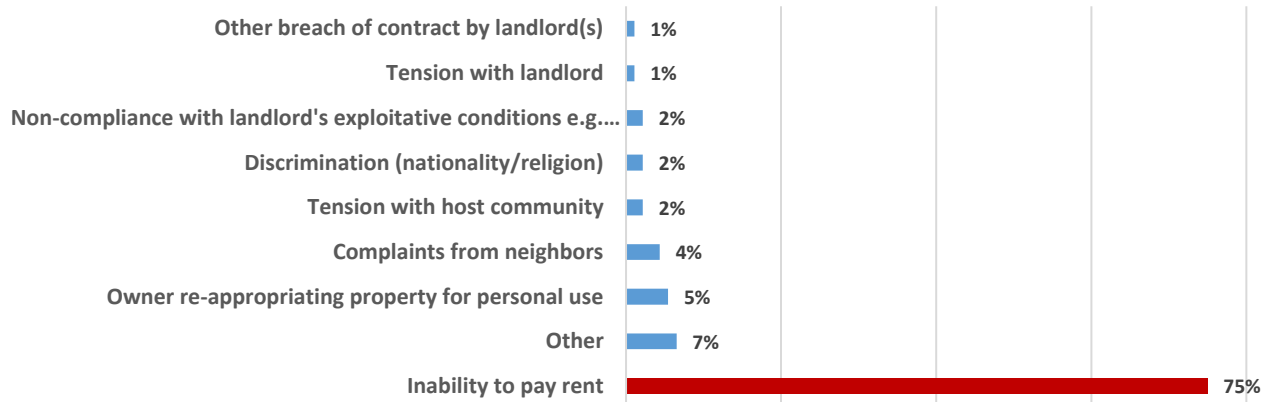***Figure 3:*** *Main reasons for evictions.*

Figure 4: *Main actors involved in enacting the actual eviction:*

- Landlord
- Actor unknown
- Municipality officials
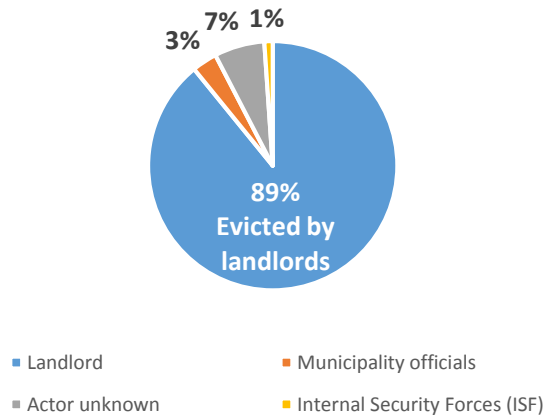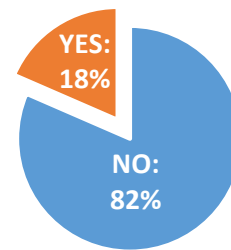- Internal Security Forces (ISF)

Figure 5: *Gaps in HHs accessing work as a result of eviction:*

18% reported having gaps in access to work resulting from eviction

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[4]Figures 3, 4, and 5 were extracted from the follow-up phone interview: 289 sample cases were extracted from VASyR 2018 who had indicated that they: a. had been evicted (171 cases), b. received eviction notice (118 cases). Out of the 289 cases, 120 cases were surveyed. The remainder cases were deemed ineligible for reasons including: unreachable, or the applicants were not at risk of eviction. The results were taken from 92 cases evicted from their residence because data on eviction reasons was missing for 28 cases. Although this sample is not representative of the whole population, the result of this survey are a strong indication that economic vulnerability is the primary cause for evictions.

Shelter

- The 2018 (VASyR) results show that over the last two years, families have been **progressively downgrading their shelter types**, moving from residential buildings to non-residential and non-permanent structures in informal settlements.

- The percentage of households living in residential buildings has decreased (to 66% in 2018, down from 73% in 2017), while the percentage **of households living in non-residential structures has increased** (**15% in 2018 up from 9% in 2017**), as well as the percentage living in informal settlements (19% in 2018 up from 17% in 2017) (see figure 6).

- Several factors including **high rental costs**, **unacceptable shelter conditions**, and **inter-community tensions**, can be factors that contribute to **the decrease in the number of families living in residential buildings**; 67 % of families living in such buildings report having experienced a security/safety-related incident in the past year.

- **Households living in non-residential accommodation are more at risk of eviction** than those living in residential and informal settlements. **22% of households with an eviction threats were living in non-residential structures** while only 15% of all households were living in non-residential structures. On the other hand, households in informal settlements are less at risk of eviction (see figure 6).

- 3.8% of households living in non-residential structures have received an eviction notice (see figure 7).

- Of the HHs that r**eceived an eviction notice in the past 6 months**, 72% had rented through direct payment, 17% were hosted free and **8% had rented in exchange for work**. **Of those evicted in the last 6 months,** 76% had to rent again through direct payment, 18% are now being hosted for free and **4% rented in exchange for work.**

- The average rent across these three shelter types differs substantially: US$221 in residential buildings, US$149 in non-residential buildings and US$58 in informal settlements.

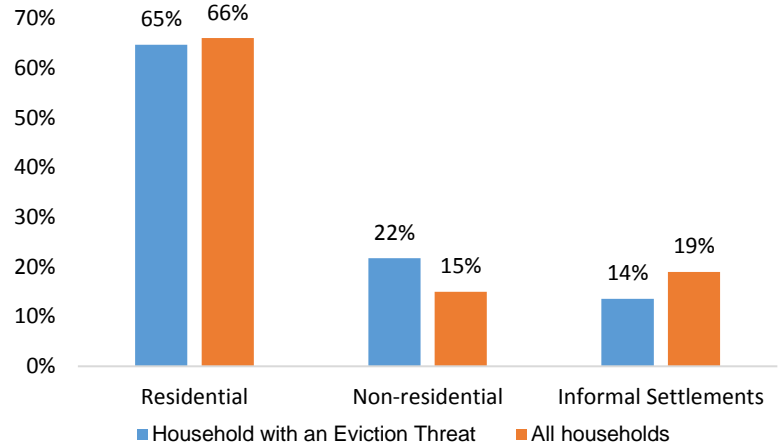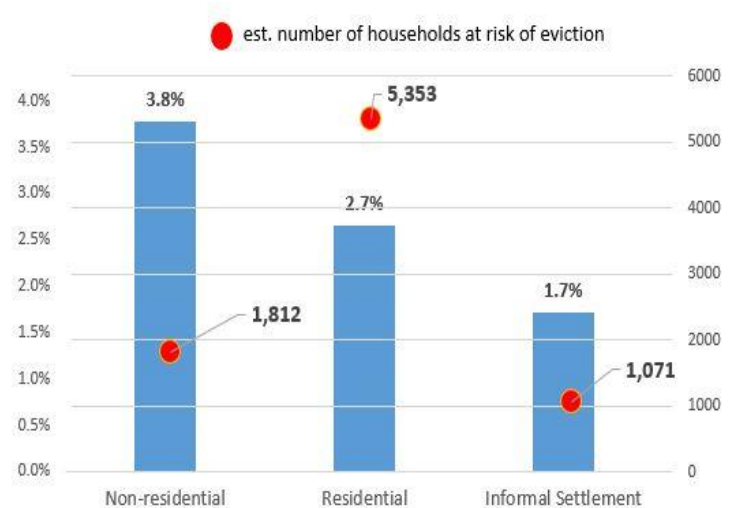**Figure 6:** *Comparison for those at threat of eviction by shelter type.*

Figure 7: *Estimated number of HHs at risk of eviction by shelter type.*

Programmes targeting families living in residential buildings **face several challenges**. Most families live in **urban or semi-urban areas** surrounding main cities and coastal areas where **rental costs and demand for housing are high**. Therefore **landlords, particularly those owning low-quality shelter units,** have little interest in reducing rental fees **in exchange for the upgrades offered by the shelter rehabilitation program**. In these locations, completed upgrades are unlikely to leverage more than a formalised rental agreement with the cost fixed at the pre-upgrade price for a set period[5].

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[5] Shelter partners evaluate the rental fees paid against the average rent range in a designated area to decide whether freezing the rent is applicable. This would help prevent the landlord from increasing rental fees once a shelter is upgraded and thus its rental market value increases. Shelter partners refrain from freezing the rent when rental fees are deemed high.

Expenditure and level of vulnerability

- **Those who received an eviction notice had paid on average only 35% of their actual rent** compared to 58% for those who did not receive an eviction notice. In addition, **people who received an eviction notice spend almost half their monthly expenditure on food,** which indicates their economic vulnerability and prioritization of food over rent and other expenditures.

- **Those who had been evicted in the last 6 months** seemed to prioritize paying rent among their expenditures, perhaps due to fear of being evicted again. However, their average rental cost is cheaper than those neither at threat of eviction nor evicted, perhaps indicating that they moved to a cheaper (more substandard) shelter post-eviction. This trend is also suggested by the current shelter types of those who have been evicted (as above under 'Shelter'). **This downgrading into less adequate shelter types is taking place in a context of significant household debt**: 82 % of households reported borrowing money; the majority (58 %) borrowed money for shelter-related reasons.

Economic vulnerability and coping strategies

- **61.5 % of all cases that have been evicted live below the SMEB** compared to 51% for all Syrian households.

- **Those who received an eviction notice or were evicted in the last six months were almost twice (20%) as likely to resort to adopting emergency coping strategies[6],** compared to 11.5% of those without an eviction notice or who had been evicted.

Evicted or Received Eviction Notice

20%

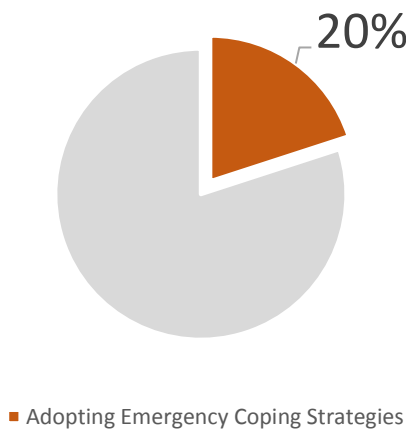■ Adopting Emergency Coping Strategies

Figure 8: Percentage of HHs that received an eviction notice or been evicted, and adopted emergency coping mechanisms.

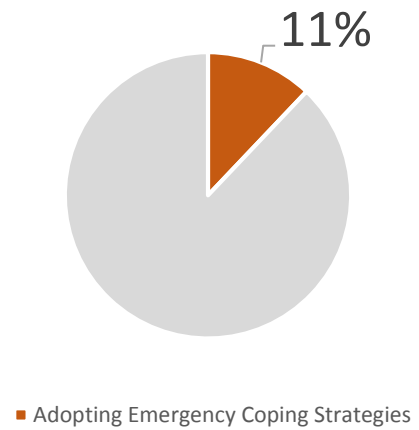
Not Evicted / No Eviction Notice

11%

■ Adopting Emergency Coping Strategies

Figure 9: Percentage of HHs that did not receive an eviction notice nor evicted, and adopted emergency coping mechanisms.

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[6] Emergency coping strategies are defined as the following: involve school children in income activities, beg, accept high-risk jobs, and sell house or land. This is the definition used in the VASyR.

RECOMMANDATIONS

1- **It is not recommended by the TETF to establish an individual eviction tracking system** as VASyR already provides enough information to draw conclusive analysis. A specific tracking system would be extremely resource intensive without guaranteeing a comprehensive tracking and would not provide any critical protection information that is not yet available. Findings from the Vasyr and following survey clearly indicate that the main reason for individual evictions is the incapacity to pay rent.

In order to ensure enhanced analysis in the future, it is however recommended:

2- To add **tailored questions to VASyR 2019 data collection** in order to capture protection needs information to inform advocacy; and to **revise the definition of 'emergency coping mechanisms' in the VaSyR questions**;

3- To **conduct regular thorough analysis** on the individual eviction situation:

   a. To conduct complementary exercises with thematic focus on an ad-hoc basis (as needed) to collect more specific information to monitor emerging trends and needs and/or to corroborate the individual eviction situation with MCAP assistance or shelter assistance (to work with Basic Assistance and Shelter sectors);
   b. To **add questions** related to evictions (collective or individual) in **protection monitoring exercises across the country**;
   c. Following a change in the context impacting individual evictions in a specific area, work with the **protection monitoring teams to zoom in the concerned areas** in coordination with field PWGs to gain a better understanding of the change in situation;

4- To enhance coordination between **the PWG and Shelter WG** to have regular **presentation and analysis** on each sector activities related to eviction response and to enhance join response;

5- To reflect on how to communicate on shelter conditions that affect refugees and hosts community through awareness activities